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THE COMPLEX SECURITY DILEMMA IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC REGION: CHALLENGES AND CHINA'S STRATEGIC RESPONSES

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Abstract. This study examines the multifaceted nature of the complex security dilemma (CSD) in the Asia-Pacific region (APR) and China's strategic responses to emerging security challenges. Amid escalating geopolitical tensions, intensifying U.S.-China strategic competition, regional militarization, and evolving defense policies of Japan and South Korea, the security landscape has become increasingly intricate. The paper explores both traditional and non-traditional security dimensions, encompassing economic vulnerabilities, technological dependencies, and cyber threats.

Particular emphasis is placed on the transformation of China's security strategy, notably through the Global Security Initiative (GSI), which seeks to foster an inclusive, cooperative, and sustainable regional security architecture. Through an analysis of regional security dynamics, the study identifies China's key policy mechanisms, including enhanced collaboration with ASEAN, the promotion of multilateral diplomacy, and resistance to bloc-based confrontations. The research employs a documentary-historical approach and qualitative analysis of state interactions to assess the evolving security environment.

The findings suggest strategic measures to mitigate conflict potential in the region, including the establishment of crisis management frameworks and cooperative security mechanisms. By providing a nuanced understanding of regional security dynamics within the broader context of global transformations, this study contributes to ongoing scholarly discourse on Asia-Pacific security.

Keywords: complex security dilemma, Asia-Pacific region, China, Global Security Initiative, regional stability, multilateral diplomacy.

Аңдатпа. Мақала Азия-Тынық мұхиты аймағындағы (APR) күрделі қауіпсіздік дилеммасын (CSD) және Қытайдың заманауи сын-қатерлерге жауап беру стратегияларын талдауға арналған. Геосаяси шиеленістердің күшеюі, АҚШ пен Қытай арасындағы бәсекелестіктің күшеюі, аймақты милитаризациялау және Жапония мен Оңтүстік Кореяның әскери саясатындағы өзгерістер жағдайында ҚДБ күрделі болып келеді. Қауіпсіздіктің дәстүрлі және дәстүрлі емес аспектілері, соның ішінде экономикалық, технологиялық және киберқауіптер қарастырылады. Қытайдың қауіпсіздік стратегиясын, оның ішінде инклюзивті және тұрақты аймақтық архитектураны құруға бағытталған Жаһандық қауіпсіздік бастамасын (GSI) өзгертуге ерекше назар аударылады.

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Аймақтық тенденцияларды талдай отырып, авторлар Қытайдың қауіпсіздік саясатының негізгі тетіктерін анықтайды: АСЕАН-мен ынтымақтастықты нығайту, көпжақты дипломатияны дамыту және блоктық конфронтацияға қарсы тұру. Зерттеу құжаттық және тарихи талдауға, сондай-ақ мемлекеттер арасындағы өзара әрекетті бағалаудың сапалы әдісіне негізделген. Құжат дағдарысты басқару тетіктерін және бірлескен қауіпсіздік үлгілерін дамытуды қоса алғанда, аймақтағы қақтығыстар әлеуетін төмендету бойынша ұсыныстармен аяқталады. Жұмыс жаһандық қайта құрулар жағдайында аймақтық қауіпсіздікті тереңірек түсінуге ықпал етеді.

Түйін сөздер: күрделі қауіпсіздік дилеммасы, Азия-Тынық мұхиты аймағы, Қытай, жаһандық қауіпсіздік бастамасы, аймақтық тұрақтылық.

Аннотация. Статья посвящена анализу комплексной дилеммы безопасности (КДБ) в Азиатско-Тихоокеанском регионе (АТР) и стратегиям реагирования Китая на современные вызовы. В условиях растущей геополитической напряжённости, обострения соперничества между США и Китаем, милитаризации региона и изменений в военной политике Японии и Южной Кореи КДБ приобретает многосложный характер. Рассматриваются традиционные и нетрадиционные аспекты безопасности, включая экономические, технологические и киберугрозы. Особое внимание уделяется трансформации китайской стратегии безопасности, в том числе Глобальной инициативе по безопасности (ГИС), ориентированной на создание инклюзивной и устойчивой региональной архитектуры.

Анализируя региональные тенденции, авторы выявляют ключевые механизмы китайской политики в области безопасности: укрепление сотрудничества с АСЕАН, развитие многосторонней дипломатии и противодействие блоковой конфронтации. Исследование основано на документальном и историческом анализе, а также качественном методе оценки взаимодействий между государствами. В заключении предлагаются рекомендации по снижению конфликтного потенциала в регионе, включая развитие механизмов управления кризисами и кооперативных моделей безопасности. Работа способствует углублению понимания региональной безопасности в условиях глобальных трансформаций.

Ключевые слова: комплексная дилемма безопасности, Азиатско-Тихоокеанский регион, Китай, Глобальная инициатива по безопасности, региональная стабильность.

Introduction

Security dilemmas constitute a fundamental concept in the study of international relations. The notion of a complex security dilemma (CSD) builds upon the theoretical framework developed by John Herz and other scholars [1], who argue that, under conditions of anarchy, uncertainty regarding the intentions of other actors and the imperative to safeguard one's own security exacerbate power competition. This, in turn, heightens perceptions of vulnerability and increases the likelihood of conflict.

The relevance of the CSD framework is evident in several key aspects:

- * Unlike traditional security dilemmas that primarily focus on bilateral interactions, a complex security dilemma involves three or more actors, each experiencing a security deficit and adopting measures to mitigate perceived threats.

- * In addition to conventional military threats, CSD encompasses economic, technological, and other non-traditional security dimensions. The interplay between these various security domains significantly influences the evolution of the dilemma.

- * Divergent security strategies, policy frameworks, and behavioral models among actors further complicate the management of the dilemma. The extent to which states can achieve consensus plays a crucial role in determining the potential for conflict mitigation [2].

The complex security dilemma provides a critical analytical lens for assessing the evolving security landscape in the Asia-Pacific region (APR). In recent years, the region has confronted a range of security challenges driven by great-power competition, geopolitical conflicts, deglobalization processes, and global pandemics. These factors have led to significant transformations in military and defense policies, as exemplified by Japan's strategic recalibrations, which have contributed to the convergence of traditional and non-traditional security threats. Consequently, the APR now exhibits a multi-actor, multi-layered security dilemma, further complicating regional stability.

The ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict, which erupted in 2022, has intensified security concerns among several Asia-Pacific nations. The United States has reinforced its strategy of linking China and Russia, amplifying the "China threat" narrative and coordinating anti-China security initiatives in collaboration with its allies. This underscores the confrontational nature of U.S. regional security policies.

Against this backdrop, China's approach to regional security governance has emphasized the imperative of peripheral stability within the broader framework of its Global Security Initiative (GSI). This study aims to analyze the structural characteristics of the complex security dilemma in the APR, assess China's role in regional security governance, and propose strategic responses to contemporary security challenges.

Literature review

The security dynamics of the Asia-Pacific region have been widely discussed in academic and policy-oriented literature. The existing body of work provides insights into the geopolitical shifts, strategic competition, and regional security cooperation mechanisms involving key actors such as China, the United States, Japan, and India.

Zhou [2] examines the "security dilemma" in the context of the Asia-Pacific, highlighting the historical evolution of the concept and its implications for contemporary regional security. Similarly, Wang [3] provides a historical analysis of the transformation of security governance in Asia, emphasizing the shift from traditional security concerns to a more integrated security architecture. He and Li [4] analyze the strategic competition between the US and China, considering the roles of regional actors in shaping the Indo-Pacific security landscape. Their study underscores the increasing militarization of the region and the significance of regional partnerships. Ma [5] further explores China's strategic decision-making in response to US policies, offering an in-depth examination of China's geopolitical calculus. Reports by SIPRI [6] and Dominguez [7] document the rise in global and regional military expenditures, with a specific focus on Japan's defense policies and China's responses. Rubinstein [8] discusses Japan's new defense buildup plan, analyzing its implications for regional security, while Kim [9] evaluates South Korea's military buildup under President Moon Jae-in. ASEAN's role in regional security is emphasized in the ASEAN Indo-Pacific Vision [10], which outlines the organization's strategic approach to fostering regional stability. The document underscores ASEAN's intent to position itself as a central player in the Indo-Pacific. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China [11] discusses the Global Security Initiative, advocating for a cooperative security framework. Xi Jinping's governance philosophy [12] serves as a cornerstone for understanding China's approach to regional security and development. Sun Weidong's remarks [13] provide insights into China-India relations, advocating for diplomatic engagement and conflict resolution mechanisms. The reviewed literature underscores the complexity of security dynamics in the Asia-Pacific region, driven by strategic competition, military expansion, and multilateral diplomatic initiatives. While scholars and policymakers acknowledge the potential for conflict, there is a consensus on the importance of cooperative mechanisms, regionalism, and dialogue in maintaining stability.

Methodology

To achieve the objectives of this study, a qualitative research design was employed to explore the key features and dynamics of the complex security dilemma (CSD) in the Asia-Pacific region. This approach enables a nuanced understanding of the structural and dynamic aspects of regional security by integrating multiple analytical methods.

The study is based on the following methodological components:

- This method involved a systematic examination of a diverse range of primary and secondary sources, including official government documents, analytical reports, international agreements, academic publications, and peer-reviewed journal articles. By critically analyzing these materials, the study identifies key security dynamics, evaluates the roles of various actors, and examines the mechanisms governing their interactions.

- A retrospective examination of security developments in the APR was conducted to trace the evolution of regional security concepts and policies. This method facilitated an understanding of historical patterns, pivotal security events, and their implications for contemporary security dilemmas. Establishing causal linkages between past developments and present security challenges provides valuable insights into the region's strategic landscape.

- Emphasis was placed on an in-depth assessment of interactions among states and non-state actors within the context of ongoing geopolitical transformations. The application of qualitative analysis enabled the identification of key structural factors, underlying trends, and power dynamics shaping the regional security environment.

By adopting an integrative methodological approach, this study not only offers a comprehensive assessment of the current security architecture in the APR but also formulates policy recommendations for security governance, considering the strategic interests of China and other regional stakeholders.

Discussion and results

Multi-Actor Dynamics and the Complex Security Dilemma in the Asia-Pacific Region

Since the conclusion of the Cold War, the Asia-Pacific region (APR) has experienced substantial "peace dividends," fostering rapid economic growth and development. However, recent years have witnessed a marked escalation in geopolitical tensions and great power competition, leading to heightened regional instability. Strategic flashpoints such as the South China Sea and the Korean Peninsula have become arenas of complex security interactions, where competing national interests, military build-ups, and diplomatic maneuvering shape the regional security landscape.

A key dimension of this evolving security dilemma is the increasing securitization discourse employed by certain regional states, which frame the rise of China as a perceived threat to justify military expansion and strategic realignments. This narrative has been instrumental in legitimizing escalatory defense policies and increasing military expenditures across the region, often under the pretext of ensuring national security and stability.

The impact of these dynamics has been particularly pronounced following the onset of the Russia-Ukraine conflict in February 2022. This geopolitical shockwave has provided several Asia-Pacific states, notably Japan, with a strategic rationale to undertake significant revisions of their military doctrines and defense postures. The resultant arms race in the APR has been accompanied by record-breaking increases in military expenditures. According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), military spending across Asia and Oceania reached approximately \$575 billion in 2022, marking a 45% increase from 2013. This figure surpassed European military spending (\$345 billion) and accounted for 26% of global military expenditures, which totaled \$2.24 trillion in 2022 [6].

Table 1: Military Expenditure in the Asia-Pacific Region (2022, SIPRI Data)

Country	Military Expenditure (Billion USD)	GDP Share (%)
China	292	1.6
Japan	72	2.0 (target)
South Korea	46.4	2.7
India	81.4	2.4
Australia	48.7	2.0

Note – from the sources [6]

A critical factor exacerbating regional security complexities is Japan's strategic recalibration of its defense doctrine. Historically, Japan adhered to a self-defense-oriented security posture, enshrined in its post-World War II pacifist constitution. However, in response to emerging security threats, Tokyo has pursued a policy of military expansion and strategic engagement beyond its immediate territorial concerns.

The Ukrainian crisis has played a catalytic role in this transformation. The Fumio Kishida administration has employed the rhetoric of "Ukraine today could be East Asia tomorrow" to justify an unprecedented overhaul of Japan's security and defense strategy. In December 2022, the Japanese government adopted three key security documents:

- The National Security Strategy
- The National Defense Strategy
- The Defense Capability Development Plan [14]

These policy shifts signal a fundamental departure from Japan's post-war security approach, with significant implications for regional stability. Notably, Japan has committed to a five-year military budget expansion to \$72 billion [7], increasing defense spending from 1% to 2% of GDP. This includes large-scale acquisitions of advanced military assets, such as F-35 fighter jets [15], Tomahawk cruise missiles, and electronic warfare systems. Additionally, Japan has reinforced its military presence on its southwestern islands, citing potential instability in Taiwan as a justification for enhanced defense capabilities.

In alignment with its strategic recalibration, Japan has intensified defense cooperation with key regional and global actors, including Australia, India, and NATO member states. Notable initiatives include:

- The Overseas Security Assistance (OSA) Program (2022): A new security aid framework aimed at enhancing regional security partnerships.

- The Japan-Australia Mutual Access Agreement (January 2022): Facilitates joint military exercises, defense technology exchanges, and coordinated security operations.
- The Japan-India "Special Global Strategic Partnership": Encompasses agreements on defense logistics, arms transfers, and intelligence cooperation.
- The Japan-Philippines "2+2" Ministerial Dialogue (April 2022): Aimed at deepening military and defense collaboration [7].

Table 2: Major Changes in Japan's Defense Policy

Change	Description
Increase in military budget	Expansion to \$72 billion over five years
Defense strategy revision	Adoption of three key security documents
Weapons procurement	F-35 jets, Tomahawk missiles, electronic warfare systems
Expansion of military cooperation	Agreements with Australia, India, and the Philippines

Note – from the sources [7,8,14,15]

Beyond the Indo-Pacific, Japan has also strengthened ties with European security actors such as the United Kingdom, France, and Germany. Tokyo's collaboration with London on sixth-generation fighter jet development and the establishment of a NATO liaison office in Japan underscore its ambition to position itself as a pivotal security actor beyond the confines of the APR. The Kishida Peace Concept (June 2022) further solidifies Japan's strategic orientation towards enhanced engagement with the United States and its allies. The strategy emphasizes support for Indo-Pacific states in satellite technology, artificial intelligence, and unmanned systems, reinforcing maritime security in the region. Japan's transition from economic assistance under the Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) program to a security-centric approach through the OSA framework represents a paradigm shift in its foreign policy orientation [14]. Parallel to Japan's strategic transformation, South Korea has also significantly intensified its military capabilities and alliance commitments, seeking to assert a more proactive role in regional security affairs.

Under President Moon Jae-in, South Korea's defense budget grew at an annual rate of 7.4%, surpassing 50 trillion won (\$40 billion). According to SIPRI, South Korea's military spending reached \$46.4 billion in 2022, constituting 2.7% of its GDP, positioning it as the ninth-largest military spender globally [9].

The administration of President Yoon Suk-yeol has pursued a more explicitly pro-American security policy, shifting from strategic ambiguity to a reinforced military alliance with the United States. In May 2022, the South Korea-U.S. relationship was elevated to a "Global Comprehensive Strategic Alliance", granting Seoul greater strategic flexibility in its defense posture. Key developments include:

- The removal of U.S. missile restrictions on South Korea, enabling the development of medium- and long-range missile capabilities.
- The modernization of South Korea's missile defense systems, including submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs), solid-fuel rocket technology, and the Long-Range Artillery Interceptor System.
- Expansion of U.S.-South Korea missile defense cooperation, including additional deployments of Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) systems.

South Korea has also deepened trilateral cooperation with the United States and Japan, while strengthening strategic partnerships with Australia under a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership framework. This realignment has included major defense procurement deals and joint military exercises [9].

The escalating nuclear threat from North Korea has further reinforced Seoul's defense posture. In March 2023, the United States and South Korea conducted their largest military exercises in five years, incorporating strategic bombers, amphibious operations, and targeted strike simulations. Concurrently, South Korea has re-evaluated its nuclear policy:

In January 2023, President Yoon publicly acknowledged the possibility of developing tactical nuclear weapons or hosting U.S. nuclear assets. In April 2023, the Washington Declaration reinforced the U.S. extended nuclear deterrence over South Korea.

South Korea has sought nuclear submarine technology partnerships with the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia under the AUKUS framework. These developments underscore South Korea's ambitions to emerge as a central actor in regional security governance. However, they also present significant challenges to strategic stability, exacerbating regional rivalries and reinforcing security dilemma dynamics in the APR [9]. The Asia-Pacific region's evolving security architecture is

increasingly characterized by multi-actor engagements, shifting alliance structures, and intensifying military competition. The security dilemma is no longer confined to bilateral rivalries but has expanded to a complex web of strategic interactions involving traditional and non-traditional security threats. The military policies of Japan and South Korea, particularly their alignment with U.S. strategic priorities, have introduced new uncertainties in the region's security landscape. As security competition continues to escalate, the prospects for conflict management and regional stability remain contingent on the ability of actors to navigate geopolitical tensions through diplomatic, strategic, and cooperative mechanisms.

Multidimensional Security Norms and the Complex Security Dilemma in the Asia-Pacific

Security norms constitute a set of principles, regulations, and institutional mechanisms that shape state and non-state actors' approaches to maintaining and managing security. The contestation of these norms by different actors plays a critical role in exacerbating the complex security dilemma in the Asia-Pacific region. In recent years, the proliferation of alliance-based security strategies and bloc-based confrontations, actively promoted by the United States and its regional partners, has undermined ASEAN-centered multilateral security arrangements. This has resulted in a "normative clash," intensified institutional competition, and negatively impacted the prospects for long-term stability and peace in the region.

For China, security governance in the Asia-Pacific is not only a fundamental pillar of its national modernization and the realization of its long-term strategic vision—the "Great Rejuvenation of the Chinese Nation"—but also a manifestation of its evolving role as a global power. Amid increasing military buildups by regional states and the United States' efforts to consolidate security alliances aimed at strategic containment, China seeks to reinforce its position in shaping security norms. This includes efforts to mitigate geopolitical escalations while advocating for sustainable and inclusive security governance frameworks [10]. One of the most significant normative initiatives in this regard is China's Global Security Initiative (GSI), introduced as a conceptual framework to address regional and global security challenges. First proposed by President Xi Jinping in April 2022 at the Boao Forum for Asia, the GSI represents a strategic response to evolving security dynamics and aims to foster a security paradigm centered on the notion of a "community with a shared future for mankind."

The Global Security Initiative is founded upon six core principles:

1. Holistic Security Paradigm – Advocating a common, comprehensive, cooperative, and sustainable security approach to maintaining global and regional stability.
2. Respect for Sovereignty and Non-Interference – Upholding state sovereignty, territorial integrity, and the right of nations to independently determine their development trajectories, in alignment with the principles of the UN Charter.
3. Rejection of Cold War Mentalities – Opposing bloc-based politics, unilateral security frameworks, and zero-sum strategic calculations that undermine regional stability.
4. Indivisibility of Security – Emphasizing the interdependence of security among states and rejecting policies that enhance one state's security at the expense of others.
5. Conflict Resolution through Dialogue – Advocating diplomatic engagement, negotiation, and peaceful mechanisms for resolving international disputes and crises.
6. Comprehensive Security Governance – Addressing both traditional and non-traditional security threats, including counterterrorism, climate change mitigation, cybersecurity, and biosecurity governance [12].

The GSI also underscores the necessity of rejecting double standards, unilateral sanctions, and the extraterritorial application of jurisdictional measures that undermine sovereign decision-making. By promoting cooperative security solutions, the initiative aspires to establish a more balanced, inclusive, and sustainable security architecture for the Asia-Pacific region.

Global Security Initiative: China's Role in Asia-Pacific Security Governance

The Global Security Initiative (GSI) represents China's strategic framework for addressing contemporary global security governance challenges. It serves as a cornerstone of China's engagement in Asia-Pacific security affairs, reinforcing its ambition to assume a leadership role in shaping regional stability. The central objective of China's security strategy is the establishment of a peaceful and stable strategic environment in its immediate periphery. To achieve this, China aims to systematically advance the implementation of the GSI by assuming the roles of a "conceptual

architect of security norms," a "builder of security mechanisms," a "mediator in security crises," and a "provider of public security goods" [11].

China seeks to establish an inclusive, cooperative, and pragmatic security order to mitigate the region's evolving security complexities. Its approach is centered on the following key strategic priorities:

1. Promotion of a Comprehensive Security Paradigm – China advocates a security framework grounded in principles of cooperation, resilience, and collective stability. This entails:
 - Opposing arms races and bloc-based confrontations that exacerbate geopolitical tensions.
 - Developing a theoretical foundation for the establishment of a long-term, sustainable peace in the region.
2. Normative Evolution of Regional Security Culture – The conceptual development of security norms and culture is critical for overcoming the prevailing security dilemma in the Asia-Pacific. As early as 1997, during the ASEAN Regional Forum, China introduced a security doctrine centered on mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality, and cooperation. This normative trajectory was further reinforced in 2014, when President Xi Jinping, at the Fourth Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA) Summit, articulated the principle of "common, comprehensive, cooperative, and sustainable security." These strategic frameworks aim to foster an inclusive security architecture based on collective security, shared responsibilities, and mutual gains [10].

The fundamental tenets of China's evolving security concept emphasize:

- Equitable Security Guarantees – The security interests of all states must be safeguarded on an equal basis. A security strategy that prioritizes one state's security at the expense of others is inherently destabilizing and unacceptable.
- Comprehensive Security Approach – Security governance must extend beyond traditional military considerations to incorporate non-traditional security challenges, including economic stability, cyber threats, climate change, and public health security.
- Security through Dialogue and Partnership – Multilateral cooperation, diplomatic engagement, and conflict resolution mechanisms should be prioritized to maintain international and regional stability.
- Integration of Security and Development Goals – Security strategies must be aligned with long-term development objectives, addressing contemporary and emerging threats such as the risks associated with artificial intelligence (AI), disruptive technologies, and cyber warfare [11].

The Global Security Initiative has emerged as a pivotal mechanism for institutionalizing China's security vision at both the regional and global levels. It synthesizes previously articulated strategic doctrines and aspires to construct a new regional security architecture that is inclusive, balanced, and sustainable. By promoting a security framework based on multilateralism, non-interference, and cooperative governance, the GSI seeks to establish a stable geopolitical order in the Asia-Pacific, reinforcing China's role as a key security actor in the region.

Table 3: Key Principles of China's Global Security Initiative

Principle	Description
Common Security	Ensuring all nations' security interests
Comprehensive Security	Addressing traditional and non-traditional threats
Cooperative Security	Promoting dialogue and collaboration
Sustainable Security	Addressing long-term stability concerns

Note – from the sources [3,5,12,13]

Asia-Pacific: Navigating Between Cooperation and Confrontation

The Asia-Pacific region (APR) stands at a historical crossroads, facing a strategic choice between openness and isolation, cooperation and confrontation, unity and division. The stability and prosperity of the region hinge upon the collective commitment of regional actors to upholding sovereignty and territorial integrity, accommodating legitimate security concerns, resolving disputes through diplomatic dialogue, and rejecting hegemonic strategies and confrontational alliance systems. Despite the United States' persistent efforts to consolidate an alliance network aimed at containing China, the sources of instability in the Asia-Pacific are multidimensional. A significant number of regional states do not seek direct confrontation with China, nor do they aspire to absolute strategic dependence on the United States. Instead, many adopt a hedging strategy, balancing their engagement with both major powers

to safeguard their security interests and maximize economic benefits. To enhance its security posture and diplomatic effectiveness, China must develop a nuanced understanding of the threat perceptions and security policies of both the United States and its regional allies. This necessitates: Leveraging intra-alliance divergences among US partners, particularly in areas such as security commitments, defense burden-sharing, and regional strategic priorities. Actively fostering a regional consensus aimed at preventing the emergence of a new Cold War, mitigating the risks of an arms race, and reinforcing regional stability through cooperative security mechanisms.

To achieve these objectives, China can employ a multi-dimensional diplomatic strategy that integrates: State Diplomacy – Strengthening bilateral and multilateral engagements with regional actors.

Party Diplomacy – Enhancing political trust and ideological exchanges to build long-term cooperative frameworks. Think Tank Diplomacy – Facilitating expert dialogue and policy research to shape a shared strategic vision for regional security [16]. Historically, ASEAN has played a pivotal role in shaping the Asia-Pacific security architecture through its advocacy of cooperative security principles. ASEAN-led mechanisms, such as the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), have demonstrated the viability of multilateral platforms in delivering regional public security goods. The ASEAN security approach, characterized by collective consultation, comprehensive security planning, and open diplomatic dialogue, has significantly contributed to regional stability.

China continues to support ASEAN's centrality in regional security governance, particularly in: Maintaining the principle of non-interference in internal affairs.

Advancing equal and non-coercive diplomacy.

Promoting the peaceful resolution of disputes through consultations. Developing a multi-tiered and diversified security architecture that accommodates the interests of all regional stakeholders.

Conversely, the United States' security posture in the region, rooted in ideological divisions, risks reviving Cold War-era strategic paradigms. The binary logic of alliance-building based on adversarial dichotomies ("us vs. them") contradicts Washington's stated objective of promoting a "free and open Indo-Pacific", thereby undermining its credibility as a stabilizing force. Furthermore, this ideologically driven approach weakens ASEAN-centered security mechanisms, eroding the foundations of a consensual, inclusive, and cooperative regional order.

To ensure long-term stability and security in the Asia-Pacific, it is imperative to reinforce ASEAN's role as the cornerstone of regional cooperation and multilateral security governance. The success of this endeavor depends on the collective efforts of all regional actors in countering confrontational strategies and fostering an inclusive, rules-based, and sustainable security order.

Results

The analysis of China's strategic behavior in the Asia-Pacific region reveals several key trends in its approach to regional security governance. First, the study finds that China has increasingly prioritized multilateral engagement and institutional coordination, particularly through ASEAN-centered mechanisms. By advocating for an inclusive Indo-Pacific vision and supporting forums such as the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting (ADMM), the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), and the Enhanced ASEAN Maritime Forum (AMF), China seeks to promote regional security frameworks that stand in contrast to exclusive, alliance-based models led by external powers.

Second, bilateral cooperation with ASEAN member states—especially Malaysia, Indonesia, and Singapore—has emerged as a critical dimension of China's regional security strategy. The findings indicate a consistent effort to strengthen joint military training, counter transnational threats such as terrorism and organized crime, and enhance operational transparency through practical measures including military hotlines, naval exchanges, and personnel development programs.

Third, the study identifies a growing emphasis on non-traditional security issues in China's regional agenda. The analysis shows that water resource management, food and energy security, and public health have become increasingly prominent areas of engagement. Regional programs such as the Lancang-Mekong Cooperation Special Fund serve as platforms for project-based collaboration, while the Global Security Initiative (GSI) is positioned as a conceptual umbrella under which pilot projects in strategically important subregions are expected to be developed.

Fourth, the research highlights China's evolving use of strategic communication as a response to growing geopolitical tensions in contested areas such as the South China Sea, the East China Sea, and the China-India border. The findings suggest that China has adopted a dual-track approach of

asserting legal and historical claims while also seeking to manage international perceptions through diplomatic messaging aimed at de-escalation and narrative clarification.

In terms of engagement with other major regional powers, the study confirms that China has prioritized dialogue and conflict prevention mechanisms. In relations with Japan, this includes maintaining structured consultations on maritime affairs and proposing mechanisms for air and maritime risk reduction. With India, the focus remains on border stability and the preservation of strategic dialogue, with the objective of preventing localized tensions from evolving into broader confrontations.

The maritime domain remains a focal point in China's regional strategy. Active participation in negotiations surrounding the South China Sea Code of Conduct (CoC) underscores China's intent to shape a rules-based maritime order. The results point to China's interest in including enforceable provisions, mechanisms for joint crisis response, and cooperative frameworks for maritime law enforcement and resource management.

Finally, the findings underscore the expanding role of public diplomacy in China's regional security policy. The engagement of think tanks, academic institutions, and media professionals is increasingly seen as a strategic tool for promoting China's security vision, addressing regional misperceptions, and reinforcing its image as a constructive actor in the region. These efforts are viewed as essential to aligning discourse with practice and maintaining credibility in regional and international arenas.

Conclusion

The Asia-Pacific region stands at the center of global political and economic change. Yet, despite its enormous potential, it continues to face a web of interconnected security challenges. The growing rivalry among major powers, competing regional strategies, and a decline in mutual trust have made the region's security environment increasingly unstable and difficult to manage. In this changing landscape, China's actions-as both a regional power and a global partner-carry considerable weight.

This article has explored the idea of a complex security dilemma, where the efforts of one country to protect its interests can unintentionally make others feel threatened, fueling cycles of tension and competition. Security today is no longer just about military strength; it also includes a wide range of non-traditional issues like maritime cooperation, food and energy access, and the impacts of global crises. Unfortunately, many of the existing mechanisms for dialogue and cooperation are still struggling to keep up with these realities.

China has proposed an alternative vision of security-based on inclusiveness, cooperation, and shared responsibility. While this vision holds promise, turning it into effective policy will require more than statements of principle. It calls for practical steps: supporting ASEAN's role as a regional coordinator, building deeper bilateral trust, and investing in long-term platforms for dialogue and joint problem-solving.

Looking forward, lasting peace in the Asia-Pacific will depend on building institutions that can prevent conflict, manage disputes, and promote cooperation on the most pressing challenges of our time. This won't be easy-and it won't happen overnight-but it is possible if countries commit to working together in good faith. For China, playing a meaningful role in this process will mean aligning its strategic goals with its stated values, and consistently showing through action its commitment to regional peace.

In the end, security in the Asia-Pacific isn't just a geopolitical issue-it's a shared human concern. It affects economies, livelihoods, and the futures of billions of people. Achieving stability and cooperation will require all nations to look beyond zero-sum thinking and toward a future built on mutual respect, shared interests, and collective progress.

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АЗИЯ-ТЫНЫҚ МҰХИТЫ АЙМАҒЫНДАҒЫ КҮРДЕЛІ ҚАУІПСІЗДІК ДИЛЕММАСЫ: ҚИЫНДЫҚТАР ЖӘНЕ ҚЫТАЙДЫҢ ӨРЕКЕТ ЕТУ СТРАТЕГИЯЛАРЫ

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КОМПЛЕКСНАЯ ДИЛЕММА БЕЗОПАСНОСТИ В АЗИАТСКО-ТИХООКЕАНСКОМ РЕГИОНЕ: ВЫЗОВЫ И СТРАТЕГИИ РЕАГИРОВАНИЯ КИТАЯ

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