

The Role of the United States, Russia, China, and the European Union in Regional Policies and Their Impact on Stability and Security

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The geopolitical transformations of the past two decades, particularly following the relative decline of United States hegemony, have intensified competition among four major actors—the United States, Russia, China, and the European Union—for influence in strategic regions such as Central Asia and the Middle East. This competition has significantly affected patterns of regional stability and security and can be analyzed through the lenses of balance of power, soft balancing, and multi-level agency. The objective of this study is to explain the roles and strategies of these powers in regional policies and to analyze their implications for stability and security. The research employs a qualitative approach and a documentary analysis method, based on a systematic review of selected scholarly and research sources. The findings indicate that the United States relies on security alliances and military presence; Russia utilizes geopolitical and energy-centered instruments; China advances its influence through the Belt and Road Initiative and soft-balancing strategies; and the European Union pursues a policy of “smart containment” and conditional cooperation. Each actor seeks to consolidate or expand its sphere of influence. While the interactions and rivalries among these four actors create certain opportunities for multilateral cooperation, they more frequently intensify competition, generate short-term instability, and complicate regional security dynamics. The study concludes that sustainable regional stability and security require the effective management of great-power conflicts of interest through multilateral mechanisms and the strengthening of the role of indigenous regional actors.

Keywords: Balance of Power; Geopolitical Competition; United States; Russia; China; European Union; Regional Stability and Security.

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1. Introduction

Over the past two decades, the international system has been transitioning from an almost unipolar order centered on the United States toward a multipolar structure in which four major actors—the United States, Russia, China, and the European Union—are increasingly competing for influence in strategic regions (Batyuka &

Morozova, 2022; Gholkhanbaz et al., 2024). Such regions, particularly Central Asia and the Middle East, have consistently been at the center of great-power attention due to their geopolitical and geoeconomic position, energy resources, transit corridors, and security significance. The approaches and instruments employed by these powers, ranging from coalition-building policies and military presence to economic initiatives such as the



“Belt and Road,” directly and indirectly affect the structures of regional stability and security (Rahmani & Miri, 2015; Salehi & Mohammadinasad, 2025).

With the relative decline of United States hegemony after the first decade of the new millennium and the significant rise of Chinese and Russian influence, along with the European Union’s attempt to play a more active role, the geometry of global and regional power has undergone fundamental changes. The central question of this study is: What are the characteristics of the strategies adopted by these four powers in regional policies, and how do these strategies affect stability and security in the target regions? (O’Sullivan, 2016; Wasser & Shatz, 2022). The main assumption is that although opportunities for multilateral cooperation exist, geopolitical and geoeconomic competition among these actors has more often led to intensified instability, increased security dilemmas, and greater complexity in power equations (Gholkhanbaz et al., 2024; Rahmani & Miri, 2015).

This study aims to conduct a comparative analysis of the roles and strategies of the four actors and to diagnose their consequences for regional security by employing a qualitative approach and a documentary analysis method. The geographical focus is on Central Asia and the Middle East, which in recent decades have been arenas of intersecting interests and serious competition among these powers (Azizbek, 2024; Erfani, 2024). From a temporal perspective, the study covers the period from 2010 to 2025, a period marked by the intensification of China–United States competition, Russia’s active return to the Middle East and Eurasia, and the European Union’s efforts to pursue smart containment and engagement in these regions (Batyuka & Morozova, 2022; Zarghami et al., 2024).

Accordingly, a comprehensive examination of the policies, instruments, and interactions of these four powers can provide a more accurate picture of security dynamics in sensitive regions of the world and offer a scientific basis for proposing mechanisms to enhance cooperation and reduce tensions at regional and transregional levels.

2. Literature Review and Research Background: Relevant Theories in International Relations

The study of the role of major actors in regional policies and their impact on stability and security requires

reliance on robust theoretical frameworks in international relations. Classical realism, as one of the oldest approaches, views international politics as an arena of permanent competition among states for power. Hans Morgenthau argues that the logic of state behavior is shaped by national interests and the necessity of survival, and the Middle East represents a clear example of this logic, where the United States, Russia, China, and the European Union each seek to enhance their power (Morgenthau, 1948).

Neorealism, or structural realism, particularly in Waltz’s analysis, shifts the focus from the nature of leaders to the structure of the international system. From this perspective, the distribution of power in an anarchic system is the main factor shaping states’ policies (Waltz, 1979). The competition between the United States and China for influence in the Middle East and Central Asia, as well as Russia’s return to regional equations, can be explained within the framework of balance of power and hegemonic transition (Batyuka & Morozova, 2022; Rahmani & Miri, 2015).

Constructivism adds another dimension to the analysis by emphasizing the role of identity, values, and social perceptions (Wendt, 1992). For example, the European Union competes with China in Central Asia not only for security reasons but also because of its value-based discourse on human rights and governance (Salehi & Mohammadinasad, 2024). This approach shows that foreign policy is not merely the product of structural pressure, but is also affected by the interaction of identities and mutual perceptions.

From the perspective of John Mearsheimer’s offensive realism, great powers have an inherent tendency to acquire maximum power and prevent the hegemony of their rivals (Mearsheimer, 2001). The findings of Gholkhanbaz and Wasser and Shatz also show that the intensification of China–United States competition has aggravated the security dilemma in the Middle East and strengthened multilayered coalition-building (Gholkhanbaz et al., 2024; Wasser & Shatz, 2022).

Alongside these theories, some studies refer to soft balancing, which emphasizes nonmilitary instruments such as diplomacy, economics, and institution-building to counter hegemony (Paul, 2004). The analyses of Rahmani and Miri and Erfani show that Russia and China have used these instruments against United States

pressure in order to expand their regional influence (Erfani, 2024; Rahmani & Miri, 2015).

The literature review indicates that the interaction of the four main actors—the United States, Russia, China, and the European Union—can only be understood through a combination of these approaches: on the one hand, the structural pressures of the international system and the requirements of balance of power, as emphasized by realism and neorealism; and on the other hand, the role of identities, values, and cultural perceptions, as emphasized by constructivism. This theoretical synthesis provides an appropriate framework for understanding the dynamics of regional security and stability.

2.1. Previous Studies on the Role of Each of These Powers

Numerous studies have examined the role of the United States in regional policies. Batyuka and Morozova show that the United States strategy in the Middle East has shifted from “active intervention” to “limited presence,” while it has continued to seek the containment of Russia and China (Batyuka & Morozova, 2022). Regarding Russia, Erfani and Gholkhanbaz emphasize the active return of this country to the Middle East and Central Asia following the decline of United States influence, particularly through the use of military and diplomatic instruments (Erfani, 2024; Gholkhanbaz et al., 2024). China, according to the findings of Rahmani and Miri, has been able to become a major investor in many regional countries by focusing on soft balancing and the “Belt and Road” project (Rahmani & Miri, 2015). According to Salehi’s analysis, the European Union has adopted a policy of “smart containment” to counter China’s influence while simultaneously acting in coordination with the United States (Salehi & Mohammadinab, 2025). Studies such as Wasser and Shatz analyze these four powers within the framework of “great-power

competition” and emphasize the overlap and conflict of their interests (Wasser & Shatz, 2022). However, most of these studies have examined only one or two actors separately and have paid less attention to the multilateral interaction and simultaneous reciprocal effects of these four powers on regional stability and security.

2.2. Research Gap

The literature review shows that most existing studies have been conducted from a single-actor or two-actor perspective, while the interaction of the four major powers—the United States, Russia, China, and the European Union—has rarely been examined within an integrated model. Studies such as Rahmani and Miri have focused on the soft deterrence of Russia and China against the United States, whereas studies such as Salehi have mainly analyzed the role of the European Union in relation to China, rather than in interaction with all actors (Rahmani & Miri, 2015; Salehi & Mohammadinab, 2024). In addition, a significant part of the existing literature has analyzed regional security and stability either solely from the perspective of hard geopolitics, meaning military power, or only from an economic perspective (Batyuka & Morozova, 2022; Wasser & Shatz, 2022); however, this article examines both the hard and soft dimensions of power in an integrated manner. Moreover, previous area studies have often addressed a limited time span and have paid less attention to the changing dynamics of international politics after key developments such as the war in Ukraine or the Abraham Accords. The present study fills this gap by analyzing the four actors simultaneously in the contemporary period and by combining the theoretical approaches of realism, neorealism, and constructivism.

Table 1

Summary of Previous Studies on the Strategies of the United States, Russia, China, and the European Union in Regional Policies and Their Effects on Stability and Security.

Source	Main Finding	Theoretical Approach	Geographical Scope / Actors	Study Topic
(Batyuka & Morozova, 2022)	Gradual reduction of United States presence and strengthening of Russian and Chinese influence	Realism; balance of power	Middle East / United States, Russia, China	Policies and strategies of the United States, Russia, and China in the Middle East
(Mamedov, 2018)	Increased Chinese investment and Russian military presence alongside the decline of United States influence	Soft balancing	Middle East / Russia, China	Russia–China cooperation in the Middle East
(Manners, 2002)	Emphasis on the normative and diplomatic role of the European Union in foreign policy	Constructivism	European Union	Normative power Europe
(Salehi & Mohammadinassab, 2025)	Strategy of smart containment of China within the framework of preserving balance and supporting the United States	Offensive neorealism	Central Asia / European Union, China	The European Union's strategy toward China's influence in Central Asia
(Wasser & Shatz, 2022)	Multilayered security environment, limited interaction, and structural competition	Competitive realism	Middle East / United States, Russia, China	China, Russia, and United States competition in the Middle East
(Rebro & Suchkov, 2021)	Pivot to Asia and reduction of commitments in the Middle East	Defensive realism	Global / United States	United States foreign policy in the post-bipolar era
(Pozdnyakov, 2022)	Emphasis on economic diplomacy and infrastructure connectivity projects	Developmental soft power	Global / China	China's development-oriented influence and model in the Middle East
(Trenin, 2016)	Emphasis on Russia's return to great-power status and confrontation with the West	Realism	Global / Russia	Perceptions of Russia in world politics

3. Theoretical Framework

3.1. Selection of Theory / Analytical Model

This study analyzes the interactions of the United States, Russia, China, and the European Union in regional policies by relying on balance-of-power theory and the concept of geopolitical competition. Balance-of-power theory, which originates from the classical principles of realism and neorealism, is based on the assumption that states in an anarchic system are compelled to contain the power of potential rivals by creating equilibrium in military, economic, and political capabilities in order to survive (Waltz, 1979). Within this framework, changes in the distribution of power—such as the relative decline of United States influence in the Middle East—create new opportunities for other powers (Batyuka & Morozova, 2022).

On the other hand, the concept of geopolitical competition emphasizes the importance of geographical position and strategic resources in shaping power rivalries. This concept is clearly applicable to the Middle East and Central Asia, with their centrality in energy,

transit routes, and geostrategic significance (Wasser & Shatz, 2022). In this competition, Russia seeks to increase its share of regional power through military presence and multilateral diplomacy; China through economic strategies and the Belt and Road Initiative (Rahmani & Miri, 2015); and the European Union through smart containment and coalition-building (Salehi & Mohammadinassab, 2024).

This theoretical framework makes it possible to examine the dynamics of regional security and stability both from a material dimension, namely capabilities and hard-power balance, and from a spatial-geopolitical dimension, namely control over key regions and lines of influence. The combination of these two approaches provides a comprehensive picture of how the four main actors interact and how this interaction affects the power structure in the regional environment.

3.2. Definition of Key Concepts

3.2.1. Regional Policy

Regional policy refers to the set of actions, strategies, and decisions adopted by actors, whether states or

international organizations, within a specific geographical region with the aim of securing interests, increasing influence, and managing the balance of power in that region (Hurrell, 2007). These policies may include diplomacy, economics, security cooperation, or even military competition. Within the framework of the present topic, the regional policies of the United States, Russia, China, and the European Union in the Middle East and Central Asia are studied with a focus on influence management and stability maintenance (Batyuka & Morozova, 2022; Salehi & Mohammadinasab, 2024).

3.2.2. *Stability*

Stability refers to a condition of durability in a political or security system in which sudden or destructive changes in the structure of power or in relations among actors are minimized (Hurrell, 2007). In international relations, regional stability is usually achieved when there is a relative balance among powers and existing conflicts are managed through diplomatic or economic instruments. The decline of United States influence or the increased presence of China and Russia may transform this stability, either toward instability arising from hard competition or toward stability resulting from a new balance of power (Rahmani & Miri, 2015; Wasser & Shatz, 2022).

3.2.3. *Security*

In its simplest definition, security means the absence of threats to the physical survival, territorial integrity, and vital interests of an actor (Buzan, 1991). At the regional level, security goes beyond the military dimension and also includes economic, political, energy, and even environmental dimensions. Regional security in the Middle East and Central Asia is strongly affected by great-power competition; for example, Russia's military presence in Syria or China's investments in the Belt and Road Initiative can redefine security equations (Batyuka & Morozova, 2022).

3.2.4. *Power Influence*

Influence refers to the ability of an actor to shape the preferences, decisions, or behavior of other actors without direct recourse to force (Nye, 2004). This influence may be hard power, through military instruments and coercive economic tools, or soft power, through culture, ideology, and public diplomacy. Studies have shown that Russia and China have used a combination of hard and soft influence to expand their presence in key regions in response to United States pressures (Rahmani & Miri, 2015; Salehi & Mohammadinasab, 2024). The European Union, although it possesses limited military power compared with the other actors, exercises its influence through value-based policies and institutional instruments.

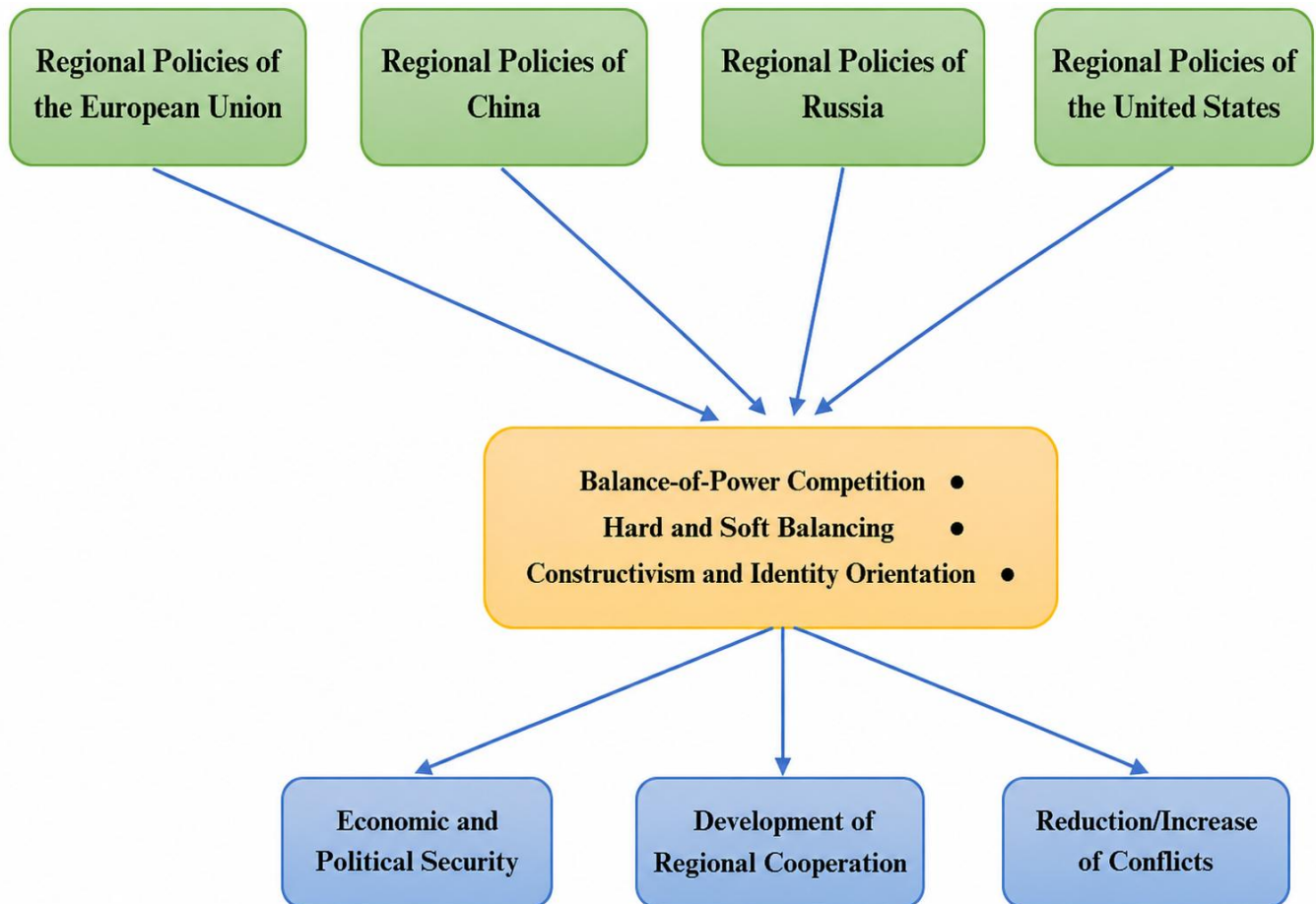
The combination of these concepts constitutes the analytical framework of the article and enables a more precise examination of the interaction of the four main powers in shaping regional policies and influencing stability and security.

3.3. *Conceptual Model*

The present conceptual model shows the overall structure of the relationships between the regional policies of the four main powers—the United States, Russia, China, and the European Union—and their impact on regional stability and security. In this model, the regional policies of each actor are regarded as independent variables that affect the dependent variable of “regional stability and security” through the mediating variable of “geopolitical interactions and competition,” which includes dimensions such as balance of power, hard and soft balancing, and constructivism. The relationships are illustrated through directional arrows in order to clarify the pathway of influence from policymaking to security and stability outcomes. This model simultaneously employs a combination of offensive realism, soft balancing, and constructivism, thereby enabling a multidimensional analysis of regional developments.

Figure 1

Conceptual Model of the Study: The Role of the United States, Russia, China, and the European Union in Regional Policies and Their Impact on Stability and Security



4. Research Methodology

This study employs a mixed-method approach in order to comprehensively examine the complex dimensions of relations among the United States, Russia, China, and the European Union in regional policies and their impact on regional stability and security. The qualitative section of the study relies on documentary analysis and a narrative literature review to identify and classify theoretical frameworks, including offensive realism, soft balancing, and constructivism, as well as the behavioral patterns of the main actors. In the quantitative section, statistical data and indicators of regional security and stability are used to measure and compare the impact of each power. The integration of these two sections strengthens the theoretical validity of the findings and provides empirical evidence for testing the hypothesis. The mixed-method approach makes it possible for both the

qualitative dynamics of power relations and the quantitative patterns of security changes to be reflected in the final model. Thus, the research methodology not only explains the causal relationships among variables but also paves the way for multidimensional and measurable analysis of the findings.

4.1. Data Collection Method

To collect the data for this study, official documents were used, including foreign policy statements, national security strategy documents, and international agreements related to the four major powers—the United States, Russia, China, and the European Union. In addition, analytical reports by research organizations and think tanks in the fields of international relations and regional security were used as secondary data sources. Another part of the data was extracted through qualitative content analysis of credible news from

international and regional media in order to identify trends, positions, and practical responses of actors to key events. Furthermore, to complete the data and obtain deeper insights, semi-structured interviews were conducted with experts in international relations, political researchers, and former diplomats. The simultaneous use of these sources makes it possible to cross-validate the findings through triangulation. This multi-source approach enables a comparative assessment of official, analytical, and narrative data and ensures the comprehensiveness of the study.

4.2. Data Analysis Method

The analytical method of this study is based on a combination of comparative analysis, discourse analysis, and historical trend analysis. In the first step, comparative analysis was conducted to compare the policies, strategies, and behaviors of the four major powers—the United States, Russia, China, and the European Union—in various security and geopolitical domains. Then, by using discourse analysis, official texts, statements, speeches, and news coverage related to these actors were examined in order to identify semantic frameworks, key concepts, and linguistic representations. Subsequently, historical trend analysis was conducted to trace gradual changes in patterns of policymaking and power interactions over the past two decades, so that turning points, periods of change, and strategic continuities could be identified. The integration of these three methods provides a more comprehensive explanation of the connection between theoretical developments, field events, and the language of politics, and helps enhance the validity of interpretations and research inferences.

4.3. Period Under Study, for Example from 2010 to 2025

The period of this study was selected as 2010 to 2025 in order to make it possible to comprehensively examine the course of major developments in relations among the United States, Russia, China, and the European Union and their impact on regional policies, stability, and security. The beginning of this period, 2010, coincided with the intensification of the United States “pivot to Asia” during the Obama administration and the emergence of the first signs of soft balancing against China. At the same time, following the 2008 Georgia war, Russia strengthened its

active return to the geopolitical arena, while the European Union expanded its eastern policies. From 2011 to 2014, developments in the Middle East, including the Arab Spring, the Syrian crisis, and Russia’s annexation of Crimea, redefined the structure of power competition. The years 2015 to 2017 witnessed the Iran nuclear agreement, the increase of Russia’s military presence in Syria, and the growth of China’s influence through the Belt and Road Initiative. The period from 2018 to 2020, concurrent with the reduction of United States commitments in the Middle East and the intensification of the United States–China trade war, caused major changes in regional alliances and rivalries. Finally, the period from 2021 to 2025, with the consequences of the United States withdrawal from Afghanistan, the war in Ukraine, the deepening of Russia–China cooperation, and new responses by the European Union and NATO, represents a turning point in the redrawing of the balance of power. The selection of this temporal scope makes it possible to continuously analyze structural developments, crisis events, and changes in security discourses, thereby providing an appropriate basis for testing the research hypotheses.

5. Findings and Analysis

5.1. The United States: Objectives, Instruments, Sphere of Influence, and Impact on Regional Security

During the period from 2010 to 2025, the United States sought to preserve geopolitical superiority in key regions of the Middle East and Eurasia, and its objectives mainly included ensuring energy security, supporting traditional allies, limiting the influence of Russia and China, and countering terrorist threats (Batyuka & Morozova, 2022). The main instruments of the United States included direct military presence, arms sales, security coalition-building, and the use of economic sanctions alongside multilateral diplomatic tools (Wasser & Shatz, 2022). The traditional sphere of United States influence mainly includes the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council, Israel, and NATO partners on the Mediterranean periphery. However, the reduction of military presence in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Syria after 2014 altered the regional balance (Mounk, 2021). The effect of these policies on regional security has been dual: on the one hand, they strengthened deterrence against hostile actors; on the other hand, because of extensive

military interventions, they created security instability and power vacuums that paved the way for the increased influence of rivals. The consequences of the rapid withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2021 constitute a clear example of the vulnerability of the United States' image and the credibility of its alliances (Shear et al., 2021). Overall, the United States has attempted to maintain its influence by recalibrating its strategy and focusing on great-power competition, but signs of declining hegemony are clearly observable (Rebro & Suchkov, 2021).

5.2. *Russia: Strategies, Interventions, and Alliances*

During this period, Russia actively expanded its geopolitical presence in regions such as Syria, the Caucasus, and Central Asia with the aim of restoring its position as a great power and securing its surrounding environment (Trenin, 2016). Its military intervention in Syria in 2015 is considered the most important turning point in this strategy, as it both preserved the allied regime in Damascus and enhanced Russia's position as a mediator in the crisis (Mardasov & Semenov, 2021). The instruments employed have included a combination of hard power, such as military presence and the sale of advanced weapons, and soft power, such as mediation and media narrative-building. At the level of alliances, Moscow's cooperation with Iran and Türkiye within the Astana format, close relations with China at the strategic level, and engagement with the Gulf Cooperation Council countries to balance against the West are noteworthy (Mamedov, 2018). In addition to consolidating Russia's position, these policies have shifted security equations to the disadvantage of the United States. However, Western sanctions after the 2022 Ukraine crisis have created limitations on Moscow's economic and diplomatic capacity, which may affect the sustainability of its role in the long term.

5.3. *China: Economic Initiatives and Soft and Hard Influence*

During this period, China steadily increased its presence in the Middle East and Central Asia through the massive Belt and Road project as an instrument of economic and geopolitical influence (Pozdnyakov, 2022). Investment in key infrastructure, from ports in Pakistan to railway lines in Central Asia, has pursued a dual objective:

ensuring energy security and expanding commercial-political influence (Mamedov, 2018). In the dimension of soft power, Beijing has promoted its image as a development-oriented partner by granting low-interest loans, assisting technological development, and strengthening cultural and educational exchanges. In the dimension of hard power, China has initiated limited defense cooperation with countries such as Iran and Saudi Arabia, although its main focus has remained economic (Pozdnyakov, 2022). This combination of soft and hard power has enabled China to establish sustainable influence in the vacuum created by the reduced focus of the United States. Western critics, however, have warned that this influence could challenge the liberal international order in the long term (Wasser & Shatz, 2022).

5.4. *The European Union: Diplomacy, Development Assistance, and Sanctions Policy*

During this period, the European Union adopted a predominantly diplomatic and economic approach toward regional developments, with its main objectives including maintaining stability, managing migration, ensuring energy security, and exerting pressure on violators of international law (Salehi & Mohammadasab, 2025). The diplomacy of the European Union has included mediation in the Iran nuclear negotiations, participation in the Libya talks, and support for multilateral frameworks. In the field of development assistance, the European Union has attempted to strengthen its economic and political ties by funding governance, education, and infrastructure projects (Manners, 2002; Salehi & Mohammadasab, 2025). Another important instrument of the European Union has been its sanctions policy, which has been used to contain Russia's behavior after 2014 and to pressure regimes identified as violators of human rights. Although the absence of hard power comparable to that of the United States or Russia has limited the European Union's strategic influence, its intelligent use of normative power has enabled it to remain a durable actor in the regional security structure (Manners, 2002).

6. Discussion and Interpretation

A comparison of the approaches of the four main actors—the United States, Russia, China, and the

European Union—shows that each of them uses a different combination of hard and soft power to advance its objectives in the key regions of the Middle East and Central Asia (Batyuka & Morozova, 2022; Salehi & Mohammadasab, 2025). The United States focuses on maintaining military superiority, security coalition-building, and the management of immediate threats, but in recent years it has shown a tendency to reduce direct interventions and concentrate on great-power competition (Rebro & Suchkov, 2021). In contrast, Russia has used decisive military interventions and historical-cultural ties to rebuild its sphere of influence and consolidate its position as a decisive actor (Mamedov, 2018). China has chosen the path of economic influence and infrastructure connectivity, accompanied by cultural soft power and development assistance, while the European Union plays the role of a “normative power” and uses instruments such as diplomacy, development assistance, and sanctions (Manners, 2002).

The reflection of these policies on regional stability and security is complex and dual. On the one hand, the presence of great powers can create a balance of power and prevent the formation of a regional hegemony, which has to some extent helped deter major conflicts (Wasser & Shatz, 2022). On the other hand, strategic competition and clashes of interest, particularly between the United States and Russia and between the United States and China, have intensified the security dilemma and mutual distrust among actors (Mounk, 2021). The sanctions policy of the European Union or the maximum pressure policy of the United States may restrict the behavior of some countries, but at the same time it may increase their motivation to move closer to Moscow or Beijing (Salehi & Mohammadasab, 2025). China’s economic presence, despite creating development opportunities, has raised concerns about debt dependence and changes in political balances (Pozdnyakov, 2022).

An examination of interaction or competition among these four actors indicates that behavioral patterns are predominantly competitive, although limited interaction has emerged in some cases. Issue-specific cooperation between the United States and the European Union on the Iranian nuclear issue or joint measures against the illegal transfer of weapons are examples of temporary convergence. By contrast, the Russia–China axis has

created deeper strategic cooperation aimed at limiting Western influence at both global and regional levels (Trenin, 2016). The trilateral competition among the United States, Russia, and China in Syria and Central Asia, together with the balancing role of the European Union, has led to the formation of a multilayered security environment in which local actors also gain greater room for maneuver. This multi-actor dynamic, while increasing the flexibility of regional order, also creates greater vulnerability to sudden crises.

Overall, although constructive interaction may lead to relative stability, the current weight of competition and mistrust among these powers has kept regional security fragile and has produced a condition of “permanent crisis management” rather than a stable order (Wasser & Shatz, 2022). In the future, the combination of competitive pressure and the necessities of cooperation in areas such as energy security and the management of transnational threats will determine the trajectory of relations among these four actors.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The analysis of the policies of the United States, Russia, China, and the European Union toward the Middle East and Central Asia showed that their strategic differences are rooted in different combinations of hard power, soft power, and geopolitical objectives (Batyuka & Morozova, 2022; Manners, 2002). The United States, by focusing on deterrence and coalition-building, has moved toward reducing direct interventions and concentrating on great-power competition, although signs of its relative hegemonic decline are evident (Rebro & Suchkov, 2021). Russia has reconstructed its position through military intervention and the creation of regional alliances, while China has placed economic-infrastructure influence at the center of its policy through the Belt and Road Initiative (Mamedov, 2018; Pozdnyakov, 2022). The European Union, with its norm-oriented approach and focus on diplomacy and sanctions, has attempted to play the role of mediator and balancer (Salehi & Mohammadasab, 2025).

The findings show that the effects of the presence of these powers on regional stability and security are dual: on the one hand, it can create a relative balance and prevent the emergence of a unipolar hegemony; on the other hand, competition and mistrust among them have intensified the security dilemma and increased the fragility of regional order (Wasser & Shatz, 2022). In

such an environment, issue-specific and tactical interaction among actors, such as limited cooperation on energy issues or counterterrorism, has not yet been able to lead to the formation of a stable multilateral mechanism.

Recommendations for policymakers:

1. Enhance multilateral security dialogue channels among powers to manage immediate crises.
2. Focus on areas of common interest, such as energy security, combating transnational crimes, and climate change.
3. Use the capacity of regional and transregional organizations to establish durable cooperation regimes.

Recommendations for researchers:

1. Conduct comparative studies on multipower interactions in other crisis-prone regions in order to extract generalizable patterns.
2. Examine the role of middle powers and local actors in balancing among great powers.

Recommendations for futures studies:

1. Simulate scenarios of balance-of-power change based on economic and technological developments.
2. Assess the long-term effects of infrastructure projects and foreign investment on the stability and sovereignty of countries.

Authors' Contributions

Authors contributed equally to this article.

Declaration

In order to correct and improve the academic writing of our paper, we have used the language model ChatGPT.

Transparency Statement

Data are available for research purposes upon reasonable request to the corresponding author.

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Declaration of Interest

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Ethical Considerations

In this research, ethical standards including obtaining informed consent, ensuring privacy and confidentiality were observed.

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