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Special Issue

**Between Regional Integration and Great Powers Competition:
The State of Globalization in the Indo-Pacific**

Editors: *Éric Boulanger* and *Éric Mottet*

Call for papers

Orientation proposal

Asia always fascinates! After the end of the Cold War, many predicted a period of instability for Asia in the absence of strong regional institutions if the United States withdrew from the region. Without this hegemonic stabilizer, Asia could well miss its rendezvous with globalization. These fears turned out to be wrong, but they have never been forgotten despite the fact that Asia has become the backbone of the global system of trade and production and the center of a growing world economy. Moreover, the process of economic integration has never run out of steam, notwithstanding the different points of view on the weight and constraints to be given to these regional institutions. China has inserted itself into this new regionalism and has become the main economic partner of Asian economies. Although ASEAN remains poorly institutionalized, the fact remains that this organization has extended its cooperation to a vast range of economic, political and even military fields. With its newfound power, China has now a decisive influence on the public policies of Asian countries, particularly with regard to trade, investment and competitiveness. These policies are perhaps today shaped mostly by the imperatives of close integration into the China's economy rather than by the access to the American market. The production networks of Japanese, South Korean and Chinese firms have continually expanded and deepened to create highly competitive value chains whose robustness has never been questioned until the COVID-19 crisis.

China is no longer strictly a base for assembling products for export; it is also a large and prosperous consumer market. On the other hand, uncertainty is on the rise. This is linked both to supply difficulties within value chains and to a tightening of political and economic norms and

rules under the aegis of Xi Jinping. The “rebirth” of China and the achievement of its objectives, including that of becoming the first advanced economic power, leave little doubt, but this rebirth will now take place on its own terms and conditions. Governments and companies that oppose it can no longer hope for favourable conditions, leading them to be very cautious, even if it means rethinking their business model for China, or even transferring certain strategic activities to reduce their vulnerability. Added to this are the actions of the United States government to prevent Chinese domination in certain economic sectors with a very high technological content. The US containment of China is done also at the military level to avoid a domination of the Indo-Pacific by the Chinese navy. In reaction to the New Silk Roads, Washington has little to offer, and the U.S. Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF) remains underdeveloped, hovering between engagement and containment without much overall coherence. This is likely due to the high degree of Sino-American economic interdependence, but also to the fact that access to the vast Chinese market remains the objective of a large number of Western and Asian companies. Since the creation of the APEC forum in 1989, Asian governments have always sought to institutionalize the rise of China within several organizations and agreements. Is it a failure if we look at China's lack of interest in basing its new power on cooperation and multilateralism, clearly preferring an attitude of confrontation or intransigence? What is the future of the Asian economy in a context that brings us back to the post-Cold War era where geopolitical tensions announced a difficult future, despite the multiplication of economic interactions?

Themes

Papers may address the following themes in international political economy and geopolitics.

1. Trade agreements

Today Asia is a region crossed by many trade agreements, which have often exceeded APEC objectives of integration and trade facilitation dating from the 1990s. More than 200 of these agreements are in force including the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) and the various agreements that ASEAN has concluded in the areas of goods, services, investment and capital thus creating a large and complex bowl of noodles. As the PERG indicates, the low degree of institutionalization of several of these agreements indicates that the Asian model remains recalcitrant to attempts by the United States and to some extent Japan to impose stronger constraints on states, mainly rules subject to legalistic and universal imperatives. The aim is to take stock of these agreements, to assess their effectiveness and their weight in the functioning of the regional and global economy. Countries in Asia-Pacific have been sturdy promoters of open regionalism and globalization, is it still the case today? What about the continuous attempts to “multilateralize” Chinese power within these agreements? What remains of the Obama presidency's attempt to create universal trade rules with the first iteration of the Trans-Pacific Partnership?

2. The New Silk Roads (Belt and Road Initiative)

In Asia-Pacific, the scale of the loans granted by China and the intensity of its economic and diplomatic activism through the New Silk Roads are shaking up regional orders. India, Japan, the European Union (EU) and the United States are worrisome. In order not to leave the field open to China, the United States, Japan and the other G7 countries wish to play the same game as Beijing by freeing up more than 150 billion dollars to build infrastructure in the Indo-Pacific. President Joe Biden and his G7 counterparts announced the Build Back Better World (B3W) initiative in June 2021 at the G7 Summit in the United Kingdom. This initiative aims to finance the construction of infrastructure in developing countries that have been particularly affected by the

COVID-19 pandemic. B3W follows on from other initiatives such as the EU's Global Gateway of 2021 endowed with 300 billion euros (European Commission, 2021), the Partnership for Quality Infrastructure launched by Tokyo in 2015 in partnership with the Asian Development Bank (ADB) where Japan is the largest investor, and endowed with 110 billion dollars, or, finally, the Blue Dot Network, a certification body launched in 2019 by Australia, Japan and the United States with the aim of promoting and mobilizing financing in so-called quality infrastructures, as opposed implicitly to Chinese projects, built quickly and often portrayed as of lesser quality by Western or Japanese competitors. Will these loans, at rates often lower than Chinese ones, and aid be sufficient to counter the growing influence of China in Asia-Pacific? Westerners are betting on more transparent financing offers (respecting Paris Club criteria), but it could prove difficult to compete with Chinese financial supply, plentiful (until a recent credit crunch), easily available, including for indebted states or states that do not meet IMF criteria, without political conditionality and, above all, less critical of projects with questionable profitability.

3. Value chains

Value chains are central to analyze the global economy. The Asian economies fit into these chains according to imperatives of competitiveness or to acquire new production and export capacities, as shown by the case of Vietnam, which has become a major exporter of electronic products and components due to foreign direct investment from large Asian global firms. This theme can be approached from three angles: Asian governments' attempts to solidify their position within the production and supply chains since COVID-19, particularly in the health care, pharmaceutical and related sectors. Another way is to assess the changing weight of China, Southeast Asian countries and India in these value chains to see if they have become a way to circumvent the obstacles induced by the Sino-American trade war. Finally, it is possible to approach value chains from a trans-Pacific perspective, in particular by examining the desire to repatriate certain "links" of these chains to North America.

4. Investment and competitiveness policies

Several Asian countries are implementing investment and competitiveness policies focusing on foreign investment to face several challenges such as demographic decline (Japan, South Korea), to ensure energy and natural resource supplies (China, Japan, South Korea) or to strengthen their comparative advantages or competitiveness within value chains. How can these policies be assessed and what are their impacts on the processes of integration in Asia-Pacific?

5. Geopolitical tensions

Despite a very high degree of economic integration, Asia-Pacific has never freed itself from geopolitical tensions, which took on a new dimension with the war in Ukraine. Tensions that could be described as traditional given their long history such as territorial disputes in the seas adjacent to China, the nuclearization of North Korea or the American containment policy of China are decked out with new variables such as energy supplies, economic sanctions against Russia or Sino-Russian strategic rapprochement.

6. Canada's Indo-Pacific Strategy

The Trudeau government presented its Indo-Pacific Strategy for Canada in the fall of 2022, thus wanting to mark a new stage in the country's integration into this great region. Bilateral trade between Canada and countries of the Indo-Pacific has reach more than is made \$226 billion. This strategy has six objectives: to promote peace, resilience and security; increasing trade and investment and building the resilience of supply chains; investing in people and connecting them; building a sustainable and green future and, finally, broadening and deepening regional

partnerships. How can this strategy strengthen Canada's position in the Indo-Pacific? Is the global perspective of the strategy promoting the interdependence of goals the best way for Canada to make significant gains both commercially and diplomatically? How can this strategy, which claims to be “based on a realistic and lucid assessment of today’s China”, put Sino-Canadian relations back on solid footing?

Editorial Board

Christian Deblock, Université du Québec à Montréal

Éric Mottet, Université catholique de Lille

Éric Boulanger, Université du Québec à Montréal

Important dates

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Send questions, propositions and manuscripts to:

boulanger.eric@uqam.ca & eric.mottet@univ-catholille.fr

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