WHY DOES BALANCING FAIL? COMPARING U.S.
BALANCING STRATEGIES AGAINST THE
SOVIET UNION AND CHINA

A Master's Thesis

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August 2022

To the founder of the modern Turkish Republic, and the greatest Turk of all time,
Mustafa Kemal Atatürk

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ABSTRACT

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Objectives. Balancing is one of the most significant concepts in international relations. States have always had to face challenges, and knowing how to balance a challenge successfully is of utmost importance for states. In this study, I investigate why balancing fails. ***Method.*** I utilize comparative case study and employ process-tracing. I examine the respective balancing strategies of the U.S. against the Soviet Union and China based on my balancing framework and compare them with each other. ***Results.*** This study finds out that, the U.S. applied a coherent balancing strategy aiming to improve the balance of relative military and non-military power to its favor vis-à-vis the Soviet Union during the Cold War. To that end, it used alliance formation as the main balancing strategy, while strategic aid to prospective allies was the secondary balancing

strategy. However, it failed to do the same against China in the post-Cold War period. Each Administration pursued different balancing strategies, creating an inconsistency. ***Conclusion.*** The pursuit of a coherent balancing strategy affects balancing success and failure. Pursuit of a coherent balancing strategy to improve the balance of relative military and non-military power against a rival results in successful balancing. Conversely, the lack of a coherent balancing strategy leads to balancing failure.
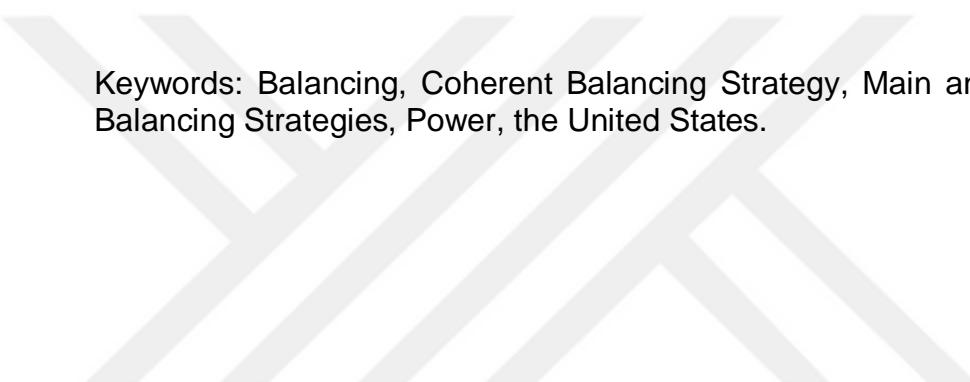
Keywords: Balancing, Coherent Balancing Strategy, Main and Secondary Balancing Strategies, Power, the United States.

ÖZET

DENGELEME NEDEN BAŞARISIZ OLUR? ABD'NİN
SOVYETLER BİRLİĞİ VE ÇİN'E KARŞI DENGELEME
STRATEJİLERİNİN KARŞILAŞTIRILMASI

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Amaçlar. Dengeleme, uluslararası ilişkilerin en mühim kavramlarından biridir. Devletler her daim sınamalarla karşılaşmış olup, sınamaların nasıl başarılı bir şekilde dengeleneceğini bilmek devletler için çok önemlidir. Bu çalışmada, dengeleme politikalarının neden başarısız olduğu incelenmektedir. *Metodoloji.* Bu çalışmada, karşılaştırmalı vaka analizi metodu ve süreç izleme yöntemi kullanılmıştır. ABD'nin Sovyetler Birliği ve Çin'e karşı kullandığı dengeleme stratejileri, çalışmanın özgün dengeleme çerçevesine göre incelenmiş ve birbiriyle karşılaştırılmıştır. *Sonuçlar.* Bu çalışmanın bulguları, ABD'nin, Soğuk Savaş döneminde Sovyetler Birliği'ne karşı, askeri ve askeri olmayan güç dengesini kendi lehine iyileştirmeyi amaçlayan tutarlı bir dengeleme stratejisi uyguladığını ortaya koymaktadır. Bu amaçla ABD, ana dengeleme stratejisi olarak ittifak oluşumunu kullanırken, ikincil dengeleme stratejisi bağlamında olası müttefiklere stratejik yardıma başvurmuştur. Buna mukabil, Soğuk Savaş sonrası dönemde Çin'e karşı benzer bir yaklaşım sergilenememiştir. Bu dönemde göreve gelen her Yönetim farklı

dengeleme stratejileri izlemiş ve bu durum bir tutarsızlık yaratmıştır.

Netice. Tutarlı bir dengeleme stratejisi arayışı, dengelemenin başarıya ulaşıp ulaşmaması üzerinde etkiye sahiptir. Bir rakibe karşı askeri ve askeri olmayan nispi güç dengesini geliştirmek amacıyla tutarlı bir dengeleme stratejisi izlemek, başarılı bir dengeleme ile sonuçlanmaktadır. Öte yandan, tutarlı bir dengeleme stratejisinin izlenmemesi, dengeleme başarısızlığına yol açmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Dengeleme, Tutarlı Dengeleme Stratejisi, Ana ve İkincil Dengeleme Stratejileri, Güç, Amerika Birleşik Devletleri

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

'Why does balancing fail?' in general, and, 'why is it that the United States failed to balance against China so far?' more particularly, are the primary research questions/puzzles that motivate this study. The reason is that balancing failure is one of the understudied and underrated issues in international relations. Yet, as argued below, it is indispensable to know how balancing fails or succeeds.

'*International Relations*' emerged as a discipline immediately after the unprecedented damage of World War I with the aim of preventing wars and maintaining peace (Yurdusev, 2011, pp. 25-27). However, the relations between polities as subjects of inquiry go back centuries (Yurdusev, 2021, pp. 15-56). With the birth of the discipline, the studies became more structured and systematic, and grand theories emerged. The realist family of theories is one of them. Among other features, it emphasizes the anarchic nature of the international system, the absence of higher authority than states; the self-help manner of the system in the absence of a higher authority to protect states; and it characterizes the international domain primarily by competition and war (Glaser, 2016, pp. 14-15).

With this emphasis on competition, war, and the absence of a higher authority, one can conclude that states may always face rivalry, challenges, and in some cases, threats from each other. And self-help suggests that states only have themselves to rely on in this dangerous realm. States have always been confronted with these challenges. Some states managed to overcome those challenges by facing them, whereas some others failed to do so. In case of a failure, the wealth, the territories, the culture, the prestige, the position, or in extreme cases, the independence of states can be at stake. Great powers are no exception in this sense, as they rise and fall (Kennedy, 1990).

If there is a constant possibility for states to come up against challenges from other states, and if it is that vital to meet those threats, one question becomes crucial: 'How can balancing a threat from a rival be successful?' Knowing how to fail is essential to understanding how to succeed. Then, the question can be reformulated as 'Why does balancing fail?' with the hope that studying balancing failure can be decisive in figuring out how balancing succeeds. This study aims to contribute to the literature by providing a valid, testable, and practical answer to that important question.

Studying balancing failures will make significant contributions to the literature. Detecting how balancing fails based on the findings of this study may serve as a guideline for policymakers of countries who face threats all around the world. Secondly, this can be a timely study examined from the angle of the intensifying competition between the United States (hereafter the U.S.) and the People's Republic of China (hereafter China).

Some may question whether the U.S. has had to balance China or not. Indeed, as discussed below in the literature review chapter, some in the literature argue that China does not pose a challenge to the U.S. yet. However, one can argue, that these analyses miss a crucial point: the effect of the polarity on the threat perception of the strongest state in the system vis-à-vis the rise of new great power.

The number of great powers in the system would naturally affect the threat perception of the strongest state in the system. Accordingly, the threat that the strongest state in the system perceives from a rise of great power may decisively differ according to polarity.

Multipolarity is the system's domination by more than two great powers (Mearsheimer, 1990, 14). In a multipolar system, there would be some situations where the rise of great power is tolerable for the most potent state, as long as the rise of a new great power can contribute to the balance of power in favor of the strongest. Alternatively, the rise of a new great power can be bearable for the strongest state, if the new great power can help containment of the most dangerous rival that the most potent state perceives.

In bipolarity, on the other hand, there is a greater tendency for parity in the system between two great powers (Mearsheimer, 2007, p. 79). In such a system, the slightly stronger state may accommodate the rise of new great power. The reason would be

that this option would turn the system into multipolarity and create the potential to *gang up on* the main rival of the most potent state, as multipolarity would allow (Mearsheimer, 2007, p. 79).

In unipolarity, on the other hand, things might be different in the sense that the state that had achieved unipolarity has more to lose in the case of a rise of new great power. Unipolarity defines a system where the capability of one state outweighs all other states to the extent that it cannot be counter-balanced (Wohlforth, 1999, p. 9). It controls a disproportionate share of capabilities that are meaningful politically, such as the size of population and territory, resource endowment, economic capability, military strength, political stability, and competence (Ikenberry, Mastundano, and Wohlforth, 2009, p. 5; Walt, 2005, p. 91; Waltz, 2010, p. 131).

Threat perception of the unipole regarding the rise of a new power would differ in some ways. To begin with, the existence of more great powers would mean a more significant unevenness in the division of capabilities among the states (Mearsheimer, 2007, p. 79). Power is a relative concept, not an absolute one. It is not an end, but it is always meaningful compared to the rival's power. In a zero-sum manner, an increase in one state's power causes a decline in the power of another (Avey, 2012, p. 157). By definition, this phenomenon is even more significant in unipolarity. From the unipolar's perspective, the rise of a new rival would mean a shift of the system to bipolarity and hence, a more even share of capabilities. The zero-sum feature of power suggests that the unipole can face catastrophic consequences if a rival arises. Therefore, for logical reasons, a unipole is supposed to be jealous of its position and oppose the rise of new great powers.

As elaborated in the next chapter, the conventional wisdom provides three answers to the research question of this study: because of the unit-level factors in either challenging power, balancing state, or secondary states; structural factors; and both. This study will be located within the boundaries of the first group, those who search for balancing failures in unit-level factors. However, none of the existing answers can solve the research puzzle that motivates this thesis: Why the U.S. successfully balanced against the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (hereafter the USSR or the Soviet Union) during the Cold War but failed to do the same against China in the post-Cold War period so far? This study builds a new balancing framework with the

help of the existing ideas and applies it to the balancing strategies of the U.S against the Soviet Union during the Cold War period, and the balancing strategies of the U.S. against China in the post-Cold War period until late 2021. Written in the spring and summer of 2022, the strategies subject to examination in the study are limited to late 2021.

The rest of the study is organized as the following.

In the next chapter, I will outline the conventional wisdom on why balancing fails and some recent literature on U.S-China relations. I will divide the existing literature on balancing failures into three: those pieces which answer with structural factors; unit-level factors in the balancing, balanced states or third parties; and factors from both dimensions. Then, each piece will be examined in detail to show why they are evaluated in this group, why they cannot explain the U.S. case against China will be answered one by one, and where this study is located. In the second section of the chapter, some selected pieces on U.S.-China relations are provided to position this study in this issue. They are grouped into two as well.

The third chapter is on definitions and theoretical framework. In this chapter, I will define, discuss, and operationalize all important concepts for this study, such as power, balancing, and underbalancing. Borrowing some ideas from the literature on balancing, I will make my own definitions of balancing and underbalancing and provide my alternative framework. In my framework, there will be 'main balancing,' which is the effort to shift the balance of relative military power; 'secondary balancing,' which is the attempt to alter the balance of non-military power; and search for constant and coherent use of a method in both groups. Then, I will explain my argument and my testable hypothesis. Finally, in this chapter, the research method of the study, the case selection, and the operationalization of variables will be provided.

The fourth and fifth chapters will be the empirical chapters. With the idea that examining a successful balancing can shed light on balancing failures, I will evaluate U.S. balancing strategies against the USSR with my own balancing framework in the fourth chapter. I argue that the U.S. used alliance formation constantly as the main balancing strategy to increase its military power against USSR and provided strategic

economic aid to prospective allies as the secondary balancing method to enhance its non-military power. This, I assert, is the effective way to balance a rival.

The fifth chapter examines the key case of the study, which I describe as a balancing failure so far: the U.S. balancing strategies in the post-Cold War period. Based on my balancing framework, I argue that each administration had different objectives and tactics vis-à-vis China and employed different balancing strategies to improve the military and non-military power of the U.S. against China. Therefore, they failed to adopt a consistent and coherent balancing strategy against China, which consequently created failure in balancing. Moreover, different commitments and priorities in other regions or the domestic realm during each administration to a different level turned the attention of the U.S. from China during this period.

Lastly, the findings from the empirical chapters will be discussed and compared in the final chapter. Finally, the study will be concluded by discussing its limitations, its contributions to the literature, and how it can be improved in the future.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

'Why does balancing fail?' or *'When do states fail to balance their rising rivals?*
This chapter aims to present the answers that conventional wisdom gives to these
questions. Below, the existing literature on the reasons for the failure to balance a
challenge, as well as some selective literature on the relations between the U.S and
China in the last decade will be reviewed chronologically.

The literature on the failure or the lack of balancing is divided into three. The first
group of pieces answers these questions with domestic/unit-level responses, either in
the challenged power, challenging power, or the secondary states. For the second
group, the answer may lay in structural reasons. The third group suggests that it may
neither be one nor the other, but both. The second part of this chapter will review the
recent literature on U.S-China relations.

2.1. The literature on Balancing Failures

    2.1.1. Unit-Level Factors

For a group of studies, balancing may fail due to the unit level factors, either in the
challenging or the challenged power. Some argue that when the rising adversary uses
a wedging strategy balancing may fail. Wedging strategy is a form of external
balancing and aims to increase a state's own power vis-a-vis the external challenge
"by preventing the grouping or causing the dispersal of threatening alliances"
(Crawford, 2008, p.3) Wedge strategies disturb existing or potential balancing
coalitions, and therefore, cause alignment anomalies that go against the general
expectations of balancing.

Three types of wedge strategies can be observed in international politics. First, a state
can employ 'pre-alignment' strategies to prevent the formation of a potentially

threatening alliance against itself. Secondly, a state can use 'dealignment' strategies to nullify a member of an existing alliance. Finally, there is the 'realignment' strategy, which targets to sow seeds of hostility into a challenging alliance, and therefore, wishes to convert a potential or actual member of that alliance hostile to another member (Crawford, 2008, pp. 4-5). As a result, three types of alignment anomalies in the form of failure of alliances can occur. First of all, a potential alliance may not be established and alignment expectations may be proven wrong if countries do not make what they are expected to make, alliance agreement. Second, countries may forgo their commitments. Third, members of an alliance can turn against each other, instead of cooperation (Crawford, 2008, pp. 4-5).

For Fritz and Sweeney (2004), the costly nature of balancing and the absence of a significant threat may lead states to avoid balancing. For them, a balancing strategy is costly. Joining a weaker side means a higher probability of losing in case of a war. And even if balancing is successfully adopted and the aggression is deterred, opposing the stronger side is potentially very costly. Moreover, one should overcome the domestic hampers to implement a balancing strategy as persuading masses to balancing policies that would require mobilization of immense resources can be difficult (Fritz and Sweeney, 2004, p. 288). Therefore, great powers may not prefer engaging in balancing, and they only balance when there is a serious threat. In the absence of a severe threat, they have the freedom to follow their interests, and "bandwagon with stronger side" to benefit in the international arena (Fritz and Sweeney, 2004, p. 286). Hence, they suggest that the existence of a threat to a state is the most important factor to push that state to balancing behavior. In terms of threat perception, for Fritz and Sweeney (2004, pp. 288-290) threat does not consist of power alone, but there are other factors such as interest, ideology, regime type, and geography that contribute to the threat.

According to the analysis of Fritz and Sweeney (2004), great powers do not always find themselves in a situation where their survival is in danger, and they do not face "high insecurity environments." (Fritz and Sweeney, 2004, s. 288). And, their expectation is that, since great powers are immune to extraordinary levels of threat, they can pursue less costly and more benefitting bandwagoning alliances (Fritz and Sweeney, 2004, s. 290).

Rather than the strategy of the challenging power, sometimes the domestic structure of the rising power may cause underbalancing. Imbrie (2010) argues that this is the case for the rise of the European Union (EU). Accordingly, Europe has a complex governance architecture with authority is distributed among local, national and supranational levels. This hybrid structure creates a multiplicity of voices in Europe on all issues, signals different intentions to potentially balancing countries and complicates the threat perception. The result is the elite fragmentation regarding the threat of EU in potential balancing countries, and in turn, the fragmentation of elite consensus on EU's threat results in underbalancing against the EU. In sum, an increase in the relative power of the EU is permeated by two intervening variables, that are, EU's multi-level governing structure & fragmentation of elite consensus on threat perception (Imbrie, 2010, pp. 3-4 & pp.12-15).

According to him, Europe has quite a significant military capability, both in terms of size and technology, and enjoys a wealthy economy that would support the military might (Imbrie, 2010, pp. 5-9). It also has ambitious plans such as European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP), which he argues that would give greater influence and autonomy to Europe in NATO *and he regards as a threat* (Imbrie, 2010, pp. 9-10). Yet, despite such power and ambitious moves such as launching ESDP or creating an independent EU military headquarters, the U.S did not balance. The reason, from his point of view, is that the structure of the EU allowed the transmission of mixed signals, which fragmented the elite consensus in the U.S and prevented the U.S to counterbalance the ESDP.

To sum, a higher level of centralization of the rising power would result in a higher balancing, and a higher level of spread of authority across different levels would result in elite fragmentation and ultimately in underbalancing (Imbrie, 2010, p. 40)

Schweller (2010) is also part of this group. After defining the term underbalancing in the way presented in the next chapter, Schweller (2010) argues that underbalancing can be caused by some domestic factors. By going more specific, he defines those domestic factors as; the elite consensus or disagreement over the threat, the elite cohesion, social cohesion or fragmentation, and, the vulnerability of the regime (Schweller, 2010, pp. 11-13).

Elite consensus is the function of shared perception about policy preferences. According to him, it has the primary role among the four variables. For states to balance a challenge, there should be a firm consensus among elites on the existence of a threat, and the best way to balance it; either through arms, allies, or both. With his words, "when there is a consensus among policymaking elites to balance, the state will do so." (Schweller, 2010, pp. 47-48).

However, it is not easy to achieve such a consensus among elites since balancing behavior generates huge costs of human and material resources. Moreover, when an alliance is formed to balance a threat, it takes some autonomy from the state in the foreign policy realm. Therefore, he argues, underreaction to threats is a default strategy (Schweller, 2010, p. 48). Moreover, he asserts that regime type can be a decisive factor. According to him, democracies tend to react to a threat particularly slowly due to two reasons. Firstly, nonbalancing is(or ought to be) the default action in a democracy before the appearance of a threat, and secondly, democracies consist of many veto powers in the policy-making mechanisms (Schweller, 2010, pp. 48-49).

The second variable for underbalancing is elite cohesion, which is the fragmentation of the political leadership due to internal divisions. According to him, elite fragmentation decreases the likelihood of the challenged state to build an efficient balance (Schweller, 2010, p. 55). If the elites are fragmented, they may not reach a common understanding on which threat should be balanced as they may be unable to rate the more dangerous challenge (Schweller, 2010, s. 12). Or, the fragmentation of the elite may increase the domestic political costs and risks of balancing. A tough decision can be blasted by the opposition elites. Another option is that governing elites would enter into a bargaining process to please the opposition elite. It would result in incoherent, half, sometimes contradicting measures, which would increase the likelihood of failure (Schweller, 2010, s. 55). Furthermore, fragmented elites may not agree on the partner of alignment due to several reasons. Also, they may be disunited over where to spend resources; whether to defend interests in the core or the periphery (Schweller, 2010).

In sum, an efficient balancing behavior can be most likely when elites agree on the target of the balancing, and how to balance it best (Schweller, 2010, p. 55).

Another variable that explains the underbalancing behavior for Schweller (2010) is the vulnerability of the regime or government. It is about the safety of the position of a government and how likely the ruler is removed from office. According to him, leaders do not only consider an external threat, pursue power or influence when they decide a security policy, but they also take domestic consequences into consideration. This is more so for weaker leaders who worry about their position, as this means they are more constrained in policy options due to domestic reasons. They cannot easily convince their people of the existence of a threat, cannot easily mobilize the national resources, cannot choose and implement policies. He predicts that such states with weak governments tend to go for searching allies rather than building up their army (Schweller, 2010, pp. 49-50)

The final variable for Schweller (2010) is social cohesion. It defines the firmness of the links between the individuals and groups in a society. It does not imply the absence of disagreements in society; but rather, the society's adherence to the legitimacy of the institutions and the feeling of solidarity (Schweller, 2010, p. 51)

In terms of the relation between social cohesion and the balancing behavior, (Schweller, 2010, p. 54 & p. 12) argues the following. States that enjoy higher social cohesion are more likely to balance against an external threat, and this can even increase social cohesion. On the contrary, states which suffer from social fragmentation may fail to react effectively, as the threat perception will not be embraced by all segments of the society. Moreover, one can expect that such states with social fragmentation can experience even more severe fragmentation in case of an external threat.

What about the interaction between these four variables? Depending on the sequence and intensity of variables, their combinations can create different consequences and causal relations in terms of the balancing strategy that the state employs to the change in relative power.

The first causal prediction is the *normal balance of power model*. In this model, continuity or the change in foreign policy in terms of the balancing strategy against the changes in the relative power depends on two things. The first is the consensus of the elite on the essence of the threat, and the degree of the cohesion of the elite.

Second is the ability of the government to mobilize, a function of regime vulnerability and social cohesion.

The second model is the *additive model*. Compared to the first, this is more generalizable. In the additive model, if the society is fragmented, the government or regime is vulnerable and the elite is fragmented; the result of the rise of an external threat is elite disagreement on the threat or nonbalancing consensus. In this situation, Schweller (2010, p. 63) argues, the behavior of the challenged state is underbalancing. However, if there is a higher level of social cohesion, the government or regime enjoys higher stability and there is an elite consensus; elites agree on the balancing against the rise of a threat, and hence, balancing behavior can be observed.

The third causal link is the *extremely incoherent states model*. According to this model, the rise of an external threat causes social fragmentation, social fragmentation leads to the government or regime vulnerability, and it causes elite fragmentation. As a result, elites disagree about how to react to the threat or reach a consensus on not balancing the rising threat. Hence, in this situation, the outcome of the rise of an external threat is underbalancing; and most probably, farther dissolution of the state, for instance in the form of civil war or revolution (Schweller, 2010, p. 63).

The fourth form of causal scheme occurs in polarized democratic states. In this *polarized democratic model*, the precondition is that the society is highly polarized. Then, when external threats rise, elites conclude that there should be a form of balancing against this dangerous situation. However, as the society is highly polarized and the democratic state mechanisms mirror the society, there will not be a consensus on i) whom should the state balance against? An ii) with whom should the state align with? The result Schweller (2010, pp. 63-64) states that there will be half measures and incoherent grand strategies.

He notes that this is the only model he presents which does not portray the elite disagreement/consensus as the proximate cause of (under)balancing behavior (Schweller, 2010, s. 64). This noting is important since he argues that "elites and their perceptions of the strategic setting play an important role in the state's decision to balance against a threat or not to do so" (Schweller, 2010, p. 64).

His final causal scheme model is the *underbalancing through wishful thinking*. In this scheme, change in the relative power leads elites to have a common understanding of the threatening environment. However, their judgment then depends on the difficulty of mobilization, on the basis of; social fragmentation or cohesion about war preparations, elite fragmentation, and regime vulnerability. As a result, elites will not be able to adopt wise balancing policies due to domestic reasons, and then, they have a consensus to reduce the threat through wishful thinking and other motivated biases. In such a situation, the outcome of the balancing decision will be "some form of underbalancing behavior or no change in foreign policy" (Schweller, 2010, pp. 65-66).

Similar with Fritz and Sweeney (2004), He (2012) brings the threat perception argument. However, he goes one step further and argue that states do not always need to apply the traditional balance of power by creating military alliances or engaging in an arms buildup race. As shown in the theoretical framework chapter, he defines negative balancing means undermining the power of a rival while positive balancing means strengthening a state's own power (He, 2012, pp. 156-157).

In this piece, he argues that the level of threat perception shapes a state's balancing strategy. In his model which he calls the negative balancing model, the amount of threat that states perceive defines the way that they react to a particular threat. States with higher threat perception are more likely to use positive balancing, especially with military means whereas low threat perception is more likely to lead to negative balancing, especially with non-military means. In the case of a medium threat perception, his model says, the threatened state is more likely to adopt positive balancing with non-military means or negative balancing with military means (He, 2012, p. 157 & pp. 169-172).

Sometimes an ideological foreign policy can cause underbalancing. Accordingly, states can pursue an ideologic path in their foreign policy, and end up in a disadvantageous position against their rivals. Walt (2018) argues that the U.S adopted a strategy of *liberal hegemony* after the end of the Cold War. It is "an ambitious effort to use American power to reshape the world according to U.S. preferences and political values." (Walt, 2018, p. 53). Its aim was to spread democracy, markets, and other liberal values around the globe as the foreign policy

elites believed that expansion of those values would make the U.S more secure in an easy way (Walt, 2018, p. xi). They thought that the U.S would lead the world and remake it in its image with the consent of other states as it has good, benevolent intentions. Yet, these hopes were proven short, as adopting the strategy of liberal hegemony did not make the U.S "safe, stronger, more prosperous" or the world "more tranquil and secure". On the contrary, its position was undermined, and chaos prevailed in many regions around the world (Walt, 2018, p. 23). When Walt compares 1993 and 2016, he finds out that the status of the U.S declined in this time period and great power competition has returned, besides some other negative trends. And although the foreign policy of the U.S was not the mere reason to blame for those developments, he argues, "..it played a significant role in many of them" (Walt, 2018, p. 8).

In terms of the great power competition, Walt (2018) demonstrates that the strategic environment of the U.S has deteriorated between the 1990s and 2016. While the U.S was the unipole and had reasonably good relations with China and Russia, it faces a significantly stronger, more assertive, and increasingly cooperating Russia and China by 2016 (Walt, 2018, pp. 31-32). When it comes to China policy, the aim in the 1990s was to integrate China into the international order with the hope that it behaves as a responsible member of the international community that does not challenge the U.S primacy. However, by 2016, China has grown and modernized its military power, became increasingly confident and assertive "with an eye toward contesting the dominant position in Asia that the United States had enjoyed since the end of World War II." (Walt, 2018, pp. 33-35). Moreover, besides challenging the U.S preeminence in Asia and furthering its territorial claims against its neighbors in the South China and East China seas, China started to develop its own international stages, as an alternative to the U.S led ones. Hence, Walt argues that it is clear by 2016 that these two were headed for a competition. (Walt, 2018, pp. 35-36). Moreover, Russia and China are cooperating increasingly, and U.S policies had pushed them to each other by creating incentives for them to collaborate (Walt, 2018, pp. 35-36). Accordingly, Walt argues that other states would worry about the U.S power especially if it uses its power without considering the interests of others. From his point of view, it is natural that the U.S attempts to spread liberal values would worry China and Russia together with some other states, as these attempts would

threaten both their domestic political arrangements and the positions of their ruling elites. Thus, U.S policies in that direction moved Russia and China closer to each other (Walt, 2018, pp. 72-73).

Mearsheimer (2018) brings up a similar point. He argues that a foreign policy based on liberal hegemony does antagonize other major powers. Accordingly, the liberal hegemonic power cannot use military power against other major powers, but it is still likely to interfere with their domestic politics in other ways. Yet, such an approach would not work as they would view such interferences as illegitimate and a violation of their sovereignty. Therefore, it would backfire and harm the relations between countries. According to Mearsheimer, this is what happened in the relations of the U.S with Russia and China. The efforts to liberalize them have worsened the relations (Mearsheimer, 2018, pp. 162-164). Moreover, Mearsheimer (2018) argues, ignoring geopolitics by pursuing an idealistic foreign policy is costly. If a country follows a foreign policy with a liberal hegemonic strategy, there is a risk that others may still pursue the premises of realpolitik. Indeed, according to Mearsheimer, not only this is the case most of the time, but this also enhances the possibility of miscalculation that can lead to a crisis or even war (Mearsheimer, 2018, p. 171).

One can place Colby (2021) in this group. According to Colby (2021) balancing or anti-hegemonic coalitions, established by a group of states to prevent an ambitious potential hegemon to dominate a particular region, are not always formed or do not always work. The reason is the intra-coalition affairs. Although the regional states have a common goal to defend their autonomy against the aspirant hegemon, their motivations may not always align. Their vulnerability to the aspirant hegemon's power would vary, and then, their differences can be exploited by the potential hegemon. As a result, the anti-hegemonic coalition can be undermined, divided, or fractured (Colby, 2021, p. 20).

Colby (2021) defines the *'systemic war.'* It is the decisive factor when it comes to defining the regional balance of power. Accordingly, a *'systemic regional war'* decides whether a potential hegemon can establish its regional hegemony in that particular region. It is ultimately about whose military power reign: the aspirant hegemon vs the anti-hegemonic coalition. However, it is not about the balance between the absolute power of the two sides, but it is about the will and capability to

use military power to achieve its objectives. For instance, he argues, the U.S might be stronger than China globally, yet, if China can project its power to Asia better or would be more willing and take more risks than the U.S can, it can prevail to form its regional hegemony (Colby, 2021, pp. 17-18).

Facing an aspirant hegemon in their region, other states encounter a dilemma: *balancing*, resisting to the aspirant and joining the balancing coalition, or, *bandwagoning,* favoring the potential hegemon or at least not resisting it, so not joining the anti-hegemonic coalition. Both options have their respective pros and cons. If a state chooses to balance against a potential hegemon, it would increase the power of the balancing coalition, increase the coalition's chance to succeed in checking the aspirant, and wrap itself with the coalition's overall power. The risk is antagonizing the aspirant and being exposed to its power. Conversely, bandwagoning does not antagonize the aspirant. It can even bring rewards and preferential treatment from the potential hegemon, which has the capabilities to provide 'carrot' in the form of material support or to increase the bandwagoning states' status in the region once the hegemony is established. Yet, the danger of bandwagoning is surrendering a chunk of autonomy to the hegemon, with no guarantee against further loss once the hegemony is achieved, and antagonizing balancing coalition. However, the choice for states is not binary but varies along a spectrum of two poles (Colby, 2021, pp. 20-21).

According to him, for states to choose to balance over bandwagoning, a couple of things are necessary. To begin with, a sufficient number of states should conclude that the balancing coalition would work. They have to believe in the coalition's chance against the potential hegemon. On the contrary, if states perceive that the anti-hegemonic coalition is likely to lose then they can choose bandwagoning or some form of accommodation. States also make their own individual cost-benefit calculations in light of the potential hegemon's strategy. They also assess the aspirant hegemony from the lenses of factors like ideological, cultural, ethnic ties, or geographic proximity (Colby, 2021, pp. 22-23). Such different assessments of the coalition members, given that the number of states that are involved must be high, create coordination problems.

Moreover, the aspirant hegemon can aggravate this coordination problem through its coercive power and inducements that it can bring. It can selectively pick some members of the anti-hegemonic coalition and try to remove them or even more favorably, bring them to its own orbit to change the balance of power in the region. Colby calls this strategy 'a *focused and sequential strategy'*. He argues that an aspirant hegemon can prevail against the balancing coalition if its '*salami-slicing approach'* would work to combine sufficient power by neutralizing actual and potential members of the anti-hegemonic coalition and hence, gain an advantage in the regional balance of power (Colby, 2021, pp. 23-25)

Against such strategy of the potential hegemon, he argues, what the balancing coalition needs is confidence. Such confidence can be provided by a '*cornerstone balancer*, a powerful state capable of projecting power to the region which would bring the coalition together. The existence of a *cornerstone balancer*, either within the region or outside of the region, is crucial for establishing a successful balancing coalition (Colby, 2021, pp. 26-27)

According to Colby (2021), the U.S should only be included as an external cornerstone balancer in a region only if U.S involvement is crucial for the formation and sustainment of the anti-hegemonic coalition in that particular region. Then, if other states in the region can form a favorable balance of power to deny an aspirant regional hegemon without U.S involvement, it is better for the U.S (Colby, 2021, pp. 28-29). When he analyzes the security situation in Asia, he argues that only the U.S has sufficient capability to project power into Asia to function as the cornerstone balancer, and without it serving this role, it is impossible for any coalition against China to be formed and sustained (Colby, 2021, pp. 30-31 & p. 37).

The stakes for regional states to stand against China are high, especially if it succeeds to secure dominance. They can doubt the commitment of the U.S to defend them against the aspirant hegemon. Then, the cornerstone balancer and other important states should spread sufficient assurance to the others that joining or staying in the coalition is more beneficial than remaining outside of or withdrawing from the balancing coalition. With the words of Colby, "the formation or sustainment of alliances" between the U.S and regional states can solve this problem and encourage

other states to balance against the aspirant hegemon by signaling them a commitment to defend (Colby, 2021, pp. 39-42).

What matters here for the regional states is the *differentiated* credibility of the cornerstone balancer and its reputation for reliability to honor its commitments to defend them, which would reveal whether and to what extent the cornerstone balancer would defend the regional states. To that end, states try to check the willingness and firmness of the cornerstone balancer based on how it behaved in the past in similar circumstances (Colby, 2021, pp. 54-56 & 61-62). Hence, he argues, regional states look for concrete and credible assurances from the U.S against China and they will look at how the U.S behaves towards themselves or has behaved others in similar cases in the past. Then, he argues, the U.S should preserve its differentiated credibility related to preventing the regional hegemony of China and hence, follow its pledges to defend the regional states. Otherwise, the trust of critical states to the coalition would reduce (Colby, 2021, pp. 62-64).

Sometimes secondary powers may affect the balancing strategy of the established great powers. Rather than engaging in bandwagoning with rising power or balancing with established power against the rising state; secondary states can use a hedging strategy that aims to keep some sort of neutrality by signaling ambiguity. In this case, Meijer and Simon argue, established great power can use "covert balancing" (Meijer and Simón, 2021, pp. 463-464)

Covert balancing is the hidden security cooperation of established great power with secondary states, which aims to generate a latent balancing capacity in accordance with the hedging strategy of the secondary power. Therefore, it is different than the 'overt balancing', that is, traditional external balancing to strengthen an alliance against a challenge. It covers its cooperation with the secondary power with something unrelated to balancing the rising power. What is covert is not the cooperation itself, but the balancing quality (Meijer and Simón, 2021, pp. 464-465).

Covert balancing can be observable in two key dimensions, capabilities and access. Accordingly, in covert balancing, the established great power will help the secondary states to develop general military capabilities with have potential to dual-use, which increase the latent capacity to balance. In terms of access, similarly, an established great power will have access to the secondary power with a cover such as

humanitarian assistance, disaster relief etc. and hence, improve its access which can be used for balancing purposes as well (Meijer and Simón, 2021, p. 470).

Whether an established great power adopts a covert balancing rather than an overt balancing primarily depends on the secondary state. If a secondary power adopts a hedging strategy instead of balancing; then the established great power may pursue covert balancing (Meijer and Simón, 2021, p. 471).

Meijer and Simon argue that covert balancing is helpful to understand the U.S efforts to balance China, according to them, if a secondary state in Asia is balancing against China, then the U.S is free to adopt overt balancing. However, when secondary states are hedging, the U.S has incentives to engage in covert balancing (Meijer and Simón, 2021, pp. 472-473). Their argument is that the U.S adopted covert balancing as a response to the hedging strategies of Vietnam and Singapore (Meijer and Simón, 2021, pp. 473-480).

Why do not these arguments give a satisfactory answer to the case of this study for me? As I argue below in the theory chapter, I think balancing is a structural phenomenon. Then, its failure or absence should be searched in unit level. Therefore, I must say that my study is part of this group as well since what I suggest as a cause of underbalancing is also a unit level factor. That's why I will show why the answers provided above do not explain the puzzle of this study.

To begin with, wedge strategy, put forward by Crawford (2008) does not explain this case, because, to my knowledge, there is no evidence that China used a wedge strategy to prevent the formation of an alliance against itself in the last decade.

What Fritz and Sweeney (2004) suggest cannot be applied to the case of U.S-China in the last decade for two reasons. First, as I will show later, it is not that U.S has not chosen balancing China in the last decade. Rather, it applied different balancing strategies. So, the suggestion that balancing is costly and therefore, states may not choose to balance do not apply here. Secondly, as discussed in the introduction, a rising power is the biggest challenge for the state at the top. And, as shown in later chapters, multiple official documents in the U.S have defined China as a geopolitical challenge. Hence, lack of threat perception cannot be applied here either.

The explanation of Imbrie (2010) is highly exclusive due to the unique structure of the EU. Therefore, I do not think it is generalizable. There is no evidence that different state authorities in China have given different signals, and it led to underbalancing in the U.S side.

Schweller (2010) is an admirable piece for me, as I build my thesis on his concept of underbalancing. Yet, I think that his four variables and five models do not explain this case. The reason is that, although he clearly conceptualizes his four variables, namely, the elite consensus, elite cohesion, social cohesion and vulnerability of regime, he does not explicitly say how to operationalize them. He gives elite consensus as the main determinant in four of five models. Yet, how to measure the consensus in elites? What constitutes a high or low level of elite consensus? How to decide whether the U.S suffered from elite disagreement, elite fragmentation, social incohesion or regime vulnerability between 2012-2021? I think his piece do not answer these questions. Further research may be necessary to see whether there was an elite disagreement over the challenge of China, or how to meet that challenge. Yet, even if such research reveals that this is indeed the case, then, elite disagreement might be the root cause for underbalancing by preventing the implementation of a coherent, constant balancing strategy, while its consequence (my explanation) would still be the precipitating cause.

 In He (2012), the negative balancing model is based on the level of threat perception, i.e high, low or medium threat perception. Yet, an explicit explanation on how to separate these three by measuring the threat is missing. '*Imminent aggression on its territory or severe pressure on its political independence*' was given as an example of immediate threat (He, 2012, p. 169). However, there is no explanation for what constitutes a low or medium threat, or how states differentiate between different amounts of threat. Moreover, in the case of the U.S vs China, as expressed above, some official documents showed a threat perception. Therefore, again, lack of threat perception does not apply here.

While I am convinced by what Walt (2018) and Mearsheimer (2018) suggest, there are two crucial differences. First, the timespan for analysis with this study and their pieces are different. While this research is focusing on the years 2012-2021, their studies analyze post-Cold War era. Secondly, the crucial difference in terms of

argumentation is that the U.S has not only engaged with China, but as I will show later, it has taken steps to balance China. Then, I argue, the failure was not ignoring China due to a liberal hegemonic foreign policy, but it was taking different steps in different times, at least in the time span that this study analyzes.

Colby (2021) is more about *what the U.S should do against China,* rather than *what it has done so far.* Moreover, its arguments about the failure of coalition due to intra-coalition affairs or due to the strategies of rising power (China) do not apply in practice yet, since one cannot talk about a balancing coalition against China as of the end of 2021. Finally, the covert balancing argument of Meijer and Simón (2021) do not fully capture this case since the U.S implemented different types of overt balancing between 2012-2021.

2.1.2. Structural Factors

For the structural group, the reasons for the failure in balancing can be found in structural reasons. Layne (1993) is part of this group. In a nutshell, he argues that "unipolar moments cause geopolitical backlashes that lead to multipolarity." (Layne, 1993, p. 32) The reason is that the immense power of the hegemon will be unbalanced in unipolar structures, which in turn will help new great powers to emerge. Secondly, once new great powers emerge, this will diminish the hegemon's relative power and eventually its preponderant position. Therefore, he argues, the strategy of preponderance is likely to fail (Layne, 1993, pp. 7-8).

Although admits that emergence as a great power results from unit-level decisions, the emergence of new great powers is a structural phenomenon and shaped by structural factors for Layne (1993). Accordingly, great Powers emerge thanks to the interaction of differential growth rates and anarchy (Layne, 1993, p. 9). States do not grow in economic, military, and technological terms parallelly, and the differentiation between their growth rates creates a different balance of capabilities over time. Thanks to this uneven growth rate, the capability gap between the hegemon and potential peer competitors narrowed eventually. Therefore, the argument goes, the hegemon is unlikely to keep its position (Layne, 1993, pp. 10-11).

The anarchic nature of international relations is another reason why unipolarity cannot prolong according to Layne (1993). The competitive environment that the anarchy creates affects great power emergence in two ways. Firstly, other states tend to balance the unchecked power of aspiring hegemon and aim to alter the balance of power in their favor. They do this for security purposes, as otherwise they would be left in mercy of the hegemon (Layne, 1993, pp. 11-13). The second way is the effect of sameness. That is, states tend to imitate the rewarding characteristics of their rivals. They do so the decrease the risk of falling behind. Therefore, other states in unipolarity act like the hegemon and try to earn the capabilities required to be a great power (Layne, 1993, p. 15).

If the hegemon pursues a strategy of preponderance, he argues, it is doomed to fail (Layne, 1993, p. 34). The logic is that, benign hegemony gives others a chance to free-ride in military and economy domain and therefore, use their resources in production instead of security. This, in turn, spoils the foundation of the hegemon's preponderant power. Also, benign hegemony eases the spread of wealth and technology, which, in turn, trigger the differential growth rate of potential competitors. Therefore, he argues, although strategy of preponderance would extend unipolarity, it would accelerate the decline of the hegemon (Layne, 1993, p. 34).

He and Feng (2008) can be placed in this basket. They offer the concepts of hard and soft balancing. Accordingly, hard balancing means increasing the relative power of a state against a powerful challenge through either domestic military buildup or external alliances; whereas, soft balancing is undermining the relative power of the threatening state by coordinating with (an)other state(s) (He and Feng, 2008, p. 365).

After differentiating between hard and soft balancing, they also make a conceptualization in terms of the means of balancing. They argue that, military means are not the only ways that a state can increase its relative power and therefore, hard balancing cannot only be achieved through military ways. Hence, they define military hard balancing and non-military hard balancing; that is, former refers to the traditional internal and external balancing while the latter means "the non-military efforts to increase a state's or a group of states' collective assets against the threatening power." (He and Feng, 2008, p. 372). In the same way, they go for such separation in soft balancing. Military soft balancing means using military efforts to

erode the relative power of threatening state(s) while non-military soft balancing is eroding the threatening state(s)' relative power through non-military means, such as economic embargoes or sanctions (He and Feng, 2008, pp. 372-373)

They argue the choices of states with regards to these strategies are based on two factors. The first element is the power disparity between the threatening and the threatened state. Their expectation is that, in case of a higher power disparity, both states tend to choose soft balancing as they argue that high power gap will diminish the effectiveness of the hard balancing (He and Feng, 2008, pp. 373-374). The second factor which shapes state's balancing strategy is economic dependence of state on its adversary. They argue that the higher (inter)dependence between the two states is, the less likely that states will adopt hard balancing (He and Feng, 2008, p. 375-376).

The interaction between these two factors is the following. When power disparity and economic dependance is both high, soft balancing is likely to occur since high balancing becomes more costly and less effective. In case of higher power disparity but low economic dependance, soft balancing is likely to be adopted with lower cost and low effectiveness of hard balancing. In cases where power disparity is low but economic dependence is high, the balancing strategy is complicated, they argue, with higher cost and high efficiency of hard balancing. In this case, domestic variables may enter into picture, in their analysis, but they still assert that effective hard balancing would lead states to adopt hard balancing. Finally, when both power disparity and economic dependance are low, states are more likely to adopt hard balancing (He and Feng, 2008, pp. 377-379).

They also show ways to measure both power parity of economic dependence. Accordingly, power disparity can be measured by comparing GDP and military spendings of countries, while they measure economic dependence by bilateral trade and foreign direct investments between states (He and Feng, 2008, pp. 382-385).

Another piece in this group is Bock and Henneberg (2013) since the reason why balancing fails for them is the security dilemma. Basing their work on Walt's '*balance of threat*', they argue that states react to threats rather than power, but in defining the threat, perception of the intent is decisive (Bock and Henneberg, 2013, p. 1 & pp. 20-21). In their understanding, a balancing strategy aims to provide

security by undermining a state or alliance that the balancing state identifies as a threat (Bock and Henneberg, 2013, p. 9 & p.18). Therefore, what they explain is a classical understanding of security dilemma. Indeed, the authors cite John Herz, the creator of the term 'security dilemma' (Bock and Henneberg, 2013, p. 24).

However, although the title of the piece is *'Why balancing fails'*, they explicitly present their research question as '*Can balancing fulfill its purpose—and reduce the threat states react to and provide security by weakening the threatening state or alliance?'* They assume that balancing behavior adopted by states is not successful and does not fulfill its aim to weaken the threat that has been identified. On the contrary, they state, balancing behavior adopted by a challenged state may indeed enhance the original threat (Bock and Henneberg, 2013, p. 19). They constate that, if state A perceives an aggressive intention from state B, irrelevant from the actual intention of state B, it will take a measure against state B to increase its own security. However, in return, any defensive action taken by state A to deter state B will be perceived as an aggressive intention by state B (Bock and Henneberg, 2013, pp. 23-25). According to their understanding, then, this is a counterproductive mechanism and it will backfire. By taking measures aiming to balance and weaken the perceived threat from state B, state A will become a threat perception for state B. Then, it will increase the posture of state B that launched the balancing behavior at the beginning (Bock and Henneberg, 2013, pp. 25-28). They explain their logic by giving examples from the Cuban Missile Crisis and the U.S and Israel's relations with Iran.

Then, they offer an alternative approach to balancing based on the Iranian case. Therefore, it will not be explained here in detail. However, in sum, they argue that there should be de-escalation to diminish the conflict with Iran. To do that, they argue, the U.S should take the first step and make concessions. In this sense, a moderate rhetoric should be used against Iran, Iranian regime reality should be accepted, and explicit security guarantees should be given to Iran to change its threat perception (Bock and Henneberg, 2013, pp. 29-31). Whether their proposals to solve the security dilemma between the U.S – Israel & Iran can be generalized as an alternative to balancing, which they think may backfire, and applied to the other cases is of a question.

Why do I think that these answers on structural factors do not explain the U.S' underbalancing against China in the last decade? Because I think that arguing structural factors -be it unipolarity, be it power disparity or economic interdependence, or be it security dilemma- cause underbalancing means in effect that balancing is doomed to fail under these structural conditions. For instance, arguing that unipolarity cannot resist the rise of new powers can empirically be proven wrong, as Wohlforth et al. (2007) shows that hegemony is routinely formed and sustained.

There is an argument that power disparity makes hard balancing less effective for the weak state both in terms of internal and external balancing. He and Feng (2008) even go further by asserting that, "To a certain extent, the weak state's behavior is not balancing at all but bandwagoning with other strong powers against the threatening power." (He and Feng, 2008, p. 374). However, I think that this is empirically wrong, as history proves examples of successful external balancing by the weak state against a stronger adversary. Secondly, although they nicely put ways to measure for both power disparity and level of economic dependence, they do not explicitly show what constitutes '*high*' or '*low*' levels of these factors. So, in their model, one can only look at power disparity and economic dependence comparatively by time. Moreover, this model does not explain the shifts in the U.S' balancing strategy vis-à-vis China during 2012-2021, which occurred without significant changes either in power disparity or in economic interdependence.

Or, I think that portraying the security dilemma as a cause of failure of balance may be problematic because its logical conclusion becomes that balancing is doomed to fail. Yet, Bock and Henneberg (2013) themselves admit that "…[T]here is no established alternative to balancing in the repertoire of reactions to an external threat" (Bock and Henneberg, 2013, p. 29). Then, if balancing may backfire due to security dilemma and if balancing has no established alternative to respond to a threat, with their own understanding; do states engage in a practice that may backfire and strengthen the original threat? Because of these reasons, I assume that none of the pieces that put structural arguments forward can explain the case of this study.

2.1.3. Both

The pieces in this group put both unit level and structural reasons forward to explain underbalancing. For instance, For Gilpin (1981), the explanation for the balancing failure for the strongest state is its domestic factors and differentiated growth rate over time. Gilpin (1981) tries to make generalizations based on historical observations since he assumes that there is an underlying continuity in world politics (Gilpin, 1981, p. 2 & p.211). He argues that major political changes occur as the result of "the conjuncture of unique and unpredictable sets of developments" (Gilpin, 1981, p. 3). Accordingly, economic, technological, and other developments lead to changes in the balance of power among actors and their interests. Then, who gains a sufficient amount of power and who would benefit most from a change will try to shift the system towards its favor (Gilpin, 1981, p. 9). The driving factor behind the international political change is the relative power between actors, which indicates the distribution of military, economic and technological capabilities among states. Over time, these capabilities tend to change at different rates because of the uneven growth of power among states. Then, this leads to redistribution of power and dissatisfaction with the status quo (Gilpin, 1981, pp. 12-14).

When there is a mismatch between the current system and the actual balance of power, there is a systemic crisis. Such a crisis can be solved diplomatically, yet, the primary determinant of the change, Gilpin states, has historically been the *hegemonic war*. It is the decisive determinant about which state(s) will be dominant in the system. It is the last resort and serves as the "ultimate test of change" about the relative power when there is a conjuncture between the existing international system and the new balance of power. The hegemonic war will change and reorder the international system in a way that reflects the new redistribution of power (Gilpin, 1981, p. 15 & pp. 197-198).
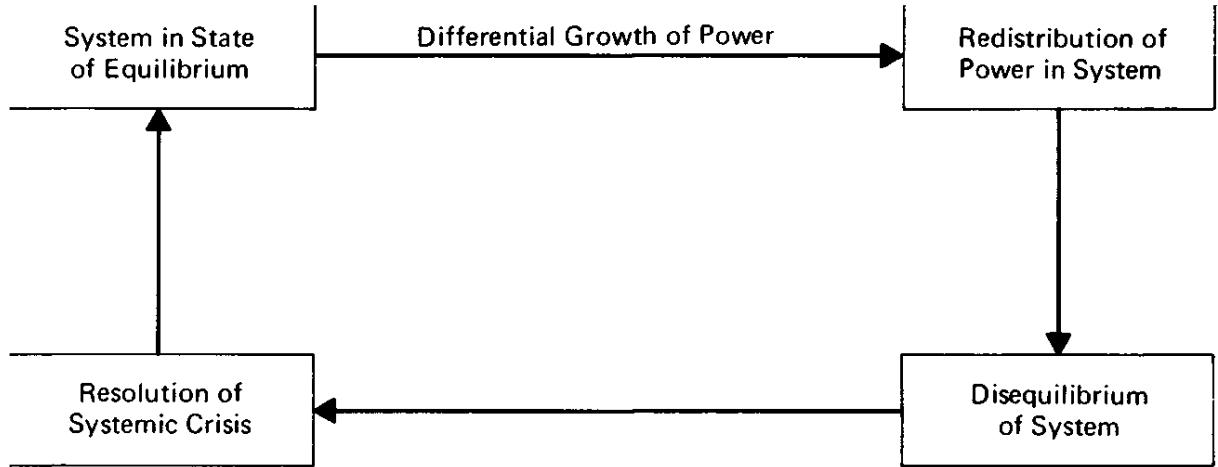
Figure 1: Gilpin's diagram of international political change (Gilpin, 1981, p. 12).

The important point is, although an international system may continue in the status quo forever if the principal actors keep their interests and the relative balance of power, or, the relative balance of power is maintained over time; the stability of the status quo is undermined in general. This can stem from both domestic and international developments. For instance, Gilpin argues, new domestic elites in a state can define the national interest differently. But more importantly for him is the fact that the powers of states are inclined to grow at different rates, which causes the redistribution of power (Gilpin, 1981, p. 13).

For the purposes of this thesis, this means that the strongest state in the system can maintain its relative power vis-a-vis its competitors. Yet, due to its domestic factors as well as the differentiated growth rate, this status quo is unlikely to endure. Moreover, dominance brings costs for dominant states. Accordingly, the dominant state has to spend for military forces, protect its allies and finance them. Then, naturally, this bears a burden on the economy of the dominant state. Moreover, Gilpin argues, the benefits coming from the hegemony decline over time due to the diminishing returns. Increasing costs of sustaining hegemony and decreasing benefits from it makes maintaining hegemony more difficult and disequilibrium in the system occurs. If it is not resolved, Gilpin concludes, it causes the ultimate economic and political decline of the hegemon (Gilpin, 1981, pp. 156-157).

The challenged power can restore equilibrium in two ways. It can either increase its resources in order to maintain its commitments and position in the system or, it can decrease its commitments with their costs without undermining its status. Accordingly, it can enhance domestic taxation or demand tribute from other states to

increase its resources. Reducing costs, on the other hand, can be achieved in the ways. The dominant state can launch a preventive war to weaken or destroy its challenger in order to eliminate the reason for increased costs. Secondly, it can expand its defensive parameter into more secure and less costly positions. Finally, it can reduce the costs of maintaining its position by reducing its foreign policy commitments through political, economic, or territorial retrenchment (Gilpin, 1981, pp. 188-193).

Wohlforth et al. (2007) is the other piece in this group, as they explain the failure of balancing by the administrative incapability of the hegemon and the expansion of the system. They argue that balancing behavior does not prevent systemic hegemony, and sustained hegemony is routinely formed (Wohlforth et al.,2007, p.156), which means balancing can fail.

According to them, balancing is a difficult act, and efforts to create an effective balancing coalition will fail because of the collective action problems. Instead of balancing, states can choose to free-ride, or rising powers can employ wedging strategies against their opponents. Secondly, potential hegemons cannot always adopt the innovative steps that would bring power due to domestic political obstacles. The reforms to self-strengthen are generally costly, and that would cause a domestic backlash. Finally, states are not always sure about which power has the greatest potential for hegemony, and this will undermine the efforts for anti-hegemonic alliances. Confusion regarding which states poses the main hegemonic challenge would hinder balancing efforts (Wohlforth et al.,2007, p.159 & p. 178).

When these three obstacles come together, in their take, they find that two things are necessary for a hegemony. The first factor is the rising hegemon's capability to administer and consolidate the conquered territories effectively. In cases where the administrative capacity of the rising hegemon is high, the balancing efforts (*'the prevention of unipolarity and/or hegemony'*) would fail, so the chances for establishing the hegemony is high. The second necessary condition is the system closure. That is, the borders of the system should remain rigid, meaning that no new powers from outside the system should enter into the system that the hegemon dominates. Because, the new powers that would emerge with the expansion of the system can alter the balance of power (Wohlforth et al.,2007, p.159 & p. 178).

In sum, "…hegemony is likely whenever a putative hegemon can make conquest pay and the system cannot expand to bring in new potential balancers". (Wohlforth et al.,2007, p.159).

Why I do not think that these answers which bring both unit level and structural causes are sufficient to explain the puzzle? The counter-arguments against bringing structural explanations were discussed above, so they will not be repeated. What can be added is that the two conditions that Wohlforth et al. (2007) brings, namely, the rising hegemon's capability to administer and consolidate the conquered territories effectively and the system's closure for the hegemony do not work in the U.S vs China case. One may argue that effective administration of conquered territories can be translated as effective administration of the international system in today's world, and state that the U.S could not manage the system effectively, and that's why it failed. However, the other condition for hegemony, the system closure is the reality today, as the international system is inclusive. Then, balancing failure during a closed system, without emergence new major powers outside, refutes the explanatory power of their argument.

2.2. Literature on U.S-China Rivalry

Brooks and Wohlforth (2016) argue that, despite China's undisputable rise, the U.S will remain as the only state with sufficient capability to be a superpower Brooks and Wohlforth, 2016, p. 8). Accordingly, they make a distinction between great powers and superpowers. The distinction is, while superpowers can exercise broad-spectrum capabilities across the whole international system, great powers do not have such capabilities, but they may aspire to achieve them. With this distinction, they use '1+X' terminology, '1' representing the superpower (the U.S) while 'X' represents the number of great powers. (Buzan, 2004, p.69 cited in Brooks and Wohlforth, 2016, p. 15). However, they make a small modification and introduce 'Y', which represents the powers with the potential to rise to superpower status and needs to be differentiated from other great powers. The reason is that there is a huge gap in terms of capabilities between the superpower and great powers (Brooks and Wohlforth, 2016, pp. 15-16)

To measure the distribution of capabilities in this century, Brooks and Wohlforth (2016) suggest that there are three core elements: military capacity, economic

capacity, and technological capacity. Military capacity is not measured through defense expenditures because they think that countries can easily change their military spending, which means using this as a measure has limitations. They instead use the "command of commons" approach to understand the key military capacity which allows the U.S to act as a superpower. To that end, they take a look at the command of the sea, command of space, command of the air, and the infrastructure of the command (Buzan, 2003, p.8 cited in Brooks and Wohlforth, 2016, pp. 17-19). When they assess from that approach, they find that the U.S still maintains an unprecedented gap with any rival despite rapidly increasing Chinese military expenditures (Brooks and Wohlforth, 2016, pp. 20-22).

Based on states' expenditure on research and development, broad information and communication expenditure, number of scientific and engineering doctoral degrees per year, and overall human capital level, they argue that the U.S is dominant in technological capacity. There is a huge gap between the U.S and China technologically thanks to the former's unique combination of massive scale, technological prowess, and human capital, and it will remain an important feature of the distribution of capabilities (Brooks and Wohlforth, 2016, pp. 22-26). In terms of the economic capacity, although China is rapidly approaching, the U.S retains the world's biggest, richest, and most productive economy. However, in their account, despite the importance of China's economic rise, measuring it with GDP underestimates the economic gap between the U.S and China since it has significant distortions (Brooks and Wohlforth, 2016, pp. 26-31). Instead, they offer "inclusive wealth" measure of the U.N. Based on this measure, the wealth of the U.S amounts to 4.5 times higher than that of China's (Brooks and Wohlforth, 2016, pp. 31-32).

Moreover, for Brooks and Wohlforth (2016), having sufficient material capacity to match the superpower and attaining status are two different things. The huge technological gap that exists between the U.S and China creates the question whether the rising China has enough "technological capacity to produce and field a defense force that can effectively match up with" the U.S' (Brooks and Wohlforth, 2016, pp. 32-34). To answer this question and evaluate the gap between the rise of China and its potential to acquire capabilities of a superpower, they again turn into the 'commands of the commons' approach. Accordingly, the U.S has developed some unique assets to maintain its dominant position such as; "(1) a large scientific and

industrial base; (2) the specific mix of military systems accumulated over the past few decades of procurement;(3) the ability acquired over decades to coordinate the production of needed weapons systems; and (4) the particular skills and associated technological infrastructure … to effectively employ these weapons in a coordinated manner" (Buzan, 2004, p.10 cited in Brooks and Wohlforth, 2016, p. 36). When Brooks & Wohlforth (2016) assesses the U.S and China according to these four criteria, they find that the U.S is in a significantly advantageous position and it will take long for China to close this gap (Brooks and Wohlforth, 2016, pp. 34-40).

Structurally, then, there are three barriers in front of China that makes catching the U.S. more difficult and longer than compared to rising states of the past and attain superpower status. First, the technological level gap between the China and the U.S is comparatively bigger than the gap between the rising and leading states of the past. Secondly, China is rising in a period when it is more difficult to convert economic power into military power due to the complexity of developing and using military equipment today. Finally, the gap between China and the U.S in terms of military capabilities is bigger than the corresponding gap in the past (Brooks and Wohlforth, 2016, pp. 40-42).

Consequently, they find three benchmarks between China's position today and its position in the future to become a peer competitor to U.S on the global stage. Accordingly, the first benchmark is when China's economic resources is enough to displace the U.S as the sole superpower, noting that this benchmark is not as significant as it was for rising states of the past since technological capacity is also required. Then, secondly, when China has sufficient economic and technological capacity to attempt to contest the global power of the U.S. They note that China is faraway to reach this benchmark. Third benchmark is, besides the latent economic and technological capacity to develop advanced systems to project power globally, procuring and learning using those systems effectively in a coordinated fashion (Brooks and Wohlforth, 2016, pp. 42-43).

Their conceptualization for the difference between a great power and a superpower is as follows.

great power › emerging potential superpower › potential superpower › superpower (Brooks and Wohlforth, 2016, p. 43).

With this conceptualization, they argue that China was in the first step in the 1990's and early 2000's with other great powers. Then, it moved one step further thanks its rapid economic rise and became an emerging potential superpower, meaning that it does not have technological capacity to bid for superpower. Their argument goes that once it has both economic and technological capacity to be able to challenge the U.S in military realm, it will move to the third, potential superpower, level. However, reaching the final level and emerging as a superpower will be difficult due to aforementioned barriers. Therefore, going back to '1+X' approach, rise of China creates '1+1+X' structure, 'with China occupying a middle category as an emerging potential superpower' (Brooks and Wohlforth, 2016, p. 43). The implication of their study is that the U.S is the only superpower in today's world, and it will remain so for a long time. Other powers do not have enough capabilities to challenge or balance the U.S, and therefore, a counterhegemonic balancing is out of reach for other countries, including China. The rise of China do not change this systemic feature (Brooks and Wohlforth, 2016, pp. 44-48).

Layne (2018) argues the opposite. Accordingly, the liberal, rules-based international order, which was built by the U.S after the World War II, is eroding due to internal and external factors. Internally, the economic trends are undermining the middle class in the U.S. Externally, what puts pax-Americana under pressure is the shift of the economic and geopolitical center or gravity from Euro-Atlantic landscape to Asia. Therefore, the days of pax-Americana are numbered due to the relative decline of American power and the emergence of risen China. Moreover, the U.S itself had a negative impact on this consequence, that is; the polarization in the domestic system as well as its own policies such as the mismanagement of its economy which caused the Great Recession in 2008 and 'the forever wars' in the Middle East and Afghanistan in which the U.S has become entrapped have contributed to this fate (Layne, 2018, pp. 89-90).

Defining the U.S hegemony and the post-1945 order that it created thanks to its military, financial and economic strength as the 'pax-Americana' (Layne, 2018, pp. 91-92), Layne (2018) argues that China is challenging military, economic, institutional and ideational pillars of that order. With the Great Recession of 2007-2008, the eroding of American power has been under spotlights and indeed, accelerated. The dominance of the U.S has been slipping away in four powers of

pax-Americana; military power, economic power, institutions and soft power. Erosion of these pillars cast a shadow whether pax-Americana can last (Layne, 2018, pp. 93-94).

Until recently, the U.S superiority had been seen as overwhelming in military realm. It is considered as the 'geopolitical trumpcard' that will secure the continuation of U.S dominance even if China catches the U.S in economic and technological realms (Brooks and Wohflorth, 2016 cited in Layne, 2018, p. 94). Yet, Layne (2018) argues that this has been questioned lately. Accordingly, while the U.S needs to be able to project power to Europe, the Middle East and East Asia; China is more restricted for the time being, and aims to dominate East and South-East Asia. The evidence suggests that, China is beginning to come to parity with the U.S in East Asia in regional military power. In east Asia, the military dominance of the U.S has been receded, as China has narrowed the gap with the U.S quite rapidly (Hegenbotham and Nixon, 2015, pp. 321-323 cited in Layne, 2018, p. 95). An East Asian security expert at RAND argues that there will be a power transition in East Asia during the 2020s and China will be able to challenge the regional status quo (Cliff, 2015, p. 244-246 cited in Layne, 2018, p. 95).

Economically, China has become the number one exporter, trader and manufacturer in the world in the last decade, surpassing the U.S in the last two. Moreover, China has surpassed the U.S in 2014 and became the largest economy of the world in GDP measured by purchasing power parity (Fray, 2014 cited in Layne, 2018, p. 95) and it is anticipated to achieve the same in mid-2020s in GDP measured by market exchange rate (IHS, 2014 cited in Layne, 2018, p. 95). In 2017, the managing director of the International Monetary Fund(IMF) stated that the headquarters of the organization could be moved to Beijing within the next decade , as its by-laws requires it to be located in its member country with the largest economy (Reuters, 2017 cited in Layne, 2018, p. 96). Combined together, these developments underscore the unignorable relative decline (Layne, 2018, pp. 95-96).

Furthermore, Layne (2018) hits back at those who argue that one should look at GDP per capita rather than aggregate GDP; new measurements have reduced the importance of GDP as a measure of a power; China is far behind the U.S technologically and it is not capable of innovation and try to downplay the

importance of the economic power change in favor of China Accordingly, China has been closing the gap with the U.S in GDP per capita. While the GDP per capita of China was %8 of the U.S' in 2000, this number jumped to %28 by 2016 (Layne, 2018, p. 96. n. 35). In terms of innovation and technology, China is catching up with the U.S in space, computer technology and artificial intelligence, visible by many recent developments (Layne, 2018, p. 96). What is more, the decline of the dominance of the U.S is noticeable to many practitioners, as the subject came to the fore at the meetings of the IMF and World Bank in 2015 (Weisman, 2015 cited in Layne, 2018, p. 97).

The Great Recession of revealed the partial inability of the U.S to accomplish its responsibility as the manager of the international economy. Accordingly, while the U.S was supposed to solve an economic crisis as an economic hegemon, it instead caused it. And, it has become the largest debtor of the world whereas the economic hegemon would be supposed to be the provider of the last resort in the international economy (Layne, 2018, p. 97). This was, Layne (2018) argues, admitted by the President Obama, who said that the engine of the global recovery can not only be the U.S, but everybody should play a role (Sanger and Landler, 2009 cited in Layne, 2018, p. 97) -which Layne Layne (2018, p.97) interprets as China, other emerging market, plus Germany. The declining of the U.S leadership on the global economic leadership became visible when the U.S was unable to convince Germany to pursue the policy of economic stimulus in 2009 to recover from recession (Layne, 2018, pp. 97-98) In sum, the ability of the U.S to manage and lead the international economy has been decreasing.

Besides, the institutional base of the pax-Americana has started to be challenged recently. The institutions that represent the order is weakening as there are demands for greater power sharing in organizations such as IMF, World Bank and the United Nations Security Council. Another indicator in this respect is that the G-8 was expanded into G-20 in 2008 for a greater voice for emerging markets in international economic affairs, due to the insistence from China and other major emerging powers (Layne, 2018, pp. 99-100). For Layne (2018), the emergence of G-20 implies three things. First, it is the confirmation of the declining of the relative power of the U.S. Secondly, it demonstrates that there is a power shift from Euro-Atlantic political landscape to Asia, as G-20 includes six countries from the region. Finally, that G-20

has emerged as the central organ of international economic management shows that there is a dramatic decline for the U.S and Europe as the manager of the international economy (Wolf, 2010 cited in Layne, 2018, p. 100).

As well as challenges and demands to change in existing structures, new institutions which could constitute a parallel international order have been created recently such as Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), backed by China; BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, the Eurasian Economic Union, the Collective Security Treaty Organization and Shanghai Cooperation Organization. Although it is not certain whether they can remain and be effective, Layne (2018) argues that at least symbolically, these institutions show the decline of the U.S-led international order and the emergence of new powers which demands recognition (Layne, 2018, p.100).

Besides the AIIB which is envisioned as a rival to IMF and World Bank, China also had an ambitious initiative: One Belt and One Road (OBOR), likened to 'new Silk Road'. It was seen as a new major institution to promote economic development in Asia. Regarded by some as the Chinese version of the Marshall Plan, OBOR is considered as an apparatus to extend the influence of China (Layne, 2018, p. 101-102). Taken together, Layne (2018) argues, the AIIB and OBOR indicate that the power of the U.S recedes, and they challenge the pax-Americana both in terms of geopolitics, international economic leadership, and international institutions. Significantly, although the U.S opposed to the AIIB, it failed persuade its allies not to join. With the words of Layne (2018), "in the face of China's growing power, the United States could not keep its allies onside" (Layne, 2018, p. 102).

Last but not least, the monopoly of the U.S in the soft power has ended after the Great Recession. The status and ideational power of the U.S has been damaged and the idea that free markets, democracy and globalization -the Washington Consensus- are the only viable route for economic and political progress has been challenged. Based on its own culture, diplomacy and attractiveness, China has become capable of developing its own soft power (Layne, 2018, pp. 100-101).

In sum, Layne (2018) argues that the days of pax-Americana are numbered. The reason is that, international rules and institutions reflect the distribution of power, or, "who rules make the rules". Therefore, the destiny of the international order is

related to the power transition dynamics between the existing and rising power. Hence, when the balance of power changes significantly compared to the time that the order was created, a new order that reflect the new balance of power will replace the old one (Layne, 2018, pp. 104, 110, 111). And for Layne (2018), today, there is a power shift between the U.S and China that shifts the ground beneath the foundations of the pax-Americana (Layne, 2018, p. 110).

Similar with Brooks and Wohlforth (2016), Shifrinson (2020) argues that the rise of China is overrated to pose a challenge for the U.S. both policymakers and many scholars exaggerate the challenge of rising states, and particularly the rise of China. The argument goes that, the rising powers often face with systemic constraints to challenge the declining powers such as other rivals. Then, they do not have the comfort to focus solely on the declining power, because doing that would weaken rising Powers against other potential challengers who they generally have to face. On the contrary, he states, rising powers can sometimes cooperate with the declining state "contain or weaken" those potential challenges to the rising power (Shifrinson, 2020, p. 178).

Accordingly, for Shifrinson (2020), rising states do not inherently pursue a competitive strategy against the decliners but have a variety of strategies based on the balance of power calculations. When risers need help against other competitors, for instance in multipolarity, they can employ a supportive strategy and commit some resources to fortify the position of the declining state (Shifrinson, 2020, pp. 183-185). On the other hand, rising states may employ predatory strategies in some situations. For instance, predatory strategies may be adopted when the declining state has no additive value against other challengers. Alternatively, there would be an absence of other major powers such as in bipolarity (*and I would say unipolarity*) and the declining state would be the last obstacle for the rising power for regional or global hegemony. Then, predatory strategies would be attractive (Shifrinson, 2020, pp. 185-186). Finally, there is a mixed strategy, where rising powers would pursue gradual advances at the expense of the declining state, yet can tactically cooperate in case of tension with other powers. Mixed strategies are especially likely to be employed "…when a declining state is at least as militarily threatening as the next-largest challenger to the rising state, and/or is the only threat present but can still militarily penalise predation." (Shifrinson, 2020, p. 187).

When this framework is applied to the rise of China, Shifrinson (2020) is cautious to declare China as a challenger and argues that China employs a mixed strategy with both supportive and predatory features (Shifrinson, 2020, p. 190). The military activities of China have mostly been seen in territories where China has territorial claims and did not follow a unilateral approach to resolve existing disputes. Moreover, he goes on, China has not increased its share of military spending in more than a decade, has sustained a minimal nuclear posture and has not tried to establish an anti-U.S alliance in East Asia (Shifrinson, 2020, pp. 189-190). Furthermore, the threat environment for China would not allow to challenge the U.S without undermining its own security as it lies in a geography with potential rivals such as India, Japan, and (maybe) Russia (Shifrinson, 2020, pp. 191-193 & pp. 195-196). Finally, he predicts that the U.S will remain ahead of China in terms of military power in the foreseeable future (Shifrinson, 2020, pp. 196-197), let alone the significant capabilities of China's neighbors which can prevent China from projecting power to its own near abroad (Shifrinson, 2020, p. 198).

All in all, Shifrinson argues that, combined together, these factors show that China does not have opportunities to readily challenge the U.S, but indeed may wish to cooperate with the U.S against other major players (Shifrinson, 2020, p. 199).

What about the future? He thinks that, although China can develop more of an assertive strategy in the future, it will still depend upon its threat environment (Shifrinson, 2020, p. 190). If the rise of China slows and it faces with difficulties to gain sufficient military and economic capabilities to challenge the U.S, it will adopt a more supportive strategy towards the U.S. Yet, if it continues to grow and develop its economic & military capabilities, it can pursue a more mixed or challenging strategy towards the U.S (Shifrinson, 2020, pp. 199-202).

According to Mearsheimer (2021), U.S policymakers did not concern with China at the end of the Cold War, although China showed signs of potential for power even back then. Moreover, instead of slowing the rise of China, they pursued a policy of engagement, which encouraged the rise. The idea was to integrate China into the existing system, in order to turn it into "a peace-loving democracy and a responsible stakeholder in a U.S-led international order." (Mearsheimer, 2021).

However, the outcome is not like what was expected. Unsurprisingly for (Mearsheimer, 2021), China has been acting with a realist logic. And, instead of adopting liberal values at home while embracing the status quo in international politics, he suggests that China became more repressive and ambitious as it rose. Therefore, the engagement policy failed, as it did not prevent the rivalry between the two once China grew wealthy. What we have today is intense security competition which can be called a new Cold War (Mearsheimer, 2021).

Mearsheimer (2021) asserts that the U.S has recently started to act in accordance with the dictates of realism. Accordingly, it started to perceive the ambitions of China as threatening and aimed to check China's continued rise. While between the 1980s and 2017 the policy of engagement with China persisted, things started to change in 2017 with the Trump Administration. A crucial point is that, although President Obama took a tougher stance against China, it was more of the same for engagement. The 'pivot to Asia' in 2011, according to Mearsheimer (2021), is not a deviation from engagement, as no meaningful steps were taken in the direction for containment. The actual change for him came in 2021 with President Trump in Office. Then, engagement was abandoned, great power competition returned, and containment strategy was started to be pursued. Biden Administration has also, contrary to expectations, adopted containment against China (Mearsheimer, 2021).

In this debate, the argument and assumptions of this study similar with Layne (2018) and Mearsheimer (2021). To set the debate, I borrowed some ideas from both pieces. Yet, there are some separative factors. Whereas Layne (2018) moves from the power shift between the U.S and makes inferences regarding the future of the international order, my research has no intention to do that. The significant difference with this study and Mearsheimer (2021) is that, he asserts that the tougher stance of Obama Administration did not make much difference and the U.S started to behave in realist manner (*can be read it as in containing manner)* with the Trump Administration. However, I will later claim that Obama Administration implemented a balancing strategy.

Having reviewed the literature on underbalancing and U.S-China relations in recent years, I will illustrate my theoretical framework in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter introduces a neoclassical realist theory of why balancing fails. It privileges systemic variables, but focuses on the balancing behaviors of threatened states, as balancing occurs successfully or fails to appear at the state level. After briefly explaining the merits of theory in international politics, I discuss alternative definitions of balancing and conceptualize what balancing refers to in this paper. Then, the following section explains the types of balancing in the literature and which grouping of balancing is used in this paper to understand the balancing strategies of states. Finally, I go over my hypothesis about balancing and balancing failures.

3.1. Merits of International Relations Theories

International politics examine the political relations between sovereign states (Sönmezoğlu, 2017, p. 587). By their nature, these relations are quite complicated to understand. Then, theories are used to simplify the reality of political relations. They emphasize some factors and ignore others (Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 10). One can liken the function of theories to lenses. Just like lenses help people see and understand reality, international relations (IR) theories help us make sense of international politics.

By simplifying this complex world of international politics, theories are helpful to make generalizations based on broad patterns and make predictions for the future. In the words of Mearsheimer (2001, pp. 7-8), "...political phenomena are highly complex, ... precise political predictions are impossible without theoretical tools...". We, the students of international relations who try to understand or engage with international politics, cannot understand the world without this function of the theories. Aware or unaware, all students and practitioners of international relations

use theories, as one cannot escape the fact that the complex world cannot be understood without the theories that simplify reality (Mearsheimer, 2001, pp. 8-9). This paper proposes such a theoretical framework to understand the complex world of balancing over the course of the last three decades.

3.2. What is Balancing?

IR concepts are often elusive, and hard to observe in real life. Therefore, defining them has significant implications for making sense of these concepts. However, the definitions of concepts may very well be contested. Although frequently used, balancing is one such disputed term. Consequently, it is possible to find alternative definitions of balancing in the literature.

The existing definitions of balancing can be divided into two baskets. The first group focus on the threatened state's attempt to increase its own relative power or capabilities by balancing. For instance, this focus is clear on the definition of Morgenthau and Thompson (1950), who define balancing as "the attempt on the part of one nation to counteract the power of another by increasing its strength to a point where it is at least equal, if not superior, to the other nation's strength" (Morgenthau and Thompson 1950, p. 103 cited in He, 2012, p.160). It is clear to see the focus on enhancing the relative power of the threatened state in Elman (2002) as well. He defines balancing as "a countervailing policy designed to improve abilities to prosecute military missions to deter and/or defeat another state." (Elman, 2002, p.8 cited in He, 2012, p.159).

The same focus is visible in Walt (1987)'s definition, although his emphasis is on increasing one's power is on alliances. For him, balancing is forming an alliance with other states against a significant external threat (Walt, 1987, p.17). Art et al. (2005) suggest that "Balancing refers to behavior designed to create a better range of outcomes for a state vis-`a-vis a state or coalition of states by adding to the power assets at its disposal, in an attempt to offset or diminish the advantage enjoyed by that other state or coalition" (Art et al., 2005, pp. 183-184). Similarly with these two definitions, Schweller (2010) offers that "balancing means the creation or aggregation of military power through internal mobilization or the forging of alliances to prevent or deter the territorial occupation or the political and military domination of the state by a foreign power or coalition." (Schweller, 2010, p. 9). The

crucial difference between Schweller (2010)'s definition and the former two definitions of balancing is that Schweller (2010)'s definition includes the internal means besides the external means.

The second group of balancing, on the other hand, defines balancing in a broader and encompassing way. Accordingly, these definitions do not just focus on increasing its relative power in balancing but also on decreasing the rival's relative power. For instance, Crawford (2008, p.3) defines balancing behavior *as any effort by a state to increase its relative power over a perceived threat*. The emphasis is crucial because these efforts include the balancing state's attempts to improve its relative power *by decreasing the relative power of the rival.* Accordingly:

"If State A has five chips, and Threat B has ten, A can balance against B either by adding one chip to its own stack or subtracting one chip from B's. If A can do both at the same time by adding (that is, allying with) one from B's stack, it is a real coup. But that is not necessary to improve its position, for just by taking B down to nine—neutralizing one of B's chips if you will—A can increase the relative strength of its five." (Crawford, 2008, p.3).

Likewise, Nexon (2009, p. 342) argues that states balance with the motivation "to reduce their vulnerability to political subjugation—or loss of control over territory or vital interests—by either enhancing their own capabilities, pooling their capabilities, or reducing the capabilities of a threatening actor." He (2012) offers a similar definition. Accordingly, he argues that balancing is a state strategy to change its relative power compared to its rival for its advantage, which aims to pursue security under anarchy (He, 2012, p. 156). He suggests that increasing its own power is not the only way a state can enhance its relative power. Instead, it can also decrease the power of its rival (He, 2012, p. 160-161).

In this study, the definition of balancing is closer to the second group than the first group. The reason is to be as broad as possible and, as discussed in the next section, to encompass as much balancing strategy as possible. To this end, I borrow the definitions of Crawford (2008) and He (2012). Then, in this study, balancing means the following: "*the strategy of state(s) to alter the relative power equilibrium to its favor vis-à-vis the rival(s) to pursue security*."

The way I define balancing implies the attributes of my operationalization of the concept of balancing. Similar to my definition, I look at He (2012) to help me operationalize the concept and borrow his four attributes of states (He, 2012, p. 161-163). Accordingly, I assume that balancing is a behavior of states. Secondly, my assumption in this study is that states balance in pursuit of security. A threat to the security of a state may arise internally, but this research focuses on external threats to the security of a state. Furthermore, as I discussed in introduction, although I regard the focus on survival for the ultimate external security concern, I also touch upon the issue of polarity to define a threat. Thirdly, balancing should have a particular target, such as a most potent state, most threatening state, or a traditional rival. Finally, as my conceptualization of balancing hints, balancing aims to change the relative power against the rival for the advantage of the balancer. Since shifting the equilibrium in the relative balance of power is a two-way street *-as one can try to increase its own power or try to decrease the power of its rival to shift the equilibrium in its favor-*, this operationalization would allow me to catch balancing strategies that aim to undermine the rival's power. The balancing efforts can be likened to a car race. Just like states aim to change relative power to their favor by balancing, cars try not to be passed by the next cars in car races. Two ways can realize this purpose: Either the car that aims to protect its position can go faster *-increase its own power* or force its competitor *-the threatening car-* to decline its speed *-undermine its rival*.

Before turning into a discussion of balancing strategies to show how the balancing strategies of the U.S are analyzed in the following chapters, I should first define and operationalize the concept of power. For power, I borrow the definition of Mearsheimer (2001) and assert that power is the "specific assets or material resources that are available to a state" (Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 57). Two kinds of power exist; military power and latent power. Based on the size and strength of a state's military forces to a great extent, military power defines the state's power in international relations in effect. Therefore, when I use the term power, it primarily refers to military power. However, privileging military power does not mean ignoring latent power. It means the socio-economic bases of the military power, and it is based on the wealth and population size of a state (Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 55-56). Moreover, given that I focus on material power, I adopt the criteria of Walt

(1985) to measure power: Size of population, gross national (*or domestic*) product, size of armed forces, and defense expenditure (Walt, 1985, p. 34).

3. 3. How to Classify Balancing Strategies

Balancing strategies can be grouped in multiple ways. They can be divided into internal and external balancing, hard and soft balancing, overt and covert balancing, and positive and negative balancing.

The classification of balancing as internal and external belongs to Waltz (1979). Both types focus on the use of military means against the threat. What differentiates them is the source of the capabilities that are used to balance. Accordingly, internal balancing means that the main military dependence of the states is on themselves. Then, in internal balancing, states balance their rival through internal means by relying on their own capabilities. In external balancing, on the other hand, there is balancing through external means and greater reliance on the capabilities of external allies (Waltz, 1979, p. 168). In effect, states can internally balance by some combination of internal mobilization, military innovations, adopting successful military strategies and technology, domestic military build-up, while they can use external balancing by forming (counter-balancing) alliances (Lobell, 2018, p. 595 & (He, 2012, p. 159).

There is also another way of classifying balancing strategies: hard and soft balancing. Hard balancing is argued to focus on the overall balance of power and aims to form a coalition to check the power of the dominant state. On the other hand, soft balancing does not pursue a shift in the overall distribution of power, but rather, 'it seeks to obtain better outcomes within it" (Walt, 2005, p. 110).

Soft-balancing is argued to occur under several conditions. Firstly, the second-tier powers in the system should be concerned by the power and military behavior of the hegemon; however, their sovereignty should not be challenged seriously. Secondly, the dominant states should be a major source of public goods in terms of economy and security, which cannot easily be substituted. Finally, the dominant power in the system should not be able to retaliate against the soft balancing efforts of the others because these efforts are not apparent, or they do not directly challenge the power of the dominant state with military means (Paul, 2005, p. 59). According to Paul (2005),

soft balancing behavior has become attractive for second-tier major powers to challenge the U.S in the post-Cold War era (Paul, 2005, p. 59). Accordingly, some major powers used non-military tools to delay, frustrate, and undermine unilateral U.S policies at the beginning of the millennia since directly challenging U.S preponderance would have been too costly. For instance, in the U.S war against Iraq, soft balancing was applied by using international institutions, economic statecraft, and diplomatic arrangements (Pape, 2005, pp. 9-10).

However, this is not the only way to define hard and soft balancing since He and Feng (2008) have a different classification for hard and soft balancing. Accordingly, he defines hard balancing as the efforts of states to increase the relative power of the state against the rival. Soft balancing, on the other hand, is defined as undermining the relative power of the threatening state through coordination with other states in a bilateral and/or multilateral way (He and Feng, 2008, p. 365 & p. 371)

According to He and Feng (2008), hard balancing can be achieved in two ways. 'Military hard balancing,' which he defines as the traditional internal and external balancing. As an alternative, a state can use non-military hard balancing, which means efforts to increase a state's or a group of states' relative power through non-military means (He and Feng, 2008, p. 372). Similarly, soft-balancing can occur through both military and non-military efforts. 'Military soft balancing refers to the use of military-related efforts to undermine the relative power of the rival, while 'non-military soft balancing' means a state's use of non-military means to undermine the relative power of its rival (He and Feng, 2008, p. 372-373).

The particular behaviors for the four types of balancing strategies (military hard balancing, non-military hard balancing, military soft balancing, and non-military soft balancing) are illustrated in Figure 1.

Definition	Military	Non-Military
Hard Balancing (increase a state's own power versus rivals)	**Military hard balancing** • internal military balancing: arms races, military mobilization • external military balancing: alliance formation	**Non-Military hard balancing** • strategic technology transfer to its allies • strategic economic aid to its allies
Soft Balancing (undermine the rival's relative power to increase security)	**Military soft balancing** • arms sales to the "enemy of the enemy" • arms control efforts targeting the enemy	**Non-military soft balancing** • economic sanctions and embargo • strategic non-cooperation

Table 1: The typology of hard vs. soft balancing strategies (He and Feng, 2008, p. 373)

Meijer and Simón (2021) offer another way to classify balancing strategies to understand the security relationship between great powers and secondary states for balancing purposes when the secondary power hedges. In effect, they are distinguishing between different versions of *external balancing*.

The first group is overt balancing. It refers to those types of relations in which states form alliances or security partnerships in ways that acknowledge and are specifically tailored to balance a particular target. Conversely, in covert balancing, the alliances or security partnerships are constructed in ways that cover the target of the balancing. Therefore, in covert balancing, the security relationship between the great power and secondary state is framed differently, unrelated to the purpose of balancing a third state (Meijer and Simón, 2021, p. 469).

What is covert in covert balancing is not the security cooperation but the cooperation's purpose (*and consequently, the balancing quality)*. Meijer and Simón (2021) argue that great powers use covert balancing as a response of great powers to adapt their balancing strategies to the restrictions of the alignment choices of the secondary states. By balancing covertly, they can simultaneously work around the hedging strategy of secondary states and create a latent capacity to balance a third power (*real target)* (Meijer and Simón, 2021, pp. 464-465).

These two types can be separated by examining how a great power frames its security cooperation with a secondary state in two critical dimensions: capabilities

and access. In terms of access, the great power would equip or help the secondary state develop capabilities specifically tailored to balance the targeting state in an overtly balancing relationship. In covert balancing, on the other hand, dual-purpose capabilities that constitute a latent balancing capacity are provided or assisted to be developed. In terms of access, in overt balancing instances, the military posture of the great power in the secondary state is stationed against the target state, with sort of capabilities to deter or fight. On the contrary, in covert balancing, the military existence of the great power in a secondary state is covered with other purposes but in a way that can be used for balancing efforts (Meijer and Simón, 2021, pp. 469-470).

The differences between the two types in these two dimensions are summarized in table 2.

	Overt balancing	*Covert balancing*
Purpose	Stated target	Dual purpose
	Publicly acknowledged target	Stated purpose (or cover) and unstated purpose (balancing)
Capabilities	Tailored (e.g. war-fighting and power projection)	Generic (e.g. enablers, logistics support)
Access	Permanent, hardened bases	Rotational deployment, non-hardened bases

Table 2: Overt and Covert Balancing (Meijer and Simón, 2021, p. 470)

The final typological category that one can classify balancing strategies is 'positive' and 'negative balancing.' Similar to the definition of soft-balancing of He and Feng (2008), He (2012) defines negative balancing as strategies or diplomatic efforts of states to undermine the power of a rival. On the other hand, positive balancing refers to strategies or efforts aiming to strengthen a state's own power in world politics (He, 2012, pp. 156-157). In line with how he describes balancing, as shown above, he argues that it is possible to further specify positive and negative balancing typology into subcategories according to the means of balancing. Accordingly, he finds four different balancing strategies: "negative military balancing, negative non-military

balancing, positive military balancing, and positive non-military balancing" (He, 2012, p. 157).

The specific state strategies categorized under each of the four groups are shown in table 3.

State Balancing Strategies under Anarchy			
Positive Balancing (increase a state's own power versus its rival) ⇓		Negative Balancing (undermine the rival's relative power vs. itself) ⇓	
1. Military Balancing —internal military balancing: arms races, military mobilization —external military balancing: alliance formation	2. Nonmilitary Balancing —strategic technology transfer to its allies —strategic economic aid to its allies	3. Military Balancing —military subversion —arms sales to the "enemy of the enemy" —arms control efforts targeting the enemy	4. Nonmilitary Balancing* —economic sanctions and embargo —strategic non-cooperation —institutional constraints

Table 3: The typology of states' positive and negative balancing strategies (He, 2012, p. 167).

Among these four typologies to classify balancing -internal vs. external, hard vs. soft, overt vs. covert, and positive vs. negative- I pick positive and negative balancing frameworks to analyze the balancing strategies of the states. The aim is to be as broad as possible and include as many balancing strategies as possible. The positive and negative balancing framework offers advantages in this sense. Besides including internal and external balancing in the positive military balancing section, it also subsumes other balancing strategies that other typologies would ignore (He, 2012, p. 157 & p. 165).

The concepts of 'internal vs. external balancing' are undoubtedly helpful, but they are narrow in the sense that they only explain balancing strategies that a state applies to increase its own power. Then, they miss instances where a state applies a balancing strategy to undermine its rival's power. 'Positive vs. negative balancing' framework would catch such strategies. The 'soft vs. hard balancing' framework seems quite similar to the positive vs. negative balancing framework at first glance. However, two reasons would lead me not to use it. First, soft balancing has multiple meanings, as shown above. Hence, using this framework would mislead. Secondly,

negative balancing embraces soft balancing, but soft balancing is not the only negative balancing strategy. Therefore, negative balancing is broader (He, 2012, p. 166). 'Overt and covert balancing' framework would be applicable for some cases; however, its applicability is too narrow. As discussed in its conceptualization above, it refers to different types of external balancing. This conceptualization is only used to explain the security cooperation of great power with a secondary state in the great powers' balancing attempt against a rising power. However, the explanatory power of this framework does not apply to the cases of this study. Due to these reasons, I choose the 'positive vs. negative balancing' framework to analyze balancing strategies in my cases.

3.4. Why Does Balancing Fail? An Alternative Explanation

For Schweller (2010), underbalancing refers to the situations "when the state does not balance or does so inefficiently in response to a dangerous and unappeasable aggressor, and the state's efforts are essential to deter or defeat it." According to him, underbalancing occurs when the supposedly-balancing state misperceives the intentions of the rising power, or if the threat is correctly perceived, the supposedly-balancing state fails to adopt wise politics against the threat due to domestic politics (Schweller, 2010, p. 10). Concurring with his definition, I define failure of balancing, or underbalancing, in line with my definition of balancing. Accordingly, it is "an unsuccessful attempt of a state to change the relative power against a rival to its own advantage, or even not attempting." Compared to the existing explanations I provided in the literature review above, I have an alternative explanation for why this failure occurs.

I base my explanation on the 'positive and negative balancing' framework. Accordingly, I consider 'military balancing' strategies in both positive and negative balancing types as 'main strategies', and treat 'non-military' balancing strategies as 'secondary 'strategies.' The reason for putting such emphasis on military means is that when it comes to balancing -*hence, trying to alter the relative power equilibrium to its favor*- military components of relative power matter more. Therefore, I assume that balancers states should employ at least one type of particular strategy to *either increase their military power* or *undermine their rival's military power.* However, I do not ignore non-military means; hence, I also expect them to constantly adopt at

least one particular strategy to *either increase their economic power* or *undermine their rival's economic power.*

Then, for balancing to work successfully and efficiently, I expect constancy in both main and secondary strategies. The cause of searching for constancy in at least one particular balancing method is efficiency. I assume that all balancing strategies require resources. Then, changing the balancing strategy against a particular threat without at least using one type overarchingly is a waste of resources in both ways. For instance, if a state tries to balance a rival internally, it allocates resources for a domestic military build-up. However, once it stops internal balancing efforts and begins to apply another military balancing strategy, it means a waste of resources in both methods, and crucially, this would undermine the probability of success to change relative power to its favor. Using the car race analogy again, one can liken going in a straight line along the path to the constancy in the balancing method. If the car that aims to maintain its position vis-à-vis the following car does not go straight along the circuit but changes its path over time, turns left after going straight, then goes back, then turns right, etc., then it is more likely to get passed by the next car. Hence, it fails to maintain its position vis-à-vis its rival.

Based on the discussion above, my testable hypotheses inferred from the examination of the empirical cases are the following.

H1: After perceiving the threat, when a state constantly adopts at least one balancing strategy from main (*positive military and negative military)* and secondary *(positive non-military and negative non-military)* balancing strategies over time, it is more likely to balance successfully.

H2: After the perception of threat, when there is an absence of the use of a constant, overarching balancing method from main and secondary balancing strategies, balancing effort is more likely to fail.

Finally, why would states fail to employ at least one balancing strategy constantly and instead adopt different balancing strategies at different times, which I expect to lead to failure in balancing? I predict that this result would arise due to some factors that would divert the attention of the balancing state from the main threat. This distraction may primarily occur due to the domestic politics of the balancing state. Over time, different decision-makers in foreign policy -either in the same

cabinet/administration or in different ones- may come to power. Then, their perception of the threat and how to cope with it may differ. However, as Schweller (2010) argues, "Balancing behavior requires the existence of a strong consensus among elites that an external threat exists and must be checked by either arms or allies or both (*or undermining the rival's power)[1]* (Schweller, 2010, p. 48). Alternatively, the foreign policy agenda of new elites may differ. Consequently, the balancing state may ignore the rising rival and prioritize different policy goals. Consequently, these factors may harm the elite consensus regarding the existence of a threat and/or how to overcome it. Other than domestic factors of the supposedly-balancing state, I would expect other geopolitical issues to divert the focus of the balancing state. A sudden crisis, for instance, may require the balancing state to spend energy to a greater degree than the main rival. I predict that states with extended security commitments over other states and/or regions may be exposed to this fate.

3.5. 'Engagement vs. Containment': Understanding the U.S. Response to China

Although the focus of this study is on balancing, two important terms need to be discussed: 'Engagement' vs. 'containment' since the response of the U.S. against the rise of China was debated with these conceptualizations. Accordingly, the idea of 'engagement' was understood as an instrument with the ultimate objective of integrating China into the rules-based order and transforming it in a more liberal state, with more domestic openness. On the other hand, the alternative approach, 'containment', considered China a rising power and consequently a threat to regional security and the international system. Therefore, according to this view, more realpolitik methods should be adopted to deter, contain, or constrain China (Shambaugh, 1996, pp. 184-185).

Containment is an elusive concept in terms of its goal and means, though. In terms of the goals of containment, for instance, Mearsheimer (2001) suggests slowing the economic growth of an adversary (Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 402). According to Art (2003), 'weakening the target state' is the aim of containment strategy (Art, 2003, pp. 113., cited in Silove, 2016, p. 52). Another account identifies the objective of

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[1] The emphasis is mine due to the discussion above on the definition of balancing and balancing strategies.

containment as "to check and over time reduce the [target state's] military power and geopolitical reach." (Gavin, 2015, p. 13., quoted in Silove, 2016, p. 52). Weakening the relative power of the rival is the common point in these definitions of objectives, which would put the containment under negative balancing of He (2012)'s framework.

In terms of the means of containment, it can be adopted through the enforcement of military stalemate, either by creating military alliances against the target state or by using limited military operations, and economic denial (Art, 2003, pp. 113-116., cited in Silove, 2016, p. 52). This definition suggests that it would either be negative military or negative non-military balancing within He (2012)'s framework, depending on whether military means or economic means are used.

However, it is hard to located containment into the framework of this study. The reason is that, He (2012) divides balancing strategies according to their intention: whether they intend to increase the power of balancing state, or whether they intend to undermine the rival's power. I, on the other hand, divide balancing strategies based on whether they aim to improve relative military power, or relative non-military power of the balancing state. Therefore, examined with this framework, containment is definitely a balancing strategy. But it needs a closer investigation to decide whether it is 'main' or 'secondary' balancing.

Conversely, the case is easier with engagement. My operationalization of balancing above hints that engagement is a case of underbalancing, since it lacks the intention of changing relative power.

3.6. Research Method

Social sciences are debates. They aim to understand the world with its structures and institutions created by human beings and the actions people take within those structures (Hancke, 2009, p. 12). Good research that all social scientists wish to create has two features: good ideas and good research design. And a good research design links question, debate, data, and argument convincingly, which transforms a plausible idea into a powerful argument (Hancke, 2009, pp. 10-11). Defined as "a body of practices, procedures, and rules used by researchers to offer insight into the workings of the world" (Lange, 2013, p. 3), methodology plays a crucial role here.

According to Mann (1981), only one methodology exists in social sciences with eight steps. These steps include; 1) formulation of the puzzle; 2) conceptualization of variables; 3) hypotheses; 4) establishment of sample; 5) operationalization of concepts; 6) gathering data; 7) analysis of the gathered data to test hypotheses; and, 8) conclusion (Mann, 1981 cited in Lange, 2013, pp. 3-4). These steps can help the structure of the methodology section.

Accordingly, my research puzzle is 'Why does balancing fail', and more specifically, 'why is it that the United States failed to balance against China?' My independent variable is a cohesive balancing strategy while balancing success/failure is the dependent variable of this study. My hypothesis is that the pursuit of cohesive balancing strategies will result in balancing success. Conversely, the lack of a cohesive balancing strategy will result in balancing failure.

My sample is U.S. balancing behavior during and after the Cold War, vis-à-vis the Soviet Union and China, respectively. The samples were selected to compare and contrast with each other. Comparative research can be done with different research designs. The two primary techniques are the most-similar systems design (MSSD) and the most-different systems design (MDSD). The former includes cases with similar background characteristics but the crucial difference in the outcome. The idea is that by comparing similar cases, it would be easier to trace the causal relationship between the dependent variable and explanatory variables. The MDSD means the opposite: the cases which differ in background conditions but produce a common outcome. The logic is to compare different cases to demonstrate that a causal relationship is observed despite contrasting cases. Therefore, one can say that the emphasis of the MSSD is on the independent variable(s), while the MDSD focuses on the dependent variable (Van der Heijden, 2014, pp. 37-40; Gerring and Cojocaru, pp. 399-400; Anckar, 2008, p. 390-394). MSSD uses an inductive approach to research where the researcher enjoys freedom in his/her quest for the independent variable(s). MDSD, on the other hand, adopts a deductive approach to test whether there is a causal relationship between an independent and dependent variable (Anckar, 2008, pp. 393-393).

Among these two types of research design, MSSD is the most suitable for the research interest of this study. This study focuses on explaining the effect of the

independent variable, namely the pursuit of cohesive balancing strategies on balancing success/failure. To this end, two similar cases are selected with the same country (the U.S.), and the same situation (facing a rival) resulted in a different outcome (balancing successfully vs. balancing failure). In terms of induction or deduction, this is more inductive than deductive, as it creates a generalizable hypothesis. However, the generated hypotheses are still tested on cases, so there is also a deductive side.

My concepts are operationalized as follows: In line with the definition of balancing provided above, the study's dependent variable, the balancing failure, is operationalized as the failure of a state to shift the balance of military and non-military power to its failure. On the other hand, the independent variable, the use of a consistent, cohesive, and overarching balancing strategy, is measured as constantly adopting a balancing method from both main and secondary balancing strategies. However, an inconsistent balancing strategy that lacks cohesion is the change of a balancing method from main and secondary balancing groups during different administrations and/or the failure to use both main and secondary balancing strategies.

I gathered data from primary and secondary sources on U.S. foreign and economic policy vis-à-vis the Soviet Union during the Cold War and China in the post-Cold War period. Namely, resources such as books, journal articles, memoirs, and speeches are used as the data to be analyzed.

In this study, I analyzed the gathered data by using comparative case studies and employing process tracing. Case studies offer an effective way to answer how and why questions since it is an in-depth investigation of phenomena in the empirical context in real life (Yin, 2009, pp. 8-18., cited in Blatter and Haverland, 2014, p. 59). I am using the comparative case study to examine patterns of change in the dependent variables with the variation in independent variables (Blatter and Haverland, 2012, ch.2., cited in Blatter and Haverland, 2014, p. 60). The balancing strategies of the U.S. against the Soviet Union during the Cold War and the balancing strategies of the U.S. against China in the post-Cold War period are compared based on the framework provided above. Among the types of case studies, this study chooses hypothesis-generating case studies, which help develop more

general theoretical prepositions based on examining the case(s) (Levy, 2008, p. 5). The comparison of cases generates the hypothesis.

Within cases, process-tracing is adopted. Process-tracing methods are almost the only method to study causal mechanisms, allowing researchers to make within-case inferences on the causality (Beach and Pedersen, 2013, pp. 1-2). There would be three different research purposes for using process tracing methods. The first is the theory-testing process tracing, where there is a hypothesized causal mechanism in several cases of a phenomenon. Then, the empirical evidence in a selected case is evaluated to see whether hypothesized causal mechanism exists or not. The second purpose is to build a theory about a causal mechanism that can be generalized to a number of given phenomena. The final purpose is to explain a historical outcome that is not theory-centric like the previous two purposes. Instead, this purpose is outcome-centric because it does not aim to test or build a theory but provides a sufficient explanation of the outcome (Beach and Pedersen, 2013, p. 11). This study uses theory-building process-tracing to build a theory about a causal mechanism between the lack of cohesive balancing strategy and balancing failure.

The main limits of my methodology concern generalizability from a small-N study and limiting factors of small-N comparative analysis. Namely, the hypothesis of this study was inferred from the comparison of only these two selected cases, and therefore, restricted to the analysis of these two cases. Secondly, there is always a possibility that other factors besides the independent variable of the study might matter (Hancke, 2009, p. 78).

Having set the theoretical framework, I will continue with an example of successful balancing in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4

Successful Balancing: U.S. Cold War Strategy vis-à-vis the Soviet Union

This chapter exemplifies a successful balancing strategy in light of the framework developed in the previous chapter. To this end, it first describes how Washington's threat perception vis-à-vis the USSR was shaped. Then, it portrays the U.S.'s main and secondary balancing strategies against the USSR.

4.1. Threat Perception

The U.S. became the sole great power to have successfully become a regional hegemon, as its attempt to dominate Western Hemisphere during the 19th century bore fruit (Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 170, p. 236). By 1850, it already had the sufficient economic power to be a great power, but it did not set up a potent military force to challenge major European powers. By1900, it was the most powerful economic force on the earth and had already established the Western Hemisphere as its sphere of influence (Mearsheimer, 2001, pp. 235-236).

With the Monroe Doctrine, laid out in 1823 by then-President James Monroe, the U.S. declared that it would not be involved in wars in Europe, and in return, it would neither allow European powers to occupy new soils in Western Hemisphere nor permit them to ally with a state in Western Hemisphere (Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 247). The idea was to prevent European powers from threatening the security of the U.S. by projecting power onto the Western Hemisphere (Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 236). In line with this thinking, the U.S. did not care about the balance of power in Europe for a good reason there was not serious peer competitor to itself (Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 236 & pp. 252-253).

After achieving regional hegemony, what great powers would be concerned about is preventing their rivals from doing some, achieving regional hegemony in their part of

the world. It is how the U.S. behaved, seeking to balance whenever a peer competitor was rising (Mearsheimer, 2001, pp. 236-237). More specifically, when the situation arose during World War I that Germany would become a dominant power in Europe and European forces could not balance it themselves, it did not hesitate to enter into war to prevent Germany from achieving that (Mearsheimer, 2001, pp. 253-254). While it did not stay in Europe during the 1920s and 1930s after the defeat of Germany, it entered into World War II again only after there was a strong chance that Germany would become a regional hegemon in Europe, and European powers could not stop it (Mearsheimer, 2001, pp. 254-255).

The U.S. and USSR were allies during World War II and fought against Axis powers together. Towards the end of the war, the imagination regarding the postwar settlement started to be formed. Accordingly, then-U.S. Franklin Roosevelt had the idea of granting a more prominent position in international politics by integrating the USSR into the system. The expectation was to create a more stable order in the postwar period. He was not looking at the USSR from an ideological prism and hence, did not regard its ideological stance as an obstacle to having cooperative relations. The idea goes that the defeat of the Axis powers would bring the archenemies of the USSR down and hence, allay its insecurities (Gaddis, 2005, p. 9). USSR, in Roosevelt's mind, was one of the policemen alongside the U.S., Great Britain, and China, who would create the order, and maintain it against the rest of the world (Memorandum, Roosevelt-Molotov conversation, May 29, 1942, FRUS: 1942, II, 568-69 cited in Gaddis, 2005, p. 10). However, this "Four Policemen" concept of the President was not naïve about the great power rivalries, as there were balancing considerations among the four (Gaddis, 20015, pp. 10-11).

While during World War II there were seven great powers – France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Japan, the U.S., and the USSR -the end of the war created a new distribution of power. Accordingly, the number of great powers decreased to three namely Great Britain, the U.S., and the USSR. However, Great Britain was declining so much that its power became inferior compared to the other two. Then, as a result, the other two were left as the superpowers (Morgenthau, 1948, p. 361). They were more potent than any other power alone or a possible combination of other states (Morgenthau, 1948, p. 363).

When it comes to the two superpowers, the capabilities of the U.S. were superior to those of the USSR. Indeed, the capabilities of the USSR were closer to Great Britain (and even France) than to the U.S. (Westad, 2010, p. 11). While British capabilities were near Soviet capabilities immediately after the War, they decreased in the following years, and a significant gap emerged (Avey, 2012, pp. 159-160). The USSR enjoyed a considerable advantage compared to the other European powers except for Great Britain. Accordingly, it had a two-to-one advantage compared to the capabilities of France, Italy and West Germany combined between 1945-1953 (Avey, 2012, pp. 159-160).

Taking a closer look would reveal the greatness of U.S. power in 1945. Its enormous production capacity during the War created an unparalleled -age of prosperity. The War boosted the gross national product of the U.S. by 60%, and in 1945, its gross national product was two times bigger than that of the USSR. Moreover, it had two-thirds of the gold reserves in the world and enjoyed three-fourths of the invested capital, while its manufacturing capacity constituted half of the world. At the same time, the most powerful war machine was created during the war while the atomic monopoly was in reach in 1945. As a result, Truman became the president of the world's greatest economic and military power (Leffler, 2010, p. 67).

However, the U.S. was not in a fully secure position. To begin with, the War demolished German and Japanese power, and Britain, as mentioned above, started to be weakened. Moreover, Western Europe came near political and economic collapse, and there was a civil war in China. As a result, the situation in the world after the War created a favorable moment for USSR to spread its influence (Buhite and Hamel, 1990, p. 370). The bottom line is that there was no remaining power in Europe to check the Soviet Union.

The U.S. was cognizant of this situation of imbalance and the growing capabilities of the USSR. According to some U.S. officials, the USSR would replace Germany and Japan as the dominant power in Europe and Asia (Buhite and Hamel, 1990, p. 370). The concern was that no combination of Western European powers would prevent the Soviet preponderance (FRUS, 1945: Conference of Berlin, Vol. 1. p. 259, cited in Avey, 2012, p. 161). The capabilities of the USSR were not less of a source of apprehension. Accordingly, in April 1945, it was argued that the USSR enjoyed

advantages in natural resources and manpower and could be stronger within several years than Germany or Japan had ever become (Copeland, 2000, p. 151 cited in Avey, 2012, p. 160). The estimation of the Joint Intelligence Staff was that the USSR had the ability to advance its economic and military capabilities faster than any other great power (JIS 85/26, July 9, 1946, Records of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (RJCS), pt. 2: 1946-53, reel 1, cited in Avey, 2012, p. 161). By 1947, the decline of Great Britain and the preeminent status of the Soviet Union in Europe become widely known and accepted. U.S. Undersecretary of State Dean Acheson said that "The British are finished … [and] …there are only two powers left" (Isaacson and Thomas, 1986, p. 393).

USSR itself fed these concerns with its actions. The perception of the world in the eyes of the strategic culture of the USSR was that a hostile world surrounded the USSR and its survival, as well as its development, were the most important objectives (Pecnatnov, 2010, p. 91). The security was understood in terms of the amount of territory – "…the more you have got, the safer you are (Washington Post, January 23, 1952, cited in Pecnatnov, 2010, p. 92). This understanding was reinforced by the experience of World War II and revealed itself in the form of defensive expansion. The idea was to"secure" the borders. Accordingly, Germany had to be weakened; the Soviet borders had to be extended to the territories Russia lost in World War I but retook in World War II. In the western borders, the expectation was to share the border with friendly states; in the Far East, the fate of Japan had to be similar to Germany's, and the revenge of War in 1904-1905 had to be taken. In the southwest, the objective was to create an enclave in Iran and have influence over the Turkish straits. As Molotov later suggested, the idea behind the expansionist policy after the War was "to extend the frontier of … [the] Motherland to the maximum" (McClellan, 1992, pp. 17-19 cited in Trachtenberg, 1999, p. 19). These expansionist goals were not so different from the tsarist regime (Trachtenberg, 1999, p. 19).

Soviet diplomats were optimistic that the world they envisaged -as expressed above- was compatible to a great extent with the vital security interests of the U.S. and Great Britain. The war helped them revise the image of Western democracies in their eyes; they had depicted the U.S. as a remote power that would probably leave Europe after the War (Pecnatnov, 2010, pp. 92-93). Moreover, they were optimistic about the

possibility of divergences between the U.S. and Britain, and they were happy to divide the world into spheres of influence: the U.S. as a dominant power in the Western Hemisphere, while the Soviet Union and Great Britain would have their own fair share of Europe respectively (Pecnatnov, 2010, p. 93). They were willing to have good relations with the West for several reasons:-prevention of the resurrection of Germany and Japan, recognition of the USSR's new borders, and its sphere of influence. Therefore, the desire was to achieve the geopolitical agenda of the USSR – gaining the legitimate spoils of War- by cooperating with the West (Pecnatnov, 2010, pp. 94-95).

It was the understanding of defensive expansion that guided the policies of the USSR about its borders. In early 1945, its army occupied most of Eastern Europe, and the signals were that the USSR would dominate the region (Trachtenberg, 1999, p. 4). It formally incorporated some states into itself while turning some others into satellite states (Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 199). The USSR refused to withdraw from Iran as promised in the wartime agreement, and instead wanted to control northern Iran by endorsing leftist regimes in the territory that its army had occupied (Trachtenberg, 1999, pp. 36-37). Another issue on the southern border was regarding Turkey. The USSR demanded military bases on the Turkish straits, as it wanted to control these strategic waterways, just like other great powers were doing in their backyard (Trachtenberg, 1999, p. 37).

These actions shaped American thinking regarding the USSR. To begin with, President Truman had a different idea regarding the postwar international order. In his conception, non-aggression, self-determination, national sovereignty, open trade, freedom of seas, and access to raw materials were taking an important place, while changing territories with force against people's will was not welcomed (Leffler, 2010, p. 68, p. 71; Truman's address to the U.N. Forum, January 17, 1944, in Appendix to the Congressional Record, vol. 90, pt. 8 (78th Cong., 2nd sess.), A265–66., cited in Leffler, 2010, p. 68). Then, Soviet policies were against his description of world politics. Moreover, these actions led to a recognition that if the U.S. did not act to prevent the USSR from growing significantly, the eventual possibility would be that the USSR would overwhelm the American sphere (Copeland, 2000, p. 147). Then, Truman felt annoyed by these actions of the USSR: "I'm tired of babying the

Soviets" (Ferrell, 1980, pp. 79-80 cited in Leffler, 2010, p. 72). As a result, he took a tougher stance:

"...Unless Russia is faced with an iron fist and strong language another war is in the making. Only one language do they understand - 'How many divisions have you?" (Truman to Byrnes (unsent), January 5, 1946, in Poen, Strictly Personal, p. 40. cited in Trachtenberg, 1999, p. 38).

Truman's way of thinking was not the only reason to stand against the USSR. There was the geopolitical-security side of the coin. The two world wars of the century taught the U.S. that the U.S. should not let any prospective competitor control the Eurasian landmass either through subversion or aggression. The idea was that potential rivals acquiring resources in this region could increase their military capabilities and then infiltrate the Western hemisphere. Therefore, any power(s) who wish(es) to seek to dominate Eurasia should be viewed as malign (Leffler, 2010, p. 68; Leffler, 1984, p. 356). In fact, as mentioned above, balancing the prospective regional hegemons and particularly preventing the domination of Europe was the reason why the U.S. fought the two world wars.

Then, actions had to be taken to balance the USSR for two reasons. First, it was rising as a potential peer competitor with the prospect of dominating Europe and North Asia (Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 55). Furthermore, due to the power situation in Europe -Germany was devastated, and France and Britain were not powerful enough- no local power was existing to do that. Hence, the only state with sufficient power to stop USSR was the U.S. (Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 256 & p. 336).

4.2. Main Balancing Strategy: Alliance Formation

According to George Kennan, five industrial and military power centers were vital to the national security of the U.S. These were central Europe and Germany, Great Britain, Japan, the U.S., and the USSR. And the primary interest of the U.S. had to be making sure that no other centers than the hostile USSR fell under enemy control (National War College lecture, "Contemporary Problems of Foreign Policy, September 17, 1948, cited in Gaddis, 2005, p. 29). Russian domination of Europe or Asia should be prevented, even by force, so that the resources in these regions could not be mobilized against the U.S. (Giffin, early February 1946, cited in Leffler, 1984,

p. 371). In order to achieve this purpose, the main strategy that was utilized was alliance formation (*positive military balancing with He (2012)'s framework (He, 2012, pp. 166-167))* either on multilateral or bilateral bases.

From its foundation, the U.S. had been reluctant to form alliance relations with outside/European powers. In his farewell address, founding president George Washington highlighted the importance of commercial relations and the "detached and distant" geography of the U.S. He said that the destiny, peace, and prosperity of the U.S. should not be entangled with Europe. In his words, the U.S. had the "true policy to steer clear of permanent alliances with any portion of the foreign world" (Washington's Farewell Address 1796, n.d.).

However, despite this historical reluctance to form alliances, alliance formation was the main strategy that the U.S. *adopted to alter the relative power equilibrium to its favor vis-à-vis the USSR to pursue security.* The essence of the strategy of the Truman administration was cooperating with allies to contain the USSR (Bowie and Immerman, 1998, p. 11). Indeed, having military alliances with Western European powers and Japan (and having military forces there) was the central pillar of the U.S. grand strategy throughout the Cold War (Walt, 1989, p. 5). This strategy was adopted *constantly, i.e., it did not change with who occupies the office.* As will be elaborated below, the U.S. formed a chain of alliances in regions that mattered most to the security of the U.S., maintained them throughout the Cold War, and arguably, these networks of alliances helped the U.S. to achieve its foreign policy triumph, succeeding in containing the USSR (Menon, 2003, p. 2).

The merit and the necessity of forming alliances were very well described in Eisenhower Administration's NSC 162/2. It was argued that it was impossible for the U.S. to "meet its defense needs, even at exorbitant cost, without the support of allies" (Gaddis, 2005, p. 149). According to Secretary Dulles, Secretary of State in the Eisenhower Administration, alliances were "the cornerstone of security for the free nations" and even more important than the nuclear capabilities (Dulles, 1954, pp. 355-357 cited in Gaddis, 2005, p. 150).

The benefits of alliances were twofold. First of all, the idea was that the manpower reserves and economic resources of the allies of the U.S. would be a vital component, while their loss would shift the global balance of power (Gaddis, 2005, p. 150). So,

the objective was to maintain the favorable distribution of power to be able to win in case of a general war, and allies would be beneficial in this aspect. For instance, what made Turkey an attractive candidate for NATO membership in the eyes of the U.S. was, besides its geopolitical location that would be helpful to contain USSR, that Turkey could provide 18 brigades alone at a time Western Europe could only provide 20 overall (Bilge-Criss, 2012, p. 15). Truman Administration, in particular, viewed alliances as a security instrument. The U.S formed alliances with countries that could provide considerable assistance in case of war and were vital for the security of the U.S. because of their geographical locations (Gaddis, 2005, p. 151).

The second part of the thinking was that alliances would serve forward presence purposes around the USSR. Accordingly, the overseas military presence in the territories of the allies close to the USSR was decisive for the U.S. air force, especially in case of war (Gaddis, 2005, p.150). In addition, the deterrent purpose of the alliances was emphasized. Accordingly, Eisenhower Administration expected that forming alliances would extend the security umbrella over its members, and in return, this would serve as a deterrent if the USSR (*or China)* wanted to attack or subdue a particular U.S. ally (Gaddis, 2005, p. 151).

Among the regions that the USSR should not control from the perspective of the national security of the U.S., the Old World had primary importance. Its industrial infrastructure, natural resources, and skilled labor should not be allowed to be harnessed by the USSR (Leffler, 1992, p. 407). Therefore, arguably, the most important alliance for this strategy was founded in Europe. The military balance and, in particular, the military balance in Europe was not so favorable for the U.S. After the end of World War II, the U.S. quickly demobilized its forces, which had "severely weakened the world's most powerful military machine" (Buhite and Hamel, 1990, pp. 382-383). The size of the overall American defense forces decreased up to 1.5 million in mid-1948 from 12 million. Within them, the Army was in the worst shape, as its size declined from 6 million in 1945 to 530.000, which was not meeting the peacetime target of 700.000 (Kugler, 1990, p. 25).

Moreover, their training and strength were not enough. The general situation of the army was severely summed up by the then Army Chief of Staff General as the American army "could not fight its way out of a wet paper beg" (Blair, 1987, pp. 3-

29 cited in Kugler, 1990, p. 25). The Navy and Air Force were not so different from the Army. The levels of both of them were below the recommended estimates. As a result, almost the whole source of American power was resting on the atomic monopoly that the U.S. had been enjoying, and it was not in good shape in 1948 either. (Kugler, 1990, p. 26).

The USSR, on the other hand, had a different picture. It was heavily outnumbering the West in terms of the size of its forces and the weapons. The more heated the Cold War became, the more the manpower and the training of the Soviet forces were increased by 1948-1949. This superiority gave the Soviets the chance to launch a quick attack into West Germany if needed. Moreover, the army of the USSR had not been demobilized at the same level as the West, and they also enjoyed massive reserves inside the country. In sum, the USSR had an overwhelming military advantage in Europe (Kugler, 1990, p. 27-28).

The military plan drafted by the U.S. Joint Chief of Staff after the onset of the Berlin Blockade depicted a nightmare scenario. Named "Halfmoon," it anticipated a simultaneous Soviet attack in Europe, the Middle East, and the Far East and quick Soviet victories in all these regions (Kugler, 1990, p. 29). The military weakness that this plan revealed led to the conclusion that a military alliance became necessary to be a deterrent and bring sufficient apparatus to defend Europe (Kugler, 1990, pp. 31-32). Then, the Atlantic Alliance was created to prevent Soviet power from expanding and defend European allies (Layne, 2000, p. 60). In the long run, it had another purpose: restoring the balance of power in Europe that would be able to defend itself with American backing (Ireland, 1981, p. 4).

In his appearance before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee to defend the signing North Atlantic Treaty, the then Chief of the Staff General Bradley argued that the alliance would assist in the integration of the vast resources, industrial infrastructure, and skilled labor of Western Europe (Leffler, 1992, p. 281). The benefit of forming NATO is visible in the first strategic concept of NATO, published in December 1949. Based on national specialization, it assigned the U.S. with the mission of strategic bombardment and defending the seas (*together with Britain*) while defending continental Europe was deferred to the Europeans to a great extent. This division of labor and that the European allies would provide a more significant

chunk of the ground forces were consistent with the U.S. reluctance to undertake missions that would require greater military build-up (Kugler, 1990, p. 43; p. 43, n. 20). That founding NATO goes against Washington's farewell address and Monroe Doctrine and that NATO is the first extrahemispheric alliance of the U.S. since 1800 (Ireland, 1981, p. 3-4) may underline the significance of the NATO.

The foundation of NATO had another inherent purpose and benefit: integrating West Germany into the western security system led by the U.S. against the USSR. Germany, as shown by Kennan's strategic thinking above, had a special place in Europe. Its potential for power has always been huge. After its unification, it became a dominant state at the heart of Europe, able to defeat its neighbors or even all countries of the continent (Kissinger, 2014, p. 90). Its bid to achieve regional hegemony in Europe resulted in two world wars (Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 41). However, it was devastated during the war and divided afterward. Nevertheless, the great potential of Germany would still be effective against the USSR in the structure of the new balance of power in the postwar period.

The U.S. was cognizant of this power potential. Accordingly, it was seen as crucial for the balance of power in Europe. Dean Acheson, first Undersecretary of State and later Secretary of State, argued that any Atlantic alliance should include Western German resources to prevent the USSR from dominating Europe (Ireland, 1981, p. 109). According to Acheson, Western Europe could not be defended without the participation of German forces ("Minutes of a Private Conference" September 14, 1950, FRUS, 1950, Vol. 3, pp. 299, 294. cited in Avey, 2012, p. 177).

While it was necessary against the USSR, there was a concern that a powerful Germany with the potential (*as history suggests)* to disturb the balance of power in Europe again (Avey, 2012, p. 177). Therefore, it should also not be allowed to be "too powerful or too independent," acting in an independent way but, according to Acheson, should be "irrevocably aligned" with the West, integrated into the western system, incapable of making trouble on her own" (Acheson-Truman meeting, July 31, 1950, Nitze in Lewis and Achilles to Byroade, May 2, 1950, and Acheson to acting secretary. May 9,1950, in FRUS 1950, 3:167-168,914, 1015 cited in Trachtenberg, 1999, p. 105).

The U.S. was not alone in worrying about an unchecked West Germany. Understandably, France also had some apprehensions if the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) was to be included in western security plans. They perceived two security threats: one from the USSR and a potential one from the resurrected Germany (Ireland, 1981, p. 70). And including West Germany in efforts to balance the USSR was seen as aggravating the latter by threatening the balance of power, and they sought concrete security guarantees from the U.S. against a renewed German aggression (Ireland, 1981, p. 74). Then, NATO was designed as a principal mechanism to both a bulwark against USSR in which West Germany would be included; and to provide assurances against possible German aggression in the future (Ireland, 1981, p. 159). This point that NATO had a function against a possible German attack was summarized by Lord Ismay, the first Secretary-General of NATO very well when he described the purpose of NATO: "keeping the Russians out, the Germans down, and the Americans in." (Menon, 2003, p. 2). After its foundation, NATO was seen as the central instrument that the U.S. could use to be more involved in European affairs to anchor West Germany into the Atlantic alliance led by the U.S. (Leffler, 2010, p. 81; Ireland, 1981, pp. 171-172). And the Atlantic Alliance/NATO constantly remained the "preeminent instrument of America's Cold War grand strategy" throughout the Cold War (Layne, 2000, p. 60).

Alliance formation was not exclusive to Europe. Accordingly, the rationale that led to the foundation of NATO encouraged the foundation of other military pacts or partnerships around the globe. This phase is called "pactomania" (Menon, 2003, p. 3). In the Middle East, the Baghdad Pact was formed by Turkey, Iraq, Iran, Pakistan, and Britain in 1955. The U.S. was not part of the pact, yet, the U.S. was behind the idea and the foundation of the pact (Campbell, 1960, pp. 49-54, 57-62 and Bilge, 1969, pp. 273-88. all cited in Hale, 2003, p. 127). Even before the foundation of the pact, J.F. Dulles, then-Secretary of State, argued that there was a relation between the security of the Middle East and Western Europe (Bağcı, 2019, p. 127). After the foundation of the Baghdad Pact, the U.S. declared that it would defend the members of the pact in case of an attack. Therefore, an indirect connection was formed between NATO and Baghdad Pact (Bağcı, 2019, p. 149). Its name became Central Treaty Organization in 1959 after Iraq had withdrawn, and the pact survived until 1979, when the Iranian Revolution led to its demise (Hale, 2003, pp. 128-129).

Asia was another region that witnessed the foundation of alliances and partnerships in this period. In Asia, Australia, New Zealand, the United States Security Treaty (ANZUS) and Southeast Asia Security Treaty Organization (SEATO) were founded in 1951 and 1955, respectively, while bilateral security treaties were concluded with Japan (1951), Philippines (1951), Korea (1953) and Taiwan (1955) (Gaddis, 2005, p. 150 & Menon, 2003, p. 3).

As hinted in Kennan's thinking mentioned earlier, and as elaborated below in the next section, Japan had a crucial place here. Securing Japan as a strategic ally became the objective of the U.S. Then, Japan was sought to be integrated into the U.S. security system against the USSR, and the U.S. pushed for Japanese rearmament and having bases on Japanese soil. The Korean War increased the significance of Japan. Ultimately, the peace treaty was signed in 1951, including the basing rights for the U.S. (Avey, 2012, p. 174 & p. 181; Schaller, pp. 12-46 and Miscamble, 2007, chap. 8 cited in Avey, 2012, p. 174).

In sum, the U.S. helped and drove the formation of alliances against the USSR in different regions, while these alliances were maintained and embraced constantly throughout the Cold War by different administrations. As a result, powerful deterrence mechanisms were set up in Europe, the Gulf (*Middle East*), and Asia that checked the USSR in these vital regions during the entire Cold War (Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 326). The U.S. successfully created and maintained a favorable balance of power with its significant allies vis-à-vis the USSR and prevented Soviet expansion into regions that Kennan defined as key for the security of the U.S. (Walt, 1989, p. 15).

Alliance formation was not the only main strategy the U.S. adopted to balance the USSR. One can argue that, from time to time, internal balancing was also adopted. For instance, Eisenhower Administration adopted the 'New Look' strategy to match conventional Soviet power in Europe, which is also assumed to be the 'first offset' strategy. Accordingly, the USSR had a conventional advantage that neither the U.S. nor its allies could check. Then, with the New Look strategy, the superiority of the U.S. in tactical and strategic nuclear weapons, long-range missiles, and bombers was emphasized to offset the conventional military superiority of the USSR (Carter, 3 March 2015, cited in Simon, 2016, p. 423; Louth and Taylor, 2016, p. 66).

The second offset strategy dates back to the second half of the 1970s and, the Carter Administration when the USSR gained nuclear parity with the U.S. Then, precision-guided munitions were developed with the second offset strategy, while advances in electronics, computers, global location systems, and stealth were effectively integrated into reconnaissance-strike operation capabilities (Simon, 2016, p. 425 & Fiott, 2018, p. 40). This second offset initiative of the U.S. brought the majority of the capabilities still in use in the field (Louth and Taylor, 2016, p. 66). However, since it has not been adopted constantly throughout the Cold War as opposed to the forming and maintaining alliances; but only used by two or three administrations, internal balancing initiatives through offset strategies do not count as a main strategy according to the framework that was developed in this study.

4.3. Secondary Balancing Strategy: Strategic Aid to Prospective Allies

The secondary balancing strategy that the U.S. adopted against the USSR was providing strategic aid to the countries that could fall under direct or indirect Soviet influence to ensure their revival. It corresponds to the positive non-military balancing in the framework of He (2012) (He, 2012, pp. 166-167). Just like alliance formation, strategic economic aid targeted vital regions and countries whose devastated economic conditions, if not aided by the U.S., would result in the rise of communist ideology.

One could claim that this is not *positive non-military balancing,* but it is *negative military balancing*; hence, it should be under *the main balancing strategy group* in my framework. However, negative military balancing is "detaching or alienating rival's allies," and it can be done through military subversion, selling arms to the target's enemy, or arms control efforts to target the enemy (He, 2012, pp. 166-167). However, in the U.S. case, the economic support elaborated on below did not target the allies of the USSR. That would be the case, maybe, if Stalin had allowed Czechoslovakia and Poland in European Recovery Program (ERP), but this was not the case (Leffler, 2010, p. 79). Hence, there was little detachment or alienation of the allies of the rival. Instead, the recipients were *against the USSR* and *close to the U.S.* However, their economic devastation made their fall under the Soviet bloc possible. Therefore, I argue that the U.S. made a preemptive campaign to provide them with sufficient economic aid to keep them in its orbit. That is the reason why I consider

this balancing strategy as *positive non-military balancing*; therefore, with my dictionary developed in the previous chapter, *secondary balancing strategy*.

The idea was linked with what led to the alliance formation: essential power centers of Eurasia had to be kept outside of the Soviet power. To that end, and to maintain the links between these regions and the U.S., there was a need to resurrect Western Europe's and West Germany's economic power. The danger was that if these regions had not revived economically, they could be seduced by the Soviet bloc, or communism could come to power, either through democratic mechanisms or illegal ways (Leffler, 2010, p. 77).

As was the case in alliance formation, Europe had priority. World War II left economic and social chaos in Europe, threatening the balance of power. There were severe risks of famine and poverty in Europe, and as a result, communist parties of Europe, either under control are vulnerable to the influence of the Soviets, could benefit from the unrest (Leffler, 1992, p. 64). Especially Italy and France were alarming in that sense. U.S. Ambassador to Rome wrote that communists were increasing their power, and therefore, their "policy to assist the development of a free and democratic Italy is losing ground." (Dunn to Marshall, 3 May 1947, FRUS, 1947, 3: 891, cited in Leffler, 1992, p. 157)

In Senate hearings for ERP, Secretary of State George Marshall said that Western Europe had not overcome the devastation of World War II. And, if the U.S. did not provide sufficient economic aid, then Europe would fall under Soviet control, which would constitute a vigorous threat to the security of the U.S. (U.S., Congress, Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, European Recovery Program, Hearings Before the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 80th Congress, 2nd session, 1948, 1:2., cited in Ireland, 1981, p. 58). According to Marshall, this is the deliberate policy of the USSR to benefit from the crisis in Western Europe as he suggested that "[T]he Soviets were doing everything possible to achieve a complete breakdown in Europe (Miscamble, 2007, p. 311 cited in Avey, 2012, p. 178). However, Secretary Marshall said the U.S. would oppose such attempts of "governments, political parties, or groups which seek to perpetuate human misery in order to profit therefrom politically…" (FRUS, 1947, vol. 3, pp. 239-241 cited in Ireland, 1981, p. 37).

Then, Secretary Marshall announced ERP on June 5, 1947. The aim was to rejuvenate the economy for "the emergence of political and social conditions in which free institutions can exist." (Remarks, by Marshall, June 5, 1947, DSB, 16 (June 5, 1947), 1159–60., cited in Leffler, 2010, p. 77). Besides, by providing aid to Western Europe, the U.S. could restore the balance of power in Europe (European Recovery Program Hearings, p. 444., cited in Ireland, 1981, p. 60).

In this sense, Germany had overarching importance, so it had to be revived and tied to the U.S. Its importance for security reasons has been touched upon above to a great length, but Germany was economically significant as well. According to Secretary Marshall, the economic revival of Europe cannot be achieved without reviving German production (Marshall speech, November 18, 1947, DSB, 17 (November 30, 1947), 1028., cited in Leffler, 2010, p. 79), and therefore, it had to participate in ERP (Leffler, 2010, p. 79). As a result, the Congress of the U.S. adopted the Economic Cooperation Act to provide economic aid to Europe in March 1948. The total amount of money to rebuild Western Europe ultimately rose to $12 billion (Marshall Plan, n.d.).

One should note that the German participation in ERP created fears in French about the possible domination of Germany in Europe, thanks to its massive production capacity in coal. As expressed above, allaying these fears created NATO, while European allies pushed the U.S. to be more closely involved in European affairs (Ireland, 1981 p. 23; p. 67; p. 74). Nevertheless, it does not clash with the argument developed in the alliance formation section above, that forming alliances in different regions was the main balancing strategy of the U.S. against the USSR. Regardless of who pushed for the foundation of NATO, one should look at who benefitted. Both sides, namely the U.S. and the Europeans, benefitted from the alliance obviously, and as shown above, NATO was an asset for the U.S. against the USSR, and to integrate Germany into Europe.

Another vital region was the Near East. It was that important that, according to Trachtenberg, the dispute over Turkey and Iran played a crucial role in starting the Cold War conflict. Accordingly, the USSR did not recognize the Middle East and the eastern Mediterranean, sensitive regions, *mainly for Britain,* as part of the Western sphere of influence (Trachtenberg, 1999, pp. 35-36). However, not just Britain but

the U.S. also cared about these regions. According to Acheson, the fall of the Near East under communism would threaten the U.S. and, eventually, the whole world (Isaacson and Thomas, 1986, p. 393). Similarly, President Truman argued that given the rich natural resources it has and the essential land, sea, and air routes passing through the region, the Near and the Middle East were of a vast economic and strategic importance (Keskin, 1981, p. 114 cited in Bağcı, 2019, p. 19).

There was a civil war in Greece after World War II. What was alarming for the U.S. was that Greek Communists could take power, and then Greece could be aligned with the USSR, creating a domino effect in Europe. Then, communist governments could be seen elsewhere (Leffler, 1985, p. 807; Leffler, 1992, p. 143). Turkey, on the other hand, had internal stability, but she had been under constant pressure after 1945 from the USSR to provide a military base on Bosphorus, revise the Montreux Convention of 1936, and return two cities, Kars-Ardahan, taken by Turkey in 1921, to the USSR (Leffler, 1985, p. 807; Hale, 2000, pp. 111-115).

In light of such a background, on 21 February 1947, the U.S. was informed by London through two documents that the latter could not sustain its assistance to Turkey in her modernization of the army and resistance to the Soviet pressures as well as Greece in the civil war (Jones, 1955, pp. 4-6; U.S., Department of State, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1947, vol. 5, The Near East and Africa, pp. 32-37., cited in Ireland, 1981, p. 24). The U.S., as seen in its responses against other Soviet actions after the War, had been cognizant of the strategic significance of this region and the meaning of a communist victory in Greece. Then, this development, coupled with the *zeitgeist* of the international environment, led the Truman Administration to adopt a new policy in line with the new international realities, one that included more significant American commitments on the global stage against the Soviet expansion (Ireland, 1981, p. 24; Bağcı, 2019, p. 21).

Then, on 12 March 1947, President Truman appeared before Congress to request $400 million in economic aid to Greece and Turkey. In his speech, which became known as the Truman Doctrine, the President mentioned the division of the world into two camps, and the U.S. had to defend the free people whenever a threat arose in the form of armed minorities or outside pressure (Ireland, 1981, pp. 25-26). Turkey and Greece were those nations who faced these perils at that particular moment; their

loss would inflict massive damage on the democratic West and hence, had to be defended (Bağcı, 2019, p. 24). In his words:

"At the present moment in world history nearly every nation must choose between alternate ways of life. The choice is too often not a free one…Collapse of free institutions and loss of independence would be disastrous not only for them but for the world … Should we fail to aid Greece and Turkey in this fateful hour, the effect will be far reaching." (Special Message to Congress, March 12, 1947, PPP: Truman, 1947, 176–80, cited in Leffler, 2010, p. 76).

As in forming alliances, Asia was another vital region that the U.S. had to apply this form of balancing. According to Kennan, the balance of power in Eurasia was vital for the balance of power in the world, and Japan, together with Germany, was crucial in that manner (Kennan Papers, December 21, 1948, box 17 cited in Leffler, 2010, p. 81). Moreover, for Kennan, the U.S. had to make sure that it was not "threatened by the mobilization… of the complete industrial area [in the far east] as it was during the second world war." (Kennan Papers, 14 Jan 48, box 17., cited in Leffler, 1992, p. 253). Hence, the U.S. focus was on Japan in that region.

After World War II, Japan was initially governed by the U.S. independently, with a significant focus on economic liberalization and democratization (Schaller, 1998, p. 8., cited in Avey, 2012, p. 174; Avey, 2012, p. 174). However, its economy had shrunk to only 40% of its 1930-1934 average (Leffler, 1992, p. 256). That was threatening, as in the case of Europe. Unless economic conditions improved, Japan might not maintain its alignment with the West; Japanese leftists might benefit from poor conditions, or Japan might get closer to either USSR or China. A weak Japan would also be vulnerable to direct Soviet pressure (Leffler, 1992, pp. 253-256; Leffler, 2010, p. 82; Avey, 2012, p. 174, p. 182). Japan was so vital that, according to Acheson, the communist bloc could earn significant manpower and industrial potential to change the balance of power if it added Japan into its ranks ("Acheson to Franks," December 24, 1949, FRUS, 1949, Vol. 7, pt. 2, p. 927., cited in Avey, 2012, p. 182).

In sum, Japan should be denied to the Soviet bloc. To that end, if it was to be sided with the U.S., and the favorable balance of power was not to be lost, and its economy had to be rehabilitated (Leffler, 1992, p. 256). To that end, the focus was shifted

toward resuscitating the economy of Japan through economic and industrial recovery, so the reformation process was stopped. Various liberalization reforms such as de-cartelization attempts in Japan that could threaten future stability and economic strength of Japan were either reversed or decelerated (PPS/10, "Results of Planning Staff Study of Questions Involved in the Japanese Peace Settlement," October 14, 1947, Vol. 1, p. 113., cited in Avey, 2012, p. 181). The purpose became the construction of a politically and economically stable Japan and linking it to the West (Schaller, 1998, pp. 12-18, 37-38; Miscamble, 2007, pp. 250-270; and Leffler, 1992, 255-258, all cited in Avey, 2012, p. 181). Later, in 1948, the Truman Administration asked for funds from Congress to acquire raw materials for Japan so that the latter could increase its exports, revive its economy and prevent unrest (Leffler, 1984, p. 375; Leffler, 1992, p. 257).

All these policies examined above in Europe, the Near East, and Japan were part of an overarching policy that aimed to re-establish the balance of power in these regions. The common idea was to deny these regions to the Soviet influence by dealing with the possible internal resources of the turmoil by rehabilitating their economies or supporting them against direct pressure. This objective was achieved by economic aid instead of armament (Avey, 2012, p. 181; Leffler, 1984, pp. 370-371). One can argue that these policies well complemented the alliance formation. Accordingly, providing strategic aid to these vital regions/countries successfully kept them out of Soviet orbit, and it anchored them to the U.S.-led Western system. Thinking in counter-factual terms can highlight the significance of this strategy. So had the strategic aid not been provided to Turkey, Japan, Greece, Germany, or Western Europe, a couple of them might have fallen under Soviet influence, and as a result, they would not have been part of the Western security system. Then, given the importance of alliances as mentioned above, balancing might have failed due to the possible shift in the distribution of power in favor of the USSR. Thinking this way may underscore how applying these main and secondary balancing strategies overarchingly helped the U.S. keep the balance of power in its favor throughout the Cold War and eventually win it.

What led to the successful utilization of main and secondary balancing strategies overarchingly throughout the Cold War was the central role that the Cold War played. Accordingly, it shaped the U.S.'s political culture, institutions, and priorities

(Leffler, 1992, p. vii). It was considered a permanent battle between two sides, not just in the military field but also in political, ideological, economic, scientific, and cultural domains (Costigliola, 2010, p. 112). This understanding means that everything was made sense in Cold War terms, and every concern was perceived in relation to the USSR and the rivalry. One can argue that this thinking that perceives everything in the Cold War terms sometimes pushed the U.S. to fatal problems.

Sometimes, there was anxiety to ensure that neutral countries in the American-Soviet rivalry did not gravitate toward the USSR, as in the case of "domino theory" and Vietnam (Costigliola, 2010, p. 122-123). However, in general, one can assert that the centrality of the Cold War made the application of permanent balancing strategies possible, since there was not a distracting factor. Then, each administration did not change the essence: the alliances established in the early Cold War period. The provision of strategic aid to the prospective allies facilitated the foundation of those alliances.

Having shown a successful example, the next chapter will demonstrate a failure in balancing.

CHAPTER 5

Unsuccessful Balancing: U.S. Strategy vis-à-vis China in the Post-Cold War Era

This chapter analyzes the United States' failed balancing attempt against a rising rival the People's Republic of China. It first illustrates the rise of China and the threat perception of the U.S. Then, it portrays how each administration pursued different main and secondary balancing strategies and, as a result, failed.

5.1. Threat Perception

To begin with, the first question that needs answering is whether the U.S. has had to balance China or not. As discussed, some in the literature argue that the rise of China is indeed exaggerated as the U.S. is still the only superpower on the earth and will remain so in the foreseeable future; and as a rising power, China does not have to challenge the U.S. (Brooks and Wohlforth, 2016; Shiffrinson, 2020). As discussed in the introduction, however, these analyses miss the effect of polarity.

The U.S., as mentioned in the previous chapter, is the only regional hegemon in the system and prevented the rise of regional hegemons in other parts of the world. The concern is that a rival that can dominate Europe, Northeast Asia, or the Persian Gulf would have significant economic clout, a mighty military, and power projection potential to shape events around the globe. Eventually, it can outweigh the U.S. in terms of controlling the resources and have the upper hand in the arms race (Walt, 2018, p. 261). The logical conclusion is that a rising power in these regions should be concerning for the U.S. and should be opposed.

With the collapse of the USSR, the bipolar balance of power that was built after World War II disappeared, and the new geopolitical arrangement saw the emergence of the U.S. as the only superpower with its Western allies behind it (Wohlforth, 1999, p. 5; Krauthammer, 1990; pp. 23-24). This unipolar position made the U.S.

"the mightiest state since Rome" as it had successfully accumulated an amount of power that had been "unseen for centuries" (Walt, 2005, p. 11). A closer look reveals that this is an unprecedented preeminence as the U.S. in the 1990s was the most dominant leading state compared to the other hegemons of history in economic and military terms (Wohlforth, 1999, pp. 11-13). The reason is that, although some leading powers of the past had enjoyed an unchallenged preeminence in one power block, the U.S. became the only one to establish its supremacy in almost every power block (Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 71 cited in Walt, 2005, p. 31). It overwhelmingly enjoyed the largest economy and the most powerful military in hard power. At the same time, it also had a leading position in the most important international institutions and extensive cultural and ideological influence regarding soft power (Walt, 2005, pp. 31-39).

This unprecedented preeminence gave the U.S. the capacity to have the "command of the commons," exerting effective control over the air, sea, and space, denying their use to others, or defeating them if others tried to deny their use to the U.S. (Posen, 2003, 8). In other words, the U.S. succeeded in being the only country with the ability to project significant military power around the globe and maintain it indefinitely (Walt, 2009, p. 93).

Nevertheless, within three decades, the U.S. position started to be challenged in every aspect mentioned above by the rise of China. Indeed, in the immediate post-Cold War settlement, Japan and Germany were reasonable suspects to challenge the U.S. over time. The idea was that their relative power would increase and make them eligible contenders. Then, it was expected that their ambitions would climb; both would seek their strategic autonomy, leadership in their regional affairs, and even nuclear power (Layne, 1993, pp. 37-38). Their unstoppable economic momentum was especially worrisome (Walt, 2005, p. 29). China, on the other hand, was not counted among the second-rank powers back then (Krauthammer, 1990, p. 24) but was described to be "a strong contender for great power status" on the condition that its internal cohesion was maintained (Layne, 1993, p. 5. n.1).

The immense rise of China in the economy, and as a result, in other fields in the last couple of decades, has been one of the central topics of international politics in recent years. This rise is best illustrated in some statistics. In 1982, the GNP of China

was $ 698 billion, while the U.S. had $ 3.07 trillion (Walt, 1985, p. 43). By 2019, without the effects outbreak of Covid, the Chinese GDP had become two-thirds of American GDP (Statistics Times, 2020). Since 1978, the beginning of the reformation of the Chinese economy, the annual GDP growth has almost been 10% (World Bank, 2022), meaning that, economically, its economy doubled every seven years. In the same period, the U.S.'s annual GDP growth rate is around 3% (Trading Economics, n.d.). Over time, China became the top exporter, top trader, and top manufacturing producer, while it has also surpassed the U.S. economy in GDP in Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) calculations (Atkins and Dyer, Feb 9, 2010; Anderlini and Hornby, 2014; Marsh, 2008; Fray, Oct 8, 2014; all cited in Layne, 2018, p. 95). That the size of the GDP of China on PPP in 1980 was only one-tenth of the U.S. may underscore the greatness of the economic growth of China (IMF, 2018., cited in Kim, 2019, p. 32).

An earlier account predicted that China would surpass the U.S. economy in GDP measured by market rates in the mid-2020s (HIS Markeit, Sept 7, 2014, cited in Layne, 2018, p. 95). According to recent reports, China becoming the biggest economy in the world is likely to happen by 2028 (CNBC, Dec 25, 2020) or 2030 (VoA, Jan 4, 2022). A projection about 2050 portrays an even darker picture for the U.S.: By 2050, the Chinese economy would be one and half times bigger than the U.S. economy, even by GDP in market exchange rates (PvC, Feb 2017).

Expectedly, the growth in the economy manifested itself in the military domain. Even though China has kept its share of the wealth allocated for military spending since 2009 (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), n.d., cited in Shiffrinson, 2020, p. 190), the annual military expenditure has increased by more than five times in the last three decades (Trading Economics, n.d.). This growth resulted in the sophistication of China's armed forces.

After investing heavily, especially in the last one-and-half decade, China emerged as a great military power. The People's Liberation Army (PLA), the Chinese army, is more capable now than twenty years ago, especially in its navy and air force (Bitzinger, 2016, p. 3). More sophisticated reconnaissance, communication, and navigation satellites were developed during this period. Hence, the capability to target fixed facilities such as airbases and ports was gained with short and medium-

range cruise and ballistic missiles (Friedberg, 2011, p. 218., cited in Simon, 2016, p. 428; Simon, 2016, p.428). These ballistic and cruise missiles, as well as fourth and fourth-plus generation combat aircraft, gave China an improved capacity for precision strikes, which menace the bases of both the U.S. and its allies in the western Pacific, including Guam, Okinawa, and Taiwan (Bitzinger, 2016, p. 3).

China also developed anti-ship ballistic missiles (ASBM) that can strike ships in the distance of 1500 kilometers from its shores, which, for some, is a game-changer since these can target U.S. aircraft carriers and broader surface fleet (Erickson and Yang, 2009, pp. 26-32., cited in Simon, 2016, pp. 428-429; Simon, 2016, p. 428).

Moreover, the enhanced ballistic and cruise missiles became the cornerstone of the PLA's broader Anti-Access/Area Denial (A2/AD) strategy (Chase and Erickson, 2012, pp.206-218 cited in Simon, 2016, p. 428). Very significant hardware which boosts these A2/AD capabilities were acquired (Bitzinger, 2016, p. 3). One can argue that the A2/AD capabilities of China threaten the regional allies of the U.S., the close-in bases in the region, and the global power projection capability of the U.S. Hence, this is a fundamental challenge to the maintenance of the balance of power in Asia-Pacific (Simon, 2016, pp. 428-429). Indeed, some Chinese declarations indicate an intention to push the U.S. out of the South China Sea, Yellow Sea, 'first island chain,' and 'second island chain.' Should this occur, Japan and the Philippines would be out of reach for the support of the U.S. Navy (Mearsheimer, 2014, pp. 372-374).

Besides the A2/AD capabilities and developing conventional types of equipment such as aircraft, carriers, and missiles, China started to produce guided missiles and directed weaponry. Notably, according to some suggestions, they aim to develop hypersonic cruise missiles, which would strike targets like aircraft carriers (Chase, Feb 15, 2018; US-China Economic and Security Review Commission, November 2017., cited in Fiott, 2018, p. 44). Moreover, artificial intelligence has become an area that Chinese leadership assumes as the core of China's national and military power (Kania, Nov 2017., cited in Fiott, 2018, p. 45). Overall, China is emerging as an actor that develops its military capabilities and can strike crucial damage to its adversaries in a sophisticated manner changing according to their weaknesses (Chieh-cheng Huang, 2001, pp. 31-40., cited in Fiott, 2018, p. 45).

In November 2020, China declared its plan to strengthen its national security capabilities with the objective of tackling security challenges against itself (CGTN, Oct 30, 2020). For some, this means fully modernizing its army by 2027 to deter the United States from intervening around the Taiwan Strait (Economic Times, Nov 1, 2020). The rapid and enhanced military build-up and the issue regarding Taiwan seem to be well-recognized by some of the top U.S. military officials and experts (Politico, Mar 15, 2020).

On the other hand, others claim that the 2027 goal is just a short-term benchmark to the existing objectives to complete full modernization by 2035 and have a first-rate army by mid-century, and it is not shortening the timeline (Hart, Glaser, and Funaiole, 2021; Xinhua, Oct 18, 2017, cited in Hart, Glaser, and Funaiole, 2021). The 2027 goal intends to improve the national strength by accelerating the mechanization, informatization, and intelligentization, as well as the modernization of military doctrine, structure, military personnel, and equipment of the PLA with the emphasis on maximizing the quality and efficiency (Hart, Glaser, and Funaiole, 2021). The significant point is that, by 2035, the U.S. may face a fully modernized military and a world-class rival by the mid-century.

The rise of China also led it to assume a more significant role in the global economy and international organizations that are led and/or were founded by the United States. Accordingly, China finalized its liberalizing reforms of the 1980s (Economist, Dec 21, 1985, pp. 66-67 cited in Kennedy, 1990, p. 533) and 1990s (Hameiri and Jones, 2016, p. 82) and became integrated in the global economy by joining World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2001 (Hur, 2018, p. 402). In the WTO, China tried to avoid pursuing an aggressive policy, such as trying to change the features of the roles of the organization, and followed its commitments to a great extent (He and Sappiden, 2009; Pearson, 2006, all cited in McNally, 2012, pp. 757-758), but it selectively contested the WTO based on its domestic interests (Weinhardt and Brink, 2020). However, its influence on the organization reached a point where China started to be seen as the last hope to revive the WTO (Davies, 2018, cited in Weinhardt and ten Brink, 2020, p. 259).

In the Great Recession of 2008, together with other emerging markets and Germany, China became a beacon of hope for driving the global economic recovery. Then,

greater calls for reform in the IMF and the World Bank came to give China (and other emerging powers) more leverage (Layne, 2018, p. 99). The leader of China openly defended free trade, economic cooperation, and globalization (Barkin, Jan 17, 2017).

The rise of China did not just result in more influence for China on existing organizations. It also manifested itself in the creation of new organizations and/or projects led by China in a way to imitate the American-led international order. Most prominent among them is the, Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) (Layne, 2018, p. 100). Created in 2016, it reflects the Chinese dissatisfaction with the economic governance after the 2008 economic crisis, with the objective of promoting its currency, and its wish to enhance its voice in global financial institutions (Kim, 201, 33). Coupled with the New Development Bank, Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa (BRICS) Development Bank (NDB), and its own lending institutions, the AIIB represents the major financial initiatives that could compete with U.S.-led institutions, such as the IMF and the World Bank (Kim, 2019, pp. 33-34; Layne, 2018, p. 102).

Secondly, there is an ambitious plan. First announced in 2013, the 'Belt and Road Initiative' (BRI) or 'One Belt One Road' (OBOR) is the attempt by China to promote regional economic cooperation among some Asian, European, and African countries (Kim, 2019, p. 33). This enthusiastic project aims to include around 70 countries, accounting for the 70% of the population of the earth and 55% of the total GNP (Cavanna, 2018, cited in Kim, 2019, p. 33). Likened to the Chinese version of the Marshall Plan, it is seen as a means for China to expand its geopolitical influence and build its dominance in Eurasia (Layne, 2018, p. 101). Taken together, the BRI and AIIB (*and NDB)* illustrate China's long-term goal to modify the global economic order, as it is not content that its voice does not reflect its power in the current U.S.-led institutions (Kim, 2019, p. 34). Furthermore, that even some of the allies of the U.S. joined the AIIB despite the outburst of the U.S. shows how China's growing power diminished the U.S.'s influence (Layne, 2018, p. 102).

Finally, China's challenge is not confined to hard power capabilities. Despite not being a democracy, some observers argued even in 2007 that China might have gone ahead in the soft power arena (Campbell and Flournoy, 2007, p. 18., cited in Layne,

2018, p. 101). With its distinct features fundamentally different from the Anglo-American one, its economic model became known as Sino-capitalism (McNally, 2012). This model is argued to include both respect for the rules-based order and a tendency to alter the playing field (McNally, 2012, p. 758). With the attractiveness of this model, Chinese culture, and diplomacy, China's soft power has increased over time and has become an alternative to the American model (Layne, 2018, p. 101).

In sum, China started to increasingly challenge the U.S. in recent years in almost all of the building blocks of the U.S. primacy after the end of the Cold War. In the subsequent section, I lay out my argument that the U.S. so far failed to balance (or under-balanced) China, i.e., *prevent China from changing the relative power equilibrium vis-à-vis the U.S. to its advantage.*

5.2. U.S. Response to the Rise of China

5.2.1. The Clinton Administration

As discussed in theory chapter, the response of the U.S. against the rise of China was debated with the conceptualization of 'engagement' vs. 'containment.' And, the U.S.'s initial response against China's rise was more in line with engagement than containment. Then-Secretary of State Madeleine Albright argued that engaging with rising China, rather than containing it, was the key to preserving peaceful relations. The expectation was that by engaging with China, the U.S. could help the democratization of China and integrate it into the U.S.-led order as a responsible stakeholder (Albright, 1997 Forrestal Lecture, Apr 15, 1997, cited in Mearsheimer, 2018, pp. 190-191). The idea behind such expectation was theoretically liberal in the sense that a democratic and prosperous China would be content with its position and, therefore, would not challenge America. Hence, constructive engagement, seen as the most prudent way to manage emerging China, was sought to incorporate China and promote its economic development with the hope that it would become a status-quo power (Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 402; Shambaugh, 1996, p. 184). There were also moves to deter China around Taiwan, such as sending two aircraft carriers (Sutter et al., 2013, p. 5), which are more consistent with containment, but overall, engagement prevailed in this period. Other regional issues, such as Eastern Europe/Balkans and Rwanda dominated the focus.

5.2.2. The Bush Administration

The Bush Administration came to the White House with a strategic priority to manage the relations with potential peer competitors, Its focus on great power relations was evident in the selection of the key officials (Silove, 2016, p. 53-54). Moreover, President Bush promised to rejuvenate U.S. relations with allies the in Asia. However, the terrorist attacks on Sept 11 (9/11) shifted the entire prioritization toward the Middle East, the early claim that calling China a 'strategic competitor' was put aside, and the Administration started to be preoccupied with the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq (Zhao, 2013, p. 112; Sutter et al., 2013, p. 6).

In the early 2000s, some defense officials were cognizant of the challenge China's military modernization posed to the U.S.'s power projection capabilities (Silove, 2016, p. 54). Indeed, in the Defense Strategy Review (DSR), the rise of China was the key concern, and the idea of the document was reorientation toward Asia (Author interview with Andrew May, the Pentagon, Virginia, Nov 7, 2013., cited in Silove, 2016, p. 54-55). Moreover, the DSR aimed to dissuade potential peer competitors from developing military capabilities that could counter U.S. superiority, for which China was the closest candidate. However, the document did not mention the idea of containment of China, slowing down its economic or military growth, as it was assumed that China would continue to grow (Silove, 2016, pp. 56-57). The attack on U.S. soil on 9/11 halted the entire process of DSR (Silove, 2016, pp. 57-58).

Nevertheless, although 9/11 halted the DSR, it did not stop the shift of the U.S. toward Asia with the focus on dissuasion of China from competing with the U.S. in the Asia Pacific. This time, the U.S. global force posture revision came into the picture. The primary (*but not the only)* idea behind the Global Posture Review (GPR) in 2004 was to revise the U.S. force posture in the Asia Pacific region so that China would be dissuaded from challenging the existing balance of power (Silove, 2016, pp. 58-59). In effect, the aim was to shift the weight of the U.S. toward the Asia Pacific (Author interview with Donald H. Rumsfeld, St. Michaels, Maryland, Apr 13, 2012., cited in Silove, 2016, pp. 59-60), and using this enhanced force in the region to deter China from claiming regional hegemony (Silove, 2016, p. 60). What is worthy to note here is that this end state of the plan was not directly declared, and this move, which Silove describes as "the original military pivot to Asia," was

intentionally not announced in this way (Silove, 2016, pp. 60-61). Therefore, since it is not declared directly, it is hard to call this the beginning of the military pivot, or as a balancing move.

Besides the shifting military posture, the strategy of reorientation toward Asia had other elements. Between late 2003 and 2004, an interagency Asia strategy was prepared. The plan foresaw external balancing and (*again)* engagement (Silove, 2016, pp. 61-62; Author interview with Green, Aug 16, 2010., cited in Silove, 2016, p. 62). The administration was clear that the U.S. should engage with China, but there was a division regarding the extent and conditionality of the engagement, i.e. whether the conditional approach should include some toughness besides cooperation. For instance, some argued that there should be a more conditional engagement that could display toughness besides cooperation (Rumsfeld, 2011, pp. 312-315; Rice, 2000, pp. 45-62., all cited in Silove, 2016, pp. 62-63). For others, engagement should be more conciliatory since the U.S. should work, cooperate and look for a better relationship with China (Author interview with Richard L. Armitage, Arlington, Virginia, Sept 28, 2011.; Author telephone interview with Colin L. Powell, Jul 12, 2012., all cited in Silove, 2016, p.63). In the plan, the latter view gained the upper hand (Silove, 2016, p. 63).

Regarding balancing, there had been a disagreement on the role of the allies among some institutions. At the beginning of the Bush Administration, the idea in the Department of Defense was that the U.S. could balance the rise of China internally, and it would remain the provider of security for its allies. The State Department, on the other hand, put a greater emphasis on external balancing (Silove, 2016, pp. 63-64). The consensus for the Asia strategy was enhanced focus on external balancing and blending it with internal balancing with the objective of advancing the overall strength of the U.S. and its regional allies and partners (Silove, 2016, p. 64; Author interview with Rumsfeld, Apr 13, 2012., cited in Silove, 2016, p. 64). Then, the plan was to create multilateral alliance networks with greater interoperability, led by the U.S. (Silove, 2016, p. 65).

In practice, both engagement and balancing were adopted. In 2004, the Senior Dialogue with China was introduced for regular political and security discussions at senior diplomatic levels. In 2006, Strategic Economic Dialogue was established to

discuss issues regarding "market access, environmental protection, finance-sector reform, energy policies" as well as inducing export-led China to move toward greater domestic consumption (Silove, 2016, p. 80; Swaine, 2011, pp.199 and Paulson, 2008, pp. 59-77 cited in Silove, 2016, p. 80). The engagement policy of the U.S. toward China was very well-articulated by then U.S. Deputy Secretary State, Robert Zoellick: "'It is time to take our policy beyond opening doors to China's membership into the international system. We need to urge China to become a responsible stakeholder in the system. China has a responsibility to strengthen the international system that has enabled its success" (Zoellick, Sept 21, 2005, quoted in Zhang, 2021, p. 7).

Silove argues that the U.S. adopted both internal and external balancing after 2004. Regarding internal balancing, the bases on U.S. soil closer to Asia, such as Guam, Alaska, and Hawaii, were expanded (Silove, 2016, pp. 67-69). Moreover, it was decided in 2007 that an additional aircraft carrier should be based in San Diego for the Pacific, which was to be implemented in 2010 (Halloran, 2008; U.S. Navy, Apr 12, 2010., all cited in Silove, 2016, p. 69). In terms of external balancing, the U.S. tried to improve the military capabilities of its allies and partners and encouraged them to advance their military relations and interoperability. For the first part, Japan and South Korea were the targets. Accordingly, the U.S. aimed to develop the military capabilities of these countries to complement U.S. capabilities and the ability to operate jointly with the U.S. (Silove, 2016, pp. 74-75). The second part was constructing greater multilateral interoperability among allies and partners by securing new deals with allies and partners in the region for U.S. forces' rotational deployment, stimulating the development of stronger defense relationships among the regional states and increased military exercises (Silove, 2016, p. 76-78). Notably, the creation of a "quadrilateral" security dialogue between the U.S., Japan, India, and Australia (QUAD) was supported during this period, while the U.S., Japan, and Australia upgraded their Trilateral Security Dialogue (Shahahan, Mar 15, 2007., cited in Silove, 2016, p. 78; Silove, 2016, p. 78).

On the economic side, free-trade agreements were signed with Singapore in 2003, Australia in 2004, and South Korea in 2007. More importantly, maybe, the negotiations for a multilateral free-trade area, the Trans-Pacific Partnership, started in 2008 (Sutter et al., 2013, pp. 5-6; McBride, Chatzky, and Siripurapu, 2021), which

was later to be intensified and completed by its successor (Green and Cooper, 2014, p.26). More on this will be elaborated on below in the section on the Obama Administration.

In sum, Silove (2016) suggests that the reorientation started in Bush Administration, however, the analysis made above shows that it is not the case. Accordingly, the Bush Administration might have planned and applied a combination of internal and external balancing, as well as strengthening allies and partners, as she suggests. These moves may correspond to the main balancing strategy in my framework, as these were efforts to improve military power against a rival. However, there was no secondary balancing strategy except for starting the negotiations in 2008 for what would later become the Trans-Pacific Partnership, as the rest of the economic activities regarding China mostly took the engagement route. This is even acknowledged by Silove (2016, p. 81), that what she describes as the attempt to reorientate toward China includes both engagement and balancing, so it is not a textbook case of containment. As expressed, there was not an overt plan and attempt but a veiled one since the United States deliberately avoided targeting China.

More importantly, I think this supposed grand strategy of focusing on the rise of China and the consequent recalibration that Silove (2016) claims were overshadowed by "the global war on terror" after 9/11 and the subsequent ambitious plan to transform the Middle East by spreading democracy (Mearsheimer, 2018, p. 155; Rice, Aug 7, 2003). As confessed by the then-Deputy Secretary of State in the first term of the Bush Administration, the Administration was so preoccupied with Iraq that the Asia region was totally ignored (Quoted in Zhao, 2013, p. 112). According to a comment, there was systematic neglect concerning the rise of China during the Bush Administration, which was to be reversed by his successor (Ljunggeren, 2020, p. 204). Finally, senior officials from both sides hailed the bilateral relations as "at their best time in history" in 2003 (Jisi and Ran, 2019, p. 2). In light of all these, I think that suggesting that the U.S. Administration started balancing against China in 2004 like Silove (2016, p.73) is at least an exaggeration, while Deputy Secretary of State Zoellick's quotation cited above the Administration's focus to engage with China.

5.2.3. The Obama Administration

According to President Barack Obama himself, what the Obama Administration inherited in 2009 was a mess. The economic crisis created immense suffering, and two wars in the Middle East had resulted in military overstretch. The international balance of power had been changing as U.S. supremacy was eroding, and some players were looking to increase their influence (Brands, 2016, p. 105). When it comes to foreign policy, as presidential candidate, Barrack Obama criticized the 'single-minded- and 'open-ended' focus on Iraq that he defined as a 'distraction,' and he promised to end this. He asserted that the U.S. should strengthen its partnerships in Asia with countries like Japan, South Korea, Australia, and India. It should engage with China on issues of common concern and continue encouraging China to shift to a more open and market-based country (Guardian, Jul 16, 2008).

In line with this understanding and his promises, Obama Administration tried to return the U.S. attention to the strategic places from the single-minded focus on the War on Terror. Emphasizing his childhood years in Indonesia and Hawaii, the Pacific was one of the regions that the Obama Administration prioritized. This focus on the Pacific is evidenced in the fact that the Japanese Prime Minister was the first guest in the White House, while the then-Secretary of State Hillary Clinton made her first overseas trip to Asia (Zhao, 2013, p. 114).

But instead of containing or balancing against China, the United States decided to engage with it. The Obama Administration continued the engagement strategy pursued by its predecessors and even tried to expand it. Accordingly, the intention of President Obama was to develop a comprehensive policy on China, with the natural purpose of deeper cooperation, as had the idea that global challenges required multilateral efforts. The Administration was cognizant that China, besides the vast Asia-Pacific region, was critical in that sense (Ljunggeren, 2020, p.197). The expectation was that China would be more cooperative in managing global issues, and in fact, there were talks about the foundation of 'G-2' between the two countries to better manage issues of global concern (Hu, 2020, p. 129). According to the then-Deputy Secretary of State James Steinberg, if China cooperates with the U.S. on issues of common concern, the U.S. would not oppose its ascendance to great power status (Steinberg, Sept 24, 2009., cited in Hu, 2020, p. 129).

President Obama and then-Chinese President Hu Jintao met on the sidelines of the G-20 Financial Summit in London on April 1, 2009, and agreed to "work together to build a positive, cooperative, and comprehensive U.S.-China relationship for the 21st century and to maintain and strengthen exchanges at all levels" and deepen their cooperation in a wide range of areas.

To this end, they launched the "U.S. – China Strategic and Economic Dialogue" at the foreign ministerial (strategic track) and treasury ministerial level (economic track) (Obama White House Archives, Apr 1, 2009). In effect, it was the combination of the already-established mechanisms of Senior Dialogue and the Strategic Economic Dialogue but at a higher level of discussion (Silove, 2016, p. 80). The use of "strategic partner" to describe the relations with China was much to the satisfaction of Beijing (Zhao, 2013, p. 115). This dialogue is unique because such mechanism had not existed between the U.S. and any other state, including its close allies (Bader, 2012, p. 22., cited in Silove, 2016, p. 46; p. 80).

Moreover, the Administration so cared about the relations with China that they tried to avoid challenging China on sensitive issues. For instance, in order to avoid creating an issue before his first official visit to China in November 2009, President Obama departed from a U.S. presidential tradition to meet Tibetan religious leaders and did not meet Dalai Lama during the visit of the religious leader to Washington D.C. in October 2009. Then, the U.S.-China joint statement, in which the two sides agreed to respect the core interests of each other for progress in bilateral relations, was signed with the objective of signaling that the U.S. understands the core interests of China (Zhao, 2013, p. 114-115).

One should also note that, just as President Obama expressed in his presidential campaign, closer cooperation with regional countries was sought. For instance, joint naval exercises were carried out with Vietnam in 2010 *and continued in the following two years.* High-level visits took place in Hanoi. During her visit, Secretary Clinton declared the U.S. desire to develop a strategic partnership with Vietnam (Ross, 2013, p. 31). Similarly, security cooperation with Cambodia was strengthened. During her visit to Phnom Penh in 2010, Secretary Clinton induced her counterparts to seek greater political autonomy from China (Ross, 2013, p. 32). Then, Cambodia became part of U.S.-led regional naval exercises for the first time

while U.S. marines and Cambodian military carried out interoperability and maritime exercises (Pomfret, Nov 1, 2010; and Morley, n.d., cited in Ross, 2013, p. 32). Finally, the strategic presence of the U.S. on the Korean Peninsula was reasserted, the troop presence in South Korea was increased, and the scale and number of joint military exercises between the U.S. and South Korea were expanded (Ross, 2013, p. 32). Furthermore, four new defense agreements were concluded between the two countries (Defence News, Oct 24, 2012., cited in Ross, 2013, p. 32).

Later, the collegial climate started to change, and the U.S. policy on China became more assertive. The visit of President Obama was a "failed visit." A distrust emerged between the two sides. Tension in the Korean Peninsula and Chinese response, as well as more forward-leaning Chinese surveillance of the activities of the U.S. in the South China Sea, contributed to the process. The U.S. side started to think that China had started challenging the existing regional order (Ljunggeren, 2020, p. 197-198).

Then, 2011 became a milestone in the U.S. strategy against China since the pivot to Asia was officially announced. Writing in October 2011, Secretary Clinton introduced the American 'Pivot to Asia' by arguing that this century will be the 'Pacific Century' for the U.S. (Clinton, Oct 11, 2011). She asserted that the U.S. had spent immense resources on Afghanistan and Iraq in the previous decade, and now, the U.S. should turn its attention to the Asia-Pacific region. The reason was the fact that the region had turned into the key driver of global politics with its huge population, its economy, and important emerging powers located in the region, including China. According to her, the region was essential for the U.S. both for economic and strategic reasons. Economically, the markets in Asia were significant for the U.S. economic recovery from the 2008 crisis. Strategically, the maintenance of regional peace and security was crucial for global stability, and, to that end, among other things, the freedom of navigation in the South China Sea had to be preserved. This strategic turn to the Asia-Pacific, Secretary Clinton wrote, would include six key lines of action: "strengthening bilateral security alliances; deepening our working relationships with emerging powers, including with China; engaging with regional multilateral institutions; expanding trade and investment; forging a broad-based military presence; and advancing democracy and human rights" (Clinton, Oct 11, 2011).

The following month, President Obama formally declared the turn of the focus of the U.S. into Asia-Pacific. In his words, "The United States is turning [its] attention to the vast potential of the Asia Pacific region." At the same time, the critical components of the strategy were asserted to be advancing security, prosperity, and human dignity (Obama, Nov 17, 2011., cited in Berteau, Green, and Cooper, 2014 p. 3).

While these two statements initiated the pivot, the Department of Defense described the specific security objectives of the pivot. Using the term 'rebalance' instead of 'pivot,' the Defense Strategic Guidance of the Department of Defense emphasized the relationships with Asian allies and key partners; and the balance of military capabilities and presence aspects of the strategy (U.S. Department of Defense, Jan 2012., cited in Berteau, Green, and Cooper, 2014 p. 5).

Later, in June 2012, then-Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta elaborated on the security element of the pivot (*or rebalance)* by describing the principles of the strategy. Accordingly, these were: "promoting international rules and order; deepening and broadening bilateral and multilateral partnerships; enhancing and adapting U.S. presence, and making new investments in capabilities needed to project power and operate in the Asia–Pacific region." In addition, a new posture for the U.S. navy that would increase the U.S. presence in the Asia Pacific was announced. The distribution of naval military assets between the Pacific and Atlantic oceans would be 60/40 by 2020 instead of 50/50 (Panetta, Jun 2, 2012., cited in Berteau, Green, and Cooper, 2014, p. 5).

These statements have common themes, such as the need to promote security, prosperity, and shared values. However, the lack of an integrated process between different government institutions that would combine the ways, means, and objectives made the strategy disjointed (Green and Cooper, 2014, pp. 28-29). Statements by the Administration officials after the 2012 elections signaled a revision or re-articulation of the strategy; or, to put it another way, exacerbated the already confusing situation. New statements highlighted a greater focus on cooperating with China instead of expanding U.S. forces and promoting U.S. values (Green and Cooper, 2014, pp. 28-29).

For instance, in his speech, National Security Advisor Thomas Donilon revised Clinton's six priorities with five distinct lines of effort. In effect, he dropped the principles of military presence and promoting human rights and democracy and instead added the pursuit of stable and constructive relations with China (Donilon, Nov 15, 2012, cited in Green and Cooper, 2014, p.29). Arguably, the new Secretary of State John Kerry reinforced this statement when he expressed skepticism skeptical about increasing U.S. military posture in Asia since, according to him, the size of the U.S. forces was unrivaled, even by China (Kerry, Jan 24, 2013., cited in Green and Cooper, 2014, p.29). Moreover, the renewed focus of Secretary Kerry led to questions about whether the second Obama Administration still prioritizes the 'pivot' or 'rebalance' Later, Susan Rice, the following National Security Advisor, started using the phrase "major power relations" to describe the relations with China, which was initially used by Beijing and considered as a call for the U.S.-China condominium in the region (Rice, Nov 20, 2013., cited in Green and Cooper, 2014, p.29; Green and Cooper, 2014, p.29). Overall, these new statements created further confusion regarding the strategic assumptions of the supposed pivot (Green and Cooper, 2014, p.30).

The confusing language regarding the policy was visible in official governmental documents also. Six objectives were listed in a factsheet released by the White House in April 2013 on the rebalance. When compared to Secretary Clinton's earlier six lines and Donilon's five lines of efforts, one can see that in these six objectives, the promotion of universal and democratic values returned, the military presence was dropped, and instead, "pursuing a stable and constructive relationship with China" was emphasized (White House, 2013., cited in Berteau, Green, and Cooper, 2014, p. 8; Berteau, Green, and Cooper, 2014, p. 8). However, the factsheet of the State Department released in December 2013 stated that the U.S. should make sure that the military presence of the U.S. aids its engagement with the region (U.S. Department of State, Dec 16, 2013., cited in Green and Cooper, 2014, p. 30). Arguably, this illustrates a lack of integration U.S. rebalance strategy (Green and Cooper, 2014, p. 30). Finally, the statement of the U.S. Pacific Commander in early 2013, which asserts that climate change is the biggest challenge in the Asia-Pacific, led to some comments that the U.S. military was unprepared for the military challenge that China poses (Green and Cooper, 2014, p. 30).

Overall, based on all these statements and documents, one can conclude that the Obama Administration failed to articulate a clear, coherent, and consistent strategy for Asia-Pacific, especially regarding the rise of China (Green, Hicks, and Cancian, 2016, p. 4). And this situation created confusion regarding the core strategic assumption of pivoting (Green and Cooper, 2014, p. 30).

The incoherence in language notwithstanding, the pivot represented a shift in the U.S.'s grand strategy toward balancing against China's rise. In this sense, there were some main balancing moves in practice, mainly in the form of internal balancing with external elements as well. First of all, there was a redeployment of forces. As expressed above in Secretary Panetta's speech, the Navy announced that it would move 60% of its fleet to the Pacific Ocean (Green and Cooper, 2014, p. 26). According to Silove, this is one of the two new additions to the internal balancing efforts of the previous Administration. What this speech meant in practice was a redistribution of cruisers and destroyers, as well as additional rotation of littoral combat ships up to four to Singapore, which amounts to a 5% increase in naval presence in the Pacific (Fuentes, Apr 21, 2012., cited in Silove, 2016, p. 69; Silove, 2016, p. 69). Regarding air power , there was a decision to deploy 60% of the Air Force fleets and a significant amount of fifth-generation fighter jets to the region (Hagel, May 31, 2014., cited in Green and Cooper, 2014, p. 26). Finally, the army would realign the I Corps for Asia-Pacific missions (Joint Base Lewis-McChord, n.d., cited in Green and Cooper, 2014, p. 26).

Another internal balancing move worthy of mentioning in this period was the launch of the 'Third Offset Strategy,' which aimed to develop advanced capabilities to preserve the U.S. conventional superiority (Brands, 2016, pp. 108-109). In his speech at 'Reagan National Defense Forum' on Nov 15, 2014, Secretary Hagel announced the new defense initiative (Hagel, Nov 15, 2014). Mentioning the importance of the American military presence for its global leadership, he argued that the military superiority of the U.S. faces a challenge from the spread of military technologies and weapons to a broad range of actors, including non-state ones, and this threatens both the U.S. and its allies. Specifically, the military modernization programs of countries like China and Russia erode the military edge of the U.S. Against this threat, Secretary Hagel asserted, the U.S. should continue to ensure that it can project power across oceans and continents. Hence, he states, just like the U.S. offset Soviet

Union's superiority through innovations back in the 1950s and 1970s, this new Defense Innovation Strategy aims to ensure the power projection capabilities of the U.S. and advance its military dominance throughout the century (Hagel, Nov 15, 2014).

Deputy Secretary of Defense Bob Work elaborated on the initiative the following January (Work, Jan 28, 2015). In his speech, he argued that the military-technological edge that the U.S. has enjoyed for decades has been eroding and this is the most significant strategic challenge to the U.S. The reason is that its potential adversaries have studied the military advantages of the U.S. throughout the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Those potential adversaries developed ways, including anti-access area denial weapons, to counter the technological overmatch and military strength of the U.S. Then, Deputy Secretary Work asserted, just like First and Second Offsets, Third Offset Strategy was declared to offset and counter the competitive advantages that the potential competitors have gained recently vis-à-vis the U.S. The particular aim was to develop the means to neglect the advantages or advances of potential peer competitors in anti-access area denial weapons and other advanced technologies; while the more general objective was to maintain conventional deterrence and to advance the competitive advantage of the U.S. and its allies (Work, Jan 28, 2015).

In his speech, Deputy Secretary Work mentioned multiple potential competitors: from large advanced states like Russia and China to small regional states like North Korea and Iran and non-state adversaries and actors. Nevertheless, despite such efforts to frame the third offset strategy as a broad attempt, China and its A2/AD capabilities were the primary threat that the third offset strategy aimed to address, according to most U.S. defense officials (Author's interviews with multiple U.S. defense officials and experts, January–October 2015., cited in Simon, 2016, p. 431). Moreover, I think that Deputy Secretary Work's (Jan 28, 2015) definition of the number one strategic priority of the U.S. as rebalancing to Asia-Pacific confirms that the central focus was on China. However, one of the criticisms regarding the Third Offset is that its primary adversary is not evidently identified (Fiott, 2018, p. 45).

The Third Offset Strategy and the internal balancing move could be visible in the trade interactions of the U.S. Accordingly, I suggest that the military build-up of a

state can be seen in trade centrality for a reason: That state may increase its imports of essential instruments to produce weapons such as iron, steel, rare earths, ammunition (see Appendix A, B, and C).

From 2013 to 2017, budgetary allocations to advanced technology development increased by around 19% (Sargent Jr, Feb 21, 2018., cited in Fiott, 2018, p. 43). The investments made thanks to these extra resources by civil and military innovation programs bear their fruits in the following years (Fiott, 2018, p. 43). Furthermore, in terms of the budget, $18 billion was dedicated to the Third Offset Strategy by the Department of Defense over its five-year Future Year Defense Program in 2016 (Eaglen, Feb 15, 2016., cited in Fiott, 2018, p. 40). However, this was only a late change concerning the defense budget. There were cuts to the defense budget between 2009-2015, which limited the ability of the Department of Defense to pursue the pivot. It was only the agreement in October 2015 that the resources of the Department of Defense were set to the budget level of the President (Green, Hicks, and Cancian, 2016, p.4; p. 219).

Another main balancing method applied in this period was, similar to Bush Administration, the strengthening of relationships with key players in the Asia-Pacific region (Brands, 2016, p. 109). In this sense, the Administration worked with Japan to initiate a new Defense Guidelines review; revised the wartime Operational Command transition plans in South Korea; made a new Force Posture Agreement with Australia, and signed a new Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement with the Philippines (Green and Cooper, p. 26). Closer security cooperation among allies was promoted as well. For instance, a 'quasi-alliance' was created between Japan and Australia. Alternatively, a more muscular security network between regional partners such as Japan, South Korea, Australia, Taiwan, and the Philippines was encouraged to constitute a base for a system for the whole region, like NATO (Kawashima, 2017, p. 26).

There was also an effort to empower regional organizations such as ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations). Accordingly, the U.S. had a strong presence in regional organizations as President Obama hosted U.S.-ASEAN leaders' meetings, made thirteen trips to Southeast Asia during his term, and joined an East

Asia Summit. This move aimed to reassure the U.S. support to ASEAN countries (Townshend, 2017, p. 7).

There was an essential attempt on the non-military *or the secondary balancing side*: the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP). The TPP was a free trade agreement (FTA) concluded between twelve Asia-Pacific countries (Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, the United States, and Vietnam) on Oct 5, 2015 (Fergusson, McMinimy, and Williams, 2016, p. 1). In effect, it was the U.S. response to increasing economic and strategic ties between Asia-Pacific countries, and the agreement became the economic focal point of the 'rebalance' or strategic pivot to Asia (Fergusson, McMinimy, and Williams, 2016, p. 1; McBride, Chatzky, and Siripurapu, 2021).

As mentioned above, the talks for the TPP date back to the Bush Administration. In 2005, a small group of Pacific countries signed a trade deal. In 2008, the Bush Administration decided to engage in trade talks with this group, while additional members joined during the process. The Obama Administration continued the negotiations after having assumed office, and indeed, it became the centerpiece of the strategic pivot of the U.S. towards to region. After several meetings, twelve countries agreed in October 2015 and signed the deal in early 2016. The TPP became the largest free trade area in the world, as it covered 40% of the global economy (McBride, Chatzky, and Siripurapu, 2021).

The economic significance of the TPP would possibly be a boost in U.S. exports to the region and a reduction in prices for U.S. consumers due to lower tariffs (McBride, Chatzky, and Siripurapu, 2021). However, more importantly for this study, it had a geoeconomic purpose: It would bind the economies of the like-minded states in the region as a balancing instrument against the trade standards of China (Townshend, 2017, p. 7). Accordingly, the TPP would strengthen U.S. allies and partners in the region and reassert U.S. leadership (Fergusson, McMinimy, and Williams, 2016, p. 2). By bringing the economies of Pacific states together, Clinton (2011) wrote, the TPP can serve as a platform for greater regional integration (Clinton, Oct 11, 2011; McBride, Chatzky, and Siripurapu, 2021). Moreover, the TPP would be expected to contribute to the lead of the U.S. on global trade rules (McBride, Chatzky, and Siripurapu, 2021).

As distractors, just like during the Bush Administration, the Middle East remained one of the central theaters of foreign policy. The Arab Spring that started in 2011 and the subsequent regional events required special attention. The presence in Afghanistan was expanded, while the U.S. had to fight ISIL in Iraq and Syria and maintain pressure on al Qaeda. Furthermore, it had to manage its commitments to its regional partners to deter Iran (Green, Hicks, and Cancian, 2016., p. 44). The military disengagement from the Middle East, the underlying assumption of the pivot idea, did not materialize, while these inherited wars and their consequences continued to demand enormous resources and attention (Ljunggeren, 2020, pp. 198-199).

Moreover, in this period, it had to face the resurrected power of Russia. The invasion of Crimea in 2014 by the Russian Federation marked a turning point in U.S. – Russia relations, requiring the U.S. to take measures to deter further Russian action and reassure allies along the eastern flank (Green, Hicks, and Cancian, 2016, p. 23; p. 44). Arguably, these events in the other regions had primacy on the agenda of U.S. foreign policy since they necessitated greater attention, which diverted the focus from China.

In sum, the Obama Administration started its term with the idea of continuing and expanding engagement with China. In 2011, it declared its intention to turn its attention to Asia-Pacific through the pivot (or rebalance). However, what this practically meant was unclear due to some controversial and revised statements from top officials. Therefore, there were comments that the Administration failed to articulate the objective of the pivot. Nevertheless, based on the balancing framework of this study, the Obama Administration became the first Administration to apply both main and secondary balancing strategies. The main balancing strategy was internal balancing by redistribution of some forces and the Third Offset Strategy, while there were also moves to strengthen regional allies, regional alliances, and organizations. On the other hand, the TPP was the secondary balancing strategy to strengthen U.S. allies in the region economically, bolster the regional leadership of the U.S., and ultimately balance China's economic power. According to some, the Obama Administration both developed and implemented critical elements of a comprehensive strategy on China (Ljunggeren, 2020, p. 204).

5.2.4. The Trump Administration

As a presidential candidate, Trump promised one of the most radical changes ever in foreign policy (Hill and Hurst, 2020, p. 1). He accused the current foreign policy experts of being responsible for the long history of failed policies and continued losses at wars (Trump, Apr 27, 2016). The 2016 Presidential Election was a clash of two different world views: liberal internationalism vs. nationalistic isolationism. Accordingly, former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton was representing the continuation of the established liberal internationalist view that gives primacy to the role of democracy and the spread of American values, free-market capitalism, and traditional alliances (Clarke and Ricketts, 2017, p. 370). On the other hand, Trump went on an all-out offensive against the established foreign policy. Compared to the dominant view of his opponent, his views were closer to realism (*quasi-realist)* with his Hobbesian image of the world, while he had neo-isolationist and neo-sovereigntist tendencies (Cha, 2016, p. 89).

In his article on foreign policy, he charged that American foreign policy was random, chaotic, and based on ideology. He described the post-Cold War American foreign policy as "foolish and arrogant" and full of disasters, especially in the Middle East, while he despised the spread of democracy. According to him, U.S. foreign policy suffered from five weaknesses. Firstly, the resources of the U.S. had been overextended to rebuild other countries. Secondly, the allies of the U.S. had not been paying their fair share for the security cooperation, and if they did not pay, they should be left to defend themselves. Thirdly, he accused the Obama Administration of fighting with friends of the U.S. and letting them look for alternative relations. Fourthly, he argued, the rivals of the U.S. do not respect the U.S. and take it seriously. Finally, there is no coherent understanding of the foreign policy goals of the U.S. (Trump, Apr 27, 2016).

During his campaign, he offered a different vision. To begin with, he argued, the idea of 'America First' would guide the foreign policy above else as he would always put the interests and security of the U.S. and the American people in his foreign policy decisions (Trump, Apr 27, 2016). This vision meant that advancing American interests and making Americans better would be the central objective of the U.S. foreign policy, not to advance a set of political values or to help others. Secondly, in

line with this thinking and his accusation of allies free-riding on American protection, he would reset the relations of the U.S. with its most important allies to make them contribute more to their defense if they want to maintain American support. Thirdly, parallel to his condemnation of nation-building efforts, he promised to leave the nation-building business. Fourthly, he criticized globalization with its institutions and agreements, particularly in the trade field, and vowed to change them. Last but not least, he defined the U.S. as a weak country and promised to rebuild its military strength (Walt, 2018, pp. 9-11). In his words, the U.S. had a depleted military concerned with global warming, but his Administration would make the necessary investments to establish an undisputed dominance. In this sense, he criticized the defense budget of the Obama Administration and instead promised to spend more on defense; build a larger army in terms of troops; a navy with more conventional assets like surface ships (The Hill Staff, Sept 7, 2016).

When all these ideas came together, they represented a radical departure from the ongoing U.S. foreign policy after World War II and, more recently, the end of the Cold War. The existing agenda was internationalist because it aimed to expand the rules-based international order by spreading democracy, promoting free trade, strengthening alliances and international institutions, and defending human rights. On the other hand, Trump offered a self-centered, nationalist foreign policy that focuses on securing short-term advantages (Walt, 2018, p. 11).

These general ideas were reflected in candidate Trump's view on China and Asia (Trump, Apr 27, 2016). According to Trump, fixing relations with China was crucial for a promising century. To begin with, from his point of view, adding China to WTO was a disastrous decision. He blamed his predecessor for letting China deplete American jobs and wealth and not obey international trade rules, while he accused China of taking advantage of the U.S. economically. Moreover, he emphasized the massive trade deficit that the U.S. suffered with China, criticized the trading behavior of China, and accused China of 'stealing jobs from Americans' besides taking advantage of the country's economy (Jisi and Ran, 2019, p. 6). What he offered implied a tougher approach as he argued that China respects strength, which he thinks the U.S. had lost by letting China take advantage. He asserted that a solution for the trade deficit should be found quickly to balance the negative net balance in trade (Trump, Apr 27, 2016).

One striking thing here is what he said regarding the central tenet of the U.S. policy on Asia-Pacific so far: traditional allies. His vision of alliances in general had always been different, even before running for office. In 1990, for instance, he asserted that 'Americans are laughed all around the world' because of defending rich nations in return for nothing. In his mind, the allies of the U.S. were '…making billions screwing [the U.S.]' (Wright, Jan 20, 2016., quoted in Drezner, 2019). In line with this thinking and what he had previously said about a more share of costs between allies, he argued that Japan and South Korea should be able to defend themselves without counting on the U.S. (Kubo, 2019, p. 58). For example, he emphasized the duration of the U.S. support to South Korea without payment and urged the ROK to start to pay the U.S. (Wright, Jan 20, 2016., quoted in Drezner, 2019). He went so far as that unless they are willing to pay more for the U.S. commitments, they should be ready to go alone and defend themselves in a volatile region (Sanger and Habberman, Mar 26, 2016.; Tatsumi, May 7, 2016., all cited in Clarke and Ricketts, 2017, p. 371). He even suggested that it would be better if Japan and South Korea acquired nuclear weapons since the conditions were different compared to forty years ago, and the U.S. could not afford the expense to protect these countries anymore, which he later denied saying (Condon, Mar 29, 2016., cited in Townshend, 2017, p. 5.; Kubo, 2019, p. 58). Such comments represent a challenge to the decades-long policy on Asia, as they create question marks on U.S. alliance commitments (Wainwright, Jul 26, 2016., cited in Townshend, 2017, p. 5).

Just as the 'Pivot to Asia' of the Obama Administration, the Trump Administration had its regional strategy: The Free and Open Indo-Pacific. The first National Security Strategy of the Trump Administration, released in December 2017, declared a bold assertion: the great power competition, which had been removed as a concept, returned after China and Russia started to reassert their regional and global influence (The White House, Dec 2017, p. 27). According to the document's depiction, the world was a competitive one where the quest for power continued, and in this competitive world, the U.S. faced Chinese and Russian challenges on American power, influence, and interests. China and Russia, the document asserted, attempt to erode the security and prosperity of the U.S. (The White House, Dec 2017, p. 2; p. 25). This labeling of China marks a significant shift since it defines China as a 'strategic competitor' rather than a strategic partner (Hu, 2020, p. 128). The previous

administrations in the last two decades were criticized for following a premise that engaging with rivals and including them in the system would make them benign and trustworthy, which turned out to be false. And it was argued that the reemerged competition requires a rethink of this policy (The White House, Dec 2017, p. 3). The Indo-Pacific region, in the document, was characterized as the theater of 'a geopolitical competition between free and repressive visions of world order' (The White House, Dec 2017, p. 45). When they are read together, these suggestions display that the U.S. faced a regional rival for the first time in decades with sufficient economic and military capabilities to challenge some of its most vital interests (Ford, 2020, p. 3).

The unclassified summary of the National Defense Strategy of the Department of Defense (NDS) released in January 2018 makes it possible to see a similar perspective. According to the document, the competitive military advantage of the U.S. has been eroding, and revisionist powers and the subsequent 'reemergence of long-term strategic competition' constitute the main challenge to the prosperity and security of the U.S. China, along with Russia, was depicted as wanting to shape the world in their own image according to its authoritarian model. The document asserted that China tries to reorder the Indo-Pacific region through its military modernization, influence operations, and predatory economics. The prediction was that if China's economic and military rise continued, China would seek regional hegemony in the Indo-Pacific and global preeminence after the displacement of the U.S. (Department of Defense, Jan 19, 2018, pp. 1-2). Similar depictions of China as a revisionist power and a strategic rival can be seen in other documents (Hu, 2020, pp. 130-131), which clearly demonstrate how the Trump Administration perceived China. This suggests a definitive change in the policy of the U.S. toward China (Nathan, 2021, p. 387).

This new reality led to a competitive 'whole-of-government' approach against the strategic rival, China. According to the 2017 NSS, the U.S., guided by principled realism, ought to respond to the direct challenge of China 'by acknowledging that we are in a strategic competition and protecting our interests appropriately' instead of engaging with China for symbolism and pageantry, without tangible outcomes. This new understanding manifested itself in all-out confrontational activities in many aspects (Hu, 2020, p. 131; Jisi, 2020, pp. 196-197; The White House, May 26, 2020,

pp. 7-8). The core competitive strategy that the Administration started to employ was the Indo-Pacific (*or the Free and Open Indo-Pacific*) Strategy (Hu, 2020, p. 133).

Japan initially introduced the term 'Open and Free Indo Pacific' in 2016, but the Trump Administration started to embrace it in late 2017 (Kubo, 2019, p. 71). There was hesitation to use the term 'pivot' of the previous administration for a reason not to signal the turning away from commitments from other regions (Mattis, Jan 12, 2017., cited in Townshend, 2017, p. 7). Then, there was a reconceptualization in terms of the region. Asia-Pacific was gone and replaced by Indo-Pacific, much to China's dismay. The Chinese saw the new term with geopolitical competition and alliance confrontation (Global Times, 2020., cited in Ashbee and Hurst, 2021, p. 726). Hence came the new regional vision of the Trump Administration: The Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) Strategy.

The strategy was first articulated by then-Secretary of State Rex Tillerson in his speech on Oct 18, 2017 (CSIS, Oct 18, 2017., cited in Ford, 2020, p. 2). Then, on Nov 10, 2017, President Trump shared the vision of the Administration for a 'free and open Indo-Pacific region with sovereign and independent nations, prosper and thrive altogether in freedom, peace, and multiculturality (The White House, Nov 10, 2017., quoted in Kubo, 2019, p. 71). In the 2017 NSS, a free and open Indo-Pacific was argued to be a U.S. interest since the country's earliest days (The White House, Dec 2017, p. 46).

According to an analysis, this competitive strategy comprised four essential components: military build-up of the U.S. in the region; undermining of Chinese influence in the region by becoming an alternative to the Belt and Road Initiative; mobilizing and consolidating allies and partners against increasing Chinese economic and military presence; and, using regional conflictual issues to check China (Hu, 2020, pp. 135-137). One important suggestion is that the strategy is the American response to the growing influence of China under the Belt and Road Initiative, and it is the main objective of the strategy to undermine this Chinese influence around the region (Scobell, May 15, 2020., cited in Hu, 2020, p. 136; Hu, 2020, p. 136).

In the main balancing strategy to change U.S. military power vis-à-vis China, external and internal elements were attempted. This is visible both in the 2018 NDS and the Administration's strategic approach to China (The White House, May 26,

2020). In both documents, strengthening alliances and partnerships and building the U.S. military were cited as the priority (The White House, May 26, 2020, pp. 13-14; The Department of Defense, Jan 19, 2018, pp. 5-10).

In 2018 NDS, 'mutually beneficial' alliances and partnerships were defined as 'crucial' to the strategy of the U.S., while expanding the alliances and partnerships in the Indo-Pacific region was chosen as a goal. However, as mentioned above, President Trump showed an unconventional approach during his campaign regarding the alliances and partnerships in Asia. Nevertheless, there was a significant change to a more traditional approach after assuming office. Accordingly, he mentioned his willingness to work with Japan and South Korea closely (Harding and Dyber, Nov 18, 2016; Williams, Nov 10, 2016., all cited in Townshend, 2017, p. 5), and he expressed 'ironclad' support for both allies (Wroughton and Rampton, Jan 28, 2017; Sang-Hun, Jan 30, 2017., all cited in Townshend, 2017, p. .5). Arguably, the leading officials in the administration persuaded President Trump to soften his campaign rhetoric that U.S. commitment to these countries depended on the payments of these countries to the U.S. (Sutter, 2017, p. 22). The reasoning was that these partners were vital force multipliers for the U.S. to preserve regional stability and deter China (Yoshida, Nov 16, 2016.; Jae-Soon, Nov 19, 2016., all cited in Townshend, 2017, p. 5). In this sense, Secretary of Defense James Mattis had a principal role as he made his first official trip as the Secretary to South Korea and Japan, he showed the importance that Pentagon would attach to these allies, and he reassured them (Conversations of the author with sources, cited in Townshend, 2017, p. 5; Townshend, 2017, p. 5).

In practice, the Trump Administration tried to improve existing partnerships with both South Korea and Japan in many areas of cooperation, such as energy, humanitarian assistance, governance and law enforcement, and water security. Defined as vital for the Indo-Pacific Vision, the U.S.-India Partnership witnessed significant development. Two sides agreed to create the 2+2 Dialogue mechanism in 2018 to increase cooperation on security and economic affairs. Steps were taken to facilitate defense cooperation, including signing a deal, plans for a bilateral military exercise, and the Indian purchase of $16 billion U.S. defense platforms (The Department of State, Nov 4, 2019, pp. 8-9).

Besides the reversal of the rhetoric on Asian allies and partners towards a more traditional sense and developing closer cooperation with them, the Trump Administration had two significant developments in regional alliances: Expanding the engagement with new partners in a bilateral sense and developing multilateral, regional initiatives. To begin with, the Administration focused on increasing the engagement of the U.S. with smaller nations in the region, as it sought to tighten relations with countries such as Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Myanmar, while U.S. relationships in the Pacific Islands region were revitalized (Ford, 2020, p. 5). Beyond the bilateral level, the Administration tried to continue earlier efforts to promote closer relations between U.S. partners in the region. In this sense, the Administration tried revitalizing QUAD, established during the Bush Administration (Ford, 2020, p. 5). The reconvention of this structure, which had been dormant since 2008, at the 2017 East Asian Summit (Panda, 2017 cited in Ashbee and Hurst, 2021, p. 728), and meeting at the ministerial level for the first time in 2019 on the sidelines of the United Nations (Panda, 2017; Fowler, 2019 cited in Ashbee and Hurst, 2021, p. 728) has been a critical development (Ashbee and Hurst, 2021, p. 728). However, one should note that a formal institutional framework had not been developed for the QUAD, and it remained with its largely undefined character (Ashbee and Hurst, 2021, p. 728). Nevertheless, after the historic first meeting, the ministers of four countries asserted their commitment to collaboration on maritime security, infrastructure, and regional connectivity (The Department of State, Nov 4, 2019, p. 9).

Moreover, additional multilateral initiatives have been created. Examples include agreements with Australia, India, Japan, Singapore, and Taiwan on the coordination of development assistance in third parties or cooperation between Australia, the U.S., and Papua New Guinea on the modernization of the Lombrum naval base in Papua New Guinea (Ford, 2020, p. 5).

However, the Administration made a series of ill-moves for a genuine external balancing campaign and/or creating/fostering partnerships. First of all, there was a broader issue of the 'America First' attitude of the Administration. President Trump had a dislike for international institutions and even tended to undermine them. This was also reflected in the alliance system in Asia, as he had a unilateralist approach to key alliances, which created unpredictability (Ljunggeren, 2020, p. 205). He had a

transactional approach which linked economic and defense-burden sharing issues and looked for gains, even though there were no direct relations between these factors (Conversations of the author with sources, cited in Townshend, 2017, p. 6).

Moreover, by being absent from multilateral forums such as the East Asian Summit at the presidential level or withdrawing from cooperating with regional actors on essential issues for them other than China, the Administration has created a perception that there is a divergence between the interests of the U.S. and the regional partners. This created frustration in regional partners (Friedman Feb 17, 2020., cited in Ford, 2020, pp. 5-6; Ford, 2020, pp. 5-6). According to an account, the allies perceived that the Trump Administration was only concerned with balancing China in narrow terms, barely avoiding being taken advantage of on trade, rather than in the broader geostrategic sense of opposing China as a superpower (Friedman, Feb 17, 2020). Naturally, this would damage all efforts to encourage regional states to cooperate with the U.S. and build a coalition against China.

Lastly, the Administration alienated its closest partners and allies for a potential anti-China coalition with its approach to economic and trade issues. Here, despite trade being part of secondary balancing, it is overlapped with the alliance policy, and therefore, the main balancing. Accordingly, the President had a different attitude toward multilateral regimes than his predecessor; instead, his administration preferred to follow a bilateral track on economic and trade issues. In practice, the Trump Administration exerted unprecedented pressure on almost all trading partners by either sanctioning or escalating economic pressure on them. That meant almost every major economy in the world with long-time U.S. ties, including Canada, Japan, South Korea, Turkey, Pakistan, India, and the E.U., (Drezner, 2019, p. 7; p. 17; Hu, 2020, pp. 133-134). President Trump labeled the E.U. as the 'greatest foe' of the U.S. (Meunier and Nicolaidis, 2019, p. 108). In return, this kind of treatment of allies created a huge geopolitical cost in the alienation of these countries and allowed China to build a rapport with these countries. In the long run, this policy of economic coercion, even towards allies, would have resulted in fewer friends, waning influence, and expansion of the ties of traditional allies with other great powers (possibly including China) (Drezner, 2019, pp. 18-19). Overall, the zero-sum attitude of the administration undermined the efforts to build a coalition against China, as even long-time close partners hesitated to embrace the Administration's vision. In

contrast, Chinese efforts to shift the existing regional order were reinforced by the administration's unilateral approach (Ford, 2020, p. 9).

In terms of the internal balancing side of the main balancing strategy, Trump Administration continued and changed some aspects of the internal balancing initiative of its predecessor, the Third Offset Strategy. To begin with, long-term competition with China (and Russia) was the main priority of the Department of Defense, and increased and sustained development for the U.S. military was a requirement in the 2018 NDS. The idea was to achieve peace through strength, and this included increased preparedness for an armed conflict. (The Department of Defense, pp. 4-6). As mentioned above, Trump promised to increase the defense budget during his presidential campaign. After he assumed office, the concept of the Third Offset Strategy was removed from the agenda, which was visible in NSS. There was not one reference to the Third Offset in the document. Moreover, some steps were taken to close close down governmental offices related to the Third Offset (Fiott, 2018, p. 41; Mehta, Apr 25, 2018., cited in Fiott, 2018, p. 41). However, beyond the labels and names, one can argue that the erosion of the U.S. military-technological edge remained a concern, as mentioned in the NDS above. Accordingly, Secretary of Defense Mattis acknowledged that the military advantage of the U.S. over its rivals had eroded in every aspect of fighting (Mansen, Jan 19, 2018., cited in Ljunggaren, 2020, p. 202). Similarly, the National Security Strategy touched on concepts like 'innovation' and 'technological edge,' while the 2018 National Defense Strategy seeks to maintain the technological advantage of the Department of Defense (White House, December 2017; Department of Defense, 2018., all cited in Fiott, 2018, p. 41). Therefore, there were indications that the new Administration would continue to see military-technological overmatch relevant (Fiott, 2018, p. 41).

For instance, the focus of the Defense Department to modernize U.S. forces and gain advanced capabilities to get ready for high-tech warfare against peer competitors such as China remained (Freeberg, Feb 1, 2017., cited in Townshend, 2017, p. 7; Townshend, 2017, p. 7). The NDS cited modernization of critical capabilities and the advanced autonomous system as part of the efforts to sustain the competitive advantage of the U.S. (Department of Defense, Jan 19, 2018, pp. 1-2). Or, the idea that harnessing the cooperation between different commercial and civilian sectors

continued to be stressed, while military-technological efforts initiated by the previous Administration were not given up. As mentioned above, some of the Obama-era investments came to fruition in this period (Fiott, 2018, p. 43). Also, China continued to be the main focus of defense innovation debates, albeit by being singled out as the main adversary, as suggested in FOIP (Fiott, 2018, p. 43-45).

What changed was the relationship between technology and conventional forces. Or, to put it another way, future technology development and current capability needs (Fiott, 2018, pp. 45-46). The Administration criticized its predecessors for making a mistake by believing that technology could compensate for reduced capacity (White House, Dec 2017., cited in Fiott, 2018, p. 45). Then, and in line with the President's campaign promises, the United States attached greater importance more conventional fighting aspects of the force, such as increasing the overall size of the U.S. military, modernizing the nuclear arsenal, space, cyberspace, and intelligence capabilities (Daniels, Feb 12, 2018., cited in Fiott, 2018, p. 45; Fiott, 2018, p. 45). The establishment of the space force was a personal interest for the President (Kubo, 2019, p. 68). The prioritization of conventional fighting forces can be seen in NDS 2018, as the more significant part of the objectives of building a more lethal force was based on more conventional capabilities (Department of Defense, Jan 19, 2018, pp. 5-6). Overall, the aim was to deter and counter the drive of the PLA toward technological parity and superiority by deploying hypersonic platforms, enhanced investments in cyber and space capabilities, and developing more lethal fire capabilities (The White House, May 26, 2020, p. 13).

President Trump also honored his electoral promises in terms of the defense budget. In 2018, President Trump proposed to increase the defense budget by $54 billion, allocated to build ships and military aircraft, and establish a stronger presence in key waterways, including the South China Sea (Holland, Feb 28, 2017; Holland, Feb 24, 2017., all cited in Townshend, 2017, p. 7).) For 2019, his National Defense Budget became the largest in recent years, with $716 billon for national security and $686 billion for the Department of Defense, accounting for a considerable 16% increase in the final national defense budget of the Obama Administration (Kubo, 2019, p. 67; Department of Defense, Feb 12, 2018). The greater part of the budget of the Department was allocated to troops, the nuclear arsenal, naval vessels, and combat aircraft (Gould and Copp, Feb 12, 2018., cited in Fiott, 2018, p. 42).

On the secondary side of the coin, the Trump Administration tried to target Chinese economic power directly. As mentioned above, President Trump had a different perspective on economic policy toward China/region with his particular emphasis on the trade deficit. To begin with, just a few days after his inauguration, the Trump administration withdrew from the TPP of the previous administrations. And the new approach of the Administration was emphasized in the President's introduction letter for the 2017 National Security Strategy, as he asserted that unfair trading practices or economic aggression would not be tolerated (Trump, Dec 17, p. 1., cited in Drezner, 2019, p. 9; Drezner, 2019, p. 9). Then, the objective of the economic strategy of the Trump Administration was to rebalance the economic relationship between the U.S. and China. To attain this objective in practice, the Trump Administration waged trade and technological war to pressure China to change its trade behavior, open more markets for the U.S., and stop forced technology transfer (Hu, 2020, p. 133).

In January 2018, the war started with the additional U.S. tariffs on solar panels and washing machines to respond to the wave of Chinese imports (Lynch, Jan 22, 2018., cited in Drezner, 2019, p. 11). Later, in June of the same year, tariffs of 25% were imposed on more than $50 billion worth of Chinese goods. Then, there was an escalation of the trade war since the Administration imposed a 10% tariff on an additional $200 billion worth of Chinese goods in September. In the spring of 2019, the negotiations with China failed, and the Administration increased the tariffs on the second tranche of goods to 25%. Later, in September of the same year, an additional %10 tariffs were imposed on approximately $150 billion of Chinese goods (Wong and Koty, Jun 29, 2019., cited in Drezner, 2019, p. 11; Drezner, 2019, p. 11). The idea behind these increases in tariffs was to coerce China to decrease its trade surplus, reorganize its domestic economy, address intellectual property theft, provide greater market access for U.S. products and ultimately restrict the role of state-owned enterprises in trade (Hu, 2020, p. 133). China, on its part, retaliated in a tit-for-tat manner, targeting mainly the agricultural sector of the U.S. (Liu and Woo, 2018, p. 320; Drezner, 2019, p. 14).

Two sides entered into negotiations, and after 18 months of negotiations, they signed 'Phase One' of trade and economic agreements in January 2020. In this document, the U.S. accepted abolishing and decreasing some tariffs imposed on Chinese goods. In return, China would stop the forced or pressured technology transfer from companies

as a condition for operating in China; intellectual property would be strengthened; new market opportunities for U.S. products, particularly in agriculture and financial services, would be created by addressing policy barriers; and, unfair currency practices would be addressed. Moreover, China would increase imports of U.S. goods and services by a minimum of $200 billion in four categories: manufactured goods, agriculture, energy, and services (The White House, May 26, 2020, p. 12; Hu, 2020, p. 134). However, although it was hailed as critical progress toward a more balanced trade relationship (The White House, May 26, 2020, p. 12), and President Trump called the deal 'transformative,' it was just the beginning of a new chapter. It signaled more of an uneasy ceasefire than an end to trade tensions" since it did not address many issues (Hu, 2020, p. 134; Washington Post, Jan 21, 2020, cited in Hu, 2020, p. 134).

The trade war did not achieve what it initially desired: rebalancing the economic relations between the U.S. and China. Instead, significant damage hit U.S. manufacturing, exporting, and consumers (Hu, 2020, p. 134). While the U.S. firms working in the sectors that the U.S. targeted were thought to benefit from increased tariffs, they instead suffered (Drezner, 2019, p. 14). U.S. consumers and companies shouldered almost all the burden for increased tariffs, not China (Amtiti, Redding and Weinstein, March 2019, cited in Drezner, 2019, p. 14).

A similar path was followed in technology. The rapid technological development of China, especially in sectors such as 5G communication, space, and bioengineering technology, caused concern on the U.S. side. Then, the trade war was expanded into high-tech to control and limit China's advancement. As a result, harsh measures were taken by the Trump Administration to block access of China to certain products and instruments, research and development projects, and human resources, as well as to restrict China's ability (Hu, 2020, pp. 134-135). In this sense, 5G, the next generation of cellular network technology, was essential. The Administration started to impose several sanctions and take measures to halt the Chinese firm Huawei from establishing a global network standard for 5G. The reasoning was that the Chinese government would exploit the role of Huawei for intelligence purposes, such as gaining covert access to confidential data. To that end, Huawei phones were prohibited from being sold at U.S. military installations, and government contractors were banned from using Huawei devices in 2018. In 2019, the Commerce

Department put Huawei on the 'entity list,' which brings the condition of federal government approval to sell inputs to the company. Moreover, the Administration started a campaign on 5G among its allies. The Trump Administration warned them that the role of Huawei in their 5G networks would threaten their cooperation on intelligence-sharing with the U.S. (Drezner, 2019, p. 12).

Just like the trade war, the months-long attempt to restrict Huawei's role in 5G networks of allied countries did not give the desired results as the campaign to convince the allies to block Huawei from the construction of the 5G network efforts failed (Drezner, 2019, p. 13). Despite its 'special relationship with the U.S., even the U.K. refused to ban Huawei (Friedman, Feb 17, 2020). By the end of the Trump Administration, Australia and Japan chose to follow the U.S., while close allies like Germany, France, and the E.U. seemed the follow the path of the U.K. (Friedman, Feb 17, 2020; Hamilton, Mar 11, 2020).

The distracting and diverting issues also continued to dominate the U.S. agenda during Trump Administration. The Administration might not have opened a new front in nation-building policies that had been criticized during the election campaign. However, active policies continued to be pursued in the Middle East. The defeat of ISIL was pursued more actively, and greater resources were invested in helping Iraqi forces; while more troops were put on the ground, a harder policy was followed against Iran (Abrams, 2017, p. 15). Quite ironically, the visit of Chinese leader Xi Jinping visited the U.S. on April 6, 2017, was overshadowed by the announcement that cruise missiles were struck as a retaliation to a Syrian airfield that was used for a chemical weapons attack (Gordon, Cooper, and Shear, Apr 6, 2017., cited in Dombrowski and Reach, 2017, p. 1014; Sutter, 2017, p. 21). I think this example perfectly shows how U.S. commitments elsewhere dwarfed U.S. relations vis-à-vis China.

Furthermore, during this period, internal affairs also started to be the focus of U.S. policy. From the onset of the Trump Administration till the end of the term, the suggestions about Russian interference in the 2016 U.S. elections in favor of Trump dominated the headlines and the political scene (Hosenball, 2020). Finally, the beginning of 2020 witnessed the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, which kept the Administration (*and the rest of the world)* preoccupied.

In sum, the Trump Administration tried both main and secondary balancing strategies against China, but they were more different than its predecessor. Part of this was personal as, according to suggestions, building on the efforts of his predecessor would have gone against the personality of President Trump (Ljunggaren, 2020, p. 202). In its main balancing, the Administration tried to increase its military power by both external and internal means. Externally, the United States tried to reinforce alliances while seeking new partnerships. However, there was a great contradiction: the style of the Administration harmed alliance-building efforts and, indeed, damaged relations with allies. Internal balancing was the most continuous theme of the Obama Administration, yet there was still a change: the Trump Administration's focus was mainly on conventional capabilities and a greater budget. In secondary balancing, the Administration withdrew from the TPP and pursued a unilateral trade war with China. The campaign in 5G did not work either. Nevertheless, abandoning the TPP was indeed a mistake that ruined U.S. relations with key allies in Asia in return for nothing and gave China room to expand its influence (Walt, 2018, p. 248).

Moreover, the Administration tried economic sanctions on allies as well. Instead of alienating allies by threatening and actually putting tariffs and quotas on them and relying solely on unilateral sanctions, it would have been wiser to create a coalition of major economies to pressure China (Walt, 2018, pp. 250-251). In short, although the Administration named the strategic competition, it neither behaved strategically or compete properly. What it did with its 'short-sighted and uncoordinated' policy on China was instead to show American confusion and intensify its weaknesses (Nathan, 2021, p. 389-390).

5.2.5. The Biden Administration

The Biden Administration came to the office amidst the most severe crisis on multiple fronts in recent decades. First of all, there was the pandemic. By the time the Biden Administration took power, the pandemic had 'taken as many lives in one year as America lost in all of World War II.' Secondly, the pandemic had profound effects on the economy. It cost millions of jobs and hundreds of thousands of businesses (The White House, Jan 20, 2021). Finally, there were the shocking events of January 6 in Washington D.C. as the Congress was stormed on the day that the

election victory of President-elect Biden would be certified by the Congress (BBC, Jun 10).

All these problems were visible in President Biden's inaugural speech (The White House, Jan 20, 2021). In his speech, President Biden cited the challenges that should be confronted and defeated by the virus, economic problems, racial injustice, climate issues, political extremism, white supremacy, and domestic terrorism. According to him, the democracy of the U.S. was in a fragile moment, yet, it had to be championed, and national unity had to be emphasized to overcome the challenges mentioned earlier, as well as repair, restore, and heal the wounds.

When it comes to foreign policy, during the campaign, he criticized the foreign policy performance of his rival, now former President Trump (Biden, 2020, pp. 64-76). According to Biden, the U.S.'s credibility and influence had decreased during the Trump Administration. During this period, U.S. allies and partners had been "belittled, undermined, or in some cases, abandoned." Misguided trade wars were launched against friends and foes, and the American people were hurt. Biden accused President Trump of having abdicated from American leadership. Finally, according to Biden, Trump Administration abandoned democratic values that strengthen the U.S. and unify its people (Biden, 2020, p. 64). And on 5G networks, Biden promised to make necessary investments not to fall behind China but to develop it together with democratic allies and use it for the common good, not to leave any community, rural or low income, behind (Biden, 2020, pp. 68-69; p. 75).

He mentioned climate change, migration, technological disruption, and infectious diseases as global challenges that the U.S. faces. From his point of view, the ability to address them has been undermined due to the rapid advance of authoritarianism, nationalism, and illiberalism. He argued that the international system that the U.S. has carefully constructed was being fragmented. Stating that the winner of the elections will have to recover the reputation of the U.S., reconstruct the belief in its global leadership and mobilize both itself and its allies against the challenges, he pledged to reaffirm the democracy and alliances of the U.S., its economic future and its global leadership (Biden, 2020, pp. 64-65).

Defining *democracy* as the core part of U.S. power and leadership, he pledged to renew democracy domestically and promised to host a global summit for democracy

(Biden, 2020, pp. 65-68). Secondly, describing the U.S.' responsibility to lead as crucial, he promised to place the U.S.' back at the head of the table'. According to him, the Trump Administration alienated the democratic allies that the U.S. needs most by treating them as transactional. Biden, on the contrary, promised to restore American partnerships and lead the attempts to reconstruct them for the world's needs. He mentioned the need to strengthen partnerships beyond North America and Europe, citing Australia, Japan, and South Korea as allies to be reinvested. India and Indonesia were mentioned as the partnerships to be deepened 'to advance values in a region that will determine the future United States' (Biden, 2020, pp. 71-73). One crucial thing to note here is that Biden argued that the forever wars should be ended, the vast majority of the troops should return from Afghanistan and the Middle East while the mission should be narrowly defined (Biden, 2020, p. 72).

The final point he raised was following a foreign policy for the middle class, emphasizing that the U.S. should improve its innovative edge and consolidate democracies to counter unfair trade practices and reduce inequality (Biden, 2020, p. 68). Crucially for the purposes of this chapter, the policy against China was discussed in this context. According to Biden, China is a significant challenge that has long been trying to expand its global influence, promote its own model and invest in future technologies. However, against this threat, Trump made a fatal mistake in designating the closest allies of the U.S. as 'national security threats' and, therefore, damaged the capacity of the U.S. to meet the real challenge. Biden, instead, asserted that the U.S. should 'build a united front as the most efficient way, composed of the allies and partners of the U.S., to counter both abusive behaviors and human rights violations of China. The decisive idea was that while the U.S. has around a quarter of the global GDP, it could collect more than half of the global economy against China if it could join together with fellow democracies. By doing this, the argument goes, it could gain substantial leverage to shape the order as more than half of the global economy cannot be neglected by China. Simultaneously, the idea of collaborating with China on issues of convergence such as climate change, nonproliferation, and global health security was mentioned (Biden, 2020, p. 70). These words represent a clear focus on external balancing as the way to increase U.S. power against China, with an additional emphasis on democracy as the criterion to identify allies and galvanize their support against China.

A similar focus can be observed in President Biden's speeches after assuming office. For instance, in his inaugural address that was mentioned above, he asserted that in order to meet today's challenges, his administration would repair alliance relations of the U.S., engage with the world again, and lead by the power of the example of the U.S. (The White House, Jan 20, 20201). His first foreign policy speech two weeks after assuming office, on Feb 4, 2021, elaborated on the foreign policy understanding of the Administration (The White House, Feb 4, 2021). To begin with, he mentioned a multilateral approach as he stated that global challenges such as the pandemic, climate crisis, and nuclear proliferation have been accelerating, and these can only be addressed if nations work together, as the U.S. cannot do it alone. Reiterating the importance of alliances to meet today's challenges, he said that alliances are the greatest asset for the U.S. And, the return of American diplomatic leadership under his reign on these alliances is crucial to meet today's challenges such as advancing authoritarianism., including the increasing assertion of China to compete with the U.S.

Defining China as the most serious competitor to prosperity, security, and democratic values, he promised to confront China on its economic abuses; counter its aggressive actions; and reject Chinese violations of human rights, intellectual property, and global governance issues. Crucially, he affirmed that building back better domestically, working with its allies and partners, rejuvenating the role of the U.S. in internal institutions, and recovering the credibility and moral authority that had been damaged would give the U.S. a position of strength in its competition with China. That is why he argued that the Administration took steps to begin the restoration of the relations of the U.S. with significant actors and its leadership position (The White House, Feb 4, 2021).

Another fundamental document in this aspect was the Interim National Security Strategic Guidance released in March 2021, which outlined the national security vision of the Administration (The White House, Mar 3, 2021). The document names the global pandemic, the economic decline, the racial injustice, and the climate crisis as trans-border challenges while depicting a world with rising nationalism, backsliding democracy, and growing rivalry with authoritarian states, including China (The White House, Mar 3, 2021, pp. 6-7). Just like in previous speeches analyzed, it is possible to find the focus on the importance of building back better at

home, renewing the global American leadership, bolstering the alliances, and working with like-minded partners to unite the collective might in order to enhance "the shared interests and deter common threats" (The White House, Mar 3, 2021, p. 6). Multilateralism and the importance of alliances were also emphasized once again. Suggesting that today's threats need a collective response, *alliances* were defined as a "tremendous source of strength" for the U.S., and it was argued that they would be rejuvenated and modernized (The White House, Mar 3, 2021, p. 7 & p. 10). For the purposes of this chapter, it is essential to note that the document describes U.S. alliances with Australia, Japan, and South Korea as 'America's greatest strategic asset' alongside NATO and other global alliances and partnerships (The White House, Mar 3, 2021, p. 10)

The document acknowledges bold assessments: That the international order the U.S. helped to shape is challenged together with its alliances, institutions, agreements, and norms. Moreover, the global distribution of power is changing as China has notably become more ambitious. The guidance defines China as "the only competitor potentially capable of combining its economic, diplomatic, military, and technological power to mount a sustained challenge to a stable and open international system" (The White House, Mar 3, 2021, pp. 7-8). In order to overcome the strategic competition posed by the more assertive and authoritarian China, the most effective way was portrayed as investing in the people, economy, and democracy of the U.S. Accordingly, the guidance affirmed that the credibility and the global leadership of the U.S. would be restored and reasserted so that the U.S. can shape the international agenda together with its allies. Crucially, the Administration stressed that any aggression from China would be deterred while threats to collective security, prosperity, and democratic way of life would be countered "by bolstering and defending … [the] unparalleled network of allies and partners [of the U.S.], and making smart defense investments)" (The White House, Mar 3, 2021, p. 20).

All these emphasis and suggestions manifested themselves in several policies/initiatives in practice. To begin with, greater importance was attached to QUAD, which was founded during the Bush Administration and tried to be reconvened in later stages of the Trump Administration. The structure started to play an increasingly important role in the counter strategy of the Administration against China (Wainer, Nov 11, 2021, cited in Zhang, 2021, p. 14). The first-ever meeting at

the leaders' level among QUAD members was hosted by the Biden Administration on Mar 12, 2021, albeit virtually (Zhang, 2021, p. 14). After the Summit, a joint statement was released (The White House, Mar 12, 2021). In the statement, the four countries reaffirmed their commitment to cooperation among themselves and the promotion of a free, open, and rules-based system to counter the threats in Indo-Pacific and beyond, while their unity in a shared vision for free and open Indo-Pacific was emphasized. Later, the first in-person meeting between QUAD leaders was hosted by President Biden again on Sep 24, 2021 (The White House, Sep 24, 2021). According to the statement after the meeting, the leaders of these four countries showed an ambitious agenda that aimed to deepen the links between countries and advance their cooperation against the challenges of this century.

Another initiative for cooperation was a trilateral security cooperation format, this time a novel one instead of a reconvened one, between Australia, the U.K., and the U.S., known under the acronym AUKUS (Coşkun, 2021, p. 2). The aim of the AUKUS was declared to create a security partnership that includes technological, scientific, industrial, and defense aspects to create a safer and more secure region. Moreover, it was understood as part of the growing network of regional partnerships, such as ANZUS, ASEAN, the Quad, and bilateral partnerships (The White House, Sep 15, 2021). In essence, it meant building nuclear-powered submarines for Australia with U.S. technology, together with cooperation in cyber capabilities and other undersea technologies. Although not mentioned clearly, this move has been seen as an effort to target and aim to counter China, as leaders of these countries mentioned regional security concerns (BBC, Sep 16, 2021).

Finally, the Biden Administration convened a summit for democracy, as promised before the elections. 'The Summit for Democracy,' 'the flagship initiative' that shows the commitment of the Administration to put democracy and human rights at the center of foreign policy, was convened on December 9-10, 2021 virtually. The main idea was to discuss what President Biden calls 'the defining challenge of our time,' the defense of democracy, and the challenges facing it. As part of the Summit, President Biden hosted more than 275 participants composed of leaders of more than 100 countries, members of the private sector such as business and labor leaders, multilateral institutions working on human rights and democracy, and human rights defenders. The three themes of the summit were strengthening democracy and

countering authoritarianism, fighting corruption, and promoting respect for human rights (The White House, Dec 23, 2021; The Department of State, n.d.).

The first theme of the Summit is relevant for the purposes of this chapter. 'Strengthening democracy and defending against authoritarianism' may be understood as a move against China. Indeed, it was argued that the efforts of the U.S. to promote and defend democracy might be interpreted as an opportunity to balance Chinese influence on U.S. allies and democracies in Asia as it would attract and keep developing countries in the 'democracy camp' (Lee, Dec 16, 2021). The suggestion of the French Minister of Foreign Affairs with regards to the Summit that they do not want the Summit to establish an anti-China bloc (Clemenceau, Dec 8, 2021), and the Chinese counter-move to gather its own meeting just one week before the Summit to promote its 'high-functioning' democracy with its better results for its people (Ruwitch and Feng, Dec 9, 2021), underlines the point that it was understood as against China.

In the secondary balancing, the position of the Biden Administration is not crystal clear. On the one hand, as mentioned above, the trade wars launched by Trump Administration were criticized heavily during the campaign, while there were hints for the continuation of the 5G competition with China, with an increased focus on use for the common good. However, in practice, the restrictive measures inherited from the Trump Administration on trade, technology, and investment were not lessened and even tightened in some cases (Kharpal, Apr 30, 2021; Heeb, Apr 8, 2021., all cited in Zhang, 2021, p. 13).

In terms of prioritization, as suggested above, the Biden Administration came to the office in a period when there was an urgent need to focus on domestic priorities such as the Covid-19 pandemic (*together with its economic effects)* and repairing the deep political divisions, surfaced in Jan 6 events (Heer, 2021, p. 8). Today, the U.S. faces difficulties in many areas such as economy, military and social. For instance, there are severe crises in terms of its infrastructure and health system. These issues create questions whether the focus of the administration should be the domestic realm, or foreign policy (Özdamar, 2022, pp. 17-18).

One thing to note here is that 'ending the forever war in Afghanistan' by withdrawing the U.S. from Afghanistan on September 11, 2021, was partially justified by the

strategic competition with China. In his speech on the decision the pull the troops out, President Biden stated, "We have to shore up American competitiveness to meet the stiff competition we are facing from an increasingly assertive China" (The White House, Apr 14, 2021; quoted in Zhang, 2021, pp. 12-13; Zhang, 2021, p. 12).

In sum, the Biden Administration continued the understanding of the strategic competition with China. In the one year analyzed above, the focus to increase the U.S. power vis-à-vis China was mainly on 'external balancing,' working with allies and partners to create a united front against China. Interestingly, democracy was particularly highlighted; the challenge of China was portrayed with the emphasis on the dichotomy of 'authoritarian vs. democratic' as a system and way of life, and both the feature of potential allies and the bloc were defined as democratic. The secondary balancing strategy of the Biden Administration is not clear yet, as trade wars were criticized, but imposed restrictions were protected.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

Previous chapters compared two similar cases with significantly differing outcomes: the U.S facing the rise of a rival - the Soviet Union and China, respectively- but managing to balance it successfully in one case, while failing to do so in other so far. The difference, this study argued, lies in the U.S. behavior against each rival. In one case, it pursued a cohesive balancing strategy and succeed in balancing; while in the other, the U.S. lacks a cohesive balancing strategy so far, and consequently, failed to balance. The findings suggest that the coherence of the balancing strategy affects balancing success and failure. Pursuit of a coherent balancing strategy to improve the balance of relative military and non-military power against a rival results in successful balancing. Conversely, the lack of a coherent balancing strategy leads to balancing failure.

In the first case, after perceiving a threat from the USSR, the U.S. acted quickly to identify the vital countries that should not be controlled by the Soviet Union, provided them strategic economic aid (secondary balancing), and then, set up alliances in the vital regions (main balancing). This as a whole was a comprehensive policy aimed to maintain a favorable balance of power for itself and preserved by different administrations.

Thinking in counter-factual terms can underline the importance of this maintenance. All these alliance relations were established under either the Truman or Eisenhower Administration. So, if Kennedy, Nixon, or any other Administration had not maintained alliances, and instead abolished NATO or other alliances, it would not have been possible for the U.S. to retain the balance of power in its favor against the Soviet Union. Similarly, if providing strategic aid had not been pursued constantly by the Truman Administration even after the change in Secretary of State, it would not have been possible to anchor the aid-receiving countries into the Western

security structure led by the U.S. Then, this thinking underlines how a state must employ a coherent balancing strategy against a rival aiming to both improve the balance of military and non-military power. A quotation from President Eisenhower perfectly sums up this argument: "We must adapt our foreign policy to a "cold war" strategy that is unified and coherent." (Eisenhower address in San Francisco, California, October 8, 1952, "September 26, 1952," Speech Series, Whitman File., cited in Bowie and Immerman, 1998, p. 139). I argued that the U.S. achieved what Eisenhower desired, and successive administrations remained loyal to the main and secondary strategies.

The case dealing with China in the post-Cold War period, on the other hand, reveals a dramatically different behavior. First of all, the rise of China in recent decades is not a secret. Its economy has grown rapidly, and the effects of that growth started to be seen in the military domain as well. In parallel, China asked for a more significant role in the existing order, started to create its own alternative institutions, and promoted its own model as a soft power tool. According to Chinese President Xi Jinping, "China already stood tall in the East," and then it can now "take center stage in the world and to make a greater contribution to humankind" while its road to modernization offers "a new option for other countries" (Xinhua, Oct 18, 2017., quoted in Ljunggaren, 2020, p. 196). Secretary of State of the Biden Administration Antony Blinken, acknowledging the challenge, defines the U.S. relationship with China as "the biggest geopolitical test of the 21st century" (The State Dept, Mar 3, 2021).

Then, how has the U.S. been responding to the rise of China? The analysis in the previous chapter argues that the U.S. response so far is inconsistent and lacks coherence. And what is the main U.S. strategy to shift the balance of military and non-military power in its favor against China? The problem is that the United States has not adopted a constant main and secondary balancing strategy. The reason is that all administrations facing rising China behaved differently in rhetoric and practice; therefore, there is no consistent, united policy. 'Is China a rival or partner?', 'Should China be engaged or contained/confronted?', 'How should the power of the U.S. be improved against China; through internal means or by working with allies?', 'If it is internal means, 'If it is external means, should democracy be a defining feature for allies and the block?' 'How should the economic power of China be targeted?' These

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questions have received different answers from different administrations. They will continue to define the balancing strategies of the U.S., or indeed, whether the U.S. should balance against China. However, as explained at length, because the answer of each administration differed significantly, U.S. balancing experienced dramatic changes in objectives and tactics. This is the reason why there were visible contradictions. One administration welcomed China into the WTO, while another defined this decision as a disastrous mistake. One administration aimed to make it a responsible stakeholder in the system, while another wanted confrontation. One administration aimed to create a free-trade area in the Pacific region, while the other withdrew from it and instead tried to target China unilaterally. One administration fought with its own allies, whereas another placed working with like-minded allies and partners at the heart of its strategy. Another had the idea to balance with internal means by maintaining the technological edge over China. One can give lots of such examples. The bottom line is that each administration drastically differed from the other in how they perceived China and how they wanted to respond to China.

The allies of the U.S. were cognizant of this situation. They have witnessed that there is no linear progression in terms of major foreign-policy initiatives, and they are not likely to continue from one administration to the other. Consequently, this created a hesitation to side with the U.S. (Friedman, Feb 17, 2020).

To all this confusion related to the U.S. policies against China, one can add other priorities and commitments of the U.S. As explained above, other issues, particularly in the Middle East, diverted U.S. attention from China, while domestic issues have required urgent attention lately. Under these conditions, the failure of the U.S. to balance rising China was all but inevitable.

This study contributes to the literature on balancing, Cold War studies, and U.S.-China relations. With its framework, it offers new theoretical insight into Cold War, and U.S. – China rivalry. As discussed in the methodology section, this testable analysis and hypotheses offered on the success and failure of balancing are based on the comparison of these two cases. In the future, the scope of the research can be widened by testing these hypotheses in new cases. Moreover, these cases can be selected from medium and small powers to see whether this framework applies to cases other than great powers as well. Doing so would enhance the external validity

of the findings, and thus provide more generalizable insights about the conditions that lead to successful balancing, a key strategic behavior in International Relations.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Trade network on world trade for iron and steel as a buyer

Year	The U.S.	China (*with Hong Kong)*
2016	0.070	0.062
2015	0.075	0.060
2014	0.082	0.057
2013	0.064	0.063
2012	0.065	0.064
2011	0.059	0.068
2010	0.056	0.076
2009	0.043	0.106

Appendix B: Trade network on world trade for aircraft, spacecraft, and parts as a buyer

Year	U.S.	China (*with Hong Kong)*
2016	0.120	0.089
2015	0.198	0.067
2014	0.180	0.082
2013	0.166	0.070
2012	0.152	0.082
2011	0.153	0.069
2010	0.142	0.078
2009	0.165	0.050

Appendix C: Trade network on world trade for arms and ammunition parts as a buyer

Year	The U.S.	China
2016	0.171	0.002
2015	0.167	0.001
2014	0.196	0.002
2013	0.225	0.001

2012	0.204	0.002
2011	0.180	0.003
2010	0.176	0.004
2009	0.197	0.003

Notes: A close examination reveals that these tables have a common theme: A significant increase in the U.S. share as a buyer of these particular products following 2011-2012, the year the pivot has announced. In general, the numbers reached the highest level in 2014-2015, when the Third Offset Strategy was declared. Therefore, these tables provide suggestive evidence for the military build-up of the U.S. related to the Third Offset Strategy.

Source of the tables: World Integrated Trade Solution, World Bank. https://wits.worldbank.org/GlobalNetwork.aspx?lang=en

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