



## SOUTHEAST ASIA IN THE STRATEGIC COMPETITION BETWEEN THE US AND CHINA IN THE EARLY TWO DECADES OF THE 21<sup>st</sup> CENTURY

Nguyen Tuan Binh<sup>1\*</sup>, Bui Thi Thao<sup>1</sup>, Le Minh Chinh<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>University of Education, Hue University, 34 Le Loi St., Hue, Vietnam.

<sup>2</sup>Dakrong High School, Quang Tri Province, Vietnam

\* Correspondence to Nguyen Tuan Binh < nguyentuanbinh@hueuni.edu.vn >

*(Received: October 31, 2022; Accepted: February 16, 2022)*

**Abstract.** With the advantages of geostrategic location, and socio-economics, in spite of existing many “hot spots” in terms of security, Southeast Asia became the disputed territory for the important influence of many major countries in the world, including both two powers and the two largest economies in the world – the US and China. The two countries are competing in the influence and leadership position in Southeast Asia through the integration plans and different geopolitical approaches. Since the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, the relation between the US and China with Southeast Asia has had great developments. Although the two countries have a starting point of different strategies and tactics for Southeast Asia, both parties have many common interests in promoting cooperation with the region. The relationship between the two world powers and Southeast Asia in recent decades is one of the main topics that has attracted the international community’s attention. With the use of specialized research methods of history and international relations, this article compares China and the US foreign policy and analyses the strategic competition between the two countries in Southeast Asia to clearly understand the strategic direction of foreign affairs as well as the influences of both the US and China to the situation of Southeast Asia for two decades of the early 21<sup>st</sup> century.

**Keywords:** China, competition, Southeast Asia, the US, 21<sup>st</sup> century

### 1. Southeast Asia region in the strategic interests of the US and China

Southeast Asia is an inseparable part of the Asia-Pacific region, and has long been a key strategic area and a disputed place for the influence of cultures and major countries around the world. Entering the beginning of the twenty-first century, the raise of economic globalization trend and the explosion of information technology has had a profound impact on the world landscape in general and the geopolitical environment of Southeast Asia in particular, which

made this region even more important in the international arena. On the geostrategic perspective, Southeast Asia is located in a favorable area for international trade and defence, located at the intersection of Asia, the most convenient maritime route from the Indian Ocean to the Pacific, between Northeast Asia and the South Pacific [5, p. 60]. This area holds a very important position with the seaport system and strait and is one of the key trade routes in the world, including the Strait of Malacca - a key location of the freight sea route from East to West. According to estimates, the maritime route through the Strait of Malacca accounts for a quarter of the world's marine traffic with more than 60,000 vessels pass through this strait every year [12, p. 25]. Over 90% of the crude oil arriving in that sea pass through the Strait of Malacca, thus making it one of the main geographical hubs of black gold in the world [19].

With such a strategic position, Southeast Asia has become a key "link" of the connection between Asia and Europe, between Southwest Asia, the Middle East, North Africa and Northeast Asia and North America. In the first two decades of the twenty-first century, the strategic importance of Southeast Asia has increased and has beneficial relations with all major countries in the world. From a very early age, Southeast Asia became the struggled area for the influence of many major countries, the place to show the political intrigues of great powers and the Western countries' colony, the "hot spot" due to the wars of invasion and occupation of empire states in pre-modern times. Since the Cold War's end, Southeast Asia has been considered as a strategic focus in the policies of the US and China in the Asia-Pacific region. If Southeast Asia is viewed by China as a "backyard" to help this great power realize its ambition to dominate the Western Pacific, the US sees this area as a strategic location to expand its influence in the Indo-Pacific region. In the competition for strategic space between the US and China, Southeast Asia has become a tense and fierce "arena". Southeast Asia region is the key connection point of the Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) Strategy, which helps the US strategically balance with China in this region, maintaining its existing influence in Asia [6, p. 11].

*For the US*, although Southeast Asia is geographically close to China, as a world power and has global interests and benefits, this region still plays a certain role in the US's global strategy that seeks to create a "just and sustainable international order" [17, p. 12], becoming an important link in the Asia-Pacific strategy in the twenty-first century, namely:

*Firstly*, as a sea power geographically surrounded by two oceans (the Atlantic and Pacific), since the founding of the country, the US has always been interested in the role of sea and sea power for building, developing and protecting national security. The US considered controlling the ocean to be especially important in controlling the world. In the context of increasing globalization at the beginning of the twenty-first century, Southeast Asia holds a more important position in the maritime strategy and sea power of the US. This region continues to be traversed

by the world's busiest and most important sea routes. During the early two decades of the twenty-first century, when the balance of world power was shifting from Europe-Atlantic to Asia-Pacific and this shift was directly related to the rise of China, the US advocates setting up a new regional cooperation framework in Asia-Pacific in general and Southeast Asia in particular, including ensuring the security of the South China Sea. "China is shifting the balance of power in the Eastern Hemisphere, and that will substantially concern the United States. On land and at sea, abetted by China's favorable location on the map, Beijing's influence is emanating from Central Asia to the Russian Far East, and from the South China Sea to the Indian Ocean" [4, p. 200].

*Secondly*, since the "September 11 terrorist event" which provided a new strategic context for defence ties [13, p. 16], when the US aggressively implemented its international counterterrorism strategy, Southeast Asia has become one of the ideal places of refuge for Islamic extremist forces. In that context, the increasing influence of Russia, China, Japan and India in this region has made the US more concerned. In order not to lose its influential role in Southeast Asia, the US has positioned the region as the second front in the global war on terror. The US advocates encouraging cooperation with partners in the region to make concerted efforts to squeeze, constrain, and isolate terrorist groups [16]. The complicated situation of separatist and terrorist forces in this region makes the US clearly aware that the need to engage more deeply in regional affairs is essential to fighting international terrorism. In addition, the US's involvement in this area also aims to "reassure" ASEAN countries against the expansion of Chinese influence; to remind all parties that it is a US objective to maintain open sea lanes and freedom of passage through choke points<sup>1</sup> such as the Straits of Malacca, Sunda and Lombok and through the East Sea; to promote free-trade economic objectives and the development of regional and subregional institutions; and lastly, in the nuanced promotion of democracy and human rights [2, p. 47].

*Thirdly*, over the years, Southeast Asia has emerged as an attractive region for foreign business, especially China, because it has more favorable conditions than other countries. Therefore, the US cannot be slower in the economic competition with other major countries, as this could destroy opportunities for highly profitable economic businesses from Southeast Asian countries. In fact, the US has a need to import a wide variety of products from Southeast Asian countries and increase the number of goods exported to countries in the region, to ensure benefits not only in terms of economics but also in the political and security realm.

---

<sup>1</sup> In military strategy, a choke point (or chokepoint) is a geographical feature on land such as a valley, defile or a bridge or at sea such as a strait, which an armed force is forced to pass, sometimes on a substantially narrower front and therefore greatly decreasing its combat power, to reach its objective. A choke point can allow a numerically inferior defending force to thwart a larger opponent if the attacker cannot bring superior numbers to bear.

The US's long-term strategic objectives in Southeast Asia include 1) To stabilize the regional situation and balance forces with the strategic goal of preventing the powerful country's emergence which has a regional hegemonic scheme; 2) Not to be excluded from the area by another great power or any alliance; 3) To prevent or counter invasions aimed at the US's friends and allies; 4) Do not let this region become a base for terrorist organizations; 5) To maintain regional economic power, protecting the trade and investment interests of the US in Southeast Asia; 6) To ensure freedom of navigation and protect international sea lanes passing through the East Sea; 7) To prevent national collapse and internal conflict in Southeast Asian countries, spread democracy, rule of law, human rights and religious freedom in this region.

*For China*, this country's interests in Southeast Asia are manifested in many fields, and many different aspects.

*In terms of geoeconomics*, with close geographical advantage, being a region with abundant resources and dynamically developing economies, Southeast Asia has long been one of the important economic partners of China, greatly contributing to the development of this country. Dubbed "the factory of the world in the twenty-first century", China desperately needs a favorable international environment for its exports, and Southeast Asia is seen as a large and potential market for China. The top priority of China's foreign policy is to maintain a stable peripheral environment so as to safeguard normal economic circumstances at home. China regards the establishment of long-standing and stable good relations with ASEAN as an important factor in attaining this goal [2, p. 112]. Besides, the countries in this region also create great opportunities for Chinese investors and Chinese technology to penetrate and develop. Therefore, for China, dominating the Southeast Asian market is its long-term goal.

*In terms of geopolitics*, in recent years, ASEAN is emerging as one of the most successful regional connection and cooperation organizations demonstrated by the establishment of the ASEAN Community with three pillars (politics-security, economy and culture-society), become an important geopolitical pole in the multipolar world order that is taking shape in the twenty-first century. As a neighboring country with Southeast Asia, China cannot afford to pass up the opportunity to establish its major status here. Once established dominant influence in Southeast Asia also means that China has built the basis to establish a greater influence on the international arena. Moreover, in the context that China is always concerned about the US policy of encirclement and restraint, this country desperately needs a safe "buffer zone" in the south, and if possible, turns Southeast Asia into their "backyard" as a fulcrum to reach out to the world.

*In terms of marine geostrategic*, since the financial-monetary crisis of 1997-1998, China has become more aware that, in the matters of security and economic development, they depend on huge into Southeast Asia. Since 2007, China consumes half of the world's cement, a third of iron

and steel, a quarter of copper and a fifth of aluminum [21, p. 785]. In global oil markets, China is the largest importer of crude oil in the world with 13 million barrels per day (in 2020) [11]. These goods were transported via many choke points in Southeast Asia such as: the Strait of Malacca, Sunda, Lombok and Makasar as well as other locations in the South China Sea. Moreover, the South China Sea is also the territorial water with abundant oil and gas reserves, so China wants to capture, exploit and use oil as well as other resources in this region. China wants to monopolize the South China Sea and repel the US's influence here, because China believes that, if the US increases its influence in the territorial waters, it will threaten China's multifaceted interests, not simply commercial economic benefits.

In brief, as two ambitious powers, the US and China both consider Southeast Asia as one of the key locations for them to increase their influence and multifaceted interests. The two leading powers of this world are redoubtable opponents with each other in this region. Therefore, the US needs to strengthen cooperation with ASEAN countries and consider this as a stabilizing factor and balancing forces in the region, restraining the rise of China in the US's control. Meanwhile, China wants to rely on its superiority and advantages in Southeast Asia to dominate this region, taking a key role here to prevent the US policy of restraint, repel the US's influence to makes China has a larger role in the international arena.

## **2. The strategic competition between the US and China in Southeast Asia region in the early two decades of the 21<sup>st</sup> century**

### **In the field of politics - diplomacy**

If in the 90s of the twentieth century, the US seemed to have "neglected" Southeast Asia, then at the beginning of the twenty-first century, this region would become an important "link" in the adjustment of the US global strategy. Since the second term of President George Walker Bush up to now, the US has advocated creating a channel of regular dialogue and promoting policy towards Southeast Asia. In early 2010, the Obama administration announced its re-engagement policy in East Asia. This policy's objective is to strengthen US diplomatic and security commitments in the region through strengthening bilateral alliances and supporting regional multilateralism. Through ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC) with partners, ASEAN's role in regional peace and security has been promoted. strong. The US side also actively participates in ASEAN-led forums and security mechanisms such as ARF, East Asia Summit (EAS), ASEAN Defense Ministers Meeting Plus (ADMM +), and Expanded ASEAN Maritime Forum (EAMF)... The United States has

intensified its involvement in key issues in Southeast Asia, especially the South China Sea issue, other non-traditional security issues, and the artificial balance of relations with regional powers [7, p. 212]. It can be said that, the US is gradually returning to Southeast Asia to establish its dominant position in each country in the region as well as in ASEAN, thereby grasping the dominant role in regional political and security issues.

On the Chinese side, over the past decade, along with the strong rise, China increasingly attaches great importance to and enhances the role of ASEAN, asserting its interests in relations with this regional organization. The year 2021 is an important milestone in China-ASEAN relations, marking the process of friendly dialogue and cooperation over the past 30 years between the two sides. China-ASEAN cooperation has developed rapidly and became deeper and deeper. Compared with all other powers from outside the region, China is now considered the most active and influential country in the ASEAN's policies and programs in the fields of politics, economics, security and diplomacy. On the one hand, China claims to pursue a foreign policy of autonomy, not forming military alliances that oppose each other; on the other hand, China changes its policy towards multilateral institutions towards actively participating, strongly supporting institutions such as ARF, ASEAN + 3. China has established a strategic partnership with ASEAN dedicated to peace and prosperity in the region, and engaged in comprehensive cooperation that has seen rapid expansion. Cooperation in East Asia, with the ASEAN and China, Japan, and the ROK as the main players, keeps expanding, leading to greater economic development and political and security trust in the region [3, p. 148]. China wants to take advantage of East Asian cooperation to promote the multipolar world, fight US hegemony, build its regional leadership, to reach out to the whole world.

#### **In the field of the commercial economy**

This is a very important area in the US-China strategic competition. The US economic strategy in Southeast Asia, both in the immediate and long term, aims to turn this region into a Western-style liberalization market in general and to create a market for American high-tech goods in particular. Therefore, the US continues to expand bilateral economic relations with countries in the region, at the same time, seeking ways through enhancing APEC's role to promote free trade, investment and development cooperation. in the area. In order to create an advantage in competing for economic influence in Southeast Asia, both the US and China are focusing on strengthening economic - trade relations with the region. Competition between the US and China to win the Southeast Asian market is becoming more and more fierce. In addition, the presence of the world's leading major economies in this region also increases the strategic value of ASEAN.

### **In the field of military and defense**

Since the Cold War, the US has become the nation holding the largest military role in the world in general, in Asia-Pacific in particular. However, in the first decade after the Cold War's end, when the US reduced its presence in Southeast Asia and showed little interest in ASEAN's affairs, China quickly filled the "power gaps" in Southeast Asia. Entering the twenty-first century, the "9/11 event" together with the global strategic adjustment created a new turning point in the US policy towards Southeast Asia. The US adjusted foreign policy, made the task of counterterrorism the top priority and affirmed its superiority over American interests in Southeast Asia [20, p. 170]. The US returned to Southeast Asia after three decades of "neglect" since its withdrawal from Vietnam in 1973. The return lies in America's global strategic calculations, including counter-terrorism and anti-terrorism Chinese influence is one of the key goals. China's military might, in the short term, destabilizing its regional equilibrium, could threaten the absolute supremacy of the US military power. China's People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) is developing roles and missions that will permit it to project power beyond its territorial sphere of interest into the Western Pacific and East Sea. Admiral Mike Mullen, Chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, has stated that the strategic intent behind China's development of new capabilities seemed to be *"very focused on the United States Navy and our bases that are in that part of the world"* [8]. In particular, the construction of the Yulin Naval Base near Sanya, on Hainan Island, provides China with a forward presence to exercise its sovereignty claims over the East Sea and to protect its sea lanes of communication through the Malacca and Singapore straits [13, p. 8].

The South China Sea is originally considered the "Mediterranean of Asia", is defined by the International Hydrographic Bureau as the semi-enclosed body of water stretching in a Southwest to Northeast direction, whose southern border is 3 degrees South latitude between South Sumatra and Kalimantan (Karimata Straits), and whose northern border is the Strait of Taiwan from the northern tip of Taiwan to the Fukien coast of China [9, p. 230]. For China, the South China Sea has an important position because it is located between the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean, which is a strategically important region, the port of mainland China to the outside world. The South China Sea is becoming a place where China and the US compete for influence quite fiercely, as China increasingly expresses its ambition to turn the South China Sea into its "home pond", and seems to be by treating the South China Sea as equal. Taiwan, Tibet, and Xinjiang - territories that China has always considered inseparable from the country and should be protected at all costs. China's increased military-defense potential, coupled with China's aggressive and pressuring actions in territorial disputes in the South China Sea with a number of Southeast Asian countries, is a concern with the US and the conflict between two countries in the military field is deepening. The United States has responded to China's naval

build-up by deploying thirty-one of its fifty-three fast attack submarines to the Pacific. Eighteen of these subs are home-ported in Pearl Harbor; others are based in Guam. The US has also deployed three Ohio-class nuclear submarines (“boomers”) to the Asia-Pacific Indian Ocean region. Each has been modified to carry 154 conventional Tomahawk cruise missiles. In addition, the United States has begun to station the fifth-generation Raptor aircraft in Hawaii [13, p. 36].

In the field of culture and competition “soft power”

Southeast Asia is a developing area dynamically and openly, so the reception of cultural values from outside is also very important. This is the basis for the US and China to strengthen their activities of spreading their culture, values and ideologies in the region. These activities, on the one hand, give the countries of the region a “more sympathetic” view of the major countries but more deeply, the ambition to impose value to manipulate regional dominance. Because through the cultural activities, the nation's ideology can be revealed most clearly, so “*cultural diplomacy as a governmental practice*” [1, p. 366] and plays a very important role in diplomacy. “*Cultural diplomacy is the linchpin of public diplomacy; for it is in cultural activities that a nation's idea of itself is best represented. And cultural diplomacy can enhance our national security in subtle, wide-ranging, and sustainable ways. Indeed history may record that America's cultural riches played no less a role than military action in shaping our international leadership, including the war on terror. For the values embedded in our artistic and intellectual traditions form a bulwark against the forces of darkness*” [15, p. 1].

For the US, with the ideology of world domination, America wanted to impose its own value system on other countries. Especially since the fall of the Soviet Union, the US has had the ambition to impose “American values” on the world. Although there is a culture - politics mixed from many different countries and regions, but the culture - politics of America have the power to spread quickly, bringing the “American values” to popularize all over the world. This country is famous for its fast food, pop music, hip hop, with this liberal-minded, has always focused on expanding its political - cultural influence to other countries, including the Asia-Pacific region in general and Southeast Asia in particular. But to achieve this goal in Southeast Asia, the US must deceive its heavyweight competitor China, since the “Chinese civilization” has long had a rather far-reaching influence on many countries in the region.

For China, many analysts said that culture is an intangible advantage that has created China's invisible power for centuries to the present day. Along with the tendency to focus on “soft power”, in the early years of the twenty-first century, China is also striving to show and exercise its soft power, bringing the values of “Chinese civilization” to countries, different regions of the world. The purpose of China is to use “soft force”, “soft power” to create a position of world power that is both sustainable, friendly, and “peaceful development”, bringing many



opportunities for development to other countries and posing no threat to others. Southeast Asia is also a place where China deploys its "soft power" strategy to expand its influence around. This is the only region with a large Chinese community that is distributed mainly in Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand... This community has the financial capacity, business experience and has close economic and cultural ties with China, which is an important "link" in expanding relations between Southeast Asian countries with China, Taiwan and Hong Kong [18, p. 8]. In 2008, Beijing became the host of the Olympics - an important event, a milestone for the process of increasing "soft power" of China in the world in general, in Southeast Asia in particular. It is "Olympic diplomacy" that has very successfully accomplished that goal of China. "Olympic diplomacy" has spread to the utmost "soft power" of China. Besides, people-to-people exchanges between China and Southeast Asian countries have expanded rather dramatically in recent years. They are embodied in the Action Plan of China-ASEAN Cultural Cooperation (2014-2018) and include a variety of activities. In an attempt to project its "soft power", since 2009 China has sent more than 2,000 Chinese-language teachers and 15,319 volunteers to ASEAN countries, while the PRC's China International Educational Foundation has also established 33 Confucius Institutes and 35 Confucius Classrooms, and provided 6,210 scholarships [10, p. 155].

It can be said that China's increasing use of "soft power" in Southeast Asia has presented new challenges to U.S. foreign policy. By downplaying many conflicting interests and working collaboratively with many countries and regional organizations on territorial disputes, investment and trade relations, Beijing has largely allayed Southeast Asian concerns that China poses a military or economic threat. However, China's activities have yet to bring significant results, as Professor Carlyle A. Thayer (The Australian Defense Academy) commented: "The aggressiveness and diplomatic tensions that China continues to maintain threatens to keep it diplomatically isolated and undermine the soft power it has established in recent years" [14]. That also means that the US still has an advantage in the competition for influence with China in Southeast Asia. With the ambition to become the number one power in the world, both the US and China have turned Southeast Asia into one of the places where a fierce power struggle takes place.

Thus, it can be seen that the US - China strategic competition has had a profound and multidimensional impact on the security environment in Southeast Asia in the first two decades of the 21st century. *On the positive side*, this has increased the geostrategic value and international position of Southeast Asia in world political life. ASEAN, as a regional organization of Southeast Asian nations, has become a powerful political entity in the regional and global security architecture. In addition, Southeast Asian countries have the opportunity to deploy a diversified and multilateral diplomatic strategy to realize national goals... *On the negative side*, Southeast Asian countries are facing many difficult problems due to the negative impact not only from the

implementation of policies for the great powers's benefits of the US and China, but also from the consequences of strategic competition between two countries. For China, the realization of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), the financial and cultural diplomacy, the pressures from the relentless trend of military modernization, and the power's increasingly assertive behavior pose a serious threat to the economic, political and defense security of countries in the region. For the US, the deployment of the trade war, technology, the universalization of human rights and democratic values, the promotion of the trend of forming security-military alliances that this superpower is pursuing has made Southeast Asian countries "distracted" from their livelihood goals. The US - China competition clearly exposes Southeast Asian countries to a tense and uncertain security environment. More dangerously, the increased fierce competition could lead the region to fall into the vortex of violent conflict. When forced to choose the US or China, it will be difficult for Southeast Asian countries to comply with the principle of consensus and the loss is something that ASEAN will be inevitable.

### 3. Conclusion

Since the Cold War, especially in the early two decades of the 21st century, China has significantly increased and expanded its influence across all sectors in the region. The rise of this Asian power has had a strong influence on world development, changing the global distribution of power. The rise and growing influence of China has caught the attention of the US's strategists and many other major countries. The US has repeatedly declared "America is a Pacific nation with the interests covering the entire region". Therefore, the US policy towards China has gradually shifted from the "strategic partner" under Bill Clinton to the potential competitor in the region under George Walker Bush and Barack Obama. Under President Donald Trump (2017-2021), the relationship between two powers has entered a new phase: comprehensive strategic competition, confrontation.

In Southeast Asia, the US and China are two most important powerful countries towards Southeast Asia. In the strategic competition in this region, the US and China each have their own advantages and disadvantages. Simply put, China has an economic and geographical advantage while the US has a geopolitical advantage and global leadership position. The US and China have both mutual interests and the possibility of a major conflict. In terms of maintaining peace and stability in the region, these countries have a common interest. In order to achieve its goal of easing conflicts in Southeast Asia, controlling the proliferation of weapons of mass murder, and legalizing the protection of peace and stability, the US both need the Chinese cooperation. In addition, with its dynamic economy and strengthened military power, China is using both moderate and flexible methods and the hard measures of the big country against its small

neighbors in Southeast Asia region. So, not all leaders or people of Southeast Asian countries also believe in beautiful words, statements, declarations promoting friendly cooperation, or Chinese diplomacy toward neighboring countries.

In fact, all the factors related to the power rivalry between the US and China in Southeast Asia region have never been out of the intentions of the two countries. Although China and the US did not directly mention the reasons that led them to choose the “both cooperation and competition” form, the moves that these countries have proved “nothing more than the issue of national interests”. Because the national interests of the US and China in Southeast Asia have both coincidences and contradictions, this is the cause and also the cross-cutting goal in the competition process between the two countries. The process of power competition between the US and China in Southeast Asia is manifested by both hard power and soft power, including competition in key areas from economics, military, and politics to culture. This competitive process has become increasingly fierce and has a far-reaching influence not only in this region but also around the world in the twenty-first century.

In short, the US and China are two countries which have great forces, great power, and have a lot of ambition in shaping the future of world politics concurrently. In Southeast Asia, China’s power and influence have grown dramatically, threatening American interests in this region. Therefore, the fierce competition for power between these countries in Southeast Asia is inevitable. When looking at the real state of the US - China relations, the observers can clearly see the “red thread” that runs through the foreign policy of the US and Chinese and their bilateral relations which is the national interest. Because the US and China have different social regimes, the relationship engine between these two countries is different. Although China has made many changes, has admitted multi-ownership, multi-economic sectors, recognized the market economy... but the institutional differences between the two countries are still clear. In addition, as two leading countries in the world with different advantages in the ability to dominate the world’s affairs, the US and China are in great demand in the outside regions, so they are both greedy and hope to dominate other countries and desire to create a world order in their best interests. This is also the reason why the US and China have a fierce strategic competition with each other in many regions of the world, including Southeast Asia.

## References

1. Ang I., Isar, Y. R. & Mar, P. (2015). "Cultural Diplomacy: Beyond the National Interest". *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, Vol. 21, No. 4, pp. 365-381.
2. Bert, W. (2003). *The United States, China and Southeast Asian Security: A Changing of the Guard*. Palgrave Macmillan, New York.
3. Goh, E. & Simon, S. W. (2008). *China, the United States, and Southeast Asia: Contending Perspectives on Politics, Security, and Economics*. Routledge, New York.
4. Kaplan, R. D. (2012). *The Revenge of Geography: What the Map Tells Us About Coming Conflicts and the Battle Against Fate*. Random House, New York.
5. Trần Khánh (2002). "Vị thế địa - chính trị Đông Nam Á thập niên đầu thế kỷ XXI" [Southeast Asian Geopolitical Position in the first Decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century]. *Tạp chí Cộng sản*, No. 21, Việt Nam, pp. 60-64.
6. Trần Khánh & Hắc Xuân Cảnh (2021). "Xu hướng cạnh tranh chiến lược Mỹ - Trung ở Đông Nam Á dưới thời Tổng thống Joe Biden" [The Trend of US-China Strategic Competition in Southeast Asia under President Joe Biden]. *The Proceedings of International Conference: ASEAN - Major Power Relations under the 46th President of the United States of America*, Viện Hàn lâm Khoa học xã hội Việt Nam. pp. 11-22.
7. Ngô Thị Bích Lan (2018). "Vai trò địa chính trị của khu vực Đông Nam Á đối với Hoa Kỳ những năm đầu thế kỷ XXI" [The Geopolitical Role of Southeast Asia Region for the United States in the early Twenty-first Century]. *Tạp chí Khoa học*, No. 54 (3C), Trường Đại học Cần Thơ, Việt Nam, pp. 209-215.
8. Mullen, M. (2009). *Remarks and Q & A at the Navy League Sea-Air-Space Exposition*. Gaylord National Resort and Conference Center, National Harbor, Maryland.
9. Pumphrey, C. W. (2002). *The Rise of China in Asia: Security Implications*. Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College.
10. Shambaugh, D. (2021). *Where Great Powers Meet: America and China in Southeast Asia*. Oxford University Press, New York.
11. Sonnichsen, N. (2021). "Leading Crude Oil Importers Worldwide 2020". <https://www.statista.com/statistics/240600/global-oil-importers-by-region-2011/>, Jul 14<sup>th</sup>, (accessed on November 24<sup>th</sup>, 2021).

12. Tarling, N. & Chen, X. (2017). *Maritime Security in East and Southeast Asia: Political Challenges in Asian Waters*. Palgrave Macmillan, New York.
13. Thayer, C. A. (2010). *Southeast Asia: Patterns of Security Cooperation*. Australian Strategic Policy Institute, Australia.
14. Thayer, C. A. (2011). “Quyền lực mềm Trung Quốc chống lại sức mạnh thông minh Mỹ” [Chinese Soft Power is Against American Smart Power]. <http://biendong.vntime.vn/News.aspx?Section=TinBienDong&obj=240985ba-114d-4aa2-8fbf-35ce9171adca>, (accessed on April 24<sup>th</sup>, 2021).
15. The US Department of State (2005). “Cultural Diplomacy: The Linchpin of Public Diplomacy”. *Report of the Advisory Committee on Cultural Diplomacy*, Washington D.C., United States.
16. The US White House (2006). “National Strategy for Combating Terrorism”. <http://2001-2009.state.gov/s/ct/rls/wh/71803.htm>, (accessed on April 24<sup>th</sup>, 2021).
17. The US White House (2010). *National Security Strategy*. Washington D.C., United States.
18. Trần Lê Minh Trang & Trần Khánh (2014). “Đông Nam Á trong lợi ích chiến lược của Mỹ và Trung Quốc” [Southeast Asia in the Strategic Interests of the US and China]. *Tạp chí Nghiên cứu Đông Nam Á*, No. 3, Việt Nam, pp. 3-9.
19. Valori, G. E. (2020). “The Strait of Malacca: China between Singapore and the United States”. <https://moderndiplomacy.eu/2020/11/24/the-strait-of-malacca-china-between-singapore-and-the-united-states/>, November 24<sup>th</sup> (accessed on April 24<sup>th</sup>, 2021).
20. Weatherbee, D. E. (2008). *International Relations in Southeast Asia: The Struggle for Autonomy*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., New York.
21. Weissenbacher, M. (2009). *Sources of Power: How Energy Forges Human History*, Vol. 1. Praeger Publishers, Connecticut, United States.