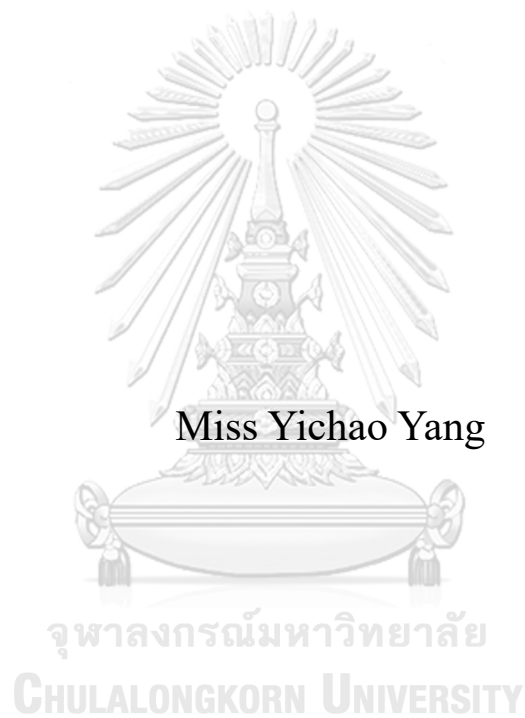


Examining the New ASEAN Regional Order Shaped by
US-Chinese Strategic Competition-Through the Lens of Health
Security



An Independent Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements
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กรณีการศึกษาระเบียบภูมิภาคอาเซียนใหม่ที่เกิดจากการแข่งขันเชิงกลยุทธ์ระหว่างสหรัฐฯ - จีนผ่านเลนส์ของความมั่นคงด้านสุขภาพ



น.ส.ยี่ฉาว หยาง

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กรณีการศึกษาระเบียบภูมิภาคอาเซียนใหม่ที่เกิดจากการแข่งขันเชิงกลยุทธ์ระหว่าง
สหรัฐฯ - จีนผ่านเลนส์ของความมั่นคงด้านสุขภาพ. (Examining the New
ASEAN Regional Order Shaped by US-Chinese Strategic
Competition-Through the Lens of Health Security) อ.ที่ปรึกษาหลัก :
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การแข่งขันเชิงกลยุทธ์ระหว่างจีนและสหรัฐอเมริกาในศตวรรษที่ 21 ได้เปลี่ยนแปลงลำดับภูมิภาคในเอเชีย และสมาคมประชาชาติแห่งเอเชียตะวันออกเฉียงใต้ (อาเซียน) ซึ่งเป็นภูมิภาคที่สำคัญในเอเชียก็ได้รับผลกระทบเช่นกัน นับตั้งแต่สิ้นสุดสงครามเย็น การเมืองทั่วโลกได้เริ่มพิจารณาความมั่นคงที่ไม่ใช่แบบดั้งเดิม รวมถึงประเด็นความมั่นคงที่เกี่ยวข้องกับสิ่งแวดล้อม สาธารณสุข และวัฒนธรรม เพื่อทำความเข้าใจว่าการแข่งขันระหว่างสหรัฐฯ กับจีนส่งผลกระทบต่ออาเซียนได้อย่างไร บทความนี้จะมุ่งเน้นไปที่ความมั่นคงด้านสาธารณสุข โดยเฉพาะในช่วงการระบาดของโควิด-19 บทความนี้จะวิเคราะห์แนวทางที่จีนและสหรัฐฯ ร่วมมือและเผชิญหน้ากันในความมั่นคงด้านสาธารณสุขในภูมิภาคอาเซียนในศตวรรษที่ 21 โดยเน้นที่บทบาทของการทูตด้านวัคซีนในช่วงการระบาดใหญ่ของโควิด-19 และอภิปรายผลกระทบของประเทศพันธมิตร และกิจกรรมอื่นๆ ตามลำดับอาเซียน บทความนี้พบว่าความช่วยเหลือเบื้องต้นจากจีนในช่วงแรกของการแพร่ระบาดของโควิด-19 ช่วยปรับปรุงภาพลักษณ์ของจีนในภูมิภาค และส่งผลให้เกิดความร่วมมือในเชิงบวกกับอาเซียน ในขณะที่การให้ความสำคัญและข้อขัดแย้งภายในประเทศของสหรัฐฯ และการถอนตัวของสหรัฐฯ จากองค์กรด้านสุขภาพระหว่างประเทศ หมายความว่าสหรัฐฯ ให้ความช่วยเหลือเพียงเล็กน้อยหรือแทบไม่มีเลยแก่อาเซียนในช่วงแรกของการแพร่ระบาดโควิด แต่ภายในกลางปี 2564 โดยเฉพาะอย่างยิ่งวัคซีนจากสหรัฐฯ ได้รับ การสนับสนุนมากขึ้นในภูมิภาคอาเซียน การแข่งขันเชิงกลยุทธ์ระหว่างจีนและสหรัฐอเมริกาในด้านความมั่นคงด้านสุขภาพทำให้ภูมิภาคอาเซียนสามารถรักษาเอกราชทางยุทธศาสตร์ผ่านความสมดุลที่เท่าเทียมกับมหาอำนาจ เช่น จีนและสหรัฐอเมริกา

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Yichao Yang : Examining the New ASEAN Regional Order Shaped by
US-Chinese Strategic Competition-Through the Lens of Health Security.
Advisor: Doctor Lowell Skar

The strategic competition between China and the United States in the 21st century has changed the regional order in Asia, and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), as an important region in Asia, has also been affected. Since the end of the Cold War, global politics has begun to consider non-traditional security, including security issues related to the environment, public health, and culture. To understand how US-China competition affects ASEAN, this article will focus on public health security, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. This paper analyzes some ways in which China and the United States cooperate and confront the field of public health security in the ASEAN region in the 21st century, focusing on the role of vaccine diplomacy during the COVID-19 pandemic, and discussing the impact of other countries, alliances and activities on the ASEAN order. This paper finds that initial assistance from China in the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic improved China's image in the region and resulted in positive engagement with ASEAN. While US domestic priorities and disputes and US withdrawal from international health organizations meant that the US provided little to no help to ASEAN in the early stages of the pandemic. But by mid-2021, especially with the western COVID-19 vaccine, the US has won more support in the ASEAN region. The strategic competition between China and the United States in the field of health security enables the ASEAN region to maintain strategic autonomy through an equal balance with major powers such as China and the United States.

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Chapter 1: *Introduction*

The United States and China have had complex relations in the 21st century, which have recently been framed in terms of “strategic competition.” One region where US-Chinese strategic competition has been especially visible is in Southeast Asia. While for much of the current century, the US has focused on traditional security issues in Southeast Asia – especially those tied to terrorism – and China has focused on trade and infrastructure development, both countries have also begun showing an interest in areas of non-traditional security as part of their engagement in the region. One key area of non-traditional security concern for China and the US in Southeast Asia during the last decade is health security. While this concern has been most visible during the COVID-19 pandemic when both China and the US have sought to assist Southeast Asia against the SARS-2 virus since 2020, similar efforts may be traced back to the earlier spread of the SARS-1 virus 2002-2004, and even earlier with help tied to limiting the spread of HIV-AIDS and malaria. To better understand how changing relations between China and the US have shaped the Southeast Asian region in recent years, this paper seeks to answer the question: *How has the strategic competition of China and the US in the area of health security affected the ASEAN region?*

To begin exploring this question, it is helpful to briefly review recent US and Chinese relations. In the 2008-2016 period, the Obama administration sought to “pivot” to Asia and adjusted its China policy, starting its "Asia-Pacific Rebalancing" strategy in 2011. This intensified the strategic competition between China and the United States in

the Asia-Pacific region.¹ It became a challenge for countries or even regions to maintain a balance with these powers. Still, it helped turn ASEAN into a key area of focus for both countries. When the Trump administration came to power in 2017, the US identified China as a "strategic competitor," and tensions between the two countries worsened. The Biden administration, since 2021, has continued the Trump administration's tone of strategic competition with China while making some essential adjustments, such as viewing itself as part of the new Indo-Pacific region.

While the US and China were involved in the ASEAN region with health issues in the 21st century, in areas like AIDS, malaria research and SARS, since 2020, the COVI SARS-2 pandemic has led both countries to put even more focus on public health. This has included competition and cooperation, as seen in various types of vaccine diplomacy that have emerged since 2021. In this context, it is crucial to consider the issue of public health security between China and the US in ASEAN, and how the strategic competition between China and the United States in the field of public health affects the ASEAN region. What has been achieved in this type of diplomacy? This article examines how China and the US have made public health responses to infectious diseases in ASEAN. Through this examination the article seeks to understand how the strategic competition between China and the US in the field of health security has affected the ASEAN region, especially during the SARS outbreak in 2003 and through the vaccine diplomacy of China and the US during the COVID-19 outbreak.

Literature Review

¹ Feng, Zhu. "Sino-US Strategic Competition and the Future of East Asian Security Order." *World Economy and Politics*, no. 3 (2013): 8–9. Xinbo, Wu. "China-US Strategic Competition." *World Economy and Politics*, no. 5 (2020): 107–111. White, H. *The China Choice: Why We Should Share Power*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, (2013): 113.

Sino-US relations are complicated. Relations were normalized in 1979, and after a honeymoon period in the 1980s, Sino-US relations changed markedly from 1989. They were strained by the Tiananmen incident in June 1989, which led to sanctions on China and temporarily isolated it globally, but this incident was embedded in a larger global transformation, namely the end of the Cold War that began in late 1989. Together, they mark 1989 as a turning point in Sino-US relations. With the demise of the USSR by 1991, the US assumed the role of global hegemon while China rapidly developed on multiple fronts, and the US and China sought to improve their relationship. Early in 21st century, US hegemonic power was weakened by the Al-Qaeda attacks on New York and Washington on September 11, 2001, and its subsequent involvement in wars in the Middle East for more than a decade, following by the global financial crisis of 2007-2009. This US weakening was accompanied by China's efforts to enhance its economic position in Asia and the world and to challenge the presumed hegemony of the US. As a result, since 2010, US-China relations have been more unstable and entered a low period, with more friction and confrontation. China has become promoting, since around 2015, the notion that we are now living in a multi-polar world.

While continuing post-Tiananmen sanctions put on China since 1989, in 1993, the US Clinton administration proposed "constructive engagement" with China, stressing more cooperation and upgrades this, in 1997, to "comprehensive engagement" with China, seeking to build a "constructive strategic partnership" oriented toward the 21st century. By 1999, presidential challenger George W. Bush criticized Bill Clinton's concept of a "strategic partnership" with China and proposed that the US and China

were "strategic competitors."² Still, in 2000, Sino-US trade relations were normalized under Clinton, and this paved the way for China's entry into the WTO in 2001. As G.W. stressed, both the US and China began to see the relationships between the two countries in terms of strategic competition.

Although fears of global terrorism dominated global politics after the September 11, 2001, attacks on the US by Al-Qaeda and led to some cooperative efforts by the US and China, a new health threat emerged in 2002: the SARS virus. After the virus began affecting the world, the US and China cooperated closely with one another and the World Health Organization (WHO). These cooperative efforts helped limit the spread and impact of the virus. In 2005, China-US entered further strategic dialogues that focused on economy and trade, energy security, counter-terrorism cooperation, democracy, and human rights. China became a major manufacturer for the world in the early 21st century. Amid the global financial crisis of 2007-2009, the Beijing Olympic Games in 2008 put China on the worldwide stage in a significant way in the 21st century. China surpassed Japan as the second-largest economy in the world and the largest creditor of the US.

In 2011, Obama sought to focus more on Asia and agreed to join the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), which included many ASEAN countries and Asia but not China. In 2013, after Xi Jinping became the new leader of China, Obama and Xi Jinping met and proposed a "new type of major-country relationship" which stressed "no conflict, no confrontation, mutual respect, and win-win cooperation," seen in their 2014 signing a climate agreement and their cooperation for the common good.

² Baum, R. "'Strategic Partners' to 'Strategic Competitors': George W. Bush and the Politics of U.S. China Policy." *Journal of East Asian Studies* 1, no. 2 (2001): 191. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S159824080000497>.

Tensions emerged in US-China relations in 2015 over the South China Sea and involved several ASEAN countries. Although the Trump-Xi administration started by reaffirming that its China policy was "built on non-confrontation" and seeking good relations. Still, in September 2018, the US toughened its stance on China in both trade and military, and a Sino-US trade war began soon after.

While early in 2020, China-US signed a "phase one" trade agreement and made commitments on multiple fronts, the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic damaged relations between the US and China, with US Secretary of State Pompeo saying the US would end engagement with the CCP and China named the US as its biggest threat. The Biden administration has continued much of the Trump administration's relations with China, toughened them in some areas, such as technology transfer, and solidified the Indo-Pacific concept for its larger strategic understanding of the region.

After this background on US-Chinese relations from 1989, the paper will next explore the concepts of strategic competition, region and regionalism in Southeast Asia, and public health security and vaccine diplomacy.

Strategic Competition

Strategic competition refers to an aspect of international relations when global powers seek to maximize their economic, political and military interests and to minimize these interests against a rival in a given political space. US scholars and some parts of the US government have used “strategic competition” to refer to Sino-US relations since the 1990s. Some Chinese scholars have also used the term in this sense, too, but the Chinese government publicly views its relations with the US as mutually beneficial (“win-win”). Although both countries seem to seek a peaceful resolution of their differences, the intensifying disputes and distrust raise fears that the two countries could be headed to confrontation.

The basic paradigm of today's great power competition centers on control.³ Robert J. Art defines "strategic competition" as the struggle for strategic superiority in the international relations system, and in international political practice, it presents a strategic type in which a hegemonic country competes with a rising country.⁴ Strategic competition is comprehensive in scope and global in impact.⁵ Some international relations scholars see "the state of competition between countries is the most common

³ Yuan, Yang. “Two Evolutionary Paths of Power Competition between Great Powers: A Comparative Study Based on the Spring and Autumn System and the Post-World War II System.” *Contemporary Asia Pacific*, no. 9 (2000): 3–5.

⁴ Art, R. J. *A grand strategy for America*. Cornell University Press. (2013).

⁵ Xinbo Wu. “China-US Strategic Competition.” *World Economy and Politics*, no. 5 (2020): 107–111.

basic state."⁶ Unlike general competition among countries, strategic competition is sometimes seen as having four key dimensions. First, it normally involves regional or global powers. Second, it is tied to the balance of power between two sides and their respective role in a region or in the global system, as a competition for power and status. Strategic competition involves vital economic and security interests, institutions, values, and order arrangements (such as domestic political and economic models, ideology, international mechanisms, international norms, and international order). Strategic competition is tied to the distribution of power and power at the unit level, tied to how interactions between countries work, and to the structure and nature of the international system. Third, the impact of strategic competition often is more than bilateral, with direct or indirect effects on other countries' behavior and regional and global situations. Fourth, Yang Yuan suggests that it can work as a way of acquiring and competing for power either by exchanging interests or coercion.

From the 1990s, China's diplomatic influence has become as strong as that of the US in many parts of the world. The narrowing gap in national strength between the US and China coincides with their more intense bilateral disputes over trade, technology transfer, cyber espionage, and human rights, among other issues. The shared threat of the COVID-19 virus has also led to trade accusations and competition

⁶ Yuan, Ming. History of International Relations. 1994th ed. Beijing: Beijing University Press, (1994):11

for global influence.⁷ Tensions have likewise grown intense in hot spots like Taiwan and the East and South China Seas.

The George W. Bush administration (2001-2009) argued that Sino-US relations are strategically competitive in terms of military and geopolitics, thus shaping its early policy toward China. Strategic competition with China has become a priority for US foreign and security affairs and remained in its ideology even as the Bush administration focused on its wars in the Middle East since late 2001. The Obama administration (2009-2017) sought to shift foreign policy from the Middle East to the Asia-Pacific region. It signed the "Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia" with ASEAN in 2009, and an Asia-Pacific rebalance strategy was proposed in 2012. It repaired its unilateral stance towards Southeast Asia under George W. Bush, and paid more attention to Southeast Asia than before, beginning to develop more relations and more cooperation efforts with Southeast Asia. In 2017, the Trump administration proposed the Indo-Pacific strategy, which changed the "Asia-Pacific" geopolitical vision to the "Indo-Pacific," thus expanding the scope of this region.

This was solidified in December 2017, when the Trump administration released the new US National Security Strategy.⁸ The strategy defines China as a "competitor," indicating that the US sees China as its strategic competitor in Asia, showing how

⁷ Franco Ordoñez, "U.S., China Accuse Each Other of Mishandling COVID-19," *NPR Morning Edition*, March 23, 2020.

⁸ National Security Strategy of the United States of America. "The White House," September 5, 2017.

[https:// www.whitehouse. gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12 /NSS-Final-12-18-2017-0905.](https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NSS-Final-12-18-2017-0905)

strategic competition has become the central guiding ideology of the US policy toward China. Scholars in China and the US also generally believe that the era of Sino-US strategic competition has arrived.⁹ Strategic competition between China and the US has arisen in the context of China's rapid economic, political and military development, and the US attempts to maintain its hegemonic position in Asia, especially using the Indo-Pacific geopolitical framework.

China is mentioned in the Strategic Competition Act of 2021 as using its political, diplomatic, economic, military, technological, and ideological might to become a near-equal strategic competitor to the US.¹⁰ Yuan Peng believes that there are two development directions for "strategic competition," one is the strategic cooperative relationship under cooperative competition, the other is the "strategic resistance state" that the conflict competition eventually evolves into, and the "strategic competitor" This term can better reflect the essence of the current Sino-US relations.¹¹ Due to the overall status and influence of China and the US in the international system, the strategic competition between China and the US will not only affect and adjust the

⁹ Xinbo, Wu. "The Trump Administration and the New Phase of U.S. Policy toward China." *International Studies*, no. 3 (2018): 84–97. Cheng, Guo. "Re-Examination of 'Stable Development of Sino-US Relations' from the Perspective of Sino-US Competition." *Strategic Decision Research*, no. 2 (2018): 14–25.

¹⁰ Congress.gov. "Strategic Competition Act of 2021," May 10, 2021. <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/senate-bill/1169/text>.

¹¹ Peng, Yuan. "A Humble Opinion on the Current Nature of Sino-US Relations." *Modern International Relations*, no. 9 (2000): 3–5.

relationship between the two countries but also significantly impact the international order.

In December 2017, the Trump administration's new National Security Strategy, followed up by its early 2018 released the "National Defense Strategy" report shows the Trump administration to focus US strategy on China fully on strategic competition. With the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, worsened relations to China and led to the rapid intensification of "strategic competition" into what some have called a "strategic confrontation". By late 2020, Sino-US relations had fallen to their lowest point in 50 years.

First, the positioning of China and the general tone of Sino-US relations have taken a fundamentally negative turn. During the Trump era, the U.S. strategic positioning toward China has undergone a sharp shift. The 2017 National Security Strategy report defined China as a "competitor" and a "revisionist country," and considered China to be one of the three major challenges facing U.S. national security. The report claims that China intends to shape a world that is "opposed to American values and interests," "reasserts its influence on a global scale," and "attempts to change the international order in its favor."¹²

After Biden became president in January 2021, US and China continued to be understood in a "strategic competition" relation. U.S. Secretary of Defense Lloyd

¹² The White House, National Security Strategy of the United States of America, December 2017. 25, <http://nssarchive.us/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/2017.pdf>.

Austin said, "China is the most concerning competitor that we're facing."¹³ U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken noted as the Biden administration's attitude to China: "Our relationship with China will be competitive when it should be, collaborative when it can be, and adversarial when it must be. The common denominator is the need to engage China from a position of strength."

Some academics view four types of effects on ASEAN by the stronger China-US strategic competition. The first emphasizes that the US has considerable influence in the ASEAN region and is the leading force in maintaining the regional order, so strategic competition between China and the US will further highlight such advantages. David Shambaugh pointed out: Preventing the emergence of opposing polarities in Southeast Asia is the main challenge facing all countries in the region. The US still has extensive, profound, and continuous influence in Southeast Asia, and the regional security order retains the characteristics of fluidity and competition.¹⁴ Amitav Acharya also mentioned that few Asian countries believe the Chinese government's statements and theories about the "new security policy" or "peaceful rise," and neighboring countries have long been worried and skeptical. Such competition will have a negative impact on China.¹⁵

¹³ Seldin, Jeff. "Defense Secretary Nominee: US Faces Enemies Both at Home and Abroad." VOA, January 19, 2021. https://www.voanews.com/a/usa_defense-secretary-nominee-us-faces-enemies-both-home-and-abroad/6200952.html.

¹⁴ Shambaugh, David. "U. S. -China Rivalry in Southeast Asia, " *International Security*, Vol. 42, No. 2, 2018.

¹⁵ Tang, S., Li, M., & Acharya, A. (Eds.). *Living with China: Regional states and China through crises and turning points*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan US. (2009):247-265

A second view is that more intense Sino-US strategic competition will prompt ASEAN to move closer to China, emphasizing that reducing the power gap between China and the US is a crucial factor. Yan Xuetong uses "structural contradiction" to explain the narrowing of the power gap between China and the US, as rising power and hegemon respectively, which will necessarily exacerbate strategic competition between China and the US. This has become an important reason for the intensification of China and the US strategy.¹⁶ David Kang argues that while ASEAN welcomes the US presence in Asia, they have little interest in a plan to contain China, and if China does not threaten their national survival, East Asian and ASEAN countries are unlikely to side with the US if the US takes a hard line against China. Therefore, the confrontation between the US and China will only alienate regional governments from the US, and the US needs to follow the trend of countries moving closer to China.¹⁷ Nie Wenjuan also argued that ASEAN and China are geographically close and have close ties. Coupled with ASEAN's distrust of the Trump administration, ASEAN has shown a trend of being "closer to China and alienated from the US" economically and politically.¹⁸

The third point of view is that ASEAN will continue to maintain ASEAN centrality, independent of either China or the US and work to minimize or ameliorate

¹⁶ Yan, Xuetong. "Uncertainty in U.S.-China Relations." *World Economy and Politics*, no. 12 (2010): 29–30.

¹⁷ David C Kang. *U.S.-China Rivalry in Southeast Asia*. 1994th ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, (2017):132. ISBN: 110716723X, 9781107167230.

¹⁸ Nie, Wenjuan. "The Evolution of Power Structure in Southeast Asia under Sino-US Competition." *World Economic and Political Forum*, no. 2 (2020): 35–36.

their competition, so that ASEAN can remain autonomous while deepening cooperation with both major powers simultaneously. Zhang Yi suggested that in the face of increasingly intensified trade, economic and political disputes between China and the US, ASEAN should avoid "choosing sides" or falling apart. ASEAN's position should be to play both sides in the game of significant powers and safeguard its interests. Although countries in the region cannot ease the Sino-US conflict, they can shape the security and economic order in the area.¹⁹ This policy choice of ASEAN stems first from its centrality, namely "maintaining and promoting regional peace, security and stability and further enhancing peace-oriented values in the region" and "in external political, economic, social and cultural ASEAN centrality in the future while maintaining active participation, openness, inclusiveness, and non-discrimination." The concept of peace, centrality, and inclusiveness makes ASEAN independent and non-exclusive in its relations to China and the US.²⁰

A fourth view is that the strategic competition between China and the US in the ASEAN region will divide ASEAN into two camps. Kevin Rudd from Australia believes that China and US competition will polarize the Asia-Pacific region, and

¹⁹ Zhang, Yi. "ASEAN's 'Indo-Pacific' Strategy and Its Role in the Sino-US Game." *Asia Pacific Economy*, no. 6 (2019). <https://doi.org/DOI:10.16407/j.cnki.1000-6052.20200107.007>.

²⁰ Wang, Chuanjian, and Xin Wei. "Research on China-US-ASEAN Trilateral Security Relations under Strategic Competition." *World Economy and Politics*, no. 4 (2022).

force ASEAN to separate its support for China or the US.²¹ Singaporean President Lee Hsien Loong has also expressed in several public interviews that the competition between China and the US in the ASEAN region will affect the integrity of ASEAN itself.²²

Given these four views of how Sino-US strategic competition may affect ASEAN, it is important to see how they can be tied to the idea of regional order and to see how ASEAN is a type of regional order.

Regional Order

After World War Two, and especially from the 1950s, some areas of the world developed common political, economic, and social systems that were tied to distinct geographic regions. Ideas of regional order sometimes led to formal arrangements among countries that were meant to express a shared sense of identity and to reach common goals. While some early efforts of regional order dissolved, the European Community's formation in 1957 and ASEAN's formation in 1967 are examples of

²¹ Rudd, Kevin. "The White House." The United States, China, and Southeast Asia: Can ASEAN Find a New Strategic Equilibrium? Speech to the Foreign Policy Community of Indonesia, November 8, 2018. <https://asiasociety.org/policy-institute/united-states-china-and-southeast-asia-can-asean-find-new-strategic-equilibrium>.

²² CNBC Transcript: Lee Hsien Loong, Prime Minister of Singapore, "CNBC, October 19, 2017, <https://www.cnbc.com/2017/10/19/cnbc-transcript-lee-hsien-loong-prime-minister-of-singapore.html>

Prime Minister's Office Singapore, "PM Lee Hsien Loong at the IISS Shangri-La Dialogue 2019," May 31, 2019, <https://www.pmo.gov.sg/Newsroom/PM-Lee-Hsien-Loong-at-the-IISS-Shangri-La-Dialogue-2019>

durable and expandable forms of regional order. Since the end of the Cold War, with the greater emphasis on globalization, discourse helped to usher in a “new regionalism” more tied to an economic optimism embedded in regional organizations, such as ASEAN, that sought to participate in multinational trade, often through regional trade agreements and areas of non-traditional security. In the 21st century, some groups of countries like ASEAN continue to pursue their own development interests through regional organizations.

The international order is tied to how power, interests, and ideas among major actors in the international community, including major powers, work, but regional organizations are also able to engage great powers with a degree of independence and autonomy. Zhu Feng has argued that tensions between established and rising powers have become central forces that may be able to reshape regional order and show a) changes in comprehensive national strength, b) changes in national role positioning, and c) ways of competing for rights and interests among countries and domestic politics.²³

Regional order can be defined as the result of the distribution of rights, interests, and ideas among neighboring countries with interactive relations. Its primary manifestation is the establishment and operation of regional systems.²⁴ Men

²³ Zhu, Feng. “International Order and Sino-US Strategic Competition.” *Asia Pacific Security and Ocean Studies*, no. 2 (2020). <https://doi.org/10.19780/j.cnki.2096-0484.20200312.003>.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

Honghua argues that the basic logic of constructing regional order can be summarized in five dimensions: 1) pursuing common interests, 2) countries sharing responsibilities and great powers assuming more responsibility as the primary form, 3) open regionalism, 4) seeking cooperation and security as the main support, and 5) take regional system construction as the core path. Amitav Acharya has provided a powerful constructivist analytical framework to understand regional order in Asia. In particular his sophisticated approach to Southeast Asia's regional order has influenced many scholars in the field.²⁵ In 1967, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand jointly established the original ASEAN. ASEAN has gone from being primarily an organization focused on political and military cooperation to an expansion since the 1980s of new countries – Brunei, Vietnam, Laos, Myanmar, and Cambodia – to create an ASEAN that now involves cooperation in various fields such as politics, security, economy, culture, and health concerns into an integrated organization.²⁶ As a successful regional organization in the world, ASEAN has helped to create regional institutions in the Indo-Pacific based on informality and a wide range of processes to address non-traditional security challenges.

Since 1990, ASEAN has been a region full of institutions to manage and control security threats and achieve relations between regional countries that are

²⁵ Amitav Archaya has written many works on regionalism and Southeast Asia, including *Constructing a Security Community in Southeast Asia* (2001 Routledge, third edition published in 2014) and *ASEAN and Regional Order* (2021).

²⁶Men, Honghua. "Theory of Regional Order Construction." *World Politics*, no. 7 (2014): 4-23.

predictable, stable, and notably free of significant conflicts. This order exists because there is a relatively straightforward and stable power structure and a set of norms in the region, so strategic interaction between major powers has had moderate influence, allowing the region's small and medium-sized countries to create regional economic and security cooperation with the help of the ASEAN institutional arrangement.²⁷

In recent years, the gradual intensification of strategic competition between China and the US has increased the uncertainty of changes in the power structure, impacted the effectiveness of institutional arrangements, and affected a country's income changes in order by infiltrating into the country. The existing security control mechanisms in Southeast Asia are under pressure to adjust.

ASEAN Centrality

ASEAN centrality names the role of ASEAN as a leader, driver, architect, institutional hub, and vanguard, aiming to be the nucleus or fulcrum of regional cooperation in the wider Asia-Pacific. It is tied to the ASEAN Charter and aims to position ASEAN at the center of regional architecture, enabling regionalism in relations with regional and major powers. ASEAN serves as a center of regional security diplomacy – both traditional and non-traditional security – and can promote the priorities of its member states in the international arena. Since reaching its current

²⁷ Liu, Ruonan. "Sino-US Strategic Competition and the Transition of Order in Southeast Asia." *World Politics*, no. 8 (2020): 24.

membership in the 1990s, ASEAN has paid great attention to ensuring its central position through developing diverse institutions and fora. A US paper from 1995 indicated that ASEAN is central to the new ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), noted how new member states needed to apply to participate and were selected by member states through consultation. The chairman of the forum can only be held by the rotating chairman of ASEAN, among other features.²⁸ These regulations help create the centrality of ASEAN, which reflects ASEAN's initiative and dynamism to ensure that ASEAN countries determine the future development direction of the forum.²⁹ The institutional design of the later "10+3" meetings and the East Asia Summit (EAS) also inherited this idea and developed similarly. China has taken the lead in related fields such as free trade area negotiations, political and security cooperation, and the agenda of building an East Asian community. Its influence in the "10+3" cooperation mechanism was growing, and it offered to host the first East Asia Summit. Facing great power competition, ASEAN has taken several measures to maintain its central position in building the regional order and avoid the risk of being marginalized. The first is to insist that ASEAN participates in the East Asia Summit and maintains the institutional framework of "ASEAN+." The second is to invite India, Australia, and New Zealand to join the East Asia Summit to balance the influence of major powers

²⁸ U.S. department of state. "The ASEAN Regional Forum: A Concept Paper," April 15, 2002. <https://2001-2009.state.gov/t/pm/rls/fs/12052.htm>.

²⁹ Wei, Ling. "Indigenous Practice and Regional Order: ASEAN, China, and the Indo-Pacific Construction." *Southeast Asian Affairs*, no. 02 (2020): 7. <https://doi.org/DOI:10.14073/j.cnki.nywtj.2020.02.001>.

on the regional process. The third is to determine the joint implementation of the East Asia Summit and the "10+3". Its nature is a strategic forum led by leaders. Membership is determined by ASEAN, which strengthens the "ASEAN way" of regional cooperation.³⁰

In July 2009, the US signed the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC) in ASEAN, and in 2015, ASEAN and the USA formally established a strategic partnership. Although the Trump administration had little interest or involvement in East Asia or ASEAN, it has always emphasized that ASEAN is an indispensable and irreplaceable strategic partner of the United States in the region in the "Indo-Pacific Strategy."³¹ The year 2020 marked the fifth year that the US and ASEAN have established a strategic partnership. The United States also expressed respect for the centrality of ASEAN, Respect the sovereignty of ASEAN.

In November 2021, while attending the summit commemorating the 30th anniversary of the establishment of China-ASEAN dialogue relations, President Xi Jinping emphasized that China will unswervingly take ASEAN as the priority direction of its neighboring diplomacy, unswervingly support ASEAN unity and the building of the ASEAN community, and unswervingly support ASEAN in the Centrality in the regional architecture and unwavering support for ASEAN to play a

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ US Department of Defense: Indo-Pacific strategy report: Preparedness, partnerships, and promoting a networked region. (2019)

more significant role in regional and international affairs.³² The Chinese ministry of foreign affairs also reiterated that China recognizes and respects the status of ASEAN as a zone of peace, freedom, and neutrality and never has and will never ask ASEAN to choose a side. China-ASEAN relations are neither aimed at third parties nor subject to interference and provocation by third parties.³³

ASEAN launched the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership in 2012 in response to the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) actions, inviting China, Japan, South Korea, Australia, New Zealand, and India to participate, to maintain ASEAN's initiative in regional shaping and institutional sovereignty. By November 2019, all countries except India had completed negotiations with ASEAN, and RCEP will officially enter into force on January 1, 2022. At crucial nodes in the political economy of the ASEAN region, the ASEAN Center has always played a leading role, guiding the framework and direction of regional processes.

In the last 30 years, ASEAN has created a set of informal and relatively weak multilateral institutions that bring together states in the more expansive Asia-Pacific regional order, such as the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), ASEAN Plus Three (APT), and East Asia Summit (EAS), which help address regional economic and security challenges tied to the prosperity of not just Southeast Asia but also the more expansive

³² Central People's Government of the People's Republic of China. "Create a More Prosperous and Beautiful Region and World Together—Interpretation of President Xi Jinping's Important Speech."

³³ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China. "Position Paper of the People's Republic of China on Supporting ASEAN Centrality in the Evolving Regional Architecture," August 4, 2022. https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjdt_665385/2649_665393/202208/t20220804_10734029.html.

Asia–Pacific or Indo-Pacific Asian region. This has enabled ASEAN to build a working notion of ASEAN “centrality” within Asia’s evolving regional architecture. For ASEAN centrality to continue, as Acharya argues, it “must be earned rather than assumed or proclaimed. Above all, there can be no ASEAN centrality without ASEAN unity and ASEAN neutrality.”³⁴ This paper sees this kind of earned centrality for ASEAN as occurring in how it has responded to China-US strategic competition in the years before and during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Public Health Security and Vaccine Diplomacy

Non-traditional security stresses that security issues need to include risks or threats to a state or a region beyond just those demanding only military or political responses or solutions. They stem from forms of cooperation in areas such as health, piracy, smuggling, human trafficking, drug trade, transnational crime or organization, illegal migration, online piracy and cyberattacks, and subversive ethnic or religious groups. They also include non-human threats, such as natural epidemics, typhoons, earthquakes, and tsunamis, which require cooperation in disaster and post-disaster relief, disease control, and food security. In this paper the focus will be on health security threats in ASEAN and more widely in Asia, which involve both human and non-human actors.

³⁴ Acharya 2017, 279.

Not all health problems are considered threats to national security. Health security focuses on the spread of epidemics, epidemics, and infectious diseases, of which infectious diseases are the greatest threat to public health.³⁵As academics pay more attention to the ASEAN region, they also note that people living there have been vulnerable to various health threats such as infectious diseases, natural and artificial disasters, and environmental change. These threats challenge many people living in Southeast Asia's developing nations and their governments. Such health security concerns are critical non-traditional regional and global security challenges; they threaten human security in complex ways and require focused regional attention and cooperation with major regional powers and international organizations. Thus, concern for health security among ASEAN member states has also attracted concerns from significant regional players, such as China and the US, which look for areas of cooperation and competition with one another. This is seen, for instance, in areas such as malaria and HIV-AIDS, as well as in SARS (2002-3004) and the COVID-19 pandemic from 2020. It is worthwhile to see how the strategic competition between China and the US in the health security field will affect the ASEAN region.

The World Health Organization defines global public health security as “the activities required, both proactive and reactive, to minimize the danger and impact of

³⁵ Kamradt-Scott, Adam *Managing Global Health Security: The World Health Organization and Disease Outbreak Control*. London: Palgrave Macmillan. 2014.

acute public health events that endanger people's health across geographical regions and international boundaries.”³⁶

Chen Yongwei pointed out that public health safety is tied to medicine and human living environments, including public health and people's daily lives.³⁷ Wu Yang believes that the issue of public health mainly refers to epidemic diseases. Although now some old epidemic diseases no longer pose a major threat, in the context of globalization, the spread of some new conditions, such as AIDS, SARS, and other diseases, have brought recent panics, and the public has found how health has experienced great harm, even threatening social stability. Not all health problems cause safety concerns, but sometimes health and safety domains overlap.³⁸ Jamison also believes that pandemics are large-scale outbreaks of infectious disease that can greatly increase morbidity and mortality over a wide geographic area and cause significant economic, social, and political disruption, thus posing a severe threat to national and international security across national borders.³⁹

During the COVID-19 pandemic, one focus of Sino-US competition is public health security, and vaccine diplomacy is an essential part of it. Vaccine diplomacy

³⁶ Health security. “World Health Organization,” n.d.
https://www.who.int/health-topics/health-security#tab=tab_1.

³⁷ Chen, Yongwei. “Research on Public Health Safety Supervision from the Perspective of Public Governance.” Hainan University, 2016.

³⁸ Wu, Yang. “Research on Public Health Safety Supervision from the Perspective of Public Governance.” Guangxi Normal University, 2011.

³⁹ Jamison DT, Gelband H, Horton S, et al., editors. *Disease Control Priorities: Improving Health and Reducing Poverty*. 3rd edition. Washington (DC): The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development / The World Bank; 2017 Nov 27. Available from:
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK525289/> DOI: 10.1596/978-1-4648-0527-1

can be better understood in the broader category of medical diplomacy concepts, a term coined in 1978 by Peter Byrne, special assistant to the president for health issues in the Carter administration.⁴⁰ Hotez pointed out that vaccine diplomacy refers to virtually any aspect of global health diplomacy that relies on the use or delivery of vaccines, including the vital work of Gavi, the World Health Organization, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and other critical international organizations made of. Since 2000, vaccines have been a vital tool in helping developing countries achieve their Millennium Development Goals and targets. To ensure universal or equitable access to much-needed vaccines against potentially pandemic diseases in low- and middle-income countries.⁴¹

Although the above studies are extensive in number from a single topic, they are not in-depth enough, and they are primarily concentrated in the general field with no case studies.

Although vaccine diplomacy is not a new concept, it has often been used during the COVID-19 pandemic period. It seems to be a new battlefield for the strategic competition between China and the US. The current response of Southeast Asian countries to China and vaccine aid Related research is still relatively weak. Most of the existing achievements focus on the anti-epidemic cooperation and health

⁴⁰ Lee, S. T. . Vaccine diplomacy: nation branding and China's COVID-19 soft power play. *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy*, (2021):1-15.

⁴¹ Wu, Dean T Jamison. "Vaccine Diplomacy": Historical Perspectives and Future Directions." *PLOS NEGLECTED TROPICAL DISEASES*, June 26, 2014. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pntd.0002808>.

governance between China, the US, and Southeast Asia, and vaccine cooperation is only a part of it. From the perspective of public health security, this paper mainly focuses on the vaccine diplomacy of China and the US in ASEAN and tries to improve the research results through more objective data.

Conceptual Framework

Competition and Strategic Competition

Competition in international politics refers to the antagonistic relations (short of armed conflict and war) among countries for tangible or intangible factors such as power, interests, status, influence, and reputation. From the point of view of international relations, "the state of competition between countries is the most common state."⁴²

Realist international relations theory believes that anarchy at the structural level and self-interested motives at the unit level determine that the state's struggle for power and interests is the most common and basic phenomenon in international relations. Liberalism argues that competition and cooperation are the two basic behaviors of the state to achieve its interests under anarchy. Constructivism argues that anarchy is what the state makes of it⁴³ and that "competition is the basic logic of state behavior.

⁴² Yuan, Ming. *History of International Relations*. 1994th ed. Beijing: Beijing University Press, (1994):11

⁴³Tang, S., Li, M., & Acharya, A. (Eds.). (2009). *Living with China: Regional states and China through crises and turning points*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan US.

Strategic competition is an advanced form of competition in international relations when global powers seek to maximize their economic, political, and military positions in the international system. They are mainly reflected in four aspects: First, strategic competition is often carried out among regional or global powers. Second, strategic competition is related to the balance of power between the two sides and their respective status in the regional or global system. It can be said that it is both a competition for power and status. The strategic competition involves not only significant economic and security interests but also institutions, values, and order arrangements (such as domestic political and economic models, ideology, international mechanisms, international norms, and international order), etc. In this sense, strategic competition is related to the distribution of power and power at the unit level, the way of interaction between countries, and the structure and nature of the international system. Third, the impact of strategic competition often extends beyond the bilateral scope, with direct or indirect effects on other countries' behavior and regional and global situations. Fourth, there are two main ways of great power strategic competition: acquiring and competing for power by exchanging interests and acquiring and competing for power by force.⁴⁴

Traditional strategic competition of great powers presents a "great power confrontation" model, a typical strategic competition model with strategic

⁴⁴ Men, Honghua. "Theory of Regional Order Construction." *World Politics*, no. 7 (2014): 4-23.

expansionism as the core. The core content of this model is the open competition for assets and strategic resources between the great powers that hold each other first, with the strategic goal of weakening and repelling their opponents' economic, political, and strategic presence.⁴⁵

Regionalism and Regional Order

Regionalism is a vital force driving world development. So far, regionalism has gone through three main stages of development. The initial stage was a bloc of colonial powers led by Britain and France in the 1930s, whose goal was to form trade barriers for self-protection. A second stage ran from the end of World War II to the 1970s. It was marked by the gradual formation of the European Union, emphasizing the identification of economy, politics, history, culture, etc., as well as ASEAN, which sought to unite countries in a region to seek political independence and autonomy and to resist hegemonism. A third stage began at the end of the Cold War and is tied to broader globalization trends, emphasizing the cooperation between developed and developing countries and striving to bring more countries into the region.

Regional order. Joseph S. Nye defined a region as a limited number of countries bound together by geographical relations and a certain degree of interdependence. A region is not just a geographical fact. The composition of a region is not a simple

⁴⁵ Zhu, Feng. "Sino-US Strategic Competition and the Future of Southeast Asia's Security Order." *Northeast Asia Forum*, no. 3 (2013). <https://doi.org/CNKI:SUN:SJJZ.0.2013-03-002>.

addition of a certain number of neighboring countries but a group of neighboring countries that have an interactive relationship.⁴⁶

Regions are a fundamental unit in the study of international relations. On the one hand, regions are the birthplace of political goals outside a country's region. Countries often project their goals beyond the national territory through a combination of strategic actions and their influence. Build environments that are familiar and align with their goals.⁴⁷ On the other hand, the integration process among most countries occurs at the regional level, which is the natural support for great powers.

Regional order can be defined as the rights between neighboring countries with interactive relations. Regional order results from distributing rights, interests, and ideas among neighboring countries with interactive relations. Therefore, the influence of major powers on the regional order is bound to be huge. Regional order is an order form within a specific regional society and is also the result of your participation in the governance of various regional acts. It is a model for institutional management and arrangement of regional political and security affairs to enhance the region's safety, welfare, equality, values, and development.

Methodology

This paper analyzes government statements and texts that deal with the development and process of strategic competition between China and the US on public

⁴⁶ Ma, Rongjiu. "The Mutual Shaping of Regions and Nations." *Contemporary Asia Pacific*, no. 2 (2010): 28–41.

⁴⁷ Kazanstein, Peter. *The World of Regions, Asia, and Europe in the American Empire*. 2007th ed. Beijing: Beijing University Press, n.d.

health in the ASEAN region through cooperation and assistance. The article selects explicitly the vaccine diplomacy measures adopted by China and the US towards ASEAN during the COVID-19 pandemic as a unique case analysis, supported by data collected from government websites or authoritative data-providing websites, better to understand China and the United States in public health. How does security affect ASEAN and what impact has it had on ASEAN.

Qualitative Research

This paper does qualitative research by analyzing firsthand sources by governments, especially those of China and the US, those by regional organizations like ASEAN, and also some by international organizations like WHO and the UN. The main topics considered relate to health security, especially SARS and COVID-19. It seeks to interpret how the strategic competition of China and the US in public health security has affected the idea of regional order in ASEAN by examining how China and the US have acted and promoted their respective public health projects and modes of cooperation in the ASEAN region. In the closeness and estrangement of the relationship, it analyzes changing attitudes of ASEAN states towards China and the USA and China and the United States towards ASEAN, as well as the different measures taken towards ASEAN. It seeks to show how ASEAN has been able to balance significant powers' strategic competition in regional processes and maintain its strategic autonomy. ASEAN behavior has enabled the region to achieve cooperation

with China and the US, as well as a type of strategic independence during the COVID-19 pandemic. This strategic independence is related to other regional powers, alliances, activities, and processes, such as the QUAD and the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and their relations with China and the US. This is supported by secondary data collected from government websites and leaders' speeches. Trying to analyze from a broader perspective the impact of the competition between China and the US in public health security on ASEAN.

Chapter 2: *Analysis of Sino-US Competition on ASEAN Public Health Security*

The paper will examine how the US and China have engaged with ASEAN in health security. Considering the last decade, with some attention to the SARS outbreak of 2002-2004, the focus will be on the COVI-SARS-2 pandemic that began in 2020. In particular, this section will analyze and compare policy statements and actions made by the US and China in ASEAN during SARS and COVID-19 in relation to their recent phase of strategic competition. After examining the public health cooperation of China and the US in ASEAN, the paper will examine bilateral cooperation efforts on public health security done by China and then by the US, and on ASEAN-China-US multilateral cooperation on public health. This will set up a more extended analysis and comparison of the vaccine diplomacy of the US and China in ASEAN during the COVID-19 pandemic. This analysis shows how the strategic competition between

China and the US in health security, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, has affected the ASEAN region. In particular, it shows how ASEAN concerns with health security have balanced the competitive relations and tensions between China and the US, thus helping maintain and strengthen its centrality.

After the end of the Cold War, the relaxation of international relations has become an essential feature of the global situation. In this context, the meaning of security evolves into a comprehensive concept whose content extends from the limited military and political aspects to cultural, environmental, public health, and so on. The focus has also gradually shifted from traditional security to non-traditional security. Threats in standard security fields often come from other state actors. In contrast, perils in non-traditional security fields generally come from non-state actors or objective natural conditions such as terrorist organizations, natural disasters, infectious diseases, and climate change. Compared with traditional security, because non-traditional security involves a broader range and includes more countries and regions, its complexity also exceeds national boundaries.

Historically, ASEAN was established to strengthen economic cooperation between regions and member states while safeguarding regional independence and peace and avoiding political conflicts as much as possible. Yet ASEAN has also embraced "Non-Traditional Security" (NTS) as a central element in considering its

approach to community building.⁴⁸ It was not until the early 1980s that public health-related cooperation gradually entered ASEAN's line of sight. After the Cold War, ASEAN's security strategy has also undergone adjustments and changes accordingly. The ASEAN trust security theory mainly comprises two aspects: the first is to emphasize comprehensive security, and the second is to emphasize cooperative security.⁴⁹

Before the early 2000s, the ASEAN health cooperation agenda focused on areas of common interest to member countries, such as health care, promoting healthy lifestyles, improving the ability to control infectious diseases, and ensuring a drug-free ASEAN. Later, with the enormous losses caused by global disease outbreaks like SARS in 2003, ASEAN realized the importance of public health cooperation mechanisms. Under such circumstances, it is essential to establish public health cooperation with China, which is geographically adjacent to Southeast Asia and a rising country, or with the US, which has long had absolute leadership and voice in Southeast Asia.

ASEAN-China Bilateral Cooperation Mechanism on Public Health Security

⁴⁸ Stéphanie Martel, From ambiguity to contestation: discourse(s) of non-traditional security in the ASEAN community, *The Pacific Review*, (2017): 549-565 DOI: [10.1080/09512748.2016.1264462](https://doi.org/10.1080/09512748.2016.1264462)

⁴⁹ Zhao, Chen. "ASEAN's New Security Concept." *International Studies*, no. 3 (1998): 13.

The ASEAN-China 10+1 cooperation framework started in 1997 to deal with the Asian Financial Crisis that began in July of that year in Thailand but spread to much of Asia by the end of the year. Cooperative mechanisms of the time focused on economic cooperation but gradually expanded to political, cultural, and other security areas. In October 2003, China and ASEAN jointly issued the Joint Declaration of the Heads of State/Government of the Association of South East Asian Nations and the People's Republic of China on Strategic Partnership for Peace and Prosperity,⁵⁰ which pointed out that China and the Southeast Asian region Accelerate the implementation of cooperation in non-traditional security fields, especially in the field of public health, establish a China-ASEAN 10+1 public health cooperation fund, and hold a China-ASEAN 10+1 health ministers meeting mechanism.

The ASEAN-China Health Ministers Meeting began on June 22, 2006. The first “China-ASEAN Health Ministers Meeting” was held in Myanmar. The meeting discussed and analyzed the prevention and control of emerging infectious diseases. Reach a consensus on further strengthening the scope of cooperation in the field of public health between the two sides. At the meeting, the Chinese Minister of Health pointed out that: Human society is currently facing the threat of infectious diseases, and

⁵⁰ Association of Southeast Asian Nations. “Plan of Action to Implement the Joint Declaration on ASEAN-China Strategic Partnership for Peace and Prosperity,” June 16, 2012. <https://asean.org/plan-of-action-to-implement-the-joint-declaration-on-asean-china-strategic-partnership-for-peace-and-prosperity/>.

it is the responsibility of the entire international community to prevent and control the spread of new infectious diseases.

With the help of this platform, the two sides can fully communicate on matters related to public health.⁵¹ On July 6, 2012, the 4th ASEAN Ministerial Meeting was held. The meeting signed the Memorandum of Understanding between the Governments of the Member States of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and the Government of the People's Republic of China on Health Cooperation. It mainly includes improving the ability of countries to prevent and control early infectious diseases, improve the country's ability to respond to public health emergencies, and hope that China will provide public health products to Southeast Asian nations under necessary conditions and alleviate local public health products. Shortage of supply. The establishment of the China-ASEAN Health Ministers' Meeting mechanism has become a platform for cooperation and dialogue between China and Southeast Asia in the field of public health security. Further, it strengthens the practical cooperation between China and ASEAN in the field of health.⁵²

In 2016, Nanning held the 1st China-ASEAN Health Cooperation Forum, which emphasizes that China will strengthen cooperation within the ASEAN health

⁵¹ People's Republic of China Ministry of Foreign Affairs. "China-ASEAN Cooperation Facts and Figures: 1991-2021," December 31, 2018.

https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/web/wjbxw_673019/202201/t20220105_10479078.shtml.

⁵² Association of Southeast Asian Nations. "2012 MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENTS OF THE MEMBER STATES OF THE ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS (ASEAN) AND THE GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA ON HEALTH COOPERATION," July 6, 2012.

https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/web/wjbxw_673019/202201/t20220105_10479078.shtml<https://cil.nus.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/2012-ASEAN-China-MOU-on-Health-Cooperation-1.pdf>.

sector, pushing forward medical staff exchanges and jointly coping with challenges of global health issues⁵³. At the same time, both sides need to actively participate in global health governance and maintain close communication and coordination under the guidance of the World Health Organization. The 2nd China-ASEAN Health Cooperation Forum, held in 2017, put forward the theme of jointly building a healthy Silk Road. Countries, including China and ASEAN, promote the WHO's important role in health governance under the framework set by the WHO and actively communicate and cooperate with international organizations in the field of health. In the area of health policy, strengthen exchanges and cooperation among countries' health policies, and coordinate their response and capacity to respond to emergencies in public health security. In the area of non-communicable diseases, improve the ability of countries to prevent and treat chronic diseases. In traditional medicine, countries have conducted extensive exchanges on medicinal resources, education and training, and scientific research capabilities to enhance the role of conventional medicine in public health governance. In terms of talent exchange, through the construction of training bases and the exchange of international students, talents in the health field are encouraged to learn from each other's excellent experiences.⁵⁴

⁵³ National Health Commission of the People's Republic of China. "Nanning Holds the 1st China-ASEAN Health Cooperation Forum," November 7, 2016. http://en.nhc.gov.cn/2016-11/07/c_70518.htm.

⁵⁴ National Health Commission of the People's Republic of China. "Guangxi Holds 2nd China-ASEAN Forum on Health Cooperation," September 20, 2018. http://en.nhc.gov.cn/2018-09/20/c_73802.htm.

In 2018, the ASEAN-China Strategic Partnership Vision 2030 was proposed. ASEAN and China need to address non-traditional security challenges jointly, conduct dialogues and exchanges in non-traditional security fields, enhance mutual trust and understanding, and strengthen common regional cooperation and resilience.⁵⁵ The Plan of Action to Implement the ASEAN-China Strategic Partnership for Peace and Prosperity (2021 – 2025) in 2020 pointed out that China and ASEAN need to improve cooperation in the field of public health and deepen cooperation in the prevention and control of infectious disease pandemics; Jointly carry out professional training for medical and health personnel; promote the deep integration of artificial intelligence and the health industry, and intelligently respond to public health emergencies; focus on improving the level of public health services to ensure that citizens enjoy safe, high-quality, and affordable medical and health services.

During this period, the public health cooperation between China and ASEAN has been continuously strengthened, the scope of collaboration has been broadened, and the prospects for cooperation have become increasingly apparent. These measures are of great significance to enhancing the frequency of ASEAN-China health information sharing, coordinating health governance cooperation with international

⁵⁵ Association of Southeast Asian Nations. “Nanning Co-Chairs’ Statement for the Meeting of China-ASEAN Ministers Responsible for Information Nanning, Guangxi, China” October 16, 2008. <https://asean.org/nanning-co-chairs-statement-for-the-meeting-of-china-asean-ministers-responsible-for-information-nanning-guangxi-china/>

organizations, deepening the scope of cooperation in the field of public health, and promoting the healthy life of people in the region.

ASEAN-US Bilateral Cooperation Mechanism on Public Health Security

Until the Obama administration's "pivot to Asia" in 2010, the US paid more attention to the Middle East than it did to Southeast Asia. The subsequent Trump administration further upgraded the strategy to the Indo-Pacific strategy, expanded the Asia-Pacific's scope, became more and more aware of the critical strategic significance of ASEAN, and gradually shifted its attention to the ASEAN region. However, the focus of security cooperation is still on traditional security areas, such as the South China Sea issue and formal security cooperation with and with ASEAN countries. As for non-traditional security, the US focuses mainly on climate change and marine pollution. It cannot be said that it has not paid attention to public health at all. However, compared with other aspects, there are relatively few financial assistance or cooperation mechanisms.

Over the past 20 years, the U.S. has partnered with ASEAN countries to invest more than \$3.5 billion in shared health goals, which lays the foundation for future U.S.-ASEAN health cooperation. Over the past decade, the US and ASEAN have completed more than 1,000 research projects, including more than 300 active research projects in collaboration with ASEAN member countries and more than 20 institutes at

the National Institutes of Health, to universities and government research institutions. Provided more than \$30 million in direct research funding; and supported HIV prevention trials, microbicides trials, AIDS clinical trials, tuberculosis epidemiology, and infectious disease clinical trials. In terms of HIV control, more than 150,000 patients are now receiving antiretroviral therapy. Such bilateral cooperation continues to support ASEAN in reducing tuberculosis and malaria in the region. In Laos, for example, malaria cases fell by 70% from 2014 to 2017.⁵⁶ USAID is working with the ASEAN Secretariat to develop a Public Health Emergency Coordination System, bringing together existing ASEAN mechanisms, such as the ASEAN Emergency Operations Centre Network, to prepare for and respond to an emerging public health emergency.

The Trump administration did not deal much with ASEAN since the COVID-19 outbreak began. After the 2021 Biden administration came to power, the situation changed. On April 22, 2021, Secretary Blinken launched the U.S.-ASEAN Health Futures Initiative. During the ASEAN-U.S. summit on October 26, 2021, President Biden announced his intent to provide \$102 million in new initiatives to expand the U.S. and ASEAN strategic partnership. The US intends to provide up to \$40 million in further efforts to accelerate joint research, strengthen health system capacity, and develop the next generation of human capital in health through the U.S.-ASEAN

⁵⁶ U.S. MISSION TO ASEAN. "U.S.-ASEAN HEALTH FUTURES," April 23, 2020. <https://asean.usmission.gov/u-s-asean-health-futures/>.

Health Futures initiative.⁵⁷ During the ASEAN-U.S. summit on October 26, 2021, President Biden announced his intention to provide \$102 million in new initiatives to expand the U.S.-ASEAN strategic partnership.⁵⁸ The US intends to provide up to \$40 million in recent efforts to accelerate joint research, strengthen health system capacity, and develop the next generation of human capital in health through the U.S.-ASEAN Health Futures initiative.

To strengthen ASEAN's ability to prevent, detect, and respond to infectious disease outbreaks, the US is transforming ASEAN countries' health workforce and university public health curricula through the One Health Workforce – Next Generation program and training the next generation of health professionals through a multidisciplinary approach. Expand the U.S.-ASEAN Health Futures Alumni Network through capacity building with programs including the flagship skills training program for young leaders (YSEALI), the Department of Health and Human Services Public Health Emergency Management Fellowship, and Fulbright U.S.-ASEAN programs. It also provides USAID assistance to strengthen the convergence of pharmaceutical standards and product quality in ASEAN.⁵⁹ These efforts were increasingly framed as efforts within the new US Indo-Pacific strategy.

⁵⁷ U.S. Mission to ASEAN, Office of the Spokesperson. "U.S.-ASEAN HEALTH FUTURES." U.S. MISSION TO ASEAN, April 22, 2020. <https://th.usembassy.gov/u-s-asean-health-futures/>.

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<https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/10/26/fact-sheet-new-initiatives-to-expand-the-u-s-asean-strategic-partnership/>

⁵⁹ The White House. "Fact Sheet: New Initiatives to Expand the U.S.-ASEAN Strategic Partnership," October 26, 2021. <https://th.usembassy.gov/u-s-asean-health-futures/>.

ASEAN-China-US Multilateral Cooperation on Public Health

The common public health security cooperation between ASEAN and China-US began in 2003. From 2003 to 2010, ASEAN and China-US established a public health security cooperation mechanism.

The outbreak of SARS in 2003 brought public health security worldwide. To cope with epidemic prevention and control in the Asia-Pacific region and reduce the economic losses and casualties caused by SARS, the issue of public health security has been included in the discussion scope of APEC. In June 2003, APEC Health Ministerial Meeting issued a declaration, urging countries to implement SARS response plans and announcing the establishment of a healthy Asia-Pacific community⁶⁰ In the same month, the first APEC ministerial meeting after the SARS outbreak was held in Thailand. The meeting adopted the Action Plan and the APEC Infectious Disease Strategy, calling on the Asia-Pacific region to deal jointly with the losses caused by SARS.⁶¹

With its advantages, APEC has minimized the impact of the spread of the disease in the Asia-Pacific region and restored and promoted the economic recovery of ASEAN, China, and the US to the greatest extent possible.

⁶⁰ Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation. "2003 APEC Health Ministerial Meeting," June 28, 2002. https://www.apec.org/meeting-papers/sectoral-ministerial-meetings/health/2003_health.

⁶¹ Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation. "2003 APEC Health Ministerial Meeting," October 20, 2003. https://www.apec.org/meeting-papers/annual-ministerial-meetings/2003/2003_amm.

In September 2007, APEC decided to establish the APEC Health Working Group to allow countries to take preventive measures and reduce the outbreak of infection when responding to the epidemic's impact. In 2009, the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation held a meeting and decided to strengthen cooperation with ASEAN in the field of public health in the future to make epidemic information transparent. In 2010, APEC held a meeting in Japan, which focused on improving the capacity of the Asia-Pacific region to respond to emergencies in public health security to improve the health system construction of member countries.⁶²

On September 3, 2020, the 10th APEC High-Level Meeting on Health and the Economy (HLM10) was held online. One of the highlights of the meeting was addressing the twin economic and health crises brought on by COVID-19. HLM10 underscored the importance of providing safe, high-quality, and effective vaccines across the region and the value of collaboration among APEC economies and with stakeholders to improve the affordability, availability, accessibility, and use of such vaccines; for developing economies, in particular, the need for measures to promote interoperability between privacy and regulatory regimes to enable secure sharing of health-related data was discussed. HLM10 emphasizes “no health without wealth,” international and APEC regional experience. The exchange of best practices can help

⁶² Central People's Government of the People's Republic of China. “2010 Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Meeting,” November 11, 2010.

http://www.gov.cn/govweb/jrzq/2006-04/07/content_248283.htm.2020-11-20.

shape and inform policy to respond to COVID-19 while improving health systems in the long run and, in doing so, returning economies to solid growth, and expect economies to continue to discuss other Pragmatic collaboration on health issues of regional importance, such as tuberculosis, antimicrobial resistance, mental health, healthy aging, cervical cancer, lung cancer, emerging zoonotic and rare diseases.⁶³

APEC is essential in controlling the epidemic, providing a platform for ASEAN-China-US public health cooperation and an irreplaceable role in the Asia-Pacific region.

The joint public health cooperation between China, the US, and ASEAN started early this century. At the same time, China and the U.S. seem to be better placed to play a better role in larger state-regional organization cooperation than bilateral public health cooperation such as ASEAN-U.S. or ASEAN-China. Talk less and cooperate with the factor.

In short, ASEAN's engagement with China-US public health security cooperation can be traced back to the SARS outbreak in the early 2000s. Compared with bilateral public health cooperation such as ASEAN-US or ASEAN-China, China and the US seem more capable in larger country regions. They play a better role in organizational collaboration. At the same time, China and the US promote their public

⁶³ Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation. "2020 APEC High-Level Meeting on Health and the Economy," September 23, 2020. <https://www.apec.org/Meeting-Papers/Sectoral-Ministerial-Meetings/Health/2020>.

health projects in ASEAN, similarly, trying to build a platform through cooperation with ASEAN to strengthen their exchanges.

Special Case Study: COVID-19 Vaccine Diplomacy

In the context of the deepening globalization process, many public goods have transcended national borders and become international public goods. In 2020, the covid epidemic was raging worldwide, making vaccines and other global public goods one of the focuses of the international community. As the US developed its new Indo-Pacific strategy, it included in its COVID-19 pandemic strategy efforts to enhance global health security, especially promoting US vaccine diplomacy within the new Indo-Pacific framework.

Although the process of globalization continues to advance, and the ties between countries are increasingly close, in this context, the significance of many public goods is not only aimed at one country. Still, it has become a global product that transcends nationality. The outbreak of COVID-19 at the beginning of 2020 has brought shocks to every country and region in the world, whether it is economic, political, or public health, which has had an enormous impact and impact, especially the problem of vaccine shortages very prominent.

Countries have responded very quickly to this global public health crisis. the first COVID-19 vaccine candidate entered human clinical testing unprecedentedly on

16 March 2020. Among them, Most COVID-19 vaccine development activity is in North America, with 36 (46%) developers of the confirmed active vaccine candidates compared with 14 (18%) in China. It can be seen from the data that the development and research of vaccines in North America and China account for 64% of those used in the world.⁶⁴

Chinese vaccine diplomacy

Since China developed vaccines in 2020, China has always held a positive attitude towards exempting vaccine patent protection. China is also the country that provides the most vaccines to the world for free. More important, Chinese leaders have repeatedly claimed to treat China's vaccines as global public goods to be shared with people in other parts of the world, especially the needy and disadvantaged.

On November 12, 2021, when President Xi Jinping delivered a speech at the 28th APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting, he said:

"It is essential to understand the new characteristics of international public goods, to effectively solve the balanced supply of international public goods represented by vaccines, and to improve supply efficiency. China is responsible for the post-epidemic era as a major country that successfully controlled the epidemic and was the first to develop and promote vaccines. It has taken more responsibilities,

⁶⁴ Le, T. T., et al. "The COVID-19 vaccine development landscape." *Nature* (2020). <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41573-020-00073-5><https://www.apec.org/Meeting-Papers/Sectoral-Ministerial-Meetings/Health/2020>.

demonstrated its responsibility as a major country, and contributed to restoring social and economic order worldwide."⁶⁵

As of early May 2022, China has provided 4.6 billion pieces of protective clothing, 18 billion test kits, and more than 430 billion masks to 153 countries and 15 international organizations. Supply more than 2.2 billion doses of covid vaccine to more than 120 countries and international organizations.

On July 16, 2021, when Xi Jinping delivered a speech at the APEC leaders' meeting, he said: "Overcoming the challenges brought about by its mass vaccination, China has provided more than 500 million doses of vaccines to developing countries and will provide another US\$3 billion in international aid in the next three years to support developing countries in fighting the epidemic and restoring economic and social development. China supports the exemption of intellectual property rights for COVID-19 vaccines and is willing to work with all parties to push for an early decision by international institutions such as the World Trade Organization. China is willing to actively participate in cooperation initiatives such as ensuring the stability and safety of the vaccine supply chain and promoting the circulation of key materials, and take effective measures to ensure the health, safety, and orderly exchanges of personnel, and promoting the early return of regional economic and trade cooperation to normal. China's donation to APEC to set up a sub-fund for "Response to Epidemic and

⁶⁵ Central People's Government of the People's Republic of China. "Speech by Xi Jinping at the 28th APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting (Full Text)," November 12, 2021. http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2021-11/12/content_5650548.htm.

Economic Recovery" will help Asia-Pacific economies overcome the epidemic early and achieve economic recovery.”⁶⁶

China has also actively participated in the "Coronavirus Vaccine Implementation Plan" (COVAX) and the "Global Cooperation to Accelerate the Development, Production and Equitable Access to New Tools for the Prevention and Control of New COVID-19 Pandemic" (ACT-A) initiative under the WHO framework. We donated \$100 million to COVAX and joined the “Vaccine Manufacturing Task Force” under the ACT-A framework. At the end of last year, President Xi Jinping announced to provide of 600 million and 150 million vaccines to Africa and ASEAN, respectively. These all significantly contribute to promoting the availability and affordability of vaccines in developing countries.

Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, ASEAN countries have become the hardest hit areas in Asia several times due to the uneven distribution of vaccines worldwide or the weak foundation of their medical facilities. Due to the inadequate domestic research and development and production capacity of vaccines in ASEAN countries, the main way to obtain vaccines is to purchase from other countries or accept donations from other countries. As an important strategic area of China's Belt and Road Initiative and an important partner of China, ASEAN has naturally become a focus area for China's vaccine assistance. Although Western sources often call China's

⁶⁶ Central People's Government of the People's Republic of China. "Speech by Xi Jinping at the 28th APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting (Full Text)," November 12, 2021. http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2021-11/12/content_5650548.htm.

actions with vaccines, “vaccine diplomacy,” most Chinese sources gives them the name “vaccine aid.” ASEAN is an essential multilateral cooperation venue for China to participate in the global management of COVID-19.

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic further exposed the vulnerability of ASEAN's public health. In fact, after May 2021, the virus further mutated into the delta, and many countries experienced the peak of the epidemic. Omicron spreads further by early 2022.

Southeast Asia is a key target for Chinese vaccine diplomacy, accounting for 29 percent of China's total vaccine donations and 25.6 percent of its vaccine sales worldwide.⁶⁷ China's exercise of soft power through vaccine diplomacy has yet to generate strategic trust in Southeast Asia, mainly due to Beijing's assertion of hard power in other domains, especially in the South China Sea.⁶⁸

In general, whether from the official or public level of ASEAN countries, China's vaccine funding to ASEAN has had a particular impact regardless of the scale. The government and officialdom are relatively positive, although ordinary people have different views. Thai citizens took to the streets and held demonstrations against the Chinese vaccine, asking the government to stop buying Sinovac and use Pfizer or Moderna vaccine instead. Since 2021, Myanmar has been in a crisis of a military

⁶⁷ Zaini, Khairulanwar . “2021/86 ‘China’s Vaccine Diplomacy in Southeast Asia – A Mixed Record’ by Khairulanwar Zaini.” YUSOF ISHAK INSTITUTE, 2021. <https://www.iseas.edu.sg/articles-commentaries/iseas-perspective/2021-86-chinas-vaccine-diplomacy-in-southeast-asia-a-mixed-record-by-khairulanwar-zaini/>.

⁶⁸ Ibid

government coup, and the people have refused to use government-purchased vaccines to oppose the military government.

Although Chinese vaccines are available to most Southeast Asian countries in a short period and at reasonable prices, the performance of Chinese vaccines in Southeast Asia has been mixed. The following discussion will categorize the extent to which ASEAN countries are affected by the Chinese vaccine.

Countries are greatly affected by Chinese vaccines.

From the available data, Cambodia is the country most affected by the Chinese vaccine, followed by Myanmar, Laos, Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand, and Malaysia. China has provided Cambodia with the most vaccines. As of March 2022, China has supplied Cambodia with 42 million doses of vaccines, making Cambodia the most critical and safest vaccine supplier.⁶⁹ As of September 16, 2022, the Cambodia Coronavirus Full Vaccination Rate has reached 87.62%, which is far ahead in ASEAN countries and surpasses developed countries.⁷⁰ Cambodia is one of the few countries worldwide to initiate the third dose and vaccinate adolescents under 18.

The Ministry of Health of Myanmar has started receiving vaccines for citizens from the beginning of 2021. Vaccinated vaccines are mainly from COVISHIELD

⁶⁹Sohu. "China Has Provided Cambodia with 42 Million Doses of Covid-19 Vaccine," March 30, 2022. https://www.sohu.com/a/533865994_99978839.

⁷⁰ YCHART. "Cambodia Coronavirus Full Vaccination Rate," October 22, 2022. https://ycharts.com/indicators/cambodia_coronavirus_full_vaccination_rate.

produced in India, and Sinovac and Sinopharm are made in China. As of December 2021, the total number of covid vaccines provided by China to Myanmar has reached 40 million doses, accounting for more than 90% of the vaccines received by Myanmar, helping Myanmar to achieve the goal of 50% of the target group vaccination rate by the end of the year.⁷¹ On March 23, 2022, the covid vaccine jointly produced by Sinopharm Group China Biotechnology and Myanmar was officially put into production, marking the fruitful cooperation between China and Myanmar in filling vaccines, which is of great importance for the two countries to deepen anti-epidemic cooperation and promote medical and health cooperation. Significance.⁷² Although the Myanmar government cooperates closely with China on vaccines, the people are not very enthusiastic about vaccines. First, due to dissatisfaction and resistance to the military government, the people refuse to accept the vaccines provided by the government. Secondly, out of doubts about the safety of Chinese vaccines, some Burmese people also do not trust vaccines produced in China.

Laos is a close neighbor of China. Due to Laos's relatively backward medical construction, it has been very dependent on China's assistance in the fight against the covid. As of January 2022, China has ranked first among the countries that have

⁷¹ Lancang-Mekong Cooperation. "Sinopharm Group China Biotech and the Ministry of Industry of Myanmar Signed a Supply Agreement for Semi-Finished Products of the New Crown Vaccine," March 30, 2022. http://www.lmcchina.org/2021-12/22/content_41836390.htm.

⁷² Xinhua. "China-Myanmar Joint Production of New Crown Vaccine Officially Put into Production in Myanmar," March 23, 2022. http://www.news.cn/asia/2022-03/23/c_1128497515.htm.

assisted Laos with vaccines and medical equipment in preventing and controlling the covid epidemic. 8.9 million doses of vaccines were donated.⁷³

To date, the top five ASEAN countries receiving COVID-19 vaccines from China have been: Indonesia (268.279 million), ranking first among ASEAN countries; the Philippines (60.025 million); Myanmar (56.34 million); Cambodia (41.803 million); Vietnam (41.5 million) million), Indonesia also ranked first in terms of vaccine purchases, reaching 272.579 million.⁷⁴

As of September 20, 2022, 68.5% of people in the Philippines have completed the vaccination. Before the outbreak, the Philippines had one of Asia's fastest new positive cases. China is the first country to donate nucleic acid testing reagents to the Philippines, the first country to send a medical expert team to the Philippines, the first country to assist the Philippines in transporting anti-epidemic materials by military aircraft, and the first country to provide both donations and commercial purchases to the Philippine government. Ways to give vaccines to countries.⁷⁵ According to the latest data published by Statista, as of June 27, 2022, the most received vaccine in the Philippines is Pfizer (93.67 million), followed by Sinovac (56.11 million). At the same time, some Filipino people do not trust Chinese vaccines (the reasons may be colonial

⁷³ Tencent. "8.9 Million Doses! China Has Assisted Laos with the Largest Amount of Vaccines and Medical Equipment in the World!," January 26, 2022.

⁷⁴ BRIDGE. "China COVID-19 Vaccine Tracker," January 26, 2022. https://bridgebeijing.com/our-publications/our-publications-1/china-covid-19-vaccines-tracker/#China8217s_Multi_lateral_Vaccine_Contributions.

⁷⁵ People's Republic of China Ministry of Foreign Affairs. "Ambassador to the Philippines Huang Xilian Was Interviewed by the Philippine Media 'Manila Times,'" August 20, 2021. https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/zwbd_673032/yjcf/202108/t20210820_9172685.shtml.

history and the influence of media orientation). While people in Malaysia and Thailand have expressed doubts about China's motives for offering to donate or buy vaccines, officials have warmly welcomed China's aid. To date, 10.9 million vaccines have been delivered. In Thailand, as of October 1, 2022, there were 53.49 million Completed Vaccinations, accounting for 76.47% of the total population.⁷⁶ Sinovac gave 26.53 million doses, after Astra Zeneca (48.65 million) and Pfizer (44.32 million).⁷⁷

Countries are less affected by Chinese vaccines.

China's vaccine assistance has not caused much impact and reaction to Singapore, Brunei, and Timor-Leste. Singapore has one of the highest vaccination rates in the world, but Sinovac is not included in the list of free vaccinations published by the Singapore government. Even if you are vaccinated with Sinovac, you will still be restricted when entering and exiting certain occasions. It was not until October 20, 2021, that the Singapore government recognized that two doses of the Sinovac vaccine were fully vaccinated. China's vaccine have been little used in Singapore.⁷⁸

At the beginning of the COVID-19 outbreak, the local infection rate in Vietnam has been very low, and the reasonable control of the epidemic has made it one of the

⁷⁶ Covidvax. "Thailand," n.d. <https://covidvax.live/en/location/tha>.

⁷⁷ Manufacturer. "Cumulative Number of COVID-19 Vaccines Administered in Thailand as of July 2022." Statista, July 2022.

<https://www.statista.com/statistics/1324242/thailand-covid-19-vaccines-administered-by-manufacturer/>.

⁷⁸ Manufacturer. "Sinovac-CoronaVac Included in the National Vaccination Programme." A Singapore Government Agency Website, October 23, 2021.

<https://www.gov.sg/article/sinovac-coronavac-included-in-the-national-vaccination-programme>.

few countries in the world with still positive economic growth. Vietnam starts nationwide vaccination in March 2021. By October, only 50 people had received one dose per 100 people. As of October 1, 2022, the number of fully vaccinated people reached 84 million, and the full vaccination rate was 86.42%.⁷⁹

Finally, because Brunei and East Timor have small populations and good relations with European and American countries, there is no vaccine tension in China, and there is almost no demand for Chinese vaccines.

Due to its global nature, the pandemic requires the world to work together. The COVID-19 Vaccines Global Access (COVAX), initiated by the World Health Organization, UNICEF, and other organizations, came into being. COVAX is conceived as the center for the overall distribution of global vaccines, representing countries in a unified way to fund pharmaceutical companies to develop and purchase vaccines and then supply vaccines to all countries fairly. Allow low- and middle-income countries to obtain vaccines at the same rate as high-income countries, and the distribution of vaccines is only determined by the number of countries' populations, regardless of economic strength. Additional complexity comes from competition among major powers to secure the number of vaccines and among multinational pharmaceutical companies that have only one purpose: maximizing their interests.

⁷⁹ Covidvax. "Vietnam," n.d. <https://covidvax.live/en/location/vem>.

After some hesitation, China announced its participation in COVAX on October 8, 2020. Xi Jinping stated in May 2020 that he would continue to support the work of the WHO and promised to contribute to the anti-epidemic efforts of countries around the world in the next two years. Provide \$2 billion in aid funds. In April, China donated 20 million US dollars to WHO.⁸⁰

U.S. vaccine diplomacy

The Trump administration chose not to join COVAX, making the U.S. one of the only countries not to participate in the initiative formally and had even withdrawn from the WHO. Congress provided \$4 billion in emergency COVID-19 relief to Gavi in support of COVID-19 vaccine access, but it went unspent until the Biden administration.⁸¹ Although the funds provided to a certain extent fill the funding gap of COVAX, it also means that the participation of the US in multilateral cooperation declined under Trump's administration.

On January 21, 2021, soon after taking office, President Biden announced that the U.S. would join COVAX and play a more active role globally in COVID-19.

US President Biden said:

“Already, the US has committed \$4 billion to support COVAX, and we have launched partnerships to boost global capacity to manufacture more vaccines. My

⁸⁰ “Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Wang Wenbin Hosted a Regular Press Conference on August 7, 2020.” People’s Republic of China Ministry of Foreign Affairs, August 7, 2016.

http://bbs.fmprc.gov.cn/web/wjdt_674879/zcjd/202008/t20200807_9712343.shtml.

⁸¹ Filling the need for trusted information on national health issues. “COVAX and the United States,” February 18, 2021. <https://www.kff.org/coronavirus-covid-19/issue-brief/covax-and-the-united-states/>.

administration supports efforts to temporarily waive intellectual property rights for COVID-19 vaccines because, over time, we need more companies producing life-saving doses of proven vaccines that are shared equitably.”⁸²

Although Chinese officials have repeatedly emphasized vigilance against politicizing vaccines, in today's globalized world, behind any behavior is politics, and some vaccine supply behaviors are inevitably linked to geopolitics. China and some ASEAN countries still have disputes over the South China Sea issue, which may explain why some ASEAN countries try to avoid Chinese vaccines or reduce their reliance on Chinese vaccines as much as possible. According to the report released by ISEAS-Yusof Ishak in 2022, among ASEAN people, ASEAN trusts the US more than China, while most people who do not trust China worry that China will use economic and military threats to their own country's sovereignty and territory.⁸³ Before Biden announced that the U.S. would donate the vaccine, China and other countries had been the mainstay of vaccine supplies while the U.S. had been absent. The entry of the US has shifted the direction of this competition. The new support for COVID-19 vaccine delivery to ASEAN countries under Biden was part of its new Indo-Pacific strategy to enhance global health security, especially by providing millions of US COVID vaccines to ASEAN countries.

⁸² The White House. “Statement by President Joe Biden on Global Vaccine Distribution,” June 3, 2021. <https://www.kff.org/coronavirus-covid-19/issue-brief/covax-and-the-united-states/>.

⁸³ Seah, S. et al., *The State of Southeast Asia: 2022*, Singapore: ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute(2022): 23.

As of October 2021, the US has provided more than 42 million safe and effective vaccine doses, more than \$200 million in emergency health and humanitarian assistance to ASEAN members to fight COVID-19, and donated \$500,000 to the COVID-19 ASEAN Response Fund. At the COVID-19 Summit on September 22, President Biden committed to supplying an additional 500 million vaccine doses globally, bringing the total U.S. commitment to over 1.1 U.S. vaccines have already been delivered to several ASEAN member states, including Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, and Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam.⁸⁴

In addition to providing vaccines, substantial financial assistance has been provided to these countries, with Indonesia receiving US\$65 million and a supply of 8 million doses, followed by the Philippines and Myanmar, which received US\$26.2 million and \$20.3 million in assistance.⁸⁵

Feedback from ASEAN on China-U.S. vaccines.

However, judging from the private reactions of ASEAN, China's vaccine diplomacy does not seem to have much impact. The US appears to be slightly better in the competition between China and the US for vaccines in Southeast Asia. According to research data:

⁸⁴ U.S. MISSION TO ASEAN. "ENHANCING HEALTH SYSTEMS," April 12, 2022. https://asean.usmission.gov/enhancing-health-systems/?_ga=2.178782692.1546957200.1664978792-953138571.1663399719.

⁸⁵ U.S. MISSION TO ASEAN. "U.S. SUPPORT TO ASEAN IN FIGHTING COVID-19," August 4, 2021. https://asean.usmission.gov/u-s-support-to-asean-in-fighting-covid-19/?_ga=2.120589512.1546957200.1664978792-953138571.1663399719.

The most trusted vaccine brands for Southeast Asians are the mRNA Pfizer and Moderna (54.8%), followed by Chinese brands Sinopharm and Sinovac (18.7%). 13.7% of the respondents feel comfortable with any vaccine available, higher than the vote share for AstraZeneca (9.2%), Indian manufactured vaccines (1.9%), domestic vaccines (0.9%), and Sputnik-V (0.8%).⁸⁶ But there are inevitably some controversies and doubts. People trust Pfizer more.

Since the Trump administration, the concept of Asia-Pacific has been upgraded to the Indo-Pacific, and the definition of the region has been expanded. The Asia-Pacific strategy has been upgraded to the Indo-Pacific strategy accordingly, turning its attention to Asia and reconstructing the regional order in the region. Continuing to maintain U.S. leadership makes the U.S. “Indo-Pacific strategy” a clear direction. Dominance is not "challenged," ensuring the US has enduring hegemonic leadership.

Although the US had long neglected Southeast Asia in comparison to Northeast Asia, under the Biden administration, the US has begun to pay attention to Southeast Asia again, and seen the region as part of a larger Indo-Pacific region. China regards Southeast Asia as a new arena for regional power competition in Asia, but the US now frames it within its new Indo-Pacific strategy. ASEAN’s attention to China and the US

⁸⁶ Seah, S. et al., *The State of Southeast Asia: 2022*, Singapore: ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute.(2022).

Strategic development plays a vital role. In addition to vaccine development, China and the US are also conducting various cooperation in other aspects of public health.

2022 marks the 45th anniversary of establishing a dialogue between ASEAN and the US. At the ASEAN-U.S. Special Summit, The US launched the U.S.-ASEAN Health Futures Initiative to support a regional approach to public health in ASEAN, focusing on three core areas: research, health system capacity and resilience, and training the next generation of ASEAN public health professionals. USAID is working with the ASEAN Secretariat to develop the ASEAN Public Health Emergency Coordination System (APHECS). APHECS will help improve efficiencies across ASEAN's existing public health emergency response mechanisms to enable a coordinated, gender-sensitive regional response to future public health crises. The US CDC is standing up a US-ASEAN Infection Prevention and Control Task Force.⁸⁷

On the Chinese side, at the summit commemorating the 30th anniversary of the establishment of China-ASEAN dialogue relations in November 2021, President Xi Jinping proposed to provide additional free assistance for the covid vaccine to ASEAN countries; additional funds to the ASEAN Anti-epidemic Fund to increase joint vaccine production and cooperation. Technology transfer; help ASEAN to strengthen the construction of a grass-roots public health system and personnel training and improve

⁸⁷ Association of Southeast Asian Nations. "Joint Vision Statement of The ASEAN-U.S. Special Summit, 2022," May 14, 2022.

<https://asean.org/joint-vision-statement-of-the-asean-u-s-special-summit-2022/>.

the ability to respond to major public health emergencies and other cooperation proposals.⁸⁸

At its core, diplomatic action seems to boil down to state interests. China responded quickly in a short period, taking advantage of its well-developed manufacturing and industrial base to actively provide ASEAN maximum assistance and maintain its right to speak in the ASEAN region. Whether in government documents or speeches by leaders, China has said it will compete in Southeast Asia. The ASEAN government has been silent on the origins of the COVID-19 pandemic. The vaccine provided by China came at the right time, saving many lives.

Nonetheless, the epidemic prevention measures of ASEAN countries in response to the COVID-19 pandemic did not follow China's "zero covid policy." Still, Given more options, ASEAN citizens preferred Western vaccines and “coexisting with the virus.”

The stark reality facing the US and its close partners is that when Southeast Asia needs a vaccine, by the end of 2020 and the first half of 2021, only China provided vaccines in large quantities. The US first seemed irrelevant because of its focus on its pandemic at home.

⁸⁸ People’s Republic of China Ministry of Foreign Affairs. “Joint Statement of the China-ASEAN Summit Commemorating the 30th Anniversary of the Establishment of Dialogue Relations - A Comprehensive Strategic Partnership for Peace, Security, Prosperity and Sustainable Development,” November 22, 2021. http://switzerlandemb.fmprc.gov.cn/web/zyxw/202111/t20211122_10451473.shtml.

China's quick and massive response was valued early on when vaccines were in short supply. With the gradual entry of vaccines from the US, Japan, and Australia in the second half of 2021, China gradually lost the advantages it had in 2020, and Chinese vaccines are not as popular as they were at the beginning.

Despite this, ASEAN countries have mixed reviews on the safety and effectiveness of China's vaccines, but it is undeniable that in a period when global vaccines are monopolized by developed or wealthy countries, even as of May 2021, the vaccines managed globally will not be available but only 0.3% of the total went to low-income countries.⁸⁹

However, according to ASEAN's statistics, in 2021, trade volume between ASEAN and China reached a new record of USD 669 billion, making China ASEAN's largest trading partner for the 13th consecutive year; foreign direct investment (FDI) flows from China to ASEAN amounted to USD 13.6 billion in 2021, almost double the USD 7.0 billion in 2020. According to China's statistics, ASEAN-China trade volume has increased to USD 878.2 billion in 2021, and ASEAN has been China's largest trading partner for two consecutive years. FDI flows from ASEAN to China was USD 10.6 billion, a significant increase from USD 7.95 billion in 2020.⁹⁰ The purpose of China's vaccine diplomacy is to save more lives, improve its image, and gain more

⁸⁹Maude, Richard. "Southeast Asia and COVID-19 Vaccines Explained." South East Asia and COVID 19, June 21, 2021. <https://southeastasiacovid.asiasociety.org/southeast-asia-and-covid-19-vaccines-explained/>.

⁹⁰ Association of Southeast Asian Nations. "Joint Statement on Cooperation for Post-COVID Economic Recovery of the Twenty-First AEM-MOFCOM Consultation," September 18, 2022. <https://asean.org/joint-statement-on-cooperation-for-post-covid-economic-recovery-of-the-twenty-first-aem-mofcom-consultation/>.

ASEAN countries in vaccine diplomacy support. From the data point of view, in the post-epidemic period, economic exchanges between China and ASEAN have become more frequent than before the epidemic. Perhaps it is the result that ASEAN actively gave to ASEAN in the early stage of the pandemic. Compared with the US and its allies, ASEAN is more likely to cooperate than the US and its allies. Prioritize China. Both sides continue to be each other's largest trading partners. RCEP began on January 1, 2022, and ASEAN and China will have broader prospects for cooperation in the future. Chinese Prime Minister Li Keqiang also said at the ASEAN 10+3 meeting: unilateralism and protectionism are on the rise, economic and financial risks are rising, and global development is facing unprecedented challenges.” As a major economy in East Asia, the group needs to “commit to promoting regional and World peace, stability, development and prosperity, and the improvement of people's well-being.”⁹¹

At the same time, from 2020-2021, China increased its influence in the South China Sea-related countries through some active diplomacy and public health security cooperation caused by the covid pandemic. Still, the disputes between China and ASEAN countries on the South China Sea issue, neither economic nor public health support can offset it. The US and its allies have also been strong backers and support for ASEAN on the South China Sea issue. Meanwhile, at the ASEAN annual meeting in Phnom Penh on November 13, 2022, Biden pledged to work with the Asian bloc,

⁹¹ China News Network. “Remarks by Li Keqiang at the 25th ASEAN and China-Japan-ROK Leaders’ Meeting (Full Text),” November 12, 2022. <https://www.chinanews.com/gn/2022/11-13/9893156.shtml>.

saying: "We will build a better future that we all want to see" and vowed to Working together to build a region that is "free and open, stable, prosperous, resilient and secure"⁹²

Due to the geographical proximity of China and ASEAN, their strong economic advantages and the importance they attach to neighboring diplomacy will continue to increase their influence on other countries. Compared with the US, due to the territorial disputes over the South China Sea issue, what China has shown in the ASEAN region is that it does not want a close friend but more of an absolute right to speak in the region.

On the US side, ASEAN members have been disappointed by the Trump administration's neglect of ASEAN and the US withdrawal from the TPP. In the pre-pandemic period, ASEAN did not receive substantial help from the US. Although the Biden administration began to pay more attention to the ASEAN region, it also proposed a new economic initiative, the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity, to compensate for the cooperation vacancy caused by the US withdrawal from the TPP. (IPEF), although the effect is not as good as TPP at present, it can be regarded as a supplement for the economic cooperation of the US in the ASEAN region.

⁹² Sim, Dewey. "US President Joe Biden Pledges More Support on Myanmar, South China Sea Row in 'New Era' of US-Asean Ties." THIS WEEK IN AISA, November 12, 2022. https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/politics/article/3199410/us-president-joe-biden-pledges-more-support-myanmar-south-china-sea-row-new-era-us-asean-ties?module=perpetual_scroll_0&pgtype=article&campaign=3199410.

At the same time, Biden said in talks with ASEAN leaders on November 12, 2022 that the relationship between the United States and ASEAN is expected to be upgraded to a "comprehensive strategic partnership" to help the region defend against threats to the rules-based order. Biden said: "ASEAN is at the heart of this administration's Indo-Pacific strategy. We will continue to strengthen our commitment to work in tandem with a strong, unified ASEAN."

Biden announced the launch of the US-ASEAN comprehensive strategic partnership to expand multilateral cooperation in areas such as the environment and climate. This partnership puts Washington's relationship with ASEAN on the same level as China.⁹³

The relationship between ASEAN and the US of China during COVID-19 reflects the contradictory combination of regions and countries. These cases affect the bilateral cooperation between the US and China and the voice and influence of the US and China in the ASEAN region.

The vast market provided by China and the security provided by the US makes it difficult for ASEAN to choose just one.

⁹³ Bangkok Post. "Biden Promises Competition with China, Not Conflict as First Summit Ends Please Credit and Share This Article with Others Using This Link:<https://www.bangkokpost.com/world/2436830/biden-promises-competition-with-china-not-conflict-as-first-summit-ends>. View Our Policies at <http://goo.gl/9HgTd> and <http://goo.gl/Ou6Ip>. © Bangkok Post PCL. All Rights Reserved." November 13, 2022. <https://www.bangkokpost.com/world/2436830/biden-promises-competition-with-china-not-conflict-as-first-summit-ends>.

Regardless of the influence brought about by the strategic competition between China and the US during the epidemic, it has not changed the choice of most ASEAN countries. Generally speaking, ASEAN maintains a neutral attitude and avoids overly apparent closeness to Beijing or Washington. , implement some equidistant cooperation. China has always stated that it will support the centrality of ASEAN, and the US has also indicated that it will not force ASEAN to make a choice. ASEAN also recognizes that strategic competition between China and the US will inevitably affect and reshape the regional order.

The criticism of China by some media has primarily affected ordinary people's views on China's vaccines, but there are also some voices of public opinion gradually turning to China. Perhaps this is the result of China's active implementation of vaccine diplomacy, which can be found in the 2022 ISEAS survey report; 58% of ASEAN governments and social elites agree that China is the most prominent supporter of vaccines in the region. Twenty-three percent chose the US, while Australia got five percent.

In short, China and the US have cooperated with ASEAN in public health since the SARS outbreak in 2003. They have been deepening their cooperation through various organizations and dialogues for more than ten years since the platform of APEC. China has always regarded ASEAN as an important strategic part of regional economic engagement through infrastructure development projects of the Belt and Road Initiative

(BRI). While COVID-19 interrupted this, it also made it clear that ASEAN needed assistance during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, which China provided, sending many supplies to individual ASEAN countries for the COVID-19 virus and much early vaccine support to help ASEAN reduce the deaths in times of vaccine shortage, so that up to mid-2021, China provided ASEAN citizens most of their vaccines. After the Biden administration came to power in January 2021, the US and its allies began to provide more vaccine options to ASEAN and to participate in WHO activities again. Chinese vaccines lost their initial competitive advantage. Although some ASEAN people have been skeptical about the quality of Chinese vaccines, the official government's attitude towards Chinese vaccines is always positive. This has improved China's image and influence in the ASEAN region. China had a significant advantage up to August 2021, but with the entry of the US from around mid-2021, China's advantage gradually disappeared.

The assistance of China and the US to ASEAN was meant to reduce casualties caused by the spread of the pandemic and to seek more opportunities for cooperation with ASEAN. China wants to have more voice in the ASEAN region, while the US cannot allow China to expand its influence. The enormous economic management of ASEAN and China and the security dependence on the US make it difficult for ASEAN to choose only one of them. Therefore, the best choice for ASEAN at present is to remain neutral. Indonesian President Joko Widodo will take over as ASEAN head next

year, and he vowed not to let Southeast Asia become the front lines of a new cold war as ties between the US and China become fraught and ASEAN would not become “a proxy to any powers.”⁹⁴

At the same time, ASEAN benefited from the strategic competition between China and the United States to provide a large number of vaccines first and economically recovered because the spread and mortality of the pandemic were controlled. At the same time, continue equidistant exchanges with China and the US to achieve a balanced relationship, thereby maintaining and promoting more cooperation and, in the process safeguarding its sovereignty and maximizing the interests of ASEAN.

China's vaccine diplomacy is based on the national economy. After Deng Xiaoping implemented the reform and opening policy in 1979, China's economy has recovered and developed somewhat. In the 21st century, taking advantage of opportunities and population advantages, it has gradually developed into the second largest economy after the United States, and invested a lot of money in vaccine research and development in the early stages of the epidemic, which is also the reason for the rapid results.

⁹⁴ Morning star. “Indonesian President Joko Widodo Will Take over as ASEAN Head next Year, and He Vowed Not to Let Southeast Asia Become the Front Lines of a New Cold War as Ties between the US and China Become Fraught and ASEAN Would Not Become ‘a Proxy to Any Powers.’” November 11, 2022. <https://morningstaronline.co.uk/article/w/south-east-asia-must-not-become-front-lines-of-new-cold%20-war>.

Compared with the US, China's cultural output and national image have been challenged among many in the ASEAN region. This is one reason that China donated vaccines to ASEAN in the first place. It gave China more recognition while saving the lives of ASEAN people and was able to enhance the image of China among some ASEAN citizens. However, compared with the US, although China's vaccine donation in the early stage of the epidemic has achieved certain results, it has received more thanks from the governments of ASEAN countries, and has not achieved obvious results among the people. Instead, some people have taken to the streets to protest and publicly oppose to vaccines has made the vaccine diplomacy that has not had good results even more embarrassing. At the same time, compared with the United States, China is not so mature in terms of technology, which is why people in ASEAN have doubts about the safety and effectiveness of Chinese vaccines.

Compared with China, the US did not directly donate vaccines to ASEAN at the beginning, which disappointed ASEAN countries. After that, American vaccine brands became the first choice of ASEAN countries. No matter before or after, the deep-rooted national image of the United States in ASEAN has won more support for the US in ASEAN.

As mentioned above, according to the survey results, the level of trust of ASEAN people in China is decreasing year by year. Regarding the relationship between China and ASEAN, most people only want to cooperate more economically.

These stereotypes give China's vaccine The obstacles set by diplomacy, and although the United States entered later, the evaluation is always positive. The State of Southeast Asia 2022 survey report notes that the US continues to enjoy popular support with 57.0% of the respondents choosing it as compared to 43.0% who chose China. However, the support rate of the US has gradually declined this year. It can be seen that ASEAN is doing its best maintain a balance between the major powers.

This chapter has shown how the competitive tensions between China and the US in recent years, especially those tied to ASEAN concerns with health security have allowed ASEAN to remain balanced and to maintain and strengthen its centrality. Vaccine diplomacy with ASEAN countries under COVID-19 was dominated by Chinese vaccines in early 2021, while the US approach came later, but since the fall of 2021, it has won wide support in ASEAN, and is seen as part of its new Indo-Pacific strategy.



Chapter 3 The Impact of Other Countries and Alliances on the ASEAN

Regional Order

The ongoing tensions and competition between China and the US are still major forces affecting the order and pattern of the ASEAN region. But other ASEAN neighbors and actors also play an essential role in the regional order, often in new configurations. Beyond single countries, some countries form alliances, and within

these alliances, minor differences caused by the pursuit of different national interests also complicate this competition. These other states and their associations affected the ASEAN regional order and contributed to the health security of ASEAN, which further involved the regional order, several of which were tied up with the new US Indo-Pacific strategy.

Australia

As one of the critical US allies in the Asia-Pacific region, Australia is familiar with the "Indo-Pacific." Australia's "Indo-Pacific" concept echoes the Obama administration's "Rebalance to the Asia-Pacific" strategy from the beginning. Australia has always hoped that the US could play a leading role in the region for a long time.⁹⁵

In the foreign policy white paper released in 2017, the scope of the "Indo-Pacific" region was adjusted to "from the eastern Indian Ocean to the Pacific Ocean, connected by Southeast Asia, including India, the US, and this region in northern Asia."⁹⁶ Australia has strengthened the use of the US as the center's cooperation strives to maintain a dynamic balance between the great powers. The South China Sea issue is related to regional rules and order competition. For Australia, "Indo-Pacific" is an accurate description of the geographical environment and a realistic basis for strategy formulation. The foreign policy white paper takes "an open,

⁹⁵ Ren, Yuanzhe. "Australia's South China Sea Policy in the Indo-Pacific Framework." *Pacific Journal* 28, no. 6 (2020): 45.

⁹⁶ Australia Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2017 Australian Foreign Policy White Paper, Commonwealth of Australia, 2017

inclusive, and prosperous Indo-Pacific region" as a key goal of diplomacy and describes it at length.⁹⁷

On the one hand, the "China threat theory" adds more episodes to the Sino-Australian relationship. On the other hand, Australia differs from the US in its attitude towards China. Australia is very wary of Sino-US competition, and the deadly Sino-US relationship should not be defined as an outright hostile relationship. At the same time, Australia is dependent on China and the US in different aspects. In terms of security, it needs more support from the US and is economically inseparable from China's huge market.

Australia's ties to China are also strong since, in 2021, China was Australia's leading export partner, importing approximately 115 billion U.S. dollars worth of goods.⁹⁸ China and Australia still have opportunities for cooperation in non-traditional security and multilateral mechanisms.

Instead of redefining the region, Australia is trying to reposition itself within the Indo-Pacific region⁹⁹, hoping to enhance the strategic position of India and the Indian Ocean.

Since 2020, Australia has cooperated with the US strategic advancement in the Indo-Pacific region and gradually adjusted its policy towards Southeast Asia.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Statista. "Value of Goods Exported to Leading Trading Partners from Australia in 2021," n.d. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/622568/australia-export-partners-by-value/>.

⁹⁹ Wilkins, T. S.. Australia and the Indo-Pacific: A Region in Search of a Strategy, or a Strategy in Search of a Region?. *Italian Institute for International Political Studies*, (2018): 4.

The Trump administration's strategy in the Indo-Pacific reflects the U.S. decision to intervene in Asia and compete with China by redefining the region. Australia wants to seek partnerships other than the US. The East Asia Summit (EAS) and the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) are inherent “Indo-Pacific,” and Australia and ASEAN can work together on an inclusive Indo-Pacific concept to provide a regional order with a third country that is neither China-centric nor US-led. A choice. Enhancing the right to speak in the future regional order.¹⁰⁰

Australia's Prime Minister Scott Morrison said in the virtual ASEAN Australia Summit, hosted by ASEAN Summit Brunei, in Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei October 27, 2021, Australia will donate at least 10 million more COVID-19 vaccines and offer A\$124 million (\$92.6 million) in financial aid to Southeast Asia, as Canberra seeks to strengthen ties with countries in the region.¹⁰¹ Of the 25 million doses Australia has committed to, 12 million have been delivered by the end of 2021, mainly to Vietnam, Indonesia and Cambodia.¹⁰²

Japan

¹⁰⁰ Medcalf, R. An Australian vision of the Indo-Pacific and what it means for Southeast Asia. *Southeast Asian Affairs*, (2019): 57

¹⁰¹ Packham, Colin. “Australia Promises More Aid to ASEAN, Seeks Stronger Relations.” Reuters, October 27, 2021.

https://mail.qq.com/cgi-bin/readmail?sid=biL9c7n-L245bVAz&mailid=ZL0024_r~PNcbuMOXguXmMA2R7ddc_a&nocheckframe=true&t=attachpreviewer&select=3&selectfile=&seq=

¹⁰² Maude, Richard, and Dominique Fraser. “Chinese Diplomacy in Southeast Asia during the COVID-19 Pandemic.” Asia Society Policy Institute, July 2022.

<https://asiasociety.org/policy-institute/chinese-diplomacy-southeast-asia-during-covid-19-pandemic#southeast-asia-and-chinas-great-national-rejuvenation--10101>.

In Japan, former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe proposed a cooperation strategy including the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean in his speech to the Indian Congress as early as 2007. In 2012 he proposed the Democratic Security Diamond. Behind the Japanese version of the "Indo-Pacific strategy" is Japan's desire to curb the expansion of China's power in the Asian region and to cooperate with countries such as Australia and India to pursue Japan's intention to have a voice in the area. In the long run, it also inhibits the expanding political and economic reach of China's Belt and Road Initiative.

During the COVID-19 period, Japan's assistance to ASEAN countries is essentially the continuation and development of Japan's traditional diplomacy with ASEAN countries. Japan has permanently attached great importance to cooperation and exchanges with ASEAN. The distance between Japan and ASEAN has been shortened. ASEAN countries generally have a favorable impression of Japan, and Japan's assistance to ASEAN during the epidemic has the same effect. Concerning public health, to achieve equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines, Japan has provided more than 23 million doses of vaccines to ASEAN countries and a total of about 327 million US dollars in grant assistance, including cold chain development.¹⁰³ Become ASEAN is The third largest supplier of vaccines in China, after the US and China.

India

¹⁰³ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. "The 23rd ASEAN Plus Three Foreign Ministers' Meeting," August 4, 2022. https://www.mofa.go.jp/a_o/rp/page1e_000436.html.

The year 2022 marked the ASEAN-India Year of Friendship to mark the 30th anniversary of bilateral relations. As the focus area of look east, India regards ASEAN as an important strategic partner, and India has also given ASEAN a lot of help and support in public health. At the 20ASEAN-India Ministerial Meeting, he spoke highly of ASEAN countries' assistance to India in responding to the epidemic, emphasizing that they should continue to assist each other in responding to the epidemic, including providing health supplies, COVID-19 vaccines, and specific medicines while improving preventive medicine capabilities and cooperating to promote regional supply chains. ASEAN countries highly value India's \$1 million aid to ASEAN Response Fund to Response to COVID-19, encourages India to explore cooperation with ASEAN in areas such as mutual recognition of COVID-19 vaccination certificates; vaccine production, generic drugs, and medical technology, and treatment of COVID-19; genomics surveillance; pandemic preparedness, and strengthening global supply chains. ¹⁰⁴ ASEAN and India agreed to assist each other in responding to the epidemic, reducing the impact of the epidemic, and promoting economic recovery.

For India, participating in the "Indo-Pacific" strategy can undoubtedly satisfy its great power mentality and give it a favorable position in its strategic relationship with China. Still, suppose it chooses to participate in the strategy too profoundly. In that case, it will not only make it Lose "strategic autonomy" but will also drift away from

¹⁰⁴News of the Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. "India Targets Southeast Asia as a Key Region to Advance Its 'Look East Policy,'" August 5, 2021. https://www.mofa.go.jp/a_o/rp/page1e_000436.html.

the shared strategic goal of controlling the Indian Ocean in the future and will also lose the strategic benefits of both sides between China and the US.¹⁰⁵ India's national interests have its calculations. In its view, maintaining a balanced strategy for China and the US in the ASEAN region is more profitable than favoring either side, which makes its participation in the "Indo-Pacific" strategy. There must be limits. Before the meeting between the two leaders in 2018, India had a negative view of the BRI. But after that, the relationship between China and India began to pick up due to economic cooperation. The improved relations with India have relieved China's regional strategic competition pressure to a certain extent.

QUAD

The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, often abbreviated as QSD or QUAD, formed as an informal set of security activities among Japan, Australia, India, and the US in 2007 but ended in 2010 before emerging again in 2017. It is not a formal military alliance, but it is often seen as a counterweight to China's growing military and economic influence in Asia and a way of reframing Asia as a region. The strengthening of QUAD is aimed at China's rising influence in the Indo-Pacific region and inhibits the formation of a China-centric regional order. The four participating countries – the US, Japan, India, and Australia – have overlapping common interests and still pay great attention to the ASEAN region.

¹⁰⁵ Li, Bo. "'Indo-Pacific Strategy' and India's Security Concept." People's Forum · Academic Frontier, no. 12 (2019).

Australia, the US, and India actively supported the restoration of quadrilateral security dialogue (QUAD) and held meetings in November 2017 and June 2018 before the first foreign ministers' meeting were held during the United Nations General Assembly in September 2019, and senior officials met during the ASEAN Summit in November 2019. Most of these meetings aimed to be "working together to advance a free, open, and inclusive Indo-Pacific, with the ultimate goal of a rules-based, accessible, and open regional order."¹⁰⁶

US President Joe Biden and the prime ministers of Japan, India, and Australia held the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QSD) on September 24, 2021, where they discussed strategies to counter the rise of Chinese influence in the Indo-Pacific region, including Proposed vaccine diplomacy to rival Beijing's ambitious plans. The Quartet has committed to deliver up to 1 billion vaccine doses to ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations), the Indo-Pacific, and other regions by the end of 2022. Australia will provide \$212 million in grant aid to buy vaccines for Southeast Asia and the Pacific.¹⁰⁷

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the interaction and cooperation between the US, Japan, India, and Australia have become more frequent, and surrounding countries such as South Korea and New Zealand have also been included in the consultation

¹⁰⁶ Zhang, Jie. "US-Japan-India-Australia 'Quadrilateral Dialogue' and the Reconstruction of the Asia-Pacific Regional Order." *International Studies*, no. 5 (2017): 65.

¹⁰⁷ The White House. "Joint Statement from Quad Leaders," September 24, 2021. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/09/24/joint-statement-from-quad-leaders/>.

system to form the structural framework of QUAD+. In March 2020, members of the Quartet met with representatives from New Zealand, South Korea, and Vietnam to discuss their respective approaches to the current COVID-19 pandemic. The participation of representatives from New Zealand, South Korea, and Vietnam, the latter being the first country in Southeast Asia/ASEAN to join, is seen as another attempt to expand the importance of QUAD and the growing threat China poses in the region. In 2021 and 2022, the QUAD delivered over 265 million vaccine doses to countries in the Indo-Pacific region.

It has been nearly a decade of developing the "Indo-Pacific" concept into the formation of the "Indo-Pacific system" by the US and the making of the "Belt and Road Initiative" by China. However, there is significant uncertainty about the influence of countries such as the US, India, Australia, and Japan on ASEAN. It is unlikely that a unified strategic system will be established in the Indo-Pacific region, and political changes in various countries will also challenge the sustainability of the strategy. . Changes in China-US, China-Japan, China-India, and China-Australia diplomatic relations will also guide the future direction of the regional order. The dual or multiple dependence of these countries on China and the US makes the order in the ASEAN region appear contradictory and multi-faceted to a certain extent. The motivations of the four QUAD countries do not entirely overlap. Although each country believes it is necessary to confront the rise of China in terms of security, there are still various

economic interests in other aspects, such as financial aspects. China's economic influence and role in the Indo-Pacific region cannot be surpassed and replaced by any country in a short period.

Nowadays, QUAD and ASEAN have launched different versions of the "Indo-Pacific Concept," and there are still considerable differences in the development direction of the future "Indo-Pacific system." During the operation, contradictions gradually emerged, which may lead to mutual elimination.¹⁰⁸

Based on the above reasons, the COVID-19 period, and ongoing tensions in the South China Sea, the ASEAN regional order may need to work harder to maintain its centrality in the future. Suppose ASEAN can maintain its role as a balancing force against ongoing tensions between China and the US. In that case, it will be able to seize opportunities and advantages brought about by its strategic competition. This will allow ASEAN to remain strong and be a meeting point and a critical part of the larger region's architecture.

China's Belt and Road Initiative Response

Early in 2012, the "One Belt, One Road" only occupied a minor position in China's foreign policy. The Obama administration signed an agreement for the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) plan, which excluded China but included several ASEAN countries. Although it is seen as a US response to China's "One Belt, One

¹⁰⁸ Liu, Lin. "ASEAN's 'Indo-Pacific Outlook' and Its Dissolution to the 'Indo-Pacific Strategy' of the United States, Japan and Other Countries." *Southeast Asian Studies*, no. 5 (2017): 72–90.

Road” initiative, it did not rise to the strategic level. During the Trump administration, U.S. relations with China worsened markedly. The U.S. saw China as a strategic competitor and a threat to U.S. influence in Asia, which led to the US proposing the “Indo-Pacific” region concept. It has appeared in various official documents since 2017 and is part of the framing done by high-level officials. This expresses their views on issues related to the "Indo-Pacific" strategy as a broader way of strategically changing a vision of Asia that centered on security concerns that excluded China, and it formed a kind of US response to the "Belt and Road" initiative. As of February 2021, China and 171 countries and international organizations have signed 205 cooperation documents on the joint construction of the "Belt and Road."¹⁰⁹

The US’s negative perception of the “Belt and Road” continued to increase after Trump took office. This is because, first of all, the achievements of the “Belt and Road” construction have significantly strengthened China’s regional and even global presence, and China’s strength and influence on international affairs, and in ASEAN, is gaining, which poses a challenge to US position in Asia and the world.

The Belt and Road Initiative focuses on building relations with countries by helping those countries to build infrastructure with Chinese funding, expertise, and technologies. Besides focusing on relations with Central Asian countries and South Asia, it is concentrating on coping with the strategic pressure from the Indo-Pacific.

¹⁰⁹ People’s Republic of China Ministry of Commerce. “My Country Has Signed 205 Cooperation Documents on the Joint Construction of the ‘Belt and Road,’” February 24, 2021. <http://fec.mofcom.gov.cn/article/fwyydyl/zgzx/202102/20210203040640.shtml>.

Aside from projects through Central and South Asia, the BRI has also done much work in the ASEAN region, becoming a key focus and node of the "21st Century Maritime Silk Road." China is ASEAN's largest trading partner, and the cooperation between the two sides shows excellent potential.

In short, China and the US are undoubtedly the main forces influencing the ASEAN regional order. Still, beyond those two countries, the new vision of the four "QUAD" countries and the Asian countries bound up in the BRI is also worth considering. From a big-picture perspective, there is tension over regional order implicit in the new Indo-Pacific strategy and the BRI and the role of the US and China in Southeast Asia. Although some common interests overlap, conflicts will inevitably arise within the alliance to safeguard fundamental national interests. ASEAN should seize such an opportunity and remain neutral in these tensions and conflicts. This will ensure that ASEAN can maintain a balanced and strong place in the region and the broader world.

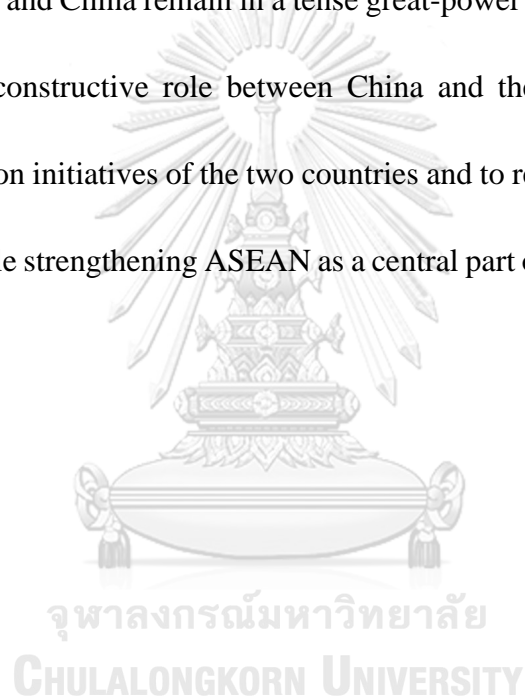
Conclusion

This paper has examined how strategic competition between China and the United States in recent years in the realm of health security has affected the ASEAN region. It has investigated government statements about perceptions of the US and China toward one another, examining their actions in the Southeast Asian region. Asia's relations to China have changed through its evolving Belt and Road Initiative

(BRI), while the US has redefined its role through its new Indo-Pacific strategy. These have been frameworks for understanding how the two countries have been involved in ASEAN during COVID-19 pandemic (2020-2022). Through this examination, the paper has found that the strategic competition between China and the US in health security has enabled the ASEAN region to keep its strategic autonomy by maintaining an equal balance with major powers in the region as China and the US were experiencing tense relations. This balancing role by ASEAN has strengthened the notion of ASEAN centrality for China and the US, and also increased its importance as a stabilizing force in the regional order. Over the past decade, and especially in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, ASEAN centrality has strengthened and become more vital to the Southeast Asian region due to the strategic competition of the US and China in health security.

How the strategic competition between China and the US will affect ASEAN or how much it will have an impact on ASEAN will depend not only on the success of China and the US's ability to implement their regional order concept and distinct leadership styles but also on how much ASEAN will be able to balance the competition of the US and China. The US has long been able to speak in ASEAN and has a mission in the ASEAN Secretariat, but judging from the immediate assistance provided by China early on in the COVID-19 pandemic, including many vaccines, China's image in the region improved and generated some positive interactions with ASEAN. While

neglecting ASEAN in the early phases of the pandemic, the US eventually assisted in the area, especially by offering vaccines for COVID-19. This won some support in the ASEAN region, to the detriment of China's influence. As ASEAN is hedging between China and the US, it is learning to deal with foreign relations without disrupting the existing balance and maintain ASEAN's sovereignty without interference from major powers. As the US and China remain in a tense great-power rivalry, ASEAN can play a more active and constructive role between China and the US, helping to improve regional cooperation initiatives of the two countries and to reduce tensions between the US and China while strengthening ASEAN as a central part of the Asian regional order.



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