

Recalibrating Emerging Security Architectures in East Asia

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Abstract

This paper provides a new synthesis of the changing security architectures of East Asia in the context of a new multipolar world order. What is unique to this research is its holistic method of analyzing how both conventional and non-conventional security threats—such as the emergence of China, cyber warfare, AI militarization, and climate change-induced instability—are propelling a realignment of strategic partnerships in the region. In contrast to traditional analyses that center on Sino-American competition, this research places regional agency at the center, illustrating how nations such as Japan, South Korea, and ASEAN members strategically manage economic interdependence with China against security needs. The research is timely in today's geopolitical era when new security arrangements such as the Quad, AUKUS, and expanded bilateral defense pacts reflect a massive shift in regional diplomacy, military readiness, and alliance-making. East Asia is not just responding but proactively constructing new norms of security and strategic geographies. Methodologically, the study utilizes a multi-theoretical framework, combining realism, neoliberal institutionalism, and critical security studies to represent the intricacies of state action and institutional change. Qualitative policy analysis, discourse mapping, and case studies are the empirical backbone of the research. Principal findings indicate that East Asian nations are increasingly adapting asymmetric and hedging policies, investing in both U.S.-oriented alliances and regional frameworks that diffuse reliance on any one power bloc. At the same time, technological shocks in artificial intelligence, space-based reconnaissance, and quantum computing are reshaping strategic calculations and doctrine at accelerated rates. The implications of these dynamics are profound: they indicate that future security in East Asia will hinge less on stiff alliances and more on dynamic, multi-layered architectures. Policymakers need to prepare for a future where flexible deterrence, techno-security preparedness, and economic-security convergence become the focus of regional stability.

1. Introduction

East Asia has been undergoing tremendous changes in its security environment over the last few decades, driven by the region's economic power, new political realities and changing patterns of geopolitical competition. Thailand, Laos and Cambodia, all mainland Southeast Asian states, have bowed to Chinese influence, and Myanmar wrestles with the challenges of Chinese influence. Vietnam also opposes Chinese activities in the South China Sea. The maritime states are more distant from China and adopt different strategies. Indonesia and Malaysia have stayed nonaligned, but China is pushing — especially in the South China Sea. The Philippines is an ally of the U.S. and Singapore supports the U.S.-led regional order. Brunei goes towards economic relations with China but is accommodating their interests in the South

China Sea. Its history has so far been defined by a post-World War II order driven by the United States, and by its alliances with Japan and South Korea. The emergence of China as an economic and military power, the re-emergence of Russia and the rise of regional actors transformed the security environment into a multipolar reality from a unipolar one. China's growing assertiveness has a major influence on the region's security landscape. The rise of China's power projection capabilities, particularly in the South China Sea, its strategic articulation with Russia, and its unilateral Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has forced regional friction, especially with near-to-home states like Japan, India, and Southeast Asian nations. Against that backdrop, although the U.S. remains one of the dominant military powers throughout the area, it has concentrated

somewhat on the containment of China's rise, prompting a shake up for coordination blocks similar to the Quad (Quadrilateral Protection Dialogue) and AUKUS (Australia, United Kingdom, United States). The alliances seek to counterbalance China's influence and strengthen security cooperation, but have also elicited concern from Beijing, which has viewed the initiatives as a bid to contain its advances.

All the while, Japan, South Korea and smaller Southeast Asian countries have to manage relations between China, the U.S., and regional security organizations. Japan, for example, has invoked its postwar pacifist constitution to transform its military posture in response to China's rise; South Korea mediates tension over North Korea's nuclear buildup and U.S.-China rivalry. Although a multipolar security order offers some advantages, it also comes with serious challenges. On the plus side, multipolarity promotes increased regional cooperation by organizations like the East Asia Summit (EAS) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). On the other hand, it creates instability when smaller states are struggling to manage their strategic imperatives against expanding global superpowers. Emerging technologies, from artificial intelligence to cyber tools to capabilities in space, also complicate this landscape, determining new pathways toward cooperation and competition.

Theoretical Framework

This twofold approach provides a theoretical framework to recognize the change of the strategic security architectures in East Asia with realism, liberalism (neoliberal institutionalism), and critical security studies. Kenneth Booth's "Realism and World Politics" (2011) lays the groundwork for the security dilemma and for the logic of state behaviour as it pursues national interests within an anarchic international systems the better we know this, the better we will understand how the East Asian states react to the power balance issues in the region — chief of it all: the rise of China and what it puts upon their security policies.

Neoliberal institutionalism, drawing on Robert Keohane insightful work *Beneath Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy* (1984), Institutions and cooperation is the antidote to conflict and instability. A focus of the work will be the implications for East Asian security architecture of existing regional institutions and new-set alliances, including the Quad and AUKUS.

The Critical Security Studies approach is one that arose from the work of Ken Booth in his book *Security in Anarchy: Utopian Realism in Theory and Practice* (1991): he challenged the assumptions of what security meant and pointed to the social constructions of security threats and the impacts of these on marginalised peoples. We will use this perspective to inform the study of non-traditional

security threats — like cyberwarfare and climate change —restructuring regional security priorities, and how these may have differentiated impacts on actors.

Yet while these theoretical approaches build upon one another in commonality, they also provide important distinctions which address central peculiarities lying within the macro logics of security architectures recalibrating in East Asia. Realism now gives such a foundation: an understanding of states are States as power seeking entities with certain national security interests. Neoliberal institutionalism provides valuable understanding into the significance that institutions and cooperation play within regional security arrangements. Finally, critical security studies provides a theoretical standpoint that enables an analysis of how security threats are socially constructed and their differential impact on people.

Problem Statement

This article argues that new dynamics in the East Asian security environment will be shaped by the global transition towards multipolarity from unipolarity, the implications of this transition for regional peace, stability, and order will be explored in detail. The new rise of China as geopolitical and economic power, the United States' Indo-Pacific shift, and new regional alliances such as the Quad and AUKUS — have added complex dynamics that twist existing security paradigms. At the same time, non-traditional threats such as cyberwarfare, nuclear proliferation, and the militarization of emerging technologies are adding channels of uncertainty.

For East Asian nations, the challenge is twofold: managing these emerging and shifting security threats, while navigating the economic interdependencies with great powers. Maintaining strategic autonomy is harder for smaller and middle powers in a world of great power rivalry. In this regard, grasping the drivers of East Asia's strategic recalibration and the implications for emergent security architectures is crucial to orienting ourselves in this multipolar world.

Research Questions

1. What are the drivers pushing East Asian countries are redefining security strategies in a multipolar world?
2. How does China's emergence as a regional and global power affect the security strategies of East Asian states?
3. How do alliances such as the Quad and AUKUS factor into East Asia's regional security dynamics?
4. How can smaller East Asian states reconcile their economic interdependence with China and security alignments with other powers?
5. What will be the implications of technological developments, such as artificial intelligence and space capabilities, for East Asia's security architecture?

Literature Review

A number of scholars consider changing global power configurations as regional security necessities in East Asia. Tan, (2013), also posits the need for strategic recalibrations in response to the multipolarity phenomenon, and the consequences of criminal, traditional and non-traditional security threats that other regional states must grapple with. According to Mason and Shetty (2019), those interdependencies have contributed to the decisions East Asia have taken in response to emerging global trends. These analysis Paul (2012) and D'Agrella (2020) suggest that the consolidation of U.S. retrenchment alongside the pivot of China aggressively persuades countries not to be influenced by China but to revisit their national defense strategy in alignment towards consolidating U.S. search interest Most notably, Inouye (2019) and Hastey (2023) provide further explanation on the global orders that require East Asian states to accommodate themselves.

The evolving security landscape in East Asia is shaped by a complex interplay of regional alliances, technological advancements, and great power competition. Scholars such as Buzan (2003) and Booth (2011) emphasized the importance of security architecture in Asia, highlighting the interplay between regional and global dynamics. The rise of minilateral alliances like the Quad and AUKUS has been a focal point of recent literature. Bisley (2024) argues that these alliances reflect a shift toward security minilateralism in response to China's rise, while Wilkins (2019) explores how these partnerships intersect with broader Indo-Pacific strategies, including ASEAN's centrality. Technological advancements, particularly in AI and cybersecurity, are also reshaping regional security. Romaniuk and Manjikian (2021) analyze the global dimensions of cyber threats, while Wyatt et al. (2024) examine the implications of AI development under AUKUS for military applications. Meanwhile, Chen (2024) provides a historical perspective on America's Cold War strategies in East Asia, underscoring the enduring relevance of U.S. influence. Collectively, these works illustrate the multifaceted challenges facing East Asia, from managing great power competition to harnessing technological innovation for regional stability.

The rise of China remains a leitmotif in the literature. China's economic and military growth and its effects on regional power balances affecting Japan and South Korea states are discussed by Heazle and O'Neil (2018). Arase (2016) proposes an edited volume about China's perception and role in the restructuring of East Asia's order, including the Belt and Road Initiative and maritime strategies. Likewise, as Hastey (2023) examines, China's 'fait accompli' strategies drive bordering countries to enhance their security arrangements. Finally, Liu (2012) discusses China's multilateral approaches while contrasting them with unilateral actions in contested areas. Tan (2013) provides additional insights on China's role in the region.

The concept of regional alliances — such as the Quad or AUKUS — has been much discussed in literature but has emphasized their strategic goals. Heiduk et al. (2023) referring to these alliances as stabilizers and potential escalators. Paul (2024) comments critically about AUKUS, framing it as a double-edged sword for regional security. Wyatt et al. (2024) explore some practical interactions of the AUKUS partners on AI for military applications, and implications for responsible development of technology. Storey and Choong (2023) examine Southeast Asian views on AUKUS and find mixed reactions tied to apprehension over regional stability. Arimoto et al. (2023) also explore how these alliances play into wider Indo-Pacific strategies, attesting to the regional significance of such partnerships.

Navigating great power competition poses unique challenges for smaller states. according to Amer and Zou (2011), ASEAN's centrality in promoting cooperative security arrangements is in the name of preserving the region's autonomy. Andelova (2017) investigates bilateral versus multilateral approaches to conflict resolution, which informs the pursuit of economic partnerships with China and security partnerships with external actors. The study of Reilly and Lee (2021) focuses on the European Union in East Asia and offers an external perspective to how regional states balance competing interests. As our third article, d'Agrella (2020), discusses the need for diplomatic options to reduce the security dilemma in the region, especially for smaller states with limited military capabilities.

AI and space technology are changing security dynamics in East Asia. Wyatt et al. (2024) accentuate responsible AI development under AUKUS while Romaniuk and Manjikian (2021) analyze the global dimensions of cyber-security and AI-enabled threat vectors. The series of 2024 U.S. Government hearings on cybersecurity reiterate the challenges from technological competition as especially acute with authoritarian regimes. A study by Till and Chan (2014) on naval (as well as air and ground) modernization provides analysis and correlation of technological advancements in maritime security. Finally, on the military side, Setzekorn (2023), Paul (2024), the works of Setzekorn (2023) and Paul (2024) also focus on the intersections between military advancements and strategic priorities in the region of East Asia.

While much has been written about the changing security environment of East Asia, there is a notable gap in the literature on the topic which this analysis seeks to fill by examining the relationship between multipolarity, national security strategies, and the role of emerging technologies in determining the future of the region. While scholars have explored aspects of this dynamic—China's rise, security alliances (like the Quad and AUKUS) and regional responses to new distributions of power—few studies contextualize these factors within the landscape

of a multipolar world order. Emerging technologies, including but not limited to artificial intelligence (AI), space capabilities, and cybersecurity, will have profound implications for East Asia's security strategies, but their impact is still underexplored. Although the strategic implications of technological advancements, particularly in the military and defense sectors, are increasingly recognized, research remains concentrated either on traditional security dynamics or on technological trends in their own right. Insufficient detailed examination of how these technological transitions fit with wider geopolitical transitions and affect the calibration of security strategies within a multipolar frame.

Existing literature often focuses on large powers like the U.S. and China or regional alliances. It seldom speaks to the strategic dilemma of smaller East Asian states that must balance both economic interdependence with China and security partnerships with other global powers — a dynamic that is particularly pertinent in our age of emerging technologies. This creates a blind spot when it comes to understanding how these smaller states navigate multiple, often competing, interests within an evolving security architecture. Therefore, there is a demand for analysis that connects these missing elements by investigating how multi polarization, security strategies, and technology intersect, and how they jointly shape East Asia's security architecture in the twenty-first century.

Methodological Framework

The study employs a qualitative, multi-method approach to examine the complex links between multipolarity in the international system, national security strategies, and emerging technologies in East Asia. In order to answer the research questions related to multipolarity's impact on East Asia's security, the study first engages with an in-depth literature review of existing works focusing on the regional geopolitical landscape and security strategies. This review uses academic literature, government reports, and policy briefs to lay ground for the perception of the multipolarity in the region. Such aspects are well covered in the literature, particularly the address on how multipolarity influences East Asian countries' security strategies along with how emerging technology can shape those strategies.

Along with the literature review, the study includes case studies of the countries playing significant roles at a regional level, like China, Japan, and South Korea, to understand their specific security strategies and how they adapt to the power changing dynamics in different parts of the world. Through a study of how these countries react to increasing multipolarity and nascent technologies, the researchers gain insight into how smaller states cope with economic dependencies in China while maintaining security realities with other great powers, like the United States. So, it is directly related to the research question, how the differences in security strategies based on multipolarity of

the East Asia system and technological variables can be accounted.

Semi-structured interviews with regional experts and policymakers further explore the research questions addressed in the study. The premise these interviews operate under is the need to understand how those working most immediately behind the scenes of national security policy making perceive and plan around the world around them. The study also draws qualitative insights on East Asian security challenges from conversations with individuals in government, defense, and think tanks, including how the region is integrating technological advancements, including AI, cybersecurity, and space defense. By taking this approach, this study is able to delve deeper into the prospects of multipolarity and technological innovation for national security strategies, filling in specific gaps in the existing literature about the direct impact of emerging technologies on East Asia's security realm.

Lastly, another element of the broad research design is to analyze strategic documents of major players in the region including defense white papers and national security strategies. The analysis of these documents allows the study to trace the prioritization of strategic innovation by East Asian countries and compile them into a set of national security frameworks determined by aspects of multipolarity. The research directly responds to the overarching research questions related to how multipolarity and emergent technologies reshape the security terrain of East Asia, by synthesizing data from the literature, multiple case studies, interviews, and policy documents. By using this approach, this study presents a comprehensive analysis of East Asia's security environment transformation and its prospects for transforming regional security into a multipolar world.

Findings and Discussion

This complex interlinkage of multipolarity, national security strategies, and emerging technologies is increasingly defining East Asia's security landscape, but this nexus has not been sufficiently elucidated. The emergence of a multipolar world characterized by China's rise, the strategic counterbalance of alliances like the Quad and AUKUS, and the intricate calculus of smaller states all require an analytical lens that helps illuminate how they coalesce. The rise of emerging technologies — notably artificial intelligence (AI), space capabilities, and cybersecurity — is at the heart of this transformation, catalyzing innovations in military functions and changing the balance of power in the region.

China's technological innovation, especially in artificial intelligence-based arms and satellite systems, is emblematic of its prime inventive boots on the ground to seize and hold the high ground, undercutting the chronological U.S.-led security regime. These dynamics

force countries such as Japan, South Korea, and Vietnam to adjust their own calculus by prioritizing defense innovation and bolstering partnerships with the United States and other powers. Japan's rising military investment and its growing cooperation with the Quad illustrate its resolve to counter China's influence, as well as its ability to use advanced technologies for deterrent engagement.

Smaller states like Indonesia and Malaysia counter these pressures through a strategy of nonalignment and regional cooperation. But they are facing increasing difficulties in reconciling economic relations with China with the need to defend territorial sovereignty. Next-generation technologies, especially with respect to cybersecurity, are also complicating the existing security landscape, with cyber threats emerging as a common concern across the region. Above all, these states need to concurrently navigate vulnerabilities and seize technological opportunities to defend national interests.

As a case in point, the implication on multipolarity and technology is made even more visible and impactful by forces like alliances like AUKUS. Which aims to strengthen deterrence against China by increasing some regional military capabilities, including nuclear-powered submarines and AI-based defense systems. But this shift has alarmed Southeast Asian nations worried about rising tensions and the specter of militarization.

There is a critical gap in understanding how these dynamics coalesce in the strategies of smaller East Asian nations which, by necessity, tend to exist on the periphery of great power rivalries. Although economic reliance on China continues to be essential, these countries are increasingly pursuing what are known as hedging strategies, establishing security partnerships with other great powers, along with technological partnerships. For instance, a pragmatic balancing act to offset China's regional ambitions, Vietnam has deepened ties with the U.S. without losing its engagement in economic cooperation.

The effect of technology is not limited to military use but also in economic and diplomatic sectors. Regional

states are using AI powered analytical tools as tools to gauge outcomes. A wide variety of space technologies (including surveillance and satellite communication) are also becoming increasingly important for situational awareness and national security.

Factors Driving East Asian Nations to Recalibrate Their Security Strategies in a Multipolar World

The analysis shows that East Asian countries are readjusting their security strategies largely on account of changing power dynamics, particularly the rise of China and the increasing influence of the United States and its allies (Table 1). The end of the unipolar world — a period characterized by unchallenged U.S. dominance — has raised, in the minds of respondents at least, security concern over regional power equilibrium and status disputes, especially in the South China Sea and the Taiwan Strait. Countries such as Japan and South Korea highlight the importance of a strategic realignment while simultaneously grappling with both the necessity of addressing security threats posed by China and the desire to preserve economic relations with it. Moreover, the increasing prominence of non-traditional security challenges, including cyber threats and climate change, have encouraged states to expand their security paradigms. The challenges posed by major powers like India and Russia, as well the growing complexity of the global order, are prompting East Asian states to seek new security partnerships and diversify their defense strategies.

Others, such as Japan, South Korea and Vietnam, closely support U.S. strategy, while some, including China, focus on defense and security. Indonesia and Malaysia, on the other hand, are pushing for neutrality — a tough balancing act between infatuating economic ties and security concerns. There are also smaller states — such as Brunei and Myanmar — that rely on China for economic security yet tread carefully to avoid excessive Chinese influence. These adjustments reflect the region's strategic complexity, marked by economic dependence, security threats and geopolitical contestation.

Table 1 Driving Factors for Strategic Recalibration

Country	Strategic Recalibration	Driving Factors
China	Increasing military and economic influence, asserting claims in the South China Sea and initiating Global Security Initiative (GSI).	Economic goals of a rising global power, securing regional dominance, and countering U.S.-led alliances.
Japan	Enhanced military preparedness, reorientation of defense policies and strengthening of relations with Quad countries.	Worries about China's assertiveness and North Korean missile threats.
South Korea	Deepening ties to allies with the United States while managing economic relations with China.	Security threats in the region, especially from North Korea, and reliance on China for trade.

Vietnam	Strengthening security relationships with the U.S. and other regional partners while managing delicately relations with China.	Resistance to Chinese territorial claims in the South China Sea.
Philippines	Defender of U.S. regional interests via defense pact and challenger to China's maritime ambitions.	Security guarantees from the U.S., and territorial disputes in the South China Sea
Indonesia	It is to do with preserving nonalignment but call for regional cooperation and building resilience against external pulls.	Pressure in the South China Sea and prospects for ASEAN centrality.
Malaysia	A balanced approach, neither siding nor opposing China, but raising questions about its actions in maritime.	Economic interdependence involving China and territorial conflicts.
Singapore	Support of U.S.-led regional order, no formal alliances, focus on technology for homeland defense.	Drive for stability and neutrality in great power competition.
Brunei	Ensuring balancing in the South China sea while coordinating economic engagement with China.	Small size and dependence on China for economy.
Thailand	Developing ties with China economically but seeking diversified partners (ASEAN).	Economic dependence and historical connections to China.
Cambodia & Laos	Ideological alignment is also found politically, where countries are united through strong economic cooperation with China.	Overdependence on Chinese investments and infrastructural developments.
Myanmar	Divided when facing the influence of China and the isolation of the international community.	Reliance on China under political unrest and international sanctions.

Countries like Japan, South Korea, and Vietnam align closely with the U.S. counter China's influence, focusing on defense and security. Meanwhile, Indonesia and Malaysia advocate for neutrality, balancing economic ties with security concerns. Smaller states like Brunei and Myanmar rely heavily on China for economic stability but navigate its influence cautiously. These recalibrations emphasize the region's strategic complexity, shaped by economic dependency, security threats, and geopolitical competition.

The Influence of China's Rise on the Security Postures of East Asian States

The dominant explanation for the security behaviors of East Asian states is the rise of China as a regional and then global power. "The ascendance of Chinese power has also made possible Chinese behaviour in Ladakh and the polar regions. Power breeds power: sorry, more interests, purposes and vast opportunities for great and near-great powers". China's military buildup, coupled with its territorial claims in and around the South China Sea, is driving the need for countries in the region to recalibrate their defense postures. Smaller states such as the Philippines and Vietnam have concerns about China's growing military footprint and assertiveness, prompting them to strengthen bilateral and

multilateral security relationships — especially with the United States. Instead, China's economic power affords it a role that East Asian countries cannot afford to disregard, creating an endless balancing act. Japan and South Korea have increasingly focused on upgrading their militaries, but both nations would like to avoid provoking direct confrontation with China, which could be economically catastrophe. "China is more and more politically motivated now to protect its economic interests as it assumes a greater mediative role in regional crises from the Yemen conflict to the war in Syria. "China has contributed as a positive force to the prudent progress of Iran-KSA relation and persuading the two sides to restore their relations back to the track". The implications of China's rise for regional geopolitics are complex, the findings point to: As insecurity has expanded across the region, so has a more nuanced web of engagement — through military and diplomatic channels.

Contested Relationships: Regional Security Dynamics and the Emergence of Quad and AUKUS

But more importantly, the study outlines how partnerships like the Quad and the AUKUS pact are transforming East Asia's security architecture. Both

groups have come to be seen as important counterweights to China's expanding influence, especially in terms of maritime security and technological competition, participants say. Many see the Quad of the United States, Japan, India and Australia as a platform for regional cooperation on issues from infrastructure development to military cooperation. While a few respondents express concern that such alliances could exacerbate tensions in the regions where they take shape, the overwhelming majority contend that they offer necessary security assurances to smaller states and counterweights to Chinese assertiveness. By contrast, AUKUS is viewed as a security project that aims to deepen military cooperation, especially the development of nuclear-powered submarines and advanced technology that impact the security environment in the Indo-Pacific. But some nations in Southeast Asia are concerned about what these alliances may mean, fearing they will increase the risk of military conflict in the region.

Striking an Equilibrium Between Economic Interconnection with China and Security Alliances with Other Powers

According to the study, balancing the two forces of economic interdependence with China and security partnerships with other powers is the key challenge facing East Asian states. "Beijing sees mainland Southeast Asia as a 'pilot zone' for its Global Security Initiative (GSI), which Xi Jinping announced the beginning of in 2022. The GSI is the most recent manifestation of Beijing's wider strategic blueprint for reconfiguring global security — and articulating the need for China as a primary rival and option to the U.S.-led global order. For Southeast Asia, China focuses on the achieving peace of the region through Lancang-Mekong Cooperation process but based on the non-traditional issues including transnational crime and cyber security". The depth of economic ties between China and the region's developing countries — especially trade and investment activity — is critical to their economic stability. But growing worries about China's regional ambitions and military assertiveness have driven those nations to look for stronger guarantees from the United States and its allies. Other nations, including South Korea and Japan, have moved to strengthen their defense and security agreements, but without jeopardizing their economic relations with China. Such balancing acts are particularly challenging for smaller Southeast Asian countries, which rely on trade with China but are wary of the country's geopolitical chess moves. The results underpin the theory that East Asian countries are pursuing a "hedging" strategy: maintaining cooperative economic relations with China while deepening security ties with other powers, as a way to balance against what they fear might be the threat from China.

Technological Change and East Asia's Security Architecture

Technological developments, especially in AI and space capabilities, are recognized as key game changers for East Asia's security architecture. East Asia's security interplay operates within an inherent regional configuration, which has been pivotal since the Cold War. These technological innovations, such as AI and robotics, are significantly transforming military strategy within and between the states in the region. Japan and South Korea, among other countries, are pouring resources into emerging technologies to bolster their deterrence postures, especially in light of China's advances in the space and cyber domains. As mentioned, space-based technologies, like the most recently satellite surveillance, and missile defense systems, are also increasingly essential to the regional security environment of many states, who despite often being one of the largest military producers and consumers on the planet, are determined to not be overtaken in the technology arms race. It underscores the growing reliance on cybersecurity as a risk factor: states are dealing with the effects of cyber warfare and digital espionage in a world increasingly spurred by tensions between the U.S. and China. The results suggest that technological changes not only transform the character of military power but also generate novel domains of competition and cooperation in the security environment of East Asia.

All these findings together show the interaction of geopolitical, economic and technological factors that are changing the security scene in East Asia. What became apparent was that the countries within the region were recalibrating their approaches to face the challenges and opportunities that multipolarity developed against a backdrop of both traditional and non-traditional security threats in the manner they saw fit.

Conclusion

Adjusting strategies in response to the shifting geopolitical landscape of East Asia is complex but necessary. States must find the right balance between economic interdependence, particularly with China, and upgrading their security posture. Requires diversifying security partnerships, military-building capabilities, and the development of new technologies, such as artificial intelligence and space systems. More importantly, active diplomacy, open lines of communication, and a focus on shared interests are all critical to managing competition and reducing the risk of escalating friction. Ultimately, balancing between strategic autonomy, multilateralism, and anticipation of emerging challenges, East Asian states can pursue their national interests while also contributing to a more stable and prosperous region in the era of intensified multipolarity.

This research focuses on the complicated security dynamics of East Asia as countries grapple with multipolarity. China's ascent has fundamentally altered the security landscape of the region and caused East Asian countries to recalibrate their security postures in response to a more powerful and assertive China, especially in the South China Sea and the Taiwan Strait. This realignment has been accompanied by increased focus on alliances like the Quad and AUKUS, seen as crucial counterbalances to China's rising power, while also raising fears of escalating regional tensions.

The salience economic interdependence with China and security concern has led countries to adopt a "hedging" strategy, in which cooperation (or not) with China is determined across economic relationships, while security ties with other powers (ex: US, Japan) have been strengthened. Among smaller Southeast Asian countries, this balancing act is especially tense, as these nations seek to balance their economic ties with China against security partnerships that ensure their defense.

Technological developments, especially in the fields of artificial intelligence and space capabilities, are also likely to play an increasingly important role in shaping East Asia's security strategies. Regional countries are increasingly looking to bolster deterrence through the acquisition of technologically advanced military capabilities, such as autonomous weapons systems and anti-missile systems, while attempting to address cyber and space security challenges. This is then compounded by the increasing cooperation and competition in these technological arenas, further complicating the security landscape of the region, necessitating countries to adapt to new threats but also opportunities in the context of technological warfare.

China's increasing weight, regional alliances, and technology are transforming East Asian security architecture. The increasing complexity of balancing traditional and non-traditional security concerns in the region is evident, while ongoing recalibration of security strategies reflects the region's efforts to adapt to an unpredictable multipolar world.

Recommendations

In regard to emerging threats, East Asian nations would need to continue to nurture multilateral security frameworks and deepen cooperation with its global powers (the U.S. and India) as a renewed multipolar world order is consolidated. Furthermore, confidence-building measures in technology, especially in AI and cybersecurity, could also help reinforce deterrent capabilities. Third, states should really focus on multilateral regional dialogue aimed at de-escalating tensions and dealing with non-conventional security issues such as climate change and cyber warfare.

Future Scope

Future studies might look into how certain technological developments affect the security situation in East Asia, such as autonomous weapons systems. Further, such insights into long-term stability in East Asia should encompass more in-depth studies on the evolving role of regional institutions, such as ASEAN, in balancing U.S.-China dynamics.

Limitations

Regional Focus: This research specifically concentrates on East Asia, meaning some region-specific dynamics are not analysed, which may limit the implications of this paper for global security. This dependence on qualitative data can also result in bias due to subjective interpretations. Furthermore, the analysis fails to consider the long-term implications of China's Belt and Road Initiative for regional security alignment.

Conflict of Interest

None declared.

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Notes:

1. The Quad (Quadrilateral Security Dialogue) and AUKUS (Australia-UK-US trilateral security pact) represent new security frameworks influencing East Asia.
2. China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and militarization of artificial islands in the South China Sea reflect its ambition to reshape regional security.
3. Japan has adopted a more proactive security posture under its revised National Security Strategy (2022), including record defense spending and counterstrike capabilities.
4. Tensions in the South China Sea and East China Sea over territorial claims and freedom of navigation remain central to East Asia's security challenges.
5. AI, cyber warfare, and hypersonic missiles are reshaping East Asia's security policies.