

## The Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy: ASEAN's Perspective as a Tug of War, the United States and China

RORTHA CHUM

The Techo Sen School of Government and International Relations  
The University of Cambodia, Phnom Penh, Cambodia

### Abstract

*The Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) strategy has emerged as the newest terms of the world's politics. As the whole world has much calculation over the strategic competition between the United States (US) and China and has significant impact the Asia Pacific, Indian Ocean and ASEAN's states. It is revealed that maritime interconnected has required to extending Asian regionalism westwards to include countries on the Indian Ocean rim. It also competes with the longstanding Asia-Pacific Policy and four major governments included Australia, India, Japan and the US, have adopted it into their foreign policies to counter balance with China. It has countless and hot debates on the Indo-Pacific concepts which focuses on how does it institutionally rebalance Asian regionalism through the incorporation of Indian Ocean states are weighted to China as Asia's supper power. The Indo-Pacific concept has been articulated in recent times as though it is a response to the rise of China and its assertive diplomacy, particularly over the South China Sea disputes and the Belt and Road Initiative and Marine time Silk Road. For ASEAN, the grouping fears a weakening of the glue of neutrality that holds it together. For giving insights the phrase "free and open" as the categories and attributes, for free a number of attributes include free from coercion, good governance is along with fundamental of rights, transparency, and anti-corruption, and open is combined with open sea lines communication and airways, open logistics via infrastructure, open investment, open trade is meant that free, fair and reciprocal trade. This paper discusses*

*situating Pacific diplomacy, the Rise of the Indo-Pacific strategy, the Rise of China and India, and Overview of the Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy from Economic to security perspectives.*

**Key words:** The United States, China, Competition, ASEAN, Tug of War, politics, economic, diplomacy, security.

## INTRODUCTION

The 'Indo-Pacific region' has emerged and transformed as the newest addition to the lexicon of Asian regionalism. Conceived of as the conjunction of the Pacific and Indian Ocean, it is revealed the belief that maritime interconnected has required to extending Asian regionalism westwards to include countries on the Indian Ocean rim. It also competes with the longstanding Asia-Pacific Policy and four major governments included Australia, India, Japan and the USA, have adopted it into their foreign policies. Countless and hot debates on the Indo-Pacific which focuses on how does it institutionally rebalance Asian regionalism through the incorporation of Indian Ocean states. One article considers the functional rescaling that attends this process: namely, what kind of regionalism is implied by the Indo-Pacific concept. It argues that the Indo-Pacific is a security-focused regional project, reflecting the desire of its proponents to form a quadrilateral bloc to resist China's growing maritime assertiveness. This security region is radically different from the Asia-Pacific concept, where regionalism was primarily driven by economic integration and security cooperation. The Indo-Pacific Strategy, therefore, marks a more contested period in Asia's international politics, where the varieties of purposes of regional cooperation is being reoriented from economic to security challenges are led by the US and China (Wilson, 2018).

Geopolitical landscape has constantly changed in the Asia-Pacific has put the regional security architecture more and

more in the spotlight and security dilemma. It is highly concerned and considered to see back from the rebalance strategy had formulated by former US president Barack Obama to the Indo-Pacific Concept recently initiated and then by President Donald Trump, how should ASEAN cope with the changes and transformations. Scholars from ASEAN member countries shared their critical views at a panel discussion during the Seventh World Peace Forum organized by Tsinghua University ("ASEAN challenged by Indo-Pacific strategy," 2018). Wilfrido Villacorta claimed that the security architecture in our part of the world has been extensively transformed and shifted. There are some reactions from big, medium and small powers. ASEAN has not actively proposed security architecture other than what we proposed a few years after its formation. The Philippines, one of the five founding members of ASEAN, had a US military base at the time. Now, neither the Philippines nor Thailand has allowed a US military base ("ASEAN challenged by Indo-Pacific strategy," 2018).

The safe and secure of sea lanes, particularly those that link the United States with its cooperation and partnership in the Indian and Pacific Oceans, is highly connected to US core interests. Therefore, US maritime strategy seeks to sustain and combat power in the Western Pacific and Arabian Gulf and Indian Ocean so as to prevent attempts at interrupting vital sea lines of communication and commerce. Strategic imperatives for the capability state and non-state actors to disrupt the Indo-Pacific sea lanes critical to global prosperity and harmony, the United States has renewed its commitment to maritime security in the wide range of Asia Pacific (Bradford, 2011). When the United States came knocking on ASEAN's door and asked for a minute, ASEAN opened it and politely listened to Washington's sales pitch on a free and open Indo-Pacific but has not embraced the strategic vision with enthusiasm (Yong, 2018). While the regional watcher viewed that the key reason behind the lukewarm reception is that the Indo-Pacific sounds

like it targets a rising China, and ASEAN has so much controversy and does not want to be forced to take sides between China and the US (Yong, 2018).

Former Asean secretary-general Ong Keng Yong said the Indo-Pacific concept has been articulated in recent times as though it is a response to the rise of China and its assertive diplomacy, particularly over the South China Sea disputes and the Belt and Road Initiative. For ASEAN, the grouping fears a weakening of the glue of neutrality that holds it together. Wong claimed that for giving insights the phrase “free and open” he classified as the categories and attributes, for free a number of attributes include free from coercion, good governance is along with fundamental of rights, transparency, and anti-corruption, and open is combined with open sea lines communication and airways, open logistics via infrastructure, open investment, open trade is meant that free, fair and reciprocal trade (Hiep, 2018). This paper discusses situating Indo-Pacific region’s diplomacy, the Rise of China, the Free and Open Indo-Pacific strategy, the Rise of China and India on the paths of competition, and conflict, and Overview of the Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy and Economic Vision, ASEAN’s Position towards to Overview of the Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy and securities focused.

## **INDO-PACIFIC REGION’S DIPLOMACY**

Pacific diplomacy has been transformed entered into new norm and paradigm in the twenty-first century. It designs strategic diversification and geopolitical agendas with new multiple actors, including beyond the traditional and normal nation state, and evolving regional politics. Often on the receiving end of “soft diplomacy” from the established and rising powers of the Indo-Pacific has sought to exert influence, the Pacific Island nations encounter actual consequences of transnational challenges such as climate change and marine resource

depletion, and are crafting their own rational diplomacy. The emerging Pacific approach suggests that aspects of network diplomacy-leveraging bilateral, multilateral, and multi-actor relations to forge issues-based coalitions around a common goal-will increasingly become a necessary feature of Pacific states seeking to navigate diverting geopolitics, and situate themselves within an emerging Indo-Pacific region (Naupa, 2017).

Pacific diplomacy has a long history of managing the effects of hard power through the use of soft power, and this is likely to remain the case. This courting of Pacific Island states via the geo-politicking of powerful Pacific countries indicates chances to advance the interests of the island region through wider diplomatic and institutional cooperation. In postcolonial diplomacy has evolved into a contemporary unity based on a wider geopolitical context and the need for urgency in addressing climate change and ocean governance challenges. In the twenty-first century, a common multilateral agenda for the Forum will need to engage across more actors and through nontraditional diplomatic channels, if it is to achieve outcomes for the region. Deeper institutional engagement with a whole range of actors should become a critical feature of future Pacific diplomacy, both a new Indo-Pacific region and the globe, if the Pacific is to achieve its vision through the Framework for Pacific Regionalism. By enabling Pacific Island nations to leverage international relations through powerful interest groups and diplomatic associations emerging outside of established structures, these aspects of network diplomacy would offer a competitive advantage for the Pacific regions' interests. However, it is only powerful where interests converge. The converging interests of Pacific Island states in a broader Indo-Pacific region remain a work in progress. Despite having smaller economies and administrations, the Pacific Islands have shown through the negotiation of a new global climate regime in Paris in 2015 that they can be effective at

leveraging wider diplomatic networks in the interests of the region, particularly when supported by technical expertise. Existing outside of rigid multilateral structures such as the UN, this new super-region is a strategic opportunity for the Pacific Islands to place themselves at the forefront of discussions taking place around the Ocean. Actual Pacific diplomacy within emerging Indo-Pacific arrangements can be built from, and look beyond, out-of-date diplomacy (Naupa, 2017).

## **THE RISE OF CHINA AND FREE AND OPEN INDO-PACIFIC STRATEGY**

US secretary of State Mike announced on July 30, 2017, \$113 billion would be invested in Indo-Pacific region for developing technology and infrastructure and then he has pledged to offer almost \$300 billion that is additional funding for Southeast Asia. And then these concrete steps of the U.S president Donald Trump can be how much impacted on the regional order. Due to the growing and rise influence of China in the region, The US' Indo-Pacific Strategy is aimed and continuous strategy to rebalance and more focused on Asia Pacific policy, and aiming to lure Southeast and South Asian countries, chiefly India, Indonesia and Vietnam, into its circle. For rebalancing Asia Pacific Strategy is mainly focused on security but overlooked of economic development of individual countries. Essentially, the rising influence of China's Belt and Road Initiative, US planned to invest infrastructure is truly contained China. In this mean, US has rebuilt the strategic competition with china, has created complexities for the regional order and development ("Trump strategy heightens tensions," 2018).

Moreover, fund has promised by Pompeo, Some countries including India are hesitant to be fully involved with the US's Indo-Pacific Strategy, due to their concerns and

misgivings and the given amount is \$ 113 million for regional technology and infrastructure development is too little for them. A number of obstacles the Belt and Road Initiative has faced and delayed newly, for example, four projects were halted in Malaysia and potential was scaled back in Myanmar, are not out of limit expectations where different concepts and disagreements can be arisen the cooperation along the two routes and China has still provided the actual investment and much-needed for enterprise infrastructure development. ("Trump strategy heightens tensions," 2018).

Some criticism and accusations have been made by Western officials and scholars and media against the China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and the accusations were also claimed that China has pushed these countries along (BRI) in to debt crisis. They believed that about 90 of Chinese investment in BRI is commercial loans if comply with international norms only a small percentage used as low-interest government loans and assistance loans. The false of the West charged against China, particularly Western economies have generally refused to offer loans to non-developed countries in the first place ("Trump strategy heightens tensions," 2018). US National Security Strategy Report, The movement of US could be potential endangered in regional peace and stability if US has pushed ahead with strategic and security alliance policies to contain China by splitting the region. Generally speaking Zhu Feng, dean of the Institute of International Relations of Nanjing University, Generally speaking, the success of US's Indo-Pacific Strategy is achieved it depended in China's responses. China does not such ambitions so Southeast Asia do not want great power rivalries rise tensions in the regions. Therefore, US's strategy possibly fail. As can be seen, the Belt and Road imitative, Chinese enterprises, particularly, state-owned enterprises are required to conduct comprehensive research and the initiative is well designed and inclusive enough to accommodate more players beforehand. Therefore,

the accusations and stereotypical bias against it are mostly overstatements, and it's high time they stopped ("Trump strategy heightens tensions," 2018). Criticizing Belt and Road Initiative irresponsible, Fu Mengzi, vice-president of the China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations stated that the US renamed its Pacific Command to the Indo-Pacific Command and on May 30, US secretary of state Pompeo has pledged funds for technology, security and infrastructure development in the Indo-Pacific regions. This announcement's funds have demonstrated the US's ambition to control the India Ocean and the same as to observe China rising influence. Beside economic issues, the US's Indo-Pacific Strategy has also revealed, concerned on its geopolitical, military, and security ambitions. To what extent, China's growing presence in region has bumpy development of the 21<sup>st</sup> century Maritime Silk Road has provoked the US administration to rebalancing Asia-Pacific Policy to the Indo-Pacific Strategy in the aiming at absorbing the whole Indian Ocean into a milestone and sphere of influence. But the US, however, has hold in position with lacks of a concrete foundation to build on disapproved calculation. In addition, three potential regional players in the region, Japan, Australia and India, all unique goals and concerns in regional issues and development. For instance, India has consistent and kept neutral policy with others states and also enhancement the relationship with China. China and Japan were upgraded while Japanese enterprises are allowed to cooperate with the Belt and Road Initiative. Australia, on its parts has sometimes attempted to reduce China's influence via its offensive strategy. Between China and the US, equally importantly, the Southeast Asian countries will not choosing between the two superpowers when it is considered to security ("Trump strategy heightens tensions," 2018).

Based on the existing literature review on the free and open Indo-Pacific Strategy has encouraged and promoted chiefly on encountered on China rise and China's claimants and



expansions and how China has rejected in it the convergence of maritime security. What have been overlooked, however, are rapidly Chinese attitudes and complex changing retaliate to the Indo-Pacific Strategy. China has co-opted in specific components in it geo-economic hegemonic projects and China has already compared and evolved with complex and multifaceted in geo-economics and maritime, continental hybridity approaches to the indo-Pacific region. It also highlights a conceptual model of a hybrid vision of the institutionalization of the Indo-Pacific for the initiative of regional partnership (He, 2018). Any conclusion that the US's Indo-Pacific Strategy has great impacted on regional paradigm and order is too early. It is interesting to note that some in the West has constantly used the Belt and Road Initiative as a scapegoat for certain local complexities, for instance, Srilanka's and Pakistan's debt crisis. The West has ignored the fact as results of variety of factors including worsening outside environment and dropped down in exports. Therefore, blaming the Belt and Road Initiative for these countries' ill is totally irresponsible ("Trump strategy heightens tensions," 2018). In the aftermath of the Cold War, the unipolar world emerged and transformed into multipolar world where Russia, China and India more and more have arisen and influenced in world affairs. In this sense, Australia as one of the middle power is faced toward the relationship the two super power, particularly, the United States with the establishment of world economic and military power and China with the establishment of economic and emerging military power, will be a major Australian long term strategic decisions. Australia, however, never overlooked due to Chinese influence in the Pacific region cooperation between US and China are highly regarded as chiefly factors in the success of Australia-US alliance in the future (Haider, 2014).

It is, after all, not every day that we get to see a self-conscious effort to create a region out of nothing, or very little,

at least. Even APEC and Kevin Rudd's abortive Asia-Pacific Community initiative at least had something to work with as far as pre-existing ideas were concerned: not only has the idea of the 'Asia-Pacific' as a mobilizing discourse been around for a while, but energetic 'policy entrepreneurs' and 'ideas brokers' also have toiled valiantly to give substance, or 'actorness', to an otherwise insubstantial concept. The Indo-Pacific can claim no such antecedents, despite the fact that there are a number of people working energetically in the United States, Japan, India and especially Australia tried to change this. At the outset, therefore, there are reasons for being skeptical about the Indo-Pacific's concepts. First, the enormous geographical expanse that the Indo-Pacific represents makes it unworkable as the basis for an effective strategic order (Yoshihara, 2013). Second, the Indo-Pacific draws together South Asia and the Indian Ocean with East Asia and the Western Pacific Ocean, which remain two distinct and therefore separate strategic systems; it has been persuasively argued (Phillips 2016, White 2016).

Third, with most of its focus on the maritime aspect of Asia, the Indo-Pacific does not pay enough attention to continental Asia especially the activities of China in that area (Bisley, 2016). Finally, there is no distinct institutional basis for the Indo-Pacific thus far, although some of the most energetic and enthusiastic supporters of the idea in academia and some influential think tanks argue that some extant institutions reflect as 'an essentially Indo-Pacific footprint' (Medcalf, 2012). Nevertheless, the Indo-Pacific has some potentially influential advocates. Australia has played a surprisingly prominent role in attempting to discursively create regional identities and encourage the development of regional institutions. In addition to helping construct the idea of the 'Asia-Pacific' region and establishing APEC (Ravenhill, 2001), the Australian governments played a role in the creation of the ARF, which, despite the shortcomings noted earlier, potentially remains the region's most important security institution. The fact that

Australian officials and policy entrepreneurs are at the forefront of efforts to promote the Indo-Pacific is, therefore, not so surprising-especially given Australia's central geographic position in this putative region. For supporters of the concept, the Indo-Pacific is 'best understood as an expansive definition of a maritime super-region centered on Southeast Asia, arising principally from the emergence of China and India as outward-looking trading states and strategic actors' (Medcalf, 2014).

For Australian officials in particular, Australia's centrality in the Indo-Pacific gives a welcome prominence to its generally neglected west coast and reinforces its status as an Indian Ocean state. Former defense minister and ambassador to the United States Kim Beazley was at the forefront of refocusing Australia's strategic outlook westwards, and it is no coincidence that two of Australia's most recent foreign ministers-Stephen Smith and Julie Bishop-have also come from Western Australia. Yet despite such bipartisan support and its near total replacement of the 'Asia-Pacific' in the 2013 and 2016, Defense White Papers, the Indo-Pacific initiative thus far lacks any significant institutional presence. Despite this, the Australian government, or more specifically its defense establishment, has been at the forefront of promoting the Indo-Pacific idea (Australian Government, 2013, 2016).

The possible strategic significance of the Indo-Pacific for Australian defense policy was made clear in the 2016 White Paper. According to the review, Australia's primary defense interests are predicated on a stable Indo-Pacific region and rules-based global order which supports Australia's interests, the Indo-Pacific includes North Asia, the South China Sea and the extensive sea lines of communication in the Indian and Pacific Oceans that support Australian trade. A stable rules-based regional order is critical to ensuring Australia's access to an open, free and secure trading system and minimizing the risk of coercion and instability that would directly affect Australia's interests. A stable rules-based global order serves to

deal with threats before they become existential threats to Australia, and enables our unfettered access to trading routes, secure communications and transport to support Australia's economic development (Australian Government, 2016).

Broadly similar assumptions underpin the positions of Indo-Pacific advocates in the United States, Japan and India too. In his speech to the Indian parliament titled 'Confluence of the Two Seas', Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe was one of the earliest and most vocal proponents in conceiving of the 'two seas' as a single strategic space (Abe, 2007). Under former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, the rather awkward formulation 'Indo-Asia-Pacific' was used when referring to the region (Clinton, 2010). Perhaps the greatest recent champion for the concept is Indian PM Narendra Modi, who in a speech before US Congress in 2016 argued that 'a strong India-U.S. partnership can anchor peace, prosperity and stability from Asia to Africa and from Indian Ocean to the Pacific' (Modi, 2016). While a number of states have begun to adopt the language, therefore, the actual implementation of the 'Indo-Pacific' concept into their defense and foreign policy strategies is another matter entirely. Part of the problem revolves around the differing conceptions of what the Indo-Pacific is and how it might be operationalised. Andrew Phillips (2016) is one of the more astute observers of these developments, and he has usefully developed a typology of different approaches to the 'Indo-Pacific' idea. First, there are those who argue that the connection between the Indian Ocean and the Western Pacific is too tenuous to justify a reinterpretation of the region's strategic environment away from the 'Asia-Pacific'. Second, a functionalist approach places a priority on seeking cooperation in areas such as maintaining the integrity of maritime/energy sea lines of communication and promoting effortless connectivity between the Indian Ocean and the East Asian economies. A third perspective views the Indo-Pacific in pure balance of power terms and strongly advocates the need to

effectively manage the perceived adverse effects associated with China's rise. Finally, there are those who think of the Indo-Pacific as an arena in which a concert of powers system might be developed, in which there is greater scope for interdependence between the two regions and there is more capacity to accommodate China's rise as a major power in the region. The point to emphasize is that such fundamental differences of opinion about the nature and possible role of the Indo-Pacific makes it less likely to be realized effectively (Beeson & Lee-Brown, 2017).

Chengxin Pan (2014) argues that at this juncture, it is hard to escape the conclusion that the Indo-Pacific trope 'is designed primarily to enable the United States and its regional allies to "naturally" strengthen and expand their existing regional alliance networks in order to hedge against a perceived China-centric regional order in Asia'. In an institutional sense, this has played out in a series of mainly bilateral and trilateral groupings involving the so-called Quadrilateral states (United States, Australia, Japan and India) including the 'Malabar Exercises' (Brewster 2016; Parameswaran 2016). In other words, the overwhelming rationale for the Indo-Pacific thus far has been strategic and geopolitical and designed to extend and reinforce American-led military primacy and to balance against the rise of China (Beeson & Lee-Brown, 2017).

For Indo-Pacific laid out three strategies to contain China. The strategies are included balancing strategy, institutional setting, and ideational construct. The balancing strategy is aimed at China's rise and low down the China's influences in the region. In this sense, institutional setting is liberal and facilitated face among states in the Pacific and the Indian Ocean in freedom of navigation. Ideational construct is the ideal concept which is encouraging and promoting value-oriented and norm-based diplomacy in the region as a whole and and this is not easy because China is one of the superpower and for future's peace and stability in the region is highly

depend on China (He, 2018). Full integration in Indo-Pacific alliance, India and Indonesia are wary of being seen as as direct confrontation with China as one of the biggest trade and economic partners. These are highly impact on the regional stability and economic growth. These factors are placed India and Indonesia in significant limits in integrated in to the Indo-Pacific strategy (Chacko, 2018). Freedom and liberal Trade have highly considered as a top priority by the United States. Washington should work with allies such as the pacts have been agreed, Trans-Pacific Partnerships and the Transatlantic Trade Investment Partnership in relation with China. Washington is supposed to be neglected balance of power and should be interested in freedom. From these points are commonly believed that the American interests can maitianed after Second World War (Tellis, 2014). Recent efforts towards greater connectivity the One Belt One Road initiative represent the continuation of that growing trend. The European Union and China are supported a multipolar and commercially connected world. Chinese economic has ascent in the broader framework of multi-polarity dimensions. Chinese ruling elites have always disdained the vanity of strength. They like to enhance their influence through subtle bargaining and consensus. The communist leadership since the time of Deng Xiaoping has deliberately taken a commercial posture and presented China as a business-friendly power. Therefore, the emerging economic and military of China has augured peace and material prosperity in its immediate periphery as well as in Eurasia. The emerging trends do not signalize confrontation and hostility with the West (Mushtaq Ahmed, 2017).

However, The US has pursued distancing strategy toward to Japan. Japan is adopted hedging strategies that is potentially weaken US reassurance, deterrence, and compelling China. In this mean, Japan and US relation has more and more coherence and cohesion it can be assumed that Japan indirectly supports for US policy toward to China over the three key

policy dominants are the East China Sea, the Taiwan Strait, and the Korean peninsular (French, 2018) .

## **THE RISE OF CHINA AND INDIA ON THE PATHS OF COMPETITION, COOPERATION AND CONFLICT**

India and China has shown a consensus and maintained peace and tranquility on the border dispute but at the same time, it is required to be carefully assessed on the intent and declarations. China has also been following the 'Monroe Doctrine'. The attempt has always been to refuse and deny access to other powers in the region that it perceives as exclusively within its convergence and sphere of influence. Such Chinese actions have been damaging the interests of other regions especially to the countries in the East and South East Asia. Many of China's actions in this part of the world would require very careful handling by India. It may be important for India in the current context to understand China's intentions and fundamental goals. India will always promote constructive engagement with China and avoid any direct confrontation. It would also be in China's interest if it forges greater and robust partnership with India in the twenty first century (Kumar, 2010).

By huge economic, defense and strategic gap between China and India, India does not want to confront directly with China, since the gaps cannot be fulfilled in a short time. Quad has aggressive design to fight off terrorism and against China ambitious design around the globe (Kumar, 2018).

China-India is dirty dancing and weird arithmetic, China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi, for China and India relation has characterized as prospect of the dragon [China] and the elephant [India] are dancing together and one pluses one equals eleven effect (1+1=11 effect). This was commonly optimistic over China and India relations (Limaye, 2018).

China and India has remained unsolved border conflict. But the bilateral meeting Xi and India's Secretary of State are

carefully considered and not allowed the differences to become disputes. China-India has to enhance and strengthen the level of mutual trust in both sides. The two parties are committed to set up the the inter-governmental mechanisms such as a joint economic group, defense and security group, strategic dialogue and cross membership organizations includes BRICS and AIIB, from these aspects of relationship can implemented as ways to put a brake on and lead to military conflict (Limaye, 2018).

India's minister had spent formal visit for four days to Cambodia and Vietnam, the aim of this visit has tighten and deepen India's strategic cooperation with the two vital ASEAN nations. India prime minister has visited elsewhere and claimed that India never considered the Indo-Pacific region as a strategy or a club of limited participants or called group (Kumar, 2018).

To support their increasing bilateral economic cooperation, it is used sources from India, China, and international economic institutions and examined whether the increasing economic cooperation in the form of bilateral trade has reduced the undying border disputes and enduring conflict associated with such disputes and misperception of each other in their actions, one can argue that Sino-India relations have the case of enduring rivalry, and it has never ended despite the increasingly closer and closer economic cooperation. For that mean, both the nations have developed strategies to contain the influence of each other in their respective regions. Thus, bilateral trade between them has neither created closer cooperation as one might expect, nor reduced the security dilemma associated with power politics. Considering such a condition, this work expects that the future of Indo-China cooperation will more likely an enduring rivalry and be characterized by a security dilemma negating any influence of economic cooperation. In other words, the outlook of their relationship will more likely be based on power politics (Thiagarajan, 2016).



The rise of China and India as energy-consuming and export-producing economies has led to rapid growth in shipping traffic carrying those commodities between Bab al-Mandeb and the Strait of Hormuz in the west, Indian ports in the middle and the great economic hubs of coastal China in the east. Many chapters produce statistics documenting this growth in maritime traffic. The concept 'Indo-Pacific' is advanced to capture this linkage between the manufacturing hubs of East Asia (including Japan) and the energy-and merchandise-shipping western Indian Ocean choke points. The vulnerability of China's sea lines of communications to either US or Indian interdiction in the event of a confrontation is an important Chinese concern. 'The tyranny of distance' gives India a great advantage over China in the waters west of Malacca. Diego Garcia and multiple US positions in and around the Persian Gulf also give the United States Navy a similar advantage over China in those waters. How to secure this vital 'Indo-Pacific' traffic is an important Chinese concern and a central issue addressed. Contributions by Chinese authors make clear Beijing's mounting concern. For example, Yang Yi, Secretary General of the Chinese Institute of International Studies, the Foreign Ministry's main research center and Zhao Qinghai, the head of maritime security at the same center, find that the embrace of the concept of the 'Indo-Pacific' by western strategic circles is a reflection of the growing power of 'East Asian countries', for instance China, and the declining power of the US and Europe due to multiple economic crises. The US calculation is that by 'drawing India closer they can contain China', 'balance China's influence' and 'effectively pin China into the East Asian littoral'. The Indian Ocean is being 'gradually regarded by the US as an ideal location to set up a long-distance naval blockade against China' far beyond the reach of Chinese anti-access, area denial missiles targeting US bases in Japan, the Philippines and Guam. But India will not go along with US 'Indo-Pacific' schemes: 'Although happy

enough to absorb a strategic dividend from those who have a balancing China agenda, India will not play the part of an anti-China chess piece on anyone's chessboard'. China's fear of possible Indian partnership with Japan and the US may well give New Delhi leverage with Beijing (Garver, 2015). Building overland pipelines, railways and highways connecting China with resource and commercial centers to its west (i.e. along the lines of Xi Jinping's 'one road, one belt' infrastructure construction programmes is another way of mitigating the vulnerability of China's Indo-Pacific. Building special relationships and 'partnerships' with key countries around the Indian Ocean coastal-Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, but most of all Pakistan-is another. Building more and better classes of warships and sending them ever further afield is yet another. All these tropes are explored in the book (Garver, 2015).

The two largest developing countries and major emerging markets, China and India have global and strategic significance. In the sense of heart to heart talks between the two leaders will promote the free trade and uphold equity and justice on the globe. As can be seen, the realistic and practical significance is more and more evident China and India relations. The 19th National Congress of CPC adopted the grand blueprint for making China a great modern socialist society in every dimension. Both countries are at the critical stage of economic development, deepening reform and modernization. Socialism with Chinese characteristics has entered a new paradigm. India puts forward for 3 years Action Agenda, blueprint for "New India" by 2022 and the 15-year National Development Agenda. China and India's development goals have overlapping time span and can learn from each other. No doubt that there are many facets to the complex China and India cooperation. It's regular for neighbors to have differences. When differences can't be solved for nowadays, we should properly cope with and focus on cooperation. China and

India's consensus and cooperation have far outweighed differences and competition. For China and India relations, both countries is to be mindful in long term vision, hold reasonably optimistic expectations and give full implement of five magic tools, for example, the "Navigator" of leaders' strategic guidance, the "Accelerator" of practical cooperation, the "Booster" of people to people exchanges, the "Enhancer" of multilateral cooperation, and the "Stabilizer" of difference control. The building a ship of China and India friendship is ready for sailing. Asia News monitor continued to look forward to a successful informal summit between the two leaders ("China-India: China-India cooperation outweighs our differences," 2018).

## **OVERVIEW OF THE FREE AND OPEN INDO-PACIFIC STRATEGY AND ECONOMIC VISION**

National security strategy, the President's Trump administration has begun to use the term Indo-Pacific Strategy for describing the expansion in Asia Pacific Region as new strategic competition with China. With the four major countries are committed to share a free and open Indo-Pacific. This concept has broaden on common values which committed to the rule of law. The strategy accepts and endorses by ASEAN core interests. America is laid out "America's Indo-Pacific Economic Vision, the US is envisioning its economic strategy, the so-called TPP-11 is proceeding without Washington, as is Beijing in pursuing its own more expansive Belt and Road initiative (Cossa & Glosserman, 2018).

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe called for the leaders of Japan and five Southeast Asian countries from Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia, Lao and Myanmar along the Mekong River adopted a joint statement at their summit in Tokyo, on calling for realization of the "Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy," which has been newly advocated and Abe, at the

beginning of the meeting, Abe vowed to continue to extend Japan's economic assistance to the countries. "The Mekong region is a corridor that connects East Asia and South Asia as well as a land bridge linking the Pacific Ocean to the Indian Ocean," ("Japan, Mekong leaders call for 'free and open Indo-Pacific,'" 2018).

Moreover, in recent years, the United States has made significant adjustments to its defense posture in order to bring more maritime forces closer to Indo-Pacific sea lanes and defense officials have stated their intention to further enhance US posture in Southeast Asia and the Indian Ocean, at the same time, maintaining US presence in Northeast Asia. Recognizing that the expansion of Indo-Pacific maritime territory and the complexity of the region's maritime challenges and commitment free lane navigation security, the United States is also strengthening cooperation with its maritime partners by expanding relationships and trust-building efforts, contributing to the capacity of its partners. At the same time, the United States is supporting the strengthening of maritime symposiums and regional organizations as the foundations for the security architectures necessary to ensure the security of Indo-Pacific sea lanes and sustaining regional prosperity (Bradford, 2011).

But it is not just India that is pursuing greater engagement with East Asia and Southeast Asia. There are a number of crisscrossing strategies throughout the region. So if you look at India's Act East Policy, if you look at South Korea's New Southern Policy, if you look at Japan's own Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy, if you look at Australia's Foreign Policy White Paper, if you look at Taiwan's new South bound policy, these partners in the region are all seeking to increase political, security, and economic ties, particularly with the ASEAN states. And that's in our interest. If we can have these crosscutting relationships that form a very strong fabric devoted to a rules-based free and open order, that can only

strengthen the prosperity of the region, strengthen the fabric of stability in the region.

The Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy is not just about China, and this is for the very simple reason that the region is much larger than China. In the ASEAN states alone, ASEAN has 600 million people. In India, we have 1.2 billion people. And if the United States, together with our partners, can sew together and unify all the peoples of the Indo-Pacific. China included under a vision that is free and open, that prizes free market economics, that prizes sovereignty, that prizes increasingly freer people and nations free from coercion, that's not just to the U.S. benefit; that's to the benefit of all nations in the Indo-Pacific, China included ("Briefing on the Indo-Pacific Strategy," 2018).

The Indo-Pacific has faced three perspectives. It suggests that the realist face of the Indo-Pacific is a “balancing strategy” against China. The liberal face of the Indo-Pacific aims to form a new “institutional setting” that facilitates cooperation among states across the Pacific and the Indian Oceans. According to constructivism, the Indo-Pacific offers an “ideational construct” for promoting value-oriented and norm-based diplomacy in the region. This paper argues that these three faces of the Indo-Pacific concept are theoretically problematic and practically flawed. There are two ways of institutionalizing the Indo-Pacific, though. One is exclusive institutionalization with China as an outside target, which follows the realist logic of making China a common threat in the region. The success of this approach mainly depends on how China behaves in the future. The other is the inclusive approach of institutionalizing the Indo-Pacific by embracing China and other states into a new Indo-Pacific institution. It will not be easy, but the endeavor of the inclusive institutionalization of the Indo-Pacific will produce positive externalities of peace and stability to the region (He, 2018).

To talk about the Trump administration's strategy for advancing a free and open Indo-Pacific and why U.S. business engagement is at the center of it-it's a staple of our mission to promote peace, stability, and prosperity. President Trump first outlined his vision for a free and open Indo-Pacific at the APEC CEO Summit in Vietnam just last year. The National Security Strategy also detailed that vision. Make no mistake, the Indo-Pacific, which stretches from the United States west coast to the west coast of India, is a subject of great importance to American foreign policy. As I will detail in a bit, this region is one of the greatest engines of future global of the future global economy, and it already is today. And the American people and the whole world have a stake in the Indo-Pacific's peace and prosperity. It's why the Indo-Pacific must be free and open ("Secretary of State POMPEO comments on 'America's Indo-Pacific Economic Vision'," 2018).

When we say "free" Indo-Pacific, it means we all want all nations, every nation, to be able to protect their sovereignty from coercion by other countries. At the national level, "free" means good governance and the assurance that citizens can enjoy their fundamental rights and liberties.

When we say "open" in the Indo-Pacific, it means we want all nations to enjoy open access to seas and airways. We want the peaceful resolution of territorial and maritime disputes. This is a key for international peace and for each country's attainment of its own national aims. Economically, "open" means fair and reciprocal trade, open investment environments, transparent agreements between nations, and improved connectivity to drive regional ties - because these are the paths for sustainable growth in the region.

The U.S. commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific is deeply rooted since The State Department, which established a consular presence in Kolkata - then called Calcutta in 1794. American entrepreneurs, whom most of you in this room represent, have been trading and investing in the Indo-Pacific

even longer than that. And I won't give you a full history today, but I will note how the United States has played a foundational role in enabling the growth, development, and wealth we see across the entire Indo-Pacific today ("Secretary of State Pompeo Comments on 'America's Indo-Pacific Economic Vision'," 2018).

The Trump administration has a clear vision for the Indo-Pacific in the 21st century. It is an American vision that is deeply engaged in the region's economic, political, cultural, and security affairs. Like so many of our Asian allies and friends, our country fought for its own independence from an empire that expected deference. We thus have never and will never seek domination in the Indo-Pacific, and we will oppose any country that does. Rather, we aspire to a regional order, independent nations that can defend their people and compete fairly in the international marketplace. We stand ready to enhance the security of our partners and to assist them in developing their economies and societies in ways that ensure human dignity. We will help them. We will help them keep their people free from coercion or great power domination. And today I want to close by inviting any nation and any business that wants those values enshrined in this region to partner with the United States Government. A free and open Indo-Pacific is America's chosen course ("SECRETARY OF STATE POMPEO COMMENTS ON 'AMERICA'S INDO-PACIFIC ECONOMIC VISION'," 2018).

But for These factors place significant limitations on the regional integration of the Indo-Pacific, Proponents of the Indo-Pacific concept assume that growing economic and societal linkages and the need for greater political and security cooperation and order-building are leading to the integration of the region. India and Indonesia were thought to be crucial in these processes of regionalisation and regionalism and were early adopters of the Indo-Pacific idea. The purpose of this paper is to evaluate the extent to which the Indo-Pacific initiatives of India and Indonesia are leading to the integration

of the Asia-Pacific and Indian Ocean regions through greater Indian involvement with the Pacific region and stronger Indonesian engagement with the Indian Ocean region. It is argued that an interlinked set of security and economic concerns drove India and Indonesia's adoption of the Indo-Pacific idea. In both cases, a desire for economic growth and preventing Chinese economic and political dominance in the region were important drivers. However, the nature of the political economies of India and Indonesia does not readily facilitate extensive economic linkages or strategic interests beyond their immediate regions. Moreover, both countries are wary of being seen as members of anti-China coalitions due to the impact this may have on regional stability and their domestic political and economic priorities (Chacko & Willis, 2018).

The study aims at examining the past and possible future role of Indonesia in the development of cooperation within the framework of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). After the description of the main steps and achievements of building a regional community both in the field of politics and economy, the author seeks to identify the reasons of difficulties to deepen economic integration, with special regard to the interests and policy of Indonesia. She concludes that by now Indonesia has not ceased to be interested in the security political cooperation within ASEAN and continues to be counter interested in deeper economic integration because of competitiveness reasons. The new leadership of the country since 2014 has taken a broader than ASEAN regional view in its foreign policy spectrum and for this Indonesia may pay less attention to the cooperation within ASEAN what may hinder the development of the South-East Asian organization (Artner, 2017).

Carl Thayer has stated that "The Philippines has just rolled over, China is continually militarising and if the US does



not maintain a presence in the region, Vietnam's got nowhere to hide," (Quy Le, 2018).

Carl Thayer has to continue to claim Vietnam has always insisted that it is committed to maintaining peace and stability in the region and calls for freedom of navigation laws to be respected, though it rarely names Beijing. The nuclear-powered USS Carl Vinson, home to some 5,000 sailors and 72 aircraft, regularly deploys to the Indo-Pacific region. The 1,000 foot-long (300 metre) ship weighing 95,000 tons will be in Danang until its departure. The visit includes a number of cultural and community events, such as basketball and soccer matches between US sailors and locals, an orphanage visit and naval band concerts (Quy Le, 2018).

This article explores perceptions and reactions across Southeast Asia towards the Obama administration's "pivot" or "rebalance" to Asia. The US approach has been dismissed as more rhetorical than substantive grand strategy, its credibility under renewed scrutiny following President Obama's cancelled visit to Southeast Asia in October 2013. Nonetheless, the rebalance has expanded from its origins in 2010-11, acquiring diplomatic and economic "prongs" with a particular focus on Southeast Asia, broadening the bandwidth of US engagement beyond military diplomacy and force realignment. However, the US "pivot" has had to contend with entrenched narratives of the US role in the region oscillating between extremes of neglect or over-militarization. The US-China strategic dynamic weighing over the region, itself central to Washington's strategic calculus across Asia, has also coloured the lens through which Southeast Asians have viewed the re-balance. Varied reactions to the US rebalance at the national level in Southeast Asia are further suggestive of a sub-regional divide between "continental" and "maritime" states that to some extent predisposes their perspectives and orientation towards the Great Powers (Graham, 2013).

However, one of the key issues that will determine the success or otherwise of the putative 'Indo-Pacific region' is how or whether it is to be successfully institutionalized. This paper firstly provides an assessment of the Indo-Pacific's prospects by drawing on some of the more influential strands of theoretical literature in this area and by considering the specific historical experience of its institutional precursors in the more expansively conceived Asia-Pacific region. Although I am skeptical about the Indo-Pacific's prospects, the following discussion provides a general framework for assessing institutional efficacy. The second objective of this essay is to introduce the other papers in this collection. Significantly, some of the other contributors are more optimistic about the Indo-Pacific. Together, these papers highlight the sometimes competing and contradictory forces of what could still be a very significant initiative in a region in which effective institutions are arguably in short supply (Beeson, 2018). but also set out India's six major visions for the Indo-Pacific region, explicitly rejecting the idea of creating a clique. And ASEAN too has always emphasized its centrality and independence in regional affairs. U.S. standards also do not serve the economic and development interests of countries in the region. A "free" Indo-Pacific region, according to Pompeo, means that all nations are able to protect their sovereignty from coercion by other countries. At the national level, "free" means good governance and the assurance that citizens are able to enjoy fundamental rights and liberties. Economically, an "open" Indo-Pacific means fair and reciprocal trade, open investment environments, transparent agreements between nations and improved connectivity to drive regional ties.

While "free and open" may sound nice, the implicit premise is that any new structure is still led by the United States. In the Philippines for example, the anti-drug and anti-terror war waged by President Rodrigo Duterte to improve its domestic governance has been accused by Washington of

violating human rights. The United States has also turned a blind eye to the efforts of China and ASEAN to maintain peace and stability in the South China Sea. China and ASEAN recently agreed on a single draft negotiating text of the Code of Conduct on the South China Sea, an important step toward the settlement of regional maritime disputes. Instead, the United States has been increasing its own military operations in the area.

Economic openness is another excuse for the United States to push forward with trade protectionism, while its purpose is to establish a unilateral U.S.-led trade system. Given the overwhelming economic and political advantages of the United States, it would be difficult for any Indo-Pacific nation to benefit from such a system.

In reality, Pompeo's protectionist and anti-global predilections were shunned at the EAS Foreign Ministers' Meeting because Southeast Asian countries are aware that they have little to gain from the U.S. Indo-Pacific strategy. The United States' withdrawal from the TPP has awakened its allies to the damage that trade protectionism brings. Japan, for this very reason, has changed its attitude toward the Belt and Road Initiative and expressed its willingness to cooperate more closely with China. Southeast Asian nations have also chosen to maintain their close cooperation with China under the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative ("Dualistic Thinking," 2018). The Indo-Pacific strategy is, in a word, aimed at maintaining the hegemony of the United States by political and economic means and constructing a U.S.-dominated unilateral trade system. Not only will China ultimately be forced to confront containment by the United States, but other countries of the Indo-Pacific region look to benefit little from such an exclusive strategy("Dualistic Thinking," 2018).

Indo-Pacific concept is aimed at strengthening and implementing the rule of law, civil society and transparent governance, promoting sustainable economic development.

Lastly, it foresees an increasing role of private sector in promoting development and finance institutions to be "better, more responsive partners." Transfer of knowledge and technology with economic sovereignty of recipient nations (Chongkittavorn, 2018). Indo-Pacific concept, regionalism was mainly driven by economic integration and cooperation. The Indo-Pacific thus marks a more contested period in Asia's international politics, where the functional purpose of regional cooperation is being reoriented from economic to security key issues (Wilson, 2018).

### **ASEAN TOWARDS TO OVERVIEW OF THE FREE AND OPEN INDO-PACIFIC STRATEGY**

"ASEAN is the fulcrum of the Indo-Pacific strategy. The strategies overlap and form a very strong fabric that is invested in the rules-based order, it strengthens ASEAN and makes it an effective forum," Mr Wong added. President Trump's decision to pull out of talks to stitch up the 12-nations Trans-Pacific Partnership trade agreement was taken by many as an indication of the US' uncertain commitment to the Asia-Pacific region. But recent comments from ranking administration officials, including Treasury Secretary Steven, appear to suggest that America may look favorably on joining the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership with trade "(Velloor, 2018).

"Whether it is President Trump or Hillary Clinton, they want to make sure that the trade agreements benefit US workers and US business," Mr Wong claimed. As Asia's economic weight in the world grows, US commitment to the region would keep pace, he added. This goes beyond partisan issues and is a matter of US national interest. Asked where China fits in the Indo-Pacific strategy, Mr Wong said the policy is not about China for the simple reason that the region is much larger than China. ASEAN states have 600 million people while

India has a population of more than a billion. The opportunity to knit all of those people in a non-exclusionary manner under a rules-based order holds immense possibilities for the region, he said. Regardless of what policies of China may follow, the US will follow its free and open strategy, as it has for 70 years. "The US National Security Strategy is not afraid of saying we have a competitive relationship with China," Mr. Wong also claimed. "And we chose that word with care. Competition does not mean conflict or containment but free and fair competition and it does not preclude cooperation in mutual interest" (Velloor, 2018).

Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong told the Financial Review that "from the region's perspective, the most critical issue is the political and strategic resolve of the US to project a reliable and constructive presence as a Pacific power". Singapore, Vietnam, Malaysia and Brunei are all members of the Trans-Pacific Partnership, the largest multilateral trade deal negotiated and which had to be reworked after the Trump administration withdrew from the TPP - its first order of business in the White House.

Former Australian trade minister Andrew Robb said the TPP decision was the stand-out example of the lack of US leadership in the region. "Many of the states in ASEAN are feeling the US has retreated significantly from the region and the withdrawal from TPP has become a very big symbol of that retreat, he said on the sidelines of a conference leading up to the summit. "ASEAN members, particularly smaller countries, feel they have been duded. They've been thrown away by the US, who sold the pivot and said the TPP was the symbol of its commitment and its long and strong leadership in the region. They want China to grow and keep benefiting everyone, but they also want the US to provide balance.

However, countries in the region have different views about how this balance might be achieved. Vietnam is emerging as the most willing to take a stand against China. Both Hanoi

and Beijing are under Communist one-party rule, but the two are locked in a territorial dispute in the South China Sea and relations have been strained since China built and militarised a string of man-made islands in the contested waterway to strengthen its claims. In 2014 China also placed an oil rig in waters off the Paracel Islands, which Hanoi claims, prompting angry protests across Vietnam that lasted for weeks. Vietnamese Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc said the country stood "ready to join in efforts towards maintaining peace and stability in the region", flagging the possibility of future co-operation on freedom of navigation operations (Murray, 2018). For the economic and political issues, the India-China relationship still contains, relevant incentives leading to cooperation, notably the increase in bilateral trade and the common interest to provide common public goods such as strong, innovative international financial institutions (New Development Bank, Contingence Reserve Arrangement and AIIB). But above all, bilateral cooperation will serve to New Delhi's interests over its overall security imperatives in the South Asian. In terms of maximizing India's security, both border security and combating terrorism, issues that does demand cooperation from Beijing, are likely to dominate the security priorities of India in the foreseeable future. Most likely, these two security priorities, together with urgent calls to guarantee freedom of navigation in the maritime realm, will shape India's AEP vis-a-vis China in the South China Sea and its bilateral relations with Southeast Asia in the foreseeable future (Granados, 2018).

So by free we mean, first of all, the international plane. We want the nations of the Indo-Pacific to be free from coercion, that they can pursue in a sovereign manner the paths they choose in the region. Secondly, we mean at the national level, we want the societies of the various Indo-Pacific countries to become progressively more free-free in terms of good governance, in terms of fundamental rights, in terms of

transparency and anti-corruption. Moving on to open-by open, we first and foremost mean open sea lines of communication and open airways. These open sea lines of communication are truly the lifeblood of the region. And if you look at world trade, with 50 percent of trade going through the Indo-Pacific along the sea routes, particularly through the South China Sea, open sea lanes and open airways in the Indo-Pacific are increasingly vital and important to the world. Secondly, we mean more open logistics – infrastructure. There's an infrastructure gap throughout the Indo-Pacific. What is needed throughout the region to encourage greater regional integration, encourage greater economic growth? We want to assist the region in doing infrastructure in the right way, infrastructure that truly does drive integration and raises the GDPs of the constituent economies, not weigh them down. We also mean more open investment. For decades, the United States has supported more open investment environments, more transparent regulatory structures, so that it's not so that the region is not only open to more U.S. foreign direct investment, but that indigenous populations, indigenous innovators, indigenous entrepreneurs can take advantage of the investment environments to drive economic growth throughout the region. And we also mean more open trade. Free, fair, and reciprocal trade is something the United States has supported for decades and that the Trump administration supports. That last paragraph in the description of "open" certainly doesn't go down easily with everything else this administration has pursued when it comes to trade policy. Whatever the Trump administration's basket of trade policy preferences are, they are certainly not the same ones the United States has "supported for decades." That alone will make at least part of the FOIPS agenda difficult to credibly communicate. But taken in sum, the core of FOIPS is familiar and is a statement of an end-state in Asia-one that is modeled on the regional status quo and under threat today as China rises. The big "new" additions-the focus on transparent

infrastructure financing and regulatory structures-are in vogue today as China's Belt and Road Initiative pushes on, but Wong fails to address how the United States will go about operationalizing this new strategy to ultimately deliver on these goals.

Wong was also pushed during the briefing by an AFP reporter, asked to square how the administration's walk away from free trade and the Trans-Pacific Partnership square with the stated goals of the FOIPS. But there too, his answer is unconvincing. He acknowledges that "there are strategic benefits to a regional free trade pact that includes the United States and our partners in the region"-something that I doubt Trump would concur with-and adds that "it's important not to put the strategic cart before the economic horse."

The recent signing of the Comprehensive and Progressive Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) has laid bare that, in the meantime, that the remaining 11 TPP states have moved on without Washington. Toward the end of the briefing, Wong is also hit with the awkward fact of Trump's recent remarks on the South Korea-U.S. Free Trade Agreement.

The administration still has its work cut out in operationalizing the FOIPS. To be charitable, these are still early days for the strategy and the Obama administration certainly faced its own shortcomings in marrying rhetoric to action with much of the Rebalance. But the Trump administration's challenges in Asia are especially acute today as a newly confident and powerful China asserts itself in Asia, in clear pursuit of regional hegemony in the coming decades. For more on the Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy, listen to a recent episode of The Diplomat's podcast on Asian Geopolitics here (Panda, 2018).

For Cambodia, Cambodia and Laos are generally seen as being in China's corner and have previously vetoed strong statements about Beijing's aggressive behaviour in the South China Sea (Murray, 2018). Following a changeover in the US



corridors of power after the election of Donald Trump as President of the US, America's allies and partners are concerned about the US's willingness to sustain its leadership role and security commitments in the Asia Pacific region. China's rising military power and the Trump administration's decision to withdraw from the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP); considering the economic leg of the 'rebalancing strategy.' This development has further contributed in increasing regional anxieties. Viewed through the lens of Neoclassical realism, the paper argues that the US emphasis on India's role within Asia Pacific is a consequence of consistencies in the US strategic priorities that value India as a regional counterweight to China's growing influence while also preserving the US dominance within the region (Hanif & Khan, 2018).

Roy Kamphausen, senior vice president at the National Bureau of Asian Research, cited discussions with officials in the Japanese Ministry of Economy, who is the chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Asia and the Pacific subcommittee stated President Trump's burgeoning Indo-Pacific strategy, claiming countries in the region are "eager" to forge bilateral trade deals with the U.S. But the president's strategy - and his earlier decision to withdraw the U.S. from the Trans-Pacific Partnership-did not sit well with other members of the panel who queried analysts about the Asia-Pacific region during hearing on China's Belt and Road initiative. Trump pitched that strategy in a speech at the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit in Vietnam as a way for the U.S. to enhance commerce "between all nations of the Indo-Pacific.", Trade and Industry in asserting that any bilateral deals the U.S. pursues should be poised as "TPP-ready (Hoagland, 2017).

The notion "Indo-Pacific" highlights a strategic framework, where these Asiatic powers-Japan and India - enhance their collaboration in the maritime domain. In fact, the term "Indo-Pacific" was first unveiled by Mr. Abe in front of Indian members of parliament in 2007 in a speech entitled as

"Confluence of the Two Seas". As he discussed the maritime connections between the Pacific and Indian Oceans, he used the expression "broader Asia (kakudai Asia)" as he encouraged India to be part of the Asian security framework. Mr. Abe has developed this idea into what he called "Asia's Democratic Security Diamond", which advocated for stronger ties among the US, Japan, India, and Australia. These concepts have now evolved into the "Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy", which was announced by Mr. Abe at the sixth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) meeting held in Nairobi in August 2016. Thus, the concept behind the Indo-Pacific strategy demonstrates the constant effort policy-makers in Washington have made in maintaining a robust US presence in the region. In other words, the Indo-Pacific strategy is an inheritance from past US administrations along with ideas produced by allies and like-minded nations in the post-Cold War era (Matsuda, 2018).

It is vital on ASEAN to reach out to the United States, Japan, India, and Australia to ascertain that all proposed elements are synergized and most importantly, that the emerging broader strategy would place ASEAN in the center ("Myanmar (Burma): ASEAN's Role in the US Indo-Pacific Strategy," 2018).

Within ASEAN countries, there have been disturbances over democratization and authoritarianism. We have also seen regional differences, meaning maritime ASEAN countries have interests that are not a priority for mainland member countries. From outside, some frustration has been voiced for ASEAN's inability to provide the driving force. It is in the driving seat, but not going anywhere fast enough. The external players have started to take matters in their own hands, with new ways of looking at the region, such as the Indo-Pacific concept ("ASEAN challenged by Indo-Pacific strategy,"2018).

Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam has claimed that discussed a lot about uncertainty and instability in the region.

In the last several years, the evolution of Asia-Pacific security architecture has been one of the most significant developments. Due to many emerging traditional and non-traditional issues, as well as adjustment of foreign policies by major powers in the region, a number of major initiatives have emerged. Two of them are the Indo-Pacific strategy of the US, and to some extent, the BRI of China. For more than 50 years, ASEAN has played a central role in the evolution of the regional security architecture. However, currently the centrality of ASEAN is facing prominent challenges. Though confirming support for ASEAN's central role, the major powers have also sought to influence the bloc as a whole as well as its individual members, affecting the unity and solidarity of the central role of the organization. Meanwhile, the mechanism and framework of ASEAN-led cooperation has revealed many shortcomings, especially overlapping functions, lack of vision and low efficiency.

ASEAN has also failed to demonstrate solidarity, consistency and initiative to better maintain its primary role and for over the last six years, there have been some changes in the ground reality and shift in issues. The South China Sea issue for example, has divided ASEAN. On the mainland, such as the Mekong region in Thailand, the construction of dams upstream has been detrimental to downstream communities and countries including Vietnam and Cambodia. There are a number of difficult issues for ASEAN to grapple with, Thitinan Pongsudhirak, professor, director, Institute of Security and International Studies from Chulalongkorn University, Thailand has stated ASEAN is facing some serious encounters internal and external issues. Within, you can see some divisions that we need to recognize and address head on ("ASEAN Challenged by Indo-Pacific Strategy,"2018).

## CONCLUSION

The United States is a resident power in the Indo-Pacific and the free flow of commerce to, from, and within that region is vital to the prosperity of Asia, the United States and the world. Therefore, the United States has clearly established its commitment to sustaining safe and secure sea lanes open to all. Unfortunately free commerce on these waters can be threatened by actions of both state and non-state actors. As a result, the United States appears committed to reinvigorating its capabilities in Asia.

Based on the experience of converging interests of Pacific Island states in a broader Indo-Pacific region remains a work in progress. New super-region is a strategic opportunity for the Pacific Islands to place themselves at the forefront of discussions taking place around the Ocean. Effective Pacific diplomacy within emerging Indo-Pacific arrangements should build from, and look beyond, traditional diplomacy. China with its track record of hostility towards India ought not intervene. Thus, the more actively unilaterally China pursues the security of its Indian Ocean. The deeper Indian apprehension of China's growing power and the closer India moves toward cooperation with the United States. It is doing so by simultaneously strengthening its regional posture and by enhancing its maritime partnerships. Posture strengthening efforts include both the deployment of more capable forces to more US bases in Guam and Japan, and dialogue with partners to identify opportunities to expand America's presence in South and Southeast Asia. Central to the effort to invigorate maritime relationships in the region are US initiatives to build trust, capacity and interoperability with a growing number of partners. At the same time, US strategy recognizes that just as it is not possible for one country to provide security over such vast water. It is also inefficient and impractical to entirely rely upon bilateral relationships to perform that mission. Therefore,

it is not unusual that an important element of this strategy is focused on building the cooperative security architecture needed to ensure the safety and security of Indo-Pacific sea lanes. The success of this approach mainly depends on how China behaves in the future. The other is the inclusive approach of institutionalizing the Indo-Pacific by embracing China and other states into a new Indo-Pacific region. The increasingly hybrid strategic environment in the South China Sea, for instance, indicates new challenges that the Indo-Pacific strategy will need to address. Nevertheless, as the Trump administration considers ways to add substance to their regional flagship policy, it is helpful to bear in mind that this is an inheritance from past administrations with an origin that could be traced to a period before Chinese maritime expansion started to challenge American and ally's primacy. A brief look at the evolution of this concept reveals a nuanced picture of how this seemingly new concept has developed as a means to preserve the status-quo in the Indo-Pacific, through enhanced maritime awareness in the post-Cold War era.

The Indo-Pacific region, states, for their varieties of norms and politics, are joined a fantastic history, culture, geography as well as economic growth to higher level of the individual states. We compulsory required solving that our security, prosperity, and core international and national interests are inextricably linked to each other. If we do not how to swim together, it is possible that we can be sunk together in the future ("On Indo-Pacific Maritime Security: "We may sink together if we do not swim together", 2013).

In a nutshell, the realization of a "Chinese lake" in the South China Sea is not a predetermined outcome. but, the claimant and conflict states, ASEAN, external actors, and the international community at large, need to be determined just how important the issue is and what costs they are willing to impose and absorb should they decide to undertake meaningful action. As the foundation of this crisis are two interdependent

considerations: (1) the rights of sovereign states to access their legal entitlements; and (2), whether there should be a rules-based regional order or an anarchical environment where the only predictable element is the capacity of the powerful to do as they wish. The dangerous precedents set by the combined effect of (1) the 2008 Russo-Georgian War; (2) Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 and subsequent interference in the eastern border provinces of the Ukraine; and (3) the near complete realization of Beijing's goals in the South China Sea, are significant of the politics of appeasement by the League of Nations during the inter-war years. As the world continues to fall into the depths of overpopulation, resource scarcity, and the increasingly dire effects of climate change. Amidst shifting power balances, rising military budgets, and increasing frustration with the U.N. and its Security Council, will Southeast Asia, the Indo-Pacific, South China Sea and the world be willing to continue to let history repeat itself (Roberts, 2018). For me, I think for ASEAN as forms of relations towards to major power in terms of benefits of diplomatically, politically, economically, as well as security from its multilateral or bilateral relationships. For its own bilateral relations can be designed as a form of a comprehensive strategic cooperative partnership, comprehensive strategic partnership, strategic partnership or a comprehensive partnership. Each ASEAN's state is in titled to share, with, cooperate and navigate among small, middle, superpowers in diversifications of gravity and dealing with multiple interests of geo-economic, geo-politics, marine time issues, security.

## REFERENCES

1. Artner, A. (2017). ROLE OF INDONESIA IN THE EVOLUTION OF ASEAN. *The Journal of East Asian Affairs*, 31(1), 1-38.
2. ASEAN challenged by Indo-Pacific strategy. (2018, 2018 Jul 24). *Yerepouni Daily News*.

3. Beeson, M. (2018). Institutionalizing the Indo-Pacific: the Challenges of Regional Cooperation. *East Asia : An International Quarterly*, 35(2), 85-98. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s12140-018-9288-3>
4. Briefing on the indo-pacific strategy. (2018, Apr 02). Targeted News Service Retrieved from <https://ezproxy.flinders.edu.au/2071/10.1007/s12140-018-9291-8>
5. Chacko, P., & Willis, D. (2018). Pivoting to Indo-Pacific? The Limits of Indian and Indonesian Integration. *East Asia : An International Quarterly*, 35(2), 133-148.
6. China-India: China-India cooperation outweighs our differences. (2018, Apr 30). *Asia News Monitor*.
7. Chongkittavorn, K. (2018). ASEAN's Role in the US Indo-Pacific Strategy. In (pp. 1-2). Washington: East - West Center.
8. Cossa, R. A., & Glosserman, B. (2018). THE PIVOT IS DEAD, LONG LIVE THE (INDO-ASIA-PACIFIC) PIVOT. *Comparative Connections*, 20(2), 1-11,131-133.
9. Dualistic Thinking. (2018, 2018 Aug 23). *Beijing Review*.
10. French, E. D. (2018). *The US-japan alliance and china's rise: Alliance strategy and reassurance, deterrence, and compellence* (Order No. 10931250). Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (2122316137).
11. Garver, J. (2015). Maritime security in the Indo-Pacific: perspectives from China, India, and the United States. Edited by Mohan Malik. *International Affairs*, 91(6), 1454-1455. doi:10.1111/1468-2346.12492
12. Granados, U. (2018). India's Approaches to the South China Sea: Priorities and Balances. 5(1), 122-137. doi:doi:10.1002/app5.
13. Graham, E. (2013). Southeast Asia in the US Rebalance: Perceptions from a Divided Region. *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, 35(3), 305-332.
14. Haider, M. Z. (2014). Australian Strategic Environment and Significant Challenges. *Defence Journal*, 17(8), 64-70.
15. Hanif, S., & Khan, M. (2018). US Security Strategy for Asia Pacific and India's Role. *Strategic Studies*, 38(1).
16. He, B. (2018). Chinese expanded perceptions of the region and its changing attitudes toward the indo-pacific: A hybrid vision of the institutionalization of the indo-pacific. *East Asia : An International Quarterly*, 35(2), 117-132. doi:<http://ezproxy.flinders.edu.au/2071/10.1007/s12140-018-9291-8>
17. He, K. (2018). Three Faces of the Indo-Pacific: Understanding the "Indo-Pacific" from an IR Theory Perspective. *East Asia : An International Quarterly*, 35(2), 149-161.
18. Hiep, L. H. (2018). America's Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy: A Vietnam Perspective. *Perspective*, 43(2018).Kuo, M. A. (2018, 2018

- Jan 24). The Origin of 'Indo-Pacific' as Geopolitical Construct. *The Diplomat*.
19. Kumar, S., 2018. Diplomacy: India's balancing act with China. *Governance Now*.
  20. Limaye, S. (2018). WELCOMED BY WASHINGTON, CONTESTED BY CHINA, ENGAGED WITH EAST ASIA. *Comparative Connections*, 19(3), 125-133. Myanmar (Burma): ASEAN's Role in the US Indo-Pacific Strategy. (2018, 07/03/2018 Jul 03). *Asia News Monitor*.
  21. Murray, L. (2018, 03/17/2018 Mar 17). A TUG OF WAR IN ASEAN. *The Australian Financial Review*, p. 19.
  22. Mushtaq, A. A. (2017). Rise of China and the EU Responses: the Search of New trends in Contemporary History. *Journal of European Studies*, 33(2), 49.
  23. Naupa, A. (2017). Indo-Pacific Diplomacy: A View from the Pacific Islands. 45(5), 902-917. doi:doi:10.1111/polp.12226
  24. On Indo-Pacific Maritime Security: "We may sink together if we do not swim together". (2013). 5(2), 275-283. doi:doi:10.1111/aspp.12030
  25. Panda, A. (2018, 2018 Apr 04). Trump's Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy Needs Clarity. *The Diplomat*.
  26. Roberts, C. B. (2018). ASEAN, the "South China Sea" Arbitral Award, and the Code of Conduct: New Challenges, New Approaches. 10(2), 190-218. doi:doi:10.1111/aspp.12391
  27. SECRETARY OF STATE POMPEO COMMENTS ON 'AMERICA'S INDO-PACIFIC ECONOMIC VISION'. (2018, 2018 Jul 31). *US Fed News Service, Including US State News*.
  28. Tellis, A. J. (2014). *Balancing Without Containment: An American Strategy For Managing China*. (). Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.
  29. Thiagarajan, K. (2016). *The future of indo-china relations: Cooperation or conflict?*(Order No. 10120767). Available from ProQuest Central; ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global; Social Science Premium Collection. (1806815469).
  30. Trump strategy heightens tensions. (2018, Aug 08). *China Daily* Retrieved from <https://ezproxy.flinders.edu.au:2068/docview/2084561056?accountid=10910He>, K. (2018). Three faces of the indo-pacific: Understanding the "Indo-pacific" from an IR theory perspective. *East Asia : An International Quarterly*, 35(2), 149-161.



31. United States: Briefing on the indo-pacific strategy. ("United States: Briefing on The Indo-Pacific Strategy," 2018). Asia News Monitor Retrieved from <https://ezproxy.flinders.edu.au>.
32. Velloor, R. (2018, 03/17/2018 Mar 17). Asean is fulcrum of Indo-Pacific strategy: US. *The Straits Times*.
33. Wilson, J. D. (2018). Rescaling to the Indo-Pacific: From Economic to Security-Driven Regionalism in Asia. *East Asia : An International Quarterly*, 35(2), 177-196.
34. Yong, C. (2018, 2018 Aug 12). Asean lukewarm, members fear compromised neutrality, *The Straits Times*. Retrieved from <https://search.proquest.com/docview>.