

American Imperialist strategy in the Asia Pacific Region

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The Asia Pacific region stretches from the Western coast of India to the Eastern coast of the United States, according to American imperialist strategy. Its significance as an imperialist arena was proposed by Karl Haushofer, a German geopolitical theorist in 1924, who served as a mentor to both Adolf Hitler and Rudolf Hess (the deputy Führer/leader of the Nazi party). Haushofer conceived of the Asia Pacific as a strategic region under the political hegemony of Germany, Japan and the USSR to counter British American dominance there as well as in the Euro Atlantic Zone.

Haushofer's ideas became popular in America during the Second World War period and there has been a distinct rehabilitation of this line of thought since the 1990s and the Asia Pacific region – renamed as the Indo-Pacific – has become a focus of imperialist contestation between America and China. The Indo-Pacific has thus become a theater of inter imperialist rivalry where America and China are confronting each other to constrain the growth of each other's power. In this context, China is seen by America as a "revisionist power" seeking to subvert American global

hegemony.

America now defines itself as an “Indo Pacific” power openly seeking regional dominance in the Asia Pacific region. America has established several colonies in the Pacific Ocean and uses them as military bases and launching pads. The confluence of the Indian and Pacific Oceans is stressed and the attempt to convert countries bordering the Indo Pacific region (India, Sri Lanka, Saudi Arabia, the UAE and the South Eastern Nations) into sub-imperialist colonies is pursued with vigour. This colonial strategy is routinely articulated by the Indian Navy’s operations under American Command in the South China Sea.

The project to establish sub-imperialist colonies in the Asia Pacific region has also led to the formation of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD). The QUAD system comprises America, Australia, India and Japan. In effect QUAD is a military alliance despite the fact that India (unlike Japan) does not have a Defense Treaty with America. QUAD and other strategic arrangements in the Asia Pacific region indicate that America does not seek to extend its sovereign power (except in Guam and American Samoa) in the region but it seeks to establish its hegemony with the help of existing (India, Australia) and potential (Philippines, Indonesia and Vietnam)

sovereign allies.

The 2017 National Security Strategy announced by the Trump administration conceived of the Asia Pacific region as a theatre of a coming war with China. Today Trump seems intent on launching a new cold war to be fought mainly by US regional allies (India, Australia, Philippines and Indonesia) with American naval, air and intelligence support. The war is likely to remain “cold” with the primary use of tariffs, trade blockades, sabotage and sanctions etc. but hot spots (Taiwan, Chinese artificial islands in the South China Sea) and naval confrontation may appear and escalate. America will continue to surround China within a “giant noose” of strong military bases and China will continue to try to reach out of this “noose” and push back American presence vis-à-vis Taiwan and the South China Sea.

As conceived by America the Indo Pacific region has about 40 state members. In this perspective, China, the formidable enemy, has two allies – the “malign” state Russia and the rogue state North Korea. These three states are being gradually excluded by America from participating in the “rule based” international order functioning under US hegemony. The US military endorses the need to inflict a humiliating defeat on these enemy states leading to a regime

collapse in them and the subsequent acceptance by them of American global hegemony. It is conceived that the Asia Pacific region is the theatre where such a defeat can be most conveniently inflicted on China and its two rogue allies.

Since the coming 'cold war' is to be fought with the assistance of regional allied countries such as India, Philippines, Indonesia and Vietnam, they have to be convinced that China poses a security threat – that China's moves to thwart the grip of American regional influence undermines their national interests and sovereignty. This is proving to be difficult since the military expenditure of most American allies in the region (with the exception of India) has been declining during 2011-2023 and many of them have established close economic relations with China and this also includes India. With the exception of Japan, no American regional ally is enthusiastic about the confrontation over Taiwan.

The Asia Pacific Region in the New Cold War

China's spectacular economic growth during 1953-2021 and its associated political ambitions has caused America to formulate a New Cold War strategy aimed principally at containing China. But America's (since 2020/2021 the Chinese GDP growth rate has been declining) relationship with China is multi-faceted. On

the one hand China has invested trillions of dollars in US Treasury Bills, Chinese imports sustain American growth and American multinationals are major investors in China. On the other hand, containing China requires the imposition of barriers to technology transfer and the initiation of not only trade wars but also surrounding China through expanding military bases and anti-China political alliances (e.g. QUAD). The 'containing China' project is problematic for America (as are most inter-imperialist conflicts).

It must be stressed that America is waging the New Cold War to contain China not to destroy it. America's principal aim is to achieve regime change in China – i.e. to replace the leadership of the Communist Party with the likes of those such as Deng Xiaoping and Jiang Zemin who are inclined to submit to the discipline of the America dominated "rule based international order" and abandoning the quest for Chinese imperialist regional hegemony. Xi's policies especially the Belt and Road project are a major departure from the Deng/Zemin policy stance and this is a major target of the American New Cold War against China.

The main theatre of the New Cold War was at least originally seen to be the Asia Pacific region and the main imperialist contenders as America and China. During Trump's first term (2017-2020) attempts were

made to develop a Russia-America alliance. This attempt apparently collapsed in 2022 when Russia invaded Ukraine and developed a close relationship with China. But the new Trump administration is seeking to close the EuroAsian arena and take the War back to the Asia Pacific region (inter imperialist conflict seems unlikely in West Asia as neither Russia nor China seem inclined to challenge American domination in this region). China seems interested in expanding the Cold War regional theatre and has supplied gunpowder, semiconductors and drones to Russia and its ally North Korea has sent troops to Ukraine.

America's apparent intention to restrict inter-imperialist conflict to the Asia Pacific region amounts to increased weaponization of all its political and economic relations in this region – including within Chinese territorial waters. The purpose of such interventions is the overthrow of Xi's regime and the erosion of CPC's authority in China.

The military build-up in the Asia Pacific thus has a clear political objective. Central to this weaponization is the conversion of India as "a net security provider" through QUAD and the gradual intervention of NATO within the Asia Pacific region (as recently proposed by an ex Japanese Prime Minister). Within the region

America envisages the transition of economic power into military – strategic power. For this purpose trade relation between American and Asia Pacific nations are being weaponized.

America has formal defense alliance treaties with Australia, Japan, Philippines, South Korea and Thailand with troops and bases in all these countries. In April 2024 America started deploying intermediate range land based missile systems in the Asia Pacific region. This is the first time America has established such a system anywhere in the world. These missile systems have both nuclear and non-nuclear payloads. They have a range of 1000 kilometers capable of reaching the East coast of China and the Taiwan Straits. Effectively a (nuclear) arms race is underway in the Asia Pacific region. The deployment of these weapon systems is supplemented by surveillance swap arrangements between America, Britain, Canada, Australia and New Zealand ('The Five Eyes').

The deployment of naval power is crucial for establishment of American hegemony in the Asia Pacific region. In this respect America relies on allied nations – especially India's – naval power. America commands the naval operation of its defense alliance partners Australia, Japan, Philippines, South Korea and Thailand. Efforts are being made to establish naval

partnerships with Indonesia, Malaysia, New Zealand, Singapore and Vietnam. A major defense partnership has been established with India in 2016. India has been designated as a “net security provider” and all restrictions on its military technology purchases from America have been lifted. India’s military purchases from America increased from \$11 million in 2008 to over \$23 billion in 2023. America has offered India a Missile Technology Control Regime Category-1 Unmanned Aerial System in 2024. However India at least at present is not fully committed to America’s Asia Pacific agenda. Its strategic partnership agreement with China signed in 2005 still exists and in 2024 it negotiated a border dispute settlement with China.

In 2024 the United States, Australia and Japan jointly conducted naval exercises within China’s maritime borders. American naval fleets routinely pass through the Chinese territorial waters including through the Taiwan straits. The United States has 66 “defence sites” spread throughout the Asia Pacific region having about 400,000 military personnel. In total there are over 400 American bases surrounding China. The bases in the Asia Pacific region are crucial for maintaining American naval superiority. During 2011 to 2024, 12 new bases were established in

Australia and the Philippines.

Military bases under the Compact of Free Association (COFA) are also being established in the Pacific island countries: Micronesia, Marshall Islands and Palau. COFA was renewed in 2023. In 2021 a new military block was established between America, Britain and Australia (AUKUS) to advance military security in the Asia Pacific region through deployment of technologies essential to cyber and electronic warfare and nuclear powered submarines. Both Indonesia and Malaysia have resented the formation of AUKUS but AUKUS is being expanded to include Japan and New Zealand.

Conclusion

America seeks to consolidate its military grip on the world system because of the continuing decline in its economic and political dominance in the global arena. The ability to translate military power into economic and political hegemony is limited. Neither America nor China can afford an all-out nuclear confrontation. Hence the emphasis in American foreign policy is on containment – not only in the Asia Pacific region but also in Eurasia and the Middle East.

The Asia Pacific region is seen by many as the industrial center of the global capitalist system gradually slipping away from the economic/financial

grip of America. China as an imperialist power is integrating the East Asia region within its own economic and financial system. In 2017 China loan and aid to the Asia Pacific nations amounted to \$36 billion as against \$3 billion from America. Both America and China are preparing for an intra-civilization clash in the Asia Pacific region. Muslim states in and around the region – Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei, Bangladesh, Pakistan, the UAE, Saudi Arabia and other Gulf States should seek to avoid involvement in the inter-imperialist battles. But given the type of rulers they currently have this seems unlikely.
