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USA President Trump's first Asian Tour – From "America first" to Indo-Pacific**

Abstract

The first Asian tour of USA President Donald Trump in his first year in office that included visits to Japan, Republic of Korea, PR China, Vietnam and the Philippines, as well as participation in the APEC summit and East Asian Summit, were expected to give many important answers to the numerous challenges and to articulate loudly the USA's position on the Asia-Pacific region that for the last seventy years was top priority for all American presidents. While maintaining its position of global economic zone of optimism in 2017, Asia became or became even more burdened with several severe threats to regional and global security, peace and stability that could potentially even change an existing order in this part of the world or globally. The most notorious of these were DPR Korea's missile and nuclear bomb tests, disputes in the East China Sea and in the South China Sea which remained severe threats for regional cooperation and stability with China's continuous assertiveness that have challenged ASEAN's unity and openness of vital commercial and communication sea lines. All of these issues were calling for more deterrent USA positioning and acting there. With the USA withdrawing from TPP and insisting on trade deficit and bilateral patterns above multilateral one, the first USA president's visit to Asia was loaded with doubts and expectations, as well as many tasks for him personally and his administration.

We will try to analyze the most important elements of this visit and its possible regional and wider current and future impact.

Key words: USA, Trump, DPR Korea's nuclear program, Republic of Korea, PR China, Japan, Vietnam, Philippines, APEK, ASEAN, EAS

Introduction – First year, first Asia tour

USA President Donald Trump's first official visit to Asia, marked by many as historical, was indeed a unique, highly important and complex one. It lasted thirteen days (from November 3-14, 2017) and was longer than any previous US presidents' Asia visits¹. The visit was burdened with different expectations, both domestic and foreign, as well as with urgent issues that required actions or clarifications from the US side. The long tour that included state visits to five countries and attendance to two summits (APEC and East Asian Summit) was a challenge by itself as it lasted so long in different time zones, with so many different

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1 The second longest Asia tour was conducted twenty five years ago by George H.W. Bush in 1992, who even collapsed at the state reception in Tokyo.

countries, issues, meeting partners and cuisines, and required an extremely good physical and mental condition from the American president, not in young age any more.

The first Asian visits of President Trump were preloaded, even over-loaded with his election campaign stance on Asia and American allies, among others, as well as with expectations from the business community, media and general public back home. Some financial circle speakers gave interviews urging Trump on what to demand from China, etc., while numerous think tanks were offering him pieces of advice on what and how to perform. Some did not hesitate to write the whole tour off in advance with the explanation of how inexperienced President Trump was in foreign policy and in any state posture², while at the same time not willing to learn and rely on state apparatus that offered professional support for his job and strengthen (any) president's position. Although some of the strategic partners and regional actors secured their positions with earlier visit(s) to Washington (Japan's Prime Minister Abe, Vietnamese Prime Minister Puck), and some through the purchase of American goods, the majority of the ASEAN countries awaited this visit in the hope that American president would confirm his country's determination to protect the existing order in this part of the world, while finding common ground with China without challenging regional peace and stability. He was to attend two summits hosting leaders from some of the largest and most powerful countries in the world, as at the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) leaders' meeting in Da Nang in Vietnam and at the East Asia Summit (EAS) summit in Angeles in the Philippines, leaders from ten of the G20 members gathered, together with those from other Asia-Pacific member states. They were representing the most dynamic and prosperous economic part of the world, which on the other hand, relied dearly on the global regimes and rules, set long ago by the USA and its allies.

Expectations in China were also trumpeted through its ambassador in Washington interviews, and most observers saw this visit as the most important part of the journey, although it was rather one of its several high points. Trump announced to domestic reporters on November 3rd, at the beginning of the tour, that he decided to change the previous decision and would be attending the East Asia Summit, after coming under criticism for skipping it. This was an obvious sign that he took this job very seriously with high consideration of regional expectations. This long trip of the USA president happened at a moment of high global instability as numerous challenges to the existing economic and political order and its supremacy erupted at the age of a reducing USA capacity to influence them, thus creating a critical historic moment. While in early summer 2017 Trump visited few allies in the Middle East and Europe, this visit, covering vast areas of Southeast and Northeast Asia, came at the time when the region has been facing severe security threats, ranging from North Korea's nuclear program to maritime and other disputes in the East and South China Seas. This trip was extremely timely when it comes to the need for articulating a clear USA strategy for engaging the region and preserving its stability as a precondition for economic vitality.

Since the end of the Second World War, only strengthened after the collapse of the Eastern Block, the USA has been the dominant power in the Asia-Pacific, providing the stability and predicted order needed for the economic prosperity of the past seven decades, which was useful to all countries in the region, from close allies like Japan, Australia, Republic of

2 This tour coincided with the anniversary of President Trump's elections victory.

Korea, ASEAN to PR China. During that era, all USA presidents have committed their country to strong engagement there. President Trump diluted that picture with his pre-election messages on how Japan and the Republic of Korea should rely more on their own capacity when it comes to security and seemed to question that pledge with withdrawing the USA from TPP (Trans Pacific Partnership) and numerous gestures of isolationist orientation and economic protectionism summed up in "America First" slogan. Before the tour, President Trump informed the public that North Korea's nuclear program and particular USA economic topics, such as trade, were his top priorities on the tour agenda, but he was eagerly awaited to clearly present his country's new vision for the Asia Pacific under his leadership and explained framework.

Trump started his trip by reinforcing America's alliances with Japan and South Korea. He and his team seemed to plan to make a united front with the leaders of Japan and the Republic of Korea against North Korea's nuclear ambitions before visiting Beijing to make the case to Chinese President Xi Jinping that he should do more to influence Pyongyang towards the same direction.

President Trump's first stop was Tokyo, where he was hosted by Prime Minister Abe, with whom he established close relations based on similar views on the two countries' alliance, firm approach to North Korea and frequent contacts, including six face-to-face meetings since Trump was elected a year ago and sixteen telephone conversations. Thanks to Abe's proactive approach, he was the first foreign leader to meet the new US president after Trump was elected, but yet not inaugurated, in November 2016 that contributed to their excellent personal relations, apart from both being passionate golf players. Golf play of the two leaders was also part of this visit, too, like it was in Abe's visit to the USA earlier in the year. While understanding that personal connections, described by Abe as friendship and trust, between the two leaders created favourable conditions to deepen bilateral ties, the general public in Japan and political circles expected Trump to boldly stress US willingness and capacity to deal with security threats challenging regional peace and the security of Japan, from the North Korean nuclear threat to China's assertiveness in the East and South China Sea. The business community was very much worried about Trump's idea to push on a bilateral trade deal and further opening the Japanese market for American goods, especially cars while demanding Japan unilaterally reduce the export of Japanese vehicles produced in Japan and Mexico to the USA market. At the same time they understood that it was not a protected market that prevented more US-made cars to be sold in Japan, but it was one of the things that a polite and uneasy host would not say. In spite of the pressure created by Trump previously, finance minister Taro Aso announced that tariffs on frozen beef from the US would not be reduced³.

Soon after arriving to Japan from Hawaii, Trump visited U.S. Yokota Air Force Base in Fussa where he addressed members of US military services and those of the Japan Self-Defence Force (JSDF) gathered to greet him. In his speech, Trump expressed firm approach towards North Korea, implying that it might be put on a list on terror sponsoring states, as part of harshening sanctions⁴. Two leaders started their talks on North Korea during the golf party.

³ Tariffs rose from 38.5 to 50% automatically in July as surge of American frozen beef to Japanese market exceeded the quota set by law triggered the protectionist mechanism. This led to the reduction of American frozen beef export to Japan by 26% compared to the previous year.

⁴ The measure was introduced within a week after his return to Washington.

Ahead of the visit, US strategic bombers were flying over South Korea as part of bold messaging to the North heating up the atmosphere even more, while strong alliance with the USA against the North Korean threat was the pillar of the recent Abe's LDP victory in Diet Lower House elections, apart from weak opposition.

Another element of the pressure towards North Korea and supporting Japanese specific sensitivity and domestic expectations from the government when dealing with the DPRK was a meeting with the families of Japanese citizens abducted by the North Korean regime. In his speech to the UN General Assembly in September 2017, President Trump mentioned Megumi Yokota, a Japanese girl who was thirteen when kidnapped by North Korean agents in 1977. Prime Minister Abe hosted Trump's meeting with Megumi's parents as well as with other abductees' family members and pledged his support for their cases. One of the focal points of this tour - gaining strong support for more resolute and efficient measures towards DPRK - were continued to be discussed with Abe at their further meetings on the tour within the multilateral frameworks in which they both took part. Part of Trump's Japan visit was a call on the Japanese imperial family, a highly protocolary and impressive part of his visit and one of the last occasions for such an experience, as Japanese Emperor Akihito is to abdicate in 2018 due to the limitations put upon his official duties by his age and poor health⁵.

Second step – Republic of Korea

The next country that US President Trump visited after Japan was the Republic of Korea, where his relations with recently elected President Moon Jae-in were not even close to those with Japanese Prime Minister Abe. Korean president Moon, human rights lawyer, has been known for his moderate approach towards North Korea, but circumstances and recent developments gave him no chance to pursue any of that. Nevertheless, in August he expressed an intention to send a special envoy to Pyongyang if DPRK halted its nuclear program. President Moon's approach towards DPRK also includes making them join the Winter Olympics that South Korea is hosting in 2018. There was a strong feeling in the Korean public over what was named "Korea passing"⁶, based on the new American administration's failure to name the new ambassador to Seoul, as well as on the lack of contact between Trump and the acting Korean president temporarily replacing former president Park after his impeachment, in spite of Trump's frequent communication over DPRK's missile tests with Japanese Abe and the visit to the USA of Xi Jinping leaving the Republic of Korea in diplomatic isolation. Moreover, Korean President Moon, left aside and obviously worried about the harsh tweeting, and vitriol and threatening messaging of Trump in the previous months, felt it necessary to publicly announce that the USA had no Seoul's approval to start any military action against North Korea as it had to have. Additionally, forming part of this trip's agenda was the USA president's intention to get bilateral free trade agreement re-negotiated, claiming that the current KORUS had been neither fair nor equal⁷. All these

5 "Japan passes landmark bill for Emperor Akihito to abdicate", BBC, June 7, 2017. Available at: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-40168983>

6 "Concerns over 'Korea passing'", *The Korea Times*, 2017-04-07. Available at: http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/opinion/2017/04/202_227159.html

7 The FTA between the US and Korea (KORUS) had been negotiated for five years and signed in 2012. It included eliminated tariffs on about 95% of industrial and consumer products, including cars, semiconductor manufacturing machines, pharmaceuticals and some agricultural

elements created the atmosphere in Seoul ahead of the visit. The US presidential plane landed at Osan Air Base outside Seoul, from which Trump and First Lady Melania Trump began a 24-hour visit. Trump then went to Camp Humphreys, the largest USA military base in the country, located only about 100 km from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), and met US and South Korean troops along with Korean President Moon.

Ahead of and during Trump's visit, there were protests where participants wanted to articulate the Korean's public's worries about Trump's strong rhetoric against DPRK and its leader as a trigger for some possible future retaliation coming from the North and endangering South Korea as the first likely target. But, in Seoul, President Trump's rhetoric was moderate and constrained, especially when he addressed the Parliament. In his speech he put the USA position as constructive and open to all options, including peace talks and negotiations with Pyongyang, while mentioning even some positive trends that could be observed from there. On the other spectre of the approach, he stressed the demonstration of force the US made with three strike groups of aircraft carriers that were meeting in the Western Pacific for exercises along with nuclear submarines⁸ and recent strategic bomber drills over South Korea. They were believed to send strong message to the North, but also to China, ahead of the visit.

When it comes to military hardware, an important part of the US president's tour and of this particular visit was to encourage Seoul to continue with the employment of the THAAD, that it had halted previously under huge economic and political pressure from China, and to get additional weaponry from the USA as a way to better defend itself against possible attacks from the North or as a deterrent, while at the same time creating demand for the USA defence industry. On the topic of trade, after withdrawing the USA from the TPP at the early days of his presidency, Trump wanted to persuade USA allies, including Seoul, to re-negotiate bilateral free trade agreements and to accept terms making it more favourable to the United States: "reciprocal", as Trump put it. On the other hand, there was a lot of criticism coming from the USA about such an approach by the new president, as they argued that America needed allies and a "united front" to confront North Korean threat and China's challenging the USA dominance and existing order in Asia-Pacific and should not pursue an agenda that alienated and pushed them towards China or felt left on their own. Any Korean administration, though, as well as the current one, considers its strategic alliance with the US in general as valuable, beneficial and a needed one for the Republic of Korea and thus, find it acceptable to make concessions to the American side when it comes to trade.

At the joint news conference, USA president praised his Korean colleague for "great cooperation" despite differences in the past over how to confront North Korea and over a trade pact between the United States and South Korea, as they agreed to renegotiate the free trade agreement in a suitable time framework. President Trump also said that he planned to meet Russian President Putin during his trip as Putin's help on North Korea was "needed", as he put it. The two presidents also agreed to continue joint three party coordination and

products. Many predicted that it would significantly increase US export to South Korea but in reality it remained the same, while Korean export surged and in 2016 reached US\$27.6. For more on KORUS at: Horwitz, J., "Trump is picking the worst possible time to toss out a trade deal with South Korea", *Quartz*, September 04, 2017

8 The carriers USS Theodore Roosevelt and USS Nimitz and their respective complementary of cruisers, destroyers and nuclear submarines arrived in the US Navy's 7th Fleet area of operations, which covers the eastern Indian and western Pacific oceans. The Roosevelt and Nimitz join the USS Ronald Reagan, which is based in Japan and has been engaged in exercises with South Korean forces in the week ahead of President Trump's visit.

steps with Japan to counter North Korea's threats on practical terms while the host announced that the Republic of Korea would immediately start talks with the United States on upgrading its military capability, including deploying the sophisticated surveillance assets. The impression after the first visit to the Republic of Korea by the new USA president was very positive, leaving his image in the Republic of Korea as a pretty enigmatic one, as one diplomatic source from Seoul put it.

China - Beijing

For many, Trump's third stop on the tour, the one in Beijing, was if not the most important, than certainly, highly intriguing and the most expected one. Ahead of it, there were different predictions, directions, comments and even sharp criticism, as well as practical acts going in opposite directions: some towards bold military point making, others coming from the Chinese side, to softening the atmosphere before the visit and talks on trade and investments regarding further opening up some parts of the domestic Chinese market now totally or partially restricted to foreigners - including the financial services⁹. President Trump was expected to deliver a strong message to Beijing and again call the region to build a "free and open Indo-Pacific" under the USA confirmed leadership, which also represented the view of the national security circles back home, implying the need to contain Chinese assertiveness in the East and South China Sea as well as its growing influence in the region. He was expected by part of the American public and administration to stand for the human rights cause, too, including some current issues¹⁰ and after the visit was criticized for not speaking on it, at least not in public. After failing to get results from the "hundred days agenda" agreed with Xi at Mar-a-Lago in April, the American president came to push the issue of the imbalance trade pattern with China and market access to American companies in China. The integral part of the agenda was to get China firm on united efforts to press North Korea further.

As part of the strong strategic and military signalling of this trip's agenda, there were only very bold and clear messages coming from the side of the military. On the day of the tour's beginning, the USA President's National Security Advisor, McMaster, warned Beijing about recent and more frequent Chinese bomber flights that had been causing more and more frequent collisions with Japanese and USA fighters in East China Sea and South China Sea¹¹. At the same time, the show of USA force and determination was reinforced with aircraft carriers in the near waters.

9 The new rules should allow full foreign ownership of local securities companies in 2020 (until now foreign ownership was possible only through joint ventures, up to 49%), and of insurance companies (now up to 50% for life-insurance services) in 2022. Foreign banks will be able to acquire local banks (now up to 25%). The question remains how the state regulator will apply these new rules. Isaku Harada, "China to lift ownership restrictions for foreign financial firms", *Nikkei Asian Review*, November 10, 2017

10 There were expectations that President Trump would put some pressure on his host regarding the fate of Liu Xia, the widow of the Liu Xiaobo, the Nobel Peace Prize laureate, who died of cancer in prison, in July 2017 after spending eight years there. China was particularly sensitive about this case and disregarded the negative effects that images of death-sick Liu Xiaobo in prison hospital arose around the world.

11 According to the US Military Times' report ahead of the visit, Chinese H-6K Badger warplanes - with 1,600km-range air-launched cruise missiles - and other military aircraft run near Japanese and US aircraft and were also targeting the USA Pacific territory of Guam to test USA defense zones. "...any kind of military effort like that will not be in China's interest... The US had the capacity to 'deter by denial', which means convincing your enemy or potential enemy that they cannot accomplish their objectives through the use of military force", Hong Kong media reported McMaster's words on November 3rd. Their comments stressed that China's bomber runs targeting Guam had complicated tensions concerning North Korea's nuclear weapons programme and threats by Pyongyang to be able to fire missiles on Guam.

The Chinese side wanted this visit to serve as a platform for establishing the long-term future direction of relations between the two countries¹², that would boost relations and move them towards a more stable and steady track that could create space for effectively dealing with differences without endangering cooperation and for establishing a 'constructive partnership'¹³. They wanted to turn the USA from "problem-oriented diplomacy", as one Chinese scholar defined it in a *Global Times*' piece before the visit,¹⁴ towards that new direction and establishment of the "new type of great power relations",¹⁵ under which the two should share global leadership as equals and break a historical pattern of Thucydides' trap of conflict between rising and established powers. It was also well understood in Washington as a deal which would include allowing China to establish and pursue a sphere of influence in Asia, with the United States retreating to minimize conflict. Some experts and leading figures on the Chinese side obviously thought that the "state visit plus" experience and ego pleasing treatment of the new American president would take them there, as the previous administration, though passive and without much achievements in Asia particularly, remained cold towards such invitation. On the American side there were also analyses and fears about such a development of affairs. The uneasiness about accepting such a proposal would also hold true for some American regional allies, for different reasons, including neglecting the interests of the "small" when the "big ones" are making deals. Additionally, some analysts accentuated that the Chinese president would use the opportunity of being asked to put greater pressure on the DPRK as additional leverage for persuading the American president to accept a "new type of great power relationship".

Some argumentations back in the USA focused on the Chinese president's renewed strength and power accumulation after the XIX Party CPC's Congress versus that of the weakened USA president, under ongoing investigation on alleged Russian interfering in the presidential election process. Such analysts in both countries stressed that while president Trump seemed to have sort of reduced power capacity due to widely spread criticism of his decisions on retreating the USA from TPP and Paris Climate Accord, the Chinese president Xi has continued to present China as a global leader on climate changes fight, willing to accept more leadership roles in the international community while USA appear to be withdrawing and abandoning its duties of the leading country. The Chinese president has been consistent in presenting his country as ready and eager to lead the world through numerous major initiatives and forms that enforce global governance in the field of anti-protectionism and pro-globalization, such as the Belt and Road Initiative, connecting continents on an unprecedented scale, Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank, the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) and numerous other initiatives that China either launched, financed or re-energized after joining, in a consistent, even strategic and pro-active manner. Nevertheless, the American president played full confidence based on stock exchange and employment figures at home, confirmed alliances with Japan and the Republic of Korea wanting concessions from China when it comes to trade and investments, and more efforts from Beijing when it comes to putting further pressure on DPRK.

12 China's vice foreign minister, Zheng Zeguang announced that the two leaders would discuss a 'blueprint' for developing relations.

13 Embassy of the PR China's in Washington webpage.

14 Zhang Hui, "Trump to get 'State visit-plus' experience in China", *Global Times*, 2017/10/31

15 Ahead of the visit, People's Republic's ambassador to Washington, Cui Tiankai, expressed the expectation that the visit would invigorate the idea.

More boldly than ever before, the Chinese side articulated an understanding that the time of humbleness had passed and that finally the two countries and accordingly, the two presidents, were equal. Some Chinese experts expressed the opinion that the two presidents were on equal footing¹⁶ unlike during the time in office of previous USA presidents and were now ready for the “new type of great power relations”¹⁷. The American president was welcomed with an honour guard, different cultural activities for him and his wife, to enjoy together or separately, and with a state banquet. Still, the pomp that was given to this state visit and President Trump and his wife personally was also to show the greatness of China, in the past and in the present, as everlasting, a phoenix-like great nation and a state which by being what it has always been, called to be a leading global nation. The tea party, Peking Opera performance and dinner at the Forbidden City’s halls, once targets of hatred and rage of the Red Guards, was for the first time in the history of socialist China used as a venue for hosting a foreign leader. While tea was served to the guests at *Bao Yun Lou* or Hall of Embodied Treasures, built in 1915 by money remitted by the USA government, and could symbolically be pointed at that gesture of understanding and reconciliation¹⁸, the dinner at *Jianfu Palace* was about showing the everlasting tradition and strength of the nation that President Xi now wants to “rejuvenate” and set it up to lead the world. The question remained: either alone or along the USA and that was one of the untold and out of written agenda of this visit.

On the economic aspect of this trip, previous harsh statements by Mr. Trump regarding China’s trade practices created pressure on both sides: for the American president to deliver some results from China in this regard, and for the Chinese to determine how to deal with the possible strong words of the in guest and the potential “trade war” that they would need to avoid. A group of forty USA corporate leaders from twenty nine major USA corporations were part of the economic team, headed by Secretary of Commerce Wilbur Ross that accompanied their president to use the opportunity to make deals and get better access to 400 billion US\$ worth of market¹⁹, opt for further opening of the Chinese market, and address protectionism and other abuses in bilateral trade. After having closed door discussions with President Xi, President Trump addressed the press blaming previous administration for passively accepting the negative trade set and “praising” China for taking advantage of the opportunity. Although Trump’s tone was moderate in comparison to especially to his campaign stance on China, he stood for what he and his team found to be the most important obstacles to fair bilateral economic relations with China which beyond an unfair trade pattern that was “a very unfair and one-sided one” in which China was said to use the openness of the American market while keeping its own protected, also included China’s market access restrictions for investors and technology transfer requirements, which prevent American companies from being able to fairly compete within China. As usual, the Chinese

16 Yan Xuetong, a professor of international relations at Tsinghua University in the statement, quoted in New York Times, on November 6, 2017.

17 Ibid.

18 The Qing dynasty government had been forced to pay compensation to eight nations, including the United States, over the violence and damage done to them during the Boxer Rebellion. Violence against the Westerners, especially targeting Christian Churches, where the Orthodox Church was worst hit and their schools, hospitals, nurseries were almost destroyed, and Chinese followers killed, took place during the uprising that lasted from 1899 to 1901 with the approval of the Court. However, the Roosevelt administration agreed to give up on the debt and the Chinese government used some of the money to build the hall. The rest was used to create a scholarship for Chinese students studying in the USA and to build today’s still elite, Tsinghua University in Beijing.

19 Combined value of the USA export to China, re-export via Hong Kong and domestic sale of the USA firms operated in China.

side promised to cooperate in general and delivered some concessions when it comes to reducing car import taxes and opening the financial sector a bit wider, as explained earlier.

Looking from China's perspective and the perspective of its relative agendas of eradicating poverty while reducing government and SOE's debts, shutting down polluters and zombie companies, fighting corruption that is *modus operandi* for too many businesses, and reducing the importance of export while strengthening domestic demand - pursuing all these goals at the same time, while upgrading the efficiency and technology level of its whole economy, China was also in no position to engage in a trade war with its most important trade partner. In 2016, China and USA trade value was US\$579 billion, while the thorny trade deficit on the American side was US\$368 billion. China is USA's second-largest goods trading partner and fourth largest services trading partner (at US\$70 billion) and third-largest export market for both visible and invisible trade. Moreover, in 2017 China was the second-largest foreign holder of USA Treasury securities (US\$1.2 trillion).

Finally, President Trump's visit resulted in US\$253.5 billion worth of deals that included 34 big projects, such as selling 300 Boeing planes worth US\$37 billion to China Aviation Supplies Holding Company and 12 million tons of soybeans in 2017 and 2018 worth US\$5 billion, and announcing possible a US\$43 billion joint project to build natural gas pipeline from the North Slope of Alaska to a port, as well as to construct a LNG loading terminal between the State of Alaska and Sinopec²⁰ where China's sovereign wealth fund, China Investment Corp, and Bank of China would help with financing. China National Petroleum Corp. signed an initial agreement with Texas-based Cheniere Energy for the long-term supply of liquefied natural gas. The biggest deal was announced with a signed memorandum of understanding between China Energy Investment Corp and West Virginia State to invest over US\$84 billion to develop shale oil, clean energy, and chemical products. These investments and intentions were announced to create more than 12,000 thousands American jobs, addressing one of the highest topics on Trump's political agenda.

In the field of aviation, General Electric signed deals with three Chinese companies worth a total of US\$3.5 billion²¹. In the area of finance, China's sovereign wealth fund, China Investment Corp. and Goldman Sachs agreed to set up a joint fund to invest in USA firms which already have already or plan to set up business operations in China. The fund plans to raise US\$5 billion. China's Silk Road Fund and General Electric signed an agreement to cooperate in investments under the Belt and Road Initiative, which is of crucial importance as it now means that USA have joined the Initiative. In addition, in the field of telecommunications, Chinese phone makers Xiaomi, OPPO and Vivo signed three-year deals to buy products from USA mobile chip maker Qualcomm, worth US\$12 billion in total.

For some, these deals were the results of Trump's wise, soft and optimistic though active approach towards China, while others saw the deals as mostly the results of the ongoing regular economic activities between the two economies, or purchases that Chinese business entities had already planned to carry out either way. Some business participants insisted that deals were quickly made just before the visit and thanks to the visit, like the order by

20 Steinbock, D., Trump Does Asia – From Competition to Opportunity, *China-US Focus*, November 15, 2017

21 An engine and repair agreement with Juneyao Airlines worth US\$1.4 billion, a US\$1.1 billion deal with ICBC Leasing for engines to power Boeing planes and a US\$1 billion agreement with China Datang Group to supply gas turbines

Chinese electronic trader JD.Com of US\$ 200 million worth of Montana beef for the next three years and construction of a US\$100 millions beef-processing factory in Montana that was initiated by Chinese Embassy quickly in September²². Others pointed out that many deals, including the biggest ones, were only intentions and promises that needed to be verified later. Many analysts also pointed out that China usually put such grand deals -but in reality these tend to be only ongoing or only promised ones - to charm the partners, their press and the public, while problems and obstacles remain and trade patterns allowing huge Chinese trade surpluses endure.

The deals were described by American president as a "very good start position" while American businesses represented by the US-China Business Council called for action to break down China's structural market barriers and create better access to and a more level playing field with the Chinese economy²³. Although, the concluded and announced grandiose deals were seen by most observers as mutually nurtured, obvious result of this visit, there remained many obstacles on that path that Trump's administration would not tolerate. For this trip, Trump's administration was not able to deliver preparations on some systemic changes requests due to being too busy with other internal and international issues, including tax changes, NAFTA, among others, such that the focus remained on trade, securing a positive image and impressive future deals announcements. On the other hand, it could be expected that in the months to come, they would focus on delivering what was promised before but required more time to deal with. Their actions should cover the investigation of the alleged Chinese illegal intrusion on American intellectual property which easily could lead to tariffs or other barriers' enforcement on Chinese goods imports. Additionally, legislation on tightening restrictions on Chinese investments in the USA or more rigid enforcement of the existing ones should be expected to be introduced soon. Only a month after the visit a Chinese Alibaba's affiliate, Ant Financial, was prevented from purchasing American money transfer service firm Moneygram for US\$1.2 billion. The same occurred and prevented a smartphone partnership between multinational Huawei and AT&T. The sales were not approved by the Committee on Foreign Investment on the basis of national security concerns. The ongoing investigations on imports of solar panels, aluminium foil and steel as goods subsidized by the Chinese government could be further restricted.

Mutual importance was clear to both sides and their global partners, and there was a joint attempt to express that shared understanding. The Chinese President needs the American market to remain as open as before, as well as peaceful competition in the region and globally in order to be able to continue his grandiose project of rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. With regard to how the future of that hugely important cooperation between the two largest global economies should look, both parties have different stances that, for both their sake, need to be coordinated in an equally acceptable manner. This is also what the global economy needs to maintain its stability. However, the next stop of the American president's tour brought out another possible way of dealing with that challenge.

22 Bradsher, K., "Trump Promotes Deals in China, but Hints at Long Trade Fight Ahead", *The New York Times*, November 3, 2017. Available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/11/09/business/donald-trump-china-trade-xi-jinping.html>

23 Zheng, S., "Hurdles Remain", *South China Morning Post*, 10 November, 2017

Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit and Vietnam visit

Soon after their joint press conference in Beijing, actually statements to media, both presidents took part in the Economic Leaders meeting of APEC and the APEC summit, held in Da Nang, Vietnam. Trump's visit to Vietnam and participation in the APEC yearly summit was for many observers the most important part of his Asia tour, due to the fact that he needed to achieve multiple goals. First, he in his first multilateral appearance in this region was supposed to do much more in pinning down the previous administration's announced "strategic partnership" with Vietnam and getting this important ASEAN member even closer. In addition, the APEC events were occasions for delivering much awaited speeches on his administration's Indo-Pacific strategy of a free and open region during the forum, a strategy already mentioned several times by the members of his team and which was also expected and seen as a needed uphold of an existing dominant power in the Indo-Pacific theatre in response to Chinese assertiveness in the same region.

The APEC summits provide an opportunity for leaders of twenty one Pacific Rim countries to regularly meet and upgrade their relationships, work on differences and expand and pursue shared interests. The essential part of APEC's founding principles and its' success as a regional organization has been to sustain regional prosperity and political security, and to engage all its members in searching for solutions to appearing problems. Since its initiation in 1993, the APEC summit has also been an occasion to bring the USA president to Asia on a yearly basis and provide an important space for leader's bilateral as well as joint meetings. This particular summit that brought President Trump to Da Nang gave the opportunity to most of the leaders in attendance to establish personal relation with him. APEC was formed and defined as a regional organization committed to open regionalism and regional and global multilateral arrangements that had provided a regime that suits the dominant interest all member states share. Asian members of APEC, which deliver growth and dynamism as the most prosperous part of the global economy, depend gravely on the openness and stability of that regime for their economic success and political stability and security. Their task, especially under the ongoing rise of protectionism, was to effectively engage its largest partners on the other side of the Pacific to create needed collective management of trade openness through multilateralism and new initiatives, a task that became severely difficult since the Trump administration pulled out of the regional TPP and declared "America first" in trade too.

The tone of President Trump's speech at APEC's CEO Economic Summit was in sharp contrast with his posture while in China, but in line with his position on the issues he addressed. He took hard stands on those countries "taking advantage of the United States" indicating that he would always put America first in the same way that others "in the room" put their countries first. This was a signal to China, but also to other local players that had accumulated huge trade surpluses in trade with the USA over time, such that his administration would insist on allies and competitors agreeing to policies more favourable to the USA. He pointed at China without mentioning its name while saying that the USA would not tolerate "audacious intellectual theft". In his speech, he advocated his administration's (revitalized) design of "Indo-Pacific" as a contrast to China's preferred "Asia-Pacific", saying that the future of the region depended on "freedom of navigation and over-flight, including open

shipping lanes”, targeting another crucial conflicting issue with China and its aggressive acts and positioning in the South China Sea on the account of smaller countries in the region, endangering also the USA, Japan, Australia and all the other big trading nations that depend on the existing openness while also challenging USA dominance. According to Hong Kong media reports, he ended his speech hitting again at Sino-Vietnamese historical disputes two thousand years ago²⁴ and strong anti-China sentiment in the present-day Vietnam²⁵.

The following speaker, President Xi took a significantly different approach, again presenting his country as a genuine defender of “irreversible” globalisation and free trade in “Asia Pacific, a long-cherished dream of...the region”, and painting China’s economy as a fair field, equal for all players, domestic or foreign, thereby responding to many of the criticism President Trump referred to in Beijing and in Da Nang, that were also widely spread among the foreign business community in China. Very constructively, Xi stressed that APEC had started “a new journey for greater integration with the world”. In his speech, he also relied strongly on China’s habitual huge numbers²⁶ regarding future plans for both: outward and inward FDI, as well as for trade and the Belt and Road Initiative of China that aimed to connect Asia with Africa, Europe and even further. In his recognizable manner Xi called on the region to “board China’s express train of development” in order to enhance mutual development, again advocating China’s model as an exemplary pattern for those who want to prosper. His speech was, as usual, carefully tailored to present China’s leadership capacity based on the developed strategy and capacity to deliver it. While Trump’s speech was exactly the right tune for many allies in the region awaiting confirmation from the USA under the new administration of its determination to remain firm in leading the region, keeping it “open and free” as protecting the “rule based order”, pointing indirectly at China as the problem causing element, the Chinese president had another strategy. For domestic audiences and for some in the region, he played the role of the benevolent, but strong regional leader at the time ready; as for the others, he dismissed their complaints, at the same time presenting China again as a global leader in protecting globalization and multilateralism. The speeches of the two presidents, according to many observers, once again proved the strategic competition between the two countries as well as the conflicting interests that contribute to the uncertainties in their relationship.

The APEC declaration from Da Nang was ambiguous but also pragmatic as it expressed both approaches: the shared interests of many for the stable and open trade regime and right to remain protectionist if needed as it affirmed the importance of bilateral agreements and “legitimate trade defence instruments”; and at the same time reiterated its commitment to further developing ways to complement multilateral trade agreements. The summit that was themed “Creating New Dynamism, Fostering a Shared Future” reaffirmed APEC’s commitment to its mission of promoting sustainable economic growth and prosperity in

24 Liu Zhen, “The Beijing show over; Donald Trump and Xi Jinping push their own world trade orders at APEC”, *South China Morning Post*, 10 November 2017. In his speech President Trump brought into play the Vietnamese tale of Trung sisters, who died in a failed uprising against Chinese overlords two thousand years ago.

25 In 2017, a Pew survey found 84 per cent of Vietnamese viewed the USA positively, up from 76 per cent in 2014; only 10 per cent of them viewed China favourably, down from 16 per cent. In a 2014 survey, 77 per cent of Vietnamese viewed Japan positively and 67 per cent saw India positively. Quoted from: Huan, C., “How can communist Vietnam be friendlier to the US than China?”, *SCMP*, November 18, 2017

26 President Xi said that in the next fifteen years China would import goods of the value of US\$24 trillion, receive FDI in value of US\$2 trillion and invest abroad the same amount of capital.

the Asia-Pacific region. In order to secure quality growth they adopted an agenda for the "development of human resources in the digital era". APEC leaders also reaffirmed the commitment to complete the agenda of the Bogor Goals on "liberalisation and facilitation of trade and investment, and enhancing economic and technical cooperation in efforts towards the formation of the Free Trade Area of the Asia-Pacific (FTAAP)"²⁷.

While Vietnam successfully played the role of APEC host, there was much for the country to achieve during the visits of the USA and Chinese presidents following the APEC summit, as it tried to build balanced relations with both countries and to continue to hedge its bets on security and the economy. Vietnam's continuous robust economic growth and its transformation into a trade power and "small China" as some described it, can be attributed to domestic economic reforms started in 1986, its strong engagement within the ASEAN and "ASEAN+China", "ASEAN+3" cooperation frameworks, USA extension of normal trade relations (NTR) status in 2001²⁸ and intense economic cooperation with China. Nevertheless, unlike in previous decades when both China and Vietnam focused on economic reforms and cooperation, in recent years, China's increasingly assertive foreign policy, along with escalating territorial disputes in the South China Sea, directed Vietnam towards the USA as it tried to diversify its strategic and economic engagements. This also included improvement of relations with other rivals of China in the region - Japan and India - as well as with other surrounding nations whether within ASEAN or bilaterally, through, for example, strategic partnership with Australia and comprehensive partnerships with Canada and New Zealand. In that sense, Vietnam saw in the Quadrilateral grouping a desirable alliance of the key players in the region that could help it to counterbalance forceful Chinese influence. It is also doing it's the most at being engaged as a trade nation participating in the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) launched and left by the USA, as well as in the ongoing negotiations within the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), another important pan-Asian regional trade association that does not include the USA, but includes China and is believed to endorse the interests of emerging economies in the region. Vietnam has consistently been careful to balance relations between the USA and China while trying to escape economic dependency upon Beijing. China's president came to Vietnam on his first state visit after the XIX CPC Party Congress, to confirm the common standing with his Vietnamese host about necessity "to keep stable and peaceful region as precondition for common prosperity", while together with the ASEAN countries kept on working on, for all parties, acceptable code of conduct in the South China Sea.

Vietnamese leaders have done a lot to prevent a trade surplus²⁹ issue from getting in the way of rapprochement with the USA and growing military cooperation. In 2016, during President Barack Obama's visit to Vietnam, the USA declared a lift on an arms embargo on Vietnam that lasted since the Vietnam War, as part of his half-if-at-all-done Asia pivot strategy. Rhetorically he also called on Vietnam to improve its human rights conditions, but in socialist Vietnam that followed China's model of economic and social development of a state-backed, export oriented economy and rigid political control, that has never been on

27 For more on APEC 2017 declaration, please consult: <http://vietnamnews.vn/economy/417379/da-nang-declaration-stresses-multilateral-trade-inclusive-growth.html#vj43GXBV0AOkhGGI.99>

28 According to the USA data, bilateral trade rose from US\$220 million in 1994 to US\$45 billion in 2015, putting Vietnam into the 13th-largest source for USA imports, but only 37th-largest destination for its exports.

29 The USA trade deficit with Vietnam was its sixth biggest in 2016: US\$32 billion.

the priority list. In fact, there were many reports suggesting a trend in the opposite direction, but as in Obama administration's case, for President Trump, other elements of their bilateral relations were far more important for the USA. Similar to Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand³⁰, Vietnam made some bold concessionary movements ahead of President Trump's visit to secure better positioning with the new administration as acting according to its expectations. Vietnam's Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc met with President Trump in May 31st 2017, at a meeting that was secured soon after he was elected. During the meeting purchasing deals worth US\$8 billion were announced³¹ as Vietnam made concessions, in order to promote a better relationship and win the trust of the new administration. During Trump's state visit, at the bilateral meetings with Vietnam President Dan Trai Quang Vietnam agreed to order USA aviation engines and services, as well as energy deals worth US\$12 billion.

Alongside the APEC meetings, two important regional multilateral initiatives took place. One was the Quadrilateral Defence Dialogue, a four-party strategic grouping between India, the USA, Japan, and Australia, that was first initiated a decade ago. While in the past Japan and the USA were the most vocal supporters of the informal alliance, Australia and India recently became more interested in, seeing Beijing as a challenger to the existing order in the South China Sea and in the Indian Ocean. In the case of Australia, there have also been a lot of accusations of alleged attempts of China to influence their internal politics, including using the Chinese immigration, as in India's case, closing China's economic and military cooperation with Pakistan and the Pakistan-China Economic Corridor within the BRI running over disputed territory of Kashmir and Doklam border confrontation. These were the most persuasive elements leading traditionally self-reliant India to become a supporter of the Quadrilateral grouping. The grouping caused immediate warning from China's Foreign Ministry that it should not "target or damage a third party's interest". The other was talks on revitalizing TPP, lead by a strong Japanese initiative, while transforming it into the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership. The idea was that the remaining eleven member states, including Vietnam, would continue with the integration processes that would suit their respective economies while also trying to re-engage the USA to return. In spite of some Canadian reservations, they had optimistic news to spread after the consultations.

State visit to the Philippines and ASEAN and East Asia Summits

The next and final stop on his first Asia tour was President Trump's visit to the Philippines and attending the East Asia Summit on November 12-14, 2017. This was also the occasion to celebrate the 40th anniversary of USA-ASEAN relations and the ceremony for the 50th

30 Malaysia's Prime Minister Razak announced that national pension fund and provident fund would invest several billion dollars in equity and infrastructure projects in the USA while Malaysia Airlines pledged to explore options for acquiring more Boeing jettliners and General Electric engines at US\$10 billion. When it comes to Thailand, Prime Minister Prayut Chanocha announced to buy twenty new Boeing jets for Thai Airways, along military Blackhawk and Lakota helicopters, a Cobra gunship, Harpoon missiles and F-16 fighter jet upgrades, as well as. Siam Cement Group agreed to purchase 155,000 tons of coal while Thai petroleum company PTT will invest in shale gas factories in Ohio. Prayut and Trump signed an MOU to facilitate US\$6 billion worth of investments that as said could create over 8,000 jobs in the USA. Singaporean Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong announced Singapore Airlines' deal with Boeing for purchasing 39 B787 and B777-9 aircraft, which, as announced – could create 70,000 jobs in the USA.

31 Deserting the TPP trade agreement by the USA did hurt Vietnam, as leaving the USA (low) import tariffs on, but maybe even more it hit on USA exporters as improved access to Vietnamese 90 million market was wasted opportunity and complex trade disputes remained.

anniversary of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). On the last stop of his Asia tour, President Trump was to have bilateral talks with the Philippines' President Duterte, an important Southeast Asian ally that the USA's president needed to get back into solid partnership with and so capitalize on the momentum created during the crucial USA summer security assistance to the Philippines. The USA President arrived in Manila, capital of its former colony for fifty years, awaited by more than 3,500 protesters who tried to march on the USA Embassy before being stopped by riot police. The protesters shouted for Trump to leave and accused the USA of "imperialist war and plunder".

A decades-long close alliance and much longer and more controversial colonial bilateral relationship recently turned into an unexpected challenge to this important USA alliance in this part of the world. In 2014, during the Aquino presidency, the USA and the Philippines signed the Enhanced Defence Cooperation Agreement (EDCA), a ten-year arrangement that again saw the return of USA forces to the Philippines, as well as with the Pentagon's generous support for Philippines' military modernization. During the same Aquino's six year mandate the escalation of maritime conflicts with China in the South China Sea escalated to an appeal made by Philippines to the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague in 2015. But, since the 2016 election of Rodrigo Duterte, the USA-Philippines relationship has been on decline, and came at the verge of becoming bizarre in the end of the Obama's presidency due to Duterte's draconian anti-drug policies. Beyond bold and undiplomatic, even vulgar language, Duterte's sovereign foreign policy became less reliant on USA security guarantees, as he even threatened to cancel joint military exercises unilaterally in 2016, but later only scaled them down. On the other side, he leaned radically towards Russia and China, setting aside a vindicating Hague Arbitration decision for bet he could get from close economic cooperation with Beijing and connecting the Philippines with the China's Belt and Road (BRI) Initiative, which is vital to his government's US\$160 billion "Build, Build, Build" mega infrastructure program that is suppose to accommodate the tripling of the Philippine per capita income in the next twenty five years³². China agreed to invest about US 15 billion in different projects and open a credit line for another US\$9 billion there and for the Philippines, as well as for other ASEAN countries, China became the biggest trading partner.

However, since president Trump assumed office, the relationship between the two leaders and the two countries seemed to be on the improving track. In their phone conversation months ahead of Trump's visit, the USA president praised Duterte for successfully fighting the drug lords. As Philippine security forces had fierce battle from May till mid October to retake the city of Marawi from ISIS-groups of Abu Sayyaf and Maute Group that lead Islamic insurgencies in Mindanao Island, the USA provided them crucial help through military equipment as well as intelligence information, surveillance³³ that helped further restoration of the bilateral relations. In the end, Trump's trip to Manila was an opportunity for the USA to rebuild strategic ties with a key partner in the region, plus to focus on more defence cooperation, Islamic State, illegal drugs, new trade agreements³⁴. The USA's new

32 Manahan, M. A., "Stories Behind the Numbers: Dissecting Duterte's Build, Build, Build Program", *Focus on the Global South*, June 6, 2017

33 Seftel, B., "U.S.-Philippine Relations Rebound Under Trump", *The Cipher Brief*, November 13, 2017

34 The USA is the Philippines third largest trading partner after China and Japan. The growing trade between the two is worth US\$ 8 billion a year. For more info, please consult: <https://ustr.gov/countries-regions/southeast-asia-pacific/philippines>

administration accepted Philippines' hedging when promising new aid to Marawi City, and more to military modernization of its army, drug demand reduction programs, etc., as part of US\$8 billion aid in the last eight years³⁵.

In Manila Trump first attended a gala celebration for the 50th anniversary of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) with ASEAN and Dialogue Partner Leaders. In his address, President Trump said that he was to deliver a message of friendship and partnership. He noted that he came to "advance peace, promote security" and to work with ASEAN to achieve a "truly free and open Indo-Pacific"³⁶. He congratulated ASEAN on "50 years of promoting peace and prosperity and stability in Southeast Asia and in the broader Indo-Pacific region". The leaders adopted enhanced United States-ASEAN cooperation on maritime security issues, including the first-ever United States-ASEAN Maritime Exercise in 2018. According to the White House, at East Asian Summit³⁷, region's leaders addressing the Indo-Pacific's most pressing political and security issues while searching international cooperation to deal with shared regional challenges, such as the South China Sea, counterterrorism, and the humanitarian crisis in Rakhine State, Burma. Also, President Trump and Singaporean Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong co-sponsored the EAS leaders' Statement on Chemical Weapons "reaffirming the region's commitment to complete elimination and non-proliferation of such weapons".

On the sidelines of EAS summit, Trump tried to strengthen ties with Pacific Rim allies, aiming to make bilateral, rather than multinational trade agreements, and motivate them to increase pressure on North Korea. He met with India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi and highlighted the two nations' "deeper and more comprehensive" ties, looking to strengthen a relationship that is vital to the U.S. vision of an Indo-Pacific region that attempts to de-power China's influence. At a trilateral meeting, he also met again with the Japan's Prime Minister Abe, and Australia's Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull. President Trump said the three were discussing trade, North Korea and other subjects. Speaking on the sidelines of the ASEAN Summit, he summarized the Asia trip and said "We've made a lot of big progress on trade." He added that his Asia trip has generated US\$300 billion "in sales to various companies, including China." Although announced, he did not meet with the Russian president Vladimir Putin, with whom he just exchanged greetings, due to "busy schedule" of both presidents.

Conclusion

It is too early to say, and a lot depends on the future posture of the Trump administration towards the Indo-Pacific, but this tour could be proved to meet its historical assignment. That was to grasp the momentum for showing still forceful USA as superpower successfully reinforced the economic, political and security ties that have kept it dominant in Asian and connected to allies and friendly nations there, determined to act against China's challenges to the existing order. But, that act should not be destructive nor neglect the interests of

35 <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/president-donald-j-trumps-trip-philippines/>

36 <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2017/11/13/remarks-president-trump-5th-us-asean-summit>

37 The East Asia Summit draws leaders from 18 countries – the 10 members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the dialogue partners: China, Japan, South Korea, India, Australia, New Zealand, the United States and Russia.

rising China and ASEAN and other important local players. China's rise will continue as well as its ambitions and its building on regional hard and soft power. The Trump administration is slowly, but surely coming around to be much more bold and hawkish about the challenge that China poses to the USA's supremacy in the Asia-Pacific and beyond, in the "Indo-Pacific" based on its new members. Despite this, his administration would also need to pursue a coherent and continuous presence there, starting with filling in USA posts in regional organizations and in empty high level diplomatic posts, to rejoin the CPATPP (TPP 11) and to take part in RCEP, while at the same time enforcing expressed articulated strategy, openness towards local specific interests of different local players, influence, leadership and military power to contribute to the regional peace, security, openness and prosperity of the region. While doing so, it would also help China to adjust its rise and international ambitions towards more acceptable one while growing experience into bigger power. As for his personal contribution, this first trip to Asia proved to be a step in the desired direction and with a very positive score for President Trump and his country.

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Прва азијска турнеја председника САД Трампа - Од „Америка прво“ до Индо-Пацифика

Апстракт

Прва азијска турнеја председника САД, Доналда Трампа, током његове прве године мандата, која је укључивала посете Јапану, Републици Кореји, НР Кини, Вијетнаму и Филипинима, као и учешће на самиту АПЕК-а и Источноазијског самита, требало је да одговори на бројне изазове и да уобличи и огласи позицију САД према Азијско-пацифичком региону, који је у последњих седамдесет година био највиши приоритет за сваког америчког председника. Док је са једне стране одржала своју позицију светске економске зоне оптимизма у 2017., Азија је постала или у још већој мери постала оптерећена неколиким озбиљним претњама по регионалну и глобалну безбедност, мир и стабилност, које би потенцијално могле да измене постојећи поредак у овом делу света, па чак и глобални. Најозбиљније од њих су тестирање ракетног и нуклеарног потенцијала ДНР Кореје, спорови у Источнокинеском мору и Јужнокинеском мору, који су остали да озбиљно угрожавају регионалну сарадњу и стабилност уз кинеску непрекидну агресивност која је изазов јединству АСЕАН-а и отворености виталних трговачких и комуникационих поморских линија. Сва ова питања су вапила за одлучнијим одређивањем и делањем САД. Но, услед повлачења САД из ТПП-а и инсистирања на питањима трговачког дефицита и билатералном договору наместо мултилатералном, прва посета председника САД Азији је била бремениста сумњама и очекивањима, као и задацима за председника лично, али и његову администрацију.

Покушаћемо да анализирамо најважније елементе ове посете и њен могући непосредни и будући утицај на посматрани регион, али и изван њега.

Кључне речи: САД, Трамп, нуклеарни програм ДНР Кореје, Република Кореја, НР Кина, Јапан, Вијетнам, Филипини, АПЕК, АСЕАН, ИАС