

China-ASEAN Cooperation on High-Quality BRI: Regional Experience, Order Reconstruction and Strategic Rethinking

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During his visits to Kazakhstan and Indonesia in September and October 2013, Chinese President Xi Jinping raised the major initiatives of jointly building the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road (hereinafter referred to as the Belt and Road Initiative, in short BRI). The year 2023 marks the 10th anniversary of the Belt and Road Initiative. After ten years of development, the BRI has achieved remarkable results in Southeast Asia, as shown by deepening economic and trade relations and increasing connectivity between China and Southeast Asian countries, innovation in international production capacity cooperation, and industrial ecosystem transformation for high-quality development. These achievements have bolstered the regional consensus on development and improved the regional cooperation network. In the context of the profound changes unseen in a century at both global and regional levels, the experience of China and Southeast Asian countries in jointly building the BRI has exemplary demonstration effects and strategic implications for development-oriented regional cooperation and for commitment to the regional and global order that is characterized by cooperation rather than confrontation.

The BRI transitioned to high-quality development in 2018. The BRI development in Southeast Asia has undergone notable changes in terms of

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cooperation projects, construction process, and the risks and challenges faced since 2018. This paper looks into the decade of China's Belt and Road cooperation with Southeast Asian countries in two phases. The first phase (2013–2018) focuses on foundation building, in which China and Southeast Asian countries jointly accomplished several tasks, such as mechanism building, strategic synergization and project initiation. The second phase (2019–2023) features high-quality development, in which the focus of cooperation shifted to new areas such as the green economy, digital economy and high technology, following a high-standard, sustainable and people-centred approach. Based on research evidence, this paper concluded: (a) The “dual-track” diplomatic model evolved from a long period of interactions between China and Southeast Asian countries and relations between China and ASEAN have provided a unique mutually beneficial mechanism for the Belt and Road cooperation. (b) The high degree of consensus on development between China and other parties in the region has made it possible to speedily harmonize strategies and implement projects smoothly to balance the dual goals of development and security rationally. All these are important regional experiences gained from the Belt and Road cooperation in Southeast Asia.

Chinese academics have studied the BRI from multiple perspectives of rulemaking, mechanism building, regional order change, national image shaping, and the concept of economic diplomacy with Chinese characteristics. The extent of studies reflected the BRI's broad and far-reaching strategic impacts. Such strategic effects have aroused doubts and anxieties and even elicited obstructions from the US and Western countries while being well received by recipient countries along the route. Since the BRI was proposed, US think tanks generally regarded it as a tool for China's geopolitical competition against the US. They systematically “smeared” it, and around 2018, the US officially launched the Indo-Pacific Strategy to counterbalance it.

At the early stage of the Indo-Pacific Strategy, the economic agenda was represented by a series of policies and initiatives to provide alleged rules-

based, transparent, and alternative infrastructure investment programs to weaken the influence of the BRI. Noting this, the last section of this paper examines the impact of the external environment on future BRI development in the context of the US comprehensive strategic competition against China and the evolving regional order. China should strategically reposition the BRI in response, the paper suggests. In advancing the Global Development Initiative (GDI), the Global Security Initiative (GSI) and the Global Civilization Initiative (GCI), China should prioritize Southeast Asia and promote high-quality BRI development as an important pathway to building a closer China-ASEAN community with a shared future and creating a more favorable neighboring environment.

Foundation Building Phase (2013–2018): Strategic Synergization and Project Initiation

Since the launch of the Belt and Road Initiative in 2013, the BRI has advanced in Southeast Asia with a series of new progress, including synergizing the development strategies of China and the ASEAN member states, devising the roadmap for the Initiative, and fully promoting connectivity in five dimensions.¹

Enhancing connectivity is essential for deepening China-ASEAN economic cooperation

China and Southeast Asia are connected by land and sea and have a shared future. At the beginning of the reform and opening up, Southeast Asia was an important source of investment for China. Shortly after the end of the Cold War, China and ASEAN established dialogue relations in 1991. After that, the two sides improved strategic trust by properly handling the South China Sea issue and gradually expanding cooperation across multiple fields. In particular, China helped ASEAN countries overcome economic

¹ Policy coordination, facilities connectivity, unimpeded trade, financial integration, and people-to-people ties.

difficulties in the 1997 Asian financial crisis and resume economic growth. In December 1997, the leaders of ASEAN and China held their first dialogue and established a good-neighborly partnership of mutual trust oriented towards the 21st century, creating a new pattern of cooperation between China and ASEAN. In 2002, China and ASEAN signed the Framework Agreement on Comprehensive Economic Cooperation and started constructing free trade area (FTA). Their economic ties became increasingly closer as the markets in goods, services, and investment opened to each other in quick succession. During the 2008 global financial crisis, the macroeconomic policies adopted by China helped ASEAN stabilize its economic growth and increase the regional economy's resilience. With the full implementation of the China-ASEAN FTA in 2010, more than 90% of the goods of the two sides were subjected to zero tariffs, which has greatly boosted China-ASEAN economic cooperation. By now, China and Southeast Asian countries have forged long-term and stable partnerships and shared rich experiences and fruitful results of cooperation. The success is an important reason why China chose to announce, in Indonesia, the initiative of building the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road. The success of past cooperation shows that the Belt and Road construction has a solid foundation in Southeast Asia.

At its inception, ASEAN concentrated on political and security affairs and did not focus on regional economic cooperation until the end of the Cold War. ASEAN has since been committed to development and gives priority to development. ASEAN had initiated East Asian cooperation with China, Japan and South Korea and constructed the FTA network with Australia, New Zealand and India under the framework of 10+1. It has gradually driven the region's economic development and become an important pole of the world economy. However, the process of ASEAN economic integration has been hindered by economic disparities among ASEAN members and infrastructure deficiencies in some member states. Because of this, ASEAN released the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity (MPAC) in 2010 to strengthen connectivity in infrastructure, cooperation

mechanisms and people-to-people. In this regard, China's BRI, which prioritizes infrastructure connectivity and production capacity cooperation, is compatible with ASEAN's development needs. The BRI and the MPAC can support each other with complementary advantages.

Southeast Asia is a priority in the BRI

Southeast Asian countries have paid great attention and responded differentially to the BRI since it was proposed. Singapore, Cambodia, Laos, Brunei and Thailand were among the first to express support. Singaporean Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong said in September 2014 that the country appreciated and welcomed China's proposals to launch an upgraded China-ASEAN FTA version, set up the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), and build the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road (MSR), and looked forward to cooperating closely with China.² The Southeast Asian countries embroiled in the South China Sea disputes with China, including Vietnam, Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines, were hesitant to participate in the BRI at the outset, fearing it would affect the South China Sea situation. Analysts believed some ASEAN members initially expected more information about China's strategic intent and policy sustainability regarding the BRI before they committed. These countries tended to wait and see whether more resources were available to implement the new initiative, as, after all, a series of relatively mature mechanisms with great potential for cooperation between China and ASEAN were already in place, including FTA.³

Nevertheless, noting the rapid and concrete progress in the BRI enabled by a series of measures taken by the Chinese government, Southeast Asian countries turned enthusiastic to the Initiative. In November 2014, all ASEAN countries joined the AIIB as principal founding members. In May 2017, seven Southeast Asian state leaders attended the first Belt and Road

2 "Lee Hsien Loong: Singapore Appreciates and Supports Building the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road," September 17, 2014, <http://singapore.haiwainet.cn/n/2014/0917/c456212-21092606.html>.

3 In the investigation to Vietnam conducted by the author in late 2013, some Vietnamese scholars expressed uncertainty about the concrete content and duration of the BRI proposed by China and the relations with the "Two Corridors and One Circle" plan already in place between China and Vietnam, among other things.

Forum for International Cooperation.⁴ As of August 2018, eight Southeast Asian countries signed Belt and Road cooperation documents with China to foster inter-country strategic synergies and implemented a number of cooperation projects (Table 1).⁵

Table 1 Strategic Synergies and Key Projects between China and ASEAN States (as of August 2018)

Country	Strategic synergies	Selected key projects
Laos	Transformation from Land-Locked to Land-Linked Country	China-Laos Railway
Myanmar		China-Myanmar Economic Corridor China-Myanmar Crude Oil Pipeline
Thailand	Thailand 4.0 Eastern Economic Corridor	China-Thailand Railway
Vietnam	Two Corridors and One Circle	
Singapore		New International Land-Sea Trade Corridor
Indonesia	Global Maritime Fulcrum	Jakarta-Bandung High-Speed Railway
Malaysia		China-Malaysia Qinzhou Industrial Park and Malaysia-China Kuantan Industrial Park Malaysia East Coast Link
Philippines	“Build, Build, Build” Program	Binondo-Intramuros Bridge Estrella-Pantaleon Bridge
Brunei	Brunei Vision 2035	Brunei-Guangxi Economic Corridor
Cambodia	Rectangular Strategy	Sihanoukville Special Economic Zone

4 The leaders of Singapore, Thailand and Brunei did not attend the event. See “Joint Communiqué of the Leaders’ Roundtable of the First Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation (Full Text),” May 16, 2017, <https://www.yidaiyilu.gov.cn/zchj/sbwj/13687.htm>.

5 In addition, China and Indonesia signed a Memorandum of Understanding to promote the Belt and Road Initiative and Global Maritime Fulcrum in October 2018; China and the Philippines signed a Memorandum of Understanding on the Belt and Road cooperation in November 2018. See “List of Countries That Have Signed Belt and Road Cooperation Documents with China,” <https://www.yidaiyilu.gov.cn/xwzx/roll/77298.htm>.

Facilities connectivity is a core content and priority area of the BRI. The key projects in infrastructure construction were centered on six major economic corridors and “multiple ports in multiple countries.” Within the scope of Southeast Asia, the China-Myanmar gas and oil pipelines were completed in 2013 and 2017, respectively. The construction of the Jakarta-Bandung High-Speed Railway, China-Thailand Railway and China-Laos Railway was started, and the Lancang-Mekong River Phase II project involving China, Laos, Myanmar and Thailand was advanced. In promoting international production capacity cooperation and building overseas industrial parks, the “Two Countries, Twin Parks” project of China-Malaysia Qinzhou Industrial Park and Malaysia-China Kuantan Industrial Park has become a model of bilateral cooperation. It also pushed the construction of many cooperation parks, such as the China-Laos Cross-Border Economic Cooperation Zone and China-Vietnam Cross-Border Economic Cooperation Zone.

Regarding financial investment, the Indonesian government officially launched the National Slum Upgrading Project with a total investment of US\$1.74 billion in April 2016. The project aims to improve the quality of slums by constructing and renovating local infrastructure to access water, electricity and roads. In June 2016, the World Bank and the AIIB announced as partners US\$433 million in financing the project, with the later to account for half. Bambang Suryono, Chairman of the Indonesian think tank Asia Innovation Study Center, said that the AIIB’s professionalism and pragmatic approach in Indonesia’s National Slum Upgrading Project was welcomed by the Indonesian government and people. He expected the AIIB to contribute more to global poverty alleviation, environmental protection and infrastructure development.⁶ On September 27, 2017, the AIIB approved US\$207.6 million in funding for Metro Manila flood management, the first AIIB-financed project in the Philippines, totally costing US\$500 million.

6 “AIIB Financing Revitalizes Indonesia’s Slums,” January 22, 2018, http://www.xinhuanet.com/world/2018-01/22/c_1122294474.htm.

In terms of people-to-people ties, China and ASEAN have gradually improved the mechanisms of humanistic exchanges, covering cultural industry cooperation, educational exchanges and cooperation, youth exchanges and international tourism cooperation. Since 2018, the visits under China-ASEAN people-to-people exchanges have reached approximately 50 million annually, with more than 3,800 weekly flights between China and ASEAN countries. At the end of 2018, China announced that it would set up the China-ASEAN Young Leaders Scholarship and launch the “Bridge of the Future” China-ASEAN Young Leaders Training Program. The project aims to invite 1,000 outstanding talents from ASEAN to China for training in the next five years to enhance the friendship.⁷

The Belt and Road cooperation in Southeast Asia certainly encountered risks and challenges during the first phase. Some domestic political considerations affected a few countries and caused them to question and even directly reject projects under the BRI. For example, under the influence of the “debt trap theory” negative publicity originating from Sri Lanka’s Hambantota port, the Myanmar government demanded renegotiation of the investment program on the Kyaukphyu Special Economic Zone due to worry about falling into a “debt trap” by accepting China’s huge investments. In response, China agreed to increase Myanmar’s share of investment in the project. In addition, some Southeast Asian countries did not formulate their China strategies due to the South China Sea issue, which delayed the strategic alignment with the BRI. In particular, the so-called South China Sea arbitration case brought by the Philippine government in 2013 raised the tension in the South China Sea. During this period, China took a positive attitude to push forward the consultation on the Code of Conduct in the South China Sea (hereinafter referred to as the COC) while continuing to fully implement the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South

7 “Speech by Li Keqiang at the 21st China-ASEAN Leaders’ Meeting (Full Text),” November 15, 2018, https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/gjhdq_676201/gjhdqzz_681964/lhg_682518/zywj_682530/201811/t20181115_9386084.shtml.

China Sea (hereinafter referred to as the DOC) with ASEAN countries. In September 2016, the Joint Statement of China and ASEAN Member States on the Application of the Rules for Unplanned Encounters at Sea in the South China Sea and the Guidelines for Hotline Communications were deliberated among senior officials of the ministries of foreign affairs of China and ASEAN member states in response to maritime emergencies. The documents were adopted to strengthen maritime crisis control and safeguard peace and stability in the South China Sea,⁸ thereby maintaining the stability of China-ASEAN relations. China-Philippines relations gradually improved with the ascendancy to power of Rodrigo Duterte in 2016. The two countries signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) on the Belt and Road cooperation at the end of 2018.⁹

High-Quality Development Phase (September 2018 to the Present): Cooperation Upgraded and Results Increasing Continuously

When presiding over a symposium in August 2018 that marked the fifth anniversary of the Belt and Road Initiative, President Xi said that in advancing the initiative, we should transition from making high-level plans to intensive and meticulous implementation, so as to realize high-quality development, bring benefits to local people, and build a global community of shared future.¹⁰ In addition, President Xi called for high-

8 “The 19th China-ASEAN Leaders’ Meeting Adopted the Joint Statement of China and ASEAN Member States on the Application of the Rules for Unplanned Encounters at Sea in the South China Sea,” September 8, 2016, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/nanhai/chn/zcfg/201609/t20160908_8523574.htm.; “The 19th China-ASEAN Leaders’ Meeting Adopted the Guidelines for Hotline Communications among Senior Officials of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of China and ASEAN Member States in Response to Maritime Emergencies,” September 8, 2016, https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/gjhdq_676201/gjhdqzz_681964/lhg_682518/zywj_682530/201609/t20160908_9386081.shtml.

9 “Joint Declaration of the People’s Republic of China and the Republic of the Philippines,” November 21, 2018, https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/gjhdq_676201/gj_676203/yz_676205/1206_676452/1207_676464/201811/t20181121_7977742.shtml.

10 The State Council Information Office, “The Belt and Road Initiative Progress, Contributions and Prospects,” April 22, 2019, http://english.scio.gov.cn/beltandroad/2019-04/22/content_76329624.htm.

quality Belt and Road cooperation at the second Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation in April 2019. While highlighting the continued focus on infrastructure connectivity, President Xi said that we should fully implement the principles of extensive consultation, joint construction and shared benefits, pursue open, green and clean cooperation, and follow a high-standard, sustainable and people-centered approach. He added that it is important to deepen cooperation in cutting-edge areas such as smart manufacturing and digital economy, implement the innovation-driven development strategy, and work together to keep the world economy open.¹¹ In a review of the BRI results achieved over the past eight years at the third symposium on the BRI development in November 2021, President Xi highlighted that the high-quality Belt and Road cooperation should look upon the “hard connectivity” of infrastructure as the important direction, which is supported by the “soft connectivity” of rules and standards, and is based on “people-to-people connectivity” along the route. At the Opening Ceremony of the Boao Forum for Asia Annual Conference in April 2022, President Xi reiterated that China would keep pressing ahead with high-quality Belt and Road cooperation to make it high-standard, sustainable and people-centered.¹²

In short, “high-quality development” has become a prominent feature of the BRI in the second phase. Guided by this principle, China and Southeast Asia countries have taken the lead in shifting the focus of cooperation to new areas such as the digital economy and green economy. This transition is closely related to the changing international environment, China’s growth adjustment and Southeast Asia’s regional development characteristics. A noteworthy fact is that the China-ASEAN economic cooperation is making headway under the huge impact on Southeast Asia’s economy, society and security brought by the COVID-19 pandemic and the

11 “Opening Address by Xi Jinping at the Leaders’ Roundtable of the Second Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation,” April 27, 2019, <http://www.beltandroadforum.org/n100/2019/0427/c24-1307.html>.

12 “Keynote Speech by Xi Jinping at the Opening Ceremony of the Boao Forum for Asia Annual Conference 2022 (Full Text),” April 21, 2022, http://www.xinhuanet.com/silkroad/2022-04/21/c_1128580418.htm.

ongoing Ukraine crisis. The continuing progress is somewhat attributable to the BRI transition to high-quality development.

Multiple factors drive the BRI transition to high-quality development

Both internal and external environments decide economic development. Following decades of rapid growth since the reform and opening up in 1978, the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC), held in 2017, put forward the ‘high-quality development’ concept for the first time. It indicated that the focus of China’s economy was transforming from high-speed growth to high-quality development. At the 20th CPC National Congress in October 2022, General Secretary Xi Jinping said, “To build a modern socialist country in all respects, we must, first and foremost, pursue high-quality development. [...] We must fully and faithfully apply the new development philosophy on all fronts, continue reforms to develop the socialist market economy, promote high-standard opening up, and accelerate efforts to foster a new pattern of development that is focused on the domestic economy and features positive interplay between domestic and international economic flows.”¹³ The BRI offers an important way to open up the international market, facilitate domestic and international dual circulation, and promote high-standard opening up, injecting new vitality into high-quality BRI development.

During the same period, Southeast Asia also entered a new stage of development. To promote regional integration, ASEAN adopted the MPAC 2025 in 2016 as a strategic document and plan of action to strengthen the region’s physical, institutional and people-to-people linkages. The MPAC 2025 aims to build a more competitive, resilient and well-connected ASEAN through community building, service optimization

13 “Xi Jinping: Hold High the Great Banner of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics and Strive in Unity to Build a Modern Socialist Country in All Respects—Report to the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China,” October 25, 2022, http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2022-10/25/content_5721685.htm.

and capital availability.¹⁴ In 2019, ASEAN published the ASEAN Outlook on Indo-Pacific (AOIP), a regional program in response to the epochal changes in the regional order. It intends to act as an “honest middleman” in the great-power competition while maintaining its centrality in the region to facilitate synergies between the regional programs of China, the US and other countries.¹⁵ The key areas of cooperation identified in the AOIP include maritime cooperation, connectivity, the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2030, and economic and other possible areas of cooperation. Such cooperation spirit of ASEAN shared many common principles and areas with China’s high-quality BRI development, making it possible to complement each other in terms of capital, technology and market in supply and demand.

The strategic adjustment and optimization of China and ASEAN have charted the right course for regional economic cooperation, which has ensured the sustainability of the BRI in Southeast Asia, and its proactive adaption to the future profound changes in the global and regional order.

High-quality BRI development gives new impetus to China-Southeast Asia cooperation

Over the five years since the BRI entered a new phase in 2018, China and ASEAN have continued to expand and deepen their cooperation. In April 2019, the second Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation was successfully held with high-level government delegations from the ten ASEAN members, reaching a consensus on high-quality Belt and Road cooperation. Fruitful results have been reaped in economic cooperation, trade and investment, connectivity, production capacity cooperation, green transition and digital economy. China and ASEAN have worked together to create a Southeast Asian model with a unique regional experience for high-quality Belt and Road cooperation.

14 ASEAN Secretariat, “Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity 2025,” August 2016, <https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/47.-December-2017-MPAC2025-2nd-Reprint-.pdf>.

15 Zhang Jie, “ASEAN Formally Accepts the Indo-Pacific Concept,” *World Affairs*, 15, 2019, p.33.

First of all, strategic synergies have been strengthened. For a long time, China has had a “dual-track” approach to dealing with Southeast Asian affairs. One track handles bilateral relations with individual Southeast Asian countries, and the other is to maintain regional peace and security by relying on China-ASEAN dialogue platform. China and ASEAN member states endorsed bilateral Belt and Road cooperation documents in the first phase. Building on this, China focused on promoting strategic synergies with ASEAN in the second phase. Among them, the cooperation on synergizing the BRI and the MPAC 2025 was established at the 22nd China-ASEAN Leaders’ Meeting in November 2019. The MPAC 2025 focused on sustainable infrastructure, digital innovation, seamless logistics, regulatory excellence and people mobility.¹⁶ It echoes connectivity in the five dimensions identified by the BRI. China and ASEAN can strengthen dialogue and cooperation through strategic alignment to achieve win-win results.¹⁷ At the ASEAN-China Special Summit to Commemorate the 30th Anniversary of the ASEAN-China Dialogue Relations in November 2021, President Xi Jinping once again affirmed the accomplishments of China-ASEAN cooperation and stressed the need to seek high-quality BRI cooperation with ASEAN and cooperation between the BRI and the AOIP. Xi said, “China will continue to develop demonstration zones for high-quality Belt and Road international industrial capacity cooperation, and welcomes ASEAN countries’ participation in the New International Land-Sea Trade Corridor.”¹⁸ This was the first time that China officially responded to ASEAN’s “Indo-Pacific” concept and confirmed synergizing the BRI and the AOIP.¹⁹ Furthermore, China proposed to build a peaceful, safe, secure,

16 ASEAN Secretariat, “Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity 2025,” August 2016, <https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/47.-December-2017-MPAC2025-2nd-Reprint-.pdf>.

17 Pich Charadine, “The Belt and Road Initiative and the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity 2025: Connecting the Dots, Integrating the Region,” *China-ASEAN Studies*, Vol.3, No.3, 2020, p.83.

18 “For a Shared Future and Our Common Home,” Speech by Chinese President Xi Jinping at the Special Summit to Commemorate the 30th Anniversary of China-ASEAN Dialogue Relations, November 22, 2021, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/topics_665678/bj2022/yswj/202111/t20211122_10451280.html.

19 Xi Jinping, “For A Shared Future and Our Common Home—Speech at the ASEAN-China Special Summit to Commemorate the 30th Anniversary of the ASEAN-China Dialogue Relations,” November 22, 2021, http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2021-11/22/content_5652461.htm.

prosperous, beautiful, and amicable home together at the summit. The proposal set a concrete cooperation agenda for the future relations between China and ASEAN.

Secondly, practical cooperation has yielded remarkable results. China and ASEAN pursue high-standard and high-quality economic and trade cooperation. In 2019, the upgraded China-ASEAN FTA Version 2.0 was completed. At the China-ASEAN Leaders' Meeting in November 2022, the proposed Version 3.0 China-ASEAN FTA negotiations were launched. The two sides will use this opportunity to raise the quality and level of trade and investment cooperation and better link our industrial, supply and value chains.²⁰ In addition, with the joint support of China and ASEAN, the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) Agreement entered into force on January 1, 2022. In 2020, China and ASEAN became the top trading partners of each other. In 2022, trade between the two sides reached US\$975.34 billion, an increase of 11.2% year-on-year.

Connectivity is one of the main threads of the Belt and Road cooperation. With the joint efforts of China and ASEAN, many infrastructure projects covering transport, communications and energy have been completed in the second phase. The effects of deepening regional integration have been gradually manifested. In December 2021, the China-Laos Railway started operation. This landmark project of the Belt and Road cooperation, as well as the endeavor to build a China-Laos community with a shared future, not only helps Laos realize the dream of a "land-linked country" and allows it to engage more actively with its neighbors.²¹ In October 2012, the Phnom Penh-Sihanoukville Expressway, the first-ever expressway in Cambodia, was opened for test use, leading the country into a "highway era." In May 2012, the Jakarta-Bandung High-Speed Railway in Indonesia began joint commissioning and testing, paving the way for

20 "Speech by Li Keqiang at the 25th China-ASEAN Leaders' Meeting (Full Text)," November 12, 2022, <http://www.scio.gov.cn/tt/34849/Document/1733130/1733130.htm>.

21 Guo Jiguang, "Rapidly Manifested Multiple Effects of the China-Laos Railway," *World Affairs*, No.17, 2022, pp.17-19.

the planned operation of the entire line.²² In addition, the construction of the China-Laos-Thailand Railway and the East Coast Rail Link in Malaysia are speeding up. Showcase models of international production capacity cooperation parks have been built in Malaysia and Indonesia through China's "Two Countries, Twin Parks" project. The New International Land-Sea Trade Corridor has enabled an efficient connection between Europe and Asia.

The "Health Silk Road" has added a new focus to the Belt and Road cooperation. The COVID-19 pandemic posed a grave challenge to China-ASEAN cooperation in the second phase. In the face of this crisis, China-ASEAN cooperation has once again demonstrated the East Asian spirit of "crisis-oriented cooperation," i.e., turning "crisis" into "opportunity." Through multi-level dialogue mechanisms such as foreign ministers' and leaders' online meetings, China and ASEAN have cooperated quickly after the virus outbreak, covering epidemic prevention and control, vaccine research & development and production, and industrial chain and supply chain stabilization. In addition, a series of mechanisms were formed for jointly responding to public health emergencies. These efforts set a model of international cooperation in combating and recovering from the pandemic. China-ASEAN cooperation in the digital economy was boosted during the COVID-19 pandemic, stimulating the demand for e-commerce, communication technology, and telemedicine.

Finally, the transition towards high-quality development has become the central theme and focal point. Regarding connectivity, the China-Laos Railway is the world's first transnational railway directly connecting to China's domestic railroad network. The Jakarta-Bandung Railway is the first high-speed railroad project in Southeast Asia, and it fully embodies leading world-class standards upheld by high-quality BRI development. Also, the cooperation between China and ASEAN member states in the new areas of high-quality BRI development, including the green and digital economies, is constantly refreshed and updated.

22 "Joint Commissioning, Testing of Jakarta-Bandung High-Speed Railway Starts," May 24, 2023, <http://world.people.com.cn/n1/2023/0524/c1002-32693552.html>.

On the green economy, China and ASEAN member states face the common challenges in addressing climate change, protecting ecological environment, and promoting low-carbon transformation of the economy and society. To this end, the ten members of ASEAN have joined the Initiative for Belt and Road Partnership on Green Development. The China-ASEAN Year of Sustainable Development Cooperation has been the theme for two consecutive years, highlighting the recognition and consensus of the two sides on green and sustainable development. China and ASEAN have decided to step up cooperation in developing and applying new energy technologies, green investment and financing, and capacity building to advance energy transition and industrial restructuring. The China-ASEAN Clean Energy Cooperation Center will be set up to explore cooperation in low-carbon, circular and green economies, jointly provide a platform for cooperation in clean energy technologies, and facilitate the cultivation of relevant talents.²³

The digital economy represents an important direction for the future development of the Asia-Pacific and the world. In 2018, the China-ASEAN Strategic Partnership Vision 2030 was adopted at the 21st China-ASEAN Leaders' Meeting, which paid great attention to developing and cooperating in the digital economy. Recognizing the importance of the digital economy in enhancing the region's development resilience, especially amid the COVID-19 pandemic, China and ASEAN launched the initiative to build a partnership on the digital economy.²⁴ China has committed to digital cooperation, focusing on improving digital infrastructure and accelerating digital transformation in the region, deepening cooperation in e-commerce, actively facilitating dialogue on digital governance and coordination to harmonize rules in the digital arena, and strengthening digital connectivity.²⁵ To date, China has carried out

23 "China and ASEAN Together Build a Southeast Asian Model for High-Quality Belt and Road Cooperation," *China Report*, No.3, 2023, p.75.

24 "Initiative on Building the China-ASEAN Partnership on Digital Economy," November 12, 2020, https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/gjhdq_676201/gjhdqzz_681964/lhg_682518/zywj_682530/202011/t20201112_9386091.shtml.

25 "Upholding Peace, Development, Independence and Inclusiveness and Renewing the Firm Commitment to Open Regionalism," Speech by State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi at the ASEAN Secretariat," July 11, 2022, https://www.bjreview.com/2022pdf/SY_NO_37_2022.pdf.

a series of activities on the Beidou application in Indonesia, Laos and other countries, assisted Thailand in building a demonstration plant for 5G smart manufacturing, and built overseas cloud computing centers in Laos, Cambodia and Myanmar. The digital economy has become a new driving force for China-ASEAN economic and trade cooperation. Particularly for Indonesia, Chinese enterprises such as Alibaba and Tencent have joined hands with GOTO²⁶ and other Indonesian enterprises in terms of capital, technology and management.²⁷ China and ASEAN have also explored synergies between the ASEAN Digital Masterplan 2025 and the Initiative on Building the China-ASEAN Partnership on Digital Economy and the action plan to implement the initiative. To meet the Fourth Industrial Revolution challenges, they have intensified cooperation in the digital economy, digital inclusion, smart city, artificial intelligence, e-commerce, big data, 5G applications, digital transition, and cyber and data security.²⁸

In a nutshell, thanks to the foundation rested on a long history of China-ASEAN cooperation and the timely BRI transition into high-quality development, the implementation of the Belt and Road cooperation projects in the stable Southeast Asia has been ensured in the second phase, even under increasingly grim regional and international environments caused by US strategic rivalry against China and the sweeping COVID-19 pandemic.

Regional Experience and Demonstration Effect of the BRI Cooperation between China and Southeast Asia

Over the past ten years, the high-quality construction of the BRI has yielded fruitful results in Southeast Asia due to the scientific, future-looking and

26 GOTO is Indonesia's largest technology group, formed in May 2021 by the merger of ride-hailing giant Gojek ("go ride" in Indonesian, similar to China's Didi) and e-commerce marketplace Tokopedia ("shop encyclopedia" in Indonesian, known as Indonesia's "Taobao").

27 "Keynote Speech by H.E. Ambassador Lu Kang at the National Resilience Institute of RI," May 22, 2023, http://id.china-embassy.gov.cn/sgyw/202305/t20230522_11081600.htm.

28 "Plan of Action to Implement the China-ASEAN Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (2022–2025)," November 11, 2022, https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/ziliao_674904/1179_674909/202211/t20221111_10972996.shtml.

professional design of the BRI's guiding principles, ideas and mechanisms, as well as taking into account the regional characteristics of Southeast Asia. China and ASEAN worked together and succeeded in many projects. They shared a series of successful experiences, including consensus on development, multi-level cooperation mechanisms, and effective balance between development and security goals. These experiences will play an important exemplary role, though they may not be fully replicated in other countries and regions.

Firstly, a high degree of consensus on development is essential. Due to historical reasons, China and Southeast Asia began focusing more on development after the end of the Cold War, and they acted in unison along the selected development path featuring openness and cooperation. In particular, China and ASEAN have gradually forged a substantive and dynamic partnership after going through the 1997 Asian financial crisis and the 2008 global financial crisis together. The time-honored consensus on development and mutually beneficial win-win cooperation made Southeast Asia inevitably become a key partner in the BRI development, and both sides engaged in more cooperation under the new impetus. In recent years, China and ASEAN have clarified and solidified their consensus on development and cooperation via joint statements under the shadow of an increasingly complex geopolitical environment, rising protectionism and multiple transnational threats in the region, and technological and scientific revolution. They reaffirmed their commitment to development, prioritized development, and deepened cooperation through extensive consultation and joint efforts to build a meaningful, substantive, mutually beneficial China-ASEAN Comprehensive Strategic Partnership for peace, security, prosperity, and sustainable development.²⁹ Such consensus contributes positively to regional peace and ensures the BRI's sustainability.

Secondly, multi-level cooperation mechanisms backstop successful project implementation. ASEAN stands prominently in the cooperation

29 "China-ASEAN Joint Statement on Strengthening Common and Sustainable Development (Full Text)," November 12, 2022, https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/zyxw/202211/t20221112_10973110.shtml.

mechanisms involving Southeast Asia. As a regional organization that has successfully operated since the end of the Cold War, ASEAN has built consensus among Southeast Asian countries and strengthened “unity” within the organization. On top of this, it has secured a “central position” in the regional structure through the establishment of such mechanisms as the ASEAN-China (10+1), ASEAN-China-Japan-South Korea (10+3), and East Asia Summit. The “dual-track approach” has become a distinctive feature in China’s relations with Southeast Asia. The dual tracks refer to China’s bilateral relations with individual Southeast Asian countries and China’s relations with ASEAN as a whole. Bilateral relations are the basic Chinese way to carry out diplomacy in Southeast Asia while considering the diversity of Southeast Asian countries. The dialogue between China and ASEAN serves a coordinating and leading role in overall regional cooperation, contributing to regional peace, development and stability.³⁰ The “dual-track approach” is crucial in making Southeast Asia a model Belt and Road cooperation region. Many cooperation projects were launched in Southeast Asia based on the strategic alignment with the BRI. At the ASEAN level, important documents such as the MPAC 2025 and the AOIP were released, reflecting the internally consolidated consensus on development among Southeast Asian countries and externally promoting strategic synergies with the BRI. Cooperation documents, represented by the China-ASEAN Joint Statement on Synergizing the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity 2025 and the Belt and Road Initiative and the Initiative on Building the China-ASEAN Partnership on Digital Economy, serve as a stabilizing anchor and gas pedal for China-ASEAN cooperation.

In addition, various mechanisms formed under the dialogue frameworks such as 10+1 and 10+3 help the efficient promotion and high-quality development of the BRI. For example, the China-ASEAN FTA was established in January 2010, and the Version 3.0 China-ASEAN FTA negotiations were launched at the end of 2022, laying a solid foundation

30 Zhang Jie, “Cooperation on Public Health Governance between China and Southeast Asia—A Case Study of Anti-COVID-19,” *Southeast Asian Studies*, No. 6, 2020, p.33.

for high-quality BRI development. After the outbreak of the COVID-19 epidemic, the available cooperation mechanisms, such as the ASEAN Coordinating Center for Humanitarian Assistance on Disaster Management (established in 2011) and the ASEAN Emergency Operations Center Network for Public Health Emergencies (established in 2016), made it possible for China and Southeast Asia to initiate cooperation against the pandemic quickly and establish new mechanisms for China-ASEAN cooperation on public health.

Also, it is important to strengthen strategic mutual trust and effectively balance development and security goals. The dialogue between China and ASEAN arose from the concern of both sides over the South China Sea issue. China and ASEAN signed the DOC in 2002 after a long consultation and negotiation period. In the spirit of the DOC, all parties concerned have exercised relative self-restraint, thus ensuring stability in the South China Sea for nearly ten years after that. Concerned countries are also committed to stepping up cooperation in marine environmental protection, marine scientific research, the safety of navigation and communication at sea, search and rescue operations, and combating transnational crimes, which kicks off the process of China-ASEAN maritime cooperation.

Due to various international and regional factors, the South China Sea issue gradually heated up around 2010, challenging the strategic trust between China and ASEAN. Given this, China and ASEAN agreed on the Guidelines for the Implementation of the DOC in 2011 and formally began negotiations on the COC in 2013. This move creates conditions for the two sides to communicate on the South China Sea issue on time to bolster trust and dispel doubts about effectively controlling the overall situation. As a result, the BRI development in Southeast Asia has not been delayed.

In addition, China acceded to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC) in 2003. Upholding the purposes and principles of the Treaty in development and security relations, China and ASEAN have agreed to advance cooperation in the priority areas identified in the AOIP to enhance strategic trust and win-win cooperation among countries in

the region, including exploring mutually beneficial cooperation with the BRI.³¹ Time has proven that China and ASEAN can balance development and security goals. By appropriately addressing security issues, the two sides have protected their relationship from major setbacks, thus providing the necessary conditions for smooth economic cooperation. Furthermore, they have fostered mutually beneficial win-win cooperation to safeguard sustainable security. Their efforts create a successful, exemplary paradigm for implementing the GDI and GSI.

Regional Order Reconfiguration and Future BRI Development

Over the decade of advancing the BRI in Southeast Asia, profound changes have happened in the Asia-Pacific region. In the first five years, China-US relations gradually moved from engagement and cooperation to cooperation and competition, and regional order is poised to change dramatically. In the second five years, from around 2018 onwards, China-US relations evolved into strategic rivalry as the US pressed on with the Indo-Pacific Strategy, forcing regional order realignment. In the two phases, the US has adopted different approaches to resist and contain the BRI—China’s “economic strategy” in their eyes. Given that the situation is unlikely to change soon, Southeast Asia’s BRI development trajectories and policy choices should be examined in the context of China-US strategic rivalry and shifting Asia-Pacific regional order.

China-US rivalry on the BRI has profoundly affected regional order reconfiguration

There is a notable change in the US perception of the BRI and its response to the initiative. At the outset, the US domestic opinion was generally wary of and guarded against the BRI, believing it conceptualizes

31 “Plan of Action to Implement the China-ASEAN Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (2022–2025),” November 11, 2022, https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/ziliao_674904/1179_674909/202211/t20221111_10972996.shtml.

China's neighborhood diplomacy and carries geopolitical and geoeconomic motives. Some US think tanks even posited that the BRI is China's version of the Marshall Plan, China's version of the Asia-Pacific Rebalance Strategy, and "China's economic self-redemption," etc. At the policy level, the Obama administration tried to reduce the impact of the BRI through the Asia-Pacific Rebalance Strategy, secretly obstructing and opposing the establishment of the AIIB. It initiated the move to a "high-standard" free trade agreement known as the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) to exert institutional pressure on the BRI. However, under domestic political pressure, the strategy failed, with the TPP soon abandoned by the succeeding Trump administration.

After the Trump administration's ascendancy in 2017, the US attitude towards the BRI morphed into confrontation. The Trump administration initially took a relatively positive attitude and sent a US delegation to the first Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation in May 2017. But with China defined as a strategic rival in the second half of 2017, the Trump administration started to openly oppose the BRI, smearing it in the international arena of public opinion with such labels as "debt-trap diplomacy," "predatory economic practices," and "neocolonialism."³² In the policy area, the Trump administration initially proposed the Indo-Pacific Strategy at the end of 2017, which includes strengthening cooperation with allies in building high-quality infrastructure to "promote a development model different from the state-driven economic model."³³ Then, the US Secretary of State, Michael Pompeo, announced in July 2018 that the US would allocate US\$113 million in new funds to support connectivity and infrastructure development in the Indo-Pacific.³⁴

32 John Pomfret, "China's Debt Trap around the World Are a Trademark of Its Imperialist Ambitions," *The Washington Post*, August 27, 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/global-opinions/wp/2018/08/27/chinas-debt-traps-around-the-world-are-a-trademark-of-its-imperialist-ambitions/?utm_term=.092edb2ee44d.

33 The White House, "National Security of the United States of America," December 2017, <https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NSS-Final-12-18-2017-0905.pdf>.

34 "Secretary Pompeo's Remarks at the Indo-Pacific Business Forum," July 30, 2018, <https://bd.usembassy.gov/secretary-pompeos-remarks-at-the-indo-pacific-business-forum/>.

Trump did not turn his attention to the BRI in his first year in office as the review took time, and he must coordinate policies with his allies and partners. As a result, there was little US pressure in the first phase of the BRI, and China was able to hold the strategic initiative. Nevertheless, China has already recognized the BRI's risks and challenges, including the potential negative impacts of great-power rivalry. The BRI transition to high-quality development can be considered a proactive policy adjustment and the "first move" to some extent to deal with the intensifying US strategic competition against China in the infrastructure sector.

In the second phase of the BRI, the international and regional environment became more complex and volatile. The conventional security risks intertwined with the historic pandemic and the Ukraine crisis escalated geopolitical rivalry, triggering international polarization. The deep-rooted contradictions of global development grew increasingly acute, among which the comprehensive strategic competition initiated by the US against China exerted the greatest and widest impact. Starting from 2018, the research and policy debate on the BRI in the US think tanks has reached another climax and pushed decision-makers to reach a consensus to contain the BRI. From the late Trump administration to the current Biden administration, the US has adopted various measures ranging from domestic legislation, institutional adjustment and alliance formation to scale up "obstruction and interception." The Trump administration enacted the Better Utilization of Investments Leading to Development Act (in October 2018) and Asia Reassurance Initiative Act (in December 2018), pledging to pool substantial resources to support all kinds of programs and initiatives in the Indo-Pacific, including the "high-quality and transparent" infrastructure projects, to boost the common development of Indo-Pacific countries.³⁵ In November 2019, the US launched the Blue Dot Network (BDN) and published the report "A Free and Open Indo-Pacific: Advancing a Shared Vision." The Trump administration trumpeted the importance of the BDN as a US-led

35 115th Congress (2017–2018), "S.2736-Asia Reassurance Initiative Act of 2018," December 31, 2018, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/senate-bill/2736/text>.

infrastructure initiative for promoting economic prosperity in the region, and vowed to work with its allies to provide “a globally recognized seal of approval confirming high standards in infrastructure and adherence with global best practices.”³⁶

After rising to power, the Biden administration scaled up measures to hedge against the BRI. The Strategic Competitiveness Act of 2021, passed by the US Congress in April 2021, proposed to cope with challenges posed by China through global infrastructure development, including launching fora on quality infrastructure development, seeking partnerships with “like-minded” international financial institutions and multilateral organizations, and endorsing the Global Infrastructure Coordinating Committee and the Transaction Advisory Fund.³⁷ At the Group of Seven (G7) Summit in June 2021, the US announced the initiative “Build Back Better World” (B3W) as a Western alternative to the BRI, with billions of dollars commitment to help narrow the huge infrastructure need of developing countries.

In short, there was an upsurge of sustained strategic pressure from the US in the second phase of the BRI. The pressures stemmed from the consensus in the US establishment that the BRI has the potential to reshape the geoeconomic and geopolitical balance of the Eurasian continent and will present a real threat to the US in many areas, including technical standards, military security and international development, and even undermine the foundation of US hegemony established after the Second World War.³⁸ It can be said that the US strategic rivalry with China on the BRI is a microcosm for the dominance of regional order. Apart from a series of tangible cooperation projects, the ten-year BRI development has brought new rules and standards and regional cooperation mechanisms based on new working principles of extensive consultation, joint contribution, and shared

36 US Department of State, “A Free and Open Indo-Pacific: Advancing a Shared Vision,” November 4, 2019, <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Free-and-Open-Indo-Pacific-4Nov2019.pdf>.

37 117th Congress (2017–2018), “S.1169-Strategic Competition Act of 2021,” May 10, 2021, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/senate-bill/1169>.

38 Zhao Minghao, “The Major Power Competition and the US Counterbalance against the Belt and Road Initiative,” *World Economics and Politics*, Vol. 12, No. 1, 2018, pp. 4-31.

benefits with host countries, which have become an important part of the regional economic order. It should be emphasized that the regional order upheld by China has always been open and cooperative rather than closed and non-inclusive.

China should strengthen strategic planning to keep optimizing the BRI

The China-US strategic rivalry will still be a key factor affecting the evolution of regional order in the near future. To maintain its dominance in the Asia-Pacific, the US will continue to block the BRI in the field of infrastructure, while pushing for decoupling from China in digital economy and technology. In this context, China should react strategically, especially by advancing the BRI construction in Southeast Asia.

First and foremost, the overall vision is to build a closer China-ASEAN community with a shared future. China and ASEAN have reached a strategic consensus on building a community with a shared future.³⁹ Work has also begun to forge communities with a shared future at bilateral and subregional levels, such as China-Laos, China-Cambodia, China-Thailand, China-Indonesia, and Lancang-Mekong communities. These communities will enrich and consolidate the stated objective of the China-ASEAN community with a shared future. In the future, the vision can be enriched and enhanced by forming more issue-oriented communities with a shared future to deliver a more stable, mutually beneficial and win-win regional environment.

Secondly, China should prioritize Southeast Asia in the three major initiatives to enhance the basic stance and guiding principles for China-ASEAN relations. China has proposed the GDI, GSI and GCI as the Chinese solutions for global development and governance. Southeast Asian countries have been quick to respond. ASEAN has unanimously supported the GDI and agreed to explore cooperation under the GDI to help realize the

39 “Joint Statement of the ASEAN-China Special Summit to Commemorate the 30th Anniversary of the ASEAN-China Dialogue Relations,” November 22, 2021, https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/gjhdq_676201/gj_676203/yz_676205/1206_676572/1207_676584/202111/t20211122_10451473.shtml.

ASEAN Community Vision 2025. All ten members of ASEAN have joined the Group of Friends of the GDI and included the GDI in their bilateral cooperation documents with China. The move reflects the high-degree consensus on development. Given that the most urgent challenge now is to prevent a US-coerced shift in the region from promising regional economic cooperation to arms race and polarized confrontation, China can promote cooperation with Southeast Asia in various fields, predominantly through the BRI, while taking into account the key issues of cooperation under the GDI and the development needs of Southeast Asia.

The GSI carries the vision of common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security. The attitudes of ASEAN member states to this initiative are subtly different. Some have been fully supportive and willing to participate actively, such as Laos and Cambodia. Some have expressed willingness to strengthen communication and explore cooperation, such as Indonesia, Thailand and the Philippines. Some have made no mention of the initiative or merely expressed their concern, such as Singapore and Vietnam. The divergence indicates the current state of strategic trust between ASEAN countries and China and has implications for China's continued efforts to advance the GSI in Southeast Asia. Specifically, we must remain committed to good-neighborliness and friendship, support ASEAN centrality in East Asian cooperation, work with a strong sense of togetherness in trying times, and reject taking sides, bloc confrontation and new Cold War to keep Asia peaceful and stable.⁴⁰ At the same time, we must resolve differences and disputes by peaceful means and appropriately deal with the South China Sea issue to ensure overall stability. Also, we should actively explore and facilitate maritime cooperation under the BRI framework and strive to achieve sustainable security through sustainable development.

The GCI proposed by President Xi in March 2023 provides important guidelines for promoting the exchanges and mutual learning among civilizations and driving human civilization's progress. Southeast Asia is a

40 "Keynote Speech by Li Qiang at the Opening Plenary of the Boao Forum for Asia Annual Conference 2023 (Full Text)," March 30, 2023, https://www.mfa.gov.cn/zyxw/202303/t20230330_11052012.shtml.

crossroads where multiple ethnicities, religions and civilizations converge. Southeast Asian countries are at different stages of development, with unique histories and cultures and specific national conditions. Attaching importance to people-to-people ties in the Belt and Road cooperation, China has established and funded a series of exchanges and training mechanisms involving youth, education and media, and will continue to strengthen humanistic and cultural exchanges as guided by the GCI. The exchanges are crucial to creating a sustainable Belt and Road cooperation environment.

Lastly, fostering high-quality BRI development is an important pathway to building a community with a shared future. The three initiatives provide strategic guidance for harmonizing development and security goals and pursuing sustainable security by strengthening people-to-people ties and promoting sustainable development. Considering this, in the next phase, the BRI can be combined with the GDI to enhance the synergies of development strategies with Southeast Asian countries in the key areas of development. In alignment with the ASEAN Community Vision 2025, the MPAC 2025 and its successors, the Initiative for ASEAN Integration (IAI) Work Plan, and the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework (ACRF),⁴¹ the cooperation between China and ASEAN to build a peaceful, safe and secure, prosperous, beautiful and amicable home should be advanced in a meaningful way, covering poverty alleviation, food security, green development, industrialization, digital economy and connectivity. 

41 In November 2021, China and ASEAN officially announced the establishment of a comprehensive strategic partnership. At the ASEAN-China Special Summit to Commemorate the 30th Anniversary of the ASEAN-China Dialogue Relations, President Xi Jinping proposed to build a peaceful, safe and secure, prosperous, beautiful and amicable home together. Released in 2022, the Plan of Action to Implement the ASEAN-China Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (2022–2025) elaborated on the vision to build a peaceful, safe and secure, prosperous, beautiful and amicable home. The section on “Partnership for Prosperity” takes the large part, including a series of economic cooperation measures such as synergizing with the BRI. See the Plan of Action to Implement the ASEAN-China Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (2022–2025), Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, November 11, 2022, https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/ziliao_674904/1179_674909/202211/t20221111_10972996.shtml.