

# CONTESTED MULTIPOLARITY IN THE INDOPACIFIC: US-CHINA RIVALRY AND MIDDLEPOWER HEDGING

Syeda Fizzah Shuja

Research Associate, Maritime Centre of Excellence (MCE), Pakistan Navy War College (PNWC)

[fizzasyed2k@gmail.com](mailto:fizzasyed2k@gmail.com)

Corresponding Author: \*

Syeda Fizzah Shuja

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20726936>

Received	Accepted	Published
20 April 2026	02 May 2026	17 June 2026

## ABSTRACT

The Indo-Pacific region is undergoing structural transformation towards a geopolitical order which is significantly different from the zero-sum geopolitical architecture of cold war, rigid logic of uni-polarity and utopian multi-polar world order. Amplified by Trump's second term, in 2025, the rapid advancement of China's military modernization, the rise of artificial intelligence and semiconductor supply chains as focal points of strategic and technological competition, and the growing "hedging" behavior of a number of middle and smaller powers have all shifted the regional order. Consequently, eroding America's unchallenged supremacy in the region. Analysis of strategic environment reveals that the notion of "great power dynamics" is analytically inadequate as the contemporary Indo-Pacific is marked by profound economic interdependence, contested multilateralism and aspiring to a strategic autonomy without rigid alignment by many actors. Based on three key concepts, neorealism, constructivism, and geoeconomics - the paper explores how Indo-Pacific security has evolved, straining the "America First" - U.S. alliance architecture, and how minilateral and extra-regional alliances have become a response to Chinese revisionism. The paper suggests that agency by a multitude of middle powers and littoral states navigating an era of contested multipolarity that is the most consequential factor driving regional order rather than the US-China dyad.

**Keywords:** Indo-Pacific; strategic multipolarity; hedging; technological competition; AUKUS; Quad; geoeconomics; middle powers; Taiwan Strait; US-China rivalry

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Indo-Pacific region constitutes the primary centre of world's geopolitical and economic fulcrum. The region integrates Indian and Pacific ocean as a contiguous maritime region and facilitates around 60% global maritime trade. In the twenty first century, where the region brings together the world's largest economies, hosts the busiest sea routes, at the same time it is brewing the tightest alliances structure and the closest rivalries between the nations (Salil, 2023). Since about 2024, the regional strategic environment

has been characterized by three major changes. First change was marked by the revival of Trump's administration in 2025 - a logic of transaction and burden-sharing took over in US alliance management. Simultaneously, it has been strengthening deterrence commitments on paper and weakening the institutional basis for deterrence in practice. Second factor was China's rapid modernization of its forces, committing to a multi-domain military build-up that includes large naval expansion, artificial intelligence integration,

and grey zone coercion in regions such as the Taiwan Strait and the South China Sea. Thirdly, the middle powers and smaller states of the Indo-Pacific have taken active steps away from alignment to actively engage in institutionally advanced, hedging strategies, which are not susceptible to the binary poles of great-power competition (Cha, 2025).

The article expands on the structural architecture of US engagement in the region under the second Trump administration, and then it analyses the multi-domain strategic posture of China. Additionally, this paper charts the hedging agenda of key middle powers and littoral states in the region, specifically with a focus on the region's geoeconomic and unilateral aspects. Finally, it examines the possibility of the technology competition becoming immediate flash point in the clash between the two powers. The policy implications and a prospective evaluation of regional order are provided in the conclusion.

## **2. Theoretical Frameworks and Conceptual Reorientation**

Indo-Pacific security is largely influenced by a structural realist approach that conceptualizes regional security as a function of the US-China power dynamics. The key logic for this framing is rooted in the principles of neorealism (Waltz, 1979), which postulates that in a world of evolving power dynamics, the system polarity drives states to either balance or bandwagon with the emerging challenger. With respect to the changing power order, the region has attracted divergent metaphors, such as, "free and open," "rules-based order," "containment," "strategic competition." Consequently, the ordering geometry that emerges from this process influences regional order.

Structuralist ideas have been relevant to understanding general patterns of alignment but have been found lacking in the empirical context of the regional politics, which shows that states do not align in a systematic way. Additionally, economic interdependence creates cross-cutting security alliances, propelling non-state actors and multilateral institutions to hold an agency.

According to Wendt (1992) and Johnston (2003), constructivism highlights the normative aspect of strategic competition, including how historical experiences shape perceptions and behaviors, role

of national identity and the rule-based contestation over international order on state action. In this context, China's search for the "great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation" does not merely conceal structurally embedded material interests. In contrast, the US narrative of competition as a defence of a "liberal rules-based order" does not serve as a fig leaf for underlying material interest, either.

The geoeconomic approach, pioneered by Luttwak (1990) and then developed by Blackwill and Harris (2016), considers that contemporary strategic rivalries are not limited to the military arena but increasingly unfold through economic means, like; sanctions, tariffs, investment screening, and restructuring supply chains etc. Such analytical lens is useful to analyze the US-China competition over the supply of semiconductors, critical minerals and artificial intelligence, where economic statecraft is increasingly constitutive of strategic competition.

Lastly, the hedging literature (Kuik, 2008; He and Feng, 2022) deliberates on a nuanced view of middle power carefully balancing their strategic partnerships, avoiding alignment with any exclusive major power. This phenomenon creates a portfolio of risk-management strategies that includes a mix of economic engagement with one great power, security engagement with another, and investment in autonomous multilateral institutions. Hedging constitutes an empirical phenomenon that is central, rather than peripheral, for the understanding of evolving political dynamics in Indo-Pacific region.

The contemporary Indo-Pacific is shaped by the interplay of three structural dynamics: (1) great-power competitive pressure, which is mainly but not exclusively between the US and China; (2) middle-power strategic agency, in the form of hedging, unilateralism and issue-selective alignment; and (3) institutional fragmentation, which is the challenge to universal multilateralism and its replacement by overlapping plurilateral frameworks, sometimes in tension with one another. It does not fall into the trap of bilateralism of superpower-rivalry analogies but maintains analytical accuracy with respect to power inequalities.

### **3. The United States in the Indo-Pacific: Alliance Leverage and Strategic Ambiguity**

#### **3.1 The Transactional Turn: Trump 2.0 and Burden-Sharing Coercion**

The reconstitution of Trump's administration in January 2025 brought a new qualitative leap in U.S. - Indo-Pacific region policy, setting it apart from both the Biden administration and Trump's first term. As compared to the "free and open Indo-Pacific" multilateralism approach of preceding administrations, including Trump 1.0, the 2025 National Security Strategy emphasized a new border security and domestic political consolidation with a more subdued reference to China as the United States' "top strategic competitor" (Jasmin & Hosen, 2025)

Most importantly, for managing alliances, the emerging imperative was "burden sharing". The United States increasingly advocated a new benchmark of 5% of GDP on defence and security spending, of which 3.5% would be core military outlays and 1.5% related expenditure. This demand significantly exceeds NATO's existing 2% spending target, and reflected Washington's desire to be a force-multiplier, not a security guarantor, in its relationships with allies (Wei, 2025). However, the bilateral and multilateral mechanisms to turn spending into operational interoperability have been less explored, in the context of Japanese and South Korean commitments to increase defence spending.

The bottom line is a widening disconnect between the rhetorical continuity of AUKUS and Quad, and their institutional depth – as US commitment to both remains limited to substantive terms. During the Biden administration, the Quad had a broader agenda than just military security, including non-military aspects of the Quad, such as health, climate and gender equity. Nevertheless, Trump 2.0 has not given sufficient attention to aforementioned objectives (Andrews, 2025). The administration had also adopted a more mercantilist trade and technology partnership approach, that may be at odds with security coordination. The U.S.-China ties fluctuated wildly throughout 2025, with a bilateral agreement at Busan whose stability and extent are questioned.

### **3.2 The Institutional Architecture: Quad, AUKUS, and Minilateralism**

The system established during the Biden administration retains institutional significance despite the transactional nature of US statecraft. US strategic engagement within the region has remained unchanged since 2017, when the Quad was revived as a quadrilateral security dialogue, and again elevated to leader-level in 2021. The Quad foreign ministers reiterated their support for "Free and Open Indo-Pacific" and agreed to stand up to any "unilateral and peaceful change by force" in January 2025.

Additionally, the Pillar Two element of the AUKUS (2021), gained more traction as it focuses on jointly developing and integrating advanced, dual-use military capabilities to improve strategic interoperability and counterbalance emerging threats (Abu Bakar, 2025). Not only that, military competition is extending into the undersea domain and networked infrastructure layer of Indo-Pacific security. However, the 2026 Shangri-La Dialogue marked a transformational political shift, not because the United States is fading away, or because China is taking its place, but because the prevalent strategic stance is "hedging under pressure".

In addition to these major agreements, the region has a growing number of functional frameworks, such as trilateral and plurilateral agreements (US-Japan-South Korea cooperation in the field of coast guard; US-India 2+2 ministers dialogue; Philippines-India-US exercises in the maritime domain etc.). The minilateral arrangements offer operational flexibility not possible in formal alliances, but they also raise the issue of overlapping mandates, coordination costs, and duplication and/or strategic signal ambiguity for potential adversaries (Biba, 2026).

### **4. China's Strategic Posture: Multi-Domain Pressure and the Taiwan Question**

#### **4.1 Military Modernisation and Grey-Zone Escalation**

Since Xi Jinping took office in 2013, China has progressively shifted its strategic focus toward the Indo-Pacific across multiple domains, with the post-2024 era witnessing stark intensification of operational pressure. According to the U.S.

Department of Defence Annual Report to Congress: Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2025, People's Liberation Army (PLA) is developing its blue-water naval presence with plans to deploy nine aircraft carriers by 2035, learning from the Ukraine conflict and incorporating artificial intelligence and cyber capabilities into platforms already in use (US Department of Defence, 2025).

Chinese military drills in December 2025 were to the effect of a full blockade of Taiwan, with defence analysts judging them to be one of the most provocative drills on record and in subsequent analysis describing them as a "test run for a blockade." (AlJazeera, 2025) PLA carrier task groups have already been sent to waters around Okinawa as a clear message to Japan. China's Coast Guard has been enforcing a blockade of Taiwan's outer islands. In mid-2025, the number of incursions over the median line of the Taiwan Strait had climbed to a new high.

China has stepped up its assertive activities in the South China Sea by aggressively pursuing Philippine maritime resources and has been providing economic and infrastructure incentives to the countries in the region via its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) as political means (Helmus et al., 2024). The strategic logic for these operations is based on the term Malacca dilemma which is the acute vulnerability of the Chinese to a blockade of its main maritime supply route, which leads to a dual strategy of internal lines (militarising the South China Sea to prevent an adversary from gaining access to China's claimed maritime space), and external bypass (BRI corridors through Myanmar and Pakistan providing alternative energy access routes to China that bypass the Strait of Malacca).

#### **4.2 The Technology Dimension: AI, Semiconductors, and Strategic Bifurcation**

The primary theater of the US-China strategic competition is no longer military but technological. The US export controls have been strengthened over the years since 2022, seeking to cut off China from access to the latest semiconductor technology and the manufacturing gear they need to develop it at home. The message is simple: high-end chips provide key inputs to

developing AI, and AI is a key advantage in future high-intensity conflict based on the logic of both US and Chinese planners (Hamdani & Belfencha, 2024). China is making its semiconductor supply chain indigenous with a strategic urgency provided by the PLA doctrine of "intelligentization" that seeks to integrate AI into all areas of military decision-making, logistics, and armaments (Andrews, 2025).

China has responded to the US export controls by finding alternatives to the technology, including the SMIC foundry program, and by moving its AI model training and data-centre capacity to other jurisdictions in Southeast Asia. That the Trump administration decided to allow the export of Nvidia's H200 semiconductors to China, a move that skirted its earlier restrictions, was an example of the conflict between commercial interests and strategic denial goals that drives US technology policy (Reuters, 2026). Taiwan is the most important player in this game: Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Co. Ltd. makes 70-90% of the world's most sophisticated chips, and at the same time Taiwan is an economic asset of enormous strategic importance, and an objective whose capture would give China a hugely significant edge in the game (Vidra, 2026).

The long-term direction of the technological race is toward a two-track global technological architecture: either AI, 5G, cloud systems and semiconductor supply chains would cluster around the US side, or around the China side. This structural dichotomy also puts high opportunity costs on states that want to engage in both, and over time the hedging strategy that most Indo-Pacific middle powers have now adopted could be put under structural pressure.

### **5. Middle Powers and the Contested Architecture of Hedging**

#### **5.1 The Logic of Strategic Autonomy**

The middle powers in the Indo-Pacific region are particularly Japan, South Korea, Australia, Indonesia, Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia, and Singapore. Whether the Indo-Pacific turns into a bloc competition or remains more pluralistic in its order will depend on its decisions regarding alignment, economic integration, technology cooperation, and institutional

involvement. Therefore, hedging has emerged as a dominant empirical reality, constituting a parallel pursuit of security cooperation with more than one major power, economic diversification encompassing competitive partnerships and investment in multilateral institutions that provide normative cover for strategic flexibility.

Kuik (2008), and He and Feng (2022) argue that the hedging process is not about strategic ambiguity or incoherence, but a refined risk-management calculation of high uncertainty. Ironically, the growing competition between the United States and China has not pushed most states to side with either nation, but rather made it even more difficult and expensive for them to do so from both a strategic and economic standpoint, thus making hedging more attractive. This logic has yielded a new development of extra-regional cooperation with the European Union as a remedy solution for middle powers to reduce their dependency on Washington-Beijing dyad.

## 5.2 Country-Level Analysis

Japan has shifted more dramatically than any of its regional middle powers from its post-war pacifist policy to one of a "fundamental departure", as outlined in its 2022 National Security Strategy. Japan, now, speaks of "counterstrike capabilities," has pledged to step up defence spending to 2% of GDP by 2027, and is stepping up trilateral security integration with the United States and South Korea (Kawai, 2024). The three pillars of Japan's Indo-Pacific strategy are: cooperation to build capacity in maritime law enforcement in the ASEAN partner countries, cooperation in economic prosperity, including through the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), and cooperation in the rule of law and freedom of navigation.

Australia has transitioned from "strategic ambiguity" to "strategic alignment" as represented by its application of the AUKUS deal and engagement with the Quad. The 2025 Australian election resulted in a government that confirmed AUKUS and focused on Indo-Pacific in the domain of national security, but was simultaneously confronted with the demands for burden sharing from Washington and the trade

friction cost from China. Australia's problem is its middle power conundrum: its security is served best by being aligned with the US, while its wealth has always relied on access to the Chinese market – one that tensions with Beijing over BRI have gradually threatened (Pan & Song, 2026).

In Southeast Asia, the diversity of hedging strategies is due to the heterogeneity of threat perceptions, regime types, and economic dependencies. President Marcos Jr. has taken the toughest stance regarding Chinese coercion in the South China Sea, strengthening its defense ties with the U.S. and exiting the Belt and Road Initiative. Even though Vietnam has a closer involvement with BRI, the country is expanding its tech partnerships to South Korea and Japan, and has not officially declared any alignment. Malaysia is being active with its neutrality while criticizing the posture of Western foreign policy in the Middle East and strengthening defence ties with Australia. Indonesia is hoping for a "third way" in ASEAN centrality, but is confronted by the issue of ASEAN institutionalisation and the challenge of internal fragmentation. In the region, Singapore, which hosts US naval bases and is China's foremost commercial gateway to the outside world, plays the most subtle balancing act and is the most obvious example of hedging as a structural disposition (Grestle, 2024).

## 6. Critical Flashpoints: Taiwan, the South China Sea, and the Technology War

### 6.1 Taiwan: From "Silicon Shield" to Strategic Fulcrum

Taiwan can be seen as the most volatile flash point and a strategic variable in the Indo-Pacific. The "silicon shield" thesis - which postulates that Taiwan's primacy to the global semiconductor industry would render any attempt - made to invade the island too costly for the Chinese military, has come under critical assessment (Harris, n.d. 2024). On the same time, the economic deterrence argument is weakening as military tensions rise amid the Chinese semiconductor indigenisation continues, and the TSMC fabrication footprint expands across Arizona, Japan and Germany.

While most Western intelligence agencies say they are not anticipating a PLA invasion of Taiwan in

the near future (Hale, 2026), the Chinese military exercises in late 2025 and early 2026 have shown the PLA's growing ability to blockade Taiwan by sea. The Trump-Xi summit of May 2026 added new questions to the mix regarding US pledges to Taiwan, as the National Security Strategy of 2025 downplayed the terms of opposition to unilateral change in the Taiwan Strait. Moreover, Trump's own transactionalism introduces uncertainty about the circumstances under which Washington might militarily intervene or not (Williams & Badgi, 2026). For Taiwan's government, this uncertainty has been compounded by Chinese Coast Guard incursions off the coast of Pratas Island in May 2026, which are reminiscent of the type of "grey-zone" operations carried out by Beijing's Coast Guard against the Philippines' maritime outposts.

### **6.2 The Korean Peninsula and the North Korea Variable**

The establishment of a new military dimension of instability in the security situation in the Northeast region is being added to by North Korea's growing military cooperation with Russia, including providing weapons and possibly some military personnel to support Russian military efforts in Ukraine. North Korea's traditional dependency on Beijing has waned, as it has established other patronage ties, and, if North Korea does attempt a nuclear provocation that could distract the United States from the Taiwan Strait, it has become a realistic concern for planners in the region. The new leadership in South Korea are struggling with the challenge of balancing South Korea's commitments to the U.S. as a military partner with the country's own diplomatic efforts with China and North Korea.

### **6.3 The South China Sea: Normalised Coercion and Contested Norms**

Though the South China Sea continues to be the hub of Chinese grey-zone operations, these operations have been carried out by the China Coast Guard and China's maritime militia, not the PLA Navy, to make it harder for potential counter-responders to calculate the cost of escalation. The trend of water cannon firing, laser illumination, and interdiction of supply routes has

been most extensively used against Filipino vessels. The Philippine counter-strategy of transparency operations (live-streaming of confrontations) and tight security ties with the United States, Japan, and Australia are a relatively new one to grey-zone coercion that has garnered much attention from the region. The implication of such events is that they pose a threat to the 2016 South China Sea Arbitral Award which is still being rejected by Beijing.

### **7. Conclusion: Policy Implications for a Contested Multipolar Order**

The analogy of great power rivalry suggests that the main policy task should be to ensure that allies are united against the revisionist competitor, to provide deterrence and prevent escalation: the logic of containment. This Contested Multipolar Order framework suggests a different set of priorities: A middle power's security requires economic interdependence as a counterweight and source of costs for unilateral defection, especially the unilateral defection of its economic partners; Technology governance frameworks need to be developed that impose costs on unilateral defection without requiring bloc membership; The structural incentives toward alignment must be managed while maintaining the strategic agency of middle powers; And plurilateral institutions would need to be built that need not be universal but would function even in their absence.

There are a number of policy implications that arise out of this analysis. First, it's not that the United States is capable of effective Indo-Pacific engagement if it has to resort to coercion in the form of transactional burden-sharing. First, it's not the case that the United States can be effective in the Indo-Pacific if it has to use coercion in the form of transactional burden-sharing. Deterrence is not all about allied defense spending, it's about the institutional arrangements that change defense dollars into an interoperable capability, and the second Trump administration has systematically ignored them. Investing in the non-military aspects of the Quad and AUKUS relationship, which has languished under the current government, will be crucial to rebuilding institutional trust in these relationships.

Second, middle power agency is not a management issue, it is a structural asset that needs to be developed. The hedging aspects of state behaviour of countries such as India, Indonesia, Vietnam, and Malaysia are rational reactions to the actual strategic uncertainty, and their strategic autonomy can be a stabilising factor between the poles. A rules-based approach, such as the EU-Indo-Pacific CEPA model, is likely to lead to more lasting regional order than a binary alignment approach, given frameworks that will respect the autonomy of middle powers and offer positive incentives for rules-based behaviours.

Third, there is a need to have governance structures at the plurilateral level, instead of a unilateral level, for the technology competition. The semiconductor and AI competition is systemic in nature, and US export controls will not be able to maintain it: So long as only market incentives are used to facilitate technology transfer, unilaterally imposed restrictions will be worked around. The creation of a coalition of technology advanced democratic nations setting agreed-upon norms and principles for export control, investment screening and AI governance is more effective in terms of strategy, and more humane than bilateral coercion.

Fourth, the Taiwan question needs a conscious and deliberate policy of escalation management that is based on military deterrence, diplomatic engagement and economic entanglement. The 'silicon shield' deterrence logic does not replace a credible and predictable US military commitment and neither does a military deterrence in its own right stop the incremental 'grey-zone' erosion of the status quo. All three instruments need to be unified to become a comprehensive Taiwan strategy.

The Indo-Pacific 2026 is not just about the United States and China. It is a product of great-power rivalry, middle-power aspiration, institutional disintegration and technological change. The complexity of this cannot be grasped fully without the policies that will shape the region's future being based on cooperation, not conflict.

## References

- Abu Bakar, M. (2025, Nov 20). *American Foreign Policy Under Trump 2.0 and the Future of Quad*. Strategic Vision Institute. <https://thesvi.org/american-foreign-policy-under-trump-2-0-and-the-future-of-quad/>
- Al-Jazeera. (2025, Dec 30). How are China's new war games around Taiwan different from earlier drills? *Al-Jazeera*. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/12/30/how-are-chinas-new-war-games-around-taiwan-different-from-earlier-drills>
- Andrews, D. M. (2025, feb 6). *Quad and AUKUS Face an Uncertain Future Under Trump*. The Diplomat. <https://thediplomat.com/2025/02/quad-and-aucus-face-an-uncertain-future-under-trump/>
- Bhaugman, J. D. (2024). *THE PATH TO CHINA'S INTELLIGENTIZED WARFARE: CONVERGING ON THE METAVERSE BATTLEFIELD*. *Cyber Defense Review*. [https://cyberdefensereview.army.mil/Portals/6/Documents/2024-Fall/Baughman\\_CDRV9N3-Fall-2024.pdf](https://cyberdefensereview.army.mil/Portals/6/Documents/2024-Fall/Baughman_CDRV9N3-Fall-2024.pdf)
- Biba, S. (2026). 'Is it good or is it bad?': minilateralism and its effects on the Indo-Pacific security architecture. *The Pacific Review*, 1-33. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09512748.2026.2614596>
- Cha, V. (2025, mar 26). *Shared Threats: Indo-Pacific Alliances and Burden Sharing in Today's Geopolitical Environment*. Center for Strategic and International Studies. <https://www.csis.org/analysis/shared-threats-indo-pacific-alliances-and-burden-sharing-todays-geopolitical-environment>
- Editor. (2023, Aug 25). *What is Japan's Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) strategy?* Japan Up Close. [https://japanupclose.web-japan.org/policy/p20230825\\_1.html](https://japanupclose.web-japan.org/policy/p20230825_1.html)
- Grestle, A. (2024). *Southeast Asia's Grand Strategy: Hedging*. *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs*. <https://gjia.georgetown.edu/conflict-security/southeast-asias-grand-strategy-hedging/>

- Hale, E. (2026, Mar 19). *US intelligence agencies not expecting China to invade Taiwan in 2027*. Aljazeera. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2026/3/19/us-intelligence-agencies-not-expecting-china-to-invade-taiwan-in-2027>
- Hamdani, M., & Belfencha, I. (2024). Strategic implications of the US-China semiconductor rivalry. *Discover Global Society*, 2. <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s44282-024-00081-5>
- Harris, K. (n.d.). *Taiwanese Silicon Shield: A Historical and Empirical Review with Analysis of U.S. Dependence on Taiwan Semiconductors and Probabilistic Risk Analysis of a U.S.-Sino Deterrence Failure*. Sylvia Regina Univeristy. [https://digitalcommons.salve.edu/doctoral\\_dissertations/256/](https://digitalcommons.salve.edu/doctoral_dissertations/256/)
- Helmus, T. C., Grocholski, K. R., & Rhoades, A. L. (2024, Nov 20). *Understanding and Countering China's Maritime Gray Zone Operations*. RAND Corporation. [https://www.rand.org/pubs/research\\_reports/RRA2954-1.html](https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RRA2954-1.html)
- Jasmin, I. A., & Hosen, I. (2025). Trump 2.0: redefining America's role in the global order. *Discover Global Society*, 3(1), 25. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s44282-025-00281-7>
- Kawai, D. (2024, Dec 2). *Japan's Defence Budget Surge: A New Security Paradigm*. RUSI. <https://www.rusi.org/explore-our-research/publications/commentary/japans-defence-budget-surge-new-security-paradigm>
- Pan, G., & Song, W. (2026). Symmetric concern and asymmetric attention: strategic convergence and divergence in Australia-Korea relationships. *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, 80(3), 410-438. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10357718.2026.2642742>
- Reuters. (2026, May 14). *US clears H200 chip sales to 10 China firms as Nvidia CEO looks for breakthrough*. Reuters. <https://www.reuters.com/business/retail-consumer/us-clears-h200-chip-sales-10-china-firms-nvidia-ceo-looks-breakthrough-2026-05-14/>
- Salil, S. (2023, feb 6). *Game Play in the Indo-Pacific: Many Players, Strategic Interests, and Common Challenges*. Air University Journal of Indo Pacific Affairs. <https://www.airuniversity.af.edu/JIPA/Display/Article/3285742/game-play-in-the-indo-pacific-many-players-strategic-interests-and-common-chall/>
- US Department of Defence. (2025). *MILITARY AND SECURITY DEVELOPMENTS INVOLVING THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA 2025* [Report]. US Department of War.
- Vidra, R. K. (2026). *How Taiwan came to dominate the global chip industry*. The Conversation, Kings College London. <https://kclpure.kcl.ac.uk/portal/en/publications/how-taiwan-came-to-dominate-the-global-chip-industry/>
- Wei, Z. (2025). *The Trump 2.0 Administration's Indo-Pacific Strategy*. China International Strategy Review. [https://cas.fudan.edu.cn/\\_\\_local/2/6D/65/FB66CF74F1B922116470124E539\\_32A1266A\\_15369B.pdf](https://cas.fudan.edu.cn/__local/2/6D/65/FB66CF74F1B922116470124E539_32A1266A_15369B.pdf)
- Williams, L., & Badgi, K. (2026). *What the Trump-Xi Summit Revealed, and Left Unsaid, About U.S.-China Tech Competition*. Center for Strategic and International Studies. <https://www.csis.org/analysis/what-trump-xi-summit-revealed-and-left-unsaid-about-us-china-tech-competition>