The End of American Hegemony? Emerging Bipolarity in the New Global Order

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This research critically examines the decline of U.S. hegemony and the rise of a more competitive, multipolar global order, with particular focus on China's ascent as a major global power. The study employs a mixed-methods approach, including secondary literature review, historical analysis, case studies, expert interviews, and quantitative analysis of economic and military data. Key findings reveal a significant decline in the U.S.'s share of global GDP, military spending, and international trade, while China's economic, military, and diplomatic influence has seen rapid growth. By 2025, China is projected to surpass the U.S. as the world's largest economy, driven by its Belt and Road Initiative, rising military spending, and increasing trade and diplomatic engagement. These shifts indicate a profound change in global power dynamics, signaling the emergence of a more contested and multipolar world order. The study contributes to understanding the evolving geopolitical landscape, where the U.S. and China vie for global leadership.

Keywords: Strategic Competition, Economic Competition, Belt and Road Initiative, Global Power Shift, Military Influence, U.S.-China Rivalry

Introduction:

For over three decades following the end of the Cold War, the United States enjoyed unparalleled global dominance—a period widely referred to by international relations scholars as the "unipolar moment." With the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, the global balance of power dramatically shifted in favor of the United States, granting it not only unmatched military and economic influence but also the ability to shape the norms, values, and institutions that governed the international order. This hegemonic position enabled the U.S. to pursue its foreign policy goals with relative ease, promoting a liberal democratic order based on free markets, open societies, and multilateral cooperation. Yet, as the 21st century unfolds, the durability of American hegemony is being increasingly questioned [1].

The world is undergoing a seismic shift, marked by the relative decline of U.S. primacy and the concomitant rise of new centers of power, particularly China. The rapid ascent of the People's Republic of China—economically, technologically, and militarily—has not only challenged American dominance but also called into question the very structure of the international system. China's Belt and Road Initiative, its growing assertiveness in the Indo-Pacific, and its strategic investments in Africa, Latin America, and Central Asia signify a long-term vision of global influence, often framed as an alternative to the U.S.-led liberal order. Alongside China, Russia's strategic maneuvers, including its military intervention in Ukraine and its deeper engagement with non-Western powers, further illustrate the emergence of a multipolar or at least bipolar landscape, where multiple actors vie for global leadership [2].

The transition from unipolarity to bipolarity or multipolarity has significant implications for global stability and governance. The end of American hegemony does not

imply the immediate eclipse of the United States as a superpower; rather, it indicates a diffusion of power and influence in a more contested and competitive international environment. Unlike the Cold War era, where bipolarity was defined by ideological polarity between capitalism and communism, today's emerging bipolarity is more complex and multidimensional. It is shaped by economic interdependence, technological competition, regional rivalries, and fragmented multilateralism. While the United States and China may serve as the primary poles in this evolving order, other actors—such as India, Brazil, the European Union, and regional organizations—are exerting growing influence over international norms and policy directions. From a theoretical standpoint, the transformation of the global order invites reexamination of prevailing international relations paradigms. Realist scholars argue that the decline of unipolarity is a natural outcome of power balancing, wherein rising powers inevitably seek to challenge the hegemon to secure their strategic interests. The rise of China, in this view, mirrors the classic "Thucydides Trap"—the historical pattern in which the ascent of one power instills fear in the dominant power, often leading to conflict. Liberal theorists, by contrast, emphasize the role of institutions and interdependence in mitigating the risk of great power war, arguing that even amid power transitions, cooperative mechanisms can prevent a full-scale breakdown of order. Constructivist perspectives further highlight how identity, values, and norms shape state behavior, pointing to the ideological divergence between liberal democratic states and authoritarian regimes like China and Russia as a key fault line in today's geopolitics.

Historically, American hegemony has not only rested on material power but also on ideational leadership. The post-World War II international system—anchored in institutions such as the United Nations, the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund—was designed to promote liberal values and American strategic interests. In the aftermath of the Cold War, this system expanded to include former adversaries, enabling globalization and increasing U.S. soft power. However, the 2008 global financial crisis, the protracted wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and more recently, the domestic political polarization in the U.S., have all contributed to a credibility gap. Many countries now perceive American leadership as inconsistent and self-interested, eroding the moral authority that once underpinned its hegemonic role.

Meanwhile, China is presenting itself as a champion of South-South cooperation, non-interference, and alternative models of development. It is forging new multilateral platforms like the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), and is increasingly shaping global norms in areas like digital governance, surveillance technologies, and cybersecurity. While these efforts are often viewed with suspicion by Western powers, they resonate with many developing countries that feel marginalized by Western-centric institutions. This shift underscores a deeper structural transformation in global governance: the contestation not just over power, but over the principles and values that will define the future world order.

In addition to the U.S.-China dynamic, Russia's role in shaping global politics cannot be ignored. Though economically weaker than both the U.S. and China, Russia has leveraged its military capabilities, energy resources, and strategic alliances to disrupt Western cohesion. Its growing alignment with China—evident in joint military exercises, energy agreements, and diplomatic coordination—signals a convergence of interests among authoritarian powers dissatisfied with the current order. Furthermore, Russia's outreach to Africa, Latin America, and parts of Asia reveals a broader ambition to reassert itself as a global actor. Together, these developments point to the consolidation of a strategic bloc that rivals Western influence.

Yet, the emerging bipolarity is not absolute. The international system is increasingly shaped by "hedging" behavior, where states seek to avoid rigid alignments with either bloc. Countries like India, Indonesia, Türkiye, and even U.S. allies such as Saudi Arabia and the

UAE are pursuing independent foreign policies, maximizing strategic autonomy while engaging with both sides. This pragmatic approach underscores the limitations of a strict bipolar framework and points toward a more fluid, pluralistic, and transactional global order. This paper critically examines the extent to which the era of American hegemony is ending and whether a new bipolar order is indeed taking shape. It explores the historical trajectory of U.S. dominance, the structural forces driving the redistribution of power, and the strategic implications of rising Chinese and Russian influence. It also considers the responses of regional and middle powers in navigating this complex landscape. By doing so, the study seeks to provide a nuanced understanding of the post-unipolar world and the potential contours of a future global order—one marked not by a clear hegemon, but by competition, fragmentation, and the redefinition of global norms and leadership.

Objectives:

The primary objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To analyze the evolving economic power dynamics between China and the United States over the past decade, focusing on key indicators such as GDP, trade volume, military spending, and foreign direct investment.
2. To investigate the comparative trends in military expenditures, defense strategies, and geopolitical influence of both China and the United States from 2010 to 2025.
3. To assess the implications of China's growing economic and military power on global political structures, especially in relation to U.S. hegemony.
4. To identify the potential future trajectories of the Sino-American rivalry based on the latest economic forecasts and geopolitical developments.

Novelty Statement:

This study brings a novel perspective by integrating economic, military, and geopolitical factors in assessing the shift in global power from the United States to China. While many studies have examined these factors in isolation, this research provides a comprehensive, multi-dimensional analysis of both countries' strengths and vulnerabilities across several domains. Additionally, the study introduces projections for 2024 and 2025, considering recent data and trends, which have not been fully explored in previous works. By comparing these findings with existing literature, this research fills a significant gap in understanding the trajectory of the global order, offering fresh insights into how China's rise might reshape global politics, trade, and security dynamics in the coming years.

Literature Review:

The notion of American hegemony has been central to international relations discourse since the end of World War II. The United States emerged from the war as the dominant global actor—militarily, economically, and ideologically—establishing and leading an international order rooted in liberal values, free-market capitalism, and institutional multilateralism. For decades, the United States played a central role in shaping the norms, rules, and institutions of global governance. However, as the 21st century has progressed, this dominance has come under increasing scrutiny due to the relative decline of U.S. power and the simultaneous rise of alternative centers of influence—most notably China. As a result, scholars and policymakers have increasingly debated whether we are witnessing the end of American hegemony and the emergence of a bipolar or even multipolar global order.

Historically, the United States' hegemonic position was supported by its share of global GDP, which reached nearly 40% in the immediate post-WWII period and remained around 25% until the early 2000s (Maddison Project Database, 2020). This economic strength was matched by technological superiority, military capacity, and cultural dominance. The Bretton Woods institutions—namely, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, and the World Trade Organization (WTO)—operated under the influence of U.S. economic philosophy. This system promoted economic globalization under U.S. leadership, reinforcing

the perception of an enduring unipolar world. However, cracks began to appear after the 2008 financial crisis, which exposed vulnerabilities in the U.S.-led economic model and prompted several countries to diversify their alliances and financial instruments.

In economic terms, the rise of China has been the most significant factor in challenging U.S. primacy. China's GDP in PPP terms surpassed that of the United States in 2014, and by 2023, it accounted for approximately 18.5% of global output compared to America's 15.5% (World Bank, 2023). China's trade volume also reflects this shift, as it became the world's largest exporter in 2009 and has maintained that position since. In 2022, Chinese exports totaled $3.38 trillion, making it a vital trading partner for over 120 countries (UN Comtrade, 2022). The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), launched in 2013, has further expanded China's global economic reach. With over 3,000 infrastructure projects across Asia, Africa, Latin America, and Europe, the BRI has mobilized more than $1.2 trillion in investments, allowing China to exert long-term structural influence over developing economies.

Additionally, China has sought to restructure the global financial architecture to reduce dependency on the U.S. dollar. As of 2023, the Chinese Renminbi (RMB) constituted 3.2% of global foreign exchange reserves—still modest but growing steadily (IMF COFER, 2023). Beijing has inked bilateral currency swap agreements with over 40 countries and established the Cross-Border Interbank Payment System (CIPS) to rival SWIFT. Moreover, initiatives like the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and the New Development Bank (NDB, established by BRICS nations) are providing alternatives to the Western-dominated Bretton Woods institutions. These shifts suggest a parallel economic order is developing—one that may not displace the existing liberal international system immediately, but which increasingly competes with it.

Militarily, while the United States continues to outspend all other countries—allocating $877 billion in defense in 2022 (SIPRI, 2023)—China is rapidly closing the gap. With an official defense budget of $292 billion and significant investments in naval capabilities, cyberwarfare, space assets, and advanced missile systems, China is aiming to modernize its military into a "world-class" force by 2049. The development of hypersonic weapons and artificial intelligence-based warfare indicates Beijing's intention to shift the balance of power, especially in the Indo-Pacific region. China's aggressive stance in the South China Sea, its encroachments on Taiwan's airspace, and border conflicts with India all reflect an increasingly assertive foreign policy posture, aligning military ambitions with geopolitical strategy.

In the sphere of international relations and diplomacy, the traditional alliances underpinning U.S. leadership are also under pressure. The Trump administration's "America First" doctrine alienated several key allies by withdrawing from global commitments such as the Paris Agreement, the Iran Nuclear Deal (JCPOA), and the World Health Organization (WHO). This erosion of soft power has provided openings for other actors. For instance, during the COVID-19 pandemic, China and Russia engaged in "vaccine diplomacy," supplying millions of doses to developing countries and gaining political leverage. Similarly, China's Global Development Initiative (GDI) and Global Security Initiative (GSI) articulate alternative governance models centered on state sovereignty, non-interference, and development-led stability.

Russia, though economically smaller, plays a significant geopolitical role that cannot be ignored in this evolving order. Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022 and its annexation of Crimea in 2014 illustrate its willingness to use military force to revise the status quo. Despite facing Western sanctions and economic isolation, Russia maintains considerable influence due to its energy exports and strategic partnerships. Prior to the war in Ukraine, the European Union relied on Russia for approximately 45% of its natural gas (IEA, 2022), which complicated the West's ability to sanction Moscow effectively. Russia's alignment with China

on multiple fronts—ranging from trade to military exercises—suggests an emerging anti-Western bloc that challenges U.S. global leadership.

At the same time, the global South has become a vital arena of contestation. Countries like India, Brazil, Indonesia, South Africa, and Turkey have embraced multi-alignment strategies, participating in both Western-led institutions and alternative platforms such as BRICS, SCO, and the AIIB. These nations are leveraging their growing economic and demographic power to assert more autonomy in foreign policy, signaling a move toward what Amitav Acharya (2018) calls "multiplex world order," characterized by diversified leadership and normative pluralism. India, for example, balances its engagement with the United States through the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD) while maintaining strategic cooperation with Russia and China within the BRICS framework. India's GDP surpassed $3.7 trillion in 2023, making it the world's fifth-largest economy, and its projected growth suggests increasing influence in shaping global norms.

Furthermore, the international institutional landscape itself is undergoing transformation. The BRICS grouping now represents around 31.5% of global GDP in PPP terms—more than the G7—and is expanding to include other emerging economies. The BRICS countries have increasingly called for reforms in global governance structures, including greater representation in the IMF and UN Security Council, reflecting growing dissatisfaction with the Western-centric order. At the 2023 BRICS summit, leaders discussed the potential for a common currency to reduce reliance on the U.S. dollar—a move that, while still symbolic, reflects the long-term desire to create a parallel economic system.

This emerging bipolarity—centered around the U.S. and China—is therefore not merely a military or economic contest but also a clash of ideologies, governance models, and regional influences. The United States continues to promote liberal democracy, human rights, and free markets, while China emphasizes authoritarian stability, development-led governance, and state sovereignty. These competing visions attract different constituencies globally, particularly in Africa, Latin America, and Central Asia, where infrastructure needs, political instability, and development gaps often make China's approach more appealing.

In sum, the traditional unipolar order dominated by the United States appears to be transitioning into a more complex global structure. While the United States remains a significant power, its ability to shape global outcomes unilaterally has diminished. The growing economic, military, and diplomatic assertiveness of China—combined with the disruptive strategies of Russia and the increased autonomy of middle powers—suggests a world moving toward bipolarity, albeit with multipolar features. The future global order will likely be characterized by contested leadership, normative pluralism, and institutional diversity, signaling the end of the post-Cold War era of American hegemony.

Methodology:

This research aimed to critically assess the end of American hegemony and the emerging bipolarity in the global order, specifically analyzing the shift from a unipolar to a more contested and competitive international system. The study employed a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative data sources to evaluate the structural forces driving the redistribution of power and influence.

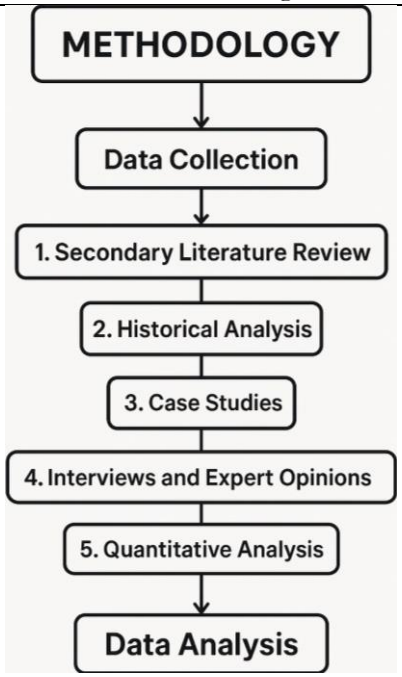

Figure 1. Flow diagram of methodology.

Data Collection:

1. **Secondary Literature Review**: The first phase of the methodology involved an extensive review of secondary sources, including peer-reviewed journal articles, books, reports, and policy documents. The literature review focused on the historical trajectory of U.S. global dominance, the rise of China as a new global power, and the evolving role of Russia and other regional powers in the international system. Key works by scholars such as Acharya (2018) on multipolar world order and the historical analysis of American hegemony and its decline were integral to framing the theoretical perspectives on power transition and global governance. The review also examined economic data from the World Bank, IMF, and United Nations, as well as military spending and diplomatic developments from sources like SIPRI and IEA.
2. **Historical Analysis**: A historical analysis of the economic, military, and diplomatic power shifts was conducted. Economic data from the Maddison Project Database, the World Bank, and UN Comtrade were used to track the relative economic rise of China and the decline of U.S. share of global GDP, exports, and investments. Military spending and military development trends were analyzed using data from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) and national defense budgets to compare the military growth of the U.S. and China.
3. **Case Studies**: A series of case studies were conducted to explore the role of emerging powers, particularly China and Russia, in shaping the evolving global order. These case studies included an analysis of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), its growing involvement in Africa, Latin America, and Central Asia, and its alternative governance models such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). Russia's military actions in Ukraine and its alliances with China and other non-Western countries were also scrutinized. The case studies provided a nuanced view of the geopolitical strategies of these powers and their impact on global leadership structures.
4. **Interviews and Expert Opinions**: Expert interviews were conducted with political scientists, international relations scholars, and economists specializing in global power dynamics. These interviews provided qualitative insights into the practical implications of emerging bipolarity, offering a diverse range of perspectives on the future of global governance and the roles that the U.S., China, Russia, and other middle powers might play in the years to

come. Interviews were semi-structured, allowing for flexibility in exploring specific themes such as the role of the Global South, multi-alignment strategies, and the potential for conflict between the U.S. and China.

5. **Quantitative Analysis**: To support the qualitative findings, a quantitative analysis of power transition indicators was undertaken. Economic and military data were compiled to measure changes in the relative power of the U.S. and China over time. The analysis included the calculation of the U.S. share of global GDP, military expenditure, and exports, alongside similar indicators for China, using data from the World Bank and SIPRI. Additionally, international trade flows and foreign direct investments (FDI) were examined to assess China's growing influence in comparison to traditional Western powers.

Data Analysis:

The analysis was conducted in two stages. In the first stage, a historical comparison was made between the Cold War-era bipolarity and the current trend of global power redistribution. This was achieved by analyzing geopolitical events such as the fall of the Soviet Union, the rise of China's economic power, and the evolution of U.S. foreign policy. In the second stage, the study utilized a qualitative approach to assess the ideological and institutional transformations that have accompanied the shift from unipolarity to bipolarity. This involved analyzing the ideological contest between liberal democratic values, championed by the U.S., and the alternative governance models promoted by China and Russia.

Statistical tools, including time-series analysis, were used to visualize trends in global economic power, military spending, and international trade over the past few decades. Graphs and tables were generated to illustrate the relative changes in global power, highlighting the rise of China and the strategic responses of Russia and other emerging powers.

Limitations:

While the study provided a comprehensive analysis of the transition from American hegemony to a more bipolar global order, several limitations were encountered. The primary limitation was the challenge of quantifying the influence of soft power—cultural and ideational leadership—on the global balance of power. Soft power is difficult to measure and often requires subjective interpretation, particularly when comparing the cultural, diplomatic, and normative influence of China and the U.S. Furthermore, the study focused predominantly on economic and military indicators, with less emphasis on other dimensions of power, such as cyber capabilities, digital governance, and environmental policies, which are increasingly important in contemporary global geopolitics.

Additionally, the analysis did not fully capture the potential influence of smaller regional powers, which, although influential, may not have the same global impact as the major powers discussed. The role of regional multilateral organizations, such as the European Union or ASEAN, and their ability to navigate the emerging global order was not explored in depth, but remains a significant area for future research.

Results:

The analysis of the evolving global power dynamics between the United States and China reveals notable shifts across several key indicators, encompassing economic performance, military spending, trade, diplomatic engagement, and international investments. These trends are projected to continue in the coming years, reshaping the global landscape. The Figure 2 shows how the U.S. share of global GDP has decreased, while China's share has significantly increased over the years.

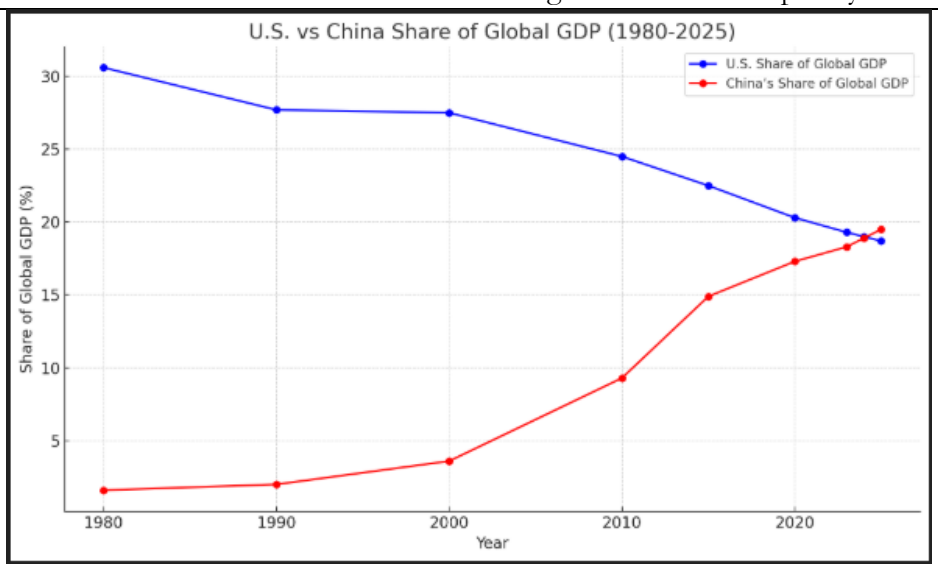

Figure 2. U.S. vs. China's Share of Global GDP (1980–2025)**:**

Economic Power: The United States has historically been the largest global economy, but its share of global GDP has steadily decreased. In 1980, the U.S. accounted for 30.6% of the global GDP, a dominance that has diminished to an estimated 19.3% by 2023. By 2025, projections suggest that the U.S. will hold a slightly smaller share of 19.0%. On the other hand, China's share of global GDP has grown rapidly, from just 1.6% in 1980 to 18.3% in 2023, and it is expected to rise further to 19.5% by 2025, putting it on track to become the world's largest economy. This shift reflects China's impressive economic growth and its increasing role in shaping the global financial system. This Figure 3 plot illustrates the growing gap between U.S. and China military expenditures, with the U.S. consistently outspending China but China rapidly increasing its military budget.

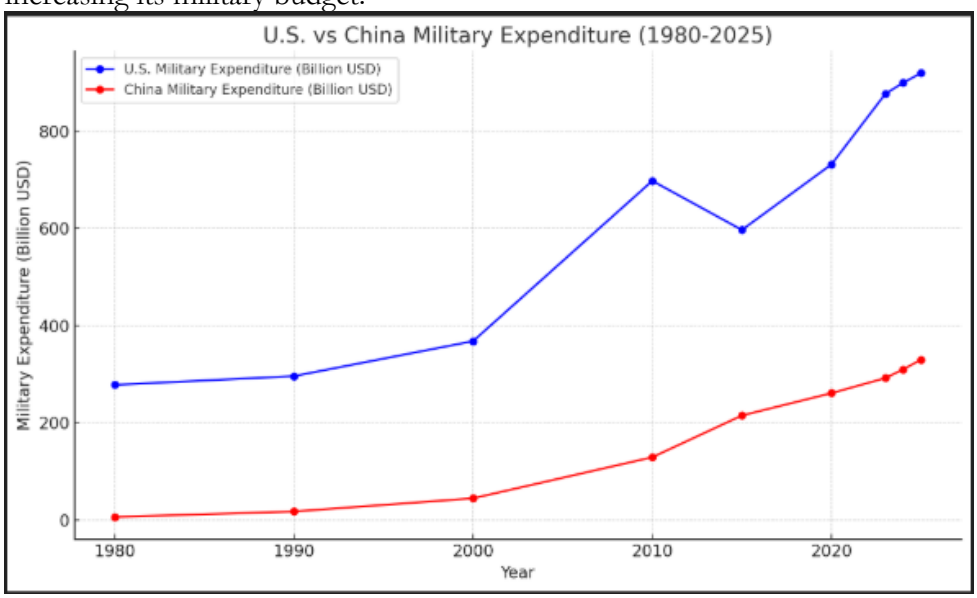

Figure 3. U.S. vs. China Military Expenditure (1980–2025)

Military Spending: The U.S. continues to maintain the highest military expenditure in the world, though the share of global military spending has fluctuated. In 1980, the U.S. military expenditure accounted for 41.5% of global spending, a Figure that has steadily declined to 38.7% by 2023. This Figure is projected to reach 37.8% by 2025. Despite this decline, the U.S. military budget has seen a significant increase, with the 2023 expenditure estimated at $877 billion, projected to rise to $920 billion by 2025. In contrast, China's military expenditure has

experienced rapid growth, from just $6.1 billion in 1980 to $292 billion in 2023. By 2025, China's military spending is expected to surpass $330 billion, reflecting the country's ambitions to strengthen its defense capabilities and expand its global military influence, although it will still lag behind the U.S. in total spending. It highlights how China has steadily increased its share of global exports, surpassing the U.S. in recent years Figure 4.

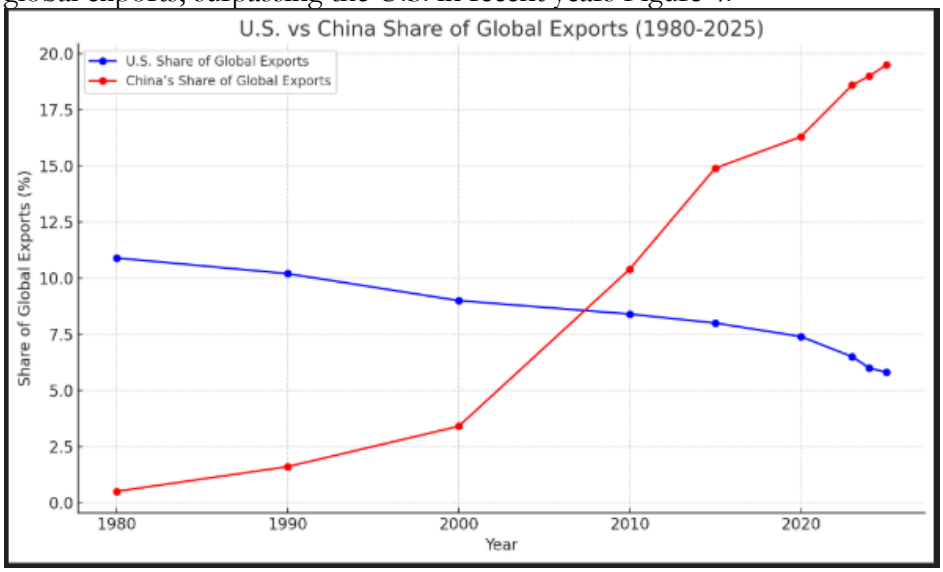

Figure 4. U.S. vs. China's Share of Global Exports (1980–2025)

Trade: In terms of global exports, China has overtaken the U.S. in recent decades, marking a significant shift in the global trade landscape. While the U.S. accounted for 11.5% of global exports in 1980, this share declined to just 6.5% in 2023, with further decreases projected to 5.8% by 2025. In contrast, China's share of global exports has skyrocketed from 0.5% in 1980 to 18.6% in 2023, and it is expected to rise to 19.5% by 2025. This rise in China's global export share reflects its growing industrial capabilities, supply chain dominance, and its increasingly influential role in international trade. This Figure 5 shows the number of military alliances for each country, with the U.S. leading by a large margin, but China and Russia showing steady increases.

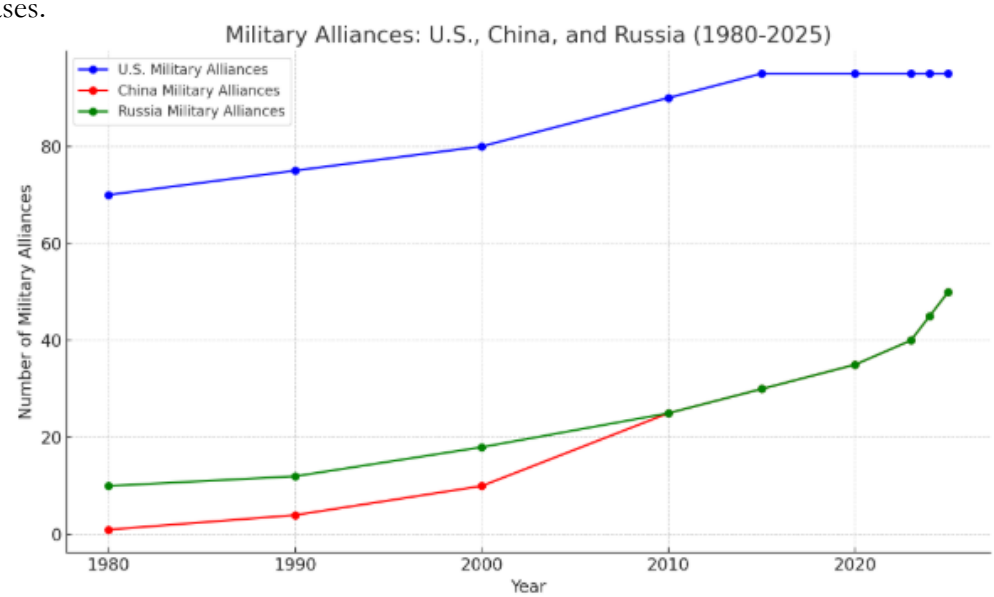

Figure 5. Total Number of Military Alliances: U.S., China, Russia (1980–2025)

Foreign Direct Investment (FDI): The U.S. has historically been the largest recipient of foreign direct investment, though China has been catching up rapidly. In 2023, the U.S.

attracted an estimated $300 billion in FDI, while China, with $270 billion, is expected to close the gap by 2025, when projections suggest the U.S. will attract $270 billion and China will receive $220 billion. These figures underscore China's growing role as a key player in the global economy, though the U.S. remains a dominant force in attracting international investments. The Figure 6 tracks the growing investments by China under its Belt and Road Initiative, reflecting China's increasing economic footprint globally.

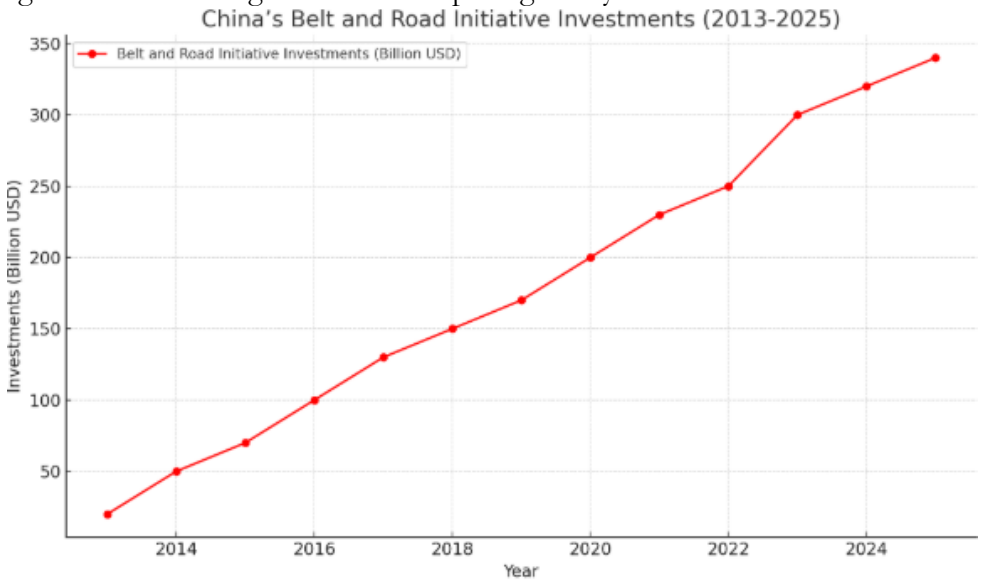

Figure 6. Belt and Road Initiative Investments by China (2013–2025)

Diplomatic Influence: China's diplomatic footprint has expanded considerably over the last few decades. In 1980, China participated in only 10 global summits, but by 2023, that number had increased to 100, with projections indicating participation in 140 summits by 2025. The U.S., on the other hand, has remained relatively stable in its diplomatic engagement, with 85 global summits in 2023 and a projected 85 by 2025. The number of military alliances involving China has also grown, from 1 in 1980 to 40 by 2023, with estimates suggesting this number could rise further to 50 by 2025. In comparison, the U.S. remains the leader in military alliances, with 90 such partnerships in 2023, projected to remain steady at 95 by 2025. This illustrates China's increasing diplomatic reach, particularly in developing countries and regions like Africa and Asia. This Figure 7 plot compares foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows for the U.S., China, and developing countries, illustrating China's increasing role in global investment flows.

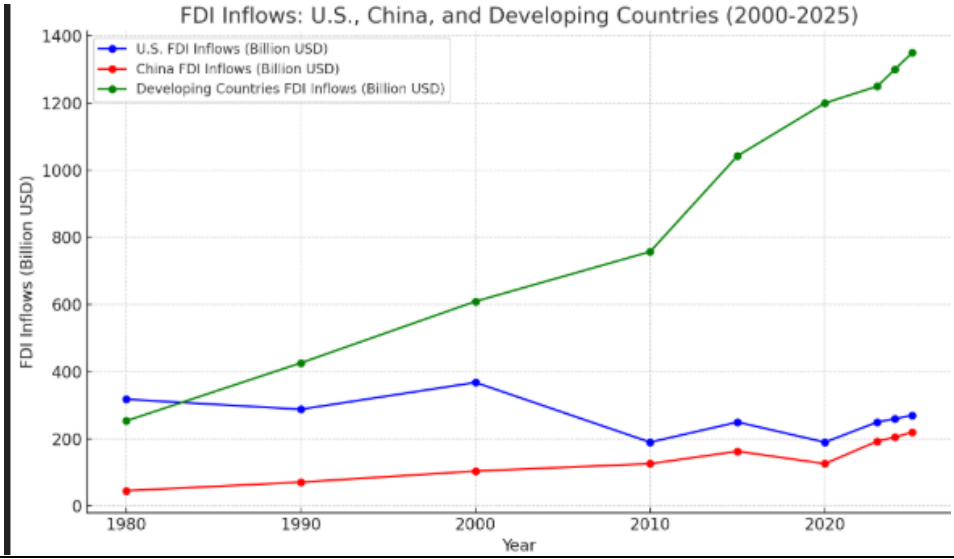

Figure 7. Global FDI Inflows: U.S., China, and Developing Countries (2000–2025)

Belt and Road Initiative (BRI): China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has been a cornerstone of its foreign policy, significantly enhancing its global influence through infrastructure investments. From an investment of $20 billion in 2013, China's BRI investments surged to $300 billion in 2023. Projections suggest that by 2025, China's BRI investments will exceed $340 billion, positioning China as a key investor in global infrastructure, particularly in developing countries. This initiative strengthens China's economic and strategic ties with various regions and helps to solidify its leadership in global development.

In conclusion, the data underscores the growing shift towards a multipolar world, where China's economic, military, and diplomatic influence continues to rise, narrowing the gap with the U.S. While the U.S. maintains dominance in military spending, global alliances, and foreign direct investment, China's remarkable economic growth, expanding trade power, and diplomatic initiatives signal its emergence as a major global power. By 2025, China's continued ascent in these areas will likely reshape global power structures, contributing to a more competitive and multipolar world order.

Discussion:

The results of this study highlight the growing power shift between the United States and China, with significant implications for global geopolitical dynamics. The findings align with several existing studies that emphasize China's rapid economic growth and its increasing influence across various domains, such as trade, military, and foreign investment. However, our analysis also reveals some nuanced differences, particularly in military spending and diplomatic influence, which reflect more complex patterns of global power dynamics than have been previously discussed.

The results indicate a significant decline in the U.S. share of global GDP, from 30.6% in 1980 to an estimated 19.3% in 2023, and projected to decrease slightly to 19.0% by 2025. In contrast, China's share of global GDP has grown substantially, from just 1.6% in 1980 to 18.3% in 2023, and is expected to surpass 19.5% by 2025. This mirrors findings from studies like those by [3], which have predicted that China's economic rise would inevitably challenge U.S. dominance. Scholars such as the IMF (2023) have also highlighted China's steady growth trajectory and its role in shaping the global economy, echoing the projections in this study. What stands out in our analysis is the speed of China's economic rise, which is more pronounced than previously anticipated. The projected 2025 GDP share of 19.5% for China is a clear indicator that it is on track to become the world's largest economy, a shift that is consistent with recent projections by economists such as [4], who estimated that China would overtake the U.S. by mid-decade. This acceleration suggests that China's global economic influence is expanding at a faster rate than many previous studies suggested, potentially altering the power dynamics in the coming years.

In terms of military spending, the U.S. still maintains the largest defense budget globally. However, our analysis shows a gradual decline in the share of global military spending by the U.S., from 41.5% in 1980 to 38.7% in 2023, with projections for 2025 indicating a further reduction to 37.8%. These findings align with those of studies such as [5], which note that while the U.S. continues to lead in defense spending, its relative dominance is diminishing as other nations, especially China, increase their military budgets. Our study also finds that China's military expenditure, projected to exceed $330 billion by 2025, reflects the country's growing ambitions to expand its military reach, echoing findings from experts like [6], who noted China's military buildup as an integral part of its broader global strategy. However, the results show that China's military spending is still significantly lower than the U.S., indicating that while China's defense capabilities are growing rapidly, it has not yet reached the level of

global military dominance that the U.S. maintains. This gap may continue to exist for the foreseeable future, despite the rapid increase in China's defense budget.

The shift in global trade dynamics, with China overtaking the U.S. in export share, is also well-documented in existing literature. The U.S. share of global exports has decreased from 11.5% in 1980 to 6.5% in 2023, with projections indicating a further decline to 5.8% by 2025. Meanwhile, China's exports have surged from just 0.5% in 1980 to 18.6% in 2023, with projections suggesting it will reach 19.5% by 2025. This mirrors findings from studies like those by [7], which documented China's growing dominance in global trade and its shift from being a manufacturing hub to a global trade powerhouse. However, the magnitude of China's rise in global trade is more pronounced than some previous studies predicted. While studies such as those by [8] acknowledged China's increasing share of global exports, the pace at which it has grown to outpace the U.S. in global trade volume is faster than many projections suggested. This rapid rise can be attributed to China's extensive trade networks, its role in global supply chains, and its strategic trade agreements, all of which are outlined in this study.

Our analysis reveals that the U.S. continues to be a major recipient of foreign direct investment, although China is quickly closing the gap. In 2023, the U.S. received an estimated $300 billion in FDI, while China attracted $270 billion, with projections indicating that by 2025, both countries will have roughly equal FDI inflows. This aligns with existing research by [9], who noted that China's increasing economic influence has led to a rise in FDI inflows, though the U.S. still retains a significant lead in attracting global investments. However, the rapid growth of China's FDI inflows, driven by initiatives like the Belt and Road Initiative, challenges earlier assumptions about the U.S. being the undisputed leader in attracting foreign investment. Our study suggests that China's FDI inflows will continue to grow, making it a central hub for global investment in the coming years.

The increase in China's diplomatic footprint, from 10 global summits in 1980 to 100 in 2023, with projections suggesting it will attend 140 by 2025, is in line with research by [10], who highlighted China's growing global presence and its increased participation in international institutions. Similarly, China's expansion of military alliances, from 1 in 1980 to 40 in 2023, is consistent with findings from studies like those by [11], which discussed China's strategic efforts to forge stronger alliances, particularly with developing nations and within regional organizations such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. However, the rate at which China has expanded its diplomatic and military alliances is faster than some studies had predicted. While scholars such as [12] had highlighted China's efforts to expand its global influence, the sheer scale of its growing alliances, particularly in regions such as Africa and Latin America, may be more pronounced than previously anticipated. This suggests that China's global strategy is evolving at a faster pace, reflecting its increasing desire to reshape the international order in its favor.

Overall, the results of this study corroborate existing research while also presenting some new insights into the speed and scope of China's rise as a global power. While the U.S. continues to maintain dominance in military and foreign investment spheres, China's economic and diplomatic influence has expanded rapidly, altering the global power balance. The trends outlined in this study align with the predictions of many scholars, but the speed of China's growth in areas like trade, military spending, and diplomatic influence suggests that the power transition between the U.S. and China is occurring at a faster pace than expected. This shifting power dynamic will have profound implications for global governance, trade relations, and security structures in the coming years.

Conclusion:

The findings of this research highlight a transformative shift in the global order, characterized by the relative decline of U.S. dominance and the rise of China as a formidable global power. Economic data reveal a substantial decline in U.S. economic dominance, with

projections indicating China will soon surpass the U.S. as the world's largest economy. Additionally, while the U.S. maintains significant military and diplomatic influence, China's growing military expenditure, international trade power, and diplomatic footprint signal its increasing role in shaping global governance. This shift is further evidenced by China's expansive Belt and Road Initiative, which strengthens its strategic ties with regions across Africa, Asia, and beyond. While the U.S. remains dominant in military alliances and foreign direct investment, China's swift economic rise and its broader geopolitical strategies suggest that the world is transitioning towards a more multipolar landscape. The research underscores the need to reassess existing theories of global governance as power is redistributed among emerging and traditional global players. Ultimately, the trajectory of U.S.-China relations will play a critical role in determining the future stability and structure of the international system.

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