SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE; ARTS AND HUMANITIES

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY; POLITICS AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

THESIS TITEL:

SINO-AMERICAN TENSIONS. THE QUAD AND THE QUESTION OF STABILITY

THE CASE OF THE INDO-PACIFIC

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List of acronyms:

APEC: Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation

ASEAN: Association of Southeast Asian Nations

AUKUS: Acronym from the English abbreviations of the three participating states of the trilateral military association of Australia, United Kingdom and United States

CPC: the Communist Party of China

FOIP: Free and Open Indo-Pacific

IPS: Indo-Pacific Strategy

NATO: North Atlantic Treaty Organization

OBOR or **BRI**: One Belt one Road, respectively Belt and Road Initiative

PRC: People's Republic of China

QUAD: Quadrilateral Security Dialogue

Sino-American Tensions. The QUAD and the question of stability

The case of the Indo-Pacific

Abstract:

This thesis analyzes the tensions between the two great powers, the USA and China, with a particular focus on the Indo-Pacific region. The economic and geopolitical weight of the region also play an important role in Sino-American relations. As part of this, in addition to a historical analysis of the relationship between the two countries, the paper focuses on the establishment of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD) and analyzes its role in relation to stability in the Indo-Pacific. Both countries separate their different historical, cultural, and theoretical backgrounds; therefore, understanding their respective theoretical perspectives and worldviews occupies an important place in the paper. The respective interests and actions are considered from the point of view of the respective theories of International Relations. This approach is intended to prevent a one-sided theoretical view. The method of literature research is used, whereby a distinction can be made between systematic and backward-looking literature research. The following sources are processed above all: Speeches, press conferences, official government documents, existing scientific papers, articles, reports and studies, as well as newspaper articles and texts by journalists.

The study concludes that the establishment of QUAD does have an impact on stability in the Indo-Pacific. Among the QUAD members, India, which is readily seen as a counterweight to China, plays a significant role alongside the United States. The U.S. and China accuse each other of being a threat to stability and security in the Indo-Pacific. China sees itself provoked by the QUAD and the increased presence of the USA and restricted in its development and in its position in the Asian region. And the US, in turn, felt that its supremacy was threatened by China's tremendous growth over the past decades as well as its increasing influence in the Indo-Pacific region. In response, and in order to grant stability and security in the region, it strengthened cooperation with the middle powers India, Australia, and Japan under the QUAD. It is apparent that US-China relations in the Indo-Pacific hold dangerous potential for escalation, the consequences of which could be far-reaching for the entire world. This demonstrates the importance and necessity of the two countries taking a step toward each other again, trying to understand each other's perspectives, and reflecting on working together to ensure stability in the Indo-Pacific and beyond.

Keywords:

Sino-US relations, China, Indo-Pacific, QUAD, conflict analysis.

Καλοκαιρινό:

Το παρόν έγγραφο αναλύει τις εντάσεις μεταξύ των δύο μεγάλων δυνάμεων, των ΗΠΑ και της Κίνας, με ιδιαίτερη έμφαση στην περιοχή του Ινδο-Ειρηνικού. Το οικονομικό και γεωπολιτικό βάρος της περιοχής διαδραματίζει επίσης σημαντικό ρόλο στις σινοαμερικανικές σχέσεις. Στο πλαίσιο αυτό, πέραν της ιστορικής ανάλυσης των σχέσεων μεταξύ των δύο χωρών, το έγγραφο εστιάζει στην καθιέρωση του Τετραμερούς Διαλόγου για την Ασφάλεια (QUAD) και αναλύει τον ρόλο του σε σχέση με τη σταθερότητα στον Ινδο-Ειρηνικό. Οι δύο χώρες χωρίζονται από το διαφορετικό ιστορικό, πολιτισμικό και θεωρητικό υπόβαθρο, οπότε η κατανόηση των αντίστοιχων θεωρητικών προοπτικών και κοσμοθεωριών τους κατέχει σημαντική θέση στην εργασία. Τα αντίστοιχα συμφέροντα και οι δράσεις εξετάζονται από την άποψη των αντίστοιχων θεωριών των διεθνών σχέσεων. Η προσέγγιση αυτή αποσκοπεί στην αποφυγή μιας μονόπλευρης θεωρητικής θεώρησης. Χρησιμοποιείται η μέθοδος της βιβλιογραφικής έρευνας, όπου γίνεται διάκριση μεταξύ συστηματικής και οπισθοδρομικής βιβλιογραφικής έρευνας. Θα χρησιμοποιηθούν ιδίως οι ακόλουθες πηγές: Ομιλίες, συνεντεύξεις Τύπου, επίσημα κυβερνητικά έγγραφα, υπάρχουσες ακαδημαϊκές εργασίες, άρθρα, εκθέσεις και μελέτες, καθώς και άρθρα εφημερίδων και κείμενα δημοσιογράφων. Η μελέτη καταλήγει στο συμπέρασμα ότι η ίδρυση της QUAD έχει αντίκτυπο στη σταθερότητα στον Ινδο-Ειρηνικό. Μεταξύ των μελών της QUAD, η Ινδία, η οποία συχνά θεωρείται αντίβαρο στην Κίνα, διαδραματίζει σημαντικό ρόλο μαζί με τις ΗΠΑ. Οι ΗΠΑ και η Κίνα αλληλοκατηγορούνται ότι αποτελούν απειλή για τη σταθερότητα και την ασφάλεια στον Ινδο-Ειρηνικό. Η Κίνα βλέπει τον εαυτό της να προκαλείται από την QUAD και την αυξημένη παρουσία των ΗΠΑ και να περιορίζεται στην ανάπτυξη και τη θέση της στην περιοχή της Ασίας. Και οι ΗΠΑ, με τη σειρά τους, αισθάνθηκαν την υπεροχή τους να απειλείται από την τεράστια ανάπτυξη της Κίνας τις τελευταίες δεκαετίες, καθώς και από την αυξανόμενη επιρροή της στην περιοχή του Ινδο-Ειρηνικού. Ως απάντηση σε αυτό, και για να διασφαλίσει τη σταθερότητα και την ασφάλεια στην περιοχή, ενίσχυσε τη συνεργασία της με τις μεσαίες δυνάμεις Ινδία, Αυστραλία και Ιαπωνία στο πλαίσιο της QUAD. Καθίσταται σαφές ότι οι σχέσεις ΗΠΑ-Κίνας στον Ινδο-Ειρηνικό ενέχουν επικίνδυνες δυνατότητες κλιμάκωσης, οι συνέπειες των οποίων μπορεί να είναι εκτεταμένες για ολόκληρο τον κόσμο. Αυτό καταδεικνύει τη σημασία και την ανάγκη οι δύο χώρες να κάνουν ξανά ένα βήμα η μία προς την άλλη, να προσπαθήσουν να κατανοήσουν η μία την άποψη της άλλης και να αναλογιστούν την ανάγκη να συνεργαστούν για τη σταθερότητα στον Ινδο-Ειρηνικό και πέραν αυτού.

Λέξεις-κλειδιά: Σχέσεις Κίνας-ΗΠΑ, Κίνα, Ινδο-Ειρηνικός, QUAD, ανάλυση συγκρούσεων.

1. Introduction:

Since the end of World War II, the Indo-Pacific has grown into one of the most important geopolitical and economic regions in the world. With "the world's most crucial sea routes, the world's most populous nations fueling high energy demands on its rims and a stretch encapsulating finest global commons, the Indo-Pacific is adjudged to be the center of the globe in terms of politics and economics." (Das 2019) The region, which stretches from the Indian to the Pacific Oceans, is home to more than half the world's population, two-thirds of the global economy and the world's seven largest military powers. (The White House 2022, 4) It is therefore not surprising that this region plays a major role in the strategy of the great powers. And it is precisely this region in which the two largest world powers confront each other. The already established world power, the USA, and the emerging People's Republic of China, which has already grown into a great power. The United States soon recognized the growing importance of China and other Asian states. Thus, both the Bush and Obama administrations invested in deepening political and economic cooperation with Asian states. (The White House 2022, 4) However, rivalries and tensions have developed between the two states and have hardened and intensified over the past years and decades. On the other hand, there is also a mutual dependency that has historically formed in the times when the two countries had worked more closely together. Since Donald Trump's presidency in the USA, the mood towards China has cooled down considerably.

For the US, stability in the Indo-Pacific is of great importance. Thus, in the "Indo-Pacific Strategy 2022" on the situation after World War II, it says: "our country could only be secure if Asia was, too." (The White House 2022, 4) Thus, the US relies heavily on strategic partnerships in the region to strengthen its influence, assert its interests as well as maintain the stability of the region for the sake of the US. Since the Trump administration committed to the new Indo-Pacific strategy in 2017 and to the goal of a "free and open Indo-Pacific", relations have become even more strained. With the AUKUS alliance and the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD), the US formed a strong network for economic, geopolitical and military cooperation. China, in turn, feels constrained and provoked by this presence and views this development very critically. (Chen 2018) It even refers to QUAD as an "Asian-NATO". (Sarkar 2020, 1) The question here is whether the increased presence and strategic cooperations of the USA have a stabilizing or rather a destabilizing effect on the region. According to the importance of the region, there are also numerous articles and other scientific literature on this subject. Much of the existing literature is based on western, often

realist theories, which is of course partly due to the English-language literature. It is about the interests of states, distribution of power and balance of power. The question "why the US, India, Japan and Australia have been promoting a strategic mechanism and how it could possibly contain an increasingly assertive China in the Indo-Pacific" is also frequently explored. (Sarkar 2020, 110)

In their article, Dep and Wilson examine the Quad coalition from the perspective of balance of power. They argue that with the rise of China, the balance of power in the Indo-Pacific was shifted and therefore the US and its allies had to strengthen their presence, what the authors call "External balancing through alliance formation". (Dep & Wilson 2021) The impact of China's rise on security policy in the region is examined, as well as the balancing effect of the QUAD coalition. (Dep & Wilson 2021) Singh, in turn, highlights India's important role in issues of stability in the Indo-Pacific. He focuses on the interconnectedness and examines the interactions between India, China and the USA in a "strategic triangle". This means "that any change in the relationship between any two has a significant impact on the interests of the third." (Singh 2016, 163)

Focusing on the form of cooperation, the following two authors both argue that QUAD is part of the trend of "minilateralism." Laksmana describes the new minilateralism in the Indo-Pacific, under which QUAD also falls, as a hybrid of multilateralism and bilateralism. This, he says, is a response to regional conflicts and security problems, and in the case of QUAD, to the rise of China. (Laksmana 2020, 113) For the author, greater cooperation and complementarity is a possible solution to many of these problems. He calls QUAD's supportive cooperation with ASEAN of "critical importance" for QUAD's future. (Laksmana 2020, 114) Gabriel and his colleagues also argue for the trend in the Indo-Pacific of "minilateralism" and that the QUAD group is an example of this. They further claim the coalition is not a military alliance and "not as ambitious and strong" as is often claimed and due to the different interests "an alliance against China seems unlikely." (Gabriel 2020, 52+54)

Finally, Nagy argues more from the perspective of the QUAD partners. The middle powers in the Indo-Pacific region, such as Australia, Japan and India, have to represent and negotiate their interests in order to survive in the rivalry of the great powers USA and China. In doing so, he examines the strategies of the middle powers to represent their interests. Nagy identifies three commonalities in their strategies: "in middle power interests centered on maritime behavior, adherence to international law, and investment in regional institutions." (Nagy 2022, 1)

1.1. Research question and methodology:

As one of the most important regions in the world, the economic, political and security stability of the Indo-Pacific is of great importance. Furthermore, the region is the scene of tensions between the USA and China, which could intensify at any time and, in the worst case, end in a military conflict. This in turn could have dramatic consequences for the whole world. For these reasons, it is important to examine the stability in this neuralgic region based on the different world views of the two states. In this paper, I would like to examine the impact of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD) on the stability of the Indo-Pacific region, focusing on the tense situation between the US and China. The research question is: "To what extent does the QUAD coalition influence stability and security in the Indo-Pacific? And what roles do the US and China play in this?"

This paper is divided into three thematic parts. First, I will analyze in more detail the development of the Chinese theoretical concept of International Relations as an academic discipline in order to get a Chinese view of International Politics. Likewise, I will briefly examine the Western view and theories of International Relations and highlight the differences between the two approaches. The second part of the paper will look at the history of US-China relations since 1972 until today. This date was chosen because in that year U.S. President Nixon visited China, after which relations began to improve again. The deepening of relations in the 1970s will be discussed, as well as the cooling that took place under Donald Trump's policies. In the third part, I will focus on the situation in the Indo-Pacific and show and analyze the interests of both countries in this region. In particular, the role of the QUAD coalition will be discussed and the impact of this coalition on stability in the Indo-Pacific region will be examined. Here, we mainly examine the period from the revival of QUAD in 2017 until today, as it gained importance and influence since 2017 due to its reestablishment. Both theoretical perspectives will be addressed as well as how the situation in the Indo-Pacific fits into the respective worldviews. Finally, the results are summarized and the research question is answered. In the end, a reflection and conclusion are drawn.

The aim of the study is to get a detailed overview of the interests, motives and respective world understandings of the USA and China in the Indo-Pacific, as well as their relationship to each other. In particular, the impact of the establishment of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue on stability in the Indo-Pacific will be examined. Thus, I will closely examine the motives and interests of the two states and show the historical course of relations since 1972. In presenting the interests, the respective theoretical view of the world and the international

community of the two states will be considered. The focus of the paper will be on the "event" of the founding of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD), which is a strategic coalition of the USA, India, Japan and Australia. The actions and reactions of the two states will be presented to draw a conclusion on the impact of QUAD on stability in the region. I will use qualitative research methods in this paper as the aim is to get a detailed overview of the US-China relationship in general and specifically in the Indo-Pacific region. In doing so, I will use the qualitative case study method. The two states of the USA and China form the cases to be studied. I will use "process tracing" as a sub-methodology of case study in my work. This method has the characteristic of examining a chain of events to detect a causal effect between independent variable and outcome. (Van Evera 1997, 64) Here, the QUAD will be the independent variable, which will occur as the "event", and the stability in the Indo-Pacific, which depends mainly on the two major actors, will be the "outcome". In most cases, the case study cannot make general statements that can be extrapolated from one case or event to another. This design is "of immense relevance when the focus of a study is on extensively exploring and understanding rather than confirming and quantifying." (Kumar 2011, 123) In this work, it is precisely "to have a holistic understanding of the situation, phenomenon, episode, site, group or community." (Kumar 2011, 123) For this study, I will mainly rely on literature. The literature consulted will partly consist of primary material such as speeches, press conferences or official government documents, secondary literature such as existing academic papers, articles, reports and studies as well as newspaper articles and texts by journalists. The systematic literature search was used by examining relevant scientific literature and the backward literature search was used by looking at the source lists of relevant literature and finding the literature used there. (Mentorium.de 2021) In this study, I will therefore work with three different qualitative methods: a backward-looking as well as a systematic literature search and a content analysis of primary material. The former has been used mainly in the historical account of US-China relations and in the analysis of their different theoretical perspectives. The latter is used to find evidence in the form of statements, threats or statements of the actors regarding the change of stability in the Indo-Pacific as well as to support the representation of the interests of the two states. Due to the frequent lack of English translations of Chinese literature and to supplement it, secondary literature is also used.

2. CAPTER 1: Chinese and Western Approaches to International Politics and International Relations Theories

In this chapter, I will take a closer look at the Chinese concept of International Relations and thus the Chinese view of the International Order. Chinese international theories will be distinguished from theories popular in the West, such as realism and liberalism, on which I will focus. A non-European and Chinese perspective will be elaborated. To understand the tensions between the USA and China, not only western theories should be used, but the Chinese perspective must also be included, by considering the "local historical traditions and ancient philosophies, sociological perspective and ontological, epistemological and axiological dimension of international relations theories". (Kumar 2018, 1) Especially in Chinese politics and history, traditions and philosophies play a major role. The two countries' different views and basic understandings of "the nature of man and society" make mutual understanding difficult. (Xie 2014, 237)

The Chinese theories of international relations as an academic discipline are very young and a Chinese school emerged only from the 2007s. Initially, the discipline of International Relations was very much determined and guided by political leadership. Increased attention to International Relations as a discipline for theoretical and empirical research came only in 1992, after the 14th Party Congress of the Communist Party of China. The discipline was further developed within the institutional framework of the National Association of History of International Relations and, from 1999, the China National Association for International Studies. (Kumar 2018, 2)

Qin Yaqing describes three phases in the development of the academic discipline of International Relations: the pre-theory phase from 1978 to 1990, the theory-learning phase from 1991 to 2000, and the theory-innovation phase 2007 to the present. (Kumar 2018, 3) In the first phase, Mao Zedong developed the "Three Worlds Theory". This divided the world into three parts, first the USA and the USSR, second the respective blocs and their allies, and third the remaining states in Africa, South America and Asia. The dominant theories during this period were Marxism and Leninism, as well as initial realism, but beyond that "no conscious attempt was made to build theoretical paradigm." (Kumar 2018, 3) The theory-learning phase was ideologically shaped by " Socialism with Chinese Characteristics" after the Party Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC). For the first time, attempts were made to develop their own Chinese theories of international relations and to distinguish themselves from the prevailing Western theories. (Kumar 2018, 3) In addition to the English School, the Chinese turned to "other areas pertaining to feminism, world governance theory and complexity theory". (Kumar 2018, 4) This was followed by a period of immersion (2001-2007) in which Western methods and analytical procedures were applied to study Chinese

international relations. Constructivism played a crucial role in this phase by leading to the realization that International Relations theories help to understand both China's foreign policy and international politics. (Kumar 2018, 4) In the last phase, the innovation phase after 2007, the concept of "peaceful development" became central under the then President Hu Jintao. With this concept came the concepts of a "harmonious world" and a "harmonious society", which needed peaceful development. (Kumar 2018, 4) President Hu Jintao promoted balanced development above all else, which set him apart from former President Jiang Zemin, who sought strong economic growth above all else. These concepts include cooperation and multilateralism for common security, common prosperity, as well as reforms in the United Nations. (Kumar 2018, 5) This phase of innovation was largely influenced by constructivism and the Chinese philosophy of change (Yijing). The latter assumes that "both identity and behavior are changeable." (Kumar 2018, 5) The concept of peaceful development and peaceful advancement, combined with China's rapid rise as a great power and its changing role in the international community, led China to rethink its identity, goals and strategies. (Kumar 2018, 5) Various Chinese theorists sought to further develop the "Chinese School" of International Relations. (Kumar 2018, 5) One of the best-known Chinese theorists in international relations is Yan Xuetong. His approaches of "(using) traditional culture as soft power" have also influenced China's "soft power strategy". (Kumar 2018, 5) He calls himself a realist and his realism with Chinese characteristics is also based on the realist assumption that 'hard' power is central to International Relations. (Kumar 2018, 5 + Creutzfeldt 2012, 1) In his approach, Xuetong emphasizes the strong role of morality in realism when considering International Relations. (Creutzfeldt 2012, 5) His focus is on political interests, not economic or military interests. And he emphasizes the role of "state morality, political ideas, and the very idea of human authority." (Kumar 2018, 5) Furthermore, on China's role in the international community, Xuetong says that China has a "non-alliance" policy, which means it does not like to ally and it does not have to make promises. This, however, is disadvantageous to the US, as it prevents it from building deeper relationships with other states. (Creutzfeldt 2012, 4) Another important theorist in Chinese International Relations is Zhao Tinyang, who applied the ancient concept of Tianxia, meaning "all-under-heaven", to International Relations. (Kumar 2018, 6) Tianxia was "designed to "create the compatibility of all peoples of all nations", so it could be said a Chinese ideal of perpetual peace." (Tinyang 2013, 2) According to Tingyang, the over 3000-year-old philosophical concept is an "ideal world system". (Yaqing 2012, 70) Tinaxia has three meanings: "as the land of the world; as all peoples in the world; and as a world institution" and thus it encompasses the physical,

psychological and political worlds. (Kumar 2018, 6) He argues that today's world is a "non-world" and despite globalization, from a philosophical and institutional point of view, it does not form a unity and is guided by the self-interests of individual states. (Yaqing 2012, 73) Tinyang criticizes western theories of international politics for not including world-encompassing concepts for a peaceful global community. (Yaqing 2012, 73)

The last Chinese theorist I would like to mention is Qin Yaqing. He is of great importance for the development of a Chinese School of thought in International Relations and has attempted to bring "Chinese intellectual legacy and socio-cultural experience" into the theories of International Relations. (Kumar 2018, 7) In his view, Chinese theory and diplomacy strives for "a harmonious world; that seeking 'long lasting peace and common prosperity for the world'", but American for "'hegemonic maintenance'". (Kumar 2018, 7) Qin Yaqing also developed the concept of relationality. In contrast to the Western assumption of a rational individual, Chinese theories of international relations are based on the principle of relationality. This principle is also applied in the field of governance to "managing relations between individual actors for the purpose of establishing order." (Kumar 2018, 12) This concept has its roots in Confucian philosophy, along with sociological theories and business management. The quality of relationships is crucial for successful governance. Relational governance is about ordering individuals and the relationships between individuals and establishing a "reciprocal and cooperative" mode of behavior based on mutual trust, values and morality. (Kumar 2018, 11) Chinese cultural consciousness sees social constructs such as the family, and thus social relationships, as central to forms of governance. (Kumar 2018, 11)

All these theoretical influences, together with global development and China's increased involvement in the international community created China's worldview today. Ancient Chinese states were guided by concepts such as a "great universal harmony" and the Tianxia idea. However, with the modern state system and the agreement of the tribute system and the independence of Korea, Mongolia and Vietnam, the image of China as the center of the world also disappeared. (Kumar 2018, 8) With China's greater integration into the international community and membership of the UN Security Council, China had to adapt more and more to the prevailing rules and norms, which were predominantly Western in character. And for a long time, "China has tried to model its international behavior on that of the great powers". (Kumar 2018, 9) The belief in the inevitable change inherent in all things has shaped the Chinese outlook for 5000 years. (Kumar 2018, 10) In this sense, China integrated itself into the international order and made necessary internal changes. Whereas for China, the international order is also subject to constant change and "the Chinese had examined this

system before joining and knew how to use this order to protect and promote own interests." (Kumar 2018, 10)

After the overview of Chinese theories and views of international relations and the global order, I will contrast the main western theories below. As we have seen, Chinese theories were initially both influenced by establish ed western theories, but later also critique some of the Western approaches and worldviews. Kumar calls western theories "singular, homogenous and universal" although there are many approaches. (Kumar 2018, 12) Realism and liberalism are certainly the most influential main theories. (Heywood 2011, 53) The academic discipline of international relations only really began to develop after the First World War. At the same time, the first theories after the war were mainly based on liberal ideas. They wanted to understand world politics under a "framework of moral and legal norms". (Heywood 2011, 54) From the 1930s onwards, however, more and more criticism came from the realists, who believed in "hard" power politics in international relations. Later, different versions and intermediate forms developed from these two. (Heywood 2011, 54) The realists pursue a theory very focused on power and power politics, which is about the pursuit of self-interest, and they distance themselves from the ideals and morals of the liberalists. (Heywood 2011, 54) The two main assumptions of the realists are, on the one hand, the international environment of anarchy in which the main actor is the sovereign state and, on the other hand, the egoistic nature of man or, derivatively, of states, which mainly pursues its own (national) interests. (Heywood 2011, 54) I will deliberately not go into further realist sub-theories and spin-offs here, since both classical realism and neorealism are built on the same basic realist principles and usually only the weighting changes. (Heywood 2011, 54)

The liberalists have the reputation of being the most "western" theory. Some also call it "the ideology of the industrialized West and identify it with western civilization itself". (Heywood 2011, 61) Liberalism experienced a new revival, especially after the end of the Cold War, after having lost importance since the end of World War 2. (Heywood 2011, 62) The main assumptions of libertarians are harmony and a natural equilibrium that will prevail sooner or later, even though they recognize the self-interest and competition of states. (Heywood 2011, 62) Here we see that despite the differences, the two theories nevertheless both assume competition and competition between states. (Heywood 2011, 62)

One can see very clearly in this juxtaposition the different approaches of the West and China to the consideration of international politics. Where the Chinese theory of striving for "Tinaxia", for a world community united "under one sky" and the gain of all participants, Western theories focus on self-interest and competition. Where in Chinese theories

relationships play a decisive role, in Western theories it is individuals, balance of power and rationality.

3. CAPTER 2: Historical background of Sino-American relations

3.1. History of relations between the US and China since 1972 until 2015

The relationship between the US and China has historically never been steady and has been characterized by its ups and downs. This ranges from cooperation as allies after the start of the Pacific War in 1941 to an increasingly hostile relationship in the late 1940s when the Cold War and Korean War began and the Chinese Communist Party came to power. (Zhang 2020, 3) Likewise, the fact that the US supported Taiwan's secession led to further deterioration in the relationship between the two countries. In the early 1970s, the situation between the two countries slowly returned to normal. The change began with Nixon's visit to China, which can be seen as the start of a renewed and revitalized political and diplomatic relationship. During this visit, the USA recognized that Taiwan belonged to China and that it was withdrawing its troops there, which also happened in 1975 with the withdrawal of the last military aircraft from Taiwan. (Arezina 2020, 3) After 1981, when President Regan came to power, US-Taiwan policy changed again to China's displeasure. (Arezina 2020, 3) During the Cold War, the improvement in US-China relations was viewed with concern by the USSR, which now had to direct its forces eastwards, which was not unimportant for weakening the Soviet Union. (Hass 2020, 2) China increasingly established diplomatic relations, within the United Nations and with individual states. "1978 was a crucial turning point, where Deng Xiaoping adopted the policy of 'Opening-up and Economic Reform' which led to its active participation in the world economy. "(Kumar 2018, 2) And in 1979, diplomatic relations with the US were established and strengthened. Increasingly, many areas of cooperation were developed and expanded, such as in economics, science, technology and security. (Zhang 2020, 3) Both countries were interested in a good relationship for mutual benefit. Even the Taiwan issue was handled with caution and compromise by both countries. China showed its will to a peaceful solution and the US tried to act with consideration. (Zhang 2020, 3) In China's economic boom, many US companies invested in the country and relocated their production to China. The latter in turn invested much of the US currency thus generated in US government bonds. (Hass 2020, 2) This created a strong connection as well as an economic dependency. When George Bush became president, relations endangered to deteriorate somewhat, as the US felt threatened by the rapid economic growth. However, after the events of 11 September 2001,

the United States turned its attention to good relations with China, which was seen as an international stability factor, and concentrated its energies on the "war on terror". (Hass 2020, 2) Thus, there was no rupture and relations continued to deepen. China acted prudently and still affirmed its vision of a "peaceful rise". (Hass 2020,3) Zhang called the period between 1979 and 2009 the "most stable China-US relations in history", with both benefiting from good relations. (Zhang 2020,3) Economically, China took on an increasingly important role internationally and in the 2008 financial crisis, the US and China worked together to stabilize the global economy. By 2010, China had grown to become the second largest economic power and was increasingly catching up with the United States. (Hass 2020, 3) The two countries also worked together on climate protection under Obama and Xi Jinping, which was particularly evident in the joint effort around the 2015 climate agreement. (Hass 2020, 3) The existing strategic differences, however, did not disappear and in some cases became more acute. For example, the US expected China to do more to counter North Korea's ambitions in the areas of missile and nuclear weapons programs. Likewise, the expanding Chinese presence in the South China Sea, which violates international law, was a thorn in the side of the United States as well as neighboring states. (Hass 2020, 3) China's rapid rise, which brought the country economic growth of more than 10% at times from the 1980s and 1990s. (Liu 2018, 5) This development not only put the USA on the spot, but also other states, such as Japan, which lost its status as Asia's first economic power to China in 2011. (Liu 2018, 5) There were also territorial disputes over islands, "the "Senkakus" by Japanese and the "Diaoyu Islands" by Chinese" - fishing and economic rights were at stake. This rise of China also prompted Japanese Prime Minister Abe Shinzō to increase cooperation between Japan, the US, Australia, and India. (Liu 2018, 5) In Chapter 3, I will elaborate on the rivalries and tensions that have developed between the US and China in the Indo-Pacific region.

3.2. The rise of China and the US under Trump - new realities

Already under Obama, voices critical of China became louder and louder, as China was seen more and more as a competitor due to its steep rise. (Arezina 2020, 4) As early as 2011, Obama said the USA wanted to counter China's influence and "promised to increase U.S. American diplomatic, economic and military presence in the Asia-Pacific". (Gabriel 2020, 60) After Donald Trump was elected president of the USA, the tone towards China intensified further, it was officially declared a "competitor" and the relationship cooled down considerably. In 2017, after Trump's inauguration, China proposed a relationship based on "non-conflict, non-confrontation, mutual respect and win-win cooperation". (Singh 2018, 5)

And in 2017, the leaders visited each other. (Singh 2018, 5) However, pre-existing disputes intensified and persisted. Differences over the economy and geopolitics increasingly came to a head, and the events surrounding the coronavirus brought diplomatic relations to a new low. (Zhang 2020,3+4) The main issues that caused tension and disagreement were the "North Korean Peninsula, the Taiwan Strait and the South China Sea", in addition to trade and trade initiatives such as the Trans-Pacific Partnership or the Belt and Road Initiative. (Singh 2018, 5) In the next chapter, I will elaborate on these points of contention. Thus, relations deteriorated and the US referred to China as a "revisionist state and a strategic competitor of the United States" in the National Security Strategy. (NSS 2017, 21) The US accused China of acting against and seeking to harm its power, security and interests. (He & Li 2020, 2) The National Security Strategy 2017, which was developed under Donald Trump, did not mince words when it came to China. The US calls China a revisionist state and further accuses it of stealing US intellectual property. (NSS 2017, 21+ 25) The 2017 report states: "Every year, competitors such as China steal U.S. intellectual property valued at hundreds of billions of dollars". (NSS 2017, 21) These disputes eventually led to a trade war between the US and China. (Sarkar 2020, 122) The two countries imposed high tariffs on each other's products. And especially the high tariffs on Chinese truths led to an increasing competitive disadvantage of the latter. (Arezina 2020, 5 + 10) Regarding China's activities in the South China Sea, the US accuses China of endangering regional stability and attacking the sovereignty of neighboring states by creating militarized outposts. (NSS 2017, 46) The aggressive tone towards China has not been softened even with the new US President Biden. China policy is said to be even more aggressive than Trump's, which has often consisted of threats. (Pao 2022; Singh 2018, 3) In the Indo-Pacific Strategy 2022, the US writes that China seeks to become the world's most influential power: "The PRC is combining its economic, diplomatic, military, and technological might as it pursues a sphere of influence in the Indo-Pacific and seeks to become the world's most influential power." (IPS 2022, 5) In response to the US National Security 2022, China accuses the United States of the report being "full of cold war and zero-sum thinking." (Ministry of National Defense of the People's Republic of China, 2022) According to China, the US is ideologically guided in its criticism of China and continues to pursue its "blocs" thinking. China calls on the US to cooperate again and to view China's development "rationally" and exaggerate it for subjective reasons. (Ministry of National Defense of the People's Republic of China, 2022) China is also responding by increasing its defense budget and expanding its military in areas such as "training, defense-related technological innovation, and military-civilian fusion" and also the Coast Guard.

(Panda 2021) This change of direction in rhetoric and policy on the part of the Trump administration is what Arezina calls an increasing undermining of multilateralism and globalism. (Arezina 2020, 1)

4. CAPTER 3 Aspects and interests in the Indo-Pacific

In the following chapter, I will discuss the tensions and rival issues between China and the US in the Indo-Pacific. Initially, I will discuss the origin of the terminology "Indo-Pacific" as well as the geographical definition. Furthermore, I will discuss the different perspectives and interests of the two states in the Indo-Pacific region.

4.1. The term "Indo-Pacific" and the geographical extent and definition of the Indo-Pacific.

The term Indo-Pacific evolved in the field of foreign policy and since 2017 by US President Trump, it has been increasingly prevalent, especially in US politics. There was a terminological and strategic shift from the term Asia-Pacific to Indo-Pacific, which was a "potential extension of the US strategic vision". (He & Li 2020, 1) Here, it is important to note that China does not use this term and continues to stick to the terminology of Asia-Pacific, believing that the US was pursuing China containment through the change in rhetoric. (He & Li 2020, 2) China also does not see itself as part of the 'Indo-Pacific'. (He & Li 2020; Denisov, et al. 2021, 7)

Overall, the term "Indo-Pacific" is based on security interests such as securing freedom of navigation, a rules-based order and open dialogue. (Denisov, et al. 2021, 1) As controversial as the term Indo-Pacific is, its geographical scope and definition is often not addressed and varies by country. And what is more: "even within the same country, the geographical definition has at times changed along with policy development." (Haruko 2020, 1) It is an imaginary space, which depends on who imagines it and who characterises it. (Das 2019) This complicates diplomatic dialogue, of course, but also academic research. It is therefore important to be aware that different geographical concepts of the Indo-Pacific exist, and that respective policies align with those concepts. (Haruko 2020, 1) In the following, I will discuss the different concepts of the QUAD states and conclude by mentioning the overlaps.

The United States began to introduce the term "Indo-Pacific" during Obama's term in office. At that time, the region was hardly defined and areas such as "South and Southeast Asia" were mentioned, or even "South Africa to Australia". (Haruko 2020, 2) Further definitions

were shaped by the inclusion of the two oceans, the Pacific and the Indian, and the region in between. The definition changed and solidified with the introduction of the Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy, encompassing the space from the west coast of India to the west coast of the United States. (Haruko 2020, 5) "The United States is an Indo-Pacific power." (The White House 2022, 4) With the inclusion of the US in the Indo-Pacific, the US gave the region special importance in its national strategy.

Australia's definition of the "Indo-Pacific" was initially focused on the Indian Ocean and the Western Pacific, as well as their sea lanes, which included India, Southeast Asia as well as Northeast Asia. (Haruko 2020, 7) In 2017, Australia broadened its definition to include the United States in the region, aligning it with that of the US, which also shows the close strategic partnership between the two countries. (Haruko 2020, 7)

Japan initially used the term "broader Asia" for the South Asia and East Asia region. Since 2013 under Prime Minister Abe, the term "Indo-Pacific" was slowly introduced. In 2017, Japan also committed to the "Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy" and increasingly adopted the concept of "Indo-Pacific". (Haruko 2020, 8+9) With this adoption of the term, the geographical definition of the region also changed. It used to include "Southeast Asia, South Asia, the Middle East and the East African littoral countries" and now after 2017 North America was also included and after 2018 even South America. (Haruko 2020, 9)

In India's Indian Maritime Security Strategy, the "Indo-Pacific" was referred to as "one of the six sea areas around India". India's definition is very broad and covers the area between the east coast of Africa and the west coast of the United Nations. (Haruko 2020, 11)

It can be seen that the definitions of QUAD states have adapted over time. Especially since Trump's term in office and the "Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy", the different views have adapted and converged to the definition of the United States. According to Haruko, all definitions have three aspects in common. Firstly, the focus on the maritime zones and the sea lanes in the Indian and Pacific Oceans; secondly, the central role of India; and thirdly, the inclusion of the Southeast Asian states. (Haruko 2020, 16)

4.2. Aspects in the Indo-Pacific:

In this complex region are located some geopolitical very significant aspects. Here I want to mention some aspects of the Indo-Pacific that have a major impact on US-China relations in the region. Starting with the Belt and Road Initiative, I go into more detail about what is now the largest project in the People's Republic. The "one belt, one road" (OBOR) initiative was introduced by Chinese President Xi Jinping during a trip to Kazakhstan in 2013. This consists

"of the SilkRoad Economic Belt and the Twenty-First Century Maritime Silk Road." (Liu 2018, 7) These trade routes, which are conducted both on land and at sea, span China, Central Asia, Russia, Central Europe and even extend to Western Europe. The sea route goes from China to Europe via the South China Sea, the Indian Ocean via the Suez Canal. (Brona 2018, 58) Maritime infrastructure is being developed and new ports are being built along the coast. (Lee 2019, 6) The project, in which a total of one trillion will be invested, is expected to cover 65 countries, reaching over 60% of the world's population. (Gabriel 2020, 58) This initiative is expected to bring China economic growth, boost exports and strengthen its position in the world. Furthermore, China seeks to spread a "peaceful and benevolent image" through this economic integration project, which includes over sixty countries. (Liu 2018, 7) Through the OBOR initiative, China is also pursuing security goals. Brona writes that, on the one hand, China wants to stabilize the Central Asian region and thus also the autonomous region of Xinjiang Uygur through accelerated development. And on the other hand, it wants to create an alternative trade route to the West so as not to be dependent on the sea route. (Brona 2018, 59) In the first Belt and Road Forum, the global significance of the initiative became clear, with 130 countries represented, 29 of them by government leaders themselves. (Liu 2018, 7) This major economic project, which involves land and sea routes, is leading to the upgrading of the Eastern European region, as well as the countries of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. However, it also prompts other Asian states to engage in balancing alliances and projects. For example, Taiwan and South Korea, both of which are not included in the OBOR initiative, are looking southwards and South Korea is trying to reduce its dependence on China through stronger ties with India. (Liu 2018, 7) QUAD countries are also critical of the project. They say the initiative is mainly for the benefit of China and its companies with the aim of expanding the market for goods and services and widening its sphere of influence. (Lee 2019, 5) Furthermore, many of the OBOR partner states are heavily indebted as a result of the project and Chinese loans. The telling example of this is the Maldives, with a debt burden to China of US$3 billion, against a BIB (2017) of US$4.19 billion. (Lee 2019, 6)

The second aspect, which I will discuss in more detail, is the North Korea issue. 16 missile tests and six hydrogen bombs tested made the North Korean case an even more pressing issue in the Trump administration than it was before. (Singh 2018, 6) The United States would like to see more active engagement on the part of China on the North Korean issue and calls on China to exercise its "diplomatic responsibility" towards North Korea. (Singh 2018, 5) The US goal of denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula still remains unachieved. However, no

US-China cooperation on this issue could be achieved in talks between President Trump and Xi Jinping. (Singh 2018, 5) The United States accuses China of continuing to trade with North Korea and therefore sees no possibility of a solution with China. The opinions of the two states on how to tackle the challenge of North Korea differ widely. While the USA wants to take a tough approach and "destroy" the regime, China is relying on negotiations and talks. (Singh 2018, 5)

Another critical issue in the Indo-Pacific is territorial disputes and Chinese island building in the South China Sea. The South China Sea region has important economic significance for China, as many trade routes for goods and energy pass through this region, which is itself rich in gas and oil deposits. (Singh 2018, 8; Gabriel 2020, 59) China claims what it calls "historic" sovereignty over large parts of the South China Sea. (Zhen 2016; Gabriel 2020, 59) The area, delimited by the so-called "nine-dash line", includes the island groups and reefs of the Paracel Islands, the Spratly Islands, and the Scarborough Shoal. (Gabriel 2020, 59) China's construction of artificial islands has alarmed the US, which does not recognize these islands as Chinese. These islands are mainly meant to be military bases and will also be used for nuclear weapons. (Singh 2018, 8) Furthermore, the UN tribunal accuses China of damaging the environment through island construction "endangering Philippine ships and interfering with Philippine fishing and oil exploration." (Singh 2018, 8) Both Vietnam and the Philippines brought their complaint against China's territorial claims to the International Court of Justice in The Hague, which ruled China's actions and claims unlawful as they violate the United Nations Law of the Sea. (Zhen 2016 & Mehta 2021) Should China be able to enforce this legal claim, it would have control over areas that are now considered international waters under international law. The United States, through its supremacy in this region, has so far supported and secured free trade and navigation as a 'public good'. (Lee 2019, 4) China's expansion of power over this area would reshuffle the cards and could not only threaten free trade and sea lanes in the region but also affect " the United States' ability to militarily support its alliance partners or play a balancing role." (Lee 2019, 4)

The Taiwan issue is another important factor in US-Sino relations in the Indo-Pacific and historically dates back to the Chinese Civil War and the end of World War II. Taiwan is in a complex situation - neither independent nor reunited with China. For both the US and China, Taiwan is of important strategic significance and Xie writes that the relationship cannot improve without US acceptance of the 'one China policy'. (Xie 2014, 240) Taiwan was occupied by Japan but was handed back to China by treaty in October 1945. (Xie 2014, 240) However, when the Communist People's Republic of China was proclaimed by Mao Zedong

in 1949, some of his opponents and supporters of the old republic fled to Taiwan. (Tagesschau) While the People's Republic under the Chinese Communist Party moved more and more towards dictatorship, Taiwan established itself as a stable democracy. (Tagesschau) The Chinese Communist Party considers the reintegration of Taiwan or reunification as a "historical mission" and it is one of its main interests. (Xie 2014, 240) Its legitimacy as the ruling party is also at stake if it fails in winning back Taiwan. Taiwan is also strategically important as a military base. (Tsang 2017, 1) Thus, Taiwan became an "important American agent", which supported the US in pursuing its interests in the Indo-Pacific. (Xie 2014, 240) The Taiwan Relations Act unofficially sealed the relationship and the US entered into a commitment "to assist Taiwan in maintaining its defensive capability." (Singh 2018, 9) Since this agreement, arms have been regularly sold to Taiwan, with arms deals worth between USD 1.8 billion and USD 1.4 billion concluded under Obama and Trump. (Singh 2018, 9) China, in turn, threatens escalation if the US actively supports Taiwan's bid for independence. Reuters (2021) and British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) (2022) both headline that China threatens war if Taiwan becomes independent. However, despite the different interests, the US and China have a common interest in "peace and stability" in the Taiwan Strait, which is why, according to Xie, the US should be cautious in supporting Taiwan's independence aspirations. (Xie 2014, 241) The US officially adheres to the Taiwan Relations Act to this day and the National Security Strategy states:" We oppose any unilateral changes to the status quo from either side, and do not support Taiwan independence." (NSS 2022, 24)

4.3. The interests of the USA and China in the Indo-pacific region

First, I will show the U.S. interests in the Indo-Pacific. Since the National Security Strategy of 2017, 2018 and 2019, it has become clear that the US will now place increased focus on the Indo-Pacific region and China. (Shicun & Colombage 2019, 4) In 2017, the US administration under Donald Trump announced its "Indo-Pacific Strategy". Adapted from QUAD, the main players in this strategy are also India, Australia and Japan, together with the United States. (Shicun & Colombage 2019, 1) The region is of very great economic and security interest to the US, especially due to the important trade routes through which a large part of the US trade volume is shipped. Therefore, an important focus of the US is the stability of the Indo-Pacific region as well as securing its own influence in the region. (Shicun & Colombage 2019, 4) Under President Trump, there was also a commitment to the "Free and Open Indo-Pacific" strategy in 2017, and the political tone towards China also became increasingly stricter. In the 2017 National Security Strategy, the US accused China of threatening stability in the region.

"Its efforts to build and militarize outposts in the South China Sea endanger the free flow of trade, threaten the sovereignty of other nations, and undermine regional stability." (NSS 2017, 46) As China's influence grew, as evidenced by its growing naval power, the US increasingly saw it as a competitor and increased its presence at sea and on the coast. In addition to this competition, however, China is also a partner in the fight against piracy as well as in humanitarian missions or multinational naval exercises. (Shicun & Colombage 2019, 4). One committed oneself to strengthening and stabilizing the region together with its allies, if necessary, also in competition with China. (The White House 2022, 5) The Biden administration reiterated that it wanted to strengthen its position in the Indo-Pacific and conceded that its interests could only be safeguarded and pursued if the Indo-Pacific region was stable and the US position was secure. (The White House 2022, 5) The US sees China as a threat as it uses its growing influence at sea to make territorial claims on other states, attacking their sovereignty. (Shicun & Colombage 2019, 4) The United States is committed to maintaining order and stability in the region. In its National Security Strategy 2019, the US reaffirms its "enduring commitment to uphold a free and open Indo-Pacific in which all nations, large and small, are secure in their sovereignty and able to pursue economic growth consistent with accepted international rules, norms, and principles of fair competition." (Department of Defense 2019) And they accuse China of: "the People's Republic of China, under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party, seeks to reorder the region to its advantage by leveraging military modernization, influence operations, and predatory economics to coerce other nations." (Department of Defense 2019) The United States' vision for the Indo-Pacific includes "a free and open Indo-Pacific that is more connected, prosperous, secure, and resilient". (The White House 2022, 6) According to Shicun and Colombage, the US has two main objectives with its Indo-Pacific strategy. First, the US administration wants to prevent China from becoming the strongest power in the region and thus assuming "absolute discourse power" on important economic and security issues. Second, the US in turn wants to strengthen and maintain its position in the region and thus retain control over sea lanes and economic issues. (Shicun & Colombage 2019, 8) In doing so, the US strategy seeks to prevent China's supremacy by concluding cooperation with other powerful states in the region. The QUAD agreement plays an important role in this, not least because of India's participation, which the US likes to see as a balancing pole to China. (Shicun & Colombage 2019, 8)

Now I come to China's interests and Chinese reactions toward U.S. policies in the Indo-Pacific. The Indo-Pacific as a region is of great importance to China. It plays an important

role in the Belt and Road strategy and the region is extremely important for the energy supply and trade of the large economy and thus a neuralgic point and indispensable for China's further development. (Sarkar 2020, 212) The country feels threatened by the construct of the "Indo-Pacific", which India continues to focus on, and fears for its regional power position. (Sarkar 202, 112) Economic multilateralism in the Asian trading area, which is important for China, was instrumental in China becoming a strong economic power in the region and beyond. It grew to become a global 'manufacturing center' and an export power. (Sarkar 2020, 112) In China's preferred construct of the 'Asia-Pacific', it grew to become a central power, as evidenced by its position in the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC). (Sarkar 2020, 213) The Chinese view, the academic community in China is critical of the "Free and open Indo-Pacific Strategy" and sees this as an attempt by the US and its partners to limit China's power and strengthen its own power in the region. (Chen 2018) In response to the US FOIP policy, China is showing conciliation with its ASEAN neighbours and is also strengthening dialogue with Japan and India as well. (He & Li 2020, 3) The People's Republic sees the Indo-Pacific strategy of the US and its allies as primarily directed against China. (Shicun & Colombage 2019, 8) Shicun and Colombage see China as specifically challenged by this strategy in three ways. First, the IPS is a strategic challenge to China. It is dependent on the US and other Western countries, and the IPS, as well as the "economic war", place obstacles in China's path, especially in terms of economic growth. Not only the US participates in the economic sanctions, but also other partners such as Japan or the EU. (Shicun & Colombage 2019, 8) China has to constantly reinforce its goodwill towards peaceful growth, which does not go to the detriment of other states, especially developing states. (Shicun & Colombage 2019, 9) Second, the IPS is a counter to China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). This "regional economic cooperation initiative" of China is at risk of being constrained or at least confronted by the strategic influence of the US in the region. (Shicun & Colombage 2019, 9) Third, with the new IPS, the US is increasingly interfering in China's politics in the South China Sea and territorial disputes with Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia and Brunei. Also, with the increased cooperation of the US with the QUAD states India, Australia and Japan, a strong interest group is forming against China's expansion in the South China Sea. (Shicun & Colombage 2019, 9) This highly controversial point concerns China's territorial claims in the South China Sea and the construction of artificial islands within the so-called "nine-dash line" which extends from the Chinese coast to only a few hundred kilometers from the Philippines, Malaysia and Vietnam. China justifies these claims with "historical maritime rights". (Zhen 2016) As mentioned above, this was considered a violation of international law by the

International Court of Justice.
Furthermore, China is expanding its influence by building trading ports that "stretch from Sri Lanka and Myanmar to Pakistan and the South Pacific." (Dep & Wilson 2021) This provides China with more influence as well as more control over trade. The maritime areas of the Belt and Road Initiative and the Indo-Pacific overlap, and so do their interests. China assumes that the U.S. wants to influence its Belt and Road Initiative, not least through the Indo-Pacific strategy. (Denisov 2021, 7) In response to the U.S. effort for an open Indo-Pacific and freedom of navigation, China reiterated that "freedom of navigation has never been an issue in the region." (Ministry of National Defense of the People's Republic of China, 2021) Another development in the Indo-Pacific that is creating tension between the two major powers is the dominance of supply chains. More and more states want to become independent of Chinese supply chains and are building their own infrastructure. For example, following the Covid-19-related failures in Chinese-dominated supply chains, the QUAD countries of India, Japan, and Australia established their own Supply Chain Resilience Initiative (SCRI) to become more independent of China. (Panda 2021) The United States is also making increasing efforts to build supply chains in semiconductors and commodities, such as rare earths, independent of China. This development in turn threatens China's dominance in this sector. (Panda 2021)
It has become apparent that the Indo-Pacific is not only a complex issue in terms of its definition and extent, but also the scene of many geopolitical aspects and interests.

5. CAPTER 4 The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD), its implications for Indo-Pacific stability and China's response

5.1. The QUAD:

Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD), with the US, India, Australia and Japan as members, was established in 2004 in response to the Indian Ocean tsunami at the suggestion of the US. The formation initially took place to deal better with security threats and emergencies at sea. (Sarkar 2020, 111). However, it broke up again as early as 2008 due to strategic differences. (Envall 2019) Australia was concerned that China could harm the country and ended the cooperation. (Dep & Wilson 2021) It was later in 2017 that the coalition was revived. (Envall 2019) The Biden Administration calls this coalition "as a centerpiece of its Indo-Pacific strategy aimed at strengthening the United States' position in and commitment to the region." (CRS, 2022) The post-2017 cooperation is widely called

QUAD 2.0. (Sarkar 2020, 111) High-level meetings were held in March and September 2021. The goals, which were defined, are freedom of navigation and democracy promotion; "vaccine production and distribution; climate change mitigation efforts and clean energy development; the promotion of transparency and high standard governance in the field of critical and emerging technologies; and the development of a regional infrastructure partnership." (CRS, 2022) China is not officially identified as a ground of the Union, but from the joint statement in September 2021, a strong focus on security can be seen, which of course indirectly targets China: "we recommit to our partnership, and to a region that is a bedrock of our shared security and prosperity - a free and open Indo-Pacific, which is also inclusive and resilient." It also declares: "to promote the free, open, rules-based order, rooted in international law and undaunted by coercion, to bolster security and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific and beyond". (Joint Statement 2021) This can be understood as an indirect threat to China's authoritarian regime. This becomes even clearer with the following statement: "We stand for the rule of law, freedom of navigation and overflight, peaceful resolution of disputes, democratic values, and territorial integrity of states. (Joint Statement 2021)
The interests of the US partners in the QUAD coalition are different and yet one can note some similarities. Lee mentions the following points here. First, "all four nations share a deep interest in maintaining a stable balance of power in the Indo-Pacific and preventing a regional state from becoming dominant." (Lee 2020, 4) Second, all QUAD states have an interest in resolving "political and territorial disputes", such as those in the South China Sea, without the use of coercion or force. Third, the QUAD states want "maintaining a maritime order based on the free movement of goods and services across the world's oceans." (Lee 2020, 4) Fourth, all four partners view China's gain in influence, not least through the OBOR project, critically and as a threat to the existing economic order. (Lee 2020, 5) The interest in a free and open region requires the support of liberal values and thus we come to the fifth point. All QUAD states want to support and strengthen democratic liberal forms of government in the region in order not to endanger free trade and to counter China's authoritarian influence. (Lee 2020, 6)
The interests of the USA are clear in both the National Security Strategy and the Indo-Pacific Strategy. For them, in addition to the economic aspect, the military aspect of QUAD is also of great interest. On the one hand, it is about maintaining a balance with its "rival" China and the "current order". (Lee 2019, 17) It is therefore increasing its presence in the region, supporting defense alliances and coalitions, and asking its partners to increase their military spending.
Japan has long been a supporter of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue. Shinzo Abe, Japan's prime minister at the time, stressed the economic and security importance of such a

partnership. (He & Li 2020, 3) Concerns about a strengthening China and its influence in the Indo-Pacific region are driving Japan's efforts to increase cooperation with the US. Cooperation with Australia and India is also increasing for security reasons. (CRS, 2022) Defense ties and military exercises have been increasingly strengthened, especially with Australia. (CRS, 2022) For Australia politics and diplomacy in the Indo-Pacific region is very important. Australia is also a member of the Five Eyes Group (Canada, New Zealand, UK, US) and AUKUS. (CRS, 2022) Like Japan, Australia has concerns about China's growing influence in the Indo-Pacific and is therefore taking both diplomatic, in the form of strengthening alliances, and domestic, legislative action against interference. It has also increased its defense budget and announced a strengthened partnership with India. (CRS, 2022) India, which is the only QUAD country to have a land border with China, has traditionally shown an "aversion to international alliances and wariness towards formalized multilateral engagements." (CRS, 2022) The country was the only QUAD country to take a neutral position in the Ukraine war. India's relations with China are strained and China represents the greatest security challenge for India, which is why it is also urged to cooperate with other states. This is also the case with the USA, with which security and trade relations have been strengthened. (CRS 2022) The clash of troops on the Indo-China border, as well as Chinese support to Pakistan, fueled tensions between the two countries. Furthermore, India refused to participate in China's Belt and Road Initiative, which is perceived as "apparent resistance to a China-led Asia order". (CRS 2022) India is seen by the US as a "balancing factor" to China. India plays an important role in US foreign policy strategy. From the US perspective, India has two important roles in its region. These are, on the one hand, the "stabilization of Afghanistan" and, on the other, "committing itself to a free and open Indo-Pacific region in the security and economic dimensions". (Haruko 2020, 2) India itself, however, is reluctant to join sides without reservation. (He & Li 2020, 4)

The role of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in the region and in US FOIP strategy is not insignificant. For example, it chaired important institutional bodies such as the ASEAN Regional Forum, the East Asea Summit and the ASEAN Plus Three. (He & Li 2020, 5) And by inviting major and middle powers, such as China, the US, India, Australia and Japan to the ASEAN Plus Forum, it creates for ASEAN states "the option of maintaining its interests by balancing, or "playing off," these nations against one another" (Lui 2018, 7). Indonesia in particular, one of the founding states of ASEAN, adopted a more pro-FOIP policy stance, consolidating its role as a leading middle power in the region. (He & Li 2020, 5) However, ASEAN is also characterized by some disagreements and the association is not

fully attributable to either the US or China. (He & Li 2020, 5) The tightening of US policy in the region put ASEAN states in the difficult situation of having to choose between the two positions. The ASEAN states, which played a decisive role in the region before the rivalry between the great powers of China and the US, are now trying to walk the tightrope of maintaining bilateral relations with both states. (He & Li 2020, 5)

There is also constant criticism of the QUAD Group. For example, QUAD is criticized for lacking democratic efforts and institutional structures. (CRS, 2022) Another difficulty that QUAD is constantly confronted with is the balancing act that the member states and, as described above, the ASEAN states have to perform in order to stand up to China and the USA. The partners Australia, India and Japan have a strong interest in a peaceful and good relationship with China, which poses challenges for them through their membership of QUAD. (CRS, 2022) Some voices also say that with AUKUS, which is mainly seen as a military and security alliance, QUAD loses weight. However, the high-profile meetings in Washington in September 2021 and in Tokyo in May 2022 show the relevance of the group. However, there are also increasing efforts to expand the QUAD group. The so-called "QUAD Plus" comprises the current members USA, India, Australia and Japan and will be expanded to include other powers with interests in the Indo-Pacific. It is possible that powers such as France and the United Kingdom will be included. (Dep & Wilson 2021) But the expansion, or at least cooperation, with other states could also be more far-reaching, with Indo-Pacific neighbors such as New Zealand, South Korea and Vietnam, as well as Brazil and Israel, participating in an original teleconference of QUAD states regarding the COVID pandemic. (Dep & Wilson 2021) Another important point to clarify regarding QUAD is that a comparison with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), which is more often made, is not very appropriate, or not "yet." (Gabriel 2020, 61) Gabriel, as well as Dep and Wilson, argue that QUAD and NATO are still very far apart in institutional terms. Gabriel cites the following reasons for this, that QUAD is "not a formal military alliance." First, there is no legally binding treaty and thus no mutual defense obligation. Second, the cooperation lacks an "official schedule or a formal agenda." (Gabriel 2020, 62) Furthermore, the name of the group "Quadrilateral Security Dialogue" is not institutionalized and the meetings "are not even formalized at the ministerial level." (Gabriel 2020, 62) And Dep and Wilson write that the path to a formal military alliance, or as some have suspected an Indo-Pacific NATO, is still more than uncertain, as is the future or final form of QUAD. (Dep & Wilson 2021)

This brings us to the question of whether QUAD can be called an alliance at all. The term alliance is used by many commentators and journalists, such as Tandon in the online news

platform Republicworld.com: "Difference Between QUAD And AUKUS & Key Commonalities of both Alliances". (Tandon 2021) However, a closer look reveals that it is not an alliance, at least not for the time being, but rather a coalition. For its part, the Congressional Research Service (NRS) simply calls QUAD a security collaboration. (NRS 2022) In the dictionary Britannica an alliance "suggests a robust partnership of at least medium-term duration." (Britannica) And Bergsmann, in his analysis of the term alliance, also defines it as "as an explicit agreement among states in the realm of national security in which the partners promise mutual assistance in the form of a substantial contribution of resources in the case of a certain contingency the arising of which is uncertain." (Bergsmann, 21) As described above, QUAD is not a formal military alliance and there is no mutual defense obligation. Furthermore, it is still a rather young state cooperation, if one reckons since the 2017 military revival. All this speaks against an existence as an alliance and more for an existence as a coalition. A coalition, on the other hand, is described as a short-term, and less "robust" partnership and is defined as "a group of actors that coordinate their behavior in a limited and temporary fashion to achieve a common goal." (Britannica) Weitsman also describes coalitions as "ad hoc multinational understandings that are forged to undertake a specific mission and dissolve once that mission is complete." (Weitsman 2011, 31) For now, QUAD can be described as its coalition, but it will be seen in the coming years whether or not there is a move toward an alliance.

5.2. The Impact of QUAD on Stability in the Indo-Pacific Region

In the following, I will examine whether and to what extent the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue contributes to stability and security in the region. Does the coalition help to defuse the tense situation in the region and establish stability, as QUAD also aims to do? Or does it aggravate the situation, intensify rivalries and thus pose a threat to stability in the Indo-Pacific? What is clear is that the two states have been accusing each other for years of endangering stability and security in the Indo-Pacific. For example, the US calls China a threat to free trade at sea, regional stability in the Indo-Pacific and a threat to the sovereignty of other states. (NSS 2017, 46) The United States does not believe in China's asserted intention for mutually beneficial development, saying "Chinese dominance risks diminishing the sovereignty of many states in the Indo-Pacific." (NSS 2017, 46) China, on the other hand, sees the stronger US presence in the region and especially with the revived QUAD and increased military exercises as a threat. Initially, the group was dismissed by China as "sea foam" and "headline-grabbing idea". (Gan 2022) This changed, however, and China

eventually calls this development a threat to stability in the region. (Denisov, et al. 2021, 1) In 2020 alone, two naval exercises were held and four high-level meetings took place in the last two years, giving further importance to the formation. (Gan 2022) But beyond that, China's government as well as Chinese experts very often bring up the stability of the region in relation to the US and the QUAD coalition. This suggests that China does see QUAD as a threat and is reacting accordingly. Regarding the stability of the Indo-Pacific, the Chinese Ministry of Defense speaks out in March 2021 and calls the region "generally stable", which can be attributed to the efforts of the regional states. However, the ministry spokesperson also mentions the negative influence of external powers, presumably alluding to the US and its allies: "Countries in the region and the international community are fully aware that the security risks in the South China Sea mainly come from outside of the region. We hope relevant countries can make more constructive efforts to maintain regional peace and stability, instead of making troubles." (Ministry of National Defense of the People's Republic of China, 2021) Furthermore, China's Vice Foreign Minister Le Yucheng warned against forming "closed and exclusive small circles" and compared this strategy with NATO's eastward expansion. These developments must be kept under control. (Gan, 2022) China also accuses the US of pretending to ensure stability in the Indo-Pacific, but actually endangering stability and peace in the region through "grave nuclear proliferation risks". (Pao 2022) Besides the USA, Japan is also considered a potential adversary for historical reasons. However, other QUAD partners are more cautious and not quite so hasty. Experts in China see the USA and Japan as the main axis of QUAD, but partly doubt the unity of all members and the will - especially of India - to stand up to China. Regarding Japan, China urges it to "speak and act cautiously in the field of military security, and refrain from interfering in China's internal affairs, undermining China's security interests, or undermining regional security and stability." (Ministry of National Defense of the People's Republic of China, 2022)

5.3. The Western view:

From the US perspective, China sought to extend its strategic reach across the Indo-Pacific with its BRI. With the rise of China and "revisionist" policies like this, the QUAD states felt pressured to cooperate more. (Dep & Wilson 2021) From the perspective of the United States, the rise of China, especially its growing presence in the Indo-Pacific, is by no means only peaceful, as the Chinese claim. (Dep & Wilson 2021) Thus, the US strongly condemns the actions surrounding China's territorial disputes in the South China Sea. (Mehta 2021) And at the March 2022 meeting of QUAD members, they made it clear that " 'unilateral changes to

the status quo with force like this should not be allowed in the Indo-Pacific region.' "(Gan 2022) Dep and Wilson go on to argue that the rise of China has altered the existing balance and pushed the other global and regional powers, led by the US, to organize and be more present. The US in particular does not want to give up the balance of power in favor of the US and therefore wants to stabilize and further expand its power. (Dep & Wilson 2021) Under the Trump administration, up to 60 per cent of the US Navy has been deployed in the Pacific, which highlights the importance of the region for the US. (Dep & Wilson 2021) China is also expanding its maritime infrastructure under the OBOR initiative and building new ports along the Indo-Pacific. This could also be used to expand the influence of the Chinese army. (Lee 2019, 6) If China further expands its People's Liberation Army in the Indo-Pacific under the Belt and Road Initiative or otherwise, this would be a move "that could destabilize regional security." (Gabriel 2020, 61) From a US perspective, expanding to a QUAD Plus would make sense and be desirable for several reasons. It would be a platform and an cooperation of states that are concerned "regarding China's military and political expansion into areas they consider their 'neighborhood'". (Dep & Wilson 2021) This would also strengthen the position of the new QUAD states vis-à-vis Chia, as they can have little impact bilaterally. (Dep & Wilson 2021)

The actions and interests of the US reflect Western theories and views of International Relations and the International System and thus aspects such as power politics, balance of power and competition between states for their self-interests are more prominently represented. (Heywood 2011, 62) Thus, one impetus for the establishment of QUAD and the strengthening of its military presence in the Indo-Pacific was the growing influence of China and the US' quest to maintain the 'balance of power' and its influence in the region. (Dep & Wilson 2021) This attitude is already evident in the National Security Strategy 2022 in the heading to the strategy regarding China and Russia, where it says "Out-Competing China". (NSS 2022, 23) China is described as a "competitor" that wants to become "the world's leading power" and has both "the intent to reshape the international order and, increasingly, the economic, diplomatic, military, and technological power to do it." (NSS 2022, 23) Furthermore, the US takes the realistic view of pursuing its own interests, saying that China uses its influence and technology "to privilege its interests and values". (NSS 2022, 23) The U.S., in turn, has set itself the goal of "competing responsibly with the PRC to defend our interests and build our vision for the future." (NSS 2022, 24) This competition with China is most noticeable in the Indo-Pacific. The US stands by its allies and partners in the region

there, which are "on the frontlines of the PRC's coercion," so that they can act sovereignly and secure their interests such as autonomy, security, and prosperity. (NNS 2022, 24)

5.4. The Chinese view

For China, the revival of QUAD is a threat and a challenge in several respects. "Quad opposing Beijing's version of centrality and leadership." (Sarkar 2020, 221) This view of a central and strong China in the East Asian world order has a historical background. The East Asian region was historically divided into local units, which were under the rule of the emperor. (Kumar 2018, 7) In this view, China was considered superior and central among Asian states. "The model of East Asian World Order was built on the assumption of sinocentrism - the notion of supposed Chinese centrality and superiority." (Kumar 2018, 7) The emerging countries of India and Japan assumed a stronger role in the region, forcing China out of its central role in the region. (Sarkar 2020, 221) In particular, China pays a lot of attention to the emerging India in this context and wants to prevent too close cooperation, especially in the military field, between India and the US. Thus, Mohan writes in the online Festschrift Foreign Policy:" Beijing is acutely conscious that India could create significant problems for China if aligned against it with other powers." (Mohan 2022)
China criticizes the current strategy of the US towards itself, accusing it of deliberate bloc-building and idealism, and affirms its intention for "peaceful development" and "the reform and construction" of an international (governance) system based on international law. (Ministry of National Defense of the People's Republic of China, 2022) The US approach is seen as a global threat: "It is promoting "integrated military deterrence", accelerating build-up of nuclear triad, making excuses for seeking and consolidating its hegemony and dominance, and prioritizing its own interests over international justice." (Ministry of National Defense of the People's Republic of China, 2022) China, on the other hand, emphasizes its desire for global cooperation and collaboration as well as the pursuit of "peaceful development". The increased interference of the USA in Asia and the Pacific as well as the formation of strategic alliances and coalitions is met with skepticism in China. Above all, the prospect of an expanded QUAD Plus is also likely to worry China and fuel its concerns about QUAD. (Sarkar 2020, 123) The Indo-Pacific Strategy as well as the QUAD agenda cross China's interests and goals. Thus Xi, at a foreign policy conference, cited the protection of its sovereignty, security interests as well as its development interests, among other goals such as the creation of global partnerships and the reform of the international governance system, as one of China's most important goals. (Gabriel 2020, 57) In the Chinese view, US actions may

well be seen as a threat to at least the first three goals.

China's foreign policy has become more self-confident and active over the past decades, and it no longer only engages in "passive diplomacy" with the aim of staying in the background and not causing a stir. (Gabriel 2020, 57) Thus the goal of "expanding China's global reach", which is part of China's new strategy "the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation", is indeed an active approach. (Gabriel 2020, 57) However, theoretical views such as those of Tinaxia ("all under one sky") continue to be reflected in the rhetoric of the Chinese leadership as Xi speaks out for the "common future of humanity". (Gabriel 2020, 57) In general, the pursuit of peaceful advancement or development, which has been pursued since 1985 under Deng Xiaoping, is a continuous part of foreign policy communication, as is the building of a world community. (Dudik 2019, 2) China strives for "a peaceful external environment and cooperative relations with major powers", which it needs for its development. (Dudik 2019, 2) In terms of rhetoric and official presentation, one can certainly see a borrowing from Chinese theories and worldview, which strive for a "harmonious world" and a "harmonious society". Thus, in the beginning, in the context of Trump's more aggressive policies, the Chinese leadership has repeatedly called for cooperation, mutual respect and win-win cooperation. (Singh 2018, 5) For example, at the 19th CPC National Congress, Xi Jinping says that through the formats and projects of the Belt and Road Initiative, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, the Silk Road Fund, the First Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation, the 22nd APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting, the G20 2016 Summit in Hangzhou, the BRICS Summit in Xiamen, and the Fourth Summit of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia, China is committed to developing a community with a shared future for humanity and has been developing the global governance system. "With this we have seen a further rise in China's international influence, ability to inspire, and power to shape; and China has made great new contributions to global peace and development." (Jinping 2017) He promotes "socialism with Chinese characteristics", which can also be a model and a "new option" for other states. (Jinping 2017) Xi Jinping also emphasizes the importance of a peaceful international environment and a win-win mentality for achieving the Chinese dream. "The dream of the Chinese people is closely connected with the dreams of the peoples of other countries; the Chinese Dream can be realized only in a peaceful international environment and under a stable international order. ... We will pursue open, innovative, and inclusive development that benefits everyone;" (Jinping 2017) The Chinese leader strikes a very conciliatory and peaceful tone. "China will continue its efforts to safeguard world peace, contribute to global development, and uphold international order."

(Jinping 2017)
However, this rhetoric is contradicted by the economic, military and political practices of the People's Republic. For example, China's "one belt one road" initiative has left many states heavily indebted to China, while private and state-owned Chinese companies have profited greatly and China has gained strategic influence. (Lee 2019, 6) Furthermore, the newly built islands in the South China Sea violate international law, which has also been recognized and signed by China, and thus violate the sovereignty of adjacent states, such as the Philippines. (Dudik 2019, 4) Theorist Yan Xuetong also takes a sceptical view of China's current development, with its domestically repressive practices and "assertive" foreign policy posturing and criticizes this approach as it would greatly damage the country's legitimacy and leadership as well as the Communist Party. (Gabriel 2020, 61) Xuetong argues that the Chinese leadership should again rely more on the old Chinese philosophy to be a good example internationally. And states should be better loved than feared by other states. (Gabriel 2020, 61)

6. Reflection and answering the research question:

After this analysis of the interests, theoretical and strategic approaches of the two great powers China and the USA, I will now go back to the research question and answer it based on the research findings. "To what extent does the QUAD coalition influence stability and security in the Indo-Pacific? And what roles do the US and China play in this?" To start with the second sub-question, it has become clear that China and the US are the two main actors competing for power and influence in the Indo-Pacific in this problem. This can be attributed to their great international influence, their sheer military and economic size, and their global ambitions. However, the influence of the Central Powers and other regional alliances and cooperations should not be underestimated. In addition to Japan and the ASEAN group, India in particular plays an important and strong role. As an emerging power and strategically decisive actor, India plays a neuralgic role in the Indo-Pacific. On the one hand, the US sees the country as a counter to China and, on the other, China increasingly sees a rising India as a threat to its regional dominance in Asia. (Sarkar 202, 112; Shicun & Colombage 2019, 8) For both China and the US, the Indo-Pacific region is significant in their respective national strategies. The USA even calls the Indo-Pacific the "epicentre of 21st century geopolitics" and the region and China play a decisive role in the National Security Strategy 2022. (NSS 2022, 37) China, in turn, also has great ambitions and interests in the region with the "one belt one

road" initiative as well as with the territorial claims in the South China Sea and the trouble spot Taiwan. China feels that its sphere of influence and interests are disturbed and restricted by QUAD and sees the strategy of the USA and QUAD as being directed against it. (Shicun & Colombage 2019, 8) The coalition brings increased US presence in the Indo-Pacific, strengthened by partnership, as well as greater cooperation between China's two regional rivals, Japan and India, and the US. (Sarkar 202, 112) The People's Republic feels threatened by this policy and calls QUAD a threat to stability, peace and security in the region. (Ministry of National Defense of the People's Republic of China, 2021) The US, in turn, sees China as a threat to stability and security in the Indo-Pacific and feels compelled to further expand its presence there and forge partnerships. (NSS 2017, 46) This paradox leads us to the first sub-question about the impact of QUAD on stability in the Indo-Pacific. It turns out that this question is a very complex one. Both China and the US accuse each other of being a threat to stability in the Indo-Pacific. For the US, QUAD is an instrument to ensure security and stability in the region and for China it is a provocation that also threatens stability and peace. To some extent, the answer to the question of stability remains paradoxical. On the one hand, it can be said that QUAD contributes to stability in the region as it brings together the middle powers of Japan, Australia and India, each of which feels threatened by the rising power of China, under the patronage of the US, thus providing a counterweight to the People's Republic and limiting increased Chinese influence and interference that could be destabilizing. On the other hand, QUAD represents a provocation for China, which feels threatened in its development and interests by the USA and its cooperation with India and Japan in particular. China calls the QUAD a development that must be kept under control. (Gan, 2022) This holds some potential for escalation and in an emergency, it could be a major threat to stability in the region. The question of whether an alliance case could be triggered should one of the member states get into trouble can be dismissed as unlikely for the time being, as there are no formal and legal agreements for this. (Gabriel 2020, 61)

All in all, it can be said that QUAD is certainly an aspect and actor that should not be underestimated when it comes to the issue of stability in the Indo-Pacific. However, its influence is also limited by the fact that it is not a formally institutionalized military alliance. (Gabriel 2020, 61) And subsequently, other state actors, such as India and Russia, as well as groups of states, the AUKUS and the ASEAN Group, play a major role. And not to forget the actions of the two biggest players, China and the USA themselves. Ultimately, the question of QUAD's influence on stability will depend on how relations between China and the USA develop.

7. Conclusion:

Even though the QUAD group does not have containment of China as an official goal and seeks a positive agenda "which is much more about delivering what the Indo-Pacific region needs - versus becoming an anti-China, NATO-like entity, which is a reputation that it's been trying very hard to combat in the region." it becomes clear relatively quickly when looking at the interests of members and in official statements and pronouncements that the rapid rise of the People's Republic and its economic and military expansion, whether in the South China Sea or with the OBOR initiative has brought the US and its partners to work together to protect their own interests and present a balance to China. (Gan 2022) China's reactions to the QUAD group have been somewhat contradictory at times. On the one hand, it was dismissed as "sea foam" and "headline-grabbing idea," especially at the beginning, and in part one still hears the official tenor from China that it believes the US administration's Indo-Pacific strategy is doomed to failure. The reason China sees is that the US does not bring any real economic benefits to its allies but works alone with the "Chinese threat scenario." (Pao 2022) On the other hand, however, QUAD is seen as a threat and a danger to stability in the Indo-Pacific, compared to NATO's eastward expansion, and represents a threatening development for China, which China believes must be controlled. (Gan, 2022) As has been shown, the US and China have very different worldviews, which sometimes leads to misunderstanding and miscommunication. Therefore, it is important for both sides to understand and learn to interpret each other's worldview. Both powers have a great interest in a stable and peaceful Indo-Pacific or Asia-Pacific region. It is therefore important to apply and consider the two respective theoretical concepts for an analysis of the relationship in terms of their respective interests and strategies.

The US feels threatened in its role as world hegemon and China in its interests in the Asia-pacific region. However, China still asserts that it "follow the road of peaceful development and would never seek hegemony." (Xie 2014, 242) And Xie further writes: "If the Chinese government can prove that it will not change the existing international order which is mainly dominated by the US, the US strategy toward China will be more rational." (Xie 2014, 242) At the moment, the views clash and the US accuse China of being a threat to stability in the Indo-Pacific and China in turn accuses the US and QUAD of threatening security and stability in the region. If the US interest is indeed a "free and open" Indo-Pacific and China seeks a stable, peaceful and secure environment for its development, then the two countries cannot avoid constructive cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region. The US should not push the

envelope and provoke the Chinese leadership too much so that it does not lead to escalation. In addition, China should strive for good relations with regional middle powers and QUAD members India, Australia, and Japan, as well as smaller littoral states such as the Philippines and Vietnam, which is built on mutual benefit, cooperation, and respect rather than fear and threats.

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