



STRATEGIC COMPETITION BETWEEN JAPAN, INDIA AND CHINA IN SOUTHEAST ASIA IN THE FIRST TWO DECADES OF THE 21ST CENTURY AND ITS IMPACTS ON JAPAN - VIETNAM RELATION

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Abstract. From the beginning of the 21st century to the present, Southeast Asia has become a hotbed of strategic rivalry among major countries, such as Japan, India and China - Asia's three largest, most influential and important countries. The strategic rivalry of these three big countries has greatly influenced relations among countries in the region as well as relations between Japan, India and China with each country in Southeast Asia, including Japan - Vietnam relations. Based on the clarification of a number of influencing factors, the article focuses on analyzing and explaining the strategic rivalry between Japan, India and China in the region and its influences on Japan - Vietnam relations from the beginning of the 21st century to the present as well as the prospects for the relations in the coming time.

Keywords: China, India, Japan, Japan - Vietnam relations.

1. Factor of the strategic rivalry among Japan, India and China in Southeast Asia from the beginning of the 21st century to the present

* *Southeast Asia has an important geo-strategic and security position to Japan, India and China.* Located in Southeast Asia, Southeast Asia has an area of about 4.7 million km², including 11 countries with sovereignty, different political regimes and socio-economic development levels. As an intersection, bridge and shortest route from Asia to Oceania, from the Indian Ocean to the Pacific, Southeast Asia is also the region with the busiest maritime activities in the world thanks to the convenient maritime routes from the Atlantic, the Indian Ocean to the Pacific such as Lombok, Sonda... especially the passage through the East Sea. This is an essential route to transport natural resources, energy and goods from Africa, the Middle East, South Asia and Southeast Asia to countries in Northeast Asia, North America, Russia and vice versa; among

five of ten strategic maritime routes and half of the freight in the world go through or are related to the East Sea. About 70% of imported oil volume and about 45% of Japan's exported goods, about 60% of imported and exported goods and 70% of imported oil from China [19] are shipped via the East Sea annually. In addition, Southeast Asia also owns 4/16 strategic straits of the world, especially Malacca - the second busiest strait in the world, with a length of more than 800 km, connecting the Pacific Ocean with the Indian Ocean as "the pharynx" of the world. Every year, 42% of Japan's exported goods and 22% of China's imported goods [4] and about 50% of India's transshipped goods pass through the strait. In case of a crisis in this sea area, resulting in all types of ships have to go to a new route or passing by South Australia, the freight costs will be increased many times as much as the former costs. They will no longer be competitive in the market, even if the maritime route passing through the East Sea or through the Strait of Malacca is blocked, most of the countries in the region, including Japan, India and China will be affected and faced with the crisis, leading to the global crisis. Therefore, Southeast Asia plays a special role for Japan, India and China in terms of geography - strategy, security, maritime and economic development. This is a significant factor influencing the strategic competition among Japan, India and China in Southeast Asia in the early 21st century until now.

* *Southeast Asia is a large and potential market for Japan, India and China.* Southeast Asia is a potential region for Japan, India and China for its "development objective". The fertile soil and tropical-equatorial climate are favourable of favorable for developing agriculture-forestry, abundant hydroelectricity, rich natural resources, especially plentiful oil and gas reserves which are particularly interested in Japan, India and China. It is obvious that energy source is supplied for these countries. It also facilitates these three countries to investigate and exploit energy with other countries to maintain their presence in the region. 10/11 countries are surrounded by sea with important seaports, so the marine economy and maritime transport are developed. With the above potential, Southeast Asia has become a reserve source and a supplier of important raw materials and fuels to Japan, India and China. In terms of general strength, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has a population of about 655.9 million people, ranking the 3rd in the world (after China and India), mostly in working age and also is the 3rd largest market in the world after the above two countries. In 2019, ASEAN's total GDP reached 3,166 billion USD, GDP per capita reached 4,819 USD, total trade turnover reached 2,815.2 billion USD, making it the 5th largest economy globally. Its economic development pace is fast, stable and dynamic; for example the average economic growth rate was from 4.9% to 5.4%/year [1] from 2016 to 2019. This is also a significant factor to strengthen the cooperation among Japan, India and China with other countries and the strategic competition in the region.

* *ASEAN's central role in regional and inter-regional cooperation mechanisms.* For more than 50 years of establishment and development, ASEAN always seeks to boost the cooperation and connection with the external partners under the guideline "Maintaining an ASEAN-centered

regional architecture that is open, transparent, and inclusive as a primary driving force in the cooperation with external partners” and “Asserting ASEAN’s central role in political, economic, cultural and social relations while maintaining the initiative, outward, inclusion and non-discrimination” [12] in the process of regional and inter-regional cooperation and integration in Asia Pacific such as ASEAN’s cooperation with each partner (ASEAN+1), ASEAN’s cooperation with three partners in the Northeast Asian region, including China, Japan and Korea (ASEAN+3), ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), East Asia Summit (EAS), ASEAN Defense Ministerial Meeting (ADMM+), signing Free Trade Agreements (FTAs)... Moreover, in relations with major countries, ASEAN always maintains a balance of influence through the “Dialogue Regulation”, not in favor of any party to limit the imposition of major countries in regional affairs, making a significant impact on the strategic competition between Japan, India and China and ASEAN.

** The adjustment and strategic competition of major countries such as the U.S., Russia for the strategic competition with Japan, India and China.* For the US, after becoming a President (January 2009), B.Obama declared a policy known as “pivot” or “rebalance” to the Asia Pacific region, focusing on Southeast Asia. In addition, after coming to power (January 2017), the administration of President D.Trump continued to maintain the policy of “pivot”, while expanding into the Indian Ocean region with a vision of “Free and Open Indo-Pacific” (FOIP). For Russia, although there is no strong adjustment like other major countries due to many factors, from the time President V.Putin was in power (2000), especially since 2012, Russia has made a policy adjustment to compete strategically with countries in Southeast Asia, most notably the “Turn to the East” policy which has a certain priority for Southeast Asia. Pursuant to Ordinance No. 640 (November 30, 2016), it was emphasized: “Russia wishes to strengthen a comprehensive, long-term dialogue partnership with ASEAN and elevate ASEAN - Russia relation to a Strategic Partnership” [6, p. 25 - 26]. This is also an important factor to promote Japan, India and China to increase policy adjustment and strategic competition with other countries in Southeast Asia.

Thus, due to the importance of Southeast Asia, the role of ASEAN for Japan, India and China has constantly increased, especially in the context that the shift of “power” on Europe - Atlantic to the Asia Pacific. However, Southeast Asia has also become a fierce strategic competition area among Japan, India and China in order to have a more permanent and firmer presence, intervene more deeply and create comparable advantages promoting the role and influence, at the same time restraining and deterring from each other to affirm the position.

2. Strategic rivalry among Japan, India and China in Southeast Asia from the beginning of the 21st century to the present

Japan, India and China have strategic intentions and objectives towards Southeast Asia in order to restrain each other and, more importantly, reinforce and further strengthen their role in Southeast Asia. From the beginning of the 21st century up to now, China's "Southbound" policy as "neighboring diplomacy", combining both "hard power" and "soft power" to Southeast Asia, India's "Act East" policy, and Japan's "Pivot to Asia" policy has been promoted, especially to Southeast Asia.

2.1. For Japan

To bring its political position in line with its economic potential and realize the policy of "Pivot to Asia", Japan has gradually adjusted its foreign policy. In particular, Japan has considered Southeast Asia as the "power base" of the major country strategy [11, p. 225]. From the beginning of the 21st century up to now, Japan has made its foreign policy adjustments and steps to compete strategically with China and India in Southeast Asia. Besides issuing foreign policies related to Southeast Asia such as: Koizumi's Theory (2001 - 2006), New Fukuda Doctrine (2008), Hatoyama Foreign Policy (2009), Naoto Kan Foreign Policy (2010), Noda Foreign policy (2011 - 2012), especially Prime Minister Abe Shinzo's Foreign Policy (2013 - 2020), Japan has also made new adjustments by the situation. In the past, Japan's policy was mainly implemented by "economic diplomacy", in which priority was given to "ODA diplomacy" with the provision of ODA aids to support Southeast Asian countries for the socio-economic development, since the beginning of the 21st century, Japan has adjusted and expanded in other fields, especially national defence - security. The combination of "hard power" with "soft power", between "economic diplomacy" with "defense diplomacy" and "cultural diplomacy" has not only maintained "the space of traditional influence", but also enhanced Japan's strategic interests in economy, politics and security in the region.

Specifically, in terms of politics - diplomacy, Japan has defined its relationship with ASEAN as "the core of East Asian regional cooperation"; always participates fully and responsibly in cooperation mechanisms initiated and led by ASEAN; supports ASEAN's central role in successfully building ASEAN Community (AC); proposes initiatives to strengthen cooperation in the field of security, especially maritime security; increases the provision of ODA aid packages for ASEAN to achieve its objectives... In the bilateral relationship, Japan advocates the policy of "shuttle diplomacy"; the relationship between Japan and each country has been constantly improved such as: the strategic partner with Cambodia (2013), "reliable and long-term stable partner" (2002) and then "broad strategic partner for peace and prosperity in Asia"

with Vietnam (2014), strategic partner with Malaysia (2015)... Especially, after coming to power, Prime Minister Abe Shinzo chose Vietnam as the first foreign destination for an official visit (January 2013 and November 2017). In 2013, Prime Minister Abe Shinzo completed his official visits to all ASEAN countries. In the most recent time, Prime Minister Suga Yoshihide also chose Vietnam as the first foreign destination for an official visit, then Indonesia (October 2020) after being in power. This is the biggest difference between Japan and China as well as India, demonstrating Japan's special interest in Southeast Asia.

Japan has been ASEAN's leading trade, investment and aid partner concerning the economic issues. The Japan - ASEAN Joint Statement (2003) emphasized "strengthening comprehensive economic partnerships and monetary and financial cooperation" as a critical priority in the general strategy. In particular, Japan's ODA White Paper always identifies Southeast Asia as the top priority in Japan's ODA policy. The expense of 9.2 billion USD, accounting for 74.2% of ODA for ASEAN countries in the total of 12.4 billion USD ODA for Asia [15] as the most apparent evidence. Japanese investors have also gradually shifted capital flows from other markets to the region. Trade turnover between Japan and ASEAN has constantly been increasing.

In terms of national security and defence, Japan always proves to be an essential partner of ASEAN, and considers ASEAN as an important security partner. In the Japan - ASEAN Joint Declaration (2013), two Parties committed that maintaining regional peace and stability in the region is prioritised, specifically addressing issues related to maritime security [13]. In fact, Japan agreed to equip the Philippines with ten coastal patrol boats (in July 2013) and Vietnam with 6 similar ships valued at 4.5 million USD (in 2014). In April 2016, two Japan's warships and one submarine visited Vietnam's Cam Ranh port after stopping by Subic Bay in the Philippines. For Indonesia and Malaysia, Japan has also signed specific agreements. Thus, to compete strategically with China and India in Southeast Asia, Japan has implemented comprehensively the strategic competition with China and India in Southeast Asia, from politics, diplomacy, economy, security, and defense and a new point, Japan has shifted from a socio-economic approach to a political-security approach, increasing engagement in the main political-economic field, and integrating with national defense and security issues. This is a significant policy adjustment of Japan towards Southeast Asia to compete strategically with China and India as well as other major countries; this brought successes and specific advantages to Japan in the strategic competition in Southeast Asia.

In summary, from the beginning of the 21st century up to now, Japan, India and China have made policy adjustments to Southeast Asia in order to increase strategic competition. Especially it is expected that all three countries highly appreciate the position and role of Vietnam, because Vietnam is not only an important strategic partner in politics, foreign policy,

economy and security for Japan, India and China, but also a strategic factor and “chain” determining the success or failure of the three countries in the strategic competition in Southeast Asia. This has greatly impacted the relations between Japan, India and China and Vietnam, especially Japan - Vietnam significant.

2.2. *For India*

Southeast Asia is not only strategic to become a great power, but also to create a firm position in the “Look East” policy to reach out to the world and compete strongly for great power position with China, Japan and other major countries. In order to realize the “Look East” policy objective, especially to increase strategic competition with China and Japan in Southeast Asia, from the beginning of the 21st century, India has made policy adjustments and taken concrete actions. In 2005, in Malaysia, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh emphasized that the “Look East” policy was not merely a foreign economic policy but also a strategic direction... This is an effort towards neighboring countries sharing a common civilization in East and Southeast Asia. India’s destiny is attached to these countries, especially Southeast Asia” [16].

After coming to power in 2014, Prime Minister Modi declared an “upgrade” to “Act East”, “putting ASEAN at the core of the Act East Policy and at the center of India’s Asian Century dream” [14], with the expansion of relations, cooperation from economy and diplomacy to national security and defence, at both bilateral and multilateral levels. Therefore, in order to increase its presence, influence and role in Southeast Asia, India has constantly expanded its relations and cooperation with ASEAN and each Southeast Asian country. As for ASEAN, India always supports ASEAN’s centered regional and inter-regional cooperation mechanism and processes, supports the process of building AC, and closely participates in the cooperation mechanisms initiated by ASEAN, especially in terms of national security and defence such as ASEAN+1, EAS, ARF, ADMM+, leading India - ASEAN relation to a strategic partner (2012), assisting ASEAN in connecting ASEAN and India, strengthening Mekong - Ganga Cooperation (MGC). Since 2002, two Parties have regularly held India - ASEAN Business Summit and signed an FTA with ASEAN (2009). Up to now, ASEAN and India are always partners in the big trade and investment.

Although there is no direct dispute in the East Sea, the East Sea has an exceptional position with India; thanks to its geo-economic interests, the East Sea is also an “integral part of the security belt of India”, playing a decisive role in “foreign trade, energy and national interests” [2, p. 239]. Therefore, India has declared the importance of maintaining maritime freedom and security, peacefully settling disputes based on international law, and supporting ASEAN and China to negotiate and sign a Code of Conduct in the East Sea (COC). The Indian Navy is increasingly actively involved in dealing with non-traditional security issues in Southeast Asia, such as conducting some joint military drills with some countries such as

Singapore, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore... in the East Sea and the Strait of Malacca to improve its capacity to respond to disasters, piracy and terrorism.

Among five India's 5 most important partners in the Asia Pacific region, three partners are in the Southeast Asian region such as Vietnam, Indonesia and ASEAN. Relations between India and other countries have also been improved with strategic partner such as Malaysia (2010), and Singapore (2015)... strengthening the defence and security support and cooperation with Vietnam, Thailand, and Myanmar... signing FTAs with Singapore, Malaysia... In particular, India is very interested in the investigation and exploitation of oil and gas in the East Sea with countries such as Vietnam, Malaysia, and the Philippines to bring economic benefits and consider as an opportunity for India to maintain and strengthen its regular strategic economic presence in Southeast Asia.

As can be seen that the policy of "Act East" has contributed to increasing the strategic value of India in the Asian order-shaping, enhancing India's position in regional security mechanisms as well as in the strategy of major countries and ASEAN, in which one of the essential objectives is to deal with the influence of China and Japan in Asia, especially Southeast Asia. In reality, although there are not many advantages compared to China or Japan, India has increasingly affirmed its role and position in the region thanks to the "wise" policy, promoting positive effects for India in terms of ensuring benefits and strengthening national potential, increasing economic integration with Southeast Asia, creating a new position and power, contributing to affirming India's position in Southeast Asia and helping India have more conditions to limit the "rise" of China and the increase of Japan's influence in the region.

2.3. *For China*

Southeast Asia is a region of traditional Chinese influence in history and has long-term aspirations: "We must take over Southeast Asia anyway... In a rich region such as Southeast Asia, there are many minerals... worth spending money to capture it. After we gain Southeast Asia, we can strengthen our power in this region..." [18, p. 15, 20]. With the ambition of becoming a socialist power, becoming "one pole" in a multi-polar, multi-center world, from the beginning of the 21st century, China always promotes the implementation of the policy of "Southbound" and considered the policy of "Neighboring diplomacy" as an important breakthrough in foreign policy and strategic competition in Southeast Asia. In particular, since Xi Jinping was in power (2012), with the "China Dream", China carried out a comprehensive "charm offensive" campaign for Southeast Asia.

Through the improvement of political and diplomatic relations, the expansion of trade and investment activities with its abundant foreign currency reserves, China has increased its aid and loan, promising to invest in significant projects, and cooperation initiatives such as the "Belt, Road Initiative" (BRI), the establishment of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank

(AIIB), the Mekong - Lan Thuong Cooperation (MLC)... China has made ASEAN and many Southeast Asian countries closer to their own economy. China is consistently ASEAN's largest trading partner and important investor. China, on the one hand, supports and fully participates in regional cooperation mechanisms initiated and led by ASEAN, such as ASEAN+, ARF, ADMM+, and EAS... on the other hand, implements a policy of separation so that ASEAN countries fail to connect with one another closely.

Taking advantage of the context that some ASEAN countries are dealing with internal problems that need to be addressed, such as political stability, conflict prevention (Cambodia, Myanmar, Thailand), and terrorism prevention (the Philippines, Thailand), China has stepped up the strategy of "divide and conquer" [17], using investments and aids to entice as well as create differentiation in ASEAN, especially in the East Sea issues. China is increasingly growing assistance and influence in the region, increasing the countries' dependence on China. This is the opportunity and method that this country uses to request other countries to serve political, diplomatic, and economic interests and support the presence and role of China in the region. In response to China's actions, many ASEAN countries have prioritized expanding their cooperation with China, thereby the China - ASEAN relations facilitate China to seek ways to consolidate its sovereignty claim in the East Sea, delaying and prolonging the negotiation and signing of the COC. China declared that force would not be used to settle disputes. Still, the pressures are put on the rapid modernization of the naval staff, reclamation, renovation and expansion of artificial islands on other sovereignty claimants.

With the "equivocal" policy, China has reassured the countries in the region and, at the same time, constantly strengthened its claim. Thus, from the beginning of the 21st century up to now, in order to compete strategically with India, Japan and other major countries in Southeast Asia, China has strengthened its comprehensive relations with ASEAN and other countries in all fields, from politics, security, economy to culture, society in the combination of "hard power" and "soft power" and constantly considered Southeast Asia as the central direction in the implementation of the Grand Strategy, as the "foundation" for China to become a world power in the future.

3. Some influences of the strategic rivalry among Japan, India and China in Southeast Asia on Japan - Vietnam relations from the beginning of the 21st century to the present

3.1. Positive and directional influences

It can be seen that "Vietnam can become a 'key factor' of economic cooperation and integration in the region and the world, acting as a 'gateway' to the sea for the Southwest of China and Laos, Cambodia, Northern Thailand, and 'bridgehead' on land, sea and air between

Northeast Asia and Southeast Asia, between the Pacific Ocean and the Indian Ocean, between Europe - America and other countries in the region" [10, p. 67], from the beginning of the 21st century until now, in the strategic competition in the Southeast Asian region among Japan, India and China, these countries especially Japan have paid particular attention to Vietnam. Two countries "have kept the same important position", "Japan will not hesitate to cooperate with Vietnam while Vietnam continues to strive to build the country in the spirit of peace, stability and development in the Asia Pacific region", and "Japan's priorities are maintaining and strengthening cooperation with Vietnam in all fields as always" [9, p. 135].

In order to enhance the presence as well as the role and influence in the Southeast Asian region, Japan, India, and China have increased relations with ASEAN in general and Southeast Asian countries in particular, thus, increasing the sustainable development of Japan - Vietnam relations, and gaining historically meaningful achievements, contributing significantly to Japan's success in strategic competition in the Southeast Asian region. In terms of politics and diplomacy, a breakthrough development has been made, and the relationship between the two countries was improved to a "Profound strategic partnership for peace and prosperity in Asia" - a "model" in the current international relations.

Japan is currently the leading economic partner of Vietnam, ranking 2 out of 135 countries and territories that have good investment projects in Vietnam with 4,402 projects, accounting for 14.23% of total projects and 59,364.2 million USD of registered investment capital, accounting for 16.34% of total registered investment capital in Vietnam [7]. "In Japan's ODA cooperation to support developing countries in the world, Vietnam is Japan's most important partner in terms of ODA with the largest scale of cooperation" [3], accounting for about 30 % of the total value of ODA committed by international partners to Vietnam. The cooperation on national security and defence has developed; two countries signed "Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on Bilateral Defense Cooperation" (in October 2011); "MOU on the Cooperation between the Vietnam Coast Guard and the Japan Coast Guard" (in September 2015); "Joint vision statement on defence cooperation towards the next decade" (in April 2018), providing patrol boats and non-refundable aid for Vietnam.

In addition, the two countries have actively coordinated, consulted with and supported mutual roles at important international organizations, forums and multilateral conferences. Regarding issues related to Vietnam, Japan has consulted and supported Vietnam's viewpoints on issues such as the peaceful settlement of disputes in the East Sea, compliance with international law, and assistance of Vietnam in joining major international organizations and forums, a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council in terms of 2008 - 2009 and 2020 - 2021, recognition of entire market economy of Vietnam... Southeast Asian region to Japan in Asia is as important as Vietnam to Japan in ASEAN. Vietnam is compared to

a “solidarity nucleus” between Japan and Southeast Asian countries, so it is essential to Japan in the strategic competition in the Southeast Asian region.

3.2. *Negative and anti-directional influences*

Apart from the positive and directional influences, Japan - Vietnam relations have also suffered from the negative and anti-directional consequences from this strategic rivalry. China and India always have specific influences on Japan - Vietnam relations, especially China. If the fierce power competition between Japan, India and China occurs in South Asia, Vietnam will be the “first place” to experience that competition. Therefore, China always finds ways to “control” and limit Japan’s presence in Southeast Asia and Vietnam as well as gets involved in the relations between Japan and Vietnam. Moreover, the strategic competition among Japan, India and China in Southeast Asia after all, also serves “security objective” and “influence objective” of these countries in Southeast Asia and more broadly in the Asia Pacific region and the world because it is evident that any country always seeks for the ambition of hegemony when it becomes powerful [8, p. 291]. Japan, China, and India have made efforts to realize this strategic objective since the Cold War.

Furthermore, due to the different international positions of Japan and Vietnam, Vietnam’s role in Japan’s overall foreign policy remains low. Concerning the bilateral diplomatic relations, Japan - Vietnam relationship is not a typical example affecting the situation and greatly impacting Japan’s strategic competition in the region. Japan focuses on implementing a pragmatic foreign policy to strengthen relations with major countries and power centers, including China and India. Because China is Japan’s largest economic partner and neighbor, the relationship between China and Japan can have a big impact on East Asia, particularly and the Asia Pacific generally. Meanwhile, India is both Japan’s major economic, political and defence partner, and belongs to the “Diamond Quartet” (including the US, Japan, India and Australia) in terms of security in the Asia Pacific region; the two countries have many similarities in regional and international issues, especially dealing with China’s “rising” ambition. Most importantly, both China and India play major roles, Japan - China or Japan - India relations are all the most significant relations in Asia, dominating many areas and many international issues in the region. Therefore, Japan would look for the behavior, reaction, or even “consultancy” of these two countries to strengthen the relationship or cooperate with Vietnam. With its economic and defence advantages and the loose defence and security policies, Japan can strengthen defence and security cooperation with some countries in the region, especially with Vietnam, to compete strategically with China and India in Southeast Asia. However, it can be determined that Japan’s “security objective” in strategic competition in Southeast Asia is to seek a common partner in dealing with the negative impacts of China’s “rise” and India’s involvement and influence. Therefore, despite enhancing defence and

security cooperation with several ASEAN countries, especially with Vietnam, besides improvement of defence potential to ensure maritime security and protect Vietnam's sovereignty and several countries, Japan's main objectives are to establish a remote safe zone, the protect strategic marfrom servingute to serve "security objective" and "development objective", especially "influence objective" in the strategic competition with China and India in Southeast Asia. Therefore, Vietnam needs to be very vigilant in its policies.

3.3. The prospects for Japan - Vietnam relations in the context of the strategic rivalry among Japan, India and China in Southeast Asia in the coming time.

As analyzed above, Japan, India and China will increase strategic competition in Southeast Asia. Although there are different objectives, measures and methods of implementing the strategies, the common point is that countries expect to increase their influence and role in, this region facilitating the Japan-Vietnam relationship to be strengthened and developed. In the Joint Statement (2015), "it's affirmed that Vietnam and Japan have established an important partnership with many similar fundamental interests, the development of this country will create favorable conditions for the development of the other one. Vietnam affirms that Japan continues to be the leading and long-term important partner, Japan confirms to highly appreciate the position of Vietnam in Japan's foreign policy in the Asia Pacific region" [20].

With such political commitments and the increase in Japan's strategic competition in Southeast Asia, Japan - Vietnam relationship will be strengthened and developed more comprehensively and deeply. This is an important basis for Japan to increase its influence and compete strategically with China and India in Southeast Asia. In addition, internal and external factors also support Japan for its presence and role and influence in Southeast Asia and Japan - Vietnam relations. Citizens highly trust the Government of Japan for the Government's Southeast policy. In Southeast Asia, most citizens and ASEAN countries support the presence and improvement of relations with Japan, especially Vietnam. Up to 60% of leaders from Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Myanmar and Vietnam consider Japan as the most critical country in Asia. In addition, the proportion of people supporting Japan's role in the region is 96% [5]. In fact, Japan's presence and role in Southeast Asia and Japan- Vietnam relations develop continuously without any "interruption", bringing many benefits to the Japanese people, ASEAN countries and Vietnam.

Conclusion

With the importance of Southeast Asia and the increasingly growing role of ASEAN in the Asia Pacific region as well as in major countries, while Japan, India and China expect to realize their objective of becoming a world power, "one pole" in the "multi-pole, multi-center" perspective, Southeast Asia is the first place for these countries to realize their big objectives.

There is no wonder that, for the first two decades of the 21st century, Southeast Asia has become the region where there has been severe and fierce competition between Japan, India and China. These countries, with their comparative advantages, have made policy adjustments to Southeast Asia and competed in many different forms to maintain a regular and continuous presence while at the same time promoting their role and influence as well as competing strategically and restraining each other. The strategic competition between Japan, India and China in Southeast Asia has greatly impacted the relations between these countries and other countries in the region, including Japan - Vietnam significant. In the coming time, the strategic competition between Japan, India and China in Southeast Asia is expected to be more intense, the level and intensity will be higher, these countries will take their comparative advantages as well as the possible objective conditions to increase competition and achieve their objectives. In addition, this strategic competition will facilitate favorable conditions for Japan - Vietnam relations to develop in breadth and in-depth, ensuring security and bringing benefits to the two countries, Southeast Asia and the Asia Pacific region.

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