

# US Strategy of “A Free and Open Indo-Pacific”: A Perspective of Taiwan

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## **Abstract**

The strategic construct of the Indo-Pacific region has drawn attention from both scholars and practitioners since President Trump’s administration presented the concept of Indo-Pacific strategy in October 2017 and Trump popularized it during his first Asia trip in November 2017. In addition, the region is becoming the center of gravity of economic development. This has been driven profoundly by the assurance of security on the global commons. The US has played a significant role in the provision of this security, with Japan and Australia emerging as vital regional partners in this effort. While the US presence in the region was primarily motivated by its Cold War aim of containing communism, the post-Cold War period has demanded a fresh approach to security in the Indo-Pacific region. Transforming geopolitical and strategic considerations, however, have raised questions on the continued efficacy of the approach. With the rise of China, the US and allies, Japan, Australia, and India, are attempting to develop a regional security architecture that will continue to bring prosperity and peace under the layout of an Indo-Pacific strategy. Thus, Taiwan may further promote the Taiwan-US military

cooperation agenda and cooperation with Japan, India, and Australia to play a prominent role, seeking the window of opportunity under the framework of the Indo-Pacific strategy.

**Keywords:** China Rise, Indo-Pacific Strategy, Asia-Pacific Security, U.S.-Taiwan-China Relations, Taiwan's Role in Indo-Pacific Region

### **I. The Advent of “Indo-Pacific” Era**

In recent years, China's rise has caused structural change in Asia-Pacific regional security because China's growing power has brought some degree of challenge and threat to its neighboring countries, thereby changing the Asia-Pacific region's traditional balance of power. The response to the regional security threat by the United States and Japan to China's rise is most obvious. Therefore, the United States and Japan have begun to think about expanding the concept of Asia-Pacific regional security as a strategic concept of the Indo-Pacific region. In August 2016, Prime Minister of Japan Shinzo Abe unveiled his regional vision, called the “free and open Indo-Pacific strategy.” On November 10, 2017, US President Donald Trump made his keynote speech at the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit held in Vietnam and echoed the concept of an Indo-Pacific strategy. Trump revitalized the term “Indo-Pacific” to refer to Asia in contrast to the traditional “Asia-Pacific.” The use of “Indo-Pacific” is not merely a change in nomenclature; it highlights not only the changing regional order or dynamics but is a manifestation of the anticipated shift in strategic framework.<sup>1</sup>

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1. Dindo Manhit, “Commentary: Applying Abe's Democratic Security Diamond in the Philippines,” *Philstar*, December 15, 2017, <<http://www.philstar.com/news-feature/2017/12/16/1768660/commentary-applying-abes-democratic-security-diamond-philippines>>.

In addition, that broad strategic framework also was previewed by former Secretary of State Rex Tillerson in a speech at Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) on 18 October 2017, arguing that the Trump Administration seeks a “free and open Indo-Pacific” with clear emphasis on Japan, Australia, and India and open skepticism about China’s trustworthiness.<sup>2</sup>

## II. The Origin of “Indo-Pacific”

The old but new geographical term “Indo-Pacific” now is being used increasingly to replace “Asia-Pacific.” It was the US Pacific Command that developed the geopolitical concept of Indo-Pacific during the Cold War. After the United Kingdom withdrew its military from east of the Suez at the end of the 1960s, the Soviet Union expanded its military presence and influence throughout the Indian Ocean region. To counter the growing Soviet threat in the region, the US Pacific Command came to cover both the Pacific and Indian oceans in 1972. Since the 1970s, the US Pacific Command has regarded the two great oceans as a unified strategic theater and described it as “Indo-Asia-Pacific.” Nonetheless, Tokyo is the one that has redefined the Indo-Pacific as a geostrategic concept of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Abe’s “free and open Indo-Pacific” strategy dates back to his first stint as prime minister — having its origin in his speech titled “The Confluence of the Two Seas” delivered to the Indian parliament in August 2007, where he laid out a bold vision of the “dynamic coupling” of the Pacific and Indian Oceans and a “broader Asia” that would expand to include the United States and Australia. This “broader Asia” would be linked with the United States, Australia,

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2. Rex W. Tillerson, “Remarks on “Defining Our Relationship With India for the Next Century,” October 18, 2017, *U.S. Department of State*, <<https://www.state.gov/secretary/20172018tillerson/remarks/2017/10/274913.htm>>.

and other Pacific nations, evolving into an immense network that would allow people, goods, capital, and knowledge to flow freely in an “arc of freedom and prosperity” along the outer rim of the Eurasian continent.<sup>3</sup> In 2012, Abe advocated that Japan and India, as like-minded maritime democracies, should promote freedom and prosperity in the “broader Asia,” formalizing such a multilateral collaboration through what he called the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, aspiring to connect Asia’s four major maritime democracies to promote their shared security goals.

What does the term “Indo-Pacific” convey that the term “Asia-Pacific” does not? It conveys a wider view of the region to include the Indian subcontinent and, specifically, India. Why does it include India? Most likely, it is because incorporating a country of India’s size and significance into the traditional concept of the Asia-Pacific region would help to balance the growing economic and military power of China in it.<sup>4</sup>

### **III. Is “Indo-Pacific” Nominal or Substantive?**

During his first presidential trip to Asia in November 2017, President Trump made headlines with his use of the phrase “a free and open Indo-Pacific.” This came several weeks after China enshrined “Xi Jinping Thought” in the national constitution and the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) was confirmed at the 19<sup>th</sup> National Congress

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3. Rohan Mukherjee, “Commentary: The Indo Pacific, a security diamond, a 10-year Quad?” *Channel NewsAsia*, November 10, 2017, <<https://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/commentary/commentary-the-indo-pacific-a-security-diamond-a-10-year-quad-9391268>>.

4. Felix K. Chang, “What’s in a Name?: Strategy Behind the ‘Indo-Pacific,’” December 11, 2017, *Foreign Policy Research Institute*, <<https://www.fpri.org/2017/12/whats-name-strategy-behind-indo-pacific/>>.

of the Communist Party of China on October 24, 2017. This turn of phrase was in part a response to Beijing’s attempts to capitalize on its growing economic dominance in Asia and beyond, and it offers something of a counterpoint to Xi’s strategic ambition in Xi’s Belt and Road Initiative.<sup>5</sup> Thus, what is in the name “Indo-Pacific?” In Chinese eyes, might be a strategy for balancing Chinese power in the region.<sup>6</sup> The strategy clearly recognizes the past US administrations’ assumption that engagement would turn China into a benign international player was “false” and calls for competition.<sup>7</sup>

China’s regional ambition and influence are far greater now than they were a decade ago. Not only has China become more assertive regarding its core interests in the region, it also has developed its economic and military capabilities at a rapid clip during this period. The BRI signals China’s desire and ability to establish a commercial empire of sorts stretching across the region.<sup>8</sup> The rise of China as a

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5. Michael J. Green, “Donald Trump’s message for Asia,” October 31, 2017, *Lowy Institute*, <<https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/donald-trump-s-message-asia>>.

6. Felix K. Chang, “What’s in a Name?: Strategy Behind the ‘Indo-Pacific.’”

7. Tetsuo Kotani, “Can the ‘Indo-Pacific’ compete with China?” *The Japan Times*, January 10, 2018, <<https://www.japantimes.co.jp/opinion/2018/01/10/commentary/japan-commentary/can-indo-pacific-compete-china/#.WmA7Pa6WbIW>>.

8. Howard J. Shatz, *U.S. International Economic Strategy in a Turbulent World: Strategic Rethink* (Santa Monica: Rand Corporation, 2016), p. 93; Karl Hallding & Sylvia Zhang, “China’s economic slowdown: good news for the environment?” October 1, 2015, *Stockholm Environment Institute*, <<https://www.sei-international.org/mediamanager/documents/Publications/SEI-2015-DiscussionBrief-Hallding-Zhang-ChinasEconomicSlowdown.pdf>>; Christopher K. Johnson, “President Xi Jinping’s ‘Belt and Road’ Initiative,” March 2016, pp. 1-25, *CSIS*, <[https://csis-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/publication/160328\\_Johnson\\_President\\_XiJinping\\_Web.pdf](https://csis-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/publication/160328_Johnson_President_XiJinping_Web.pdf)>; Rohan Mukherjee, “Commentary: The Indo Pacific, a security diamond, a 10-year Quad?”; Jonathan E. Hillman, “China’s Belt and

major economic power in recent decades is due fundamentally to conscious policy decisions in Beijing aimed at fostering industrialization in order to produce a variety of goods for export to international markets. In addition to the military investments aimed at preserving a cordon up to the “first island chain,” China steadily is acquiring various air, naval, and missile capabilities that will allow it to project power up to the “second island chain” and beyond while beginning to establish a permanent naval presence in the Indian Ocean.<sup>9</sup>

On December 18, 2017, the Trump administration released its National Security Strategy (NSS). Analysis of the document has highlighted the prominence of Russia and China, identified as revisionist powers that “want to shape a world antithetical to U.S. values and interests.” Observers also have remarked on the incoherence of a strategy that claims a role for “competitive diplomacy” and “advancing American influence” while slashing the budget and the personnel of the State Department. The Indo-Pacific framework seems driven by China’s greater assertiveness throughout the region, and the NSS characterizes the region in terms reminiscent of the Cold War: A geopolitical competition between free and repressive visions of world order is taking place in the Indo-Pacific region.<sup>10</sup>

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Road Initiative: Five Years Later,” January 25, 2018, pp. 1-12, *CSIS*, <<https://www.csis.org/analysis/chinas-belt-and-road-initiative-five-years-later-0>>; Andrew Small, “The Backlash to Belt and Road,” *Foreign Affairs*, February 16, 2018, <<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2018-02-16/backlash-belt-and-road>>; Talat Shabbir, “Rising China and its South Asian Neighbors: Evolving Dynamics and the Outlook,” *Policy Perspectives*, Vol. 14, No. 2, January 2017, p. 137.

9. Ashley J. Tellis, “Protecting American Primacy in the Indo-Pacific,” *Carnegie*, April 25, 2017, <<http://carnegieendowment.org/2017/04/25/protecting-american-primacy-in-indo-pacific-pub-68754>>.

10. Alyssa Ayres, “More Prominence for India and the Indo-Pacific in the U.S.

Asian experts in Washington generally welcome the Trump administration’s shift from engagement to competition with China. Perhaps Tokyo, New Delhi, and Canberra also share Washington’s assessment of challenges posed by China in the Indo-Pacific. Nevertheless, Japan, India, and Australia have not given up on engagement with China. Japan is showing interest in cooperating with the BRI as it seeks more stabilized bilateral relations. New Delhi has agreed to rebuild bilateral ties with Beijing after the land border standoff last summer. Canberra emphasizes constructive ties with China under the comprehensive strategic partnership expecting Beijing’s greater responsibility.<sup>11</sup>

For the moment, though, the Indo-Pacific region’s only formal security alliances are the bilateral ones that link the United States with Australia, Japan, the Philippines, and South Korea in what some have described as a “hub-and-spokes” arrangement.<sup>12</sup> The United States also has long-standing security relationships with Singapore, Taiwan, and (until recently) Thailand. All other regional security ties are relatively nascent, including the one between Australia and Japan. Although both countries seem drawn to one another, their bond is not yet strong. Seen in that light, Australia’s recent decision to abandon a Japanese design for its future submarine fleet was probably a missed opportunity to reinforce that bond.<sup>13</sup>

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National Security Strategy,” December 19, 2017, *Council on Foreign Relations*, <<https://www.cfr.org/blog/more-prominence-india-and-indo-pacific-us-national-security-strategy>>.

11. Tetsuo Kotani, “Can the ‘Indo-Pacific’ compete with China?”

12. Hseik-wen Soong, 〈台灣應加入日本主導的 CPTPP 以確保經濟與國安〉, 《民主視野》, No. 21, Spring 2018, pp. 54-60.

13. Felix K. Chang, “What’s in a Name?: Strategy Behind the ‘Indo-Pacific.’”

#### IV. Strengthening the “Indo-Pacific” Strategy

Since the Trump administration began unveiling the contours of an “Indo-Pacific” strategy in October 2017 to replace the Obama administration’s “pivot/rebalance,”<sup>14</sup> US former Secretary of State Rex Tillerson followed to deliver remarks on “Defining Our Relationship with India for the Next Century” at the Center for Strategic & International Studies (CSIS). He stated:

*“The world’s center of gravity is shifting to the heart of the Indo-Pacific. The U.S. and India – with our shared goals of peace, security, freedom of navigation, and a free and open architecture – must serve as the eastern and western beacons of the Indo-Pacific.”<sup>15</sup>*

It is little known that the Trump administration has adopted a classified Indo-Pacific strategy, which is said to be in line with its National Security Strategy. Most likely, the classified document calls for a strategy of competition *vis-à-vis* China in the Indo-Pacific region.<sup>16</sup> Throughout US President Donald Trump’s tour of Asia in November 2017, he repeatedly referred to the region through which he travelled not as the “Asia-Pacific,” which was what predecessor Barack Obama mostly used, but rather as the “Indo-Pacific.” While other American presidents have spoken of the “Indo-Pacific” before, they did so infrequently. Trump’s continuous use of the term has prompted some to speculate whether it offered a clue to the future

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14. Russell Hsiao & David An, “Taiwan Is Ready to Serve as an Indo-Pacific Partner,” *The National Interest*, January 4, 2018, <<http://nationalinterest.org/feature/taiwan-ready-serve-indo-pacific-partner-23936?page=4>>.

15. Rex W. Tillerson, “Remarks on ‘Defining Our Relationship with India for the Next Century.’”

16. Tetsuo Kotani, “Can the ‘Indo-Pacific’ compete with China?”

of American strategy in the region.<sup>17</sup> His choice of words reflects the desire of the US for India, the region’s third-largest economy, to play a bigger role in its security matters. As China expands its economic and military clout, India could offer a buffer for smaller states, especially in Southeast Asia. Using “Indo-Pacific” helps reinforce the message that security in the region is underpinned by freedom of navigation at sea. That is because it allows the US to group together concerns about two key maritime trade routes that collectively link Asia to the Middle East and Europe. In addition, the phrase “Indo-Pacific” is intended to stress the US and India as “bookends” in Asia. In embracing the term, Trump is borrowing from the US foreign policy establishment, who in turn borrowed it from Australian policy wonks.<sup>18</sup>

Tanvi Madan, Director of the India Project at the Brookings Institute in Washington, said there were elements of continuity between Obama’s Asia pivot and Trump’s strategy, but also key differences, “including the term Indo-Pacific, the explicit concern expressed about China.....and a greater emphasis on democratic partners, particularly India.”<sup>19</sup>

One lesser-discussed area worth further attention is the more prominent place given to India and the Indo-Pacific region in US national security. The 2017 NSS describes its components in four

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17. Felix K. Chang, “What’s in a Name?: Strategy Behind the ‘Indo-Pacific.’”

18. Peter Martin, Justin Sink, & Iain Marlow, “Trump Discovers ‘Indo-Pacific’ on Asia Tour in Boost for India,” *Bloomberg*, November 14, 2017, <<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2017-11-13/trump-discovers-indo-pacific-on-asia-tour-in-boost-for-india>>.

19. Demetri Sevastopulo, “Trump gives glimpse of ‘Indo-Pacific’ strategy to counter China,” *Financial Times*, November 10, 2017, <<https://www.ft.com/content/e6d17fd6-c623-11e7-a1d2-6786f39ef675>>.

sections following the four “pillars” of the strategy, which lead the document: “protect the American people,” “promote American prosperity,” “preserve peace through strength,” and “advance American influence.” Following these pillars, a final section charts out “the strategy in a regional context.” This format differs from those of previous NSS documents, which tended to interweave specific regional priorities within the outlines of strategic goals.<sup>20</sup> The biggest departure from previous NSS documents, however, is the placement of the Indo-Pacific discussion at the very top of the regions considered — above Europe and the Middle East. This is the first mention of the Indo-Pacific in any NSS, although the George W. Bush 2002 document referred to the Indian Ocean sea lanes. The Indo-Pacific framework seems driven by China’s greater assertiveness throughout the region:

*“A geopolitical competition between free and repressive visions of world order is taking place in the Indo-Pacific region. The region, which stretches from the west coast of India to the western shores of the United States, represents the most populous and economically dynamic part of the world. The U.S. interest in a free and open Indo-Pacific extends back to the earliest days of our republic.”<sup>21</sup>*

This section, while covering the challenges of China’s militarization of the South China Sea, Belt and Road investments, and North Korea, presents US “allies and partners” as the centerpiece of American strategy, leading with South Korea, Japan, Australia, and New Zealand.

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20. Alyssa Ayres, “More Prominence for India and the Indo-Pacific in the U.S. National Security Strategy.”

21. The White House, “National Security Strategy of the United States of America,” December 2017, p. 46, *The White House*, <<https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NSS-Final-12-18-2017-0905.pdf>>.

The document welcomes “India’s emergence as a leading global power and stronger strategic and defense partner” and it calls for more cooperation with the rest of the “Quad” — Japan, Australia, and India. It also pledges to “expand our defense and security cooperation with India, a Major Defense Partner of the United States, and support India’s growing relationships throughout the region.”<sup>22</sup>

Thus, in terms of regional focus, the Trump administration’s adoption of the larger Indo-Pacific framework and its elevation to the top of the regional strategic priorities boosts India’s place in terms of strategy.<sup>23</sup> As the National Defense Strategy of the United States of America (NDS) has stressed:

*“Today, we are emerging from a period of strategic atrophy, aware that our competitive military advantage has been eroding. We are facing increased global disorder, characterized by decline in the long-standing rules-based international order — creating a security environment more complex and volatile than any we have experienced in recent memory. Inter-state strategic competition, not terrorism, is now the primary concern in U.S. national security.”<sup>24</sup>*

*“China is a strategic competitor using predatory economics to intimidate its neighbors while militarizing features in the*

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22. Alyssa Ayres, “More Prominence for India and the Indo-Pacific in the U.S. National Security Strategy.”

23. Alyssa Ayres, “More Prominence for India and the Indo-Pacific in the U.S. National Security Strategy.”

24. U.S. Department of Defense, “Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy of the United States of America,” January 2018, p. 1, *U.S. Department of Defense*, <<https://www.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/2018-National-Defense-Strategy-Summary.pdf>>.

*South China Sea. Russia has violated the borders of nearby nations and pursues veto power over the economic, diplomatic, and security decisions of its neighbors.”<sup>25</sup>*

**Table 1. The Population, Military Strength Ranking, GDP, and Economy of the US, Japan, India, Australia, and China**

| Country       | Population (2017) | Military Strength Ranking (2017) | GDP (2017, in USD)* | Economy/Trade (2016, in USD)              |
|---------------|-------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------|---|
| United States | 326,625,791       | 1                                | 19.3 trillion       | 18 trillion (24.3% of the global economy) |
| Japan         | 126,451,398       | 7                                | 5.4 trillion        | 4.4 trillion (6% of the world economy)    |
| India         | 1,281,935,911     | 4                                | 9.4 trillion        | 2 trillion (2.83% of the world economy)   |
| Australia     | 23,232,413        | 22                               | 1.2 trillion        | 1.4 trillion (1.81% of the world economy) |
| China         | 1,379,302,771     | 3                                | 23.1 trillion       | 11 trillion (14.8% of the world economy)  |

Sources: Central Intelligence Agency of U.S.A., “The World Factbook,” March 14, 2018, Accessed, CIA, <<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/xx.html>>; World Bank, “World Development Indicators,” March 14, 2018, Accessed, *World Bank*, <<http://databank.worldbank.org/data/reports.aspx?source=world-development-indicators>>; International Monetary Fund, “IMF Data,” March 14, 2018, Accessed, *International Monetary Fund*, <<http://www.imf.org/en/Data>>; Alex Gray, “The world’s 10 biggest economies in 2017,” March 9, 2017, *World Economic Forum*, <<https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2017/03/worlds-biggest-economies-in-2017/>>; “Jane’s Security: Military Capabilities Module,” March 14, 2018, Accessed, *IHS Markit*, <<https://ihsmarkit.com/products/janes-security-military-capabilities.html>>.

Note: \*List by Purchasing Power Parity (PPP).

## V. Taiwan’s Role in the US Indo-Pacific Strategy

Partly because of the importance of Taiwan’s geostrategic position in the Indo-Pacific region, the NSS document highlights China’s relationship with Taiwan, which scarcely has been mentioned in the past NSS. The NSS clearly has set the tone for the administration’s

<sup>25</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, “Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy of the United States of America,” p. 1.

approach *vis-à-vis* China — it will not shy away from being tough on a wide range of issues, including North Korea, maritime disputes in the region, and bilateral trade.<sup>26</sup> Then, at a public seminar in Washington DC in late November, Randall Schriver, the confirmed nominee to be assistant secretary of defense for Asian and Pacific security affairs, stated that the president’s vision for a free and open Indo-Pacific “suggests.....that there should be a key role for Taiwan.”<sup>27</sup>

From the point of view of its Indo-Pacific strategy, the United States sees China as the biggest challenge to its hegemony. The Trump administration will actively look for partners who can ally themselves with the United States in the Indo-Pacific. Japan is now the most solid ally of the United States in the Asia-Pacific region. The Trump administration will be more flexible in regard to its geopolitical strategy towards Taiwan and its sensitivity to Cross-Strait relations than the previous administration, and actively build closer ties with Taiwan to strengthen its Indo-Pacific strategy as the NSS pointed out:

*“We will maintain our strong ties with Taiwan in accordance with our ‘One China’ policy, including our commitments under the Taiwan Relations Act to provide for Taiwan’s legitimate defense needs and deter coercion.....We will maintain a forward military presence capable of deterring and, if necessary, defeating any adversary. We will strengthen our long-standing military relationships and encourage the development of a strong defense network with our allies and*

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26. Yuki Tatsumi, “The US National Security Strategy: Implications for the Indo-Pacific,” *The Diplomat*, December 21, 2017, <<https://thediplomat.com/2017/12/the-us-national-security-strategy-implications-for-the-indo-pacific/>>.

27. Russell Hsiao & David An, “Taiwan Is Ready to Serve as an Indo-Pacific Partner.”

*partners.*"<sup>28</sup>

Support for Taiwan's security role in the Trump administration's Indo-Pacific strategy is clear. For example, regarding the "One China" policy written in the "*US-China Three Communiques*" and "*Taiwan Relations Act*," Trump has used only our 'One China' policy in the 2017 NSS. Indeed, the NSS has deliberately emphasized the role of Taiwan. Nevertheless, the NSS also has brought some warning to Taiwan, in particular, a serious trade war between the U.S. and China probably would do a meaningful damage, which will test the Taiwan economy and Cross-Strait relations. In this regard, Taiwan's national security administration first should study new developments of future US-Taiwan relations, along with its derivative opportunities and costs, and the layout of the response measures that should be taken as early as possible.

On November 9, 2017, the US Congress coordinated the *2018 Defense Authorization Act*. 1,259 of these records stated that, when the two governments of the United States and Taiwan have tried to strengthen Taiwan's defensive capabilities, the US policy was to strengthen its commitment under the *Taiwan Relations Act* and to maintain the same agreement with the United States on the Six Assurances.<sup>29</sup> This act is expressed in the form of a congressional

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<sup>28</sup> The White House, "National Security Strategy of the United States of America," p. 47.

<sup>29</sup> The Six Assurances are unilateral clarifications to the *Third Communiqué* between the United States and the People's Republic of China in 1982. They were intended to reassure both Taiwan and the United States Congress that the US would continue to support Taiwan even if it had earlier cut formal diplomatic relations. U.S. Congress, "Reaffirming the Taiwan Relations Act and the Six Assurances as cornerstones of United States-Taiwan relations," March 14, 2018, Accessed, *U.S. Congress*, <<https://www.congress.gov/bill/114th-congress/house->

resolution, so Congress believes the US should strengthen and improve the long-term partnership and cooperation with Taiwan. As such, the US should be in accordance with the *National Defense Authorization Act of 2017*. In addition, the US-Taiwan military officer and senior official exchange plans to improve the relationship between the two armies should be implemented, the expansion of Taiwanese personnel trained in the US should be supported, and the appropriateness and feasibility of establishing an exchange of visits between US and Taiwanese naval vessels should be considered.<sup>30</sup>

On January 10, 2018, The US House of Representatives passed the legally *Binding Taiwan Travel Act* (HR535), making it clear that the US government should encourage US-Taiwan visits at all levels. The US Senate, on February 28, 2018, passed a bill promoting closer US ties with Taiwan, which China has warned would threaten stability in the Taiwan Strait and must be withdrawn.<sup>31</sup>

In my opinion, the *2018 Defense Authorization Act* and the *Taiwan Travel Act* are the legal effect that have the greatest and far-reaching impact on the US-China-Taiwan triangle since the establishment of US-China diplomatic relations in 1979. Trump signed the *Taiwan Travel Act* into law on March 16, 2018. How will it work? If Taiwan is to cooperate actively with the United States to implement these Acts, what are the preventive measures that Taiwan must take first *vis-à-vis* China’s vertical opposition and possible political, economic,

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concurrent-resolution/88/text>.

30. “Taiwan in the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) 2018,” December 12, 2017, *Taiwan Defense & National Security*, <<http://www.ustaiwandefense.com/taiwan-in-the-national-defense-authorization-act-ndaa-2018/>>.

31. “China says U.S. bill on Taiwan ties threatens stability,” *Reuters*, February 9, 2018, <<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-usa-taiwan/china-says-u-s-bill-on-taiwan-ties-threatens-stability-idUSKBN1FT13G>>.

or military sanctions against Taiwan? These will have a structural impact on the US-China-Taiwan triangular relationship, and in close relationship with the regional peace and stability of the Indo-Pacific region.

The “Indo-Pacific strategy” is a security strategy through the “certification” of the US National Security Strategy report. Taiwan’s strategic position will be more crucial as the US is located strategically in India and China, and in the geopolitical sense. The US has viewed Taiwan as an important stronghold for defending against China’s presence in the Indian region, following provocative moves by the Chinese military to expand its military in the South China Sea and recently dispatching warplanes to bypass the island’s coast. What could be expected is that the Trump government intends to incorporate Taiwan into the security map of the “Indo-Pacific strategy” and to strengthen Taiwan’s key defensive force in the “first island chain.” Thus, Taiwan needs to explore the opportunity and cost of such a “new situation” as soon as possible.

Faced with the rise of China and the strategic layout of the US, Taiwan is facing the biggest development opportunity and the most serious security challenge since 1979 and the National Security Council should be faced with the “comprehensive security” of Taiwan. Thus, there is need for more systematic and in-depth analysis and concrete implementation of methods and steps of a new strategy, in order to take into account and grasp the US-China competition. Finally, I will emphasize here that Taiwan must consider joining the CPTPP as a conjugate strategy of economy and security, rather than a pure economic or trade policy. In sum, Taiwan must formulate a set of core values, discourse, and implementation steps of the “Indo-Pacific strategy” and “Cross-Strait relations” as soon as possible in the era of Indo-Pacific.

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