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## Southeast Asia in the context of the formation of the Indo-Pacific region

UDC 327  
DOI <https://doi.org/10.24195/2414-9616.2023-4.31>

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*The article discusses the formation of geopolitical concept of the Indo-Pacific region and the actualization of the role of Southeast Asian countries in this block. The Indo-Pacific region (IPR, Indo-Pacific) is a relatively new construct in international relationships. It appeared in world political discourse less than a decade and a half ago and soon aroused fierce controversy. While the expert community and political circles in the United States, India, Australia, Japan, Indonesia, and a number of European countries adopted it, China treats it with suspicion, believing that it is intended to limit the growth of its economic and political power.*

*It has been researched that The United States and India have advanced furthest in the conceptualization of the Indo-Pacific region, while their versions of the Indo-Pacific diverge more and more every year. For Washington, the IPR is a convenient political construct, which, in accordance with the US Indo-Pacific strategy, is necessary in order to use the countries of the region (primarily India and Australia) to contain China. For New Delhi, IPR is first and foremost a idea that allows India to base its claims on the status of a great power.*

*It is clarified that for India, the concept of the IPR is the implementation of the "Asia-Pacific region plus India" scheme, which implies the recognition of India as the dominant power in the Indian Ocean region, while ASEAN acts as the most important regional partner. This leads to the fact that India's relations with East Africa and the Persian Gulf countries, although important, are taken out of the scope of the IPR. Об'рунтоваю, що Despite the fact that Indian officials regularly mention that the Indo-Pacific in the Indian sense extends to the coast of Africa, the western part of the Indian Ocean in Indian political discourse is often not perceived as an integral part of the Indo-Pacific, in contrast to South Asia, the eastern part of the Indian Ocean and the Southeast Asia.*

*The authors note that as part of this concept and geopolitical space, Southeast Asia is of interest to the participants of the new regional association. And in this sense, it is also important what the region can give for the Indo-Pacific, and what benefits it can get from participating in the project.*

**Key words:** *Indo-Pacific, Southeast Asia, geopolitical challenges, democracy, transformation.*

**Introduction.** According to the British think tank Policy Exchange, the Indo-Pacific is defined as "the region stretching from the Indian subcontinent to the upper part of Southeast Asia and China, and then to Northeast Asian countries such as Japan and Korea". The European Union (EU) Strategy Paper for the Indo-Pacific of 16 September 2021, which was prepared using the strategy papers of Germany, the Netherlands and France, defines the Indo-Pacific as "the broad region stretching from the east coast of Africa to the Pacific island states".

Despite all the different definitions, the Indo-Pacific is the world's largest market, with strategic points such as the Malacca Strait accounting for 25% of world trade, 90% of which is by sea. Also, the Indo-Pacific region, in which the EU invests \$90 billion a year, could potentially have very serious consequences due to the possible interruption of the sea routes passing through it.

The growing interest in the Indo-Pacific region and the use of this term as a geopolitical concept indicates that the world economic and political center of gravity has shifted to this region. European interest in the region has been boosted following disruptions to the supply chain, which was also affected by the container crisis during the Covid-19 pandemic. Efforts to reduce dependence on China and develop alternative

trade partnerships with countries in the region, first through the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and then with countries such as South Korea, New Zealand, India and Australia, should be seen as a result of this development.

Issues devoted to the role of the countries of Southeast Asia in shaping the concept of the Indo-Pacific region are considered in the works of such researchers as Abe Shinzo, Amita Acharya, Devi Fortuna Anwar, John Lee, Anthony Milner, Marty Natalegawa, David Scott. Considering the studies conducted by these scientists, we note that the problem of conceptualization of the Indo-Pacific region is becoming increasingly important.

The **main tasks** of the article are to describe the prerequisites for the formation of the Indo-Pacific region; to analyze the challenges facing the countries of Southeast Asia in the context of the creation of the Indo-Pacific region; to determine the place and role of the ASEAN countries in the new geopolitical reality.

**Research methods.** The study used descriptive, systematic and comparative methods, which allowed to analyze how the emergence of a new geopolitical region influenced the countries of Southeast Asia and determined their place in it. The descriptive method helped to conduct a general study

of the emergence of the Indo-Pacific concept. The systematic method made it possible to analyze the main positions of the ASEAN countries regarding their participation in the newly formed association. The approaches of the countries of Southeast Asia to the future of the Indo-Pacific and their tasks in the context of the development of the region were studied by a comparative method.

### Results.

#### Conceptualization of the Indo-Pacific idea

It should be noted that the term “Indo-Pacific region” appeared in the science of international relations for a long time. According to Australian expert Rory Medcalf, it goes back to the 1960s and even to the period of the colonial past [11]. Back in 2007, Indian political scientists used it in their work. In the same year, 2007, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, speaking in the Indian Parliament, spoke in his speech “Merging the Two Oceans” about the “dynamic connection” of the Indian and Pacific Oceans and called for the creation of an “arc of freedom and prosperity”, including in it countries not only in East and Southeast, but also in South Asia. S. Abe noted that India and Japan, as “equally thinking democratic maritime states”, need to promote freedom and prosperity in “wider Asia”, which should include Japan, India, the United States and create the possibility of free movement of people, capital, goods and knowledge [1, p. 2].

Since the beginning of the 2010s, the concept of the “Indo-Pacific region” has become quite firmly entrenched not only in the world political science discourse, but also in official documents, as well as in public speeches by US and Australian government officials. In 2013, the phrase “Indo-Pacific” was included in the Australian Government's Defense White Paper. In the United States, the concept of “Indo-Pacific” (Indo-Pacific region) has been used since 2008 by the administration of B. Obama, but quite rarely – the American president himself preferred to use the term Asia-Pacific region (Asia-Pacific region). However, after the change of power in 2016, the idea of the IPR became firmly established in the official circulation of the administration of President D. Trump, who needed an ideological justification for his policy in the Asian direction.

In November 2017, during his Asian tour, D. Trump actively promoted the idea of creating a “free and open Indo-Pacific region”, giving it a special place in his speech on the sidelines of the APEC summit in Da Nang, as well as at a meeting with the Philippine President R. Duterte. This idea gradually supplanted the traditional American rhetoric idea of “rule-based order”. For example, in his speech to the leaders of the business community during the APEC summit in Da Nang, D. Trump described the Indo-Pacific region as a territory in which independent nations can “show a desire for freedom and peace”, and all countries “will adhere to the rules” [19, p. 3].

The idea of the IPR was actively used during briefings following the results of Trump's Asian tour, which visited the Philippines, Vietnam, China, South Korea and Japan, and other representatives of the American administration, including National Security Adviser H. McMaster and US Secretary of State R. Tillerson, who in his speeches during this tour used the term “ITR” more than 15 times. He emphasized that US democratic allies Japan and Australia should work together to confront “China's challenge to the rules-based international order” [8].

In the view of the Americans, a “free and open Indo-Pacific region” should be built on the unification of countries that accept common liberal values. Among them, according to US National Security Adviser G. McMaster, are the ideas of freedom of navigation and air traffic, the rule of law, freedom from coercion, respect for sovereignty, the principles of private enterprise and open markets. Of particular importance among these rules is the principle of freedom of navigation, concerning two key maritime trade routes connecting East Asia with the Middle East and Europe. The concept of the “Indo-Pacific region” is firmly connected with the security of maritime communications – its introduction into circulation is intended to signal that security in the region will be supported by freedom of navigation at sea, and above all those maritime trade routes that connect East Asia with the Middle East and Europe [9, p. 3].

The controversy around the concept of “IPR” gives grounds to wonder whether the “newfangled” concept of “Indo-Pacific” is consistent from a meaningful point of view or is it an artificial ideological and synthetic construction that has little in common with real life. One cannot but agree with the conclusion that the idea of “Indo-Pacific” is based on deeply interconnected economic, international political and military processes. An analysis of these processes dynamically occurring in the basins of the Indian and Pacific Oceans allows us to conclude that a new regional community is being formed, based on the interpenetration and interaction of the world's two largest oceans. It can be recalled in this regard that the concept of the “Euro-Atlantic space”, which arose in the post-war period as a propaganda tool for the ideological justification of the military-political unity of the destinies of Western Europe and the United States, for a long time seemed to be an artificial construct [14, p. 7].

Similarly, the “Asia-Pacific region” narrative, which appeared in America in the 1970s in connection with the need to argue for US military-political hegemony in East Asia and the Pacific, seemed unnatural to many. However, today the regularity of the existence of both of these terminological constructs is beyond doubt – they are backed by real-life regional systems with a powerful set of economic, political, social, military, cultural and humanitarian ties.

### Factors in the formation of the Indo-Pacific

Several factors contribute to the formation of the region into a single whole. First of all, these are the economic processes that are actively taking place there, the distinguishing feature of which is the active involvement of the economic space of the Indian Ocean basin in the orbit of the economic interests of the dynamically developing economies of East Asia.

A new arena of trade and economic competition is emerging in the vast Indo-Pacific region, the development of which will, over time, increasingly determine the path of the global economy. The Indian Ocean is the largest trade route connecting East Asian energy consumers with their suppliers in the Middle East. It is through the Indian Ocean that China, India, Japan and South Korea receive a significant part of their energy and other raw materials from the East Africa and Near and Middle East, it is through the Southern Sea Route, which runs through the Strait of Malacca, the Indian Ocean and the Suez Canal, that caravans pass ships from East Asia to Europe. The countries of the Indian Ocean basin were involved in the emerging system of economic integration in the Asia-Pacific region, having found their niche as a source of raw materials, a transport and logistics corridor, and in the future – and first of all, taking into account the huge potential for the economic development of India and other countries of South Asia – and the most important sales market for products manufactured in East Asian countries [17, p. 5].

The concept of the IPR was largely the result of significant strategic trends regarding the increased interconnectedness of individual subregions of South, Southeast and East Asia, the military-political and economic rise of China, the strengthening of the regional and global role of India, and the aggravation of competition between the two countries in the foreseeable historical perspective Asian superpowers. The main geopolitical risk for regional development is associated with the inevitable clash of interests between Beijing and New Delhi, which will be based on the intersection of two vectors of military and economic expansion – the western one in the policy of China and the eastern one in the policy of India. This, on the one hand, creates a vast zone of competitive overlap between them, on the other hand, it unites the Indian and Pacific Oceans with a myriad of new relationships, involving most of the countries of South, Southeast and East Asia into their orbit [4, p. 12].

Close attention is paid to the impact of the IPR and the quadripartite Quadrilateral Security Dialogue on ASEAN's position as coordinator of platforms for Asia-Pacific versatile cooperation. ASEAN experts emphasize: the institutional design of the IPR can marginalize institutions such as the ARF – ASEAN Regional Forum, ASEAN+8 Defense Ministerial Meeting and East Asia Summit, depriving the Association of its main “trump card” – a neutral agenda collabor-

ation with partners. It has even been suggested that IPR is the first sign of a “post-ASEAN” reality.

The intellectuals of the Southeast Asian countries raise the issue in such a way that the participants of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (India, Australia, USA and Japan) must provide convincing arguments that the IPR will not be anti-Chinese and will not affect the status of ASEAN as the coordinator of multilateral negotiations. The question was also raised about the possibility of joining the states of the Indian Ocean to the ASEAN-centric platforms of multilateral diplomacy [18, p. 7].

The organization's experts believe that the IPR can exacerbate the problem of the South China Sea, geographically located at the epicenter of the future Indo-Pacific, and geopolitically it is an arena of clashes between China and the United States. In order to prevent such a development of events, ASEAN must act “proactively”.

### Indonesian initiative for ASEAN participation in IPR

The initiative to develop the ASEAN position on the Indo-Pacific region was taken by Indonesia. This is due to a number of factors.

The main one is the geographical position of Indonesia. The country is washed by the Indian and Pacific oceans. Straits of strategic importance for maritime trade pass through the archipelagos of Indonesia. The administration of

J. Widodo set a course for turning the country into a “global maritime axis”. This course involves the development of the following five areas: the transformation of Indonesian maritime culture, the development of maritime resources, the construction of maritime infrastructure and the strengthening of interconnectedness, the strengthening of maritime military forces and the promotion of maritime diplomacy. All this somehow correlates with the discourse on the formation of the Indo-Pacific.

Indonesia has an intellectual backlog in the conceptualization of IPR. In 2013, M. Natalegawa, who at that time held the post of Minister of Foreign Affairs of the country, proposed expanding the scope of activities of the ASEAN-centric structures of multilateral diplomacy to the areas of the Indian and Pacific Oceans, creating the so-called “system of dynamic balance” [13].

It played the role and significance of the IPR as an intellectual project in the priorities of the major powers influencing the development of Indonesia. The Indo-Pacific narrative is being developed by Australia, with which Indonesia has traditionally had a competitive relationship (suffice it to recall Jakarta's reaction to the presence of Australian conciliators in East Timor in 1999–2002). The Chinese factor is also important for Indonesia: Jakarta plans to coordinate the strategy of the Global Maritime Axis and the Maritime Silk Road of twenty first century. There is a growing inter-

est in Southeast Asia, primarily in the South China Sea, another influential international player – India.

Finally, Indonesian experts and politicians have repeatedly raised the issue that the country's future lies far beyond interaction with ASEAN partners. This is not a recent phenomenon, but a steady trend. Suffice it to recall that during the formation of the East Asia Summit, Jakarta advocated the incorporation of Australia, India and New Zealand in the EAS, which can be seen as an attempt by the Indonesian leadership to expand the institutional space of its foreign policy. In his opinion, the growing economy of Indonesia makes it one of the centers of influence in the modern world. Hence, Jakarta's focus on building relationships with established global players, which implies its participation in projects with a distinct global component [12, p. 10].

Taking the lead in shaping ASEAN's position on the idea of institutionalizing the Indo-Pacific, Indonesia conducted its thorough brainstorming and subsequent presentation. During 2018–2019 Statements on this topic were made by the heads of the Foreign and Defense Ministry, as well as the country's top leadership, highlighting various aspects of the idea and lobbying for its support from the rest of the G10 (Group of Ten) countries. Special mention deserves the hosting by Indonesia in March 2019 of the “High-Level Dialogue on Cooperation in Engineering and Technology” with the participation of representatives of eighteen member states of the East Asia Summit [21].

Indonesia's unwillingness to come into conflict with already voiced ideas, for example, about an “open and free Indo-Pacific region” was clearly visible. As well as opposing initiatives that have already started, for example, the quadripartite dialogue format on security issues. The Indonesian proposal also lacked an anti-Chinese component: it was rather about co-opting existing ideas into the Indonesian (and, in the future, common to all ASEAN countries) concept of the development of the IPR, taking into account the interests of all its major participants. It is noteworthy that in the speech of the Indonesian Minister of Defense R. Ryacudu, the Indo-Pacific project was linked to the activation of ISIS militants (banned in the Russian Federation) in Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria with the prospect of their infiltration into Indonesia, and not to the contradictions between the major countries of the Indo-Pacific region.

In developing a common ASEAN position on the IPR, attention was drawn to Indonesia's desire to involve existing multilateral institutions, in particular, to establish cooperation between ASEAN and the IORA – Indian Ocean Rim Association. Along with Malaysia, Thailand and Singapore, Indonesia is also a member of IORA, being the largest country representing ASEAN there. At the same time, Indonesia was aware of both the limitations of its own

resources and the growing need to solve the problems of internal development. Hence the preference for multi-sided dialogue formats over a two-sided track.

A kind of quintessence of Indonesian efforts to develop an ASEAN position on the South China Sea can be considered the preparation by Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the document “Indonesia and the ASEAN position on the IPR: towards a prosperous, peaceful and inclusive region”. The main feature of this document is the desire to adapt the ASEAN cooperation mechanisms, in particular the East Asia Summit, to the Indo-Pacific space. Of the specific areas of dialogue, emphasis was placed on cooperation on maritime frontiers, infrastructure construction and building relationships, as well as on the implementation of the “continual development goals” [3, p. 121].

Indonesia's willingness to take the lead in resolving issues relevant to ASEAN had not only a purely pragmatic but also an emotional and value dimension. It was in Bali that the historic summit of 1976 was held, which laid down the parameters for cooperation between the organization. Subsequently, Jakarta also played a key role in resolving the Cambodian problem. This continued after the end of the Cold War, when Indonesia took over the holding of working meetings on the South China Sea and the development of a “Six-Point Agreement” on the South China Sea after the Cambodian ASEAN fiasco in the summer of 2012.

The Association officially announced its views on the ITR project in June 2019. The main feature of the document entitled “ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific” is an attempt to link the process of forming the IPR with ASEAN possibilities.

The document emphasizes that the Indian and Pacific Oceans are not just two interconnected maritime spaces, but an integrated and interconnected region, in the center of which is ASEAN. The aspiration of the G10 to achieve synergy between the formation of the IPR and the ASEAN Community, on the one hand, and the strengthening of the institutions of multilateral cooperation led by the association, on the other, is stipulated. The importance of the ASEAN Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia as a normative basis for the position in relation to the IPR project is emphasized.

The main directions of the Indonesian position on Indo-Pacific – cooperation at sea, building interconnectivity and achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals until 2030 – are complemented by the development of a dialogue in the economic sphere (connections between micro, small and medium enterprises, increased cooperation in the digital sphere, etc.). In institutional terms, priority is given to ASEAN-centric dialogue formats: the ASEAN Regional Forum, the ASEAN+8 Defense Ministers Meeting, the ASEAN+1 tracks and the East Asia Summit, with an emphasis on the capabilities of the latter [10, p. 28].

### **Interests of Southeast Asian countries in the context of the formation of the Indo-Pacific region**

An analysis of ASEAN's historical legacy leads to the conclusion that only in a multipolar world does this organization have a chance of successfully “balancing” between the major powers. An ideal multipolar world is “multilayered” (in the terminology of A. Acharya – the multiplex world), i.e. interconnected “horizontally” (in economic, political, humanitarian, cultural and other respects) and “vertically” (at the global, regional, national and local levels). The “multilayered world” includes numerous, but not competing, numerous “modernization paradigms” (multiple modernities), “sewn together” into a single whole by a system of formal and informal relationships and interactions [2].

Based on this, the association believes that its prerogative is to form such a world at the level of Southeast Asia (with reservations – The Asia-Pacific region), hoping to delegate to its partners the solution of this task at the global level. ASEAN sees its contribution to the “multi-layered global world order” as subordinate to the policies of global players.

To do this, ASEAN needs to solve three inter-related tasks:

- to develop the ASEAN Community project by integrating it into global cooperation processes;
- to integrate into the Chinese Belt and Road project;
- to adapt the assets developed in the Asia-Pacific region to a wider geopolitical and geo-economic space.

The ASEAN Community project was originally aimed at increasing the role of this organization in the global economy, and continues to be aimed at this. The task is to turn Southeast Asia into a unified space for doing business (in 2016, in terms of the total GDP of its countries, ASEAN was the sixth economy in the world, and by 2050, according to a number of estimates, it may become the fourth), interconnected in terms of infrastructure, institutional and “human” terms and representing a single production and market enclave [20].

The ASEAN Community is called upon to provide a favorable international environment for solving this political and security challenge. This involves optimizing ASEAN's relations with dialogue partners and increasing the efficiency of ASEAN-centric structures of multilateral diplomacy. In socio-cultural terms, the project is aimed at consolidating the elites and, to a much lesser extent, the peoples of the Southeast Asian countries, so that the states of the Asian south-east fulfill their tasks by pursuing a single policy.

The main task of the Association remains the construction of cross-border infrastructure in Southeast Asia, because this can cause a multiplier effect, stimulating the development of related economic

sectors, and, consequently, maintaining high rates of economic growth in the states of the subregion.

Through the prism of linking this need with the formation of IPR, we emphasize that cooperation on the land – Eurasian – space is more in line with the interests of ASEAN than on maritime borders. Moreover, in relation to engineering, we are talking about vast spaces. The construction of infrastructure, primarily energy, is easier from a technical point of view and less burdensome from a financial point of view. As the IPR develops, it will increasingly come into conflict with China's “Maritime Silk Road” project, placing ASEAN in the position of a hostage to Chinese-American disagreements over the South China Sea issue [5, p. 1–3].

### **Belt and Road Initiative VS Indo-Pacific**

China's mega-strategy “Belt and Road Initiative” is developing at a critical stage of globalization, when increasing interdependence, gaining momentum and scope, is not accompanied by consensus on political and security issues. The development of nuclear weapons outside the non-proliferation regimes, trade wars, international terrorism and the COVID-19 pandemic against the backdrop of insufficient effectiveness of global governance and regulation institutions undermine the possibility of building a sustainable international order.

For ASEAN, this “initiative” comes with both benefits and costs. The first are connected, first of all, with the prospect of an influx of Chinese investments in the construction of cross-border infrastructure of the countries of Southeast Asia, primarily port infrastructure (despite the fact that two land economic corridors and a section of the Maritime Silk Road pass through Southeast Asia). The policy of the Celestial Empire stimulates activity in the Asian southeast of other states – South Korea, Japan, India and others, providing ASEAN with alternative opportunities for cooperation and creating the effect of its multiplier.

However, ASEAN is also aware of something else: Beijing's motivation is far from charitable and altruistic. Through the implementation of infrastructure projects in partner countries, China intends to form a “friendly environment belt” in the Celestial Empire, which in practice means building a China-centric “common security” system. Continued financing of infrastructure construction (and this is, by definition, a lengthy and costly process) will be linked to the readiness of China's partners, including those in ASEAN, with concessions from these countries of the Celestial Empire on political issues.

Special mention deserves such direction of the “Belt and Road Initiative” as “Digital Silk Road”. By developing it, including in relations with the states of Southeast Asia, the Celestial Empire expects to achieve far-reaching goals. This includes strengthening its position in international industrial cooperation (if a manufacturing plant is being built by Chinese con-

tractors, by default it is assumed that its Information and Communication Technologies support will be provided by the Chinese side), transferring it to Chinese operating systems and the fifth generation Internet. We can also note the relief for Chinese companies, and not necessarily those employed in the ICT sector, to enter the markets of partner countries, assist Chinese B2B and B2C platforms in expanding their customer bases. The discourse on “inclusive globalization” with an emphasis on inclusive trade and investment, the rational use of big data, the creation of so-called “smart cities”, etc. became the information support of such a policy [16, p. 12–17].

For the countries of Southeast Asia, the continuation of such a policy means the prospect, if not the loss of their own digital sovereignty, then certainly an increase in their own vulnerability and a decrease in the threshold of their ability to stop these processes. The main risks for the countries of Southeast Asia include the formation and, subsequently, the expansion on their territory of industries and markets for digital services based on Chinese standards and technologies. The activities of the Chinese companies Huawei and ZTE in laying fiber optic cables in Indonesia and the Philippines, as well as in installing equipment for the fifth generation Internet, make the Southeast Asian states vulnerable in the event of a possible (to what extent is another question) intentional disruption of infrastructure as a tool for political manipulation. Taken together, these factors will also affect ASEAN, in particular, its role as a “driving force” of formats and initiatives for many-sided cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region in the fields of economy, politics and security [6, p. 2].

The prospect of intensifying the “Belt and Road” and IPR projects and projecting the contradictions of ASEAN's global partners onto Southeast Asia is pushing it to look for ways to increase its competitiveness. It is important to adapt the already developed political, organizational and intellectual assets to it.

It is important to emphasize that the ASEAN countries are far from united on the issue of the Indo-Pacific region and their participation in the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue. Singapore took part in naval maneuvers jointly with the states of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue in September 2007. There is reason to expect interest in the QSD from Vietnam, which is unlikely to miss the opportunity to create an additional counterbalance to China in the South China Sea. However, the fact that QSD does not include the Philippines and Thailand, American allies in the Asia-Pacific Region, speaks of the restrained and skeptical moods of the elites of the Southeast Asian countries, especially those who do not have territorial claims in the South China Sea, regarding the future of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue and the formation of Indo-Pacific institutions [8].

Let us also note the important point that the ASEAN version of regionalism has traditionally been characterized by a strong element of identity formation. The political lexicon of ASEAN is characterized by terms with a strong component of this concept – it is enough to recall the “ASEAN Community”. The fact that the name of the Indo-Pacific region does not include the word “Asia” naturally contradicts the goal-setting of ASEAN, where the advent of the “Asian century” is linked to the further development of dialogue platforms led by the efforts of the Association.

In general, the interests and long-term plans of the association hardly correspond to active participation in the formation of the institutions of the Indo-Pacific region. Especially in the coming years, when international turbulence will be superimposed on the expected and natural increase in the tendency towards isolation of the G-10 countries as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine.

**Conclusions.** An analysis of the intellectual narrative of ASEAN in the context of the concept of the Asia-Pacific Region and the specifics of this geopolitical project leads to the conclusion that the association has little chance of repeating its success in building, if not flawlessly, but on the whole effectively functioning multilateral dialogue formats, as happened in the Asia-Pacific region after the Cold War.

The reason is not that this task is beyond ASEAN's strength – practice has shown that it can effectively cope with the most complex challenges. The problem is different: participation in the Indo-Pacific project runs counter to both the long-term plans of the association and the evolution of its resources.

An equally important role is played by the growing awareness by the elites of the ASEAN countries of the fact that the world order, promoted, among other things, by the adherents of the IPR project, is less and less reminiscent of a model of cooperation that can bring peace, harmony and prosperity to the countries of Southeast Asia. In other words, the liberal world order and promoted by ASEAN since the first half of the 1990s neutral agenda of cooperation with its global partners, as well as between these partners themselves, have ceased to be identical concepts. The natural rise of elements of nationalism in world politics will further undermine the narrative of liberalism in any form.

Under such conditions, it can be reasonably predicted that ASEAN's reserved and skeptical attitude towards the ITR project will continue in the future. At the same time, ideas will be developed that can really, and not declaratively, contribute to the growth of the competitiveness of Southeast Asia as economic and political community, expanding the tools for solving problems, the number and degree of complexity of which will grow.

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## Південно-Східна Азія в контексті формування Індो-Тихоокеанського регіону

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*У статті розглядається формування геополітичної концепції Індо-Тихоокеанського регіону та актуалізація ролі країн Південно-Східної Азії у цьому блоці. Індо-Тихоокеанський регіон (ІТР, Індо-Пацифіка) – відносно нова геополітична конструкція. Вона з'явилася у світовому політичному дискурсі менш як півтора десятиліття тому і незабаром викликала запеклі суперечки. У той час як експертна спільнота та політичні кола США, Індії, Австралії, Японії, Індонезії та ряду європейських країн прийняли її, Китай ставиться до неї з підозрою, вважаючи, що вона покликана обмежити зростання його економічної та політичної сили.*

*Було досліджено, що США та Індія найбільше просунулися у концептуалізації Індо-Тихоокеанського регіону, при цьому їхні версії Стратегії з кожним роком розходяться дедалі більше. Для Вашингтона ІТР є зручною політичною конструкцією, яка відповідно до Індо-Тихоокеанської стратегії США необхідна для того, щоб використовувати країни регіону (насамперед Індію та Австралію) для стримування Китаю. Для Нью-Делі ІТР це передусім ідея, що дозволяє Індії ґрунтувати свої претензії на статусі великої держави.*

*Доведено, що для Індії концепція ІТР є реалізацію схеми «Азіатсько-Тихоокеанський регіон плюс Індія», що передбачає визнання Індії домінуючою державою в регіоні Індійського океану, а АСЕАН виступає як найважливіший регіональний партнер. Це призводить до того, що відносини Індії зі Східною Африкою та країнами Перської затоки хоч і важливі, але виводяться за межі концепту блоку. Незважаючи на те, що індійські офіційні особи регулярно згадують, що Індо-Пацифіка в індійському розумінні простягається до узбережжя Африки, західна частина Індійського океану в індійському політичному дискурсі часто не сприймається як невід'ємна частина нового геополітичного конструкту, на відміну від частини Індійського океану та Південно-Східної Азії. Автори зазначають, що в рамках цієї концепції та геополітичного простору Південно-Східна Азія становить інтерес для учасників нового регіонального об'єднання. В межах такої співпраці важливим є те, що регіон може дати Індо-Тихоокеанському регіону, і яку вигоду він може отримати від участі в проекті.*

**Ключові слова:** Індо-Тихоокеанський регіон, Південно-Східна Азія, геополітичні виклики, демократія, трансформація.