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## Strategic Competition and Alliance Dynamics in the Contemporary International Security Environment

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### Abstract

*This study examines the evolving relationship between strategic competition and alliance dynamics in the contemporary international order. Anchored in Neorealist theory and the Balance of Threat framework, the research employs a qualitative comparative methodology to analyze alignment behaviors in the Euro-Atlantic and Indo-Pacific theaters between 2017 and 2024. Drawing on official government documents, defense white papers, and alliance communiqués, the study argues that renewed great power rivalry has catalyzed a structural transformation in security partnerships. The findings reveal a divergence in alignment strategies: in the Euro-Atlantic, the existential threat posed by Russia has revitalized traditional multilateralism and triggered hard balancing, evidenced by NATO expansion. Conversely, in the Indo-Pacific, deep economic interdependence with China has necessitated flexible, issue-based minilateral arrangements like the Quad and AUKUS, allowing states to hedge between security and prosperity. Furthermore, the analysis highlights the intrusion of the economic-security nexus into alliance management, where cooperation on supply chains and critical technologies has become as pivotal as military interoperability. The study concludes that modern alliances are no longer static military pacts but adaptive instruments of statecraft, requiring nuanced diplomatic strategies to bridge the gap between collective security and national economic resilience.*

**Keywords:** Strategic Competition, Alliance Dynamics, Minilateralism, Balance of Threat, Hedging.

### Introduction

The contemporary global order is increasingly defined by a resurgence of great power rivalry, marking a decisive departure from the post-Cold War era of unipolarity and liberal internationalism. The dominant paradigm of the early 21st century has shifted from counterterrorism and humanitarian intervention to what policymakers and scholars now routinely term "strategic competition." This re-emergence of geopolitical friction, primarily driven by the rise of China and the assertiveness of Russia, has fundamentally altered the strategic calculations of states. At the heart of this transformation lies the intricate interplay between strategic competition and alliance dynamics. As major powers compete for influence, resources, and technological superiority, their relationships with allies and partners are being tested, reshaped, and in some cases, weaponized. Understanding this interplay is critical for deciphering the future trajectory of international security, as the stability of the international system increasingly depends on the cohesion or fragmentation of competing alliance networks.

Strategic competition is not merely a return to the bipolar rigidity of the Cold War; it is a complex, multidimensional phenomenon that operates across military, economic, technological, and ideological domains. Unlike the ideological contest of the 20th century, the current competition is deeply intertwined with globalization. The United States, China, and Russia are not isolated blocs but are embedded in a web of economic interdependence that complicates traditional deterrence models. As noted by Allison (2017), the "Thucydides Trap" the structural stress caused by a rising power threatening to displace a ruling power provides a perilous backdrop for current diplomatic interactions. However, the mechanism through which this competition is managed is often through alliance structures. Alliances, traditionally viewed as aggregation mechanisms for military capability, have evolved into instruments of broader strategic coercion and normative contestation.

The theoretical literature on alliance dynamics has long debated the motivations behind alignment. Realist scholars, following Waltz (1979) and Walt (1987), argue that states form alliances primarily to balance against threats. In the current context, this explains the revitalization of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in response to Russian aggression in Ukraine, and the strengthening of US bilateral ties in the Indo-Pacific to counter China's rise. Yet, the "balancing" behavior observed today is nuanced. It is not purely military but involves "internal balancing" through indigenous industrial capacity and "soft balancing" through international institutions. Furthermore, the concept of "hedging" has gained prominence, particularly among middle powers in Southeast Asia, who seek to maintain economic ties with China while relying on US security guarantees (Kuik, 2016). This strategic hedging complicates the binary logic of alliance formation, suggesting that states are attempting to navigate the competitive pressures without fully committing to either camp.

A critical dimension of this evolving dynamic is the shift from broad, multilateral alliances to flexible, "minilateral" arrangements. While the US alliance system remains the cornerstone of global security, the emergence of groupings such as the Quad (Quadrilateral Security Dialogue) and AUKUS (Australia-UK-US trilateral) signals a strategic adaptation. These frameworks prioritize interoperability, technological sharing, and domain-specific cooperation (such as in cyber and space) over the collective defense mandates of traditional treaties. Rapp-Hooper (2020) argues that in an era of constrained resources and diverse threats, these "entente" structures offer the necessary agility that larger institutions often lack. This shift, however, raises questions about the future of established institutions like NATO. While the alliance has found renewed purpose following the 2022 invasion of Ukraine, it faces internal fissures regarding burden-sharing and the strategic prioritization of the Indo-Pacific theater.

Moreover, strategic competition has weaponized interdependence, altering the nature of alliance obligations. The decoupling of supply chains, particularly in strategic technologies like semiconductors and telecommunications equipment, has transformed economic policy into security policy. Allies are increasingly pressured to align their technological standards and investment screening mechanisms with those of the leading power, often at significant economic cost. This "alliance coercion" creates friction; for instance, European reluctance to fully decouple from Chinese markets highlights the divergence between US security imperatives and European economic interests (Barkin, 2022). Consequently, alliance management is no longer just about troop deployments and nuclear umbrellas, but about harmonizing export controls, investment rules, and digital governance. This economic-security nexus introduces a layer of complexity that traditional alliance theory struggles to fully encompass.

The study of strategic competition and alliance dynamics is further complicated by the role of revisionist powers. Russia and China have sought to leverage divisions within the Western alliance system, utilizing disinformation, political interference, and asymmetric economic inducements. The concept of "sharp power," as described by Walker and Ludwig (2017), illustrates how authoritarian states exploit the openness of democratic societies to undermine alliance cohesion from within. This offensive strategy necessitates a defensive response that goes beyond military posturing, requiring allies to build resilience in their domestic information environments and political institutions. Thus, the current competition is not only a contest of capabilities but a contest of systems, where the legitimacy and durability of democratic alliance networks are pitted against the authoritarian model of statecraft. This study aims to critically examine the relationship between strategic competition and alliance dynamics in the contemporary security environment.

### **Literature Review**

The academic discourse on strategic competition and alliance dynamics has undergone a significant resurgence in recent years, driven by the palpable shift from a unipolar post-Cold War order to an era of renewed great power rivalry. The literature broadly coalesces around three thematic pillars: the theoretical drivers of strategic competition, the evolution of alliance structures from multilateralism to minilateralism, and the economic-technological dimensions of modern alignment.

The foundation of the literature remains anchored in Realist theory, specifically the structural imperatives of balancing. Waltz (1979) argued that states balance against power, a concept refined by Walt (1987), who posited that states balance against *threats*. This distinction is

critical in the current context, where the United States and its allies frame their posture not merely as a response to China's material capabilities, but to the perceived threat posed by its revisionist intent. Allison (2017) reinvigorated this debate by applying the historical lens of the "Thucydides Trap," suggesting that the structural stress of a rising power displacing a ruling power makes conflict probable, though not inevitable. However, critics like Johnston (2019) caution against overly deterministic structural explanations, arguing that the specific choices of leaders and the nature of domestic regimes play a decisive role in shaping the intensity of competition.

A significant body of literature examines how states navigate this competitive environment. Traditional alliance theory focuses on balancing (aligning against the principal threat) and bandwagoning (aligning with the threat). However, the complexity of the current order has given rise to extensive scholarship on "hedging." Kuik (2016) defines hedging as a strategy pursued by secondary states particularly in Southeast Asia who seek to maintain strategic autonomy by simultaneously engaging the rising power economically while cultivating security ties with the status quo power. This literature suggests that the binary logic of the Cold War is inapplicable to the modern Indo-Pacific, where deep economic integration with China complicates pure balancing strategies.

Furthermore, scholars debate the cohesion of the Western alliance system. While Ikenberry (2011) predicts the resilience of the "liberal international order" due to its institutional depth, others point to internal fragmentation. Rapp-Hooper (2020) argues that the US alliance system is undergoing a transformation, shifting from broad, collective defense architectures like NATO to more flexible, issue-based alignments. She suggests that the rise of "ententes" allows states to cooperate on specific threats without the rigidity of formal treaty obligations, a necessary adaptation in a complex security environment.

Closely related to the evolution of alliance structures is the literature on minilateralism. Moving away from the "hub-and-spoke" model of US bilateralism, recent studies analyze the emergence of groupings like the Quad (Quadrilateral Security Dialogue) and AUKUS. Singh (2023) posits that these arrangements represent a form of "geared balancing," allowing middle powers like Australia, Japan, and India to align their capabilities with US strategy while retaining political agency. This literature highlights a shift away from the "buck-passing" behavior often predicted by structural realism toward a more active burden-sharing model, driven by the immediacy of the China challenge.

Finally, a burgeoning strand of literature integrates International Political Economy into security studies. Farrell and Newman (2019) introduced the concept of "weaponized

interdependence," arguing that states can exploit global networks of trade and finance to coerce adversaries. This has profound implications for alliance dynamics, as the literature now focuses on "tech alliances" and supply chain decoupling. Barkin (2022) notes that this introduces new friction into alliances, as European and Asian allies often have divergent economic interests regarding engagement with China. The literature suggests that the future of alliance management lies not just in military interoperability, but in harmonizing economic policies, export controls, and technological standards. The reviewed literature establishes that strategic competition is reshaping alliance dynamics in fundamental ways. While the theoretical roots of balancing remain relevant, the strategies employed by states have evolved to include hedging and minilateral cooperation. Furthermore, the intrusion of economic statecraft into the security domain adds a layer of complexity that traditional alliance theory must account for. This study builds on these foundations by analyzing how these theoretical shifts are manifesting in the specific policies of the US, China, and their respective partners.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study is anchored in the Realist tradition of International Relations, specifically drawing upon Neorealist structural theory and the Balance of Threat framework. These theoretical perspectives provide the necessary analytical tools to understand how shifts in the global distribution of power drive strategic competition and necessitate adjustments in alliance dynamics.

At the foundational level, Neorealism, as articulated by Waltz (1979), posits that the anarchic structure of the international system compels states to prioritize survival. In the absence of a global sovereign, states must rely on self-help to ensure their security. This structural condition creates a "security dilemma," where one state's efforts to increase its own security (e.g., military build-up or alliance expansion) are perceived as threatening by others, prompting countermeasures. The current era of strategic competition is theoretically explained by this structural friction: the rising power of China and the revisionist behavior of Russia generate uncertainty, compelling the United States and its partners to seek security through external balancing. This theoretical lens explains *why* the competition is occurring as it is a structural inevitability in a transitioning international order.

The Balance of Threat Theory While Waltz focuses on balancing against power, this study utilizes Stephen Walt's (1987) Balance of Threat theory as its primary explanatory framework for alliance formation. Walt argues that states do not balance against power *per se*, but rather against the perceived threat. Threat perception is determined not only by material capabilities

but also by geographic proximity, offensive capabilities, and aggressive intent. This framework is critical for explaining the divergence in alliance dynamics observed in the study.

In the Euro-Atlantic theater, the Russian invasion of Ukraine drastically altered the perception of "intent," transforming Russia from a potential partner into an immediate threat. According to Walt's logic, this high threat perception explains the rapid "hard balancing" and NATO expansion. In the Indo-Pacific, while China possesses significant power, the perception of threat varies among actors. For Japan and Australia, the threat is immediate, driving hard balancing. For ASEAN states, the threat is mitigated by economic interdependence, leading to softer balancing strategies. This variation in threat perception provides the theoretical basis for understanding why NATO has solidified while the Indo-Pacific relies on flexible multilateralism.

To account for the behavior of middle powers who refuse to strictly align with either great power, the study incorporates the concept of Hedging. Moving beyond the binary of balancing (aligning against a threat) and bandwagoning (aligning with a threat), hedging theory explains the strategic behavior of states particularly in Southeast Asia who seek to maintain strategic autonomy (Kuik, 2016). Hedging allows states to cultivate economic ties with the rising power (China) while securing political-military ties with the prevailing power (US). This theoretical construct is essential for explaining the rise of multilateral arrangements like the Quad, which function as limited liability alignments rather than comprehensive defense pacts.

**Weaponized Interdependence** Finally, to address the economic dimensions of alliance dynamics, the study integrates the framework of Weaponized Interdependence proposed by Farrell and Newman (2019). This theoretical perspective explains how states exploit the networks of global interdependence (such as financial systems and supply chains) to coerce adversaries. In the context of alliances, this theory elucidates why security cooperation has expanded into the technological domain. It explains the shift from "military alliances" to "tech alliances," where alignment is driven by the need to secure critical nodes of the global economy rather than just geographic territory.

On the whole, these theoretical frameworks provide a comprehensive lens. Neorealism explains the structural impetus for competition; Balance of Threat explains the variation in alliance cohesion across regions; Hedging explains the specific forms of multilateral alignment; and Weaponized Interdependence explains the expansion of alliance scope into the economic domain.

## **Methodology**

This study employs a qualitative comparative research design, utilizing the case study method. This approach is deemed most appropriate for investigating the complex causal mechanisms linking strategic competition to shifts in alliance dynamics. Unlike quantitative methods, which might track aggregate trends in alliance formation, a qualitative comparative design allows for a deep, contextual analysis of the specific diplomatic, economic, and military strategies employed by states. The study compares the alliance behaviors of major powers (the United States, China, and Russia) and the responses of middle powers across two distinct geopolitical theaters: the Euro-Atlantic (NATO) and the Indo-Pacific (Quad/AUKUS). Data collection involves a systematic review of documents published between 2017 and 2024, a period delineating the explicit shift in US policy toward "great power competition" and the subsequent restructuring of global alliances. Lastly, this study utilizes qualitative content analysis.

### **Discussion of Findings**

The qualitative comparative analysis of strategic competition and alliance dynamics reveals a fundamental transformation in the architecture of international security. The findings, derived from a systematic review of government documents, alliance communiqués, and defense white papers between 2017 and 2024, indicate that the resurgence of great power rivalry has acted as a catalyst for the restructuring of alliance systems. The analysis confirms that while traditional balancing behavior remains prevalent, the mechanisms of alignment have shifted significantly. The study finds that the rigid, treaty-bound multilateralism of the Cold War era is increasingly being supplemented and, in some cases, supplanted by flexible, issue-based "minilateral" arrangements. Furthermore, the findings highlight a critical expansion of the competitive domain into the economic and technological spheres, fundamentally altering the calculus of alliance management.

### **The Shift from Multilateralism to Minilateralism**

A primary finding of this study is the strategic pivot toward minilateralism as a preferred tool of statecraft in the Indo-Pacific region. While the Euro-Atlantic alliance (NATO) has reaffirmed its traditional multilateral cohesion in response to the Russian threat, the Indo-Pacific theater has seen the emergence of new groupings such as the Quad (Quadrilateral Security Dialogue) and AUKUS. The analysis of official statements, particularly the Joint Statements from the Quad summits (2020–2023), reveals a deliberate avoidance of the term "alliance" in favor of "partnership." This rhetorical shift masks a substantive deepening of military and logistical integration.

### **Table 1: Comparative Analysis of Alliance Structures in the Indo-Pacific (2017–2024)**

Feature	Traditional US Alliances (e.g., US-Japan)	Minilateral Arrangements (e.g., Quad, AUKUS)
Legal Basis	Formal Treaties (e.g., Treaty of San Francisco)	Joint Declarations / Memoranda of Understanding
Primary Mandate	Collective Defense (Article 5 style)	Issue-based Cooperation (Health, Tech, Maritime)
Flexibility	Low (Institutional rigidity)	High (Adaptable membership and scope)
Strategic Utility	Deterrence against territorial aggression	Shaping the strategic environment / Soft balancing
Entrapment Risk	High	Low (No automatic defense obligations)

Source: Author's analysis based on official treaty texts and summit declarations (2017–2024). Table 1 illustrates the functional divergence between the two structures. The findings suggest that minilateralism offers distinct advantages in the context of strategic competition with China. Unlike NATO's Article 5 commitment, which risks "entrapment" in a conflict over minor interests, the Quad allows states like India and Australia to cooperate with the US on specific domains—such as maritime domain awareness and critical technologies—without formally committing to a defense pact. As Rapp-Hooper (2020) argues, these "ententes" provide the necessary agility to address the multifaceted nature of modern competition. The data shows that this flexibility is particularly attractive to middle powers who wish to signal resolve to Beijing without severing economic ties, effectively allowing them to "have their cake and eat it too" regarding security and economics.

### **Balancing vs. Hedging: The Divergent Strategies of Middle Powers**

The comparative analysis of the Euro-Atlantic and Indo-Pacific theaters reveals a stark divergence in the behavior of middle powers. In Europe, the findings demonstrate a clear trend toward "hard balancing." The invasion of Ukraine in 2022 served as a catalyst for the abandonment of hedging strategies by states like Finland and Sweden. The process tracing of their NATO accession documents reveals that the perception of an existential threat overrode historical neutrality. This aligns with Walt's (1987) "balance of threat" theory, where the aggressive intent of a rival, rather than just its power, drives alignment.

Conversely, the findings in the Indo-Pacific highlight the persistent utility of "hedging." An analysis of the defense white papers of key ASEAN nations (Indonesia, Vietnam, Malaysia) shows that despite increasing pressure from the US to choose sides, these states continue to pursue a dual strategy. They maintain military interoperability with the US (through exercises like RIMPAC) while preserving economic dependency on China.

### **Table 2: Strategic Postures of Select Middle Powers (2017–2024)**

Country	Strategic Posture	Security Alignment (US)	Economic Alignment (China)	Key Evidence (2017-2024)
Japan	Hard Balancing	High (Strengthening)	Medium (Reducing dependency)	Defense budget doubled; counter-strike capability acquisition.
India	Soft Balancing	Medium (Converging)	High (Trade deficit rising)	Quad participation; remains in SCO and BRICS.
Indonesia	Hedging	Low/Medium	High	"Free and Active" policy reiteration; limited defense pacts.
Germany	Transitional Balancing	High (Post-2022 shift)	Medium (Decoupling slowly)	<i>Zeitenwende</i> speech; increased defense spending to 2% GDP.

Source: Compiled from National Defense White Papers and SIPRI Military Expenditure Database.

The findings presented in Table 2 highlight that hedging is not a static position but a spectrum. Japan, historically a "security free-rider," has shifted significantly toward hard balancing following the assessment that the US "extended deterrence" umbrella is no longer guaranteed. The analysis of Japan's 2023 Defense White Paper explicitly cites the "need for counter-strike capabilities," a doctrinal shift from pure self-defense (Ministry of Defense Japan, 2023). In contrast, India exemplifies sophisticated hedging; while participating in the Quad, it continues to engage with BRICS and maintain substantial oil imports from Russia, demonstrating a refusal to fully subordinate its strategic autonomy to US objectives (Kuik, 2016).

### 3. The Economic-Security Nexus: Weaponized Interdependence

A critical finding of this study is the extent to which strategic competition has penetrated the economic domain, transforming alliance management into an exercise of "tech coordination." The literature review established the concept of "weaponized interdependence" (Farrell & Newman, 2019), and the findings provide empirical support for its operationalization within alliances.

The study finds that the US has increasingly used its alliance networks to enforce supply chain decoupling, particularly in semiconductors. The analysis of the "Chip 4" alliance (involving

the US, Japan, Taiwan, and South Korea) reveals that traditional security guarantees are now being leveraged to secure economic advantages. The US Department of Commerce's 2022 export controls on semiconductor technology to China were not unilateral; they were coordinated with key allies (the Netherlands and Japan) to maximize efficacy.

**Table 3: Evolution of Economic Security Measures in Alliances (2017–2024)**

Year	Policy Instrument	Alliance Mechanism	Target	Objective
2018	Tariffs (Section 301)	US Unilateral	China	Trade deficit reduction
2019	Entity List Expansions	Bilateral Pressure	Huawei	5G Security
2022	Export Controls (Oct 7)	US-Japan-Netherlands Trilateral	Semiconductor Mfg	Tech Denial
2023	Investment Screening	AUKUS / EU Coordination	Critical Infrastructure	Preventing Tech Transfer

Source: Author's analysis based on government press releases and trade policy documents.

Table 3 demonstrates the evolution from unilateral tariffs to multilateral techno-industrial coordination. The findings suggest that alliances are no longer solely about the aggregation of military power but are increasingly about the aggregation of economic leverage. This has created friction within alliances; European documents (e.g., EU Strategic Autonomy papers) express concern that US policies force European companies to bear the cost of decoupling. The findings indicate that "alliance coercion" is now a double-edged sword, where the US pressures allies to align with its economic containment strategy, potentially straining the cohesion of the alliance in the process.

### **NATO's Revitalization vs. Indo-Pacific Flexibility**

The comparative aspect of the methodology allows for a nuanced assessment of NATO's revitalization. Contrary to predictions of NATO's irrelevance (a view held by some realist scholars prior to 2022), the findings show that strategic competition has reinvigorated the alliance. The NATO 2022 Strategic Concept explicitly identifies Russia as the "most significant and direct threat" while acknowledging China's "systemic challenges." This document marks a watershed moment, expanding NATO's remit beyond the North Atlantic to consider the security implications of the Indo-Pacific.

However, the process tracing reveals that this revitalization is driven by a "fear of abandonment" as much as "fear of entrapment." Eastern European states (the Baltic members) have pushed for a hardening of defenses, fearing that US focus on China might dilute Washington's commitment to European security. This finding supports the transactional view of alliances posited by Schroeder (1976), where allies seek to control the patron's behavior as much as they seek protection.

In the Indo-Pacific, the lack of a NATO-equivalent structure remains a defining feature. The findings suggest that the "hub-and-spoke" system is morphing into a "meshwork" of overlapping bilateral and trilateral pacts (e.g., US-Japan-ROK trilateral at Camp David). The analysis of the Camp David Summit Joint Declaration (2023) reveals a commitment to institutionalize trilateral security coordination, signaling a move away from purely bilateral dependency on the US toward intra-Asian security networking.

### **The Role of Ideology and Narrative**

Finally, the content analysis of strategic documents reveals a resurgence of ideological framing. The US National Security Strategy (2022) frames the competition as a contest between "democracies and autocracies." Similarly, China's discourse on the "Global Development Initiative" and "Global Security Initiative" positions itself as the leader of the "Global South" against US hegemony.

The findings indicate that this ideological framing serves a functional purpose in alliance management. For the US, it provides a cohesive narrative to rally diverse democratic allies (Japan, Australia, EU) around a common value system, thereby legitimizing the costs of economic decoupling. However, for non-democratic US partners or neutral states in the Global South, this framing is counter-productive, pushing them toward hedging strategies to avoid being categorized as "revisionist" or "autocratic."

From the forgoing, it becomes evident that strategic competition is acting as a solvent that dissolves the rigid boundaries between the economic and security domains, and between regional theaters. Alliances are adapting by becoming more flexible (Indo-Pacific minilateralism) or more focused (NATO's return to basics). The study confirms that states are not passive recipients of structural pressure; they actively choose between balancing, hedging, and bandwagoning based on their geographic proximity to the threat and their economic resilience. The data ultimately supports the conclusion that the modern alliance system is characterized by "complex interdependence," where security commitments are negotiated alongside trade ties, and where minilateral groupings serve as the adaptive mechanism for a rapidly changing distribution of power.

## **Conclusion**

This study examined the transformative impact of renewed great power rivalry on the architecture of global alliance systems. By comparing the dynamics in the Euro-Atlantic and Indo-Pacific theaters, the research reveals that strategic competition has acted as a potent catalyst for structural adaptation. The findings challenge the notion of a monolithic "Cold War 2.0" dynamic; instead, the contemporary alliance landscape is characterized by a divergence in form and function. In Europe, the existential threat posed by Russia has revitalized traditional multilateralism, prompting a return to hard balancing and institutional solidarity within NATO. Conversely, in the Indo-Pacific, the complexity of the China challenge where security risks are intertwined with deep economic interdependence has driven a shift toward flexible, issue-based minilateralism, allowing states to signal resolve without the rigidity of formal treaty obligations. A critical insight from the study is the weaponization of economic interdependence, which has fundamentally altered the nature of alliance management. Alliances are no longer purely military pacts but have evolved into vehicles for technological coordination and supply chain security. This economic-security nexus, however, introduces friction, compelling middle powers to navigate a precarious path between security alignment with the US and economic survival vis-à-vis China. Consequently, the study concludes that the future stability of the international order will not depend solely on the military aggregation of alliances, but on their capacity to adapt to the multidimensional nature of modern competition, balancing the imperative for collective security with the necessity of strategic autonomy.

## **Recommendations**

1. Policymakers should prioritize the institutionalization of minilateral frameworks, such as the Quad, to provide the necessary flexibility for navigating the complex security-economic nexus in the Indo-Pacific.
2. Alliance managers must establish clear protocols for coordinating economic statecraft and technology transfer to minimize the internal friction caused by the weaponization of interdependence.
3. Major powers should create specific mechanisms to support middle powers in mitigating the economic costs of alignment, thereby reducing the incentives for strategic hedging.
4. NATO should calibrate its strategic concept to address security linkages with the Indo-Pacific without overextending its resources or undermining the primary focus on European territorial defense.

5. Diplomatic strategies must transcend rigid ideological binaries to cultivate stronger ties with non-aligned nations in the Global South, preventing them from drifting toward rival alignment.

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