[**A titanic struggle**](https://www.dawn.com/news/1690570/a-titanic-struggle)

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CAUGHT in the whirlpool of domestic politics as we are right now, our analysts sometimes tend to ignore the implications of rapidly evolving global geopolitical realities. However, our leaders and policymakers cannot do the same without causing severe damage to the country’s interests. Therefore, while responding to foreign policy challenges, Pakistan’s leadership must remain on its guard all the time so as not to be on the wrong side of historical trends while safeguarding the country’s immediate security and economic interests.

At present, the US reigns supreme globally because of the formidable combination of its enormous economic and military power, the strength of its worldwide alliances, its domination of multilateral security and economic institutions, and the attraction of its soft power in the form of cultural advancement and a powerful media. China’s dramatic rise, however, poses a potent challenge to US global supremacy.

**Read more**: [*Pakistan wants to bring together US and China to avoid 'Cold War-like' situation*](https://www.dawn.com/news/1673997)

The growing Sino-US rivalry, which will be the defining feature of global politics during the coming decades of the 21st century, disguises within itself a titanic struggle for world supremacy in the long run. The passage of time will simply add to the intensity of this struggle, encompassing political, economic, military and ideological (liberal democracy vs authoritarianism) spheres as China becomes stronger economically and militarily. Simply put, the world is in the grip of Cold War II.

As noted by the highly respected American scholar John Mearsheimer in a recent issue of Foreign Affairs, the US is now firmly committed to the policy of containment of China. Unsurprisingly, the US is employing every element of its national power to counter China’s growth and undermine its political stability. The strengthening of the US alliances in the Indo-Pacific region, the deepening of its strategic partnership with India, the revival of the Quad, the establishment of AUKUS as a new alliance, the US economic and trade sanctions against China, and its efforts to incite political instability in China should be seen in that context.

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The Ukraine crisis has diverted to some extent the attention and resources of the US-led West to Europe in order to check Russia’s westward advance. This diversion, at least temporarily, may reduce the West’s pressure on China and strengthen the latter’s position on the global political chessboard by pushing Russia closer into a strategic embrace with it. There is even the distinct possibility of the emergence of a Sino-Russian bloc in some form to counter the global domination of the US and its allies.

**Read more**: [*Peaceful living*](https://www.dawn.com/news/1688425/peaceful-living)

While recognising the security risks posed by a re-assertive Russia in Europe, US policymakers are fully aware that the centre of gravity of international politics is gradually shifting to Asia where the decisive struggle for world supremacy will be decided. This is understandable considering the enormity of the challenge posed by China because of the huge size of its population and its rapid economic growth over the past four decades. China’s GDP in purchasing power parity terms surpassed that of the US in 2014. Even its GDP in nominal terms is expected to overtake the US around 2027. China’s huge advantage in population and its dramatic economic growth have allowed it to rapidly build up its military might.

The world is now poised for a period of increasing international tensions and instability because of the growing Sino-US rivalry and a re-assertive Russia, posing difficult choices for countries like Pakistan which basically will have to balance its vital security and economic links with China against its valuable economic and commercial ties with the US-led West. The test of Pakistan’s diplomacy would be to strike the right balance between the two so as to safeguard its vital security, economic, and commercial interests while being on the right side of history.

Pakistan’s domestic political stability, economic strength, scientific progress, and technological advancement will be the decisive factors in determining the success or failure of its diplomacy. Unfortunately, these are precisely the areas which constitute the country’s Achilles’ heel as a quick survey of its current domestic scene reveals.

Our leaders, therefore, would be well advised to place national interests above narrow personal or institutional considerations and focus on solid hard work and sound policies to strengthen political stability, ensure the country’s security, and promote its economic well-being. Above all, they must desist from indulging in populist propaganda and hollow slogans for cheap popularity at the expense of national interests and resorting to political vendetta to settle personal scores.

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