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## THE PARTICULARITIES OF THE FORMATION AND MECHANISMS OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE JAPAN'S INTEGRATION POLICY

## ОСОБЛИВОСТІ ФОРМУВАННЯ ТА МЕХАНІЗМИ РЕАЛІЗАЦІЇ ІНТЕГРАЦІЙНОЇ ПОЛІТИКИ ЯПОНІЇ

## ОСОБЕННОСТИ ФОРМИРОВАНИЯ И МЕХАНИЗМЫ РЕАЛИЗАЦИИ ИНТЕГРАЦИОННОЙ ПОЛИТИКИ ЯПОНИИ

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**Abstract.** *Using a variety of theoretical and methodological tools, the article reveals the features of Japan's integration policy in the Asia-Pacific region in the first decades of the XXI century. The influence of internal and external factors on its formation and implementation is shown. In the context of the principles of regionalism and globalism, the origins and basic principles of the doctrine of "open regionalism" as a basis for the formation of a multilateral free trade area are analyzed. , but also the world economy. All this gives grounds to assert that regional and global liberalization go hand in hand, reinforcing each other. Japan.*

*The difference between Tokyo's approaches to the issue of integration cooperation in the region and the classical European model is traced. The example of Japan's participation in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) shows how the combination of economic feasibility in the foreign economic strategy with geopolitical processes in the region. Japan has contributed to expanding the range of participants (ASEAN + 3, ASEAN + 6). It is emphasized that strengthening the position of ASEAN is considered by Tokyo as one of the tools to strengthen the collective position of the participating countries in international relations. The role and motives of Japan's participation in the TPP are clarified - to benefit from full-scale liberalization and to formulate common economic and political goals of the countries in the region, which will ensure unity of action in countering China's trade and economic expansion. It is emphasized that in the conditions of international uncertainty and high conflict in the world, Japan demonstrates the ability to adjust its foreign policy. In this regard, the growth of its interest in strengthening the format of trilateral cooperation between Japan-China and South Korea to ensure stability and security in the region is significant.*

**Key words:** *integration, region, globalization, pragmatism, "open regionalism" doctrine, Asia-Pacific region, East Asia, Southeast Asia, APEC, ASEAN, ASEAN + 3, ASEAN + 6, TPP-12, TPP-11, trilateral format, South Korea, China.*

**Анотація.** Використовуючи різнобічний теоретико-методологічний інструментарій в статті розкриваються особливості інтеграційної політики Японії в Азіатсько-Тихоокеанському регіоні в перші десятиліття XXI ст. Показано вплив внутрішніх і зовнішніх факторів на її формування та реалізацію. В контексті принципів регіоналізму та глобалізму проаналізовані витоки та основні засади доктрини «відкритого регіоналізму», як бази формування багатосторонньої зони вільної торгівлі. Підкреслено, що сприяння лібералізації торгівлі і інвестицій, розглядається в японських урядових колах, як фактор, необхідний не тільки для стійкого росту японської економіки, але й світової економіки. Все це дає підстави стверджувати, що регіональна та глобальна лібералізація протікають разом, підсилюючи одна одну. Наголошується, що стримування протекціонізму в торгівлі, підтримка і зміцнення СОТ, яка забезпечує правову стабільність і передбачуваність міжнародної торгівлі, захист прав інтелектуальної власності залишаються сьогодні основними завданням в зовнішньоекономічній політиці Японії.

Показано відмінність підходів Токіо до питання інтеграційної взаємодії в регіоні від класичного європейського зразка. На прикладі участі Японії в Асоціації держав Південно-Східної Азії (АСЕАН) показано, як завдяки поєднанню в зовнішньоекономічній стратегії економічної доцільності з геополітичними процесами в регіоні Японія сприяла розширенню кола учасників (АСЕАН+3, АСЕАН+6). Підкреслюється, що зміцнення позиції АСЕАН розглядається Токіо як один із інструментів посилення колективних позицій країн-учасниць в міжнародних відносинах. Показана роль і з'ясовано мотиви участі Японії в ТПП - отримати переваги від повномасштабної лібералізації і сформулювати спільні економічні і політичні цілі країн регіону, що дасть можливість забезпечити єдність дій в протистоянні торгово-економічній експансії КНР. Акцентується увага, що в умовах міжнародної невизначеності і високої конфліктності у світі, Японія демонструє здатність до корегування своєї зовнішньої політики. В цьому плані показовим є зростання її зацікавленості у зміцненні формату тристороннього співробітництва Японії-КНР-Південної Кореї для забезпечення стабільності і безпеки в регіоні.

**Ключові слова:** *інтеграція, регіон, глобалізація, прагматизм, доктрина «відкритого регіоналізму» Азіатсько-Тихоокеанський регіон, Східна Азія, Південно-Східна Азія, АТЕС, АСЕАН, АСЕАН+3, АСЕАН+6, ТПП-12, ТПП-11, тристоронній формат, Південна Корея, Китай.*

**Аннотация.** Используя разносторонний теоретико-методологический инструментарий в статье раскрываются особенности интеграционной политики Японии в Азиатско-Тихоокеанском регионе в первые десятилетия XXI века. Показано влияние внутренних и внешних факторов на ее формирование и реализацию. В контексте принципов регионализма и глобализма проанализированы истоки и основные принципы доктрины «открытого регионализма», как базы формирования многосторонней зоны свободной торговли. Подчеркнуто, что содействие либерализации торговли и инвестиций, рассматривается в японских правительственных кругах, как фактор, необходимый не только для устойчивого роста японской экономики, но и мировой экономики. Все это дает основания утверждать, что региональная и глобальная либерализация протекают вместе, усиливая друг друга. Отмечается, что сдерживание протекционизма в торговле, поддержка и укрепление ВТО, которая обеспечивает правовую стабильность и предсказуемость международной торговли, защита прав интеллектуальной собственности остаются сегодня основной задачей во внешнеэкономической политике Японии.

Показано отличие подходов Токіо к вопросу интеграционного взаимодействия в регионе от классического европейского образца. На примере участия Японии в Ассоциации

государств Юго-Восточной Азии (АСЕАН) показано, как благодаря сочетанию во внешнеэкономической стратегии экономической целесообразности с геополитическими процессами в регионе. Япония способствовала расширению круга участников (АСЕАН + 3, АСЕАН + 6). Подчеркивается, что укрепление позиции АСЕАН рассматривается Токио как один из инструментов усиления коллективных позиций стран-участниц в международных отношениях. Показана роль и выяснено мотивы участия Японии в ТТП - получить преимущества от полномасштабной либерализации и сформулировать общие экономические и политические цели стран региона, что позволит обеспечить единство действий в противостоянии торгово-экономической экспансии КНР. Акцентируется внимание, что в условиях международной неопределенности и высокой конфликтности в мире, Япония демонстрирует способность к корректировке своей внешней политики. В этом плане показателен рост ее заинтересованности в укреплении формата трехстороннего сотрудничества Японии-КНР- Южной Кореи для обеспечения стабильности и безопасности в регионе.

**Ключевые слова:** интеграция, регион, глобализация, прагматизм, доктрина «открытого регионализма» Азиатско-Тихоокеанский регион, Восточная Азия, Юго-Восточная Азия, АТЭС, АСЕАН, АСЕАН + 3, АСЕАН + 6, ТТП-12, ТТП-11, трехсторонний формат, Южная Корея, Китай.

**Introduction.** In a narrow sense, integration is seen as a process of relations intensification and voluntary rapprochement of states based on common interests. This mutually beneficial union gives certain advantages to states at different levels of economic development. At the same time, the integration policy of each of the Asia-Pacific countries has its differences and cannot be adjusted by common rules.

In this regard, it is worth noting the study of Japan's integration policy, which is based on the philosophy of free trade. Its goal, in accordance with the "Economic Growth Strategy" adopted by the Ministry of Economy and Industry in 2006, is not only to maintain Japan's status as one of the largest economies, but to transform the country into a strong dominant economy in the world.

At the same time, the influence of domestic and foreign policy factors on the implementation of its economic strategy is noticeable. As for the domestic political factor, it reveals the contradictions between the desire of part of the population to historical rapprochement with neighbors in Asia on the postwar Franco-German model and the new nationalism, which is usually referred to as the desire for greater persistence in foreign affairs [Мелькина, 2018: 101].

As for the foreign policy factor, this includes, first of all, dissatisfaction with the continued Japan's military dependence on the United States.

The factors noted by us do not contribute to the formation of Japan's common economic and political goals of the region. Therefore, the lack of such unity does not give us grounds to consider existing free trade zones, customs unions as instruments of integration, but rather as instruments of trade and economic relations. However, given the global and functional interdependence in the modern world and the dynamics of economic growth in China and India, Japan's foreign policy is undergoing significant changes. First of all, in an effort to maintain its leadership position, official Tokyo seeks to reconcile its political and economic interests with other countries in the region, which gives us reason to consider these steps as prerequisites for the formation of a new integration union.

**Definitions, methods, and research structure.** The objective of this article is to investigate the impact of internal and external factors on integration policy, to reveal the mechanism of the implementation of the country's foreign economic strategy and the features that distinguish it from the policy of China and other participant states of the Asia-Pacific region.

The Asia-Pacific region is becoming one of the world's centers of growth, forcing Tokyo to look for ways to intensify its foreign policy. One of the important instruments for its implementation is the country's foreign economic activity. Its goal, in accordance with the "Economic Growth Strategy" adopted by the Ministry of Economy and Industry in 2006, is not only

to maintain Japan's status as one of the largest economies, but to transform the country into a strong dominant economy in the world.

Rested on pragmatic foreign economic strategy, Japan, however, is forced to consider both domestic and foreign policy factors. At the same time the domestic political factor reveals the contradictions between the part of the population which is for historical rapprochement with their neighbors in Asia on the postwar Franco-German model and the rising tide of nationalism, which manifest itself in the aspiration for greater persistence in foreign affairs [Мелькина, 2018: 101].

Regarding the foreign policy issues there is some discontent with the Japanese sustained military reliance on the United States, the growing influence of China, and the escalating battle between the two economies for leadership in Asian and the world affairs.

#### **Literature review and research background.**

Judging by the analysis of recent publications on international relations, we have every reason to believe that the world has entered an era of uncertainty. On the one hand, we are witnessing how the fear of losing its leading position is undermining the strength of the West, on the other hand, there are dynamic changes in the Asia-Pacific region, which claims to be the new global leader. Therefore, it is not surprising that the leading players in the region are actively searching for a new ambitious model that can strengthen its authority in the rest of the world. As one of the key players in this process, Japan is trying to use its economic potential to increase its influence. At the same time, as noted by Ukrainian researchers M. Kulnych, Y. Konstantinova, J. Leshchenko, Y. Pakhomov, S. Shergin, L. Areshidze, M. Malyutin, G. Chufirin, to achieve its political goals, Japan skillfully uses the format of multilateral cooperation, both with the countries of the Asia-Pacific region and other leading countries.

Such American and Western European researchers as B. Buzan, L. Hagstrom, D. Shambaugh, J. Linda, M. Lohdi, M. Green, G. Hook, G. Roseman emphasize that it is Japan's participation in multilateral dialogues that ensures the sustainability of economic cooperation and improves Japan's image as a responsible regional partner and expands its opportunities for diplomatic maneuver.

However, it should be noted that due to objective reasons: the growing influence of China and India in the region and the growing conflict between the United States and China, the question of Japan's influence on integration and key political processes in the region remains poorly understood.

**Materials of the research.** Speaking of regional integration, it is necessary to define the essence of the concept of "region", which in modern regionalism does not have a single definition. Based on the object and subject of our study, the most successful foreign policy interpretation of the region was proposed by K. Deitch, N. Palmer, W. Rostow, according to which "the region is a group of countries that in many obvious parameters are more interconnected than with other countries" [Субботина, 2017: 210].

It should be noted that there is no single point of view on the Asia-Pacific region geographical framework issue and on its integrity both in domestic and foreign science [Субботина, 2017: 211]. Such lack of uniformity of opinions is associated with the mobility and dynamism of APAC's boundaries changing. Therefore, for the most part, the Asia-Pacific region is seen as a geopolitical space or megaregion that unlike a geographical area has no clearly defined boundaries.

Another feature is that the political and economic instability of the region in the postwar years made it difficult to choose the development strategy of individual countries. Therefore, Japan, as a leading economy had in the 60-80's XX century to implement its foreign economic policy by creating an extensive production and trade network, which contributed to the liberalization of regional trade and investment. These steps resulted in the activating of economic life in the region and the emergence of other integration initiatives including the first meeting of the Asian Development Bank in 1966, the establishment of ASEAN to ensure peace and stability in Southeast Asia in 1967, the founding of the Pacific Economic Council (TEC), a regional association of business, and even the Pacific Conference on Trade and Development (PAFTAD), a scientific society, which is engaged in the study of the region's development challenges and solutions. The

institutionalization of integration processes has created the prerequisites for regional integration which were not supported by Japan as the key beneficiary of the multilateral trading system.

The absence of the single legal framework for uniting is one of the important reasons for it. Uncertainty of legal mechanisms for the implementation of integration projects could lead to destabilization of the situation in the region and separatism. Therefore, Japan criticized the positions of individual countries on the integration of economies and supported an open, stable and based on the rules of GAAT and WTO international economic order [Терехов, 2009: 94].

It was more important for Japan, to promote the economic growth of the region through free trade and the WTO-based international economic order support as it would enhance it as a guarantor of economic stability in the region. This was the approach of its foreign economic strategy adopted by the government in the 1960s and 1980s. By creating a favorable regime for the location and operation of enterprises in the Asia-Pacific region, Japan drew the countries of the region into its orbit, and thus changed the historical image of the aggressor's country formed during World War II.

It was these circumstances that determined the peculiarity of Japan's integration policy in the 70-90's XX century and affected the integration processes in the Asia-Pacific region that were different from the classical model of European integration.

### **The Doctrine of Open Regionalism in 2000**

Japan's Foreign economic policy during the 70-90's XX century was based on the principle of "open regionalism", which further determined the directions of economic cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region and the policy of trade liberalization and economic relations.

In 2006, the business representatives of the APEC economies put forward the idea of creating an Asia-Pacific Free Trade Area (APTA). Seeking the ways to weaken Japan's influence in the region China became the biggest booster of its creation. Following the results of the APEC summit in November 2014 the Beijing *roadmap* to vast Asia-Pacific free trade area was adopted. With the help of this document China struggled to establish a specified time frame for the establishment of a Free Trade Area with the participation of the APEC economy until 2025. However, most countries in the region opposed it.

Japan instead initiated the adoption of the APEC Growth Strategy in 2010. This program document identifies areas of work for the formation of a new model of economy, which would include such components of economic growth as balance, inclusiveness, sustainability, innovation, security.

The key issue is how to improve the interconnection in the Asia-Pacific region, both at the level of infrastructure and at the level of institutions and individuals. Hence, the formation of a holistic, comprehensively interconnected and integrated space in the physical, institutional and humanitarian dimensions was defined as the main goal.

On the eve of Japan's G20 presidency in 2019, Prime Minister Abe said that as a free trade promoter, Japan would actively build up the prosperity and stability of the Asia-Pacific region, a "global growth center", and that Japan would secure and strengthen its Asian-Pacific presence as a supporter of the "Free and Open Indo-Pacific" and the Pacific Islands Leaders' Meeting (PALM) [4].

Accordingly, the principle of "open regionalism" has gained global popularity thanks to APEC, which remains a major factor in the world trade system [5].

However, it should be noted that neither the decisions taken at the summits of heads of states and APEC governments, nor the Japanese government's official documents contain a definition of "open regionalism" as a doctrine. As a result, several competing ideas about the essence of the principle and the mechanisms of its implementation have emerged. The two main approaches interpreting "open regionalism" through the relationship between multilateral and regional trade agreements should be highlighted. Those who view it as a multilateral process express three main concerns. First, they note that regional agreements give preferences to member countries, putting other trading partners at a disadvantage. Since apart from differentiated tariffs, APEC members can enjoy preferential rules and set their own regional requirements. At the same time, there are

concerns that an individual member of the preferential agreement may suffer from the negative impacts of profit distribution arising from the income redistribution of tariff rates [6].

Secondly, they argue that countries may lose interest in the multilateral system taking active part in regional initiatives halting its evolution and even threatening its viability [6].

The sharp changes in US trade policy since the early 1980s were particularly worrying. During this period, the United States foreign policy combined global liberalization with participation in regional initiatives. By negotiating and concluding bilateral agreements and free trade with Israel and Canada, they facilitated large-scale free trade agreements in the Asia-Pacific region through APEC and in the Western Hemisphere through the introduction of a free trade area. Due to fear of the adverse effects of regionalism some countries have focused much of their criticism on the United States policy as the state has been a longtime (and sometimes the only) leader in global liberalization [7].

The third problem of regionalism is its geopolitical influence. Some researchers point out that in previous epochs, regional trade agreements (and economic blocs in general) could have contributed to political and even military confrontation between nations. The imperial preferences of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland (later the Commonwealth) and the closed economic zone created in Central Europe by Nazi Germany in the 1930s provide a good illustration of this. Modern critics of regionalism do not expect such extreme results, but fear that large and intense regional ties can go beyond the economy and lead to annoyance and even conflict in other areas of international relations.

Practice shows that it is impossible to resolve the dispute "regionalism against globalism". Therefore, one should probably agree with those researchers who believe that regional and global liberalization go hand in hand, and therefore they tend to strengthen each other. An example is the United States, which has implemented its regional initiatives through global leadership of multilateral liberalization. Undoubtedly, this approach can provide counterarguments that would give alternative judgments. But the practice of post-war cooperation between the United States and Japan shows that the only **undeniable conclusion is that** the relationship between regionalism and globalism depends on the management of the process by the key countries involved.

**Balance** and dynamics of economic relations is achieved through constructive decisions of the participants [8]. According to Japanese government officials, promoting the trade and investment liberalization today is necessary not only for the sustainable growth of the Japanese economy, but also for the rest of the world economy. At the same time, restraining trade protectionism, supporting and strengthening the WTO, which ensures legal stability and predictability of international trade, protection of intellectual property rights remain the main tasks in Japan's foreign economic policy [Ito, Iwata, McKenzie, Urata, 2018: 3].

#### **Japan's participation in the ASEAN integration association**

ASEAN is considered one of the most influential integration entities in Southeast Asia. Its formation was driven by the need for military and political stabilization in the region. These political factors contributed to the revival of economic relations between the countries. From the mid-1950s until the 1990s, Japan, through its "planned and rational model of development," not only became one of the leading economies in the Asia-Pacific region, but also contributed to their economic growth and economic modernization by assisting neighboring countries. Such a mediating role strengthened the liberalization of trade and economic relations between the states and contributed to the involvement of Japan in bilateral and regional initiatives of ASEAN member countries [9].

Since the early 1970s, thanks to trade and private business investment, as well as government support, these relations have deepened significantly, establishing the classic model of interdependence of economies.

Japan strengthens its economic influence politically by participating in various ASEAN activities. In this way it helps to stabilize the situation in the region, which is crucial for Japan's security and prosperity.

ASEAN member states have been important suppliers of natural resources and food to Japan. For example, in 2011, Malaysia, Indonesia and Brunei together accounted for about 35 percent of Japan's total demand for natural gas. Thailand provided about 60 percent of Japan's sugar imports (imported sugar will provide 90 percent of Japan's demand for sugar). At the same time, ASEAN countries relied heavily on Japanese products: about 30 percent of the region's imports of transport equipment came from Japan during the 2000s. These relations reflect the classical theory of comparative advantage, which is an important aspect of Japan-ASEAN bilateral trade [10].

In addition to this classic economic interdependence, Japan and ASEAN member states have established another interdependent link in the manufacturing sector. To take advantage of labor costs, in the late 1980s and 1990s, Japanese firms aggressively increased their investment in ASEAN member countries. As a result, the region includes a significant part of the global production networks of Japanese multinational companies. Aggressive investments by Japanese multinational companies have shifted labor-consuming production processes, such as assembly lines, to other countries. This trend was particularly noticeable in the Japanese electric machinery sector. The division of production processes and the transfer of those that are labor-intensive to countries with large numbers of manpower helped to reduce overall production costs and to increase scale of production [10].

The Asian financial crisis, which began in 1997, has shown how vital for Japan is the ASEAN's economic stability. The new challenges prompted the search for new formats of cooperation within ASEAN + 3 (People's Republic of China, Japan and the Republic of Korea).

The main objectives of the new association were consolidated in 1999 in the Joint Statement on East Asian Cooperation. In November 2004, the states agreed to Japan's initiative to connect India, Australia and New Zealand to the existing format. (ASEAN +6).

The presence of China's economy in the region has prompted Japan to take the lead in supporting ASEAN member states. In fact, during and after the crisis, Japan actively assisted ASEAN member states by creating two new funds: the Japan-ASEAN Solidarity Fund in 1999 and the Japan-ASEAN General Exchange Fund in 2000. Broadly speaking Japan managed to improve its relations with ASEAN member states in several respects during the 2000s. In particular, the ASEAN-Japan summit in 2003 in Tokyo adopted a package of agreements covering various areas of cooperation. Among them there is the Regional Economic Partnership Agreement, which eventually created the regulatory framework for the Comprehensive Economic Partnership between ASEAN and Japan. The summit stressed the need to reduce the economic development disparities among ASEAN member states and stressed the importance of cooperation between Japan and ASEAN in global issues such as control of terrorism, the fight against piracy, environmental protection, and the control of infectious diseases [12].

ASEAN's economic integration will expand the region's domestic market which will contribute to intra-industry trade with Japan, attract new Japanese investment, encouraging Japanese transnational enterprises to move their subsidiaries to neighbouring countries. Such processes will increase the effect of agglomeration and increase the productivity of the new economy. However, the benefits of ASEAN integration will depend on the extent to which "real" integration is achieved, which should remove non-tariff barriers as well as tariffs. It is clear that the definition of non-tariff barriers is more difficult than targeting tariffs [12].

The degree of ASEAN integration depends on attracting additional investment from abroad, in particular Japan. The main feature of Japanese investments in the region is that they contribute to the creation of well-paid, highly productive jobs. From the Japanese government point of view the existence of multinational enterprises, the transactions they perform, and the employments they create have to contribute to the economic growth of the host country. In order to deepen integration in the region, the Japan-ASEAN Integration Fund (JAIF) has supported the ASEAN integration increase in many areas, including the assistance in reducing economic inequality in the region by enhancing ASEAN cooperation. At the Japan-ASEAN Summit in November 2018, Prime Minister Abe noted that Japan's assistance to ASEAN exceeded its 2013 commitment to provide 2 trillion yen over five years. He also admitted that Japan will continue to support private investment and

promote the development of regional infrastructure of high quality in accordance with international standards, respecting the unity of ASEAN and its dominating role. A number of summit initiatives will also contribute to the integration deepening: the Initiative for Cooperation in the Field of Industrial Human Resources Development; ASEAN-Japan Fourth Industrial Revolution Initiative; cooperation with the Smart Cities Network in partnership with the ASEAN Smart Cities Network (ASCN); cooperation between ASEAN and Japan in disaster management through the use of JAIF, cooperation with the ASEAN Coordination Center for Humanitarian Aid in Disaster Management, environmental cooperation, etc.

As a result of participating in regional integration processes, Japan has managed to expand cooperation with ASEAN countries. However, due to the rise of China's economy and the central role of ASEAN in the integration process Japan was no longer responsible for their further development and there are no any reasons to speak of its leadership in the region. Although this situation undoubtedly opens opportunities for the establishment of China as a leading actor in the region, but it also constitutes the risk of escalating the struggle between China and Japan and affects US interests.

### **Security issues in Japan's regional integration policy**

As South-East Asia develops, Japan's political role in the region becomes more visible. In particular, it has been hard at work on the security cooperation. At 1992 ASEAN Prime Ministerial Conference, Foreign Minister Nakayama Taro proposed to add a security policy dialogue to the agenda. Since peace was achieved in Cambodia Japan has worked to strengthen ASEAN's role in the region and to promote the Establishment of the Security Cooperation Council in the Asia Pacific (CSCAP) [13].

The existence of a politically stable Southeast Asia is in Japan's interests. One of the threats to this stability is the illicit trafficking of small arms. In May 2000 together with the Government of Indonesia and the United Nations Regional Center for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific Japan as the Chairman of the UN Group of Governmental Experts on Small Arms co-sponsored a seminar on small arms and light weapons in Jakarta. It was attended by all ten ASEAN countries, with China, Pakistan and South Korea as observers. The seminar was the first occasion to discuss regional cooperation on this issue.

Ethnic, religious disputes, and social and political unrest caused by poverty and bureaucratic corruption are not a lesser threat to the stability in Southeast Asia. Contributing to regional stability through mediation and economic assistance, Japan feels itself comfortable in this political role.

In early December 2002, Japan, along with the United States, the European Union, and the World Bank, hosted a peace conference in Tokyo, demonstrating support for international cooperation on a peace settlement [14].

According to the «*Vision Statement on ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation*» and the «*Joint Statement*» adopted at the ASEAN-Japan Anniversary Summit, held in Tokyo in 2013. The creation of a more stable and prosperous ASEAN is seen as an important way for the prosperity of the region.

In November 2018, the readiness to strengthen ASEAN-Japan cooperation in a wide range of areas, including advancing ASEAN integration, enhancing economic growth, improving people's lives, and promoting peace, stability and prosperity across the Indo-Pacific region was confirmed by the Joint Statement of the 21st ASEAN-Japan Summit to Commemorate the 45th Anniversary of ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation. Prime Minister Abe Shinzo noted the importance of strengthening cooperation between Japan and ASEAN in four regional partnerships, namely Partners for Peace and Stability, Partners for Prosperity, Partners for Quality of Life, and Heart-to-Heart Partners.

Prime Minister Abe stated that Japan would promote practical cooperation within the framework of the Vientiane Vision (Japan-ASEAN Defence Cooperation Initiative) and strengthen cooperation in cybersecurity. With regard to regional and international affairs, Prime Minister Abe said that Japan would continue to work closely with ASEAN member states to support and change the "free and open Indo-Pacific region".

Referring to North Korea, Prime Minister Abe stated that UN Security Council resolutions must be fully implemented to ensure complete annihilation of all weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missiles by North Korea [Terada, 2014:13]. With due regard to the threat of North Korea's nuclear capabilities strengthening, Foreign Minister Kono praised the efforts of the United States and Republic of Korea to "fully denuclearize" North Korea. Japan declares for closing the loopholes in sanctions against North Korea and enhanced cooperation on the protection of intellectual property rights.

Together with other countries Japan shares serious concerns about the rapid and massive construction of Chinese outposts in the South China Sea. During the official visit of Prime Minister Abe in October 2018 to China, it was emphasized that Japan and China must play a constructive role in ensuring peace and prosperity of the international community in East Asia. Vectors for future development of such cooperation were discussed at the 13th meeting of the SAC, which took place in Singapore in November 2018. Prime Minister Abe said that disputes should be resolved peacefully, on the basis of international law, and not by force [17] .

The settlement of the conflict with China over the status of the South China Sea is of the particular importance for Japan. The South China Sea is critical for both Japan and ASEAN as they have achieved peace and prosperity through trade. Therefore, ASEAN countries have expressed deep concern over China's unilateral attempts to change the status quo in the South China Sea. Japan supports ASEAN's initiatives to demilitarize the area and maintain a peaceful and open South China Sea to ensure maritime security and safety for both sides.

Thus, external factors affect the regional role of ASEAN and its relations with partners. This is evident in Japan's emphasis on the supremacy of law in the field of maritime security and in ASEAN's ongoing efforts to manage conflicts connected with territorial requirements in the South China Sea . ASEAN generally does not support any separate territorial claims by Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines and Vietnam. The organization seeks to maintain its role as a judge by involving China (also the plaintiff) as a regional group under the Declaration of Conduct in the South China Sea in the Code of Conduct. However, China prefers to consider different territorial claims on a bilateral basis. China's fears that the South China Sea issue could be used against its interests and could force it to use the ASEAN consensus principle in ASEAN-China negotiations.

Therefore, Japan updates the format of multilateral relations with bilateral initiatives to inform and facilitate regional discussions. At the same time, enduring tensions between China and ASEAN countries such as the Philippines and Vietnam will continue to intensify discussions on that subject.

However, the South China Sea issue may not be the best objective for assessing ASEAN's response to external challenges or influences. There have been cases where ASEAN has successfully responded to external situations considered by all the members a common threat to regional stability. The 2000 Chiang Mai Initiative, launched by ASEAN finance ministers and their counterparts in China, Japan and South Korea, demonstrates a desire to prepare for future economic shocks in the region, such as the 1997-98 Asian financial crisis.

Our analysis shows that for half a century of its existence, ASEAN represents an interesting picture for the analysis of the integration processes. After creating the space among competing nations for achieving the superiority the first generation of founders gradually ceded the helm to successors who faced different regional realities. The new group of leaders brings different interpretations of the "ASEAN path", as well as different views on bilateral cooperation with external partners [Wallace, 2018: 884].

Since 2012, ASEAN members have openly faced the challenge of maintaining a balance between the unity of the organization's goals of regional stability and security. Member States must also withstand the pressures of external influences that underlie members' bilateral relations with other countries in the wider region and beyond.

#### **Increasing influence in trilateral relations Japan - China - Republic of Korea**

Due to the weakening of the US position in ATP and the deterioration of US-China relations, Japan took the lead in the Asia-Pacific region . At the same time, it successfully uses dissatisfaction

with US protectionist policies in the world trade to restore and strengthen its influence in the format of the trilateral summit Japan - China - Republic of Korea.

The relations with its regional neighbors are extremely important for Tokyo. First of all the election of the leader of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) of Japan has proved their impact on the domestic political situation in the country, and secondly, tripartite summit relations ensure its participation in the integration and other political and economic processes taking place in the region.

After winning the election, the Shinzo Abe government made every effort to resume dialogue in a tripartite format interrupted in November 2015 due to a number of contradictions. Relations between the East Asian States in particular have been complicated by territorial disputes between Japan and China in East Asia China Sea, with South Korea on the ownership of the Dokto Islands / Takeshima and the differences between Beijing and Seoul on regional security and the location of American THAAD missile defence systems on the territory [Wallace, 2018: 885].

The thawing of relations between Tokyo and Beijing and the unpredictability of the US President D. Trump's policy contributed to the reduction of tension in the interstate relations within the East Asian triangle. An equally important factor in the resumption of dialogue has been the situation on the Korean peninsula in connection with the DPRK's nuclear program. Ensuring security and stability in the region required the further coordination. The resolving the situation on the Korean Peninsula became one of the central issues during the meeting between the Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, the Premier of the State Council of the People's Republic of China Li Keqiang, and the President of the Republic of Korea Moon Jae-in. The discussion of the prospects of creating a common free trade area and protection against all forms of protectionism in the world trade was equally important for the three states [18].

After mutual visits of top officials from the United States, Japan, South Korea, China, and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, as well as the Inter-Korean Summit in April 2018, there was a need for further coordination in the region. In May 2018, the Tokyo summit which provided an opportunity to hold tripartite consultations and discuss the results of separate meetings between Xi Jinping and Moon Jae-in with Kim Jong Un and S. Abe with D. Trump took place. The declaration adopted as a result of the tripartite dialogue of the heads of state praised the results of the Inter-Korean Summit and reflected the intention of China, Japan and Republic of Korea to achieve full denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.

The summit was an important diplomatic success for the Abe government in reviving of the trilateral format of the meeting of the leading East Asian states and bringing in Tokyo into the North Korean negotiating process.

Together with the need to coordinate action on North Korea's policy the discussion on financial and economic issues was important for Japan and South Korea. As a result, the leaders of China, Japan and the Republic of Korea emphasized their determination to combat all forms of protectionism in the world trade and the desire to develop a tripartite free trade area (FTA) in the final declaration [19].

The document also expresses support and seeks the further development of the format of the Common Regional Economic Partnership – RCEP. During a press conference following the summit, Premier Li Keqiang called on his colleagues to develop the FTA between the three countries and to expedite the conclusion of negotiations on RCEP. The first step towards Tokyo was Beijing's decision to provide Japan with a quota of qualified foreign institutional investors (Renminbi Qualified Foreign Institutional Investor Program, RQFII) of 200 billion yuan (about \$ 31.36 billion) to support active investment by Japanese financial institutions in the capital market PRC [20].

More than ten economies in Asia, Europe and the Americas have joined the system so far. All these efforts have shown that the current state of affairs contributes to the intensification of the negotiation process between China, Japan and South Korea.

However, as the practice of relations between the states shows, despite the common financial and economic interests on the way to the implementation of the integration project there is still a

mistrust between the states, generated by the tragic past of the Second World War. And while Beijing, Tokyo and Seoul are trying to overcome the legacy of the past, historical memory prevents them from looking to the future and developing plans for mutual cooperation. It was the serious controversy between Tokyo and Seoul over the issue of compensation for the forced recruitment of Korean workers in Japanese enterprises during World War II that prevented a tripartite meeting in October 2020 with the participation of Premier Li Keqiang, President of South Korea. Moon Jae-in and Japanese Prime Minister Eshihide Suga.

Referring to the agreement between Tokyo and Seoul in 1965, the Japanese government believes that all compensation for damages has been paid. Therefore, any concessions on this issue do not exclude that Korea will demand compensation and apologies for the occupation endlessly. In October 2018, having considered the dispute over compensation for Korean workers who were forcibly mobilized and put to forced labor during the Japan occupation, determined that Japanese companies must pay them compensation. Nippon Steel property was seized. In response, in July 2019, the Japanese government imposed restrictions on exports to South Korea of materials without which the production of semiconductors is impossible [21]. Despite the trade war and the existing contradictions, China, Japan and South Korea are struggling to maintain the trilateral format, as further escalation of relations around the "selective historical memory" may puncture a scheme to create a tripartite free trade area by 2035 [Rostow, 1993: 57]. Following the exchange of statements Seoul intends to make efforts to hold a tripartite summit between South Korea, China and Japan. According to the South Korean President Kang Ming Sik administration's representative if there are open issues that need to be resolved, it is necessary to be bent on holding a meeting, and refusal to participate should not be a lever of pressure in resolving various issues between countries.

The experience of integration processes in the Asia-Pacific region shows how dangerous is the «selective use of historical memory» for obtaining political dividends by individual political forces of the country. Thus, the states found themselves facing a choice whether to carry on further speculation about historical memory which will lead to the collapse of plans to boost economies and improve the lives of citizens, or to search for compromises and to create a tripartite free trade zone that will radically change the situation in the region and give unprecedented trade and economic opportunities for three countries by 2035. And as soon as they do it they will confirmation their ability to move forward without ever looking back.

**Conclusions and discussions.** The peculiarity of Japan's position on regional integration is in the considering the whole world as a single market and seeking the ways to improve the conditions for business activity in cooperation with other countries.

At the same time, emphasizing the interests of global world cooperation, Japan not only promotes the development of national economies but also strives to prevent regional separatism.

Having skilfully integrated economic feasibility into the region's geopolitical processes in its external economic strategy Japan has contributed to the expansion of the membership of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN + 3, ASEAN + 6). Always actively participating in the implementation of APEC and TPP integration projects Japan finds it important to reach specific agreements between the participating countries in certain areas of economic cooperation, which allows to lay the foundations for the national economy integration into a comprehensive mechanism of regional cooperation.

Integration policy is distinguished by its pragmatic orientation in all areas of international cooperation, from the "free trade zone" to the cultural and educational sphere. However, the US withdrawal from the Trans-Pacific Partnership in 2017 reduced Tokyo's role as its main ally and strengthened China's position in regional integration. Beijing seeks to strengthen its position in Tokyo's traditional spheres of influence by promoting alternative integration projects. After lengthy negotiations China succeeded to reach an agreement on signing a Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) in November 2020. Thus, Beijing has managed to create the largest free trade area, covering 2.2 billion people and about a third of world economic production. The signing of this agreement by the Government of Japan reduces its role as the center of the Asian

region which, being the largest consumer market, will determine the vector of economic and political direction of the developed countries in the future.

Thus, in our opinion it is worth noting several trends that will become increasingly visible in the regional policy of states due the dynamics of events in the region. In particular, the presence of three economic leaders in China, Japan and India will lead to the emergence of new integration projects and the struggle between them for the less influential countries support to form new economic associations. At the same time, in the absence of internal conflicts such presence would be the potential for bringing the countries of the region closer together despite the existence of different political regimes in the countries, and the proximity of cultures and traditions.

In such state of affairs there is a danger of intensifying the conflict between China, Japan and India which might affect US interests. Therefore, it is important for Japan that the countries participating in the regional project reach concrete agreements in certain areas of economic cooperation, which allows to lay the foundations for the integration of national economies into a comprehensive mechanism of regional cooperation.

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