

The Changing Global Order and China's Rise

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Summary

No other development has had a greater impact on contemporary world politics than the rise of China. It has altered the global balance of power and triggered a discourse centred on the inevitability of a conflict between an existing power and an emerging one. However, a contrary and a more optimistic view is that both China and the United States (US) will rationally manage their relations and coexist, impelled by their interdependence and considerations of mutually assured destruction. Both have a stake in the present global order; China being its beneficiary and the US as its architect. However, both will have to agree to a type of framework which defers to each other's interests and sensitivities, finds cooperative solutions to universal challenges, shuns zero-sum-approaches and works for global peace and security.

At the turn of the 21st century, the most profound change has been the rise of China as a major power. Graham Allison, in his famous book, *Destined for War*, says, "The world has never seen anything like the rapid, tectonic shift in the global balance of power created by the rise of China."¹ While the Global South has welcomed this development, the West looks apprehensive. No doubt, the rise of China has polarised international opinion, generating excitement amongst its friends and discontent amongst its adversaries. Critics forget that apart from about 100 years, which the Chinese call a century of humiliation, China was the largest economy in the world along with India. In his book, *On China*, Dr Henry Kissinger said that "as late as 1820, it [China] produced 30 per cent of the world's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) – an amount exceeding the GDP of Western Europe, Eastern Europe and the United States combined."²

In 1949, China emerged from the tumult of a protracted civil war beaming with the nationalistic and ideological fervour of a nation determined to cast off poverty and shackles of servitude. Chairman Mao Zedong's leadership provided the much-needed confidence to a war-weary and fractured society to take its destiny into its own hands. China embarked on a nation-building venture with massive industrialisation and land reforms. However, this path of national reconstruction faced numerous internal and external challenges forcing a policy reversal.

The 3rd Plenum of the 11th Party Congress in 1978 was a pathbreaking event which decided to open China to the outside world. China was a poor and underdeveloped country when the reform process started in 1978-79. However, at each crucial turning point in its history,

¹ Graham Allison, *Destined for War* (Scribe, United Kingdom, 2018), p. 16.

² Henry Kissinger, *On China* (Penguin, New York, 2012), p. 12.

China had a leadership which kept the wheel of progress on track. After the demise of Mao in 1976, Deng Xiao Peng assumed leadership and brought about a paradigm shift in the policy framework. China took a turn from a centrally controlled economy to a socialist market economy with “Chinese characteristics”.

For three decades or so, China maintained a double-digit growth rate of economy.³ China’s accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2001 enabled it to integrate with the world’s economy. “The most explosive period of China’s growth took place after it joined WTO. Its GDP exploded from US\$1.2 trillion (S\$1.62 trillion) in 2000 to US\$11.1 trillion (S\$14.9 trillion) in 2015.”⁴

Over the last 40 years, China has completed several institutional and market-oriented reforms that have helped narrow the development gap between urban and rural life and dramatically improved the standards of life of the people. China encouraged foreign investment, setting up special economic zones in Shenzhen, Zhuhai and Xiamen. Today, these zones are the engines of growth for their national economy. Deng’s decision to send a large number of Chinese students to Western universities contributed immensely to the country’s development.

Over the years, China has emerged as the leading destination for foreign direct investment among developing countries. In 2002, it achieved a milestone by surpassing the US to become the world’s largest recipient of foreign capital for the first time.⁵ China has also encouraged foreign trade by developing its manufacturing sector. Trade not only earned much-needed foreign exchange for China but also induced technology transfer. Trade has played an important role in China’s growth. Today, China is the largest trading nation.

The reform process initiated in 1978-79 has continued apace under successive Chinese leaders. President Xi Jinping, since assuming office in 2013, has consolidated this process. Addressing the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC), he emphasised the need to “break new grounds” while preparing the Chinese nation to be ready to face the “high winds, choppy waters and even dangerous storms”, alluding to the global changes of a magnitude not seen in a century.⁶

The CPC has pursued national rejuvenation through a Chinese path to modernisation and at its own pace. The Chinese path derives its strength from its cultural ethos and national conditions. Xi has made it clear that “China’s issues must be dealt with by Chinese people in light of the Chinese context”. The Western model of governance, in the Chinese view, does not conform to their national conditions. Neither does China endorse the current model of

³ “Economic History of China (1949-present)”, Wikipedia, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Economic_history_of_China_\(1949%E2%80%93present\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Economic_history_of_China_(1949%E2%80%93present)).

⁴ Kishore Mahbubani, *Has China Won?* (Public Affairs, New York, 2022), p. 36.

⁵ Yan Rui Wu, *China’s Economic Growth: A Miracle with Chinese Characteristics* (Routledge, London, 2003), p. 3.

⁶ Report to the 20th National Congress of the CPC by Xi Jinping, 16 October 2022, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/202210/t20221025_10791908.html.

global governance which in its view is unfair and discriminatory. It seeks to “build a global network of partnerships and foster a new type of international relations”.

Contrary to the perception in the West that China wants to “wreck” the international order, China, in fact, has benefitted from globalisation and WTO membership. It is deeply integrated with the international economy. About 45 per cent of its trade is with the US and European Union (EU). China does not wish to wreck the international system, but it wants protection of its legitimate rights and interests through redefining the rules of the game, designed after the Second World War.

China’s advocacy of multilateralism resonates with the majority of nations. Today, it is the second largest contributor to the UN’s budget and a major troop-contributing country in UN peacekeeping operations. China’s voice cannot be ignored, be it on security or development-related issues. Neither is it possible to “decouple” from China as global trade and supply chains are heavily dependent on China.

China has unequivocally declared that “no matter what stage of development it reaches, China will never seek hegemony or engage in expansionism”.⁷ China’s record shows that its rise has been peaceful. It has not indulged in aggression, overseas conquests, colonialism, resource extraction, loot or plunder which defined Western imperialism. China has expanded its global footprint on the strength of its economic muscle.

Since China is dependent on its trade and energy supplies on the choke points of Malacca Strait and Suez Canal, it is but natural that it enhances its naval capability to guard against any interruption. Kishore Mahbubani, in his book, *Has China Won?*, says that “over the past two thousand years, China has often been the single strongest civilisation in the Eurasian landmass. If China was inherently militaristic, it would have and should have conquered territories overseas, as the European powers did.”⁸

Xi declared at the 20th National Congress that “in pursuing modernisation, China will not tread the old path of war...We will stand firmly on the right side of history and the right side of human progress”. China is not keen to export its governance model. The Chinese government has repeatedly asserted that it is a “responsible great power” and that the “central goal of China’s diplomacy is to create a peaceful and stable international environment for its development”.⁹ China’s top priority is to attain the goal of its “national rejuvenation”, the prerequisites for which remain a conflict-free environment and a peaceful neighbourhood.

Emerging as the second-largest economy in the world, China has succeeded in eliminating absolute poverty. When Xi assumed office in 2012, China’s GDP was US\$8 trillion (S\$10.8 trillion). Today, it is US\$18 trillion (S\$24.3 trillion), accounting for nearly 19 per cent of the world’s economy. China’s spending on research and development is the second highest in

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Kishore Mahbubani, *Has China Won?*, op. cit.

⁹ Report to the 20th National Congress of the CPC by Xi Jinping, op. cit.

the world.¹⁰ China is fast becoming a knowledge economy. China is also modernising its armed forces commensurate with its needs. This enhancement is essentially defensive in nature and to serve as a deterrent.

China has benefitted significantly from foreign investment, infusion of foreign technology, heavy investment in human capital, infrastructure, science and technology and the environment. Any talk of decoupling the American and Chinese economies, which together contribute about 50 per cent to global economic growth, is not only unrealistic and simplistic but also wrongly premised. Similarly, any talk of a “China threat” or “China collapse” is also misplaced. China’s rise is a historical process. As Mahbubani stated, “China’s growth will continue for a long time, but driven by the Chinese civilisational cycle.”¹¹ China’s success has not only been propelled by its civilisational strength and the hard work of its people but also due to the CPC’s long-term people-centric policies. It is the service delivery which ultimately matters, and the CPC has demonstrated that delivery.

It is ironic that despite their economic interdependence, the US and China’s relations are on a roller coaster. The US is apprehensive that if China is not stopped now, it will become unstoppable. It appears difficult for the sole superpower to accept the reality of the rise of another power. The emerging world order of bi-multipolarity is perceived as disruptive to the American dominance which prevailed over the last 30-40 years.¹²

Mahbubani confirms that “there is a remarkable consensus in an otherwise divided American body politic that the time has come for America to stand up to China. Yet, there is absolutely no consensus on what realistic goals America can achieve by such a confrontation”.¹³ Several thought leaders and American scholars have questioned the US’ approach and advised against China-bashing. Jessica Chen, an American scholar, wrote in *Foreign Affairs* in October 2022, “The current course will not just bring indefinite deterioration in the US-China relationship and a growing danger of catastrophic conflict; it also threatens to undermine the sustainability of the American leadership in the world”.¹⁴ Richard Haass said, “heightened geo-political competition makes it even more difficult to produce the cooperation demanded by new global problems, and the deteriorating international environment further fuels geo-political tensions – all at a time that the US is weakened and distracted.”¹⁵ William Burns, Central Intelligence Agency Director, writing in *Atlantic Journal* questioned the premise that “the US leaders can resurrect the end of uncontested American primacy to prevent China’s rise” and called it a “mirage”.¹⁶ Fareed

¹⁰ “China’s R&D spending surpasses 3 trillion yuan”, *China Daily*, 22 February 2023, https://english.www.gov.cn/archive/statistics/202302/22/content_WS63f5583cc6d0a757729e7061.html.

¹¹ Kishore Mahbubani, *Has China Won?*, op. cit.

¹² This assessment is shared by many scholars and policy practitioners. This theme is also reflected in the *Asian 21st Century* by Kishore Mahbubani, p. 47.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Jessica Chen Weiss, “The China Trap”, *Foreign Affairs*, September-October 2022, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/china/china-trap-us-foreign-policy-zero-sum-competition>.

¹⁵ Richard Haass, “The Dangerous Decade”, *Foreign Affairs*, September-October 2022, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/united-states/dangerous-decade-foreign-policy-world-crisis-richard-haass>.

¹⁶ William Burns, “The United States Needs a New Foreign Policy”, *Atlantic Journal*, July 2020.

Zakaria wrote in *Foreign Affairs*, "China's challenge is being exaggerated. A cold war with China will be much more costly than with the former Soviet Union and with an uncertain outcome."¹⁷

China's response to the anti-China tirade has been cautious. Rohan Mukherjee tries to articulate China's perspective. "For a rising power such as China, an intolerable sense of inequality is created when an established great power bends or breaks international rules without allowing Beijing the same privilege. China wants to be recognised as an equal of the world's preeminent great power, the United States. China's approach to the international order depends on the extent to which the order's rules and the institutions recognise its desire for status. The durability of the international order, therefore, depends on whether or not its core institutions, and their architect, the United States can create sufficient status-based incentives for China to cooperate with them."¹⁸

Whether Mukherjee's remarks depict a correct picture, one cannot find an issue with this line of argument, except that while seeking its legitimacy, say in the international system, China wants coexistence and harmony amongst the nation-states. China believes that it cannot displace the US; neither can it prosper to the exclusion of others or by being the sole arbiter of international architecture. China believes that no single nation is in a position to tackle a myriad of challenges faced by humanity. More than status, it is a matter of right that China is accorded her due voice in international financial institutions and global economic clubs, being the second largest economy.

In the first three quarters of the year 2021, while the world trade grew by 27.8 per cent, Asia-Pacific trade grew by 29.6 per cent. In 2021, Asia accounted for 39 per cent of global GDP with Asian economies worth around US\$36.8 trillion (S\$49.9 trillion), compared to North America with US\$32 trillion (S\$43.5 trillion) and Europe with US\$20.8 trillion (S\$28.28 trillion) [2020 figure]. Asian countries are part of 49 of the 80 world's largest trade routes and about 56 per cent of the value of this trade through 20 largest trade routes involves China.¹⁹

Graham Allison shares an interesting fact. Even when China's growth rate was low in 2015, "China's economy created a Greece every sixteen weeks and an Israel every twenty-five weeks."²⁰ Asia is 55 per cent of the world's population and has seen the biggest rise in the middle class in the last 15-20 years. In 2000, the US economy was eight times that of China; now it is only 1.5 times bigger. About 140 countries have more trade with China than the US: with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations being the largest trading partner of China. Taiwan has a trade of about US\$300 billion (S\$408 billion) with the mainland

¹⁷ Fareed Zakaria, "The New China Scare", *Foreign Affairs*, January-February 2020, <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2020/07/united-states-needs-new-foreign-policy/614110/>.

¹⁸ Rohan Mukherjee, "China's Status Anxiety", *Foreign Affairs*, 19 May 2023, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/china/united-states-china-status-anxiety>.

¹⁹ McKinsey Global Institute, "Asia on the Cusp of a New Era", 22 September 2023, <https://www.mckinsey.com/mgi/our-research/asia-on-the-cusp-of-a-new-era>.

²⁰ Graham Allison, *Destined for War*, op. cit., p. 13.

compared to over US\$60 billion (S\$81.6 billion) with the US.²¹ There is, therefore, a merit in the Chinese argument that the matters of Asia should be left to Asians to decide. However, given the heightened tensions in the Asia-Pacific region with considerations of 'security' gaining importance, questions are being asked whether trade flows and supply chains could be impacted.

Participating in the debate on China's rise or China's terminal decline, analyst Ali Wyne wrote in *Foreign Policy* on 9 January 2024, "slowing of its (China) growth is not surprising for a country the GDP of which grew from just under US\$397 billion (S\$539.93 billion) to almost US\$14.9 trillion (S\$20.9 trillion) in 2020. Second, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) forecasts that China's GDP will increase by 4.2 per cent this year. This is not disappointing when compared to the IMF's projections that advanced economies will overall increase by 1.4 per cent this year. Third, China's economy still has room to expand. Fourth, some of the socioeconomic challenges that confront China also confront many other countries."²²

Undoubtedly, the interplay between geopolitics and geo-economics is a defining feature of this era, both overlapping as well as alternating in its ascendancy and decline. The global scene would be shaped by how the US-China competition plays out. The US describes China as a "revisionist power" and a "most consequential strategic competitor for the coming decades".²³ The US wants to carve out a system which checkmates on China's rise, based on an exclusionary approach through a coalition of alliances like the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad), AUKUS (an alliance consisting of Australia, the United Kingdom and the US), I2U2 (a grouping of India, Israel, the United Arab Emirates, and the US) and the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC). The US 'policy towards China is not balanced and lacks clarity. This policy has created fissures in Europe and Southeast Asia where even countries regarded as closer to the US are reluctant to choose sides between the US and China. This is also true for the Middle East and other regions.²⁴

In the new power dynamics, there is greater strategic convergence between China and Russia to resist the American domineering attitude. New alignments and re-alignments are evolving at regional and sub-regional levels pivoted around the US, China and Russia or China and Russia combined. The trend is overwhelmingly in favour of multilateralism, regional cooperation mechanisms and inclusivity. Countries are working to form alliances based on economic interests as existing financial structures have failed to meet their developmental needs.

²¹ Kishore Mahbubani, *Has China Won?*, op. cit., p. 236.

²² Ali Wyne, "US policy shouldn't depend on Chinese weakness", *Foreign Policy*, 9 January 2024, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2024/01/09/united-states-policy-china-xi-jinping-economy/>.

²³ Barbara Lippert and Volker Perthes. "US National Defence Strategy, 2022; and "Strategic Rivalry between US and China", *SWP Research Paper*, 6 April 2020, chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://www.swp-berlin.org/publications/products/research_papers/2020RP04_China_USA.pdf

²⁴ French President Macron declared Europe would not follow the US approach towards China on 19 April 2023. Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim stated in Australia on 6 March 2024 that attempts to contain China's rise would only aggravate the country and sow discord in the region.

On the other hand, China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), launched by Xi in 2013, was the answer to the developing countries' growing needs to address infrastructure and development deficits not overcome by globalisation. The BRI was, therefore, widely welcomed. Heralded as the revival of the 'Old Silk Road', the central plank of the BRI is connectivity. It aims at connecting both the sea lanes and land lanes with the outside world to provide China not only with alternate routes other than the Malacca Strait but also to revive its economy as well as the regional economies. The BRI has, however, been criticised by some countries for its lack of transparency and debt accumulation of developing countries.

China launched six corridors, including the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). China is now practically linked with all corners of the world through overland and the maritime and aviation corridors. An efficient cargo railway transportation network links China to Europe. This is a transformation unimaginable when China was under an air blockade in the 1960s. Pakistan International Airlines was the first foreign airline to lift this air blockade of China in 1964.

The BRI has been described as another version of China's "Go Global" strategy or a "new round of opening to the world". China has financed hundreds of projects around the world under the BRI. Nearly 150 countries are now partners in the BRI. It is estimated that over US\$1 trillion (S\$1.35 trillion) worth of projects are being implemented or are in the pipeline. China is also sharing its 5G technology with its partners. A redeeming feature of the BRI is that many countries have voluntarily joined this initiative.

A great benefit of the BRI to China is the development of its neglected Western regions like Xinjiang. The BRI is also helping China to promote its official currency, the renminbi, as an international currency, especially after the Ukraine war. The Third Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation (BRF) on 17 and 18 October 2023 in Beijing was significant against the backdrop of tensions between the US and China. The BRF helped in dispelling the impression that the BRI has lost its momentum. During his speech at the BRF, Xi said that the BRI has progressed from "sketching the outline" to "filling in the details". At the BRF, another US\$97 billion (S\$131 billion) worth of contracts were reportedly initialled. Xi clarified that the BRI is based on the principle of "planning together, building together and benefitting together" to build an "inclusive and interconnected world."

While the BRI has evoked wide support, the US and its close allies, including India, project it as China's tool to spread its geopolitical influence. Parallel initiatives like the Build Back Better World (B3W),²⁵ renamed as the Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment, have been launched by G-7 with the US as a lead partner. The B3W initiative seeks to mobilise resources worth US\$40 trillion (S\$54 trillion) needed for the infrastructure of

²⁵ The 'Build Back Better World' initiative was launched on 12 June 2021 as an alternative to China's BRI. It would provide infrastructure development of low and middle-income countries. See "FACT SHEET: President Biden and G7 Leaders Launch Build Back Better World (B3W) Partnership", The White House, 12 June 2021, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/06/12/fact-sheet-president-biden-and-g7-leaders-launch-build-back-better-world-b3w-partnership/>.

developing countries by 2035. The initiative aims at inducing the private sector to investments in “climate, health security, digital technology and gender equity”.²⁶

The EU has also launched the Global Gateway initiative. This programme has been criticised for failing to provide concrete details on projects and drawing heavily on already existing programmes.²⁷

As against the BRI which has tangible outcomes to its credit, the aforementioned western initiatives have yet to make any impact worldwide. The BRI has a major leverage in that it is transnational and cross-cultural in character. Its spread is all over from Eurasia to Africa, Latin America to Central Europe and it extends to both poor and rich countries, on the principle of mutual benefit and win-win outcomes.

As far as Pakistan is concerned, it has benefitted from the CPEC. The first phase of the CPEC has seen an injection of US\$26 billion (\$35.1 billion) worth of investment in energy and infrastructure projects. Several more projects are in the pipeline. After the completion of Early Harvest projects in the first phase, the next (second) phase envisages a larger scope of cooperation to include agriculture, industry, ports, health, education, mining, science and technology, tourism and livelihood projects. The deep-water port of Gwadar is expected to be fully operational in the next few years and become a transshipment hub for China and the region.²⁸ Landlocked Afghanistan and the Central Asian Republics have shown a keen interest in using the port for trade. Similarly, the CPEC’s extension to Afghanistan will help rebuild the country’s war-ravaged economy and promote trans-regional trade and energy cooperation. As sister ports, Gwadar and Chahbahar, will complement each other and with China being on friendly terms with both Pakistan and Iran, can play a key role in promoting the economic well-being of southern West Asia. China’s role in the region as a development partner will further increase due to its positive contribution to mediating between Iran and Saudi Arabia.

China’s investments in Pakistan have given a boost to an investment-starved economy. It is the first time in Pakistan’s history that a foreign government has reposed its confidence in the country’s economic potential. It has created local jobs and improved Pakistan’s infrastructure. The CPEC enjoys across-the-board support in Pakistan, notwithstanding attempts to discredit it. Much is at stake for both China and Pakistan to ensure the CPEC and the BRI’s success.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ The EU Global Gateway is a strategy to boost smart, clean and secure links in digital, energy and transport sectors and to strengthen health, education and research systems across the world with 300 billion Euros of investments till 2027, Official EU Website, https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/stronger-europe-world/global-gateway_en; and “EU Global Gateway: Development or Profit?”, EU Watchdog Radio, Podcast, 21 November 2022, <https://counter-balance.org/media/eu-global-gateway-development-or-profit>.

²⁸ Early Harvest Projects: Examples: 8000 MW Energy Projects; 510 KM of Highways and 932 KM of roads.

In South Asia, the US has chosen India to be a “net security provider” to contain China.²⁹ Consequently, India is opposing the BRI and the CPEC. It is using legal jargon and invoking the principle of sovereignty to oppose the CPEC. India has threatened to occupy Gilgit-Baltistan, the node connecting Pakistan with China.³⁰ The security of the Chinese people has been put in jeopardy. Although Pakistan and China have made it clear that the CPEC is meant to promote regional connectivity and is not against any country, attempts continue to derail it.

Relations between Pakistan and India and India and China are not normal. China’s containment by the West is multi-domain strategic, military, diplomatic, economic, commercial and technological, and India has become a partner in that game. The western countries have forged an alliance to apply a multi-pronged pressure on China. They will pose a challenge to China on the strength of their financial and technological power.

Pakistan faces a fallout of a triangular conflictual relationship between the US and China; India and China and India and Pakistan, with Afghanistan, adding to the volatility of South Asia. India’s massive acquisition of sophisticated western technology and arms, its foundational and technology-related agreements with the US, membership of the Quad, I2U2 and the IMEC, patrolling in the South China Sea, the nuclearisation of the Indian Ocean, rejection of dialogue with Pakistan and unilateral steps to alter the disputed nature of Jammu & Kashmir, represent a dangerous standoff in nuclearised South Asia as also a source of serious concern for China. India has not joined the China supported Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership but is willing to join the American sponsored Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity in alignment with its policy tilt towards the US. Pakistan has accused India of making the regional cooperation mechanism of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation dysfunctional.³¹

China-India relations are also fragile due to multiple factors, including a border standoff. China holds the view that it has a major role to play as a security and development partner of its partners in the region. Depending on the government in power, the South Asian countries are upbeat over their cooperation with China. It is disappointing that while the overwhelming trend is in favour of connectivity and regional cooperation, South Asia remains the least integrated.³²

China certainly has a key role in promoting regional economic collaboration and connectivity. Both Pakistan and China wish to see peace in their periphery and resolution of disputes through peaceful means. This is a strategic convergence and the edifice on which

²⁹ Anit Mukherjee, “India as a Net Security Provider: Concept and Impediments”, *RSIS Policy Brief*, August 2014, chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://www.rsis.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/PB_140903_India-Net-Security.pdf.

³⁰ “Indian minister speaks of annexing Gilgit-Baltistan”, *Dawn*, 28 October 2022, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1717261>.

³¹ Mandira Nayar, “Pakistan accuses India of making SAARC dysfunctional, New Delhi undecided on attending summit”, *The Week*, 4 January 2022, <https://www.theweek.in/news/india/2022/01/04/pakistan-accuses-india-of-making-saarc-dysfunctional-new-delhi-undecided-on-attending-summit.html>.

³² “South Asia least integrated region in world: ICCB”, *The Business Standard*, 20 July 2023, <https://www.tbsnews.net/economy/south-asia-least-integrated-region-world-report-668658>.

rests their 70-year relationship. The world is at a crossroads. The choice is between cooperation and conflict. Through cooperation, the world can be a better place for all to live. On the other hand, confrontation and conflict not only will bring untold misery to our planet but also unravel the fruits of globalisation.

As Graham Allison says, "The defining question about global order is whether China and the US can escape Thucydides Trap. Most contests that fit this pattern have ended badly."³³ One only hopes that will not be the case and that both China and the US will wisely manage their competition.

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³³ Graham Allison, *Destined for War*, op. cit., p. 17.