



저작자표시-비영리-변경금지 2.0 대한민국

이용자는 아래의 조건을 따르는 경우에 한하여 자유롭게

- 이 저작물을 복제, 배포, 전송, 전시, 공연 및 방송할 수 있습니다.

다음과 같은 조건을 따라야 합니다:



저작자표시. 귀하는 원저작자를 표시하여야 합니다.



비영리. 귀하는 이 저작물을 영리 목적으로 이용할 수 없습니다.



변경금지. 귀하는 이 저작물을 개작, 변형 또는 가공할 수 없습니다.

- 귀하는, 이 저작물의 재이용이나 배포의 경우, 이 저작물에 적용된 이용허락조건을 명확하게 나타내어야 합니다.
- 저작권자로부터 별도의 허가를 받으면 이러한 조건들은 적용되지 않습니다.

저작권법에 따른 이용자의 권리는 위의 내용에 의하여 영향을 받지 않습니다.

이것은 [이용허락규약\(Legal Code\)](#)을 이해하기 쉽게 요약한 것입니다.

[Disclaimer](#)

**Master's Thesis of
Graduate School of International Studies**

**The United States and Asia Pacific
Economic Regionalism:
Understanding and contextualizing the Indo Pacific
Economic Framework**

미국 및 아시아 태평양 경제 지역주의:
인도·태평양경제프레임워크의 이해와 맥락화

February 2023

**Graduate School of International Studies
Seoul National University
Cooperation Major**

Carmen María Quiñonero López

**- The United States and the Asia
Pacific Economic Regionalism:
Understanding and contextualizing the Indo Pacific
Economic Framework -**

Sheen Song-Ho

**Submitting a master's thesis of
International Cooperation**

February 2023

**Graduate School of International Studies
Seoul National University
Cooperation Major**

Carmen María Quiñonero López

**Confirming the master's thesis written by
Carmen María Quiñonero López
February 2023**

Chair	김태균 Kim Taekyoon
Vice Chair	이재원 Lee Jae Won
Examiner	신성호 Sheen Seong-Ho

Abstract

The withdrawal from the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) by the Trump administration in 2016 significantly jeopardized the United States position in Asia, specially when it came to economic policy and trade rules-setting arena. The prospects of said lack of participation of the United States during the last years in multilateral and regional cooperation only worsened with increased regional cooperation led by China. It, then, became urgent for the new Biden administration to propose an initiative that could be competitive enough to counter balance China's Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP). Soon after president Biden took office, the Indo Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF) would be proposed, as the current administration's grand strategy to re-pivot to Asia. To everyone's surprise, the the IPEF was not going to be a free trade agreement, nor have any market access provisions, and the administration was not considering joining the now Comprehensive CPTPP. In an age where US-China competition in Asia Pacific is at an all-time high, the IPEF's proposal can be perceived as relatively weak, and limited from its very conception.

Through a historical overview focused on the US' role and participation in regional economic cooperation in Asia Pacific, ranging from the beginning of the Cold War to the Trump administration, we find different structural factors that are still very much prevalent in the current administration and the IPEF, but we also find many practices that have been unprecedented in Washington. We see a United States aware of its own shortcomings as a declining global economic hegemony, and for this creative in the ways it aims to regain trade rules-setting power and relevance in the economic field. In the IPEF we see a return to soft voluntary

multilateralism that was the most prevalent method for economic cooperation in Asia Pacific before the rise of regional FTAs. However, the way the different negotiations will be undertaken, in a minilateral manner among like-minded countries, shows a lot of continuity with the US' usual *modus operandi* in the region, as well as coherence with the increasing preference for minilateralism in the region. Regarding possible polarization with China, the IPEF presents itself as an open and inclusive initiative, similar to the TPP, as well as a policy-making platform rather than a trade bloc that targets China explicitly. This, however, does not mean that the IPEF is free of limitations. The lack of market access might make the initiative not be worth the risk of antagonizing China for many Asian states, and the fact that some countries are excluded from the negotiations in its first stages might bring back past resentments of US-led regionalism colliding with that native to East Asia. Together with this, past organizations that were rather informal and discussion-based have resulted in limited outcomes and non-binding agreements, which might make the IPEF not the ideal tool for the United States to gain rule-setting power. Going forward, it will be key for the United States to look back in history and avoid past mistakes related to its participation, or lack thereof, in multilateral initiatives in Asia Pacific. The IPEF presents an innovative way of going beyond domestic economic downturn and congressional ratification, focusing on creating high quality standards and redefining hegemonic leadership. Lastly, we will consider some conditions that the initiative should meet for it to avoid past mistakes and lead to significant outcomes.

Keyword : Indo Pacific Economic Framework, Asia Pacific, United States, Foreign Policy, Economic integration, Economic Cooperation, East Asian Regionalism
Student Number : 2021-22779

Table of Contents

<u>I. Introduction</u>	4
1. Purpose of Research.....	5
<u>II. Background</u>	7
1. Biden Administration and the Indo Pacific Economic Framework.....	7
<u>III. The United States’ role in East Asian and Asia Pacific regional initiatives</u>	9
1. Cold War years: Southeast Asian Japan-led East Asian regionalism.....	9
2. Post-Cold War years: The rise of East Asian regionalism.....	26
3. Current day: Biden Administration.....	49
<u>IV. Unpacking the Indo Pacific Economic Framework</u>	63
1. Understanding the format of the IPEF.....	63
2. Potential limitations of the IPEF.....	73
<u>V. Conclusion — Policy suggestions</u>	81
Bibliography	85
Abstract in Korean	94

I. Introduction

By the time the Biden administration took office, a departure from the Trump administration's coercive *modus operandi* was seen as needed, but this new pivot to Asia has not been as groundbreaking as it would have been expected from a liberal administration. Far from putting forward a traditional and multilateral free trade agreement equivalent to the China-led Regional Economic Comprehensive Partnership (RECP), or to the one led by Barack Obama back in 2016, the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) trade agreement, President Biden has brought the Indo Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF) to the table. The latter one, however, has little to do with trade, and more to do with agenda-setting and policy-making. Questions such as "why is the US not working on a new free trade agreement that can counterbalance China in the region?" Arise when the public learns that the IPEF, which is at the centre of Biden administration's grand strategy in Asia.

Protectionism has not ended with Trump's term, and it will possibly not end with Biden's either. However, with a rise in multilateral and minilaterals in East Asia that exclude the United States, that the United States gains back leverage and rules-setting power at the regional level. Can this new pivot to Asia achieve this goal without market access provisions? The Indo Pacific Economic Framework is the attempt. In this research, I will examine how said initiative might benefit, and what limitations it presents to, the United States' power in the region.

1. Purpose of Research and Methodology

Through this research I have the ambitious goal of adding to relevant literature on the United States' role and influence in Asian economic regionalism. Most of the work I review covers up to the Obama administration, as well as different aspects and angles of this very phenomenon. The Indo Pacific Economic Framework struck to me as an unprecedented move by the United States, only the more intriguing if we take a look at the most recent past of Washington's foreign policy in Asia Pacific. As I became more interested in this initiative, most of the literature I found touched upon the conservative role of US Congress and domestic factors that put in doubt the prospects of the United States joining a regional free trade agreement in Asia Pacific. However, the question I wish to answer is: What are the prospects of the Indo Pacific Economic Framework in promoting Asia Pacific economic regionalism?

In my graduation thesis, then, I aim to analyze the IPEF within the United States' trajectory of regional economic integration in Asia Pacific. Understanding this return to Asia within the broader context of United States' participation in region-building and integration, will help us understand the proposal further. Understanding the ways in which the United States' participation in multilateral initiatives has evolved, will make us understand the potential limitations and advantages of the initiative. In this way, I will be adding to the research on Asia Pacific regionalism, and the United States' history of promoting a Washington-inclusive economic regionalism in East Asia.

The first part of this thesis will consist of a historical overview on the United States' evolving role as a regional power, and its involvement and influence in the formation of regional economic cooperation initiatives. I will be covering the time between the beginning of the Cold War and the Trump administration, focusing solely on the United States' attitudes and role in advancing, or slowing, regional economic integration. Through this analysis, I aim to draw conclusions and differentiating factors that characterized the United States foreign policy in two different periods: During the Cold War and after the Cold War. The different factors that will be evaluated are: The United States' geopolitical role, policy priorities, negotiation style, participation in multilateral initiatives, and position regarding regional cooperation. I will analyze the context and United States' role in regional cooperation during the different time periods, and summarize the information into tables to clearly see the commonalities. Through this historical overview of the United States' role in multilateral and regional initiatives for economic cooperation in the region which I aim to identify:

(1) The ways in which the IPEF presents innovative elements in the United States' foreign policy towards Asia, and in which ways we see continuity. Revising the regional integration attempts that had led up to the proposal to the IPEF helps us understand the initiative, its format, and its reception, more holistically.

(2) Identify potential limitations and problems that the IPEF might present, based on experience, as well as things that the IPEF seems to have gotten right in comparison with past administrations' attempts.

(3) Lastly, inform my policy suggestions that will conclude this research.

In the second part of this thesis the focus will be put on the current administration. The historical overview done previously will serve us to (1) contextualize in a more holistic way the Biden administration's initiative, (2) analyze what remains the same and what has changed in the current administration when compared to past roles that the United States has taken in multilateral initiatives in Asia Pacific, (3) analyze potential advantages and limitations based on past experiences, and (4) formulate some final informed policy suggestions.

II. Background:

1. Biden administration and the Indo Pacific Economic Framework

The development of an economic framework in East Asia has been one of the main priorities of the Biden Administration, in an attempt to economically recover from the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) agreement withdrawal during the previous administration. Ever since the TPP was being negotiated, opposing views flooded the debate on what strategy can sustain and advance the US' position in the region, and while some held the view that further economic integration in East Asia would be beneficial for the domestic American market while promoting free trade and advancing the US economic statecraft in the region, others found the deal to work against the domestic economic well-being by being likely to lead to increased job outsourcing harming the American workers. The latter view was argued for and spread by President Trump, and led to an eventual withdrawal from the agreement. During the Trump Administration, a more protectionist and coercive approach was believed to be more effective, as it would focus on showcasing the US military might to the East Asian allies, proving to be powerful enough of a security ally capable of balancing China if needed.

The Biden Administration promises a new pivot to Asia, the continuation of that started by President Obama, and while the US foreign policy in East Asia is continuing Trump's efforts in building the military capacity and network in the region, the Biden Administration has also given crucial importance to economic diplomacy and integration as a method to further balance China and regain economic regain leadership. However, Biden administration does not mean the return to President Obama's policy in Asia, but rather it presents an interesting middle ground between integrative and diplomatic efforts, as well as relatively protectionist and worker-centric trade measures, which, as we will see, explain the nature of this framework.

Before we embark in a trip down memory line through the United States' multilateral engagement in Asia Pacific, we must ask a key question: What even is the Indo Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF)?

During the Obama administration, the United States finally got ascended to the East Asia Summit, and following this, the Biden Administration not only would attend, but also continue the American presidents' tradition of announcing the United States' economic agenda for the region. Following the 2021 summit, the intention of the administration to kickstart the IPEF was announce, as a platform to define "shared objectives around trade facilitation, standards for digital economy and technology, supply chain resiliency, decarbonization and clean energy, infrastructure, worker standards, and other areas of shared interest."¹

¹ "Statement on Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity," The White House, May 23, 2022, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/05/23/statement-on-indo-pacific-economic-framework-for-prosperity/>.

To everyone's surprise, the IPEF is not a traditional trade agreement, rather, it is a platform for negotiations, which will be conducted in both multi and minilateral fashion, with the ultimate goal of creating common standards. Indeed, it is worth noting here how there is only one pillar dedicated to trade, or, more specifically, digital trade and economy, while the rest of the pillars cover different issues surrounding climate governance, technological cooperation, and social standards. When compared to the CPTPP, or with other trading blocs that are now gaining momentum, the IPEF comes across as a very modest, and yet intriguing, proposal.

III. The United States' role in East Asia and Asia Pacific regionalism

1. Cold War: Southeast Asian and Japan-led East Asian regionalism

Taking a look at the recent history of the United States in East Asia with a focus on its attitude towards multilateral and regional processes can give many valuable insights. First of all, the United States has acted as a partial hegemonic figure since mid-nineteenth century in East Asia, and its hegemony has been maintained in different settings: Bipolarity with the Soviet Union, hegemonic struggle with Japan during the 1980s, rise of US-exclusive East Asian regionalism and, currently, hegemonic struggle with China. Analyzing how the United States has approached regional cooperation in these different stages will showcase (1) what characteristics of the United States' foreign policy have remained mostly the same, and (2) how the role of the United States has evolved throughout time. Together with this, (3) it will help us understand the rationale behind the IPEF and what past experiences shape it. Having done this research, we can make informed predictions and policy suggestions for this new phase in United States' participation in East Asia.

The establishment of the United Nations, the World Bank, or the International Monetary Fund, gave commencement to a new era of globalized liberalism. This also brought with it the inclusion of underdeveloped and developing countries in the game of world politics and trade, but for the United States the end of the World War II meant the beginning of a new struggle against the communist forces and continued instability. Because of this, promoting pro-American attitudes in Europe and Japan was the United States' main priority to extend and solidify the new multilateral system. Ultimately, the independence of developing countries would have to wait until the United States had deterred the Soviet Union effectively, and with this goal in mind, they self-assigned themselves the role of policing and driving countries away from the communist influence. Using Korea as an example once more, stopping the spread of communism came at the cost of serious political repression, decreased freedom of speech and publication, and social division that did nothing but worsen the morale and political polarization among South Koreans. Ultimately, the Korean quest for independence was firstly dismissed at the beginning of the 20th century and secondly sidelined as Korea became the frontline of the Cold War. Even after both wars, the United States seemed to continue to uphold the opinion that some Asian states were not ready to govern themselves, while others were encouraged and supported, as it was the case of Indochina and India. Stricter control would be placed on those countries where the risk of communist expansionism was greater. Same was the case of Indochina (territory that included the current nations of Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos), which remained a French colony and received military aid from the United States to fight the Soviet forces in the territory. By the time, however, that the French granted independence to said colonies, the United States stepped in and *created* South Vietnam. During this post-war period, the United States' presence in the region and

the security agreements that it held with strategic partners, made the United States a *defacto* hegemony in East Asia, as a result of “immense asymmetry” between the American and Asian governments.² As the region developed in the post-war period, it progressively became the more important for the United States to secure its access to the growing market, and for that, considering the political context of the region—namely, the expansion of communism, Japan, and then China’s assertiveness—, it became essential for the United States to guarantee the region’s political stability. Since the end of the world until today, it has been the long-standing mission of the US to guarantee two things in this region: Preventing any other power in the region to become a hegemony, and guaranteeing its access to the region’s market.³

In the post World War era, the world had become bipolar, and in such a system, both leading powers behave as unipolar powers in their own spheres of influence. In the case of the United States, bilateral security alliances came together with economic liberalization attempts. As Mastanduno explains, “unipolarity motivates the dominant state to integrate economic and security policies. A unipolar structure tempts the dominant state to try to pre-serve its privileged position; that effort, in turn, requires its international economic strategy to line up behind and reinforce its national security strategy in relations with potential challengers.”⁴ For the United States to transform the world into a unipolar system, middle states had to become dependent on its economy, as well as be military protected. With the idea and

² Renato De Castro, “U.S. Grand Strategy in Post-Cold War Asia—Pacific,” *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 16, no. 3 (1994): 342

³ Marvin C. Ott, “Southeast Asia: Security Among the Mini-Dragons,” *U.S. Foreign and Strategic Policy in the Post-Cold War Era*, ed. By Howard J. Wiarda (Greenwood Press, 1995), 152

⁴ Michael Mastanduno, “Economics and Security in Statecraft and Scholarship,” *International Organization* 52, n. 4 (1998), 827

ultimate goal of burden sharing, the United States made its mission of communist containment a global one.

In exchange of the United States' occupations, justified by the maintenance of regional stability, the United States would extend bilateral assistance to those governments that were non-Communist, as was the case of Japan, Korea, Philippines, and South Vietnam, where they could "promote their nation-building enterprises."⁵ Among other methods, the United States would encourage the Japanese government to close economic ties with Southeast Asia and Taiwan; and would place Syngman Rhee, a strong anti-communist and American-educated figure, as the president of South Korea. On the side of developing countries siding with the United States was a no-brainer, as such alliance would mean being recipient of highly beneficial security and economic assistance.⁶ What is interesting here, however, is that while such liberalization process was being implemented multilaterally in Europe, namely, with the formation of NATO, the United States acted bilaterally in Asia Pacific, and all assistance and security alliances were made in this way. This can be explained, in part, considering how, differently from Europe, the so-called now Asia Pacific area had then *no accurate regional delimitation*, considering how not all states were sovereign, as some were then colonies, some were being occupied by Soviet forces, as well as China becoming a communist state later on. In this post-war period bilateral agreements became common practice for the United States in the region, and it is not until some

⁵ Akira Iriye, "The United States and Japan in Asia: A Historical Perspective," in *The United States, Japan, and Asia*, ed. Gerald L. Curtis (New York: Norton & Company, 1994), 46

⁶ Charles H. Stevenson, "U.S. Foreign Policy in Southeast Asia: Implications for Current Regional Issues," *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 14, no. 2 (1992), 98

decades later that regional agreements started to look like a viable option. During the years 1951 and 1954 the United States signed various military treaties with Asia Pacific powers: Bilateral security treaties with the Republic of China (Taiwan), Japan, South Korea and the Philippines; a trilateral treaty with Australia and New Zealand, and the South East Asian Treaty Organization (SEATO). The priority, then, was on political control and military alliances with the goal of containing the communist threat, economic liberalization was then only a natural consequence of this system reform processes.

While in the post-war period the United States established itself in Taiwan, Japan, and Korea in a bilateral way, the United States would attempt at creating a regional organization in Southeast Asia, **Southeast Asia Treaty Organization** (SEATO) ideally similar to NATO, but much weaker in praxis and in its conception.⁷ Unlike NATO, SEATO would not include any permanent military, but rather would physically depend on “mobile striking power” and “strategically placed reserves.”⁸ On top of this, the United States reserved its right to act unilaterally or bilaterally within the system, in contrast to its attitude in Europe, where there was a growing reliance on nuclear deterrence promotion of further multilateralism in the region through the sharing of weapons.⁹ From its very conception, said regional mechanism was doomed from the start, considering how the community created through the organization was non-existent, only motivated

⁷ Donald G. McCloud, “United States Policies Toward Regional Organizations in Southeast Asia,” *World Affairs* 133, no. 2 (1970), 134

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Marc Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace: The Making of the European Settlement, 1945-1963*, (Princeton University Press, 1999)

by external powers that had key interests in the region. Those members that joined, as was the case for Korea or Japan, did so to prepare against possible aggressions and secure the United States assistance, but not out of a sense of regional community. By the time SEATO was created, many powers in the region had just achieved their independence from European powers and were focused on state building, not ready for community building. SEATO, then, can hardly be considered a regional mechanism in Southeast Asia, considering how more than half the members were foreign to the region.

As a way to strengthen the alliance and evolve with the times the Secretary of State William P. Rogers would, in 1969, bring the idea of making SEATO participate and manage development projects, on top of the bilateral aid the members of the organisation were already receiving. This was an attempt by the United States to adapt to the increasing economic and political development of the region. Further contributing in the development of these nations in a multilateral way would create a more connected community that would strive away from the communist economy. However, soon after SEATO would face its ultimate ending, as reaching any agreement among the members became the more and more difficult. Simultaneously, however, a true regional organization among these actors was in the making and came to be in 1967: The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

Almost simultaneously, the United States would set itself to act truly multilaterally through the **Mekong Project**, which started to be devised in 1947, and aimed to encourage regional integration through a big scale development plan. It would not be until 1957, however, The United States would firstly work through the Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East (ECAFE), and progressively

the plan attracted many investors and collaborators, including 23 countries Canada, Japan, and France, United Nations institutions, and other foundations. The United States, however, would contribute the most to the project compared to the rest of the nations, and, surprisingly, it would also take a hands-off approach this time around. The United States was not one of the primary decision makers, but rather focused on encouraging cooperation at the regional level and assisted the actors in doing so. Why did the United States take on such a different approach, compared to SEATO? As the project gained momentum and continued in 1970, the United States had had one too many fatal experiences trying to orchestrate the region. The war in Vietnam and the failure of SEATO seemed to teach the United States that the way for it to guarantee stability and market access would have to be indirectly, rather adopting a “supporting role in the general evolution of a secure progressive Pacific Community.”¹⁰

The foundation of the **Association of Southeast Asian Nations** (ASEAN) was the evidence would happen almost simultaneously, after the foreign ministers of the Philippines, Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia, and Singapore met in Bangkok in 1967 to form an organization that would not include the United States, Australia, or New Zealand; It would be strictly *asian*. As the Cold War progressed and middle starts started to get caught up in the middle of great power rivalry, an indigenous want and need to cooperate at the regional level started to form. This was the first instance in which the United States, an incomplete hegemon in the region, would be excluded from a regional initiative, mainly because it was the first was that was not organized by the United States itself. The formation of ASEAN too would let us know where Southeast Asian leaders’ priorities and limits were. First and

¹⁰ William P. Bundy, "Partnership in East Asia and the Pacific," in *Department of State Bulletin*, v. 57 (1967), 199

foremost, ASEAN would not include any agreement for military cooperation, and its only focus would be economic cooperation and development.¹¹ Linked to this, the member states also recognize their obligation to not interfere in the internal affairs of other member countries. To this day, ASEAN leaders have been defined as not being willing to give up their sovereignty, even at the regional level, which has continuously put into question the effectiveness of the organization. On the other hand, the ASEAN type of regionalism aimed to distinguish itself from other initiatives, such as the European Union, in the sense that it aimed at reinforce the sovereignty of its members, rather than eroding it.¹² The United States, then, was forced to adopt an indirect role towards the organization, having no policy making power in its early stages.

However, we should not forget how, underlying this stability that ASEAN fought for in the form of political cooperation and economic development, the United States remained as a key security provider working for the deterrence of potential threats to the region stability. At the broader regional level, as we will see, the participation of the United States would result crucial because of this very reason. The concept of “Asia,” excluding the United States would prove to be rather unrealistic and limited, as the bilateral security between Asian states and the United States played a profound role in the development of the region as a whole.

¹¹ Donald G. McCloud, “United States policies toward regional organizations in Southwar Asia,” *orld Affairs* , September 1970, Vol. 133, No. 2 (September 1970): 141

¹² Tom Ginsburg, "The State of Sovereignty in Southeast Asia," 99 *American Society of International Law Proceedings* 419 (2005), 420

So much so that, as argued by scholar Deepak Nair, “the United States is a prerequisite for the fruition of the regional project.”¹³

The United States, which had occupied the place of a hegemony in Asia (although incomplete), would see China become a nuclear power in 1964. Both countries were already facing an escalation of tensions over Vietnam, and the development and testing of nuclear weapons by China would give start to a balance of power between both powers that lasts to this day. Leading up to the Vietnam War, Richard Nixon would talk about “A Wide Anticommunist Act,” which referred to the strategy that most nations around China to the south, from India to Japan, including Australia, New Zealand, and the United States beyond the ocean, were united in the fight for liberalization and democracy. The idea was that this anti-communist union would become so powerful that China would “seek dialogue with Washington to avoid further isolation from world affairs.”¹⁴ Once the United States experienced a bitter defeat in Vietnam, they became aware of the limitations of their global hegemonic system. From this need of reevaluating and redesigning its position as a global leader, the Nixon Doctrine would be proclaimed in 1969, which promised that the American interventionism and unilateralism that had characterised the US policy in the region, was then to be replaced by “more balanced alliance with our friends—and a more creative connection with our adversaries.”¹⁵

¹³ Deepak Nair, “Regionalism in the Asia Pacific/East Asia: A Frustrated Regionalism?” *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 31, no. 1 (2009), 113

¹⁴ Wen-Qing Ngoei, “Looking Back on ASEAN and Sino-US Rivalry in the Cold War,” *E-International Relations*, March 9, 2021, <https://www.e-ir.info/2021/03/09/looking-back-on-asean-and-sino-us-rivalry-in-the-cold-war/>.

¹⁵ Richard Nixon, “A New Strategy for Peace,” U.S. Department of State Archive, February 18, 1970, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/r/pa/ho/frus/nixon/e5/54804.htm>.

Although the aspect of the doctrine that is the most remember is the military one, the most important point to highlight here is how the doctrine would, for the first time, stress the importance of interregional cooperation, meaning “Asian initiatives in an Asian framework” that were also “abetted by multinational corporations and organizations.” President Nixon would also declare, and predict, how the American partnership with Japan would be key for the success of the doctrine in Asia.¹⁶ The United States had been encouraging Japan’s economic involvement at the regional level since 1950s, mainly because as early as in 1948, it would be argued how it would be Japan and not China, the American armed wing in the region, both militarily and economically. Japan, on its side, would compete with China regionally by depriving it from the benefits of trading with the time more technologically advanced Japan, focusing on integrating Southeast Asia into the capitalist system. The development of more intricate economic interdependence between Japan and Southeast Asia was seen as a vital part of the US’ policy in Asia since 1950. In words of Nixon, in 1953: “Why is the United States spending hundreds of millions of dollars supporting the forces of the French Union in the fight against communism? If Indo-China falls, Thailand is put in an almost impossible position. The same is true of Indonesia. If this whole part of Southeast Asia goes under Communist domination or Communist influence, Japan, who trades and must trade with this area in order to exist, must inevitably be oriented towards the Communist regime.”¹⁷

¹⁶ John W. Dower, “10 Points of Note: Asia and the Nixon Doctrine,” *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars* 2, no. 4 (1970), 48-49

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 65

Although the focus of said doctrine was security, the attitude adopted by Nixon administration would continue to be followed by the rest of American leaders since the end of the Cold War until Trump Administration. China's military rise and ascension as a nuclear power would force the United States to become creative in the ways it maintained its Asian allies, at the same that it avoided triggering China through improved diplomatic ties and pursuing an even balance of power.

This détente has been explained by some as being a result of the United States' weakening economically since 1967, but the United States had effectively secured its hegemonic position in East Asia because of its established bilateral military alliances. However, one obstacle that the United States would be facing more and more domestically was excessive military expenditure that the Truman Doctrine (1947) brought with it, and Nixon would declare that the US could not defend its allies fully.¹⁸ This doesn't mean that the United States would cut ties with the Asian allies, but it means that regional cooperation would gain new importance with the rise of Japan. In words of Nixon: "Our cooperation with Asian nations will be enhanced as they cooperate with one another and develop regional institutions."¹⁹ The doctrine had mainly two objectives: (1) Isolate China and force it to surrender to the international liberal system peacefully, and (2) accelerating the burden-sharing process with its allies through decreased military support and encouragement for regional cooperation.²⁰ Allies were concerned about the power

¹⁸ Richard J. Samuels, "Nixon Doctrine," Encyclopedia Britannica, September 5, 2019, <https://www.britannica.com/event/Nixon-Doctrine>.

¹⁹ "60. Report by President Nixon to the Congress," U.S. Department of State, accessed November 15, 2022, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v01/d60>.

²⁰ Frank N. Trager, "The Nixon Doctrine and Asian Policy," *Southeast Asian Perspectives*, no. 6 (1972), 10

vacuum that the United States would leave behind if it left the region, as it could potentially leave to a hegemonic struggle between China, Japan, or the Soviet Union.²¹ Allies, then, would try to persuade Washington to continue committing to the region, as the only powerful enough player in Asia Pacific that could deter such potential hegemonic struggle.

In other words, the United States would not be able to afford a war with a re-invigorated communist bloc in Asia, and if it was to maintain its hegemonic position, the United States would have to follow a two-track diplomacy with China. A clear example of this is the alliance between the United States and Taiwan after the proclamation of the détente. Over the period of 1951 until 1965, the United States had greatly helped the Republic of China in Taiwan with over \$1.4 billion in assistance. However, in order to try to salvage the distance with the People's Republic of China, Taiwan was removed from the United Nations.²² Further polarisation that supporting Taiwan supposed was something the United States could afford. Luckily, China-US relations would be stable and friendly during the period of 1971 and 1989, which was aided by the recognition of the People's Republic of China in the United Nations and many presidential visits. Through it all, the United States would support Taiwan commercially through the Taiwan Relations Act, which allowed it to continue supporting Taiwan's defense system without triggering the One-China policy.²³

²¹ Ngoei, "Looking Back on ASEAN"

²² Nancy Bernkopf Tucker, "Taiwan Expendable? Nixon and Kissinger Go to China," *The Journal of American History* 92, no. 1 (2005), 120

²³ "Timeline: U.s.-China Relations," Council on Foreign Relations (Council on Foreign Relations), accessed November 15, 2022, <https://www.cfr.org/timeline/us-china-relations>.

By the time the 1970s came around, the hegemonic status of the United States would change and weaken, which was evident with the leaving of the gold standard. At the same time, and as a consequence, the United States started to experience trade deficit around this same decade. Said trade imbalance did not allow the United States to save enough to finance national investment, and the gap between savings and investment did nothing but increase since then.²⁴ This meant that the United States would have to take on a different approach that was more cost-effective, putting the focus on information sharing and promoting transparency among members, rather than on strict regulations.²⁵ Together with this, as the collapse of the Bretton Woods system would affect Western countries equally, these would be more reticent to assist the Third World, and instead would insist on free trade, free markets, and privatization, as was the case of the United States in Asia going forward. In this context, the United Nations, which had been opened to many emerging and underdeveloped countries, began to be seen as an obstacle to said liberalization process that, in the interest of the developed West, had until then been administered mainly by the IMF and the World Bank.²⁶

Meanwhile, the United States' goal at the time of burden sharing was being realized in East Asia through Japan, which, by 1970, had the third-raking GNP worldwide, after the United States and the Soviet Union. The emerge of Japan as a powerful country, as well as the growth in Australia and New Zealand, definitely

²⁴ Brian Reinbold and Wen, Yi, "Understanding the Roots of the US Trade Deficit," Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, October 9, 2018, <https://www.stlouisfed.org/publications/regional-economist/third-quarter-2018/understanding-roots-trade-deficit>.

²⁵ Chris Brummer, "Multilateralism's Rise and Fall," in *Minilateralism: How Trade Alliances, Soft Law and Financial Engineering Are Redefining Economic Statecraft* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 45

²⁶ Robert W. Cox, "Multilateralism and World Order," *Review of International Studies* 18, no. 2 (1992), 164

helped lessen the communist influence in Asia Pacific.²⁷ Together with this, the other great power alliance that held close ties with those NIEs (Newly Industrialized Economies), and the flow of trade between Japan and those countries had surpassed that with the the United States during the previous years.²⁸ Although effective for region-building, if left unattended, the United States would risk losing a key role in the region to an in-shore power that *did belong* to Asia Pacific. As the US trade with the Asia Pacific region amounted to 136 billion dollars, surpassing that with European partners, a regional unity movements that excluded the United States was to be avoided at all costs.²⁹ Together with this, the slowdown in America's economic growth made the country relatively less competitive in comparison to Japan, as, simultaneously, the Japanese market saw a steady increase in world market during 1968 and 1971.³⁰ This rise in Japanese presence and economic relevance, came together with some of its first attempts at creating a pan-Pacific trade organization. Together with Australia, Japan would try to launch the **Organization for Pacific Trade and Development (OPTAD)**, which was to be designed as an Asia Pacific version of the OECD, but ultimately failed to be realized.

Japan, however, would succeed in forming the **Pacific Basin Economic Council (PBEC)** 1967. The PBEC was nongovernmental, and would mainly serve as a forum that included East and Southeast Asia, as well as United States and

²⁷ Trager, "The Nixon Doctrine and Asian Policy," 9

²⁸ Chee Peng Lim, "International Rivalry: U.S. - Japanese Competition in the ASEAN Countries," *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 4, no. 1 (1982), 37

²⁹ Ibid. 62

³⁰ John E. Roemer, *U.S.-Japanese Competition in International Markets*, (Berkeley: University of California, 1975), 28

Australia.³¹ It aimed at a broader idea of region, Asia Pacific, but Japan presented some challenges at said desired region-building project: Anti-Japanese sentiments that dated back to the World War II, and the lack of effective institutionalism beyond the ASEAN region.³²

Soon after, Japan then orchestrated the **Pacific Trade and Development Conference (PAFTAD)** in 1968, another nongovernmental organization. Although the outcomes of said initiative were rather limited, it showcased the growing sentiment of an Asia Pacific community becoming a reality. Mark Beeson discusses the term of “epistemic communities,” which was defined by Ernst Haas, as a group committed “to a common causal model and a common set of political values,” as well as to turn these into public policy.³³ The above mentioned scholar would also argue how said organizations, soft and voluntary in nature, would turn out to be a key both in the policy making and in delimiting and defining the region.³⁴ Both organizations were limited in their outcomes due to their nongovernmental nature, but did plant the seed for community building.

Although neighbours welcomed an increase in Japanese investment and trade during the decade of 1970, their actions and investment also received the criticism self-serving and single-minded, so they also remained suspicious about the

³¹ Donald Crone, “The Politics of Emerging Pacific Cooperation,” *Pacific Affairs* 65, no. 1 (1992), 69

³² Ibid.

³³ Ernst Haas, *When Knowledge is Power: Three Models of Change in International Organizations* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1990), 41–42

³⁴ Mark Beeson, *Institutions of the Asia Pacific: ASEAN, APEC, and Beyond* (London and New York: Routledge, 2008), 39

Japanese intentions going forward.³⁵ Japan's development initiatives were receiving backlash for only focusing on profits and the interests of Japanese companies, so much so that this could be considered a new form of colonialism.³⁶ Japan was becoming the most powerful player of the region, which made the US' lack of attention to the region the more unsettling. All was not well when it came to Japan's ever-increasing power in the region, which triggered memories of what can be considered, in words of Mark Beeson, Japan's first attempt at regional organization, **The Greater Co-Prosperty Sphere**, during its war-time imperial period.³⁷ Said sentiments reportedly waned as the decade progressed throughout ASEAN, and although Japan didn't yet earn the full trust of the region, Japan-ASEAN relations would be "free os hostility."³⁸

It would be in 1980 when a more developed organization would come into view, the **Pacific Economic Cooperation Council (PECC)**. Mark Beeson argues how PECC has been the precursor of the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation forum, both in terms of its competences and its membership. The PECC was orchestrated by Japan and Australia, and included the United States, Canada, New Zealand, Korea, Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia, Singapore, and the Philippines. Although it was also nongovernmental be policy-oriented, but government officials would also join in an informal way, together with professionals in the business world and

³⁵ Quansheng Zhao, "Japan's Leadership Role in East Asia: Cooperation and Competition between Japan and China," *Policy and Society* 23:1 (2014), 123

³⁶ Willard H. Elsbree, "Japan and ASEAN in the 1980s: Problems and Prospects," *Southeast Asian Affairs* (1981), 52

³⁷ Beeson, *Institutions of the Asia Pacific*, 7

³⁸ Elsbree, "Japan and ASEAN," 50

academia.³⁹ It would evolve to establish a secretariat in Singapore in 1990, and by 1991, Brunei, China, and Taiwan also joined the forum. However, the fact that the nature organisation, once again, presented significant limitations to the organization's advisory role.⁴⁰

	During the Cold War
Position	Quasi-hegemonic
Focus	Solidifying security networks, keeping the Asian markets open and liberal
Priorities	Before late 1970s: Focus on liberalization After late 1970s: More emphasis on information sharing, less regulation
Negotiation style	Outcome-oriented
Position regarding regional cooperation	No interest in multilateral initiatives: Unilateralism and Minilateralism

Figure 1. Summary table of the United States' role in East Asia during the Cold War years

2. Post-Cold War years: The rise of East Asian regionalism

Trade deficit and domestic economic slowdown in the United States did nothing but increase during the 1980s decade, and for them to maintain a hegemonic position in East Asia and avoid self-destruction, military arrangements would have to be re-devised. Although the United States would maintain its bilateral relations with its Asian allies, more importance would be given to economic linkages. With the US' capabilities decreasing, limitations to Asian exports and more efforts to

³⁹ Mark T. Berger, "APEC and Its Enemies: The Failure of the New Regionalism in the Asia-Pacific," *Third World Quarterly* 20, no. 5 (1999), 1039

⁴⁰ Donald Crone, "The Politics of Emerging Pacific Cooperation," *Pacific Affairs* 65, no. 1 (1992), 70

avoid *free-riding* the American military umbrella increased. In other words, the United States would have to be more creative with how they engaged with the region. As Under Secretary Joan Spero declared in 1993, the United States would “seek to promote continued rapid economic growth with a commitment to sustainable development and market-oriented economies, open to international trade and investment.” Their approach, then, would “include vigorous and essential efforts to convince trading partners to tear down barriers to trade and investment,” for which they were “actively exploring possibilities for economic cooperation on various levels.”⁴¹ By the time the Cold War ended, no real multilateral mechanisms existed at the regional level besides ASEAN, which gave room to the United States to orchestrate the regional order of East Asia. The focus, then, was liberalizing trade in the region and convince the regional powers to accept increased imports, which was argued as being key for further economic growth, and was conceived by the United States as another burden that would be unsustainable for the country to bear alone. Simultaneously, the United States had to gain relevance in multilateral regional advances. Even when the United States would show very limited interest in multilateral processes during said decade, it would not allow “multilateral mechanisms to substitute or threaten US bilateral alliances and other US-led security arrangements.”⁴² This became more and more of a concern as Malaysian would push for an **East Asian Economic Group** (EAEC) in 1991, which would mean that the exclusive sentiments could potentially expand to the entire region. However, it would not be until the aftermath of the Asian financial crisis in 1997 when this idea of “East Asia” would gain

⁴¹ Joan Spero’s Speech delivered to the Asia Foundation (24 September 1993), 3

⁴² Ralph Cossa, “Evolving US Views on Asia’s Future Institutional Architecture,” in *Asia’s New Multilateralism*, ed. Michael Green and Gill Bates (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009).

momentum.

Past attempts at region building by Japan had been very limited in their conception and nature, but they would finally lead to a more formal organization, the **Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation** (APEC). In 1989 the establishment the foundation of the organization would be celebrated in Canberra, which was kickstarted, once again, Japan and Australia would kickstart the talks. Its original members included the United States, Canada, Japan, South Korea, New Zealand, and the six ASEAN member states.⁴³ Japan was at the time the only regional power with the ability to bring states together, and the idea of such an organization had gained momentum leading up to that moment. However, there were many contentious aspects of it.

The very participation and role of the United States, and for that matter all the extra-regional powers, in the organization was heavily debated among ASEAN states, and while Thailand was cautious, Indonesia and Malaysia held a negative opinion about it and wanted to focus on *regional* integration. Singapore, on the other hand, pointed out that including the United States in said multilateral platform might help “combat and contain unilateral US actions on trade issues,” which ultimately led to the US inclusion in the system.⁴⁴ The key to the US acceptance in the forum, however, was Japan. Within the institution, the United States would push for liberalized trade, which had been motivated by failed negotiations for further trade liberalization in the 1982 GATT ministerial meeting

⁴³ P. Drysdale, D. Vines, B. House, *Europe, East Asia and APEC: A shared global agenda?* (Cambridge University Press, 1998), 6-9

⁴⁴ “The Genesis of APEC: Australian-Japan Political Initiatives,” *Pacific Economic Papers*, no. 298 (December 1999), 25

and the increase of regional trade blocks in North America and Europe.⁴⁵ This, too, would motivate Australia to put forward this proposal, as a counter move to the regional blocs forming abroad, and although the ASEAN community would share the sentiment that any Asia Pacific regional forums besides their own would be too unpractical and unfruitful, bigger was the concern of being left out of a trading regional bloc, and standing left alone in a world where global multilateralism was losing momentum.

Despite this, further economic integration and liberalization was not in the agenda for most East Asian countries, which economies were growing following a Neo-mercantilist markets. On top of this, even when Japan wanted the organization to be a platform for economic cooperation, rather than liberalization, Australia and the US' push was very strong and did not find much resistance. APEC, then, would not include preferential trade practices, such as those found in the European Union, and rather it would be conceptualized as a group of like-minded countries that are committed to friendship, cooperation, and the removal of barriers to economic exchange among members in the interest of all.”⁴⁶

During the foundational years of APEC, however, the United States was primarily committed to the creation of the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the North American Free Trade Association (NAFTA).⁴⁷ It also favored global and multilateral economic forums more than regional organizations, for which it would

⁴⁵ Ibid., 6

⁴⁶ Cited in Mark Beeson and Kanishka Jayasuriya, “The political rationalities of regionalism: APEC and the EU in comparative perspective,” *The Pacific Review*, 11(3) (1998), 327

⁴⁷ “Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), 1989,” *Office of the Historian*, Accessed October 25, 2022, <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1989-1992/apec>.

initially reject the invitation to participate in APEC. Soon enough, however, it would become concerned about being left out of the Asia Pacific region, and the issue gained such momentum that it even reached the US Congress.⁴⁸

During this same time, the United States addressed concerns regarding their intermittent commitment, and emphasised how, even with the end of the Cold War, the United States would continue to maintain bilateral security arrangements in the region. US policy makers would perceive how maintaining the American security structure in Asia Pacific was no longer enough, and rather, it would have to step up their game in the economic field by participating in more economic organizations. This would be stated in the proposal put forward by Senator Cranston in 1988: “We should make it clear that we are prepared to begin with an economic agenda and defer pressuring security questions for future discussions.”⁴⁹ During the Clinton administration, which started in 1993, the United States would be set to participate in the region both bilaterally —through increased diplomacy to convince regional powers to open their markets further and take more military responsibility— and multilaterally —through increased participation in APEC, the main regional multilateral institution—. It would also be then when C. Fred Bergsten, who became chair the Eminent Persons Group of APEC that same year, would emphasize how the forum should have worldwide reach and be a a driving force for trade liberalization outside of the region as well as within.⁵⁰ Together with this, although not all members were pleased with the involvement of non-Asian actors, as was the case of the then Malaysian president, the first years of the 1990s were

⁴⁸ Crone, “The Politics of Emerging Pacific Cooperation,” 73

⁴⁹ Bill Bradley, “Building a Pacific Coalition,” *Proceedings of the Academy of Political Science* 37, no. 4 (1990),

⁵⁰ C. Fred Bergsten, “APEC and World Trade: A Force for Worldwide Liberalization.” *Foreign Affairs* 73, no. 3 (1994),

full of optimism. Both Western and Asian politicians would argue how such an alliance did not mean the westernization of Asia, but rather its modernization.⁵¹ On top of this, it would be the Clinton administration that would initiate the first summit meetings by APEC in Washington State, which gave the participating states both the chance to partake in multilateral talks, but also bilateral sessions.⁵²

On the other hand, the United States' powerful role in the region was undeniable, which was greatly due to its close relationship with Japan. The very fact that Malaysia would accept to enter the APEC process, and the fact that its initiative at creating an institution that excluded non-Asian actors did not receive the support it needed by Japan, "symbolised the limits on any and all regional challenges to US hegemony in the Asia-Pacific."⁵³

Despite having achieved an unprecedented level of success in region building, APEC was facing some crucial limitations and obstacles to its effectiveness and relevance in the region. First and foremost, we must highlight the non-binding nature of the organization, which meant that breakthroughs in the dialogues did not necessarily bring about a change in policy or real commitment among the members. Ultimately, such a multilateral framework, where binding agreements could not be reached at the end of the negotiations, and where the US was not a central player, made the superpower the more reluctant to engage in such rigid platform. Asian states' methodology was greatly shaped by the "ASEAN way" of

⁵¹ Tommy T. B. Koh, *The United States and East Asia: Conflict and Co-operation* (Singapore: The Institute of Policy Studies, 1995), 107-108

⁵² Jeffrey J. Schott, "Can Obama Help Retrieve Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation," *Peterson Institute for International Studies*, uploaded on November 4, 2009, <https://www.piie.com/experts/peterson-perspectives/can-obama-help-revive-asia-pacific-economic-cooperation>

⁵³ Berger, "APEC and Its Enemies," 1026

consensus, which meant “thin institutionalisation and non-interference.” For the United States APEC was important because then it was the only multilateral channel that connected them with the regional powers, but there was one fundamental difference between Asian powers and the United States: That the former held a process-oriented approach to regional cooperation, while the United States’ approach was outcome-oriented.⁵⁴ Critics have mentioned how the community-building practices within APEC appear to be minimalist and lacking credibility, while the United States was more focused on deliverables and clear outcomes to the different multilateral processes.

Together with this, the United States and Japan did not see eye to eye when it came to trade practices, situation that was made the graver if we consider that Japan and the United States were the two most powerful states representing Asia and the off-shore Pacific members respectively. Japan advocated for trade cooperation while the United States together with Australia focused on liberalization and lifting protectionist obstacle to trade in the region. On top of this, this difference in mindset between most Asian states, that generally advocated for mercantilist methods, and the United States, which advocated for trade liberalization, was bound to result ineffective. Said goal become a priority for the United States, which urgently needed to lower their increasing trade deficit with the region.

The Asian financial crisis of 1997 was a catalytic event in the region as it gave momentum to the above mentioned “East Asia” ideas. Beeson highlights three factors that, following the crisis, explain such a turn: The crisis made East Asian powers understand (1) the potential risks of further integrating into the US-led

⁵⁴ Nair, “Regionalism in the Asia Pacific/East Asia,” 117

global economy, (2) how reliant most East Asian economies were of foreign assistance, (3) how little domestic capacity they had to face such financial crises.⁵⁵ On top of this, China, not considered until then a hegemonic rival, was proving to be more and more threatening in the way that it gave Asian governments a new in-shore superpower to be reckoned with.⁵⁶ As the 20th century came to an end, China's foreign policy reached new lengths and seemed more ambitious than ever in the mission of promoting intra-regional cooperation. On the other hand, the American leadership in the region was effectively waning. With an increase in intra-regional trade and economic cooperation, East Asian states would slowly discover the benefits of less reliance on the global economy. This was only enhanced by the perceived opportunistic, as well as lacking, assistance of the United States in the aftermath of the financial crisis. Together with this, the United States would effectively block many multilateral agreements in the region that were outcome-oriented and excluded Washington. This was not very well received by some regional powers that were already suspicious about the United States' participation in Asian regionalism, and the Prime Minister of Malaysia would bring forward the idea of creating the **East Asia Economic Caucus** (EAEC) in 1997. In case there were any doubts regarding the motive and *raison d'être* of said initiative, the foreign ministry would clarify that it was "retaliatory in nature and not merely a consultative forum stating."⁵⁷ Malaysia knew that to turn any such initiative into reality, the support of Japan would be key, and would try to convince it to do so. However, the United States would express its concern regarding this exclusive

⁵⁵ Mark Beeson, "The United States and East Asia: The decline of long-distance leadership?" *The Asia Pacific Journal* vol. 7, Issue 43, no. 1 (October, 2009), 7

⁵⁶ Takashi Terada, "The United States and East Asian Regionalism: Inclusion-Exclusion Logic and the Role of Japan," *A Pacific Nation* (February 2011),

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

organization, which put Japan in a very difficult spot. As it is implied in Secretary of State James' message, that read: "In private, I did my best to kill (the EAEC)... Without strong Japanese backing, (the EAEC) represented less of a threat to (America's) economic interests in East Asia."⁵⁸ Similar was the case of the **Asian Monetary Fund** (AMF) initiative, which was proposed in 1997 by Eisuke Sakakibara, Japan's vice finance minister for international affairs. It was designed to be a financing facility for the Asian states, and for that it was perceived as a threat that the United States-led International Monetary Fund (IMF). In this case, the United States was explicit in voicing out its rejection to any such regional institution that was exclusive and results-oriented, and Japan eventually backed down and did not go forward with the proposal.⁵⁹ Even with the American leadership waning in its relevance, getting to new lows during the end of this decade, the alliance between Washington and Tokyo was key to safeguard the US' role in the region.

Towards the end of the century, China seemed to abandon Deng Xiaoping's suggestion to keep a low profile regarding its foreign policy, and started to move towards the role of "responsible stakeholder."⁶⁰ For this, China became more and more interested in establishing strategic partnerships in order to reduce the US' power in the region.⁶¹ As mentioned previously, it was at this time when China was

⁵⁸ James Adison Baker, *The politics of Diplomacy: Revolution, War, and Peace, 1989-1992* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1995)

⁵⁹ Terada, "The United States and East Asian Regionalism,"

⁶⁰ Joseph Cheng, "China's foreign policy in the mid-1990s," *Strategic Studies* 19, no. 1 (1996),

⁶¹ Joseph Cheng, "China's Regional Strategy and Challenges in East Asia," *China Perspectives*, 2013/2 (2013), 58

gaining a stronger voice in the foreign policy arena, and as soon as 1997, **ASEAN Plus Three** would be formed, a minilateral forum for ASEAN member states, Japan, South Korea, and China exclusively, with the main goal of protecting the East Asian economy from potential shocks to the US dollar. Naturally, China would side with Malaysia in its wish to exclude the United States from APEC, and keep it exclusive to East Asia, and for that more emphasis would be put on ASEAN Plus Three.⁶² This formation, to this day, has been very prolific and would undertake many projects such as **Chiang Mai Initiative** (CMI) in 2000, which consisted on bilateral swap agreements with more countries than those belonging to the ASEAN Swap Arrangement, within which the **Economic and Review Policy Dialogue** (ERPD) was created to function as a mechanism to prevent potential crises, or **Asian Bond Markets Initiative** (ABMI), or the **Chiang Mai Initiative Multilateralization** (CMIM). In the case of said initiatives, the United States would support them through APEC.⁶³

On the other hand, as an unprecedented initiative at the regional level, the **Asia-Pacific Telecommunity** (APT) presented a radically new model of regional cooperation, and although formed in 1979, this framework would be utilized for different regional groupings that would come to be towards the end of 1990s and the first years of 2000s. Membership to the APT was simple: Any country recognised as member to Asia Pacific by the United Nations Economic and Social

⁶² Ibid., 56

⁶³ Suk Hyun and James F. Paradise, “Why is there no Asian Monetary Fund?” *ADB Working Paper Series*, no. 1061 (December 2019), 1 <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/546901/adbi-wp1061.pdf>

Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP).⁶⁴ Differently from past regional initiatives, the APT proved to be productive, outcome-oriented, and effective in alleviating some regional weaknesses that derived from the financial crisis. It would be successful in formulating clear guidelines and initiatives, and it would not only stay in the economic realm, but also delve into political-security and transitional issues.⁶⁵ It progressively grew and created new organisations, such as the **East Asian Study Group** (EASG), ir the **East Asian Vision Group** (EAVG). By 2001, APT leaders would discuss the establishment of annual summits and the creation of an East Asian Free Trade Area.⁶⁶ The creation of the former, an annual summit, would materialised into a solid proposal: The **East Asian Summit** (EAS). Its realization, however, would prove to be more difficult, and helplessly entangled with the United States hegemony in the region. It also evidence how the power balance between the United States and Asia was fundamentally changing with China as a regional superpower. Similar as to the case of APEC, in which the membership of the United States was a divisive matter, membership to the EAS faced the same dilemma, only that now a newly established and empowered China was on the side of Malaysia. The concern over China potentially becoming a hegemonic rival increased during the last decade, and as soon as in 2008, the growing influence of China would be suspected by the United States to become, not only a threat to the US military, but also to the advantages that the American military network provides to Washington. “China’s economic rise was alleviating the power asymmetry between the United States and its allies, allowing Malaysia

⁶⁴ “How to become a member,” *Asia-Pacific Telecommunity*, retrieved on May 1, 2017, <https://www.apr.int/become-members>

⁶⁵ Nair, “Regionalism in the Asia Pacific,” 119

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

so be backed up by another great power that could balance out the unshakable rigidity of the US-Japan alliance.

The rising power of China through these multilateral initiatives started to become a concern, not only for the United States, but also for other nations such as Singapore or Indonesia.⁶⁷ This is because both countries had been the biggest supporters of Japan's idea of "open regionalism" within ASEAN.⁶⁸ The ASEAN Plus 3 grouping was becoming very powerful and expansive, and it was feared that China "would become a rule-setter as a result."⁶⁹ Once again, the US-Japan alliance would be key in fighting said perceived threat, and they would decide to respond to China's advances with the formation of organizations that could balance out China's relations with ASEAN, as well as include other powers that were US allies. In the first place, Japan and the United States would push for the creation of the **ASEAN Plus 6**, which would include the original members of ASEAN Plus 3, as well as India, Australia, and New Zealand. Secondly, as inclusion of the United States in the East Asian Summit seemed implausible, Japan would push for the inclusion of the above mentioned countries in the summit.

At the same time that China was experiencing said rise in presence at the regional level, it was becoming the more difficult for the United States showing commitment to the multilateral processes in Asia after the terrorist attacks in that same year, which forced the United States to reevaluate their foreign policy and

⁶⁷ Terada, "The United States and East Asian Regionalism," 140

⁶⁸ Malcolm Cook, "The United States and the East Asia Summit: Finding the Proper Home," *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 30, no. 2 (2008),

⁶⁹ Terada, "The United States and East Asian Regionalism," 141

focus many resources in the Middle East. Despite attempts by the US to convince allies of its commitment to the region, member countries to APEC were not reassured and remained unsure regarding the US' participation in their annual meetings.⁷⁰ Together with this, following the 9/11 attacks, increased importance would be given to security matters and the war against terrorism, and consequently following the events the United States would utilize APEC mainly to discuss security concerns, giving less importance to purely economic cooperation issues. Ultimately, it did not help the already declining relevance of APEC, even less so than when ASEAN+3 was providing East Asian leaders with a more concrete framework, stable goals, and less diverse membership.⁷¹

Simultaneously, at the multilateral level Trade Agreements would proliferate in East Asia, starting with the one between China and ASEAN in 2000, followed by Japan, South Korea, India, and Australia/New Zealand, which would sign bilateral FTAs with ASEAN as well in the years to come. The United States, according to Evans J.R. Revere's speech, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, at the Baltimore Council of Foreign Affairs in 2005, "would welcome" growing East Asian intra-regional trade and regional cooperation in East Asia, understanding how it "contributes to further openness and inclusiveness," which will "advance regional prosperity and stability."⁷² However, by 2006 Japan would propose the creation of an FTA that included the member states to the ASEAN+6 grouping —**Comprehensive Economic Partnership for East Asia**

⁷⁰ Cook, "The United States and the East Asia Summit," 306

⁷¹ Ibid., 145

⁷² Evans J. R. Revere, "U.S. Foreign Policy Priorities and the East Asia-Pacific Region," U.S. Department of State Archive, May 3, 2005.

(CEPEA)—, which was a countermeasure to China’s proposal to do the same with the ASEAN+3 framework 2004 —**East Asian Free Trade Agreement (EAFT)**—, but that excluded the United States.⁷³ Said attempts were naturally not welcomed by the super power, specially not Japan’s, and in usual fashion it would counter-attack through APEC, proposing an FTA within this framework: **Free Trade Area of the Asia-Pacific (FTAAP)**. The formulation of such an agreement had started to be discussed within the APEC Business Advisory Council (ABAC) in 2004, which, in light of bilateral FTAs in the region, would bring forward the idea to pursue a region-wide agreement that promoted liberalization at the *Asia Pacific* level. However, before the United States had brought it back on the table in 2006 at the Hanoi APEC Leaders’ Meeting, it had been discarded as an agenda point for APEC.⁷⁴

The challenge of the United States during the 21st century, then, will be pushing the boundaries of said “dual hierarchy” strategy, fighting for a stronger position in Economic Asia. The fact that most Asian states are protected under the United States’ security umbrella is a given today, and China will accept said military balance because it does not interfere with its role as most powerful economic regional power. However, if the United States wants to enter in competition with China at the economic level, it will have to get creative, once again, in the way it promotes itself in the region. At the minilateral level, the biggest disadvantage that the United States presented against China was that there was no US-ASEAN Free Trade Agreement, which would be key in promoting China’s presence regionally. The stronger fight would present itself at the multilateral level, as gaining

⁷³ Terada, “The United States and East Asian Regionalism,” 143

⁷⁴ Ibid. 145

economic leverage would have to happen in a way that did not trigger a retaliatory answer from China. That is how the Trans Pacific Partnership agreement would be conceived.

The Obama administration brought with it the so-called *Pivot to Asia*, and President Barack Obama would take concrete steps forward greater cooperation and integration in East Asian regionalism. In fall of 2011, the US would make public its intentions to focus resources in the region For the most part, with the goal of playing “a larger and long-term role in shaping this region and its future.”⁷⁵ Obama’s foreign policy towards East Asia has remained mostly the same to that of the past administration.⁷⁶ Similarly to the past administration, the current one would maintain a two-track diplomacy approach towards China: Cooperating and being proactive, while hedging China militarily. On the other hand, strengthening cooperation with India had been a pillar in Bush administration’s policy, as it considered that India would be a major player in the years to come.⁷⁷ So much so, that the United States and India alliance has been considered to be the “greatest bilateral success story” for the United States in the 21st century.⁷⁸

However, Obama administration would be referred to as “Pacific” mainly because of its active role in engaging with the region multilaterally, in a way never

⁷⁵ The White House Office of the Press Secretary, “Remarks By President Obama to the Australian Parliament,” November 17, 2011.

⁷⁶ Mayang A. Rahawestri, “Obama’s Foreign Policy in Asia: More Continuity than Change,” *Security Challenges* 6, no. 1 (2010), 112

⁷⁷ United States Department of State, ‘Background Briefing by Administration Officials on US- South Asia Relations’, Washington DC, 25 March 2005, <<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2005/43853.htm>> [Accessed 8 October 2009].

⁷⁸ Timothy J. Lynch and Robert S. Singh, *After Bush: The Case for Continuity in American Foreign Policy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 251

seen in Bush administration. The previous administration had acted mostly unilaterally in the military at the same time that it would be more assertive in dealing with trade disputes with China.⁷⁹ The then Secretary Clinton, would called for a “sustained US commitment to forward-deployed diplomacy in the Asia Pacific,” and one of the six key lines to implement the strategy that he mentioned, “engaging with regional multilateral institutions” would occupy the first place.⁸⁰ The Obama administration would sustain itself through maintaining bilateral relations, *projecting* “a more active presence at the strategic level of regional architecture”, exploring “deeper US engagement in the field of economics” as well as in security matters.⁸¹

As evidence of this, another point to highlight here is that, from the very beginning of the Obama administration, it would attend the APEC summit in Singapore in 2009. Even when APEC significantly declined in terms of the agenda’s ambitiousness after 1997, Asia Pacific leaders have maintained the organization afloat as a caucus, a forum to enhance regional cooperation.⁸² APEC presents more and more of a conflict of interest with the US-China competition worsening, given that it is the only regional organization joined by both countries, but President Obama would use the first APEC summit of his term to assert how the United States wants “China to do well.” He would also mention how both

⁷⁹ Rahawestri, “Obama’s Foreign Policy in Asia,” 112

⁸⁰ Phillip C. Saunders, “The Rebalance to Asia: US-China Relations and Regional Security,” *Strategic Forum*, no. 251 (August 2013), 2

⁸¹ James Gannon, “Engaging in Asia: The Evolving US Approach to Regional Community Building,” In *A Pacific Nation: Perspectives on the U.S. Role in an East Asia Community*, ed. by Mark Borthwick and Tadashi Yamamoto (Japan Center International Exchange, 2011), 26

⁸² Schott, “Can Obama Help Retrieve.”

nations plan to undertake further cooperation, and how “if China and the United States can work together, the world benefits.”⁸³ On the other hand, it was key that the Obama administration revitalized the organization making the Pacific participants remember the reason why APEC continues to exist, which had been devirtualized by past administrations’ focus on security matters, as well as other global conflicts that required the organization’s focus.⁸⁴ On that same speech, the American president would remind the public To do this, the Obama administration would return to the organization’s roots and push for region-level liberalization.

As a result of this change in strategy, the Obama administration would have to strengthen relations with putting forward the proposal for the **Trans Pacific Partnership agreement (TPP)** in 2008, which designed to be a stepping stone for the FTAAP. The United States would position itself against the “low quality” FTAs that China had been arranging, and the TPP was meant to be an alternative “high-quality” FTA.⁸⁵ At the time, whether the TPP or the FTAAP could be realized was unsure, what was the most crucial for the United States was maintaining, most importantly, ASEAN member states, Japan, and South Korea busy so as to CEPEA and EAFTA negotiations would have to be paused. In words of US Trade Representative Michael Froman, the deal would be of crucial importance as it would put America “squarely where it needs to be when it comes to both the global trading system and global leadership.” The deal sent the world the signal that the

⁸³ “Remarks by President Obama at APEC CEO Summit,” The White House, November 10, 2014, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2014/11/10/remarks-president-obama-apec-ceo-summit>.

⁸⁴ “President Obama Tours Asia,” *Council on Foreign Relations*, November 3, 2009, <https://www.cfr.org/expert-roundup/president-obama-tours-asia>.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.* 147

US was “prepared to lead a 21st century race to the top on trade and set new standards on everything from intellectual property rights, to a free and open internet, to labor and environment, to disciplines on state-owned enterprises.”⁸⁶ Through the TPP, the United States would set itself as a leader in the economic field in Asia, leading the discussions and setting standards around emerging issues at the time such as the above mentioned. It would pursue the goal of eliminating taxes and trade barriers, but also had more ambitious goals such as further intellectual property protection, protection of workers, and environment standards. Whether the Asia Pacific partners would accept such “high quality” provisions was a worrying question, but their intention to enter the talks was evident when Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, and Vietnam entered the negotiations. The agreement initially started as the Trans-Pacific Strategic Economic Partnership (P4), which was being negotiated by Brunei Darussalam, Chile, Singapore, and New Zealand. The United States would believe that its participation would encourage other countries to join, and so was the case, but the only other Asian country that joined the negotiations was Japan.

Another key element of the TPP that made it an initial success in achieving said objective its open nature regarding China’s membership. The TPP did not present allies with the dilemma of choosing a China-exclusive Pacific initiative over a purely East Asian initiative, risking China’s retaliations, but rather presented itself as an attractive option that was open to those countries that wanted to participate in

⁸⁶ Victoria Guida, “Major TPP political players talking,” *Politico*, 2 March, 2016, <https://www.politico.com/tipsheets/morning-trade/2016/02/major-tpp-political-players-talking-warren-hits-tpp-ahead-of-signing-spring-showers-bring-ttip-flowers-212510#ixzz3zARPeVnL>.

a broader partnership. The agreement set its principles and goals straight, namely, the establishment of “rules-based economic system” and “stringent standards for liberalization and transparency.” As long as China would commit to said goals, it would be welcome to participate in it. China would be working on its own trade agreement, the Regional Comprehensive Partnership (RCEP) at the same time, but even then, it would refer at the TPP as “one of the key free trade agreements” in the region.⁸⁷ As mentioned earlier, it was a key component of Obama’s strategy for Asia to normalize and improve ties with China. At the multilateral level, the TPP remained open, and at the bilateral level, even amid trade tensions, military escalation over the South China Sea, and cybersecurity concerns, both presidents would cooperate bilaterally.⁸⁸

However, it is clear to us how key players in East Asia did not join the TPP, namely many ASEAN member states, Korea, or Taiwan. Together with concerns regarding its benefits for said economies, it has also been argued how reluctance from Seoul and Taipei to join the agreement is in great part due to the potential dangers of diving even further into the US-led region building in Asia. On top of this, Korea, at the time, held FTAs with most of the agreement signatories, for which said strategic partnership was not as interesting for the country, and was in the process of negotiating the China-led regional trade pact: **Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP)**. However, not participating in the TPP talks was to be considered a strategic mistake, as those signatories would not be able to participate as strongly in the rule-setting process that would happen

⁸⁷ Freeman, Carla, “How Will China’s Bid to Join the Trans Pacific Trade Pact Affect Regional Stability,” *United States Institute of Peace*, 7 October, 2021

⁸⁸ “Timeline: U.S.-China Relations,” Council on Foreign Relations

within the boundaries of TPP.⁸⁹ The success of the agreement, however, would be short-lived for the United States, although it still remains relevant as the **Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP)** for Australia, Brunei, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, and Vietnam. The remaining members would keep most of the ambitious provisions agreed upon during the original negotiations, and not only that, but the continuation of the agreement without the US would also serve as proof for the Asian states of how Washington was no longer needed for regional economic integration.⁹⁰

The United States' policy in Asia would take a drastic turn with the inauguration of the Trump administration in 2016. For starters, one of the first actions of the administration would be the withdrawal from the Trans Pacific Partnership agreement before it had been ratified in US Congress. The very agreement of TPP was contentious and controversial amid continued economic recession domestically for the last 10 years preceding to the decision.⁹¹ By the time Trump took office, those concerns regarding the impossibility of the administration to support their hegemonic status gained momentum, for which stronger trade protectionist measures became the more popular. He famously denounced the TPP

⁸⁹ Jessica L. Lee, "The Truth About South Korea's TPP Shift," *The Diplomat*, 23 October, 2015, <https://thediplomat.com/2015/10/the-truth-about-south-koreas-tpp-shift/>.

⁹⁰ Mireya Solís, "Heyday of Asian Regionalism? The Implications of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership for the United States," *ERIA Discussion Paper Series*, no. 435 (August, 2022), 17

⁹¹ Song Guoyou, "The Trump Administration's Trade Policy and Sino-American Economic Relations," in *Parallel Perspectives on the Global Economic Order*, ed. Matthew P. Goodman (Center for Strategic and International Studies, September 2017)

as a disaster for the United States, and would declare how the country would go back to its usual modus operandi in foreign trade: Bilateral trade deals.

The key difference between the previous and Trump administration is that, while the former would work for the maintenance of the US' hegemony in Asia, Trump would want to remove itself from such position. In many aspects, it supposed a return to the Nixon doctrine regarding its military concerns and approach in the sense that it aimed at readjusting the defense burden share with Asia Pacific allies. Done in a very harsh and blunt manner, it left allies feeling not reassured about the future of the United States' hegemonic role in the region. This, naturally, would leave a power vacuum in East Asia. Disengagement and unstable commitment from the United States would help China advance its presence as a regional superpower. At the same time, China was engaging further in multilateral institutions and mechanisms, making the most of the United States' under-attention to multilateralism, and it is proving to be a golden opportunity to reshape the region.⁹²

In 2013, the Chinese president Xi Jinping would launch an unprecedented initiative, the **Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)**, which was not technically exclusively Asian as it includes Central Asia and European states, but it is a massive infrastructure development project that mainly engages South East Asia in the Asia Pacific region through the Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar (BCIM) economic corridor. The initiative, at the same time, would be materialized in 2016 through the Beijing-based Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB). In the

⁹² Bruce Jones, "China and the return of great power strategic competition," Brookings, February, 2020, <https://www.brookings.edu/research/china-and-the-return-of-great-power-strategic-competition/>.

establishment of said bank, we can highlight South Korea, Australia, and New Zealand as founders of the institution in Asia Pacific. Through the BRI, some of China's goals are coordinating economic policy with the participating countries, working towards *unimpeded* trade, and financial integration.⁹³ Interestingly enough, president Xi Jinping would invite the United States to join China in BRI projects, with the argument that both countries should work together to build in Asia Pacific a “family of openness, inclusiveness, innovation, growth, connectivity, and win-win cooperation.”⁹⁴ This new drive of China to expand regionally and globally responded to President Xi's renewed plan for China upon Deng Xiaoping's term ending.⁹⁵ Focusing on infrastructure building gives China leverage over the economies it invests on, creating significant dependence in the receiving states, a kind of relation that is more permanent than an FTA. Not only this, but the BRI initiative seems to be beneficial for the countries involved, where China is stepping in and addressing infrastructure gaps and aiding trade flow. In the rules-setting game, the withdrawal from the TPP by Trump gave significant advantage to President Xi's “China Dream,” and in the face of rocky relationships with Washington, increased integration within East Asia—in detriment to Asia Pacific—became more attractive.⁹⁶

⁹³ Yose Rizal Damuri, Vidhyandika Perkasa, Raymond Atje, and Fajar Hirawan, “Belt and Road Initiative: An Overview,” In *Perceptions and readiness of Indonesia toward the Belt and Road Initiative: Understanding local perspectives, capacity, and governance* (Centre for Strategic and International Studies, 2019), 5

⁹⁴ “China Invites the United States to Join the Belt and Road Initiative,” Silk Road Briefing, March 3, 2022, <https://www.silkroadbriefing.com/news/2022/03/03/china-invites-the-united-states-to-join-the-belt-and-road-initiative/>.

⁹⁵ Joshua P. Meltzer, “China's One Belt One Road initiative: A view from the United States,” *Brookings*, June 19, 2017, <https://www.brookings.edu/research/chinas-one-belt-one-road-initiative-a-view-from-the-united-states/>.

⁹⁶ “China Invites the United States,” Silk Road Briefing

At the same time that China was focusing on infrastructure development, it would be the ASEAN member states that would bring to the table a region-wide ASEAN-centered FTA in 2012: The **Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP)** agreement. Overlapping in time with the negotiations for the Trans Pacific Partnership agreement, the RCEP would include all ASEAN member states, Australia, New Zealand, China, Japan, and South Korea. Compared to the membership of the TPP, RCEP included many more Asian states: Namely, all ASEAN member states, South Korea, and China. In comparison, the American agreement would have not contributed in any significant way to regional economic integration, as, its very name says, it was Pacific, rather than *Asia Pacific*. However, it could be argued that any Trans Pacific Agreement in place would be better than no agreement at all in the face of the RCEP. Soon after the Trump administration withdrew from the TPP, the the RCEP would be signed, which further worsened the US' prospects for agenda setting. Mireya Solís, Senior Fellow at the Brookings Institution, discusses how the consequences of the establishment of the RCEP for the United States were (1) “growing marginalisation from intra-Asian trade”, (2) “diminished rule-making capabilities as alternative standards disseminate widely in the region”, and, lastly, (3) “lessened diplomatic clout, as the United States appears incapable of formulating a compelling economic strategy that can vie for regional influence.”⁹⁷

The Obama administration would aim at containing such exclusive groupings and the development of an East Asia community that closed its market to Washington. The Trump administration found in unilateralism and economic

⁹⁷ Solís, “Heyday of Asian Regionalism?”

coerciveness a more effective way in doing so, but this approach worsened the prospects of the true development of an Asia Pacific region that included the United States. However, even Obama’s approach, although successful in furthering American interests, was essentially "reactive and tentative."⁹⁸ However, for the United States to become a leader in Asia Pacific, improved cooperation with the region must bring competitive benefits to the signatories as well as fill in the gaps of the very exclusive Asian groupings. Can the Biden Administration achieve that goal?

	During the Cold War	After the Cold War
Position in East Asia	Quasi-hegemonic	Transition to a “dual hierarchy” system
Priorities in Asia Pacific	Creating security networks and keeping the markets open and liberal	Maintaining security networks and deterring China’s rise of power
Negotiation style	Outcome-oriented	Outcome-oriented
Multilateral participation	No interest in multilateral initiatives: Unilateralism and Minilateralism	Timid, focus on bilateral and minilateral cooperation, multilateralism beyond only Asia Pacific with the TPP
Position regarding regional cooperation	Transition from unilateral imposition of liberal economic system to emphasis on burden sharing	Preference for regional trading blocs and minilaterals as the best way to navigate increasing rivalry with China

Figure 2. Summary table of the United States’ role in East Asia during and after the Cold War

⁹⁸ Gannon, “Engaging in Asia,” 15

3. Current day: Biden Administration

As we have seen until this point, the United States has not really been a hegemonic economic power in Asia in the last decades, being firstly replaced by Japan as Asian states' main investor during the 1980s. The US' partial hegemonic position in Asia is maintained through bilateral and minilateral security alliances, and has been in most jeopardy when allies have doubted the US' military commitment in the face of protectionist or nationalistic American behavior. However, as intra-regional trade gains terrain, mainly through the RCEP, the United States is losing more and more its capacity to set the rules of trade in the region. The US military network in the region has become insufficient to compete for power in Asia, and, once more, Washington would have to get creative with how it sets an economic agenda in the region.

Naturally, it has been in the United States' interests, since the beginning of last century, to ensure that the Asian region is free of any other hegemonic power for the ultimately goal of ensuring its access to said markets. For the longest time, as we have seen, engagement in the region in bi and minilateral fashion was enough for the US. Compared to complex and rigid multilateral processes, military power and global presence has given the United States enough leverage to regard said minilateral approach more productive than region-wide cooperation.

However, as regional institutions were becoming more popular, wider, and outcome-oriented, and with the the very goal of keeping the region free of monopolizing powers or institutions, the US would go beyond bilateralism, would

join APEC, and start entering small trade agreements.⁹⁹ but on their own terms. The US and close allies would work against Japan, which, at the same time, greatly helped the US to get accepted into the organization, pushing for liberalization rather than mere cooperation. An added difficulty that the US had been facing is having many open fronts abroad, Asia being only one of them, and the United States could allow to act as an incomplete hegemony as no other great power in the region could be able to balance out the US' power. We have seen how, repeatedly, Japan, the most powerful economic and political power in East Asia until the 1990s, would choose "open regionalism" initiatives instead of exclusive "East Asian" ones. However, China was growing and opening itself rapidly, not only militarily, but also through many different development initiatives and projects all over the region.

What changed the way regional integration was being undertaken in Asia Pacific was the proliferation of minilateral FTAs, mainly the one between China and ASEAN. Soon after, other FTAs that excluded the United States were being negotiated, evidencing how regional cooperation was now moving to new heights, and how, with China's renewed regional leadership, said integration could be carried out without America's participation. It was only then when the United States would propose a countering FTA within the APEC framework,....., not sure whether its realisation and ratification could be possible. The regional FTA race, however, could continue with the simultaneous negotiations of TPP by the ambitious Obama administration, and the unprecedented China-led RCEP.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

The Trump administration, however, would take on a more protectionist approach that has not ended after his presidency. By the time the TPP was agreed upon, domestic opinion was very polarized, and the idea that the US' trade deficit was a consequence of liberalized trade with Asia gained popularity, so much so that the Trump administration would withdraw from the agreement and renegotiate previously arranged FTAs, namely with Korea, losing significant agenda-setting power in the region. The "America first" worker-centric approach started with Trump and continues with Biden, but the way in which they are realizing this domestic goal abroad is significantly different. For the Trump administration, a worker-centric approach also meant unstable diplomacy and nationalism, in some way giving up on its role as a great global power in charge of rule-setting and policy-making. The Biden Administration, however, seems to be redefining what being a great power in the current age of multipolarity can be. The current democratic administration also had to find new ways to handle domestic economic downturn and Congress conservatism, and while adapting a similar worker-centric approach, it would get creative with its ways to continue to lead in Asia Pacific.

The economic statecraft of China in the region is doing nothing but increasing in volume and importance, and the current Biden administration seems to believe that balancing China cannot be done solely through military assertiveness and trade war, but rather, that re-entering the region multilaterally will mean further balancing China where it is the most powerful, as well as push the US agenda where the Chinese market leads. As Mark Beeson explained in a work published in 2008 on the United States' leadership status in Asia, the scholar would make the differentiation of structural and agential power. The sources of American power, mainly institutional organizations (the Monetary Fund, the World Bank, or the

United Nations) and long-lasting military presence, make the US' global leadership enduring and pervasive, however, as these structures become less relevant with the rise of minilateralism, as well as the decrease in inter-state warfare, it is more complicated for the United States to transform this structural power into agency and leverage.¹⁰⁰ We can argue that the case of East Asia is somewhat different because of very latent and current military tensions, mainly territorial disputes and North Korea's nuclear power, which, to this day, "virtually *bid* the United States to play the "hub.""¹⁰¹ However, when it comes to economic cooperation, the vacuum that the United States left after the Obama administration has been compensated for and filled with an increase in both multilateral and minilateral initiatives. It might not be easy for the United States to transform its structural power into agential power if it plans to do so in a way that it promotes its integration in the region, rather than through coercive mechanisms. Economically, however rocky relations are with Asian allies, the United States has been deeply entrenched into the region "by the cultivation of a liberal economic order that that has sought to open up and integrate with national economies."¹⁰²

If defining East Asia was an arduous task before, the rise of China as a powerful economy in East Asia posed a big challenge. Not only was China a potential hegemonic figure in East Asia, but it was also outside of the international system and the American security umbrella. When Japan had come too close to threatening the US' hegemonic role in East Asia, it could —and did— utilize political and

¹⁰⁰ Beeson, "The United States and East Asia," 8

¹⁰¹ Josef Joffe, "'Bismarck' or 'Britain'?: Toward an American grand strategy after bipolarity," *International Security* 19, no. 4 (1995), 114

¹⁰² Nair, "Regionalism in the Asia Pacific," 126

economic pressure to prevent this from happening. At the same time, Japan greatly benefited from the United States' economic and military presence, and would avoid antagonizing Washington for this reason. Japan would then strive to include the United States in the Asia Pacific region, where the alliance between both countries acted as a *defacto* hegemony. The rise of China came to be in the shape of Free Trade Agreements during the first years of the 21st century, which promoted economic integration in East Asia effectively. However, it also came paired with aggressive foreign policy that made the regional powers find refuge in the American military scheme. On the one hand, China is a regional player, mainly because it has become the most powerful player in East Asia with meaningful economic relationships with many regional powers; but on the other hand, China is effectively outside of the liberal international order as a non-democracy, which naturally challenges the democratic and liberalized system that the United States has taken part in creating and maintaining in Asia Pacific.

Feigenbaum and Manning explain this complicated scheme wonderfully with the idea that there are two Asias, arguing how there exist two different Asias: Economic Asia, in which China has become the indisputable greatest economic power in the region, and Security Asia, dominated by the United States.¹⁰³ Adding to this, G. John Ikenberry "dual hierarchy" approach, arguing that both powers play the role of regional hegemons in their own field.¹⁰⁴ In the economic field we highlight the gradual economic growth of China that, although starting later than its

¹⁰³ Evan A. Feigenbaum and Robert A. Manning, "A Tale of Two Asias," East Asia Forum, 4 December, 2012, <https://www.eastasiaforum.org/2012/12/04/a-tale-of-two-asias/>.

¹⁰⁴ John G. Ikenberry, "Between the Eagle and the Dragon: America, China, and Middle State Strategies in East Asia," *Political Science Quarterly*, vol. 131, issue 1 (Academy of Political Science, 2016), 2

neighbours', has situated the country at the centre of the economic relations of the region. Not only that, but also the dependency of other East Asian countries with respect to the Chinese economy is ever-increasing. China has experienced an unprecedented growth, successfully spreading its economic influence all around the Asian region, partly because of heavy investment in infrastructure and great sums of OFDI. So much so that China has outnumbered Japan in said arena, former leading lender of OFDI, and, until recently, East Asian economic leading figure. Moreover, China has also replaced the United States as the primary trade partner of the most powerful Asian economies during the last decade.¹⁰⁵ The ambition of China to spread its power across the region materialises in the "One Belt, One Road" initiative and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, through which China aims to push its interests and consolidate its presence all across the region. In the politics and security arena, however, China is not recipient of such trust from the states in the region for the most part. The end of the Second World War and the Cold War that followed gave place to key alliances between the United States and some of the wealthiest countries in the region. This traditional preference for the United States as the main security provider across the region has been reinforced by China's increasingly aggressive foreign policy and territorial disputes throughout the years.

Naturally, we must highlight the role of Japan as a key figure in "Security Asia," which aims to simultaneously improve its strategic positioning, as well as further the "US-led international order."¹⁰⁶ Japan, as a key regional power, in the face of

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Kei Koga, "Japan's 'Indo-Pacific' question: countering China or shaping a new regional order?," *International Affairs*, vol. 96, issue 1 (January 2020), 50

the risk of China gaining further regional power, has recently adopted a more active role in the regional security arena, such as through projects like the Free Open Indo-Pacific initiative.¹⁰⁷ The support of Japan and its very strategic cooperation with China has served the United States immensely in promoting international liberal values and furthering a strategic alliance with India. In a speech given by Shinzo Abe in 2016, the Prime Minister would highlight, among others, the importance of promoting “freedom, the rule of law, and the market economy, free from force or coercion, and making [the region] prosperous.”¹⁰⁸ Japan has not only supported the United States’ strategies in promoting Asia Pacific economic regionalism, but has also taken leadership in the very maintenance of the international order. With this goal, Japan has been a key figure in carrying out development projects with “like-minded states” in the region: Australia, India, and the United States.¹⁰⁹ This, however, does not mean the United States should take US-Japan alliance for granted, as Japan has been clear and assertive with Washington when its commitment has waned in the past. Namely, the United States’ reluctance to involving in regional multilateralism in Asia during the first years of 2000s, as well as the global financial crisis of 2007 and 2008 that would draw the United States inward, would leave Japan in a very vulnerable position, given that it has been in such moments when the US-Japan alliance has been at its worst, when China has taken advantage militarily.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ “Address by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe at the opening session of the sixth Tokyo international conference on African Development (TICAD VI),” Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), 27 August, 2016, https://www.mofa.go.jp/afr/af2/page4e_000496.html.

¹⁰⁹ Yoga, “Japan’s ‘Indo-Pacific’ question,” 67

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 53

The ongoing rise of Chinese economic influence and, most importantly, increasing participation in regional initiatives and soft power poses the question of whether the United States, going forward, will be able to maintain its hegemonic position in the “Security Asia” without an increase in influence in “Economic Asia.” China’s increasing influence in the region comes together with *defacto* power to shape the regional order in a way that benefits the national economy. Opposed to this last point, the United States’ participation in Asian economic regionalism has been deemed as reactive, responding to regional trends. Namely, the United States would bring TPP to the table only after the proliferation of US-exclusive FTAs in the region. This approach has made the United States, contrary to China, not really engage “dynamically” in “creating a new vision for regional architecture.”¹¹¹ The United States’ usual *modus operandi* since the Cold War has been more focused on containment and maintaining Asia Pacific open, mainly focused on outcomes and not so much in process of region-building.

By the time the Biden Administration started, the skepticism regarding the United States’ capability to be a regional player in the security field significantly increased. So much so that the Asian states have adapted to this Sino-US competition, and found pathways to diversify and extend their support system intra-regionally in the last years.¹¹² This is why the Biden Administration is giving

¹¹¹ Amy Searight, “The United States and Asian Economic Regionalism: On the Outside Looking In?” In *A Pacific Nation: Perspectives on the U.S. Role in an East Asia Community*, ed. by Mark Borthwick and Tadashi Yamamoto (Japan Center International Exchange, 2011), 71

¹¹² Cheng-Chwee, Kuik, “The Twin Chessboards of US-China Rivalry: Impact on the Geostrategic Supply and Demand in Post-Pandemic Asia,” *Asian Perspective* (2021):157-176.

multilateralism a try, to work in detriment of US-led regionalism by competing with it in the standards-setting process. The question remains: How far can the United States go in the project decentralizing “Economic Asia” away from China?

It can be argued that the current American administration has a lot of damage control to do when it came to relations with its Asian allies. As of today, the Biden Administration has worked towards revitalizing the Quad in a way that it focused on regional cooperation, which reflects the overall strategic change by the United States in the region, as it left its sole focus on security that it adopted during these last years, to strengthening “cooperation on COVID-19 vaccines, climate change, and critical and emerging technology.”¹¹³

Together with this, Southeast Asia became another another big part in the administration’s strategy with the region, but only after half a year into the President Biden’s term. Expectations by the US allies have not been met to the fullest degree in the very beginning. The ending of the Trump administration was perceived as, hopefully, a return to Obama administration-like committed and stable engagement in the multilateral mechanisms centered around ASEAN. In turn, the Biden administration did not provide Asia during its first months, occupied with Europe and the Quad, with any concrete plans or strategies in the economic field.¹¹⁴ Together with this, during the entirety of 2021 no bilateral phone

¹¹³ Tomotaka Shoji, “Southeast Asia and the United States under the Biden Administration: from expectations to bewilderment,” The Sasakaya Peace Foundation, Accessed October 15, 2022, https://www.spf.org/iina/en/articles/shoji_14.html.

¹¹⁴ Hoang Thi Ha and Ian Storey, “The Biden Administration and Southeast Asia: One Year Review,” *Perspective*, ISEAS Yusof Ishak Institute, February 11, 2022, <https://www.iseas.edu.sg/articles-commentaries/iseas-perspective/2022-11-the-biden-administration-and-southeast-asia-one-year-in-review-by-hoang-thi-ha-and-ian-storey/>.

calls would be held between the United States and Southeast Asia, and only three Southeast Asian states were invited to the Democracy Summit in 2021, Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines.¹¹⁵ However, although the administration experienced a rocky start in its diplomatic ties with ASEAN, the United States would eventually organize an ASEAN-US Special Summit in May 2022, and would establish an ASEAN-US Comprehensive Strategic Partnership. Through this partnership, we can highlight here the commitment of all parties involved to building better health security, strengthening economic cooperation, leveraging technologies and promoting innovation, and supporting sub-regional development.

However, at the Quad Leaders' Summit that same year, the administration would publish its Indo Pacific Strategy, where the American objective to strengthen its long-term commitment to the region —ranging from the Pacific Islands to South Asia— was emphasized. In the publication the administration would acknowledge how all regions, mainly Europe, Asian allies, and the very United States, are looking inwards, but how “the American interests can only be advanced if we firmly anchor the United States in the Indo-Pacific and strengthen the region itself, alongside our closest allies and partners.”¹¹⁶ Another key element of this letter of intentions was explicitly calling the People's Republic of China a challenge for the Indo-Pacific region, not only because of its military aggressiveness that targets some US allies in the region, but also because of its economic coercion towards regional actors. Together with this, the administration expressed its concerns and objectives to deter China from “transforming the rules and norms that have

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Joe Biden, “Indo-Pacific Strategy of the United States,” The White House, February 2022, 5

benefited the Indo-Pacific and the world.”¹¹⁷ However, learning from how past administrations have attempted at deterring or including China in the international liberal order, the Biden Administration set itself to “shape the strategic environment” in which China operates, not China itself, and to compete with China responsibly. The need to reinvent its leadership seems to be a central topic of this communique, as, in order to be a worthy competitor of the ever-growing influence of China, as outside of the liberal system, the United States commits itself to “strengthen the international system, keep it grounded in shared values, and update it to meet 21st-century challenges.”¹¹⁸

Another key feature is how the release calls for collective effort, putting a strong emphasis on burden-sharing through “unprecedented cooperation”, and heavily relying on the allies’ commitment to the liberal and democratic values.¹¹⁹ It acknowledges the key role of US allies in redefining the international order in the age of multipolarity, as well as the key role of ASEAN in orchestrating the regional order. For this, the action plan of the United States states its intentions to, in the economic realm, “drive new resources to the Indo Pacific” — which included opening new consulates and embassies, specifically in Southeast Asia—, “strengthen an empowered and unified ASEAN.”¹²⁰ Another minilateral and bilateral relations were to be revamped according to the action plan, specially with India. The current administration’s strategy gives a great importance to India,

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Joe Biden, “Indo-Pacific Strategy of the United States,” The White House, February 2022, 5

¹¹⁹ Ibid. 7

¹²⁰ Ibid. 16

which is evident in the very nomenclature that has been used in this communiqué and the very IPEF initiative. One of the goals in the action plan would be to “supporting India’s continued rise and regional leadership,” which is translated into working together with India through regional groupings, and in areas that had not been part of the bilateral agenda. This would be extended to the Quad, which would work on emerging technologies development, supply-chain cooperation, as well the establishment of “high standards” in infrastructure.¹²¹ On the other hand, cooperation with Korea and Japan was another important pillar in the action plan, and said cooperation would focus, similarly, on the development of technology, diversifying supply chains, and women’s leadership—which is a very worrisome social problem for both allies.¹²²

Another key point in the economic realm explicated in the Action Plan would be leading an Indo Pacific Economic Framework, which will serve the goal of setting high-standards for trade, digital economy, supply-chain resiliency and security, as well as promoting transparent investment on high-standards infrastructure, and building digital connectivity. The ultimate launching of this initiative would happen in May earlier this year, in Tokyo, through a virtual meeting between the United States, Japan, Korea, Australia, New Zealand, India, Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam. Later in September, these original members would be joined by Fiji earlier this year.¹²³

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Kazuo Yamaguchi and Yoosik Youm, “The glass ceiling in Japan and South Korea,” VoxEU, December 11, 2016, <https://cepr.org/voxeu/columns/glass-ceiling-japan-and-south-korea>

¹²³ “FACT SHEET: In Asia, President Biden and a Dozen Indo-Pacific Partners Launch the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity,” The White House, May 23, 2022

We see a clear change in the American foreign policy going forward: An emphasis on security and transparency in detriment of further liberalization. The Trump administration’s retrenchment was, more than anything, the outcome of the US’ declining power as a global hegemony.¹²⁴ And, to this day, the United States is still not ready to take on any more trade pacts: Rules-setting attempts will have to be realized in ways that do not involve the congressional approval. In the Biden Administration we see a lot of emphasis on democracy, as well as its intersection with blooming economic sectors such as technology. The administration would, for example, make the distinction of “techno-democracies” and “techno-autocracies.”¹²⁵ This transition of values, from liberalization to cooperation in the areas of technology, supply chain, or environment, is not entirely new, but what is new is how said cooperation is at the core of the administration’s grand strategy in Asia Pacific.

	During the Cold War	After the Cold War	Present
Position in East Asia	Quasi-hegemonic	Transition to a “dual hierarchy” system	“Dual hierarchy” system
Priorities in Asia Pacific	Creating security networks and keeping the markets open and liberal	Maintaining security networks and deterring China’s rise of power	Focus on economic cooperation and technological competition
Negotiation style	Outcome-oriented	Outcome-oriented	Process-oriented

¹²⁴ Roberta Haar, “The Biden Administration’s Incompatible Views on Multilateralism,” *Atlantisch Perspectief* 45, no. 5 (2021), 21

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 22

	During the Cold War	After the Cold War	Present
Multilateral participation	No interest in multilateral initiatives: Unilateralism and Minilateralism	Timid participation, focus on bilateral cooperation	Renewed interest for regional multilateral platforms, as well as for multi-faceted cooperation within traditional minilateral security networks
Position regarding regional cooperation	Transition from unilateral imposition of the liberal economic system to emphasis on burden sharing	Preference for regional trading blocs and minilaterals as the best way to navigate rivalry with China	Transition towards less binding multilateralism, blurrier lines between security and economic cooperation

Figure 3. Summary table of the United States' role in East Asia during and after the Cold War and during the current administration

IV. Unpacking the Indo Pacific Economic Framework

1. Understanding the format of the IPEF

First and foremost, the IPEF aims at balancing economic and trade networks formed around China, with the ultimate goal of allowing the United States to gain some economic and trade rule-setting leverage back. However, any free trade agreement would be impossible to be ratified by the USTRR as of today, and the Biden Administration seems aware of the limitations of the United States' power in the region. As many times in the past, the United States would have to get creative with the ways in which it conducted economic integration, having as its main goals (1) being viable and coherent domestically, and (2) not triggering a retaliatory answer from China. If a region-wide trade pact such as the CPTPP or the RCEP is

not possible to undertake, the recent history of regional cooperation in Asia Pacific can serve as an example.

More than a well-formed agreement, the IPEF can be seen as a declaration of intentions where the United States establishes why and how they want to pursue these negotiations in agreement with the signatories. Taking the lead on shaping the framework and strategically choosing their negotiating partners has proven to be a crucial motivating factor for the US to develop the IPEF and not, for example, joining what is left of the TPP in the shape of the CPTPP. The framework is designed to give the United States the upper hand in setting rules and standards in many crucial and emerging industries such as digital commerce, but how can this be achieved through this initiative's format?

Soft multilateralism: The traditional way

Only recently Free Trade Agreements have become standard in the region, but for the most part, regional integration has been conducted in the form of informal and soft multilateral organizations. This was the case of the first organisations brought forward by Japan, mainly non-governmental forums, as well as APEC later in the 1980s. As was discussed earlier, formations such as the PAFTAD, soft and voluntary in nature, were discussed by scholars to become key in orchestrating the regional order.¹²⁶ Both organizations were limited in their outcomes due to their nongovernmental nature, but did plant the seed for community building. Some scholars have argued how this very preference for weak institutionalization in

¹²⁶ Beeson, "Institutions of the Asia-Pacific," 39

regional forums has, at the same time, been product of the United States' interests in the region and the "organizational gap" it has created.¹²⁷

The PAFTAD, a network of economists all across the region, had as a goal enhancing the economic growth and development of Asia Pacific, and key elements such as trade systems, trade barriers, investment, technology transfer, or environmental externalities would be considered in the talks. With time, this network would be applied to PECC, an initiative kickstarted by Japan and Australia. A key element of PECC is how both states recognized the importance of ASEAN in any region-building process. Participants to this process, that ended up also being joined by the then growing China, were also "eager for the United States to enhance its commitment to the Western Pacific and be more actively involved in PECC."¹²⁸ It would be towards the beginning of the second Reagan administration mid 1980s, when the United States would start participating actively in any Asia Pacific economic cooperation processes. Soon after, APEC would be established in Canberra in 1989, and it was joined by a total of twelve initial members: Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Canada; Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Malaysia; New Zealand, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and the United States. As a side note, we can see how the list of founding members to the APEC is almost identical to that of the IPEF.

APEC is still alive and well, but it also faced some fatal limitations that diminished its relevance towards during the last years 20th century. As we have discussed in the previous chapter, the Asian signatories presented a different

¹²⁷ Seungjoo Lee, "The Evolutionary Dynamics of Institutional Balancing in East Asia," EAI Asia Security Initiative (Seoul: The East Asia Institute, 2002), 1

¹²⁸ Hugh Patrick, "From PAFTAD to APEC: Economists networks & public policy making," *Discussion Paper Series* no. 2 (New York: Columbia University, 1997), 15-16

negotiation style to that of the United States, Canada or Australia. The latter were most focused on pushing for trade liberalization and achieving quick and binding outcomes, whereas the former pursued more informal, less binding negotiations.¹²⁹ The “ASEAN Way” of negotiating cooperation in the region is preferred by many key players, such as China or Japan.¹³⁰ This difference in approach, only worsened by the wide list of very contrasting participants—including Chile, Canada or the Russian Federation—, has made the APEC susceptible to heavy criticism.¹³¹

The IPEF proposes a new model that could overcome said differences. Firstly, regarding its membership, the fourteen-member list of the IPEF seems to be more coherent with the very East Asian regionalism when compared to the twenty one-member list of APEC. When compared to other regional initiatives by the United States such as the TPP, the IPEF seems to have a clear focus on Asia, not only because it includes less states on the Pacific side, but because it extends itself to India, which also presents an incentive for the rest of the signatories, given that India did not join the RCEP or the CPTPP.

On the other hand, the IPEF presents four pillars, each one of which will lead to a series of negotiations. However, members are free to join as many or as little pillars as they wish. Through this approach, although the United States has delimited the agenda of overarching issues to be discussed, it moves away from an all-or-nothing approach and shows willingness to find a middle ground that also fits

¹²⁹ Solís, “Heyday of Asian Regionalism?,”

¹³⁰ Patrick, “From PAFTAD to APEC,” 20

¹³¹ Peter Brian M. Wang, “Long-jam in the Indo-Pacific economic policy space,” *The Lowy Institute* (July 6, 2022)

the Asia Pacific economies. As of today, no emphasis has been made by the United States regarding the outcome of these negotiations, which is surprising given its track of prioritizing outcomes over process. The IPEF seems to promise relatively more informal talks and relatively less binding outcomes, considering that it is not an FTA or treaty. In this sense, the IPEF is an unprecedented initiative, through which the United States, instead of pushing against Asian allies for further liberalization or binding outcomes, seems to adopt an approach to economic cooperation that is more in tune with its Asian allies.

Multilateral initiative, minilateral negotiations

This non-binding format allows the United States to enter the region putting forward a seemingly multilateral initiative, joining efforts with regional powers as a benign hegemon willing to cooperate and negotiate, without sacrificing domestic protectionism. However, the IPEF will lead to agreements with like-minded countries that will comply with a high-quality agenda that, although up for negotiation, has been drawn and delimited by the United States.

As we have seen previously, the United States has always preferred to hold bilateral negotiations with Asian allies since its presence in the region became the most significant in the post Cold War period. Even with the establishment of SEATO, a premature Southeast Asian regional grouping, the United States would still operate bilaterally within its framework, a provision that did not exist in NATO. Bilateral and minilateral formations have always proven more effective in the region, not only for the United States, but for all regions. This preference for minilateralism has done nothing but increase during the uncertainty that the Trump administration brought to the region. Minilateralism has allowed all actors to focus

on specific debates in a more efficient way, and, specially when it comes to security, it has been essentially encouraged by Beijing's aggressive behavior in the region.¹³² The IPEF might overcome other initiatives' limitations regarding their inefficacy in agreeing on common principles, as having minilateral negotiations within the minilateral framework will only bring like-minded countries ready to make concessions about the specific topic to the table.

On the other hand, increased participation by China in multilateral initiatives and East Asian regionalism in the 1990s would make acting bilaterally a necessity to ensure the United States' relevance in the region. Up until this time, US-led bilateralism and minilateralism in the region was justified due to the lack of regional delimitations in Asia, as well as its quality of extra-regional actor. Together with this, the United States, due to its structural power, has been able to remain a status quo power in Asia, and bilateralism has proven to be enough in maintaining the US' presence in the region.¹³³ During the first years of the decade, bilateralism would also be preferred with the goal of not triggering any retaliatory reaction from China and allow allies to partake in regional initiatives while maintaining their commitment with the US. For these reasons, minilateralism is normally preferred by the US, as it ensures its position in the region in two ways: (1) Reassuring China that such alliances are not targeted at any specific country, or excluding any specific country, as well as by (2) allowing the US to focus their resources in the key actors in the region. Said minilateralism too helps the US act

¹³² Rajeswari Pillai Rajagopalan, "Explaining the Rise of Minilaterals in the Indo-Pacific," *Issue Brief* no. 490 (2021), 10

¹³³ Nair, "Regionalism in the Asia Pacific," 129

in a way that raises comparatively less suspicion.¹³⁴ The fear of antagonizing China is always present for the US allies in the region. Middle powers in the region will continue to exercise this two-track diplomacy, keeping themselves in between China and the US, and they equally fear China's economic retaliations, and the US' withdrawal from the region.

Having said this, how have so many actors joined the IPEF talks, when it clearly excludes China from the negotiations, as well as pro-China Southeast Asian actors? We must understand that Asian states are not interested in participating in an economic framework that merely serves as a containment tool. It is in the interest of the US to reassure the signatories of the fact that this framework has been designed "independent of China," as the USTR Representative Katherine Tai has asserted, and not against it.¹³⁵ Asian states carefully and strategically sit on the fence between friendly relations and dependence with the US and China, being the US the region's main security provider and balancing force against China, and China one of, if not the most, important trading partner for all the countries involved in the negotiations.

Adding to this last point, we must understand that the IPEF is not a FTA or a binding agreement. Rather, it presents itself as a platform where 21st century challenges will be discussed, and where "high standard commitments" will be made. These, however, do not include any market access provisions as of now. Although it actively excludes China from the process, the very format of the IPEF,

¹³⁴ Argument put forward in: Joel Wuthnow, "U.S. 'Minilateralism' in Asia and China's Responses: A New Security Dilemma?," *Journal of Contemporary China*, vol. 28, issue 115 (2019)

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

informal and soft as of today, allows for these talks to happen in a way that they do not undermine commitments made under, namely RCEP. Added to this, the fact that the negotiations would be undertaken multilaterally gives signatories freedom to join the pillars that do not suppose a conflict of interest.

Inclusion of the United States and India in the Rules-setting regional game

If the IPEF was merely a containment tool, it wouldn't been attractive or worth it for the signatories to join talks, but the IPEF negotiations promise to fill in the gaps that have not been addressed by other regional initiatives. Namely, South Korea justifies its participation in the negotiations by arguing how the IPEF agenda touches upon some interests that are vital for the country. Kim Doo-sik, international dispute resolution lawyer, discusses how, for South Korea, the IPEF complements the China-led RCEP. On top of this, it is in the interest of none of the signatories to antagonize China, but participating in the standards-setting process that will be aided by the IPEF can benefit the middle states in different ways, such as in addressing supply chain crises or in pursuing “universal values.”¹³⁶ Together with this, to lessen IPEF signatories' worries regarding antagonizing China, Taiwan has not been included in the negotiations. The deputy director of Taiwan WTO & RTA Center at the Chung-Hua Institution for Economic Research Roy Lee himself understands this move as strategically crucial for the US “to convince other

¹³⁶ Doo-sik Kim, “IPEF, Korea and the China factor,” *Korea JoongAng Daily* (June 5, 2022), <https://koreajoongangdaily.joins.com/2022/06/05/opinion/columns/IPEF-China-Korea/20220605195821933.html>

countries that the IPEF is not an anti-China coalition and to provide incentives to those that are reluctant to join.”¹³⁷

The IPEF includes the United States and India in the regional game, as neither of them are part of the CPTPP or RCEP. Although polarizing China is a reason for concern, Asian powers have repeatedly benefitted from the US’ participation in regional economic cooperation, as it is in no Asian power’s interest to be greatly dependent on China. Ultimately, as Tan See Seng, research adviser at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, put it, “participation in the IPEF is a signal to China that some Asian states much prefer a balance of power and influence in the Indo-Pacific region.”¹³⁸

One of the main drawbacks of China being most of the Asian states’ primary trade partner is that states are very vulnerable to any crises in the Chinese market or to its government’s retaliations. The situation in which some of the signatories find themselves, in between the US and China, is very compromising, and it has happened more than once that, upon open displays of support towards the US’ military alliance, China has retaliated against the allies’ economies.¹³⁹ On top of this structural constraint, the attacks on Ukraine most recently, together with the

¹³⁷ Novia Huang, Hsieh Fang-yu and Joseph Yeh, “Taiwan's exclusion from IPEF based on geopolitical factors: Taiwanese analysts,” *Focus Taiwan* (May 23, 2022), <https://focustaiwan.tw/business/202205230005>

¹³⁸ Maria Siow, “From Singapore to Malaysia and Philippines, Asean’s interest in Biden’s IPEF a signal to China it wants better ‘balance of power’ in region,” *This Week in Asia*, May 27, 2022, <https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/politics/article/3179436/singapore-malaysia-and-philippines-aseans-interest-bidens-ipef>

¹³⁹ Florence Wen-Ting Yang, “Asymmetrical Interdependence and Sanction: China’s Economic Retaliation over South Korea’s THAAD Deployment,” *Issues & Studies*, Vol. 55, No. 04, 1940008 (2019)

COVID-19 pandemic, have made it evident to the Asian powers the need to diversify its supply chains. This, for example, is the main reason why South Korea decided to join the IPEF, as well as being one of the major reasons for Malaysia.¹⁴⁰ In the case of Malaysia, the Prime Minister Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob has showed enthusiasm about the initiative, as instead of seeing the IPEF and the RCEP—as Malaysia is now a member of both—as intrinsically opposites, chooses to regard both initiatives as complementary and beneficial to promote further economic cooperation.¹⁴¹

Although it is unknown to us where negotiations will lead, by joining the IPEF the states can make it clear that they want to pursue greater cooperation and diversification outside of the Chinese market. However rocky relations are with Asian allies, the United States is deeply entrenched into the region through the liberal economic order that integrates the regional economies. The US allies inherently belong to the international liberal same system as Washington, and for that, even when trust for the United States significantly decreased during the Trump administration, at least in Japan and South Korea, this did not translate into increased trust in Xi Jinping.¹⁴² The United States, through the promotion of values

¹⁴⁰ “Seoul diversifying to non-Chinese supply chain by joining IPEF,” *Pulse* by *Maeil Business News Korea*, May 24, 2022, <https://pulsenews.co.kr/view.php?sc=30800022&year=2022&no=457379>.

¹⁴¹ Leslean Arshad, “Malaysia confident IPEF will strengthen Indo-Pacific economic cooperation, says PM,” *The Edge Markets*, May 26, 2022, <https://www.theedgemarkets.com/article/malaysia-confident-ipef-will-strengthen-indopacific-economic-cooperation-says-pm>.

¹⁴² Jeremiah Cha, “People in Asia-Pacific regard the U.S. more favourably than China, but Trump gets negative remarks,” Pew Research Center, February 25, 2020, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/02/25/people-in-asia-pacific-regard-the-u-s-more-favorably-than-china-but-trump-gets-negative-remarks/>.

that should be common within the international liberal system —high-quality standards for democracy, transparency, workers, the environment, digital economy, infrastructure— present a way of competing against China’s rising influence in the region without overlapping in their goals for the most part. Whether the US-led system will prevail in the face of an empowered China and allies, will ultimately depend on how attractive these standards are made to be for the Asian powers, as well as how well signatories avoid antagonizing and escalating tensions with China while doing so.

The increase in intra-regional trade and institutions as a way to safeguard the East Asian economies from the US-China competition, has also given them more room to maneuver, as well as more bargaining power, which should be exercised during the negotiations. East Asian states can benefit from this initiative by taking a seat in the concentrated and strategic negotiation table that the IPEF presents. Indeed, it is in the interest of most signatories to negotiate rules and standards in some, if not all, the pillars that are included in the proposal, and the IPEF gives all states the chance to do so multilaterally, among like-minded countries.

2. Potential limitations of the IPEF

The format of the initiative, soft, voluntary, and process-oriented, might effectively avoid significantly triggering China, the same way that the United States would not feel threaten when East Asian states would establish process-oriented, rather than process-oriented, institutions. This, however, could signal how little effective the initiative might result to be in pursuing the goal of improving the United States’ role in “Economic Asia.”

At the same time, the benefits of this are significantly curtailed considering how Washington has designed the IPEF to reorganize the supply chains around China, as well as to “counter China’s unfair trade practices and market distortions.”¹⁴³ Not only this, but the United States is exploring the advancement of American technological innovation through minilaterals like Quad, through bilaterals —such as the US-Singapore Partnership for Growth (PGI) and Innovation annual dialogue¹⁴⁴—, and domestic regulations —namely, the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA)—. Together with this, the clear preference for only certain states in the region, both multilaterally and bilaterally, might contradict the US and Japan’s goal of working for the unity of ASEAN.

Lastly, we are yet to see how attractive the initiative can be without any market access provisions by the United States. The promotion of ambitious high-quality standards together with no market access provisions might make joining the initiative worth the risk for the least developed countries on the table.

Not a binding agreement

The non binding nature of the IPEF, as beneficial as it can be for the United States and the rest of the signatories that the initiative is not a competing trade bloc, the lack of prospects for a binding agreement also pose significant limitations to the

¹⁴³ Hoe-seung Kim, “What consequences will joining Biden’s IPEF have for S. Korea?,” *Hankyoreh*, May 19, 2022, https://english.hani.co.kr/arti/english_edition/e_business/1043535.html.

¹⁴⁴ "Joint Statement: U.S. Department of Commerce and Singapore Ministry of Trade and Industry Celebrate Inaugural U.S.-Singapore Partnership for Growth and Innovation Annual Dialogue,” U.S. Department of Commerce, October 17, 2022, <https://www.commerce.gov/news/press-releases/2022/10/joint-statement-us-department-commerce-and-singapore-ministry-trade-and>.

attractiveness of the initiative. Although the IPEF supposes an important step forward reassuring the East Asian allies about their commitment, it is still an incipient project, the launch of the negotiations, but not a free trade agreement or any other form of binding contract. Whether the outcomes of each pillar then result into more than executive agreements will determine if the IPEF negotiations will lead to a compelling balancing act against China's statecraft and economic influence, or if they will end up being another United States' failed attempt at gaining economic relevance in the region without making overbearing commitments. The pillars contain ambitious and high-quality goals that many countries involved might not be interested in, or might not be capable of meeting. If, then, the United States does not encourage the inclusion of the least developed countries' concerns and accommodations, then the United States might be viewed as working unilaterally, and added to the lack of market access provisions, said signatories would see no real benefit and could opt out. This has, for example, been the concern of India, as the Commerce and Industry Ministry, Piyush Goyal, has asserted how, specifically on the environment pillar, the negotiations might "discriminate against developing nations who have to provide low cost and affordable energy to meet the needs of a growing economy."¹⁴⁵ The question here, if the negotiations will result in executive agreements that are not binding, and considering how high the stakes are with China, will these talks lead to any substantial resolutions?

It is interesting to note here how in the IPEF we see a change that has been taking place during the last decade: The United States has become more interested

¹⁴⁵ Saurabh Sinha, "India stays out of Indo-Pacific trade pillar," The Times of India, September 10, 2022, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/business/india-business/why-india-opted-out-of-joining-trade-pillar-of-ipef-for-now/articleshow/94106662.cms>.

in taking on softer approaches when it comes to international economic issues, and, at the same time, Asian states becoming more willing to close binding agreements. After the Asian financial crisis, East Asian countries grew fonder of legally institutionalizing regional cooperation, which is seen in the proliferation of intra-regional FTAs and the progressive upgrading of the Chiang Mai Initiative during the first decade of 2000s.¹⁴⁶ Whether this will limit and jeopardize the prospects of the negotiations is something we have yet to see, but judging from experience, said differing approaches did limit the effectiveness of APEC negotiations.

As we have discussed previously, this framework is innovative in the sense that it not a trade bloc and contains no market access provisions or tariff cuts, for which we have to wonder here how the outcomes of the negotiations could be turned into a binding agreement. In this aspect the IPEF and APEC are very similar. Both are considered new models for pursuing economic cooperation at their time, and both push for open regionalism.¹⁴⁷ At that time, APEC embarked itself in the mission on restoring the legitimacy and credibility of the international trading system, and would work to transition from being a consultative forum to a solid institution with the establishment of annual summits.

High-quality standards with no market access provisions

Added to this last point, the fact that the USTR representative has made it clear that market access is “out of the table” does not help make the initiative any less

¹⁴⁶ Lee, “The Evolutionary Dynamics,” 3

¹⁴⁷ Bergsten, “APEC and World Trade,” 20

attractive.¹⁴⁸ Amy Searight takes this point forward, arguing how, until the US Congress' figurative ban on trade pacts ends, this will continue to jeopardize the prospects of American economic engagement in the region.¹⁴⁹ At the same time that it might help the IPEF's signatories in engaging in the negotiations without polarizing China, it is true that the effects of the outcomes might be less powerful in putting the United States at the center of the rules-setting game.

(1) It might leave the East Asian allies unsure of the US commitment. So far, the IPEF is merely a political instrument that has the potential of becoming a key US' instrument in the region. However, the lack of market access, for example, makes the Biden administration look not fully committed to the alliance, keeping one foot out of the door. As an example of this, the former South Korean Trade Minister Yeo Han-koo, market access provisions would be “one of the important sorts of returns that countries in the region would expect from US leadership.”¹⁵⁰ And related to this, in words of Kelly Ann Shaw, a former deputy assistant for international economic affairs of the Trump Administration, the IPEF, so far, can be argued to be “a modest step in the right direction” that is in risk of “turning into another failed exercise.”¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁸ “Trade Representative Testifies on China and Russia Trade Policy,” C-Span. U.S, March 31, 2022, <https://www.c-span.org/video/?519175-1/us-trade-representative-testifies-china-russia-trade-policy>.

¹⁴⁹ Searight, “The United States and Asian Economic Regionalism,” 72

¹⁵⁰ “Market access may make US-proposed IPEF more attractive: S. Korean trade minister,” *The Korean Herald*, January 28, 2022, <https://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20220128000157>.

¹⁵¹ Bill Tomson, “Indo Pacific strategy faulted in hearing for lack of new market access,” *Agripulse*, March 15, 2022, <https://www.agri-pulse.com/articles/17365-indo-pacific-strategy-faulted-in-hearing-for-lack-of-new-market-access>.

(2) The IPEF signatories are skeptical of the possible benefits of the initiative. Not only does the lack of market access provisions show that the US is not willing to commit wholeheartedly to free trade in East Asia, but the lack of market access can make the initiative as a whole less attractive for the participants. Through this framework, the United States gets to push a certain agenda in East Asia that will directly benefit the country, but in comparison to this, without market access provisions, certain participants are skeptical about the prospects of the negotiations. For example, the framework seems to put forward standards for labor, environmental protection, or digital trade way above those set by ASEAN. The idea of the IPEF being merely a balancing strategy against China is not attractive or beneficial for the involved countries in itself, and its success will depend on whether the US convinces the participants of it. President Biden's visit to South East Asia received mixed reactions, as while the US president intended to reassure the region of his commitment, the Indo-Pacific strategy presented in the US-ASEAN Special Summit was deemed to be, as put by the EAF Editorial Board, "rhetorically ambitious but substantively vague."¹⁵² Another factor that feeds this skepticism is the fact that Asian states are still recovering from the Trump administration's unreliability, and as Mary Lafley, a senior researcher at the Peterson Institute for International Economics argued, "[Asian allies] may be reluctant to invest much in new structures that can be as easily blown away as houses of straw."¹⁵³ Ultimately,

¹⁵² Editorial Board, ANU, "What ASEAN takes to Washington," *East Asia Forum*, June 10, 2022, <https://www.eastasiaforum.org/2022/05/02/what-asean-takes-to-washington/>.

¹⁵³ "Indo-Pacific Economic Framework' not a blessing to Asia," *Khmer Times*, May 16, 2022, <https://www.khmertimeskh.com/501076225/indo-pacific-economic-framework-not-a-blessing-to-asia/>.

because the future is unsure, the Asian signatories are entering this agreement with a mix of skepticism, optimism, and caution.

As we have commented earlier, the American foreign policy directives have changed in the last years in two drastic ways: (1) A change in approach, being more process-oriented and less quick to join binding agreements, (2) a focus on transparency and security rather than on liberalization, which has been the number one priority in the US' agenda in Asia for the longest time. The standards that the United States aims to set for the region might be too advanced or unattainable for some signatories as of today, and joining the fight of the more advanced countries might not be the most attractive path.

Potentially working against some of Asia's regional networks

Whether China can be considered a part of the region as the rest of East Asian states in practical terms is a matter of perspective, but it is believed that the US-led framework will undermine regional networks with the inclusion of some powers and the exclusion of others, mainly China and some ASEAN states. Said concerns have been exacerbated with the exclusion of Cambodia, Laos, and Myanmar from the framework seems to be undermining the economic regional network of ASEAN. This selective approach is feared by the participants and China to evidence the unilateral approach that the US might take in the negotiations, pushing for its own interests with not much regard about existing networks and dynamics.¹⁵⁴ As mentioned before, Asian actors have learned to adapt to the US-

¹⁵⁴ PTI, "China says regional countries fear IPEF may decouple them from Chinese economy," *The Indian Express*, May 25, 2022, <https://indianexpress.com/article/world/china-regional-countries-ipef-chinese-economy-7936250/>.

China competition and have focused on regional groupings that allow them to function and prosper without overbearing reliance on said great powers. However, as we have seen repeatedly in the past century, engaging in US-led —or US-engaged— initiatives will work against the construction of US-exclusive regional initiatives. The question that Carla P. Freeman brings up the following: “Despite rhetorical support for multilateralism in the region, the Biden administration’s tactical multilateralism risks weakening rather than strengthening the efficacy of existing regimes.”¹⁵⁵

We have seen how said perceived unilateralism has done nothing but work against the very US’ positioning in the region, and, if anything, the regional allies, with progressively more bargaining power, will not let it pass. Because of this, the United States, with the goal of addressing concerns about the US-led initiative works against East Asian institutions, mainly ASEAN, should encourage the participation, going forward, of those states that were initially included. Not only this, but the United States could work through different channels such as APEC or the EAS.

This is, at the same time, a way in which the United States could tactically compete against China at the regional level is working for the ASEAN unity. Kei Koga argues how China conducts a “divide and conquer” tactic towards ASEAN and repeatedly takes advantage of this disunity.¹⁵⁶ It is key that both Japan and the

¹⁵⁵ Carla P. Freeman, “America’s tactical multilateralism for Asia and its consequences,” in *Divers of global change: Responding to East Asian economic and institutional innovation*, ed. Giuseppe Gabusi (Torino World Affairs Institute, 2021).

¹⁵⁶ Kei Yoga, “Recalibrating U.S.-Japan Indo-Pacific Strategies Towards ASEAN,” *Asia Program* (October 2022), 2

United States continue emphasizing the importance of ASEAN unity, and that follows up with clear initiatives and projects that target them as to follow up with the administration's stated goal.

V. Conclusion: Policy suggestions

Having reviewed the complicated history of economic integration and regionalism in Asia Pacific and the United States' role in it, I aim to put forward some suggestions that could improve the United States' positioning in the economic and political front going forward. Instead of looking at current policy papers and studies, in this part of my thesis I will draw conclusions exclusively from the research made previously.

I believe that the IPEF can be a promising initiative, but its success will depend on how persuasive the US can be in attracting the signatories to commit to binding agreements that set ambitious standards, which might be more likely if the US itself is willing to make concessions that prove its commitment to the region. The launch of the negotiations is a very important step towards the new pivot towards Asia of the Biden administration, and the participation of India only makes the prospects of these negotiations the more intriguing.

In the past we have seen how many advances by the United States towards further economic integration have been either unilateral or reactive. Although strategically there is nothing inherently wrong with launching an initiative as a

reaction to United States-excluding schemes, what we have seen repeatedly is how these tend to be temporary as well as rushed. Dissonance between the administration and the United States Congress has also made certain moves towards integration the more difficult. It will be integral to any further advancements that the Administration and Congress agree in what they can offer to the rest of the signatories in order to avoid any complications later, as well as show a higher degree of commitment and rigour. From the very start of the negotiations, the current Administration seems to be aware of the limits that Congress might impose on any market opening provisions and is being very cautious with said offerings. It is key that the United States shows a united front to their allies, willing to make meaningful sacrifices.

Related to this, it is still unknown whether the outcomes of the negotiations will end up being binding or not. This will depend both on the United States Congress, as well as on how beneficial these are for the East Asian allies. Great part of the IPEF's strategic advantage is that it is not a competing trading bloc to the RCEP, and whether the signatories will be willing to convert the result of these negotiations into binding agreements will directly depend on how committed all parties involved are willing in realizing the IPEF's desired goals. We can only assume that the goal is having IPEF become a competing network to that of RCEP, and for this, non-binding executive agreements or minilateral cooperation will be rendered insufficient. The United States Congress should be willing to make unprecedented concessions in order to achieve this, which would be an unprecedented advance in the region.

Showing unprecedented commitment to the region also means closer and more meaningful cooperation with allies, specially those that have showed continued support throughout the decades. Because of this, I argue that high level figures from both the American and Japanese governments should coordinate the initiative. As we have seen throughout this paper, the cooperation between the United States and Japan has been key in securing the United States' engagement in the region. The concept of Asia Pacific, and Indo Pacific including India, is cemented in the post World War relations between both countries and the Superpower status of Japan. Adversely, when relations between both countries have been at their lowest, East Asian regionalism has gained significant relevance in detriment of other forms of regionalism that include the United States. The geopolitical and territorial characteristics of Japan have made the country a perfect mediator between East Asia and the Pacific, which remain relevant to this day. Hosting the coming rounds of negotiations in different allies' capitals instead of in the White House might reassure allies of the United States' commitment making the initiative physically closer to the region.

Another front where the United States will have to show its commitment is when fighting the assumption that this US-led initiative might work against East Asian regional institutions, mainly ASEAN. ASEAN unity will be key in ensuring the success of the initiative, for which Washington should incentivize the rest of the ASEAN member states to join the negotiations, however small their participation might be. ASEAN has itself been the motor of many attempts to achieve a US-exclusive East Asian regime, and disagreements among all members concerning the United States' engagement in the region has resulted to be polarizing in more than one occasion. To prevent this, Kei Koga puts forward some policy suggestions that

focus on how the US-Japan alliance can better engage ASEAN amidst contradicting regional initiatives. Here I highlight three specific ideas: (1) Defining what “ASEAN centrality” means for the United States and Japan, and (2) strategize the means to sustain ASEAN unity through increased capacity-building efforts, and (3) clarify the roles of the different strategic groupings (“the Quad, AUKUS, the IPEF, and ASEAN”) and how they intersect and overlap.¹⁵⁷ Precisely, clearly defining the roles of each body becomes urgent as the lines between security and economic cooperation get blurrier in US’ foreign policy strategy. Clear definitions and delimitations on the different platforms’ tasks will provide clarity and guidance to all parties involved.

Related to this last point, it is key that cooperation between China and the United States at the multilateral level continues, mainly through APEC. As we have seen, the Biden Administration is not only revitalizing the Quad or bringing forward the IPEF, but it is also revitalizing APEC. The United States should not work on the IPEF in detriment of APEC, as not having any functioning multilateral platform in the geographical region that binds both powers could worsen the polarizing goal of the IPEF. The IPEF has a clear competitive *raison d’être*, and as it is highly improbable that China joins the negotiations, deescalation of tensions should be promoted through other mediums where both powers can cooperate and work together on common goals.

Unwavering and continued commitment from the United States to the region will be crucial in guaranteeing that initiative has long-lasting effects. In the past we have seen how the American intermittent commitment to Asia has created

¹⁵⁷ Koga, “Recalibrating U.S-Japan Indo-Pacific Strategies Towards ASEAN,” 10

uncertainty and anxiety among the allies, as well as impeded the development of institutions. Key to further development of the initiative, and, consequently, of the United States' position in "Economic Asia" as a whole, greatly depends on how attractive the negotiations will turn out to be, which can only be possible if the United States shows great willingness to cooperate and make meaningful concessions. Besides this, the next biggest threat to the IPEF is its potentiality to trigger and polarize the networks formed around China as it takes a more concrete shape going forward. Meaningful advancements in any of the pillars that constitute the IPEF will be met with resistance by those key players directly affected. For this, it will be key to attract those powers that are hesitant to join, as well as meaningfully participate in multilateral and minilateral platforms shared with strategic partners in the region. Whether the IPEF, as one of the key foreign policy strategies of the Biden administration, will allow the United States to recover economic and rules-setting power in Asia Pacific will directly depend on how the above mentioned issues are resolved.

Bibliography

- “60. Report by President Nixon to the Congress.” U.S. Department of State. Accessed November 15, 2022. <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v01/d60>.
- “Address by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe at the opening session of the sixth Tokyo international conference on African Development (TICAD VI).” Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA). 27 August, 2016. https://www.mofa.go.jp/afr/af2/page4e_000496.html.
- “How to become a member.” Asia-Pacific Telecommunity. Retrieved on May 1, 2017. <https://www.apt.int/become-members>.
- “‘Indo-Pacific Economic Framework’ not a blessing to Asia,” Khmer Times, May 16, 2022, <https://www.khmertimeskh.com/501076225/indo-pacific-economic-framework-not-a-blessing-to-asia/>.
- “Joint Statement: U.S. Department of Commerce and Singapore Ministry of Trade and Industry Celebrate Inaugural U.S.-Singapore Partnership for Growth and Innovation Annual Dialogue.” U.S. Department of Commerce, October 17, 2022. <https://www.commerce.gov/news/press-releases/2022/10/joint-statement-us-department-commerce-and-singapore-ministry-trade-and>.
- “Seoul diversifying to non-Chinese supply chain by joining IPEF,” *Pulse by Maeil Business News Korea*, May 24, 2022. <https://pulsenews.co.kr/view.php?sc=30800022&year=2022&no=457379>.
- “Statement on Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity.” The White House. May 23, 2022. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/05/23/statement-on-indo-pacific-economic-framework-for-prosperity/>.
- “President Obama Tours Asia.” *Council on Foreign Relations*. November 3, 2009. <https://www.cfr.org/expert-roundup/president-obama-tours-asia>.
- “Remarks by President Obama at APEC CEO Summit.” The White House. November 10, 2014. <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2014/11/10/remarks-president-obama-apec-ceo-summit>.
- “Timeline: U.S.-China Relations.” Council on Foreign Relations. Council on Foreign Relations. Accessed November 1, 2022. <https://www.cfr.org/timeline/us-china-relations>.
- Arshad, Leslean. “Malaysia confident IPEF will strengthen Indo-Pacific economic cooperation, says PM.” *The Edge Markets*, May 26, 2022. <https://www.theedgemarkets.com/article/malaysia-confident-ipef-will-strengthen-indopacific-economic-cooperation-says-pm>.

- Baker, James Adison. *The politics of Diplomacy: Revolution, War, and Peace, 1989-1992*. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons (1995).
- Beeson, Mark. "The United States and East Asia: The decline of long-distance leadership?" *The Asia Pacific Journal* vol. 7, Issue 43, no. 1 (October, 2009). <https://apjff.org/-Mark-Beeson/3240/article.html>.
- Beeson, Mark. *Institutions of the Asia Pacific ASEAN, APEC, and Beyond*. London and New York: Routledge, 2008.
- Berger, Mark T. "APEC and Its Enemies: The Failure of the New Regionalism in the Asia-Pacific." *Third World Quarterly* 20, no. 5 (1999): 1013–30. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3993609>.
- Bergsten, C. Fred. "APEC and World Trade: A Force for Worldwide Liberalization." *Foreign Affairs* 73, no. 3 (1994): 20–26. <https://doi.org/10.2307/20046655>.
- Biden, Joe. "Indo-Pacific Strategy of the United States." The White House. Washington DC, February 2022. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/U.S.-Indo-Pacific-Strategy.pdf>.
- Bill Tomson, "Indo Pacific strategy faulted in hearing for lack of new market access," *Agripulse*, March 15, 2022, <https://www.agri-pulse.com/articles/17365-indo-pacific-strategy-faulted-in-hearing-for-lack-of-new-market-access>.
- Bradley, Bill. "Building a Pacific Coalition." *Proceedings of the Academy of Political Science* 37, no. 4 (1990): 1–8. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1173767>.
- Brummer, Chris. "1. Multilateralism's fail." in *Minilateralism: How Trade Alliances, Soft Law and Financial Engineering are Redefining Economic Statecraft*, 22-52. Cambridge University Press, 2014.
- Brummer, Chris. "Multilateralism's Rise and Fall." Chapter. In *Minilateralism: How Trade Alliances, Soft Law and Financial Engineering Are Redefining Economic Statecraft*, 22–52. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014. doi:10.1017/CBO9781107281998.002.
- Bundy, William P. "Partnership in East Asia and the Pacific." In *Department of State Bulletin*, v. 57 (1967).
- C-Span. U.S. "Trade Representative Testifies on China and Russia Trade Policy." Uploaded March 31, 2022. <https://www.c-span.org/video/?519175-1/us-trade-representative-testifies-china-russia-trade-policy>.
- Cha, Jeremiah. "People in Asia-Pacific regard the U.S. more favourably than China, but Trump gets negative remarks." *Pew Research Center*, February, 25, 2020. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/02/25/people-in-a>
- Cheng, Joseph. "China's foreign policy in the mid-1990s." *Strategic Studies* 19, no. 1 (1996): 64–111. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/45182239>.

- Cheng, Joseph. "China's Regional Strategy and Challenges in East Asia." *China Perspectives* [Online], 2013/2 (2013): 53-65.
- Cook, Malcolm. "The United States and the East Asia Summit: Finding the Proper Home." *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 30, no. 2 (2008): 293–312. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41220508>.
- Cossa, Ralph, and Gill Bates. "Evolving US Views on Asia's Future Institutional Architecture." Essay. In *Asia's New Multilateralism*, edited by Michael Green. New York: Columbia University Press, 2009.
- Cossa, Ralph. "Evolving US Views on Asia's Future Institutional Architecture." In *Asia's New Multilateralism*, edited by Michael Green and Gill Bates (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009).
- Cox, Robert W. "Multilateralism and World Order." *Review of International Studies* 18, no. 2 (1992): 161–80. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20097291>.
- Crone, Donald. "The Politics of Emerging Pacific Cooperation." *Pacific Affairs* 65, no. 1 (1992): 68–83. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2760217>.
- Crone, Donald. "The Politics of Emerging Pacific Cooperation." *Pacific Affairs* 65, no. 1 (1992): 68–83. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2760217>.
- Damuri, Yose Rizal, Vidhyandika Perkasa, Raymond Atje, and Fajar Hirawan. "Belt and Road Initiative: An Overview." In *Perceptions and readiness of Indonesia toward the Belt and Road Initiative: Understanding local perspectives, capacity, and governance*. Centre for Strategic and International Studies, 2019. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep25409.4>.
- De Castro, Renato. "U.S. Grand Strategy in Post-Cold War Asia—Pacific." *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 16, no. 3 (1994): 342–53. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25798254>.
- Dower, John W. "10 Points of Note: Asia and the Nixon Doctrine." *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars* 2, no. 4 (1970): 47–70. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14672715.1970.10419199>.
- Editorial Board, ANU. "What ASEAN takes to Washington." *East Asia Forum*, June 10, 2022. <https://www.eastasiaforum.org/2022/05/02/what-asean-takes-to-washington/>
- Elek, Andrew. "Asia Pacific Economic Co-operation (APEC)." *Southeast Asian Affairs*. ISEAS - Yusof Ishak Institute (1991): 33-48
- Elsbree, Willard H. "Japan and ASEAN in the 1980s: Problems and Prospects." *Southeast Asian Affairs* (1981): 49–61. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27908421>.
- Feigenbaum, Evan A. and Robert A. Manning. "A Tale of Two Asias." *East Asia Forum*, 2012. <https://www.eastasiaforum.org/2012/12/04/a-tale-of-two-asias/>.

- Freeman, Carla P. “America’s tactical multilateralism for Asia and its consequences.” in *Divers of global change: Responding to East Asian economic and institutional innovation*. Edited by Giuseppe Gabusi. Torino World Affairs Institute, 2021.
- Freeman, Carla P., “How Will China’s Bid to Join the Trans Pacific Trade Pact Affect Regional Stability,” United States Institute of Peace, 7 October, 2021). <https://www.usip.org/publications/2021/10/how-will-chinas-bid-join-trans-pacific-trade-pact-affect-regional-stability>.
- FTI. “China says regional countries fear IPEF may decouple them from Chinese economy.” The Indian Express, May 25, 2022. <https://indianexpress.com/article/world/china-regional-countries-ipef-chinese-economy-7936250/>.
- Gannon, James. “Engaging in Asia: The Evolving US Approach to Regional Community Building.” In *A Pacific Nation: Perspectives on the U.S. Role in an East Asia Community*. Edited by Mark Borthwick and Tadashi Yamamoto. Japan Center International Exchange, 2011.
- Ginsburg, Tom, “The State of Sovereignty in Southeast Asia," 99 American Society of International Law Proceedings 419, 2005. https://chicagounbound.uchicago.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=8109&context=journal_articles.
- Goodman, Matthew P., and William Reinsch. “Filling In the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework.” Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), 2022. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep39408>.
- Guida, Victoria. “Major TPP political players talking.” *Politico*, 2 March 2016. <https://www.politico.com/tipsheets/morning-trade/2016/02/major-tpp-political-players-talking-warren-hits-tpp-ahead-of-signing-spring-showers-bring-ttip-flowers-212510#ixzz3zARPeVnL>.
- Guoyou, Song. “The Trump Administration’s Trade Policy and Sino-American Economic Relations.” In *Parallel Perspectives on the Global Economic Order*. Edited by Matthew P. Goodman. Center for Strategic and International Studies, September, 2017. <https://www.csis.org/analysis/parallel-perspectives-global-economic-order>.
- Haar, Roberta. “The Biden Administration’s Incompatible Views on Multilateralism.” *Atlantisch Perspectief* 45, no. 5 (2021): 20–24. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/48638265>.
- Haas, Ernst. *When Knowledge is Power: Three Models of Change in International Organizations*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1990.
- Heath, Timothy R., and William R. Thompson. “Avoiding U.S.-China Competition Is Futile: Why the Best Option Is to Manage Strategic Rivalry.” *Asia Policy* 13, no. 2 (2018): 91–120. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26497772>.

- Huang, Novia, Hsieh Fang-yu, and Joseph Yeh. "Taiwan's exclusion from IPEF based on geopolitical factors: Taiwanese analysts." *Focus Taiwan*, May 23, 2022. <https://focustaiwan.tw/business/202205230005>.
- Hyun, Suk, and Paradise, James F. "Why is there no Asian Monetary Fund?" ADBI Working Paper Series, no. 1061 (December 2019). <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/546901/adbi-wp1061.pdf>.
- Ikenberry, John G. "Between the Eagle and the Dragon: America, China, and Middle State Strategies in East Asia." *Political Science Quarterly* vol. 131, issue 1. Academy of Political Science, 2016.
- Iriye, Akira. "The United States and Japan in Asia: A Historical Perspective." In *The United States, Japan, and Asia*. Edited by Gerald L. Curtis. New York: Norton & Company (1994): 29-52.
- Joffe, Josef. "'Bismarck' or 'Britain'? Toward an American grand strategy after bipolarity." *International Security* 19, no. 4 (1995): 94–117. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2539121>.
- Jones, Bruce. "China and the return of great power strategic competition." Brookings. February, 2020. <https://www.brookings.edu/research/china-and-the-return-of-great-power-strategic-competition/>.
- Kim, Doo-sik. "IPEF, Korea and the China factor." *Korea JoongAng Daily* (2022) <https://koreajoongangdaily.joins.com/2022/06/05/opinion/columns/IPEF-China-Korea/20220605195821933.html>.
- Kim, Hoe-seung. "What consequences will joining Biden's IPEF have for S. Korea?" *Hankyoreh*, May 19, 202. https://english.hani.co.kr/arti/english_edition/e_business/1043535.html.
- Koh, Tommy T. B. *The United States and East Asia: Conflict and Co-operation*. Singapore: The Institute of Policy Studies (1995).
- Koga, Kei. "Japan's 'Indo-Pacific' question: countering China or shaping a new regional order?," *International Affairs*, Volume 96, Issue 1 (January 2020): 49–73. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iiz241>.
- Lee, Jessica L. "The Truth About South Korea's TPP Shift." *The Diplomat*. 23 October, 2015. <https://thediplomat.com/2015/10/the-truth-about-south-koreas-tpp-shift/>.
- Lee, Seungjoo. "The Evolutionary Dynamics of Institutional Balancing in East Asia." EAI Asia Security Initiative. Seoul: The East Asia Institute, 2002.
- Lim, Chee Peng. "International Rivalry: U.S. - Japanese Competition in the ASEAN Countries." *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 4, no. 1 (1982): 35–57. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25797695>.

- Mastanduno, Michael. "Economics and Security in Statecraft and Scholarship." *International Organization* 52, no. 4 (1998): 825–54. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2601359>.
- Meltzer, Joshua P. "China's One Belt One Road initiative: A view from the United States." *Brookings*, June 19, 2017. <https://www.brookings.edu/research/chinas-one-belt-one-road-initiative-a-view-from-the-united-states/>.
- McCloud, Donald G. "United States policies toward regional organizations in Southeast Asia," *World Affairs*, September 1970, Vol. 133, No. 2 (September 1970): 133-145.
- McCloud, Donald G. "United States Policies Toward Regional Organizations in Southeast Asia." *World Affairs* 133, no. 2 (1970): 133–45. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20671188>.
- Nair, Deepak. "Regionalism in the Asia Pacific/East Asia: A Frustrated Regionalism?" *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 31, no. 1 (2009): 110–42. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41288791>.
- Nixon, Richard. "A New Strategy for Peace." U.S. Department of State Archive, February 18, 1970. <https://2001-2009.state.gov/r/pa/ho/frus/nixon/e5/54804.htm>.
- Ott, Marvin C. "Southeast Asia: Security Among the Mini-Dragons" in *U.S. Foreign and Strategic Policy in the Post-Cold War Era*, edited by Howard J. Wiarda. Greenwood Press, 1995.
- P. Drysdale, D. Vines, B. House. *Europe, East Asia and APEC: A shared global agenda?* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- Patrick, Hugh. "From PAFTAD to APEC: Economists networks & public policy making." Discussion Paper Series no. 2. New York: Columbia University, 1997. <https://business.columbia.edu/sites/default/files-efs/imce-uploads/PFS/02.%20patrick.pdf>.
- Peng Lim, Chee. "International Rivalry: U.S. - Japanese Competition in the ASEAN Countries." *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 4, no. 1 (1982): 35–57. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25797695>.
- PTI, "China says regional countries fear IPEF may decouple them from Chinese economy," *The Indian Express*, May 25, 2022, <https://indianexpress.com/article/world/china-regional-countries-ipef-chinese-economy-7936250/>.
- Raga, Sherilyn. "How will Southeast Asia Benefit from the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework?" ODI. July 18, 2022. <https://odi.org/en/insights/how-southeast-asia-will-benefit-from-the-indo-pacific-economic-framework/>.
- Rahawestri, Mayang A. "Obama's Foreign Policy in Asia: More Continuity than Change." *Security Challenges* 6, no. 1 (2010): 109–20. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26459473>.

- Rajagopalan, Rajeswari Pillai. "Explaining the Rise of Minilaterals in the Indo-Pacific." Issue Brief no. 490 (2021).
- Reinbold, Brian and Yi Wen. "Understanding the Roots of the US Trade Deficit." Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis. October 9, 2018. <https://www.stlouisfed.org/publications/regional-economist/third-quarter-2018/understanding-roots-trade-deficit>.
- Renato De Castro, "U.S. Grand Strategy in Post-Cold War Asia—Pacific," *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 16, no. 3 (1994): 342–53. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25798254>.
- Revere, Evans J. R. "U.S. Foreign Policy Priorities and the East Asia-Pacific Region." U.S. Department of State Archive. May 3, 2005. <https://2001-2009.state.gov/p/eap/rls/rm/2005/45754.htm>.
- Roemer, John E. *U.S.-Japanese Competition in International Markets*. Berkeley: University of California, 1975.
- Samuels, Richard J.. "Nixon Doctrine." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, September 5, 2019. <https://www.britannica.com/event/Nixon-Doctrine>.
- Saunders, Phillip C. "The Rebalance to Asia: US-China Relations and Regional Security." *Strategic Forum*, no. 281 (August, 2013). <https://ndupress.ndu.edu/Portals/68/Documents/stratforum/SF-281.pdf>.
- Schott, Jeffrey J. "Can Obama Help Retrieve Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation." Peterson Institute for International Studies. Uploaded on November 4, 2009. <https://www.piie.com/experts/peterson-perspectives/can-obama-help-revive-asia-pacific-economic-cooperation>.
- Searight, Amy. "The United States and Asian Economic Regionalism: On the Outside Looking In?" In *A Pacific Nation: Perspectives on the U.S. Role in an East Asia Community*. Edited by Mark Borthwick and Tadashi Yamamoto. Japan Center International Exchange, 2011.
- Silk Road Briefing, "China Invites the United States to Join the Belt and Road Initiative." March 3, 2022. <https://www.silkroadbriefing.com/news/2022/03/03/china-invites-the-united-states-to-join-the-belt-and-road-initiative/>.
- Sinha, Saurabh. "India stays out of Indo-Pacific trade pillar." *The Times of India*, September 10, 2022. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/business/india-business/why-india-opted-out-of-joining-trade-pillar-of-ipef-for-now/articleshow/94106662.cms>.
- Siow, Maria. "From Singapore to Malaysia and Philippines, Asean's interest in Biden's IPEF a signal to China it wants better 'balance of power' in region." *This Week in Asia*, May 27, 2022. <https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/politics/article/3179436/singapore-malaysia-and-philippines-aseans-interest-bidens-ipef>.

- Shoji, Tomotaka. "Southeast Asia and the United States under the Biden Administration: from expectations to bewilderment." The Sasakaya Peace Foundation. Accessed October 15, 2022. https://www.spf.org/iina/en/articles/shoji_14.html.
- Solís, Mireya. "Heyday of Asian Regionalism? The Implications of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership for the United States." *ERIA Discussion Paper Series*, no. 435. August, 2022. <https://www.eria.org/uploads/media/discussion-papers/FY22/Heyday-of-Asian-Regionalism-The-Implications-of-the-Regional-Comprehensive-Economic-Partnership-for-the-United-States.pdf>.
- Stevenson, Charles H. "U.S. Foreign Policy in Southeast Asia: Implications for Current Regional Issues." *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 14, no. 2 (1992): 87–111. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25798145>.
- Terada, Takashi. "The United States and East Asian Regionalism: Inclusion-Exclusion Logic and the Role of Japan." In *A Pacific Nation: Perspectives on the U.S. Role in an East Asia Community*. Edited by Mark Borthwick and Tadashi Yamamoto. Japan Center International Exchange, 2011.
- The Australian National University. "The Genesis of APEC: Australian-Japan Political Initiatives." *Pacific Economic Papers*, no. 298. Australia, 1999.
- The White House. "FACT SHEET: In Asia, President Biden and a Dozen Indo-Pacific Partners Launch the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity." Accessed October 2, 2022, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/05/23/fact-sheet-in-asia-president-biden-and-a-dozen-indo-pacific-partners-launch-the-indo-pacific-economic-framework-for-prosperity/>.
- Trachtenberg, Marc. *A Constructed Peace: The Making of the European Settlement, 1945-1963*. Princeton University Press, 1999.
- Trager, Frank N. "The Nixon Doctrine and Asian Policy." *Southeast Asian Perspectives*, no. 6 (1972): 1–34. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30174752>.
- Tucker, Nancy Bernkopf. "Taiwan Expendable? Nixon and Kissinger Go to China." *The Journal of American History* 92, no. 1 (2005): 109–35. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3660527>.
- Wang, Peter Brian M. "Long-jam in the Indo-Pacific economic policy space." The Lowy Institute (July 6, 2022). <https://www.loyyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/log-jam-indo-pacific-economic-policy-space>.
- Wuthnow, Joel. "U.S. 'Minilateralism' in Asia and China's Responses: A New Security Dilemma?" *Journal of Contemporary China*, vol. 28, issue 115 (2019): 133-150
- Yamaguchi, Kazuo and Youm, Yoosik. "The glass ceiling in Japan and South Korea." *VoxEU*. December 11, 2016. <https://cepr.org/voxeu/columns/glass-ceiling-japan-and-south-korea>.

Yang, Florence Wen-Ting. "Asymmetrical Interdependence and Sanction: China's Economic Retaliation over South Korea's THAAD Deployment." *Issues & Studies*, Vol. 55, No. 04, 1940008 (2019).

Zhao, Quansheng. "Japan's Leadership Role in East Asia: Cooperation and Competition between Japan and China." *Policy and Society* 23:1 (2014): 111-128. DOI: 10.1016/S1449-4035(04)70029-6

Abstract in Korean

2016년 트럼프 행정부의 환태평양경제동반자협정(TPP) 탈퇴는 특히 경제 정책과 무역규칙 설정 분야에서 아시아에서 미국의 입지를 크게 위태롭게 했다. 지난 몇 년 동안 다자간 및 지역 협력에 대한 미국의 참여 부족에 대한 전망은 중국이 주도하는 지역 협력의 증가로 인해 악화되었을 뿐이다. 그러자 바이든 새 행정부가 중국의 지역포괄적경제동반자협정(RCEP)과 균형을 맞출 수 있을 만큼 충분히 경쟁력 있는 구상을 제안하는 것이 시급해졌다. 바이든 대통령이 취임한 직후 현 정부의 아시아 재도전 전략으로 인도태평양경제체제(IPEF)가 제안될 것으로 보인다. 모두가 놀랍게도, IPEF는 자유무역협정이 아니며, 시장 접근 조항도 없을 것이며, 행정부는 현재 포괄적인 CPTPP에 가입하는 것을 고려하고 있지 않았다. 아시아 태평양 지역의 미·중 경쟁이 사상 최고조에 달하는 시대에 IPEF의 제안은 상대적으로 약하고, 그 개념에서 제한적이라고 인식될 수 있다.

냉전 초기부터 트럼프 행정부에 이르기까지 아시아태평양 지역 경제협력에 대한 미국의 역할과 참여에 초점을 맞춘 역사적 개요를 통해 현 행정부와 IPEF에 여전히 매우 만연해 있는 다른 구조적 요인들을 발견하지만, 많은 관행을 발견하기도 한다. 그는 워싱턴에서 전례가 없었다. 우리는 미국이 쇠퇴하는 세계 경제 헤게모니로서 자신의 결점을 인식하고 있으며, 경제 분야에서 무역 규칙을 정하는 힘과 관련성을 되찾는 것을 목표로 하는 방식으로 창의력을 발휘하고 있다고 본다. IPEF에서 우리는 지역 FTA가 발생하기 전에 아시아 태평양에서 경제 협력을 위한 가장 일반적인 방법이었던 소프트 자발적 다자주의로 돌아가는 것을 볼 수 있다. 그러나 뜻을 같이하는 국가들 사이에서 서로 다른 협상이 소일하게 진행될 방식은 이 지역에서 증가하는 소일주의 선

호와 일관성을 보일 뿐만 아니라 이 지역에서 미국의 통상적인 운영 방식과 많은 연속성을 보여준다. 중국 관련 양극화 가능성에 대해 IPEF는 TPP와 유사한 개방적이고 포괄적인 이니셔티브이자 중국을 명시적으로 겨냥한 무역 블록이 아닌 정책 결정 플랫폼으로 스스로를 제시한다. 그러나 이것은 IPEF가 제한이 없다는 것을 의미하지는 않는다. 시장 접근성의 부족은 일부 아시아 국가들에게 이 이니셔티브가 중국을 적대시할 만한 가치가 없을 수 있으며, 일부 국가가 첫 단계에서 협상에 참여하지 않는다는 사실은 동아시아 토종 국가들과 충돌하는 미국 주도의 지역주의에 대한 과거의 분노를 불러일으킬 수 있다. 이와 함께 다소 비공식적이고 토론 기반이었던 과거 조직들은 제한적인 결과와 구속력이 없는 합의를 이끌어냈으며, 이로 인해 IPEF는 미국이 규칙 제정 권한을 얻는 데 이상적인 도구가 아닐 수 있다. 앞으로 미국이 역사를 되돌아보고 아시아 태평양에서의 다자간 이니셔티브에 참여하거나 참여하지 않는 것과 관련된 과거의 실수를 피하는 것이 관건이 될 것이다. IPEF는 국내 경기 침체와 의회 비준을 뛰어넘는 혁신적인 방법을 제시하며, 높은 품질 기준을 만들고 패권 리더십을 재정의하는 데 초점을 맞추고 있다. 마지막으로, 우리는 과거의 실수를 피하고 중요한 결과로 이어지기 위해 이니셔티브가 충족되어야 하는 몇 가지 조건을 고려할 것이다.