

XI JINPING'S FOREIGN POLICY; A CRITICAL CHALLENGE FOR THE US

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Received: 26 March, 2024

Revised: 25 April, 2024

Accepted: 10 May, 2024

Published: 21 May, 2024

ABSTRACT

China under Xi Jinping became more assertive, bold, and engaged in global affairs, presenting critical challenge to the US. In the last decade, China manifested shift in its foreign policy and quitted risk aversive approach. China previously adhered to the principles of keeping low profile and remained concerned about economic development. China under Xi quitted the policy of keeping low profile and launched a strategy of striving for achievement as he has faith in power unlike Deng who had faith in wealth. Beijing's assertive foreign policy, growing economic and military capabilities, territorial disputes in South China Sea and new global initiatives demonstrate a departure from its previous cautious approach. Xi Jinping played role in bringing about shift in the external affairs of China, reflecting his vision. US, as a dominant global player feels threaten with the foreign policy of China, pursued by the incumbent president. So far, US has enjoyed considerable influence in many parts of the world is being challenge by the China's growing influence and increasing global role. US has been grappled to sustain its primacy on the face of China's assertive foreign policy and ambitious global goals. This Paper examines shift in China's foreign policy with the Xi arrival to power and how the country's new initiatives and trends on foreign policy front present a critical challenge to the US. It also investigates the Xi's role in China's foreign policy. Furthermore, the paper discusses the China's assertive approach to external affairs, aggressive take on Taiwan and South China Sea, and diplomatic engagement. In the last part of the paper, it is investigated that how China's partnership diplomacy, aiming at to increase Chinese influence in different significant regions, presents critical challenge to the US.

Keywords: China, Xi Jinping, Foreign Policy, Shift, Challenge, US.

INTRODUCTION

Since the establishment of the communist China, the Sino-US relations witnessed strained era followed by the Normalization began in early 1970s, leading to the diplomatic recognition of the People Republic of China in 1979. Since then, the relations have been marked by a complex interplay of cooperation and competition. The new leadership after Mao had initiated the reforms era that focused on making China a prosper nation. US sought to bring China into the mainstream international system hoping to promote market-oriented economy in China and strengthen liberal world order. Focusing more on economic development, the predecessors of the president Xi Jinping remained disengage from the global geo-politics. The US was feeling secure with the Chinese behavior of least interference in global affairs. China achieved success in rapid economic

growth and laid the foundation for its emergence as a regional power.

Considered once a regional power, China has now become the global competitor of the US. Reform era resulted in economic boom, which is continue, has reduced the gap between the US and China's GDPs. China rapid military modernization emboldened it to engaged in oversea affairs. Owing to its economic strength, defense advancement and technological development in addition to its geography and population, China's external policies have been a source of concern at the time when Xi has been driving them. With Xi power, the foreign policies have become more autocratic, assertive, bold, and centered on Xi Jinping, manifesting a shift in Chinese's state's approach to external affairs. Under Xi, China is evolving and asserting leadership in

global affairs which present challenges to the US. It leads US to revise its strategies and formulate its policies toward China.

Xi appeared as a visionary, nationalist and ideologue president of China with distinct style of governance who is bringing about shift in the foreign policy of the country. He appeared strictly adhered to the ideology and Mao's shadow. He presented his vision for China: Chinese dream, building community with a shared destiny, reforming global governance and engaging China in global affairs. The purpose of the Xi new approach is to revive the China's status in global community, getting motivation from the history when China enjoyed prestigious status as a unique developed civilization followed by an era the nation was humiliated by the west. The Xi vision encompasses National rejuvenation, economic prosperity, cultural revival and expanding global influence. Translating the vision into action requires some changes which Xi has made in foreign policy, making it assertive and valiant.

The decades long economic boom, achieved by his predecessor, compelled Xi to come up with a vision that clearly focused on the goal of restoring China's glorious past. His vision has had different packages mainly focused on China's global ambition and international initiatives to inspire the CPC and People of China in achieving the goal of economic development and China global influence. Presenting an alternative world order, Xi Jinping has announced the Vision for a Community with a shared future in 2013¹ and has been repeated the stance multiple times subsequently. The aim and objectives of the doctrine was to create a peaceful and stable world order that could benefit the entire world by addressing the challenges, the world had been facing and to promote common development for all.²³ The vision envisaged three major initiatives; the global security initiative, the global development initiative and global civilization initiative. The idea was rooted in Xi's thinking that the world is connected and interdependent in which all nations share interests and responsibilities. Through this vision, China was suggesting the world how to deal with security challenges by promoting dialogue over confrontation and alliance over partnerships.

The increasing Chinese influence on global stage is a challenge to the US's eroding influence. The US, enjoying exclusive influence in post-cold war period is threaten by the China's ambitious global initiatives, Wolf Warrior Diplomacy, South-South

cooperation and asserting territorial claims. China under Xi threatens the US primacy which was maintained through liberal world order, global financial institutions, and economic strength. In terms of defense, its military strength was unmatched with unparalleled capabilities across land, sea, and space. The US played an important role in shaping global governance and international affairs. The significant geo-political pivots were considerably under the US influence like Middle East, South Asia etc. Beside diplomatic edge over other nations, the American cultural influence, spreading through music, movies, literature, and technology, shapes global trends, perception, and promotes American values and ideas globally. It is also enjoying par excellence in innovation capacity. In a nutshell, it dominated all areas exclusively ranging from economy to technology, contributing to the US national power. China under Xi Jinping has pursued a foreign policy, aiming at to excel in all areas where the US enjoyed sole global status.

The purpose of the paper is to explore the shift in China's external behaviors that is happening in the Xi's period. Further, it investigates that how the new foreign policy of China under the Xi presents major challenge to the US. It identifies few areas where the new Chinese approach threatens the US interests and triggers the powershift in favor of Beijing. China adopted aggressive standing over South China Sea and Taiwan while kicking off strategic engagement in important regions of the world. On global front, China initiatives and leading role in the affairs demonstrates the Xi's global ambition. The concerns in the US over China's foreign policy are also included in last part of the study.

Marking the shift in China's foreign policy under Xi

For last one-decade, new trends, approaches and concepts have been introduced in China's foreign policy, demonstrating the shift in the country's external behavior. China's foreign policy under Xi is showing departure from his predecessors' approach. Xi in his vision for China expressed ambition to become the country a composite national power with global influence.⁴ Increasing China multidimensional global and regional activism, Xi gave a vision of a global community of common destiny, picturing a and striving for a world where people live in harmony with greatest possible benefit for all.⁵ In 2022, China called for the reforming of

the western dominated world order and maintaining of equal status of all countries in global affairs which the Chinese calls true multilateralism.⁶ It has manifested the active role as great power on global stage the new China aspire to. In his first term, Xi hosted Five major summits and went on twenty eight overseas trips⁷ Consequently, China has undergone shift from “prosper nation diplomacy” to “strong nation diplomacy” under Xi, increasing South-South Cooperation, expanding influence to global governance and building China led global and regional institutions.⁸ Making China great again, great rejuvenation was made target of the new foreign policy, enhancing China’s global standing. Three multilateral financial institutions, worth of \$200 billion. China seems more confrontational toward the US, assertive on the issues of Taiwan and South China Sea and focused on major countries relations. It is extending overtures to European Union and intensifying relations with Russia, defying the US concern over Ukraine war. China signed a deal of Airbus aircraft with France amid voice from the US over China salience on Ukraine issue.⁹

The shift in China’s foreign policy is largely attributed to Xi’s leadership capability as political leader is supposed to make decision. China remained the same in 2013 as it was some time earlier, but Xi Jinping announced shift from keeping low profile to striving for achievements.¹⁰ The foreign policy under incumbent is more nationalist with robust territorial claims. Consequently, China conducted unprecedented large-scale land reclamation in the South China Sea conducted in start of Xi Jinping’s period, highlighting the president ambition to change status quo in Sea water.¹¹ The changes that happened in the incumbent president’s era demonstrates a major shift in Beijing’s approach to international relations, presenting a critical challenge for US. The US, the superpower of post-cold war era, is concern with the China outward strategy, expanding influence and leadership role.

Xi Jinping aggressive foreign policy.

Keeping low profile and focusing on wealth, China was strictly adhered to non-interventionist approach in foreign policy. A cardinal foreign policy principle, “Keeping low a profile” set by the Deng Xiaoping was followed in the subsequent decades. Deng proposed the rule reads: “observe calmly, secure our position, cope with affairs calmly, hide our

capacities and bide our time, be good at maintaining a low profile, and never claim leadership”.¹² It guided Chinese foreign policy. The cautious and moderate approach was adopted in external affairs. During Deng era, China decided that ideology would be no longer an arbitrator to decide its attitude toward any country. It extended friendship to every country. The Military expenditure went down as no aggressive strategy was on the table. The president focused on economic development and internal reforms. During the US and USSR Competition, Deng kept China at international background to protect domestic reforms. In the decades of 1990s, on the face of western sanction triggered by Tiananmen event in 1989, China took the path of low profile in global affairs.¹³

The motivation of keeping a low profile was drawn from the consequences Mao’s external and domestic policies brought to the country. After the revolution, Mao engaged his country in block politics by adopting “one side binding strategy”. during the cold war and sided with USSR against capitalist bloc which was led by the US. Bringing socialist ideology as an arbitrator to China’s external attitude coupled with Chinese fear of security, Mao stood by USSR to get tangible and moral support. In Korean war, this strategy incurred upon China a huge loss. More than half million people including Mao’s son were killed. Then the short-lived Sino-Soviet honeymoon turned into rivalry ascribe to multiple reasons led China to came up with a new approach in foreign policy: two lines fighting i.e. opening front against the US and USSR. In Vietnam war, China backed North Vietnamese with 300,000 troops and 20-billion-dollar logistics against the US. Engaging on two fronts made it difficult for economically weak China. Capitalizing on Sino-Soviet rivalry, the US approach China and resumed diplomatic relation in early 1970s.¹⁴ During Mao’s era, China had been very active on foreign policy front that reminded unsuccessful in achieving some long-term interests. Mao’s policies and initiatives were unsuccessful in bringing economic governance which provides legitimacy to the authoritarianism of Communist party of China. Keeping in view the consequences of Mao’s policies on domestic as well as external front, Deng pursued independent peaceful diplomacy by limiting the country’s focus on domestic economic development and reforms. Deng continued reconciliatory and cooperative foreign policy, though he engaged in only one war against Vietnam.

The relative power of China was not fundamental increased. Jiang Zemin's and Hu Jintao's eras had witnessed the Deng moderate approach of engaging little in oversea affairs despite relative increase in China's power. Both promised peaceful development and harmonious relation even when China was recognized as rising power.¹⁵ China's foreign policy went under profound changes since 1949 revolution as Mao launched revolutionary diplomacy followed by Deng developmental diplomacy that was continued in Jiang and Hu administrations keeping China least involved in external affairs and biding for China's time.

Xi Jinping decided to roar back China on global stage to regain its glories past once it enjoyed, creating concerns for the US. Motivated by Chinese economic achievement in 2010 when it's GDP surpassed Japan and became second largest economy on the globe, Xi aspired to increased Chinese power and influence by becoming an active actor in international arena. Xi Jinping formally announced departure from Deng Xiaoping's principle of "Keeping a low profile" and presented a new strategy aimed at asserting Chinese position global stage. Xi delivered a speech at foreign affairs conference of Communist Party of China on October 24, 2013, revealing a new strategy of "fenfayouwei", which meant striving for achievement in foreign policy.¹⁶ Xi Jinping pursued aggressive foreign policy which is known as "wolf Warrior". In the wake of 20th national gathering of Communist Party of China defended it. The Chinese media has been referring it "Xiplomacy" since 2019, demonstrating the new foreign policy that reflects Xi's thoughts.¹⁷ Injecting new vision in state's external policy, Xi signaled a shift from the status quo approach and started preparing China for leadership role in global affairs with the objective of maximizing China global influence. Flexing its muscles to firmly hold its influence in enlarged periphery, China made attempts by expanding security perimeter to keep the US away from its neighborhood. Renewed and aggressive claims on territory in its neighborhood is the bold imitative of Xi Jinping which has become a big critical challenge for the US. The objective of Xi new approach in foreign policy is to achieve the Chinese Dream of Great Rejuvenation.

Reasserting Influence in South China Sea and Taiwan

Emerging as a global powerhouse, China under Xi Jinping has focused on reasserting influence in important maritime territories, notably the South China Sea and Taiwan. Both are strategically significant in China's grand strategy, addressing security concerns and establishing historical claims. The Chinese new approach is blend of diplomatic maneuvering, military intervention, and economic leverage that has increased the Beijing influence in the regions. Owing to their economic significant, strategic importance and maneuvering space for Washington to counterbalance China, the territories have always pivotal for the US. The Chinese renewed claims and venture in the sea, where important trade routes are passed, presents critical challenge to US and has created concerns in the strategic community in Washington.

In terms of economy, the Sea is a passage of maritime trade making it significant naval rout. It is claimed by Six countries One-third of the global shipping that counts more than 3.4 trillion sea trade makes way through it. Forty percent of China trade while six percent of the US trade are carried through South China. In term of military significance, the Sea has considerable importance for China as well as the US. The US seventh fleet travel through it when transits between Indian ocean and Pacific which needs maritime security for carrying troops smoothly. In addition to it, the Sea has abundance of natural reservoirs. China claims over the region dated back to 2000 years ago while Japan has taken confrontational claim on it.¹⁸ Emerging victorious from the World War II, the US become the dominant resident power in East Asia. The US has substantial military presences in Japan and having close relation of Alliance with South Korea and Philippine. By the end of the cold war, countries across the region prioritized modernization and economic development and went under the shelter the US security. The US has three major interests in the region: Economic, alliances and partnership with partners and Maintaining balance of power.

When Xi became the president, he vigorously asserted Chinese claim on the Sea while addressing the National University of Singapore in 2015, stated: "The South China Sea islands have been China's territory since ancient times. It is the bounded duty of the Chinese government to uphold China's territorial sovereignty and legitimate maritime right and interests."¹⁹ A reported prepared by the Brookings Institution in 2019 discussing China's

activities in South China Sea gathered the data which proves Xi aggressive diplomacy in south China Sea. China has reasserted its territorial and Maritime claim. It has been encroaching on exclusive economic zones and has increased military presence seeking to deny the US navigational and other freedom of Sea which has triggered the militarization of the region. The actions, China has taken put it in advantage to the US. Xi approach to South China's Sea has deterred other claimants as well as undermined the US credibility in the region. China has tried to keep the US and other warship out of the Sea. In 2018, China complained of Britain ship of breaching China's sovereignty. When French warship sailed through the strait of Taiwan, China declared it illegal entry into its territory. In 2018, Chinese warship came close to USS Decatur within 45 yards making situation alarming for the US.²⁰ China has been carefully crafting its strategy focusing on replacing the US as a dominant actor in the Sea.

China renewed ventures in the Sea has created great concerns in the US. In a statement on 13 July 2020, the US secretary of state Mike Pompeo rejected China's claim on the Island and declared it unlawful. Reassuring the US allies of Its support, Mike Pompeo added that "America stands with our South Asian partners in protecting their sovereign rights to offshore resources and reject any push to impose 'might makes right' in South China Sea or the wider region".²¹ The repeated high-level statements coming from the US has made it clear that Xi's foreign policy presents unprecedented challenges to the US influential position particularly in Asia and Asia Pacific

China has adopted an assertive approach to Taiwan to recapture China's lost territory as well as core strategic region. Securing a critical juncture for China's security, holding a dominant position in its neighborhood, and achieving an exclusive sphere of influence in the region, Taiwan has been on the priority of Xi Jinping's foreign policy to attain greater role in global politics. In repeated policy statements, Xi has made it clear to the world that China's unification with the Island is inevitable. He has maintained that the people of China and Taiwan belong to same family and same nation.²²The Xi's statements reaffirm China's historical claim on the Island, but he has taken certain aggressive steps. In Xi era, China has started intimidating Taiwan militarily. From January 2021 to October 2022,

China has made 400 sorties into Taiwan's air defense identification zone.²³ China has become so aggressive that it suspended military communication with the US as a protest over the US house's speaker Nancy Pelosi visit to Taiwan in August 2022. Chinese Second rank Military official warned against any move which is aimed at establishing an independent Taiwan state.²⁴In 2023, the Taiwan defense ministry claimed that 43 Chinese aircraft and seven ship were detected near the Island. Apart from traditional military pressure, Taiwan accused China of cyber-attacks targeting its government agencies. China has been using all kind of means to bring Push Taiwan away from the US influence including suspension of cross-strait communication, diplomatic clout and economic pressure. In 2021, China cut off its trade ties with Lithuania when it allows Taiwan to open office for representatives in its Capital. Beijing not only bars countries from entering into free trade agreement with Taiwan but also kept Taiwan out of multilateral trade blocks.²⁵Beijing claim on the Island is very old, but Xi Jinping aggressive diplomacy has sourced the ties between the US and China.²⁶

Former US ambassador to UN, Nikki Haley blamed Xi Jinping for the China's aggressive behavior.²⁷ During Trump's administration, the US increased arms export to Taiwan of all time, demonstrating the concerns in Washington. In addition to its strategic location, Taiwan economic is another factor. In electronics industry and semiconductor manufacturing, Taiwan has been on the leading position in the world. Its significant status in the US foreign policy led the US to encircle it with military bases to protect it from China's encroachment.²⁸ Xi Jinping aggressive approach has threatened Taiwan and posed Challenge to the US to firmly stand behind the Island in face of much powerful China. If it falls to Chinese Control, China project of holding influential position in western pacific will be easier. In addition, if the vibrant economy of the Island would come under China's control could be used by Beijing to further geopolitical goals.

China Rising influence in Pacific.

Locating between China and United states of American, the states of Pacific region are of great strategic importance. When China has started inspiring for bigger role in international affairs, the Island countries hold centrality in its ambition. China under Xi has been increasingly active in the region.

It has increased its engagement in the region driven by diplomatic and strategic interest. The objective of the renewed involvement in the Island countries is to reduce Taiwan international space, access to the region resources and secure its periphery. China has activated multiple foreign policy instruments ranging from economic incentives to diplomatic engagements to increase sphere of influence into Pacific Island. Defense partnership has also been reported, but denied by the Chinese but still there is a fear that military bases could be established which has raised concerns among the US and its allies in the region.²⁹

The region, comprising of fourteen independent and freely associated countries and US territories, is highly significant for the US as well as China. The US holds control of its three territories: American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands and Guam where the US Navy and air forces are located. In addition to defense significance, the Pacific Island Exclusive economic zone is extended across 7.7 million square miles of ocean. The countries have control over major fisheries. Given to their Same status in the UN general assembly as the bigger economies have, their influence over fisheries and climate change issue is widespread, which makes it the important strategic region for the US. The major interests of the US in this strategic location are economic, security and diplomatic. The US major ally Taiwan has formal relations with six out of fourteen countries that bolsters Taiwan's international space and make eligible Taiwan to become part of the multiple international organizations ultimately serves the US interests³⁰.

According to Beijing officials view, the region is in the China's periphery or neighborhood that makes it significantly important for China. China has major three interests: Diplomatic and strategic, Reducing Taiwan's diplomatic space and gaining access to the resources. Among its strategic and diplomatic interests, China wants to weaken the US influence in the region and to promote political and economic interests. Accessing Pacific Island and protecting its sea line of communication create China's major stakes in the region. Chinese maritime great power dream is incomplete if China does not get access to Island. Monitoring the US submarine activity, expanding People Liberation Army to move free in the Island and intelligence gathering are the top Chinese strategic interests. Considering China's integral part, China wants to reduce diplomatic space for Taiwan in

the Region which is working in partnership with the US. Engaging and incentivizing the Island states, China could press them to switch their recognition to Beijing that would limit diplomatic relations for Taiwan. Another interest of the Beijing in the region is gain access to the resources of the Pacific that could contribute positively to the China's economy.³¹

For decades, the China had ignored the Pacific Island while remained focused on major powers. The countries of the Pacific had gotten little attention till 2013. In 2013, when Xi became president, the Island got centrality in China's foreign policy. The increasing Beijing's engagement in the Pacific has been witnessed in the recent years. In 2015, President Xi declared the region as Southern leg of the "Maritime Silk Route". President Xi has been utilizing all instruments of foreign policy including Aid and Assistance diplomacy, Economic relation, Investment and trade, public diplomacy, and Security engagement to gain foothold for China in the Island. In 2019, Beijing made a huge diplomatic breakthrough by making the Two official diplomatic partner of Taiwan to switch their recognition to China. Using carrots and sticks approach, China pressured Panama and Liberia to switch their recognition to Beijing. Regarding fisheries and natural resources, Beijing has been involved in fisheries outside of its internationally recognized ECZ in the sea of Pacific. Beijing has been mining gold and other metals for years in the Pacific Island. On strategic front, China has struck a secret security deal with Solomon Island in 2022 that will allow Chinese forces to make routine port visits and to allow Beijing forces to assist and train the Solomon law enforcement agencies. The same year in April, China signed another agreement with Honiara. In May, the Chinese foreign minister embarked on an eight-nation ten-days tour of the Pacific to convince them to become part of China led "China-Pacific Island Countries Common Development Vision."³² The abovementioned few initiatives among other suggest that how China has been actively engaging in the Pacific Island and its influence over the Island has increased in the Xi Jinping era.

The rising involvement of China in the Pacific region poses challenge to the US and its allies. The notable allies of the US in the entire region are Australia, New Zealand and Taiwan which are facing challenges in ensuring open and free environment to the Pacific Islands and preserving their interests in

the region. They consider it vital to their security and economic interests. Referring implicitly China, the New Zealand foreign minister in a statement declared the region, the contested strategic space making it a source of strategic anxiety.³³ The rising Chinese involvement led the US to focus more on the countries of Pacific. The vice president of the US, Harris has announced initiative including the opening of new embassies in Kiribati and Tonga in addition to Solomon Islands which was announced earlier, re-establishing USAID mission in Fiji and devising a Pacific Islands strategy. The US appointed a special envoy in 2021 to negotiate for the renewal of Compacts of Free Association (COFAs) deal that grants the US military an exclusive access to FAS territories and Exclusive economic zones³⁴. Given the limit of the study, few initiatives among many are mentioned, which have been launching by the US and its allies to resist China's growing role in the pacific.

Xi Jinping rampant Partnership diplomacy

With the decline of the US as a sole hegemonic power, multiple power centers are emerging that has increased the importance of middle and small level powers in the world politics. In the polycentric world, partnerships diplomacy is gaining currency which is used by different geo-strategic players to enlarge their sphere of influence. State-to-state interactions may be conflictive or cooperative. Strategic partnerships between countries because of cooperative interactions are carried out through partnership diplomacy. Partnerships diplomacy is focused on strategic partnership that covers foreign affairs, security, and economic relations. These special relations between states are devised when their foreign policy is framed. The drivers of this kind of long-term and stable engagement are the interests that are shared by the countries. The common regional and global interest between states bring them closer in strategic partnerships.³⁵ Engaging with a country or group of countries with which one share common interests is carried out through sustainable relationships which is called partnership and partnership diplomacy in foreign policy is utilized by states marking shift in the paradigm of diplomacy. It transcends the ideological differences between states where they are largely focused on benefits of the relationship creating a win-win situation.

Building strategic partnerships with different states has always been an important dimension of Chinese diplomacy. China has always adopted partnership diplomacy but in the era of Xi Jinping, a rampant increase has been witnessed focusing different Pivotal states of the globe. The first strategic partnership, China established with Brazil in 1993, a bilateral and sustainable relation which was based on mutual interests. Since 1993, the empirical evidence suggests that Xi Jinping has not only increased Chinese partners but also brought qualitative change in their relations. In 2012, China had 52 partner states before Xi Jinping, while in Xi's first seven years, it jumped to 103 digits. Each partnership has a different nature, so all the China's partnerships have been categorized based on their nature. The highest level of diplomatic engagement in partnership is the Comprehensive strategic partnership of cooperation that consist of multi-layered and wide-range of cooperation which China pursued in 2008 when signed it with Vietnam and, Russia became the 2nd comprehensive strategic cooperative partner of China in 2010. Belarus was upgraded to this status in 2016.³⁶

Before Xi Jinping, China had few Comprehensive strategic cooperative partners where its neighboring states were largely prioritized while Xi Focused on other Part as well. In July 2023, the Democratic Republic of Congo became the 12th African states³⁷ and in September 2023, Republic of Zambia became 13th African state³⁸ which have concluded the Comprehensive Strategic and Cooperative Partnership. In the era of Xi Jinping, China has increased other kind of partnership including strategic partnership. The increase in the number of Chinese Partnership in Xi era is reflecting Xi Jinping global vision and ambition. In Xi era, China has been involved in partnership based on mutual interest in different pivots of the global has posed a big challenge to the US influence. Few of them are mentioned which suggests that China 'partnership diplomacy has been invoked by Xi to enlarge Chinese sphere of influence.

Chinese strategic partnership in Asia

In the last two-decade, China's partnership diplomacy has been evolved and the surge in Chinese partner states has been witnessed in Xi Jinping era. His focus has been shifted from major powers to small and medium powers while from periphery to remote countries. Xi has brought an

enormous shift in the nature of partnerships and number of partnerships in Asia. When he became president, he presented a vision called “Asian dream”, which as per the strategic thinking, focusing an exclusive Chinese hold on Asia. Xi Jinping has not only increased the number of Chinese partnerships in Asia but also upgraded its relationship with Asian states. The official documents of Chinese Partnership with Asia states reveal that neither side will join any military alliance against each and neither the third state can use their territory against the party state of the partnership.³⁹ Asia which is divided into many geopolitical regions: South Asia, Middle East, Southeast Asia, and Central Asia. China, Under Xi, has been focusing on all regions of Asia to establish an influence where sixty percent of entire globe population live, and which is considered the economic powerhouse of the coming century. Shakil Rana in a Seminar at QAU Islamabad stated that China has been increasing its influence in Asia through economic tools and other means.⁴⁰ China enjoys partnerships with ASEAN states since 2005 when China established partnerships with Kazakhstan and Indonesia but a significant increase in its partnership with ASEAN states has been seen in Xi Jinping era. In 2013, China had 24 ASEAN states in partnership while in 2019, the number reached to 37. China view geopolitically important ASEAN states as pivotal and can play a role of regional balancer in the global configuration.⁴¹ Amid China rampant partnerships diplomacy in Southeast Asia has trigger Sino-US competition. The US has lost its influence in the Southeast Asia to China including economic relation, cultural and diplomatic influence as stated by the report compiled by Lowry Institute that the US influence has been limited to only two states Philippines and Singapore.⁴² China has been actively engaged in Middle East, a region where the US holds traditional allies. In recent years, the Sino-Middle east relation went beyond traditional energy resources. The China’s noninterventionist approach has great appeal in middle eastern states that have been under US security umbrella. In case of Iran, China has ignored the US led international sanction and signed a “25-year comprehensive cooperation agreement” with Iran in March 2021.⁴³ The deal aimed to enhance bilateral trade to 600 billion dollar. In 2014, China upgraded its relations to strategic partnership with another US ally in Middle east Egypt. It shows that

the US influence has been on decline and countries are looking for another partner which is the Xi’s China.⁴⁴ Using its diplomatic clout, China has started working on conflict resolution in Middle east. Bringing Iran and Saudi close together, when China broke a deal between them,⁴⁵ not to mention the China active role in Gaza war is breakthrough for Chinese diplomacy.

Since Xi Jinping, China has been actively engaged in Asia. In proximity with China and the economic incentives, China offers, the Asia states are more comfortable in relationship with China. Few of the above-mentioned examples suggest the China growing partnership with different Asian states has posed major challenge to the US influence in the largest continent of the globe.

China growing partnership in Latin America

Latin America and Caribbean states are strategically important regions where Chinese growing involvement presents critically challenge for the US. Under Xi, the region has been on the priority of China’s foreign policy where Washington enjoyed exclusive hold. Since 2013, China has pursued active partnership diplomacy aiming its intensifying and widening relations in north America. The first strategic partnership, China established with Brazil, and its number reached to 10 in 2013, While in the next six years, the number of Chinese Partner states become double. China took the initiatives of “China–Latin America community of common destiny” which has been focused on economic development, shared destiny, building of mutual trust and economic integration. To further strategic partnership in the Region, China established a forum China Community of Latin America and Caribbean states. Though China is limited to Economic and commercial interests to avoid further intensification of conflict with US but Chinese growing influence in the Western hemisphere, particularly in US backyard poses major challenge to the Washington.⁴⁶

Given the limitation of the study, few of the strategic Partnerships that China has established in the Xi Jinping era are mentioned which is unprecedented in the history of modern China’s foreign policy. After becoming president, Xi personalized the Chinese foreign policy and activated the partnership diplomacy to appeal strategically important states in different region as partnership is less abiding than formal alliance. Xi built new partnerships with states in Asia, Africa, Europe, and Latin America. In 2012,

the Chinese partner countries in Africa were just four while in Xi six years, it reached to twenty.⁴⁷ The rising surge in Chinese strategic partnerships presents major challenge to the US influence.

Xi Jinping's global initiatives

Xi Jinping has recently embarked China on another journey aiming at Chinese global ambition. After one decade of BRI, China has announced new initiatives that provides conceptual backbone to more globally engaged China. The three new flagship projects envisioned in Xi's Jinping foreign policy which aim to foster dialogue, to promote global peace, to gear up more targeted developments programs and to promote mutual learning, common values, democracy, and justice etc. China led global Initiatives is creating more space for China in global affairs. Emanating from Xi Jinping vision of Shared destiny, the projects is bringing China into the mainstream global affairs and earning it the status of global leader. China growing role creates fear for the US to lose its status of most influential global power.⁴⁸ The launching of the three new global initiatives: Global development initiatives, Global Security initiatives and Global Civilization Initiatives justify the claim that China is carving for a substantial space in global Leadership that is a major challenge to the US which was the sole bigger power on the globe.

In September 2021, the Chinese president Xi Jinping proposed "Global development initiative" while addressing the 76th session of United Nation General Assembly. In his titled "Bolstering Confidence and Jointly Overcoming Difficulties to Build a Better World", Xi presented a map for Global development partnership and spelled out strategies to achieve jointly 2030 agenda for sustainable development.⁴⁹ Xi called for people centric, environment friendly and result oriented innovative global development. Promoting inclusive development and assisting developing countries, China has committed US\$4 to global development initiative so far. China has launched multiple projects under this initiative in countries including Myanmar, Romania, Vietnam, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Laos, Uruguay, Egypt, Philippines, Vietnam, Myanmar, Malaysia, Mauritania, Sierra Leone, Mongolia, Syria, Ethiopia, Zimbabwe, Liberia, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Venezuela and achieved tangible success⁵⁰.

On April 2022, the Chinese President Xi Jinping announced a new initiative at the Boao Forum for Asia Annual Conference 2022. Addressing the conference titled "The World in COVID-19 & Beyond: Working Together for Global Development and Shared Future", Xi stressed up on the importance of security⁵¹. He said that Security is the prerequisite for economic and social development leading to prosperity while instability plunges states into poverty. Xi Jinping called for a big role by the different organizations to play their due role in bring peace to the entire globe. Mentioning the famous Chinese quote "One must not change his commitment or give up his pursuit even in the face of danger and risk",⁵² Xi was stressing upon strong resolved by the global community in face of traditional and non-traditional security threats. China under Xi leadership proposed way to the global community that how to mitigate the challenges of Covid-19, unilateralism, climate change and other security threats that fueled disparities and increase poverty. While suggesting solutions, China identified areas: common security, peaceful conflict resolution, adhering to UN Charter, respecting each other sovereignty, where the states of the entire globe along with different organization can work and address the challenges that contribute to instability and insecurity.⁵³

In the era of Xi Jinping, China has been actively engaged in the global issues. Presenting solutions to the global challenges commonly shared by the entire world community, China proposal for development, peace and human civilization progress marks the start of China role as a global player. Leading global community for Climate Change action, peace development and global justice, China has earned more space for itself in comity of nation that presents a threat to the US global leadership. The strategic community of the US is concern of China rising role in global affairs in the recent decade.

US congress response

In the post-cold war era, the US enjoyed a status of sole global power. There was no power in the world that even dare to challenge the US's primacy on the globe. The status was maintained through liberal world order, global financial institutions, and economic strength. In terms of defense, its military strength was unmatched with unparalleled capabilities across land, sea, and space. The US played an important role in shaping global governance and international affairs. The significant

geo-political pivots were considerably under the US influence like Middle East, South Asia etc. Beside diplomatic edge over other nations, the American cultural influence, spreading through music, movies, literature, and technology, shapes global trends, perception, and promotes American values and ideas globally. It is also enjoying par excellence in innovation capacity. In a nutshell, it dominated all areas exclusively ranging from economy to technology, contributing to the US national power. Few statements from the US congressional members are mentioned to substantiate the claim the China under Xi became a critical challenge for the US. While the formal response in the form of policies and strategies, aiming at China are given in the next part. Bob Mendez, Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman, states "This moment demands a strong, strategic response that can begin to rebuild American leadership and invest in our ability to out-compete China in the generation ahead."¹

James Risch, Senate Foreign Relations Ranking Member says that "As we proceed through the 21st century, China is going to be a major competitor of ours in every way that there is. Obviously economically and militarily, culturally and every other way."²

Conclusion

Inspired by China's glories past and infused with patriotism by the China's humiliation period at the hand of west, Xi Jinping emerged as the most powerful visionary leader in China after Mao that has got control over the formulation of foreign policy. He secured his precedent breaking third term as a Chinese president which has intensified his influence over domestic as well foreign policy. Repeatedly presenting his ambitious doctrine aiming to earn China a prestigious status in the community of the nations, once China enjoyed before the era of humiliation, Xi has devised his foreign in way that reflects his vision and thinking. Xi Jinping has brought about Shift in China's foreign policy and launched a resourced geo-economic strategy marking China's roaring back on global stage, creating threat to the US global leadership. Adopting assertive posture to Taiwan and South China where the US has deep strategic interests is major challenge for the US. Partnership diplomacy has increased Chinese friendly states in every geopolitical pivot that presents a grave concern for US. Being a second bigger economy and militarily strong country, China's approach to foreign affairs under Xi has become a major challenge to the US preeminent position in global politics.

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