

# Reconstruction of Sino-US Relations and Deepening ASEAN Relations in the Post Epidemic Era

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**Abstract:** The development of Sino-US relations is the focus of the world. The competition between China and the US not only changes the world's political and economic development pattern, but also affects the evolution of international relations between regional countries. Under the impact of COVID-19, the competition between China and the US extends from the Asia-Pacific region to the Indo-Pacific region. ASEAN occupies an important geostrategic position in the Indo-Pacific region, and the relationship between China and the US will have a profound impact on the future strategic direction. For countries in the region, the market allure of China and the financial hegemony of the US are inevitable choices for them to acquire strategic space. Geopolitics and the great power game bring opportunities and challenges to countries in the region. Under the influence of Sino-US relations reconstruction in the post-epidemic era, how China deepens its relations with ASEAN will be an important factor affecting the strategic development and strategic autonomy of the region. In view of this, the analysis of the current situation of Sino-US relations and Sino-US relations with ASEAN is the first step. The development context of the repositioning of Sino-US relations is reviewed. The role of ASEAN in the repositioning process of Sino-US relations is clarified. The influence of China-ASEAN in geopolitics Re-layout new development strategies and build a new regional order to make recommendations is discussed, so as to provide a reference for restructuring relations between major powers and promoting regional development in the post-epidemic era.

**Keywords:** Post epidemic Era, Sino-US relations, ASEAN, Strategic positioning, Strategic reconstruction.

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## 1. Introduction

The sudden outbreak of COVID-19 has intensified the fragmentation process of the global pattern. The world economy has suffered a serious downturn, and the risk of world political uncertainty has increased. International relations, world order, and global governance face unprecedented uncertainty. The measures taken by the international community to cope with the long-term and recurrent epidemic have become more complex due to the intervention of economic and political factors. The epidemic has been spreading, and the epidemic situation faced by various countries around the world is also different. After China took the lead in controlling the epidemic and resuming work and production, it is facing pressure to "prevent imports from the outside, and prevent rebounds from the inside". However, other countries around the world have started to adopt a "coexisting with the virus" epidemic prevention model after experiencing rounds of rebounds. The time point for the end of the epidemic has been gradually postponed, and the global pattern is still deteriorating due to the fragmented process of the worsening epidemic. The changes in international communication methods caused by the epidemic are having profound and long-term impacts.

The Trump administration exerted strong pressure on China through the pandemic, leading to a strong counterattack by China. Sino-US relations fell into a predicament. The Biden administration shifted its focus to domestic epidemic prevention and began to reshape partnerships between Western countries. However, due to the Trump administration, the transformation of the United States' attitude towards China had already taken shape, and the improvement process of Sino-US relations was slow. The relationship between China and the United States is the most important bilateral

relationship in the world in the 21st century, and has a global significance that goes beyond bilateral relations. Cooperation between the two sides has a positive impact on both their own interests and global interests, while confrontation between the two sides can harm their own interests and be even more catastrophic for the world. As the top two economies in the world, China and the United States should make due contributions and lead by example to global epidemic prevention and governance. The relationship between China and the United States has formed a serious political gap due to the extreme policies of the Trump administration towards China. The relationship between China and the United States did not improve since Biden took office, but instead showed a clear trend of intensifying trade competition between China and the United States. The Biden administration, under the banner of "rule based", is repairing ally relations and continuously expanding its "circle of friends" to control China. On the other hand, it continues Trump's Indo Pacific strategy and strengthens the "American interests" argument, continuously dividing China's relations with ASEAN and neighboring countries through political and economic means. China, the United States, and ASEAN are facing the problem of balancing internal adjustments and coordinating external competition in the new environment and conditions. ASEAN has become an important force in easing differences and increasing consensus between China and the United States. Managing the relationship with the world's only superpower is a necessary task for China's peaceful rise. Expand its opening-up, share development dividends, and build a community with a shared future are the fundamental tasks for China to develop its relations with ASEAN and neighboring countries.

The spread of the epidemic has led to a multi-point spread in the world. Since the outbreak of COVID-19 in India and

Myanmar, Southeast Asian countries have faced the dual test of the epidemic and economic downturn. Singapore has begun to try the model of "coexisting with the virus", while countries such as Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, and the Philippines are still struggling with the virus. The assistance of major countries and regional cooperation have become the key to controlling the epidemic and reshaping the pattern in the region. How to adjust and deepen relations with ASEAN in the context of the reconstruction of Sino-US relations has become an important influencing factor in breaking through the strategic constraints of the United States, India and the Pacific, solving the competitive dilemma between China and the United States, and promoting regional development.

## **2. The Current Development Status of Sino-US Relations**

### **2.1. Trump's Unwarranted Pressure have Led to a Shift in the Development of Sino-US Relations**

Since the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and the United States in 1978, the relationship of Sino-US have gone through highs and lows, but have been steadily moving forward until the Trump administration, when the slogan "America first" became an important driving force for the authorities to disrupt Sino-US relations and suppress China's development. Since Trump took office, the global economic and political order has entered a period of intense fluctuations. The economic and trade frictions between China and the United States, initiated by the US in 2018, not only pushed bilateral economic and trade relations to the brink of decoupling, but also had a huge impact on the global economy. In the last year of Trump's term of office, China and the United States suspended the trade war by signing the first phase of the economic and trade agreement, but the COVID-19 has brought new challenges to Sino-US economic and trade relations. Trump's re-election failed, and his economic and trade policy towards China was forced to be suspended, declaring his economic and trade strategy towards China to have ended in failure. During the Trump administration, using the climax of populism to launch a national security strategy that saw China as a "strategic competitor", he rashly launched a trade war against China, prohibited American companies from selling equipment to Huawei and other Chinese companies, increased visa restrictions on Chinese students and scholars, and designated China as a currency manipulator.

As the 2020 US election year entered, under the impact of the pandemic and the election, the Trump administration adopted an extreme policy towards China, challenging China's core interests on issues related to Hong Kong and Taiwan. In the later stages of the Trump administration, Sino-US relations deteriorated to the lowest point. The US policy towards China has shifted from strategic competition to strategic confrontation, and the Trump administration has deeply imprinted negative emotions towards China into the thinking and practice of US politics. The Trump administration's series of measures have led to the return of power politics to the political stage of the United States. With the accelerating pace of China's rise, the strategic anxiety of the United States continues to deepen. American political elites believe that China's development has already touched the national interests of the United States, and in the policy framework of the United States, China can no longer be

simply seen as a "collaborator". There are fundamental ideological differences between the two sides, and "America first" is not only a leading comprehensive strength, but also a leading system and path. Driven by this series of strategic thinking changes, trade frictions between China and the United States have gradually extended to political struggles.

### **2.2. Confrontation, Competition, and Cooperation, Redefining Sino-US Relations**

In 2021, during the US presidential election, China calmly responded to the tyranny and extreme pressure of the Trump administration, creating conditions for stabilizing Sino-US relations. However, Sino-US relations did not ease due to Biden's election, as strategic confrontation between China and the United States has become a consensus in US politics. In the early stages of the Biden administration's administration, the basic framework of China policy of "confrontation, competition, and cooperation" was clarified. The tension between China and the United States further deteriorated, and China became one of the focuses of its implementation of US foreign policy. The Biden government not only made a great deal of trouble in Xinjiang, Hong Kong, Taiwan and cyber-attacks, but also tried to separate the CPC from the Chinese people in ideology, value, culture and emotion. Ideological struggle became Biden's competitive weapon. The Biden administration has regarded China as a challenger to "democracy" and "rules", and China is the only competitor that poses a sustained challenge to the international system led by the United States.

Although the US policy towards China has not fundamentally changed and continues the core policy of imposing tariffs on China and ensuring a competitive advantage in the Chinese economy, the Biden administration has demonstrated a willingness to cooperate with major powers. They clearly realize that China and the US have a common responsibility to maintain world order and participate in global governance. Strategic competition between China and the US is a relatively long-lasting game, The demands of both sides on climate issues and ending the epidemic as soon as possible are consistent. However, while the United States seeks cooperation with China in related fields, it continues to exert extreme pressure on China in other areas. Since the ceremonial meeting between US Trade Representative Dai Qi and Vice Premier Liu He in May 2021, trade negotiations between the two countries have fallen into a state of truce. Due to the overall changes in the international situation under the influence of the epidemic and China's early advantage in controlling the epidemic, China's initiative and leadership have been further enhanced. The high-level bilateral talks held in Anchorage, Canada and Tianjin, China have fallen into fierce confrontation, and diplomatic stagnation has worsened the joint efforts of China and the United States to address climate change. After Foreign Minister Wang Yi explicitly stated that climate cooperation "cannot be separated from the overall situation of Sino-US relations," US Special Envoy for Climate Issues Kerry returned home empty-handed after a meeting in China.

The domestic political environment in the United States has weakened the Biden administration's willingness to engage effectively with China, and China's threat has become a constant topic in American politics, from infrastructure to technology spending. In early September, during a conversation between President Xi and President Biden's

head of state, it was mentioned that "ensuring competition does not evolve into conflict" has become a security line for the development of Sino-US relations. In October, China and the United States held a high-level forum in Zurich, which achieved good results, and only then did the future of Sino-US relations see dawn. After the collision of the Trump administration, the economic and trade relations between China and the United States still exhibit the fundamental characteristics of strong complementarity and mutual benefit. According to US statistics, under the impact of the epidemic, the export volume of US goods to foreign countries decreased by \$217.3 billion year-on-year in 2020. However, in the same year, the total amount of goods exports from the United States to China increased from \$107.9 billion in 2019 to \$125.2 billion, an increase of \$17.3 billion, accounting for 8.7% of its total foreign exports from 6.5% in 2019. From the perspective of total trade in goods, the proportion of total trade in goods with China to the total foreign trade in goods with the United States has also increased from 13.4% in 2019 to 14.8%, which is the highest level in history. During the Biden administration, the survival of the first phase agreement, the transformation of economic alliance relations, supply chain security, and the coordination of global economic issues in the post pandemic era will become new priorities in the bilateral economic and trade relations between China and the United States.

### **3. The Development Status of Sino-US-ASEAN Relations**

#### **3.1. Gradual shift in Sino-US-ASEAN relations**

The publication of the Bangkok Declaration in 1967 announced the establishment of ASEAN, which demonstrated a posture of diversified diplomacy from its inception. The United States, relying on its role in the security of Southeast Asia, took the lead in initiating dialogue with ASEAN in 1977, and in 1991, China began the dialogue process with ASEAN. In 2003, China and ASEAN took the lead in establishing a strategic partnership. In November 2011, ASEAN proposed the "Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP)" initiative, aimed at building ASEAN's core position in East Asian cooperation. In 2013, President Xi proposed to jointly build the 21st century "Maritime Silk Road" during his visit to Southeast Asian countries. Although China established dialogue with ASEAN relatively late, with its inherent geographical advantages and acquired development advantages, the relationship between China and ASEAN countries has entered a fast lane of development. Until 2015, the United States upgraded its relationship to a strategic partnership with ASEAN due to strategic needs, in order to demonstrate its respect for the central position of ASEAN. With the implementation of the Trump administration's foreign policy, there has been a turning point in the relationship between the United States and ASEAN. In 2017, Trump expressed his vision for a free and open Indo Pacific during his participation in the US-ASEAN summit. However, ASEAN pursued a balanced policy and the United States had been lacking corresponding policies to implement, ultimately leading to the collapse of the policy framework for US engagement with ASEAN. Trump has been absent from two consecutive US-ASEAN summits in 2018 and 2019, and the position of US Ambassador to ASEAN has been vacant since 2017. The US's attitude towards ASEAN has become more apparent, and ASEAN countries have also become more

independent.

In November 2017, the PRC Premier Li Keqiang proposed at the 20th China-ASEAN Leaders' Meeting to build a "3+X cooperation framework" with political security, economic and trade, and cultural exchanges as the main pillars and multi field cooperation as the support, firmly supporting ASEAN's central position in East Asian cooperation. With the integration of the Asian region, especially in East and Southeast Asia, it has become an irreversible trend. The breadth and breadth of cooperation between China and ASEAN continue to expand. Compared to the cooperation between the United States and ASEAN, China provides real value to the region, while the United States often uses its so-called Section 301 Domestic Trade Act to combat trading partners, the sudden withdrawal of US troops in Afghanistan has made ASEAN realize that US interests are a priority at a critical moment. In November 2020, the nearly 10-year RCEP negotiations were concluded, and China, South Korea, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, and ten ASEAN countries officially signed the RCEP agreement. Currently, the world's most populous, largest economic and trade area, and most promising free trade area, has officially set sail [12]. The relationship between China and ASEAN is closer, while the United States is still repairing various relationships after experiencing the "breach of contract" and "withdrawal" during the Trump administration.

#### **3.2. Redefining the Interest Relationship between China, the United States, and ASEAN**

In 2020, the bilateral trade volume reached 684.6 billion US dollars, with a year-on-year growth of 6.7%. ASEAN overtook the European Union and became China's largest trading partner for the first time. Behind the obvious trade gap is the increasingly close industrial chain, close geographical location and deep cultural ties between China and ASEAN. Its value chain advantage shows strong resilience under the influence of the COVID-19. According to the statistical information of the Ministry of Commerce, due to the impact of the COVID-19, the overall foreign investment of ASEAN declined in 2020, while China's direct investment in ASEAN increased by 52.1%, Brunei by 182.8%, the Philippines by 132.1%, Singapore by 104.7%, and the interests of China and ASEAN were further strengthened. As cooperation between East Asian countries continues to strengthen, the geopolitical and economic landscape of cooperation between the United States and ASEAN will change. After taking office, the Biden administration focused on repairing the US-ASEAN relationship that had been disrupted by the Trump administration, attempting to restructure its Indo Pacific strategy by attracting and exerting pressure, and building ASEAN countries into outposts of competition and confrontation with China. In August 2021, Vice President Harris of the United States visited Southeast Asia, indicating that the United States intends to deepen its relations with the region.

As trade tensions with China continue, deepening economic relations with ASEAN has become a higher strategic priority for the United States. ASEAN is currently the fourth largest trading partner of the United States, with a trade volume exceeding \$354 billion in 2019. As of 2020, the United States was the largest source of foreign direct investment in ASEAN, with an investment amount of over 328.5 billion US dollars. Therefore, ASEAN countries

reluctantly accepted that the United States would continue to be a stabilizing factor in the region. However, ASEAN member countries were aware of which paths were in line with their basic interests and had a clear understanding of the harm caused by competition among major powers to small countries, so they would not allow the United States to use the region as a place to play zero sum games. In order to enhance the competitive advantage of the United States, the Biden administration plans to propose a digital trade agreement covering the Indo Pacific economies to improve digital infrastructure. However, China's investment in ASEAN has quickly caught up with the United States in high-tech industries, from 5G networks, artificial intelligence to satellite navigation, and the connection between the two sides is becoming increasingly close. Behind the hopeful China-ASEAN relationship, there are also emerging economic cooperation zones, large free trade agreements RCEP, and trade relations between China and ASEAN based on mutual respect. China is gradually widely regarded as the most influential strategic participant in the region, while the United States is gradually distancing itself from Southeast Asian countries due to its unpredictable and self-interest policies.

## **4. Repositioning Sino-US Relations**

### **4.1. China's Discourse Power has been Enhanced, and the Trend of Peaceful Rise is Inevitable**

The COVID-19 that broke out in the world at the beginning of 2020 has objectively brought about the inevitable readjustment of the world economic and trade pattern while striking the world economy and trade. The institutional advantages of socialism with Chinese characteristics have played an important role in controlling the epidemic and resuming work and production, not only making China the first in the world to emerge from the development shadow of the impact of the epidemic, Even promoting China as the world's second largest economy to fully leverage its full industrial chain advantages. In 2020, China became the only country in the world to achieve positive economic growth. According to the International Monetary Fund, China's economic growth rate will reach 8.4% in 2021, far exceeding other countries [14]. To some extent, this is the result of China's active fight against the epidemic. China's successful control of the epidemic has also provided a model for countries around the world to control the epidemic and achieve recovery. Nowadays, China is playing the role of a responsible major country, actively providing China's plan and experience for the world's fight against the epidemic. China not only takes the lead in the field of technology, making vaccine research and development at the forefront of the world, but also actively provides anti epidemic materials to the world through industrial advantages, playing the role of a world factory. At present, China has successfully developed and put into use four vaccines, which not only achieve vaccine self-sufficiency, but also actively provide vaccines to developing countries, striving to expand vaccine accessibility and make Chinese vaccines a true global public product. During the epidemic, China's actions truly interpreted the concept of a community with a shared future for mankind, showcasing the image of a responsible major country, and China's plan was also tested in this anti epidemic process.

The successful control of the epidemic and China's active efforts in the world's common fight against the epidemic have

further enhanced China's international influence and status, allowing the world to see China's institutional advantages, economic resilience, and development prospects. The Chinese economy is an important driving force for the rapid recovery of the world economy in the post pandemic era. The effectiveness of the fight against the epidemic has shown the Chinese people the strength of the country and the advantages of the system. China's national confidence has been fully cultivated during the epidemic, and Chinese society's belief in dealing with difficulties has become more firm. This enables China to unite and march towards the great rejuvenation of the nation. Taking the lead in restoring the economy and maintaining growth during the epidemic has further narrowed the gap between China and developed countries. China cannot do without the world. It has gradually transformed into a world that cannot do without China. Since the outbreak of the pandemic, China's exports to the world have continuously reached new highs. China's vaccines and China's plan are helping most developing countries emerge from the pandemic. China's development resilience and relaxed international environment can effectively support China's high-quality development. China will gradually achieve peaceful rise in the process of world recovery, China's peaceful development will also bring opportunities for world recovery. China will share the achievements of deepening its own practice and exploring the laws of human social development with the world. In the face of unprecedented changes in a century, China is closer to great rejuvenation than ever before, and China's rise will be an irreversible trend.

### **4.2. The Declining Influence of the United States, but still remains the World's Leading Force**

During the Trump administration, "breaking the treaty", "withdrawing from the group", and "sanctions" became representatives of his hegemonic thinking. Trump's goal was to "make America great again", and regardless of allies or opponents, he used the interests of the United States as a measure. He wielded a tariff stick around the world, indiscriminately suppressing opponents, and causing a negative impact on the world order. During Trump's tenure, China and the United States inevitably began a prolonged trade friction. Trump's imposition of tariffs on China not only harmed the interests of the United States, but also the interests of its allies. Trump, who lacks the concept of political alliance and national leadership, poses an unpredictable threat to the United States and its allies. Trump's poor epidemic response strategy has made the United States the center of the epidemic in the Western world, and has also made Chinese society aware of the unbearable Western system and the risk of the US economy falling into recession. After Biden took office as the new president, fighting the epidemic and curbing economic recession became the top priorities that the Biden administration urgently needed to address. Biden actively promoted measures such as mask bans and vaccination to control the epidemic, and stopped his strategy of stigmatizing China. After the epidemic in the United States was brought under control, the Biden administration passed an economic stimulus bill to actively promote economic recovery. Subsequently, it was proposed to revitalize the global alliance and partnership system of the United States, starting to retrieve allies on a global scale and strengthen the connections between allies. And it reiterated its determination to lead and maintain a stable and open international system, returning to

the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, stopping withdrawal from the World Health Organization, returning to the United Nations Human Rights Council as an observer, returning to the multilateral system, and hosting the World Climate Summit. In terms of the concerted response to the world epidemic, the Biden government also announced to allocate US \$4 billion to the "COVID-19 Vaccine Implementation Plan" [15].

The Biden administration's series of performances have shown its differences from Trump. The Biden administration emphasizes alliance relations and rule systems, but remains steadfast in its demand for US led international relations. It strives to win over its core led allies and suppresses China and Russia, which threaten its core position. After the Biden administration took office, the United States organized the United States, Japan, India, and Australia four-way summit with the aim of strengthening the alliance and addressing the challenges faced by China and Russia. Subsequently, the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia signed a defense and technology sharing agreement, stating that the United States and Britain will assist Australia in building nuclear submarines to enhance its military response capabilities in regional situations. Although Biden extended the US-Russia New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty for five years, he imposed new sanctions on Russia. Although he does not agree with Trump's series of actions towards China, he is not in a hurry to overturn the policies formulated by Trump. Although Biden adopts suppression measures against China and Russia, he still seeks cooperation with China and Russia in areas such as climate and economy, and attempts to lead this cooperation process. As a world superpower that has dominated the world for over 70 years and ruled the world for 30 years after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the United States has always adhered to Monroeism and chauvinism, making its ambition not to allow other countries to share the power of world domination. Although the COVID-19 has led to a serious decline in the US economy, increased inflation in the United States, and increasingly serious differentiation caused by domestic racial discrimination, and has objectively promoted the strength of China and the United States to ebb and flow, the United States still leads the world, and its super comprehensive national strength, as well as military hegemony, dollar hegemony, and scientific and technological hegemony will still maintain its dominant position in the world. China has also made it clear that it has no intention of challenging the dominant position of the United States, only seeking space for peaceful development.

### **4.3. The Ideological Differences between China and the United States have Increased, and the United States has Strengthened its Containment Strategy**

The United States is a country that has long pursued a global strategy, and its unified starting point for formulating a global strategy is to maintain its position of dominating the world and prevent the rise of other major powers from challenging its unique dominant position. Although China has shown no intention of shaking the dominant position of the United States, the ideological differences between China and the West have led to the United States being full of fear and distrust towards China's peaceful rise. Strategically speaking, the Biden administration places greater emphasis on curbing Russia's development to meet its commitments to allies and safeguard its own European interests. Therefore, in the

absence of complete control over the US epidemic, the Biden administration is not in a hurry to deal with China. The initial cold interaction between the two countries fully demonstrates that the relationship between China and the United States will not reopen. One aspect of progress during the Trump era is that the Biden team no longer "demonizes" China. On the other hand, the allies of the United States have closer trade and investment relations with China than the United States. After Biden's election, the European Union, Japan, South Korea, Australia, New Zealand, and ASEAN signed new economic agreements with China. It can be said that there are some contradictions between the United States' confrontation with China and multilateral cooperation, so over time, Biden's policy towards China will have to reduce symmetry, otherwise, the United States will inevitably embark on a more unilateral path of no return.

In the Asia Pacific economy centered around China, how to ensure that the United States' position and interests in the Asia Pacific are not threatened or affected has always been a hot topic of concern for the US government. The outbreak of the COVID-19 has made the United States realize that the rise of China is an irretrievable fact, so how the United States should deal with it has become the most urgent problem to be solved by the Biden government. Under the leadership of the Biden administration, the beginning of Sino-US relations did not go smoothly. Biden attended the online summit of the Group of Seven and the US Japan India Australia online summit. The United States and its allies discussed the so-called threat and restoration of Western dominance by China, and disregarded their own humanitarian disasters and the reality of racial discrimination to once again challenge China on human rights issues, fabricating lies of "forced labor" and "genocide". In order to maintain its technological monopoly and hegemonic position, the US government has also generalized the concept of national security and abused national power to suppress Chinese high-tech enterprises. In April 2021, the Industry and Security Bureau of the US Department of Commerce added seven Chinese supercomputer entities to the so-called "entity list". In addition to implementing strategic encirclement and suppression of China in the fields of technology and politics, the United States has established a strategic chain around China on a global scale, attempting to close and block China's connections with the world.

After Biden took office as president, he continued the strategy of balancing Asia Pacific and the Middle East, and strengthened the implementation of the Indo Pacific strategy. The United States has begun to withdraw troops in the Middle East and redeploy to the Asia Pacific and Indo Pacific regions to maintain its strategic influence. The United States has begun to integrate its Asia Pacific and Middle East strategies, using the Middle East to coordinate its Asia Pacific strategy and investing more hard resources in the Asia Pacific region. In the Middle East, its strategic presence is mainly maintained through diplomacy and assistance. In the Asia Pacific region, the South China Sea issue, which was once hyped by the United States, has been shelved due to the trade-offs between countries' common interests. The key to the United States' Asia Pacific strategy is to promote Japan-US proximity and the South Korea-US alliance. However, South Korea has not responded more to the United States' Asia Pacific strategy due to its own strategic considerations, and most of all supports the construction of the "THAAD" missile base. However, Japan has accelerated its tilt towards the United States due to

the need for support from the United States in areas such as the Tokyo Olympics, the entry of nuclear wastewater into the sea, and the lifting of the ban on self-defense. The United States uses Japan's geopolitical status to advocate for Japan's intervention in the Taiwan issue, expand the oil and gas dispute between China and Japan in the East China Sea, and hype up the sovereignty issue of the Diaoyu Islands, attempting to strategically drag down China and achieve its intention to contain China's development.

The Indo Pacific strategy was inherited and strengthened by the Biden administration as a legacy of the Trump era. The United States took advantage of the territorial dispute between China and India, vigorously wooing India, promoting the talks between Modi and Biden, and inviting India to participate in the G7 meeting as an observer, putting India at the center of Western geopolitical relations. The US Indo Pacific strategy has strengthened the role of the strategic channel in the Indian Ocean and attempted to block China's "the Belt and Road" strategy. However, due to the deterioration of the epidemic situation in India, the implementation of the US Indo Pacific strategy has been restricted. In addition, the sudden withdrawal of the US troops in the Middle East has led to the deterioration of the situation in the Middle East, making it more difficult to establish a strategic chain to encircle China. In August 2021, Vice President Harris of the United States visited Southeast Asia, indicating that the United States intends to deepen its relations with the region and win over countries in the region, attempting to use political, economic and other means to influence the policy trends of ASEAN member countries. In September 2021, the United States organized the Four Nation Summit of the United States, Japan, India, and Australia, strengthening the integration of the Indo Pacific strategy and the Asia Pacific strategy.

## **5. Strategies for Deepening China-ASEAN Relations**

### **5.1. Restructuring Sino-US Relations and Strengthening Strategic Mutual Trust**

Globalization has gradually divided the power of major powers, giving rise to the diversified development of global governance entities. China's rise is changing the international system structure, and the international "China threat theory" is constantly being sung. Its main perspective is to worry that China will further make radical changes to break the existing international system [19]. As a responsible major country, China is not simply a participant, but a defender of the international system. Becoming a "responsible major country" is both imperative and inevitable. Power and responsibility are the two wings of China's rise, and China's peaceful rise is a landmark political and economic phenomenon in contemporary international society. The United States should rationally view China's peaceful rise. By combating the COVID-19, the United States should be aware of China's needs and development reality, as well as its own development reality. It should not blindly treat China's rise with Western paranoid ideology. The identification between China and the United States is beneficial for both countries and even the world. China's peaceful rise not only fulfills China's commitment to the Chinese people, but also reflects the responsibility of a responsible major country towards world peace and development. Under the governance system led by the United States, major country cooperation can better

play its leading role and promote the transformation of the global governance system, accepting more capable and responsible entities to participate in international governance and global recovery.

Mutual trust is the foundation of cooperation, and identity recognition is a prerequisite for mutual trust. The foundation for building strategic mutual trust between China and the United States lies in respecting and maintaining each other's core interests. In areas that do not touch core interests, necessary concessions and compromises can be negotiated. China and the United States should continuously strengthen communication and coordination on international and regional issues, and jointly address the challenges of epidemic prevention and control and regional uncertainties. When facing competitive affairs, both sides should jointly accurately grasp each other's positioning, fully utilize international organizations and other platforms to actively communicate and dialogue, further strengthening the symbiotic and mutually beneficial relationship between the two countries in political, economic, social, cultural and other fields. In the current era of rampant epidemic, the United States can take advantage of the development opportunities brought about by China's rise, fully leverage the style of major country cooperation, strengthen cooperation and docking with China in various industries, promote the smooth flow of goods and trade, and use China's market to revitalize the US real economy affected by the epidemic, accelerate the pace of epidemic resistance, and benefit the people of the world.

Under the governance of the Biden administration, the "competition, cooperation, and confrontation" in Sino-US relations will run through the entire reconstruction process. The strategic mutual trust between China and the United States is likely to drift to the brink of fragmentation for a long time, and the uncertainty in the development of the relationship between the two countries is bound to exist for a long time. While actively advocating cooperation, China should also make corresponding psychological preparations - maintain a proactive cooperative attitude in tactics, and be ready to respond to the betrayal of the United States at any time in strategy, And we must play an active role globally, actively build a community of interests and a community of shared future, break through the strategic blockade of the United States, and use proactive strategies to bring our opponents back on the right track of cooperation.

### **5.2. Firmly Support ASEAN's "Central position" and Respect the Reality of Each Country**

The Okus Alliance, composed of the United States, Japan, India, and Australia, is the latest measure taken by the United States to confront China. This constantly militarized confrontation may turn Southeast Asia into a frontline country. The tough attitude of the United States in forcing ASEAN countries to choose sides has undermined ASEAN's neutrality and increased concerns among countries in the region about their future and destiny. The pandemic caused by the COVID-19 epidemic is still continuing. Southeast Asian countries need to survive and recover under the double impact of the epidemic and economic contraction, which is the top priority for ASEAN countries in the future. After centuries of colonial rule, most Southeast Asian countries look forward to shaping their own national destiny and seeking strategic convergence in their relations with China and the United States to strive for future peace and prosperity. This is the goal of ASEAN

countries. And the United States hopes to dominate the world and will not give ASEAN independent power. Southeast Asia is an important front line in the new era of geopolitical competition between China and the United States, full of challenges and opportunities. ASEAN countries are eager to play a role in global governance and multilateral cooperation, and their pursuit of "centrality" is unwavering. In the process of deepening its relations with ASEAN, China needs to distinguish itself from the United States, not engage in power politics or alliances, adhere to the principles of independence, non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries, firmly support ASEAN's "central position" demand, and avoid the situation of ASEAN choosing sides. ASEAN countries need to gain the identity of a major country in international exchanges, and a high level of recognition is necessary to create more development opportunities and common interests.

Although ASEAN adheres to the principle of "neutrality", the strategic propositions of ASEAN countries are different, and their respective considerations of interests are also different. Convergence of interests is the code of conduct in international relations. In Southeast Asia, there are allies and partners of the United States, such as the Philippines and Thailand, Indonesia, Singapore, and Vietnam; There are also old friends from China, such as Laos, Cambodia, Myanmar, etc. To deepen relations with ASEAN, it is necessary to respect the actual situation of each country. Due to development needs, countries have different considerations for their interests in their interactions with China and the United States. There are those who pursue "hedging strategies", those who pursue "independence and autonomy", those who prioritize national interests ", and those who " sway policies ".

Currently, the level of distrust among major powers has reached its highest level in history, and small and medium-sized countries need to survive and develop in the cracks of their interactions with major powers. ASEAN countries are even more familiar with this approach. The United States is a reality that ASEAN must face, while China is a reality that ASEAN countries should face. The promotion of the US' Indo Pacific strategy will further squeeze ASEAN's strategic space, disintegrate ASEAN's internal unity will, and in order to avoid internal differentiation within ASEAN, strengthening cooperation with dialogue partner countries is the only way to address challenges. After taking the lead in controlling the epidemic, China actively engaged in economic construction and anti-epidemic cooperation with neighboring countries. After the domestic epidemic stabilized, China sent a medical expert group to ASEAN countries to provide materials and technical assistance, share anti epidemic experience, and promptly opened up "fast channels" and "green channels" for personnel and material exchanges between both sides. Strong development vitality is an inevitable choice for the survival and recovery of Southeast Asian countries in the post pandemic era. As long as China respects the realities of other countries, actively engages, shares development dividends, and works together to address challenges, it will naturally deepen its ties with all these countries.

### **5.3. Strengthen the Construction of the China-ASEAN Community and Leverage the Advantages of Neighboring Countries**

The US' Indo Pacific strategy may divide ASEAN into small interest groups independent of the will of the main body,

undermining regional multilateral cooperation mechanisms and regional stability. With the increasingly sharp friction between China and the United States, the geographical advantage of Southeast Asia has become prominent. The Biden administration has begun to focus on repairing the regional alliance damaged by the Trump administration. Vice President Harris and Secretary of State Antony Blinken of the United States have visited ASEAN one after another and proposed a series of measures to restructure the economy and combat epidemic cooperation. However, the lip service but unfulfilled promises cannot solve the current difficulties faced by Southeast Asia. As a close neighbor of Southeast Asian countries, China should leverage its advantages, strengthen the China-ASEAN community, and win cooperation among ASEAN countries through actions. China and ASEAN share similar cultural and cultural factors, and have inherent advantages in building a closer China-ASEAN community with a shared future [22]. Since President Xi proposed to jointly build a China-ASEAN community with a shared future in 2013, with the continuous advancement of the 21st century Maritime Silk Road, both sides have entered a fast lane of development, infrastructure connectivity has been accelerating, value chain connections have become closer, economic and trade cooperation has continued to improve, and cultural exchanges have become increasingly frequent. The unprecedented outbreak of the COVID-19 has made people around the world feel connected by destiny. The consensus reached by China and ASEAN in maintaining the stability of the industrial chain and supply chain has strongly supported the epidemic prevention work of both sides [23]. In the post pandemic era, both sides should strengthen their willingness to jointly safeguard and promote multilateral mechanisms, promote the speedy implementation of the RCEP agreement, and leverage the dividend advantages of the world's largest free trade zone.

China is a close neighbor of ASEAN countries, taking the lead in controlling the epidemic and resuming work and production, setting an example for countries in the region. China's regional friends are the top priority beneficiaries of the development dividend of resuming work and production. The epidemic has impacted the regional economy. The medical materials produced by China and the COVID-19 vaccine developed by China have first helped ASEAN countries fight against the epidemic and develop their economies. The value chain link between China and ASEAN has also strengthened the ties between ASEAN member countries. Faced with the unprecedented century long upheaval in the world, China has completed a great initiative in poverty alleviation. The western region of China has lifted itself out of absolute poverty, and China's experience in poverty alleviation can be shared with its neighbors. After completing poverty alleviation, the region can unleash new vitality and promote the development of the China-ASEAN Free Trade Area. The Chinese side regards ASEAN as the priority direction of neighboring diplomacy and the key area of high-quality joint construction of the "the Belt and Road". China's Guangxi, Yunnan and other land provinces bordering Southeast Asian countries, as well as coastal areas such as the Beibu Gulf, will become a window for dialogue and cooperation between the two sides.

To develop relations with ASEAN, China needs to leverage its proximity advantages, promote infrastructure connectivity and cooperation through the construction of new land sea channels, expand market openness and investment efforts,

promote deep integration of the three chains of both sides, take advantage of the green transformation of China's economic development, accelerate investment cooperation in the digital economy, build the "Digital Silk Road", and build the China-ASEAN Blue Economic Partnership. In the new situation, China needs to help ASEAN countries end the epidemic as soon as possible, reshape ASEAN's central position in East Asian cooperation, promote the positioning and upgrading of bilateral relations, and jointly play a better neighbor advantage in infrastructure, logistics and transportation, digital and other fields of cooperation, and jointly build an open and inclusive regional architecture.

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