

# America's Indo-Pacific Strategy and Its Impact on Cooperation and Development in Asia

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**Abstract:** The Indo-Pacific Strategy is the basic content of the Asian policy of the United States (US) under the current US administration. The new US strategy emphasises the issue of "freedom" and "openness" in the relationship between the US and Asian countries as well as in the relationship among countries in the region. The US advocates a revision of the current imbalanced and unfair trade between the US and Asian countries, especially its major partners; promotion of transparent cooperation among countries, and resistance to the threat of big countries in maintaining maritime freedom and national sovereignty issues in the region. With this strategy, US-China relations are entering a period of real strategic competition. The tensions between the US and China have a multidimensional impact on relations among countries in Asia concerning both economic and security fields.

**Keywords:** Indo-Pacific, Belt and Road Initiative, the US national security strategy, diamond quadrangle.

**Subject classification:** International studies

## 1. Introduction

In recent decades, the world has witnessed a high dynamism in Asian development. Previously, the "miraculous" development of the region had some regional economies, such as Japan, the Republic of Korea (South Korea), Singapore, and Taiwan, to become the world's fastest-growing economies. Recently, this "miraculous" development has once again brought some countries into great powers, namely China and India. China's recent development was much

stronger than that of other economies in the region when its economic growth rate was maintained at double digits for many years, and in the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the size of China's economy surpassed those of Germany and Japan and has become the second-largest economy in the world after the US.

With improved economic potential, China is now ambitious to become a superpower through the realisation of the "Chinese Dream" and the "great Chinese revival". To become a country of regional and international influence,

China needs a strong economy, strong military forces, and tough foreign policies that demonstrate national power. It has invested heavily in defence to modernise its military. China's military forces have experienced rapid improvements in power with a range of new and advanced weapons capable of an enlarged range of operation. In particular, its naval forces are being given prioritised resources and are achieving rapid improvement in combat capacity, a rapid increase in the number of submarines and surface ships, as well as advanced anti-ship missiles capable of challenging the US Navy in the Western Pacific region. It is the rapid growth of military forces in general and the navy and coast guard in particular that have created significant advantages for China to increase its potential in territorial disputes with neighbouring countries and challenges of freedom of navigation in the Asia-Pacific region.

China's recent growth and its geopolitical and geostrategic ambitions are exerting a strong impact on US-China relations. Economic and security challenges to the US in Asia are quite diverse (ranging from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's weapon programme to terrorist organisations in Southeast Asia and South Asia as well as non-conventional security issues). However, the US government is increasing priorities to counter challenges imposed by China. Currently, the US sees China as a strategic competitor, and China's growth and ambitions are undermining the role and interests of the US in this region. In response to these challenges, in stead of the previous strategy of "rebalancing to Asia", the administration of President Donald Trump is now pursuing a new strategy, which is the "Indo-Pacific Strategy". The article

analyses this strategy and its impact on cooperation and development in Asia.

## **2. Content of the US's "Indo-Pacific Strategy"**

During his trip to attend the 2017 APEC Forum in Danang, Vietnam, US President Donald Trump gave a speech titled a "Free and Open Indo-Pacific". In this speech, President Trump, on the one hand, made judgments about the importance of Asia as well as the challenges that the US is facing in this area, and on the other hand, also provided basic sketches on how the United States builds its relationships within Asia. The idea of building US relations within Asia based on this "free" and "open" principle of President Trump is a successor and development of the "Free and Open Indo-Pacific" made by Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in 2007 in a speech at the Indian Parliament on his visit to the South Asian country.

A new feature of the "Indo-Pacific Strategy" as outlined by President Trump in Danang includes two issues: (i) expanding strategic space covering a part of the Indian Ocean, and promoting India's role; and (ii) emphasising the two words "free" and "open". US Secretary of State Michael Pompeo recently clarified the implications of this "free and open Indo-Pacific" strategy of the US President. The US Secretary of State explained: "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. [...] 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. [...] Economically, “open” means fair and reciprocal trade, open investment environments, and transparent agreements between nations, and improved connectivity to drive regional ties” [1].

Thus, the “free” and “open” that the US President mentioned in the Indo-Pacific Strategy both imply economically and strategically that the US wants to adopt the Indo-Pacific Strategy to re-establish economic rules as well as security rules in the Indo-Pacific region because these rules are currently being violated in the region, and it can be said that these “free” and “open” ideas are aimed at addressing security and cooperation issues in Asia today. After returning from his Asian tour in November 2017, at the end of December 2017, the US President approved the US 2017 National Security Strategy, and many of America's Indo-Pacific Strategy ideas were mentioned in this report.

In general, the content of America's Indo-Pacific Strategy is as follows:

### *2.1. On the strategic space*

In the past, under President Barack Obama's administration, the Asia policy of the US was concentrated in the strategy of “rebalancing to Asia”, and for this strategy, the Asia-Pacific region was focused on as a strategic space. However, in recent years, the challenges in Asia faced by the US have expanded beyond this strategic space, and thus, the current Asia policy of the US has expanded, covering the whole of the Pacific Ocean and the Indian Ocean regions. The US 2017 National Security Strategy divided the

world into six security zones including (1) Indo-Pacific; (2) Europe; (3) Middle East; (4) South and Central Asia; (5) Western Hemisphere; and (6) Africa. According to this report, the Indo-Pacific stretches from the United States west coast to the west coast of India, and this is also re-emphasised in the US Secretary of State's speech of 30 July 2018. In the speeches of the US President or US officials about the Indo-Pacific Strategy, there is almost no mention of the Indian Ocean, but only India, and limited to the west coast of India. Furthermore, there is no mention of the east coast of Africa. Thus, on the western geographic space of the Indo-Pacific Strategy of the United States, only countries and waters from the west coast of the United States to the west coast of India are included, not covering the entire Indian Ocean. The main point of expanding the US' strategic space is to make India an important partner in the Asia policy. In terms of geostrategic competition between the United States and China, this is logical because China is trying to reach the Indian Ocean region through the gateway of Pakistan. Involvement of India in the regional policy of the US stems from a number of reasons: (i) The US and India share the same views on the challenges in Asia, especially challenges from China's rise; (ii) India is a country of potentialities (in terms of population and economics) in coordination with the United States in its strategy of preventing challenges from China; and (iii) India has an important strategic position in the maritime routes in the Pacific and Indian Oceans.

### *2.2. On the economic front*

Economics has always been an important component of great US strategies, thereby,

on the one hand, the United States represents a leading role in the development of the world economy, and on the other hand, it can use economic tools to entice nations to follow their trajectories, or punish countries with unfriendly ties. Previously, the United States opened its domestic market for goods imported from other countries and promoted international economic integration to lead the world's economic development process. However, in the context of high trade deficit and international competition characterised with new trends, President Trump is reviewing this policy. In the spirit of "America first", in the speech at the 2017 APEC Forum, Mr Trump affirmed that the previous model of economic integration was not suitable for the US of today. This is because many countries have taken advantage of the US opening up to apply unfair trade measures lacking transparency and leaving negative consequences for the US' economy. Mr Trump's speech at the 2017 APEC Forum shows two economic orientations: (i) The US will no longer pursue large-scale, multilateral international economic integration as before; and (ii) the US will implement strong trade retaliatory measures with its counterparts who apply incompatible competition measures, saying, "Those who do not can be certain that the United States will no longer turn a blind eye to violations, cheating or economic aggression. Those days are over." [11]. Regarding economic integration, President Trump explicitly stated that the United States did not pursue multilateral trade agreements but only limited bilateral trade agreements. He stated: "I will make bilateral trade agreements with any Indo-Pacific nation that wants to be our partner

and that will abide by the principles of fair and reciprocal trade. What we will no longer do is enter into large agreements that tie our hands, surrender our sovereignty, and make meaningful enforcement practically impossible." [11].

With the spirit of being "free and open" as mentioned above, President Trump is determined to fight unfair trade situations. In general, the US government has accused many different partners in Asia of adopting unfair competition measures including Japan, South Korea, and Vietnam, but the one that Mr Trump wants to aim at is China. President Trump is keen to apply tough trade measures to China because the country has implemented many trade policies that violate the regulations of the World Trade Organisation, for example, depreciation of the RMB, application of state subsidies, forcing US companies to transfer technology, and theft of intellectual property. Especially, President Trump fiercely opposes the economic model which China is implementing, namely using state subsidies to carry out trade and investment activities that harm US companies. Therefore, President Donald Trump stated: "We will no longer tolerate the audacious theft of intellectual property. We will confront the destructive practices of forcing businesses to surrender their technology to the state. [...] "We will not remain silent as American companies are targeted by state-affiliated actors for economic gain, whether through cyberattacks, corporate espionage, or other anti-competitive practices." [11]. The provisions that President Donald Trump put forward are mainly aimed at trade and investment relations between the US and China. If these intentions are implemented, then trade relations between the US and

China may fall into tension in the coming period, and this may affect many other areas of bilateral relations as well as issues of international relations in Asia.

In addition to trade issues, President Trump also directed his criticism of China's infrastructure projects underway in the recent period of its "Belt and Road Initiative". According to analyses of US experts and officials, as well as Mr Trump's expression, China's infrastructure projects implemented in regional and non-regional countries are implemented through the funding of the Chinese government. At the US Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) in Washington DC, former US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson said: "They don't often create the jobs, which infrastructure projects should be tremendous job creators in these economies, but too often foreign workers are brought in to execute these infrastructure projects. [...] So this is not a structure that supports the future growth of these countries" [2]. In this regard, President Trump also said at the 2017 APEC Forum that: "We will find opportunities for our private sector to work with yours and to create jobs and wealth for us all. We seek strong partners, not weak partners. We seek strong neighbours, not weak neighbours. Above all, we seek friendship, and we don't dream of domination. For this reason, we are also refocusing our existing development efforts. We are calling on the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank to direct their efforts toward high-quality infrastructure investment that promotes economic growth." [2]. Thus, in the field of infrastructure construction, there is a competition and confrontation between the US and China in Asia to increase influence and to entice countries into their orbit.

### *2.3. On the security front*

A new feature of security cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region is the US's appreciation of India's role and its desire to strengthen relations with New Delhi. The geospatial expansion of the Asia strategy and the involvement of India show the US trust in the country of more than one billion people. The US has seen a disagreement on many issues of Indo-Chinese relations such as the Indo-Chinese border dispute, and the fact that India does not support China's "Belt and Road Initiative", and the country shares concern with the US about China's rise. With the participation of India, the US wants to promote the "diamond quadrangle" including the US, Japan, India, and Australia into a security core to maintain freedom of navigation with the goal of "freedom and openness". The US 2017 National Security Strategy states: "We welcome India's emergence as a leading global power and stronger strategic and defense partner. We will seek to increase quadrilateral cooperation with Japan, Australia, and India" [3, p.46].

Along with increasing ties with new partners as well as former allies and partners, the US has also affirmed to maintain a strong military force in the region to deter and be ready to defeat the enemy which is identified as the Democratic Republic of Korea first and foremost. The US 2017 National Security Strategy does not mention any cooperation with China in the field of security, but instead emphasises threats to the US and countries from the growth of Chinese military, namely the threat to maritime security in the East Sea (i.e. the South China Sea), preventing US military operations in the region. Regarding the East Sea issue, the US 2017 National

Security Strategy frankly criticises China's intention to build artificial islands and militarise these islands. It states: "Its efforts to build and militarise outposts in the South China Sea endanger the free flow of trade, threaten the sovereignty of other nations, and undermine the regional stability" [3].

The US still appreciates the role of traditional allies such as Japan, the Republic of Korea (South Korea), the Philippines, Thailand as well as other regional partners including Vietnam, and at the same time emphasises the importance of ASEAN, aiming at ensuring maritime security. The US 2017 National Security Strategy states: "We will re-energise our alliances with the Philippines and Thailand, and strengthen our partnerships with Singapore, Vietnam, Indonesia, Malaysia, and others to help them become cooperative maritime partners" [3, p.47]. Thus, the security structure in the Indo-Pacific strategy will be based on a basic axis of the "diamond quadrangle" composed of the US, Japan, Australia and India" and the cooperation of other allies and partners to deter the challenge from the DPRK (or North Korea), China, and other threats.

### **3. Some recent measures of Indo-Pacific strategic implementation by the US**

#### *3.1. Economics*

After taking office, US President Trump intended to implement economic policies to realise his election commitments strongly. In particular, the US President intends to apply some economic sanctions on China. However, after President Obama informed

the public about the Democratic Republic of Korea's programme as "an urgent matter" [6], President Trump temporarily suspended economic measures with China and instead promoted diplomatic measures with Beijing and increased pressure on Pyongyang. Until early 2018, the issue around North Korea's "mass destruction" weapons had positive developments, and President Trump returned to implement his economic commitments and signs of a US-China strategic competition in the economic field.

As mentioned above, in the US 2017 National Security Strategy, the United States stressed concerns about trade deficits, and theft of intellectual property and technology by China. The US President's administration is currently implementing many measures to prevent the Chinese approach to US' high technology. On 22 March 2018, the Office of the US Trade Representative published a survey of China's access to technology (125 pages, at the request of the US President) and raised four concerns: (i) China implements a regime that requires US companies to execute unfair technology transfer (in a compelled situation) to Chinese companies; (ii) China forms preferential policies/regulations for Chinese companies (while mistreating US companies) in the sale of technologies in the Chinese market; (iii) China applies a policy to support Chinese state-owned companies to invest abroad in acquiring US high-tech companies; and (iv) China directs (secretly) theft of intellectual property and espionage of corporate sensitive commercial information over the internet. Mr Lighthizer, US Trade Representative, had a hearing on this issue in the US Congress, a day after the publication of the report. According to Reuters (21 March 2018), the

US Treasury Department is said to have prepared a new regulation to stop US-based company purchases (mainly to prevent Chinese companies from acquiring US companies), and in particular the US government on 17 April 2018 announced the ban on Chinese mobile and network equipment company ZTE from buying and selling equipment from the US for violating copyright issues, and the company must pay a fine of 1.2 billion dollars for a breach of contract (ZTE is China's largest mobile phone and network equipment company) [4].

In the early months of 2018, the US President has repeatedly introduced measures to threaten economic sanctions against China. This includes the signing of a decree to impose a 25% tariff on steel and 10% tariff for aluminium goods imported from China (as from 8 March 2018). The US Trade Representative also said that the US would impose a 25% tax on 1,300 imported goods from China worth about USD 50 billion (as from 4 April 2018). Moreover, after tough responses from China, the US President asked the US Trade Representative to consider imposing taxes on about USD 100 billion of goods imported from China (from 6 April 2018). On 15 June 2018, the US President announced the official imposition of a 25% tax on USD 50 billion of goods imported from China, first applied to USD 34 billion and then to USD 16 billion. With tough statements and retaliation to impose a 25% tax on USD 50 billion of goods imported from the US, US President Trump on 1 August 2018 announced to consider imposing a 25% tax on USD 200 billion of goods imported from China [9].

Along with substantial economic measures aimed at China, the US and other

partners, especially the "diamond quadrangle" partners, are promoting economic cooperation programmes, especially those on infrastructure development, as a counterbalance of China's "Belt and Road Initiative". In a speech at the India-Pacific Business Forum on 30 July 2018 in Washington DC, US Secretary of State Michael Pompeo announced a number of US investment programmes in Asia including a USD 130 million infrastructure, energy, and information connection fund to help countries call for investment in these areas, and announced the BUILD Bill that the US Congress would approve with total investment capital of about USD 60 billion and these three programmes [10].

Recent measures to impose taxes, to investigate theft of intellectual property and technology, and to prevent activities of investment and technology access taken by the US against China recently, which may be continued in the near future, as well as the US infrastructure investment promotion programme are of an economic and a political/strategic character. Economically, the tax measures imposed by the US government on Chinese goods are due to the recent increase in the trade deficit: USD 367 billion in 2015, USD 347 billion in 2016, and USD 375 billion in 2017. The US trade deficit with China is very high, accounting for nearly 60% of the total value of bilateral imports and exports (in 2017, total US-China bilateral import and export turnover was USD 636 billion)<sup>2</sup>. With such a high trade deficit, US President Trump has repeatedly stated that this situation is unacceptable and that Chinese goods have made many American industries decline and deprived Americans of many jobs, and he has

repeatedly advocated implementing measures to protect domestic industries against the attack of Chinese goods (and goods of other countries). Measures to protect goods and safeguard technology carried out by US President Trump need to be understood both politically and strategically. America's economic and political power in the world is based on a science and technology foundation. The US is a country with advanced science and technology which has made the US the No. 1 world power in terms of both economy and military. In recent times, China's science and technology have achieved rapid progress and actively supported some of its industries and some military fields. The US believes that the rapid development of some of China's industries and military equipment is partly due to China having advanced technologies from the US, such as aircraft carrier catapults and Stealth aircraft J20 [12]. Thus, if the US does not have measures to prevent China from having advanced technologies, high-tech industries (i.e. electronics, information, biology, nano), the US may lose its competitive advantages quickly, and in particular, the US could lose its military advantage. Therefore, the administration of US President Trump is implementing drastic measures to restrict trade with China and to prevent technology transfer for China for economic purposes.

### *3.2. Concerning security and military issues*

Different from the previous "Rebalance to Asia" strategy under President Obama's administration thereby the US played a key role in preventing China's military ambitions in the region, with the formation of the Indo-Pacific strategy, the US still

plays a key military role, but at the same time mobilises the participation of allies and partners. In recent times, after the North Korean issue has experienced positive developments, the US has shifted its regional security focus to Taiwan and freedom of maritime navigation in the East Sea to create pressure on China in these two areas. Cooperation between the US and Taiwan is taking new steps. At the end of March 2018, the US President signed the "Taiwan Travel Act" which allows senior leaders of the two sides to visit each other. The Act allows: "High-ranking US government officials, including national security officials, military generals and other executive officials, to come to Taiwan to meet fellow officials", and also allows: "high-ranking Taiwanese officials to enter the US [...] to meet with US officials including officials from the US Department of State, the US Department of Defense, and the agencies of the Cabinet of Government" [7]. In addition to signing a USD 1.7 billion contract to sell weapons to Taiwan in 2017, the US has recently planned to supply submarine building technology to the territory [8]. Thus, the US administration is currently increasing ties with Taiwan as a tool to increase security pressure on China, despite Beijing's opposition and argument that the US has violated the policy of "One China".

The naval operations of the Indo-Pacific strategic countries have also increased in the East Sea recently. The number of visits by warships from Indo-Pacific quadrangle nations to the East Sea has increased significantly. These include the visits of the USS Carl Vinson of the US to the Philippines and Vietnam. Accordingly, the number of Australian and Japanese

warships visiting ports in Southeast Asia has also increased. Along with promoting security cooperation of regional countries, the US Navy has increased the presence of US naval forces, maritime patrol activities, and organised a number of military exercises in the East Sea. These activities include the USS Hopper destroyer patrolling within 12 nautical miles of the area of Scarborough archipelago (on 17 January 2018), and the USS Mustin destroyer patrolling within 12 nautical miles in the area of the Mischief Reef island which has been renovated by China (on 23 March 2018). In early 2018, the US Navy deployed three carriers in the East Sea region including the USS Theodore Roosevelt, the USS Ronald Reagan, and the USS Carl Vinson. The USS Carl Vinson aircraft carrier group of the US conducted military exercises with the Japanese Navy in the East Sea (on 11 March 2018) [13]. The rise of US military operations in the East Sea has encountered Chinese opposition. China opposed all US patrol activities in the East Sea, and had relatively strong responses to US military exercises in the East Sea by organising a large-scale military exercise also in the sea with the participation of around 40 warships and the Liaoning aircraft carrier about a week after the US conducted its military exercise.

#### **4. Some of the effects of the Indo-Pacific strategy on Asia**

It can be said that the Indo-Pacific strategic focus of the US is China, although other Asian issues are still paid attention to by the current US government. The time so far that

the US has implemented the strategy is relatively short, but the effects of this strategy have shown that this is a strategy that can exert significant impacts on US-China relations in particular and issues of cooperation and development in the region in general. Some generalisations about the impact of the Indo-Pacific strategy of the US to date are as follows:

##### *4.1. Regarding economics*

The US-China relations are at a stressful stage. The US application of tariffs on Chinese goods and the threat of expanding the scale of tariffs on Chinese goods, as well as China's responses by imposing tariffs on US goods officially started the US-China trade war. Early calculations show that if the two countries can manage their initial trade war (at a level of USD 50 billion by each side), the scale of the war is not too large, because it only accounts for a relatively small share of the total GDP of either country. However, if the US-China trade war expands in size to USD 200 billion, or USD 500 billion as the US President recently announced, the extent of the impact of this trade war on the regional and global economies is huge. According to the International Monetary Fund, if the US and China carry out the trade war, the global economy will decrease by about 0.5 percentage points by 2020, equivalent to about USD 430 billion [5]. The immediate economic losses are relatively large. However, the indirect effects of the US-China trade war will be much larger and unpredictable, including the financial and price impacts, and instability in the international economy in the upcoming time.

For neighbouring countries trading with China, it is likely that Chinese goods that cannot be consumed in the US market and will, therefore, overflow into these neighbouring economies, and may cause economic uncertainties for those economies.

Despite concerns about the negative impact of the US-China trade war, the Indo-Pacific strategy of the US also has positive signs for the economic development of Asia, particularly, the infrastructure development programme in Asia that the US and some of its major partners in the region form and promote. On the one hand, the programme will help countries (apart from China) be less dependent on China's "Belt and Road" infrastructure programme; on the other hand, they will have new resources to develop their infrastructure systems. Although the BUILD Asia infrastructure assistance programme of the US still has to wait for the US Senate to approve, it may be a rather important programme that contributes to the increase of opportunities for the selection of investment funds of countries. In addition to the BUILD programme, the US and other major regional partners such as Japan and Australia will also have similar support programmes through their funds or the Asian Development Bank.

#### *4.2. Regarding military and security*

The Indo-Pacific strategy of the US and its allies and partners focuses on the issue of maintaining freedom of maritime navigation, especially some key points of the maritime route from the Pacific Ocean to the Indian Ocean for which maintaining security in the East Sea is a key issue of

today. Given the fact that China has completed the construction of the islands in the Spratlys and intends to use those islands for military purposes, the US issued many warnings and prevented China from militarising these artificial islands. The US and the "quartet" countries have maintained military operations (primarily demonstrating military power with exercises and patrols) and got involved in regional diplomacy to promote the parties to seek a peaceful solution (for example, the promulgation of the Code of Conduct in the East Sea between China and ASEAN countries). Along with those multilateral activities, the US has also made efforts to promote bilateral relations with countries, especially those in Southeast Asia, to promote cooperation on national security and to support countries to improve the capacities of law enforcement forces at sea such as the coast guards. With the formation of the Indo-Pacific strategy, the defence and security cooperation of the "diamond quadrangle" countries with Southeast Asian countries will also be strengthened. Security and defence cooperations between Southeast Asian countries and Japan and Australia and India's participation in Southeast Asia's security operations have also increased significantly recently.

Although territorial disputes and security issues in the East Sea region still exist alongside exposed maritime routes in the entire Pacific Ocean and Indian Ocean, the presence and increased military operations of the US and other countries of the "diamond quadrangle" together with the cooperation of other countries in the region have maintained the security of this region to the effect that no incidents have occurred

recently. Although disputes in the East Sea may still be complicated, cooperation activities between the countries participating in the Indo-Pacific strategy and other countries in the region have prevented conflicts from happening as they used to in the past.

Despite these positive effects, the Indo-Pacific strategy of the US and other countries could make China have adverse reactions because China sees that the Indo-Pacific strategy of the US harms its interests and strategies. Not to mention political and strategic issues, the maritime route connecting the Pacific and the Indian Oceans is also an extremely important route for Chinese goods to be exported to countries, as well as this route provides strategic goods for China (80% of China's imported oil is shipped through this route). Therefore, in the face of the formation of Washington's Indo-Pacific strategy, Beijing may likely form a new strategy to deal with this. It will continue to develop stronger military forces in general, especially its navy, planning to upgrade the coast guards into a second naval force and the world's biggest coast guards' force. Similarly, China will also continue to promote the implementation of the "Belt and Road Initiative" projects to counterbalance US efforts to entice countries. And with those efforts of China, the US-China competition in Asia in the upcoming time will increase in all aspects of economics, military, politics and diplomacy.

## 5. Conclusion

The economic landscape and regional relations in Asia are changing very

fundamentally recently, and this is to verify the true role of the US in Asia. To cope with the challenges in this area, especially the rapid rise of China, the US has implemented the Indo-Pacific strategy to increase its influence in the region and to challenge China's ambitions. The US has implemented a tough policy with China, and through the "diamond quadrangle" has increased military influence in the region, thereby maintaining freedom of maritime navigation and preventing regional security conflicts. The US-China trade war has officially erupted, and tensions in the East Sea between the US and China as well as between China and other countries in the region are characterised with new features. China's development and the implementation of the Indo-Pacific strategy signal a new phase in US-China relations, a period of strategic competition between the two superpowers in the Asia-Pacific region.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> The paper was published in Vietnamese in: *Châu Mỹ ngày nay*, số 9, 2018. Translated by Luong Quang Luyen, edited by Etienne Mahler.

<sup>2</sup> The figures are from the US Census Bureau [14].

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