

The Factors Affecting US Foreign Policy to the Southeast Asia from the Post Cold War until Present

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Abstract The US has continuously changed its policy toward Southeast Asia from the end of the Cold War (1991) to the present in an effort to retain alliances and maintain its dominant position in this region. To extend their influence in Southeast Asia more and more deeply, the main powers - China, India, Russia, Japan, etc. - have intensified their policies to varying degrees and in diverse ways. This has evolved into a factor influencing US foreign policy in Southeast Asia from 1991 to the present. By analyzing the policies and measures in relations with Southeast Asian countries of China, India, Russia, and Japan, the article will show the impacts of these factors on the foreign policy of China. US towards Southeast Asia in the period from 1991 to present.

Keywords: US foreign policy, strategic competition, Southeast Asia, influencing factors

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1. Introduction

The collapse of the Soviet Union - one of the world's two superpowers since World War II, disintegrated the old international order, opening the era when the world changed from two poles to a "super-superior", multi-power". The United States became the only superpower in the world in terms of economic, political and military dominance. However, along with the strong globalization process, the great impacts of the world trend from confrontation to dialogue, many great powers have risen to become competitors with the US in Southeast Asia - an area with a very important geostrategic position in the world, of which the most important are China, Russia, India and Japan, along with the Southeast Asian countries themselves. Within the scope of this article, we will deeply analyze and understand the impact of major factors on US policy towards Southeast Asia in the period from the post-Cold War to the present. From there, it can be seen that the US must make appropriate adjustments in its foreign policy towards Southeast Asia to maintain its important role in this region.

2. Factors Affecting US Policy in Southeast Asia since the Cold War until Now

a. Chinese Factor

China's involvement and influence in Southeast Asia, including through the ASEAN-China dialogue relationship framework, has grown significantly since the early 1990s. This development is both a natural consequence. However, due to China's strong economic growth, it is both a

consequence of its historical relationship with countries in Southeast Asia that are geographically close, and also a consequence of the Beijing's decades-long investment in building regional relationships both bilaterally with ASEAN member states and multilaterally through ASEAN with an ASEAN-led regional architecture. Since the early 1990s, China has enhanced its relationship with ASEAN through dialogue forums such as ASEAN+3, ASEAN Regional Security Forum (ARF), and Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM), East Asia Summit (EAS)...In November 2002, ASEAN and China signed an Agreement on the Code of Conduct in the South China Sea. This document is the basis for ASEAN and China to settle disputes at sea, and at the same time create favorable conditions for maritime trade in this sea. Then, in October 2003, China and ASEAN signed the Joint Declaration on the China-ASEAN Strategic Partnership for Peace and Prosperity, and China officially joined the ASEAN Treaty of Amity and Cooperation¹. This is considered an important step in political-security cooperation between China and ASEAN.

In the first two decades of the 21st century, the rise and expansion of the sphere of influence of emerging powers is a very remarkable point, especially China - the most populous country in the world. First of all, China repeatedly violates the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and makes claims without legal evidence in the South China Sea. This was followed by sovereignty disputes with some ASEAN countries and Japan, especially with threats or use of force to obstruct the freedom of air navigation in the Asia-Pacific region regarding the ADIZ

¹Nguyen Thi Thanh Thuy (2007), "US-ASEAN relations in the early years of the 21st century", in *ASEAN-40 years in retrospect and towards*, Hanoi National University Publishing House, p.360.

in the East China Sea ²; arbitrarily brought the HD 981 rig to illegally exploit the waters under Vietnam's sovereignty; arbitrarily set up administrative units, named disputed entities... These actions show that China does not follow the international rules and laws of the contemporary system that the US is "holding balance and bounce"³. China's territorial expansion actions in the South China Seas have increased tensions in relations between China and countries with related interests. This is a long-term risk that destabilizes and threatens security in the Asia-Pacific region. With its important geostrategic position, the South China Sea is always a hot spot for territorial and maritime disputes. And that has harmed American interests. Therefore, after President B. Obama took office, fearing the rise of China, the US-China relationship was also more competitive. The US strategy of "Pivoting to Asia" also partly comes from China's growing ambition to expand, which directly threatens the US's number one position in this region. Countries such as Japan, India, and Australia also promote the Asia - Pacific vision, which focuses on the principle of freedom and openness to gradually form a front (together with the United States) to contain China.

China's Asia-Pacific strategy has changed since the 2008 global economic crisis. After a successful rise, China wants to increase its national power in all aspects. The country's goal is to become the leading power in the region and the world. After the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (2012), China wants to realize the "Chinese Dream" to become the world's leading power by 2049⁴. China's foreign policy adjustment in recent years has focused on two groups of countries: large countries and neighboring countries. China also proposed to introduce new initiatives and institutions to expand its sphere of influence not only in the economic field, but also gradually shift and strengthen political-security cooperation such as: The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI-Belt and Road Initiative) in 2013 aims to connect infrastructure including land, sea and air between China and Southeast Asia, South Asia, India, and Iran and Europe, Africa; China-ASEAN Community of Shared Future in 2013; Lancang-Mekong Cooperation (LMC) involves 5 countries in the Mekong sub-region: Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam; Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) 2014;... China's intention is to combine these initiatives with a number of other regional cooperation mechanisms such as the Global Economic Partnership Agreement Regional Representative Office (RCEP), ASEAN-China Trade in Goods Agreement (ACFTA)...will become the pincers of this country for the East Asian economy, the goal of building an economic structure in Asia, where China will play a central role, while leaving out strategic rivals such as the United States, Japan, and India. China is also drawing ASEAN countries and many other countries in the Asia-Pacific region into its orbit to strengthen its power to compete with the US.

For the US, the BRI initiated by China is very worrisome because if China succeeds with this strategy, it will form a new cooperative institution, a new unprincipled international development belt, standards set by the US, causing countries to reduce their dependence on the US to become dependent on China, and if so, it will first threaten US economic interests in the Asia - Pacific region⁵. Therefore, in addition to withdrawing from TPP and reviewing NAFTA, the US has implemented an Asia - Pacific strategy to contain the rise of China, using a variety of tariff measures with a dense frequency of tariffs on Chinese goods imported into the United States to weaken the Chinese economy.

Another noteworthy point is that in terms of bilateral cooperation, China continues to strengthen its traditional relationships in the region. In 2010, China and Cambodia agreed to establish a comprehensive strategic partnership. The two countries regularly have high-level exchanges and signed cooperation agreements in many fields. Cambodia is considered China's "most dependent partner" in Southeast Asia⁶. In addition, China also strengthens the establishment of strategic partnerships with other countries (Vietnam 2008, Laos 2009, Myanmar 2011), or is an ally and close friend of the US (Thailand 2012, Malaysia and Indonesia 2013).

In terms of economic and trade cooperation, China and Southeast Asian countries have increasingly become each other's important trading partners. China-ASEAN trade reached \$292.8 billion in 2010, with China's total exports to ASEAN reaching \$154.6 billion and imports from ASEAN reaching \$138.2 billion. ASEAN has become China's 4th largest trading partner, 4th largest export market and 3rd largest source of imports⁷. At the 7th Summit (November 2001), China signed with ASEAN countries an Agreement on Building a Free Trade Area (ACFTA), expected to be completed in 10 years, creating an FTA. largest in the world with about 1.7 billion consumers and GDP of about 2 trillion USD⁸.

China's economic expansion is often intertwined with its military build-up, which poses challenges for many of the countries involved, especially the United States. In February 2019, Admiral Philip Davidson of the US Asia - Pacific Command called the Chinese military "the main threat to the interests of the United States, its citizens, and its allies in the region"⁹. The Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) estimates China's defense budget at around \$240 billion in 2021, second only to the United States in military spending. The CSIS report states that over the past decade, "China's annual increase in official military spending has outstripped annual GDP growth, reflecting Beijing's priority for strengthening its armed forces". China has a stockpile about 280 nuclear weapons on land and at sea and "the

²In 2013, China announced the establishment of an ADIZ, but this ADIZ overlaps with pre-existing ADIZs (Taiwan, Korea and Japan ADIZs), and this ADIZ is deployed more broadly than other countries. ADIZ is different, so this has caused the reaction of the countries involved.

³Vu Van Anh (2020), *Shifting structural power in international relations - Theory and practice*, World Publishing House, Hanoi, pp.186-187.

⁴Hoang Khac Nam (2020), *Theory and practice of Asia-Pacific regional structure*, National Political Publishing House, Hanoi, p.189.

⁵Hoang Khac Nam (2020), *Theory and practice of Asia-Pacific regional structure*, National Political Publishing House, Hanoi, p.186.

⁶Hoang Khac Nam (2020), *Theory and practice of Asia-Pacific regional structure*, National Political Publishing House, Hanoi, p.142.

⁷Hung Ming-Te & Tony Tai-Ting Liu (2012), *US Foreign Policy in Southeast Asia Under The Obama Administration: Explaining US Return To Asia And Its Strategic Implications*, Usak Yearbook, Vol.5, p.207.

⁸Nguyen Thi Thanh Thuy, "US-ASEAN relations in the early years of the 21st century", in *ASEAN-40 years in retrospect and towards*, Hanoi National University Publishing House, tr.360.

⁹The Policy Circle, *Foreign Policy: Asia Pacific* at <https://www.thepolicycircle.org/brief/us-foreign-policy-asia-pacific-region/>.

country's modernization program is adding significant new capabilities" ¹⁰.

Thus, it can be asserted that it is the rise of China that is the main reason for the US to return to Southeast Asia. In recent years, China's rapid economic rise and rise to power have had a major impact on the power structure in the Asia-Pacific region. Although China has repeatedly emphasized the concepts of "peaceful rise" and construction of a "harmonious world", fulfilling the obligations of a responsible country and actively participating in international affairs. However, in fact, this country is increasingly showing its intention to expand and invade its territory, especially in the South China Sea - where the world's most important maritime trade route is located. With China's rapid rise in both economic and political power, a growing number of scholars warn that the United States needs to pay special attention to both its soft power and expansionist ambitions and will be potential threat to America's position not only in Southeast Asia but also in the Indo - Pacific ¹¹.

b. Factors of other big countries: Russia, India, Japan

Russia, India and Japan are three major countries, more or less all factors that have an impact on Southeast Asia, although in terms of magnitude and influence cannot be compared with the US and China. In the first two decades of the 21st century, all three countries have adopted policies and strategies to strengthen their position and presence in Southeast Asia.

First of all, India: along with rapid economic growth and strong development of information technology, India is increasingly asserting its role as a major country in the economic and political structure of the Asia - Pacific region. Asia-Pacific through active implementation of the Look East policy and strengthening economic cooperation with ASEAN countries. India's Look East Policy was announced in 1991, and has been pursued continuously by the Indian cabinet for two decades. In September 2014, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced his decision to rename the Look East Policy to Act East. This shows that India will be more proactive and purposeful in the region to affirm its larger and more worthy role as a major power in the region and the world.

Since India became a full dialogue member of ASEAN (1995), ARF (1996) and signed the TAC Treaty (2003), relations between India and ASEAN have improved rapidly. Since 2002, India and ASEAN have regularly hosted the Summit. To promote cooperation, the two sides established the India-ASEAN Joint Committee on Cooperation (IAJCC) and the ASEAN Joint Business Council (IAJBC). India competes with countries such as the US, Japan and China in establishing bilateral FTAs with ASEAN countries. Regarding bilateral cooperation, India established a strategic partnership with Indonesia in 2005, Vietnam in 2007, Malaysia in 2010 and strengthened ties with Singapore through the Defense Cooperation Agreement ¹². India's role in the region was further enhanced with its participation in the 2005 East Asia Summit as well as

strategic partnerships and multilateral naval exercises in the region.

Regarding security, the Look East policy focuses on three aspects: (1) balancing with China in Myanmar; (2) investment in oil fields in Vietnam; (3) Indian Navy's maritime doctrine 2007-ranked the South China Sea and the Persian Gulf as second most important, after the Indian Ocean. With China planning to set up dual-use ports in Hambantota, Gwadar ¹³, ... India also wants to exert influence in the South China Sea and East China Sea as part of its counterbalancing strategy ¹⁴.

In terms of economy and trade, as of 2012, India achieved more than \$80 billion in bilateral trade with Southeast Asia (up from less than \$3 billion in 1993). The two sides will soon complete the signing and ratification of the India-ASEAN FTA on services and investment to supplement the FTA on goods signed in 2009 and create a momentum for the bilateral trade relationship to jump to over 80 billion USD, increasing to about USD 100 billion in 2015 and doubling in 2022. Two-way investment is increasing rapidly, the capital of ASEAN investment projects in India in the last 8 years has reached about USD 27.9 billion. In contrast, India's investment in ASEAN also reached 32.4 billion USD ¹⁵.

India has been at the forefront of promoting a series of transnational projects aimed at creating an interconnected system of roads, railways and waterways. The physical, institutional and spiritual connectivity will create an increasingly closer bond between India and ASEAN, such as the completion of the Tamu-Kalewa-Kalemoyo line under the India-Myanmar Expressway Project Thailand is creating a new dynamic in India's multifaceted relationship with the region.

Recently, India has actively increased its economic activities and military cooperation with Southeast Asian countries, especially in the Malacca Strait and South China Sea. Statistics show that nearly 55% of India's total transshipment cargo is transported through the Strait of Malacca to continue to China, Japan, South Korea, the US and other important destinations. This proves that the maritime routes passing through the South China Sea play a decisive role in New Delhi's economic strength.

For Russia: Since the early 1990s, the Soviet Union has made efforts to create a security structure in Southeast Asia. In 1991, a few months before the dissolution, the Soviet Union became a consultation partner of ASEAN. In 1994, Russia became a founding member of the ARF, and two years later its status was elevated from consulting partner to dialogue partner. Russia joined ASEAN's non-aggression pact, the TAC Treaty in 2004, and joined the US in the EAS Conference in 2011.

In 2010, a year before President B. Obama's administration announced its pivot/rebalancing strategy to Asia, President Vladimir Putin announced that Russia would implement a "Look East" policy. Starting here, Russia pledges to increase its economic, political and security engagement with countries in Asia. However, basically before 2014, Europe was still the focus area of

¹⁰Matthew P. Funaiolo, Brian Hart (2021), "Understanding China's 2021 Defense Budget", *Center For Strategic & International Studies*, p.4-5.

¹¹Hung Ming-Te & Tony Tai-Ting Liu (2012), *US Foreign Policy in Southeast Asia Under The Obama Administration: Explaining US Return To Asia And Its Strategic Implications*, Usak Yearbook, Vol.5, p.206.

¹²Hoang Khac Nam (2020), *Theory and practice of Asia-Pacific regional structure*, National Political Publishing House, Hanoi, p.144.

¹³Hambantota is a port city of Sri Lanka; Gwadar is a port city of Pakistan.

¹⁴Nguyen Thi Minh Thao (2015), "India: from the policy of "Looking East" to the policy of "Acting in the East", *Social Science*, No. 11(96), p.110.

¹⁵Nguyen Thi Minh Thao (2015), "India: from the policy of "Looking East" to the policy of "Acting in the East", *Social Science*, No. 11(96), p.113.

the country's foreign policy. It was only after 2014, due to the pressure of sanctions from the US and Western countries after the annexation of Crimea, that Russia focused on shifting its foreign policy pivot towards Asia. Starting in 2015, Russia periodically organizes the Eastern Economic Forum with the goal of strengthening economic cooperation with the Asia-Pacific region¹⁶. With ASEAN, Russia upgraded its relationship with ASEAN to a strategic partnership. However, due to the lack of strong economic potential and many difficulties due to the embargo of Western countries, Russia's involvement and influence in Southeast Asia is still quite faint. Except for Vietnam, almost no country in Southeast Asia considers Russia a credible and committed player. While Russia will continue to urge ASEAN member states to buy its energy and weapons, for Moscow, Southeast Asia is likely to remain secondary to its European, Middle Eastern and Chinese counterparts.

The statistics highlight weak economic connections between Russia and Southeast Asia. In 2014, Russia was ASEAN's 14th largest trading partner: two-way trade value reached 22.5 billion USD, up 13% compared to 2013 figure (19.95 billion USD) but still only 0.9% of the total trade of the 10 member countries. In contrast, ASEAN's trade with China was \$366.5 billion (14.5%), with the EU at \$248 billion (9.8%), with Japan at \$229 billion (9.1%). US\$212 billion (8.4 percent) and India \$67.7 billion (2.7 percent). Russian investment in Southeast Asia is also modest and declining. From 2012 to 2014, Russia's FDI into ASEAN 10 was only \$698 million or just 0.2% of the total inflows. During the same period, EU invested US\$58 billion (15.7%), Japan US\$56.4 billion (15.3%), US US\$32.4 billion (8.8%), and China Country 21.4 billion USD (5.8%). Due to the country's economic crisis, Russian FDI in Southeast Asia in 2013-2014 fell by 105% compared to 2012-2013¹⁷.

Japan: Although not a close neighbor like China, Japan is still closely associated with Southeast Asia on many interests, especially economic interests. The South China Sea and its straits are the shortest and most important fuel shipping route for Japan. Therefore, for many years, Japan has actively maintained bilateral cooperation with countries in the region and multilaterally with ASEAN. Japan has not publicly stated its goals but is very clear in its intention to gain a great position in Southeast Asia through further improving and strengthening relations with ASEAN countries, supporting ASEAN's central role. Japan participates in many dialogue forums with ASEAN such as ARF, Foreign Ministers Meeting (PMC) 9+1, 9+10, ASEAN-Japan Forum. In the second decade of the 21st century, Japan strengthens its policy of engagement in Southeast Asia through economic tools, universal values, and especially security and defense tools to secure and strengthen national interests, and deal with the negative effects of China's rise. In January 2013, Prime Minister S. Abe chose Southeast Asia, including Vietnam, as the starting point for his first overseas trip since taking office. Later, during his visit to Indonesia, he laid out the "5 principles for the new administration's foreign policy in

the region" (Abe Doctrine) related to strengthening diplomatic relations, security-defence between Japan and ASEAN. In 2013, Prime Minister Abe completed visits to all 10 countries in Southeast Asia. In terms of security, in Japan's 2013 National Security Strategy, ASEAN involves various aspects in dealing with Japan's security challenges. Accordingly, Japan considers ASEAN an important security partner. In the 2014 National Defense Program Guidelines (NDPG), Japan affirmed that it wants to promote joint training and capacity building with ASEAN countries in addition to cooperation in crisis response.

Japan has also repeatedly spoken out about the South China Sea issue. When China pulled the oil rig into Vietnam's exclusive economic zone and continental shelf in May 2014, Japan reacted quite clearly: Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said at NATO headquarters that "In the South China Sea...we cannot accept changes caused by force or coercion. This is a global issue that has a major impact on Asia¹⁸." On June 11, 2014, the Foreign Affairs Committee of the House of Representatives of Japan issued a statement on the East Sea, calling on relevant parties to show restraint, not to use force to change the status quo and impose sovereignty on a single basis in the South China Sea.

In terms of economy and trade, Japan is one of the leading trading partners of ASEAN. As the world's third largest economy, Japan stepped up the provision of official development aid (ODA) to ASEAN countries, accounting for 60% of ASEAN's total ODA. Japan is also a major investor in Southeast Asia, exceeding US\$100 billion in 2003. Two-way trade between ASEAN and Japan reached US\$225.9 billion in 2019, making Japan a major trading partner. FDI from Japan is the second largest in ASEAN, in 2019 FDI from Japan into ASEAN countries amounted to 20.4 billion USD, accounting for 12.7% of total FDI inflows into ASEAN¹⁹.

Thus, through the analysis of China, Russia, Japan and India factors, it must be affirmed that in the political-diplomatic structure, the United States still makes efforts to maintain the partnership with the East Asian region. South Asia, but besides that, the great powers behind the US such as China, Japan, India and Russia from the late 90s of the 20th century up to now have made unremitting efforts, with different levels and forms. Each other has been expanding their network of foreign relations and influence in a deeper and broader direction, thereby drawing countries in Southeast Asia out of dependence on the US.

c. Southeast Asian Factor

After the Vietnam War, the situation in Southeast Asia developed in the direction of peace and cooperation. The six original countries of ASEAN had a change of perception when they saw the great values of the national liberation struggle in the three Indochinese countries, so that these countries would get rid of their military dependence. entry to America. ASEAN's first act of goodwill was the signing of the Treaty of Amity and

¹⁶Hoang Khac Nam (2020), *Theory and practice of Asia-Pacific regional structure*, National Political Publishing House, Hanoi, p.191.

¹⁷Ian Storey (2015), "What Russia's "Turn to the East" Means for Southeast Asia", *Researchers At IEAS-Yusuf Ishak Institute Share Their Understanding Of Current Events*, No.67, p.4-5.

¹⁸Nguyen Vu Tung, Nguyen Thuy Anh (2017), "Japan's policy adjustments to Southeast Asia during the 2nd term of Shinzo Abe's government", *International Studies*, No. 2 (109), p. 49.

¹⁹The ASEAN Secretariat, *Overview of ASEAN-Japan Dialogue Relations* at https://asean.org/storage/2012/05/20201008_Overview-ASEAN-Japan-Relations-full-version.pdf.

Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC, also known as the Treaty of Bali) in February 1976, which gave ASEAN the status of a business - political economy, determine the relationship of the organization with countries around the world. In fact, through the TAC, the six ASEAN countries expressed their desire to improve relations with Vietnam and Indochina²⁰. On the Vietnamese side, in 1976, in turn, it established diplomatic relations with the member countries of ASEAN. The process of improving relations between the two groups of countries was achieving good results, when the Cambodia issue and the war between Vietnam and China in the late 1970s occurred. Due to not properly understanding the act of goodwill and Vietnam's humanitarian issues in Cambodia and under pressure from the US, the group of 6 ASEAN countries strongly and vehemently condemned Vietnam's actions, making the political atmosphere in the Southeast Asia throughout the 1980s was always in a state of tense confrontation. This situation improved markedly after Vietnam completed its withdrawal from Cambodia in 1989.

In parallel with the withdrawal of Vietnamese troops, on July 30, 1989, the Paris Conference on Cambodia was held, opening the door to peace for the Indochinese peninsula and Southeast Asia. However, it took more than 2 years for the negotiation process to end when 19 countries²¹ signed the Paris Agreement (the Agreement on comprehensive political settlement of the conflict in Cambodia) on December 1, 1989. October 23, 1991 with 9 major sections divided into 32 articles²².

Thus, the withdrawal of Vietnamese troops from Cambodia has removed complicated knots in relations between Southeast Asian countries. The trend of confrontation and tension has now been replaced by a trend of peace and cooperation. The situation of countries in the region from this point onward also gradually stabilized, especially after the events of ASEAN admitting new members in the second half of the 1990s: Vietnam (1995), Laos and Myanmar (1997), Cambodia (1999), making ASEAN an increasingly developed organization with great position and prestige in the world, contributing to peace and stability in Southeast Asia.

After the Cold War, the leaders of countries in Southeast Asia have very well absorbed the lesson of the intervention of world powers in the internal affairs of the region. In the aftermath of the tense confrontation between the Indochinese group of countries and the group of ASEAN countries close to the US during the Vietnam War, the Cold War was really a big threat to regional security, hindering the process of building a peaceful, stable and developed Southeast Asia region. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, many emerging powers also aspired to compete with the US for influence in the region. This is a necessary condition for ASEAN to promptly adjust its foreign policy in the direction of diversifying and multilateralizing relations, rather than depending on a great power as in the Cold War period. And historical practice has proven that right of ASEAN, this organization has become an important factor for balancing among major powers: while continuing to maintain good relations between ASEAN and the United States, Japan, China, Russia, but also clearly show their attitudes and stances in regional internal affairs without having to completely obey pressure from major powers. Indeed, ASEAN has grown stronger and stronger, becoming a more prestigious and autonomous regional organization that can decide many important issues without the intervention of major powers.

Economically, after decades of development based on investment and trade flows of newly industrialized countries (NIEs), the economies of ASEAN countries are growing stronger and gradually gaining a position in Asia-Pacific region. According to the IMF, the growth of ASEAN 5²³ will exceed 5% by 2022, while the 4 Northeast Asian economies will only be 3%. The GDP of ASEAN 5 exceeded the total GDP of 4 NIEs in 2017. In 2018, ASEAN's GDP reached USD 2,760 billion, making it the third largest market in the world (after China, India), and the third largest economic region. 6 worlds (after USA, China, Japan, Germany and UK)²⁴. The achievements of the 4.0 revolution have been turning Southeast Asia into the most dynamic region in terms of science and technology application. In addition, the establishment of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) will certainly contribute to the rapid and dynamic growth of the regional economy. By attracting the attention of surrounding countries and the world's number one power - the United States, ASEAN has contributed to the economic dynamism of East Asia, where the Sino-Japanese relationship is balanced, China-US relations and many other pairs of relations, while consolidating the central position of Southeast Asia. The adjustments in economic policy and economic cooperation of ASEAN over the past decades are most vividly illustrated (ARF, ASEAN+3, EAS) and more recently (in favor of the BRI proposed by China, the TPP proposed by China). America leads, Asia - Pacific strategy of US and Japan, Look East policy of India). This also shows the geostrategic importance of Southeast Asia for the world's leading powers. It is a fact that whether in the past or at the present time, great powers such as the US, China, Japan... still compete with each other in this region, whether in the field of politics-security or not on the economic field.

²⁰Le Khuong Thuy (2003), *US policy towards ASEAN during and after the Cold War*, Social Science Publishing House, Hanoi, p.115.

²¹Including Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Canada, China, France, India, Indonesia, Japan, Laos, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Soviet Union, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States, Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and Vietnam.

²²The Paris Agreement on Cambodia includes a number of important contents as follows: 1) Recognition and respect for Cambodia's independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity, neutrality and national unity (Article XV); 2) The Supreme National Council (SNC) is the only legal body expressing Cambodia's sovereignty during the transition period and representing Cambodia to the outside world (Articles III, IV, V); 3) Establishment of the United Nations peacekeeping force in Cambodia (UNTAC) to manage public order and prepare for the general election to be held in 1993 (Article II); 4) Immediately after the entry into force of the agreement, any foreign armed forces, advisers and personnel and their equipment will have to be removed from Cambodia. All are subject to UNTAC supervision (Article VIII). Must immediately cease foreign military support to all parties in Cambodia (Article X); 5) Cambodians will decide their political future through free and fair elections; will draft and ratify a new Constitution for Cambodia and form the basis for the establishment of the Cambodian government (Article XII). [United States Institute of Peace (2000), *Agreement on a Comprehensive Political Settlement of the Cambodia Conflict* at https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/file/resources/collections/peace_agreements/agree_comppol_10231991.pdf].

²³Indonesia, Thailand, Philippines, Malaysia and Vietnam.

²⁴Hoang Khac Nam (2020), *Theory and practice of Asia-Pacific regional structure*, National Political Publishing House, Hanoi, p.248.

Average economic growth of ASEAN member countries (Unit: %)

Nation	1971-1980	1981-1985	1986-1995	1996-2000	2001-2010	2011-2015
Brunei Darussalam	9.5	-3.25	0.76	1.22	0.77	0.18
Cambodia	-6.91	2.82	7.47	6.46	7.50	6.60
Indonesia	7.91	5.59	7.56	1.09	5.12	5.41
Laos	3.74	7.87	5.15	6.56	7.11	7.81
Malaysia	7.88	5.16	8.20	4.99	4.61	5.37
Myanmar	4.19	4.77	1.96	8.35	12.4	7.45
Philippines	5.91	-1.14	3.45	3.58	4.76	5.84
Singapore	-	6.97	8.69	5.82	6.04	4.57
Thailand	6.68	5.37	8.88	0.74	4.54	2.41
Vietnam	3.94	7.01	6.19	6.96	6.80	6.18

Source: Data compiled from <http://databank.worldbank.org> and <http://unctadstat.unctad.org>. World Bank, Dataset: World Development Indicators, Gross Domestic Product; UNCTAD Stat, Dataset: National Accounts, Gross Domestic Product.

Over the past 50 years, as an organization representing countries in the region, ASEAN has made enormous contributions to peace and stability in the region, in global affairs, recognized by many of the world's leading powers. ASEAN deserves to be the representative representative of multilateral integration globally. Although there are still many limitations in establishing a common voice, common guidelines and policies, and many regional issues have not been resolved²⁵, in general, ASEAN is still on the path of development and growth. It is an expansion from the original 5 members (1967) to the 10 countries today. It is the cohesion through the establishment of the ASEAN Community with three main pillars: the Political-Security Community, the Economic Community and the Socio-Cultural Community. It is the deepening integration of ASEAN through the building of a system of dialogue mechanisms with many key powers outside the region and other multilateral dialogue mechanisms. It is the strong development of a unified ASEAN in Southeast Asia that has attracted powers outside the region to adjust their foreign policies, increasing the strategic competition of countries in this region, which before mainly the US and other major countries.

3. Conclusion

After the end of the Cold War, the world order and the international political-security situation had a fundamental change. The United States became the sole superpower in the world after the collapse of the Soviet Union. However, in the context of many emerging powers, they began to expand their influence into Southeast Asia; The trend of confrontation has been gradually replaced by a trend of dialogue. Southeast Asian countries, after decades of being engulfed in contradictions and conflicts, have now begun the process of cooperation and unification for

socio-economic development and integration with the world; Along with the subjective factors inside, the US has made adjustments in its foreign policy towards Southeast Asia towards a more moderate and tolerable direction, the imposition of a big power policy on other countries. America's Southeast Asia is also starting to fade. That is the result of the impact of many factors, especially the competition of major countries in Southeast Asia, most notably the strong rise of China and the new strategic calculations of India, Russia and Japan. It is this that has more or less affected the US foreign policy making towards Southeast Asia with more changes in order to maintain the US presence here with a leading position.

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²⁵Most notably, on the South China Sea issue, ASEAN has not been able to find a common voice on this issue. In 2012, for the first time, ASEAN failed to come up with a joint agreement because Cambodia did not accept to include the dispute between Vietnam, the Philippines and China in the South China Sea in the joint statement.

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