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## **Locating the US, Russia and China in the Great Power Competition of West Asia and North Africa**

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**LOCATING THE USA, RUSSIA AND  
CHINA IN THE GREAT POWER  
COMPETITION OF WEST ASIA AND  
NORTH AFRICA**



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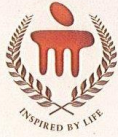
**LOCATING THE USA, RUSSIA AND  
CHINA IN THE GREAT POWER  
COMPETITION OF WEST ASIA AND  
NORTH AFRICA**

**A Dissertation Submitted to the Department of Geopolitics and  
International Relations in Partial Fulfilment for Master's Degree  
in Geopolitics and International Relations**

**Supervisor**  
**DR. NANDA KISHOR**

**By**  
**ARUSHI SINGH**

**June 2021**



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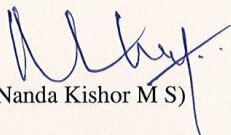
## DECLARATION

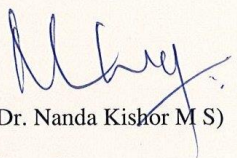
I declare that the dissertation entitled “**Locating the USA, Russia and China in The Great Power Competition of West Asia and North Africa**” submitted by me for the award of the degree of Master of Arts in Geopolitics and International Relations of Manipal Academy of Higher Education is my own work. The dissertation has not been submitted for any other degree of this University or any other University.

*Arushi Singh*  
(Arushi Singh)

## CERTIFICATE

I recommend that this dissertation be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

  
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## ABBREVIATIONS

A2AD	Anti-Area Access Denial
ABM	Anti-Ballistic Missile
AKP	Justice and Development Party
AQAP	Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula
BRI	Belt and Road initiative
BYD Co. Ltd.	"Build Your Dreams" Company Limited
CCP	Communist Party of China
CMC	Central Military Commission
CNNC	National Nuclear Corporation
CSL	Cooperative Security Locations
CZEC	China Zhongyuan Engineering Corporation
ETS	Escort Task Force
FOS	Forward Operation Sites
GCC	Gulf Co-operation Council
GERD	Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam
GNA	Government of National Accord
GNEP	Global Nuclear Energy Partnership
GRU	Main Intelligence Directorate
HADR	Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief
INSTEX	Instrument in Support of Trade Exchanges
IR	International relations
IRGC	Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps
IS	Islamic State
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant
JCPOA	Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action
LNA	Libyan National Army
MAP	Morocco's News Agency
MiG-29	Mikoyan
MOOTW	Military operations other than war
MPS	Ministry of Public Security
MSS	Ministry of State Security
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NPT	Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons
PIJ	Saudi Public Investment Fund
PJAK	Kurdistan Free Life Party
PKK	Kurdistan Workers' Party
PLA	People's Liberation Army
PMC	Private military companies
PSC	Private Security Contractors
RDIF	Russian Direct Investment Fund
RSCs	Regional Security Complexes
RT	Russia Today

SCO	Shanghai Cooperation Organization
SCZ	Suez Canal Economic Zone
SKD	Semi-Knocked-Down
SOEs	State-Owned Enterprises
STC	Southern Transitional Council
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UK	United Kingdom
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
US	United States of America
USARICOM	United States Africa Command
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WAM	Emirates News Agency
WANA	West Asia and North Africa
WWII	World War II
YPG	People's Protection Units

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## **ABSTRACT**

The dissertation on the theme “Locating the USA, Russia and China in the Great Power Competition of West Asia and North Africa” has made a modest endeavour to delve into and examine the rapidly advancing great power competition in the West Asia and North Africa region. Traditionally, the region has drawn great powers due to its various attributes including its natural resources, strategic location and regional geoeconomic opportunities. Great powers are also significantly impacted by the regional dynamics which has a considerable bearing on great power competition and the geopolitics of the region. The convergence of advances by state and nonstate actors alike are slated to affect the security and geoeconomic consideration of great power interests globally. Particularly, as regional allies of great power focus on self-preservation rather than solely on the pre-emption of threats to their great power allies. Therefore, great powers nurture and foster partnerships with supportive states in their quest of acquiring and exercising power for the achievement of their sprawling interests.

Contemporaneously, the US has been prone to focus on a recalibration of its interests in the region while Russia and China are lasered in on gaining more ground and influence in the region. Russia has emerged as a power broker while China transitions from geoeconomics as a sole focal point of its strategy in the region to security concerns as part of its strategic imperatives in the WANA region. China has also cultivated its perceptions as a national sovereignty-accepting power which has led to opening of vast avenues by regional countries providing Beijing with greater access as well as resources that amplify its influence to the strategic detriment of the US.

Furthermore, security cooperation agreements, scaling of naval presence in regional ports, arms and technology transfers along with defence and financial aid have been utilised to bolster regional partnerships by great powers across the region. Russia under President Putin has been known to develop partnerships with all key players including with regional rivals. Moreover, the ambivalence of the US regarding its regional assurances has afforded Beijing to attain information power with its signature One Belt One Road Initiative.

However, the approach of both Russia and China in the great power competition in West Asia and North Africa differs greatly. The dissertation strives to infer this variation in approach wherein Russia posture indicates a direct and immediate confrontation while ramifications of

China's approach are evinced subtly and gradually. Russia has showcased his approach through its ability to militarily intervene in Syria which has been then employed as springboard for power projection across the region and to utilise private military contracts in Libya. China has meanwhile been focused on enhancing its economic and diplomatic heft while boosting its credibility as a mediator in conflicts in West Asia and North Africa. Both Russia and China have further vetoed UN Security Council resolutions and continue to find convergences which are charted to undermine US regional interests.

Nevertheless, the sustenance of Chinese advancement in the region is contingent on regional stability while Russia has been actively involved in actions which have given credence to the assertions that Moscow has contributed to instability in region. This instability has been detrimental to both US allies and China. However, the US retains multiple advantages in comparison to its competitors in the region including long standing defence partnerships and military bases. The US has not kept pace with the opportunities which has been presented in the region while Russia, China and various violent non-state actors have seized these openings to advance their agendas and priorities.

The great power competition in the region is observed and posited to be singularly consequent for the geostrategic, geopolitical, geoeconomic and military aspirations of great powers globally. The era of a reluctant US, a rising China and a resurgent Russia has resulted in an intensifying great power competition in the region. Thus, it makes it very imperative to understand the great power competition and dynamics between the great powers in the region. The dissertation also ventures to dissect through scenario building, various variables of the great power competition which are slated to permeate and propel patterns of realignment in the region as rivalry between the great power escalates.

This research has made an attempt to explore the relevance of international relations theory and concepts from geopolitics; to understand the nuances of the current regional geopolitics of West Asia and North Africa; to analyse the drivers for great power intervention in West Asia and North Africa; to evaluate the contemporary great power competition among the US, Russia and China in West Asia and North Africa; and to assess the probable outcomes of great power competition in the region through scenario building.

