

## Original Paper

# Understanding ASEAN's Perception and Response to Japan's "Indo-Pacific Strategy"

Lin Wang<sup>1\*</sup> & Bing Li<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> School of International Studies, Dalian University of Foreign Languages, Dalian, 116044, China

\* Lin Wang, an associate professor and master's supervisor at the School of International Relations, Dalian University of Foreign Languages, Dalian, 116044, China

\* E-mail: wanglin2018@dlufl.edu.cn

Received: August 11, 2024

Accepted: October 08, 2024

Online Published: October 21, 2024

doi:10.22158/ape.v7n3p42

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.22158/ape.v7n3p42>

### **Abstract**

*The ASEAN region is located along Japan's critical maritime lifeline and has maintained close cooperation with Japan in various fields for an extended period, making it a pivotal point for Japan's "Indo-Pacific Strategy". To successfully advance this strategy, Japan has strengthened cooperation with ASEAN and its member states in the economic and maritime security sectors through dual-track diplomacy, seeking ASEAN's recognition and support for the strategy. ASEAN views Japan's policies as beneficial to its development and capable of enhancing its strategic autonomy to some extent. However, the regional order constructed by Japan's "Indo-Pacific Strategy" undermines ASEAN's centrality in the regional security architecture and negatively impacts its amicable relations with China. To preserve its centrality, ASEAN introduced the "ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific", aiming to articulate its vision and stance clearly to maintain its central role in regional affairs. Furthermore, ASEAN employs a hedging strategy amid great power competition to safeguard its interests and actively collaborates with external countries to expand its strategic autonomy.*

### **Keywords**

*Japan's Indo-Pacific Strategy, ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific, Strategic cognition, Strategic response*

### **1. Introduction**

In recent years, the rise of emerging nations has led to unprecedented shifts in the international power structure. The comprehensive strength of countries in the Global South has significantly increased, prompting major powers to implement a series of policies aimed at enhancing cooperation with these

nations in economic and political domains to garner their support. ASEAN, as a pivotal regional organization within the Global South, not only maintains long-term and close collaborative relationships with China across various sectors but also serves as an important partner for Japan in trade and economics. However, with China's growing comprehensive national power, particularly its expanding political and economic influence in Southeast Asia, Japan, as an island nation, has begun to experience unprecedented pressures. Concerns regarding its security and interests within the current international system have led Japan to urgently seek diplomatic and strategic means to safeguard its position. Consequently, Japan has proposed the "Indo-Pacific Strategy", aiming to unite more nations, especially those surrounding China, to create a "containment network" to manage China's peaceful rise. Given that ASEAN is located along Japan's maritime lifelines and has maintained close relations with Japan in economic and cultural fields, it becomes a crucial focal point for the implementation of this strategy. Japan seeks to enhance cooperation with ASEAN to effectively advance the "Indo-Pacific Strategy" and create a geopolitical balance against China. However, the strategy, which inherently contains intentions to contain China, poses a potential threat to the long-standing amicable relations between China and ASEAN. As a recognized "intermediary", ASEAN is reluctant to take sides in great power competition. It is committed to creating equal and just opportunities for all parties to promote mutual interests in the region. In the context of current great power dynamics, ASEAN adopts a strategy of multiple hedging against China, Japan, and the United States, thereby maintaining its central position in Southeast Asia while continually enhancing its comprehensive strength and international influence. In light of this, this paper examines ASEAN's perceptions and responses to Japan's "Indo-Pacific Strategy", contributing to China's understanding of ASEAN's policy direction and interests, thereby enabling adjustments to its foreign policy to promote regional stability and cooperation.

## **2. ASEAN Policy in the Process of Japan's Advancing the "Indo-Pacific Strategy"**

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is located at the center of the Indo-Pacific region. It is not only the lifeline of Japan's maritime transportation but also a key cooperation region for Japan to promote its "Indo-Pacific Strategy". One of the goals of Japan's "Indo-Pacific Strategy" is to formulate and maintain international rules favorable to itself, so it needs the support of many countries outside the region. The ASEAN as a whole has a significant impact on the regional power balance, so obtaining the permission and support of ASEAN is necessary. In order to smoothly promote the implementation of the "Indo-Pacific Strategy," Japan has strengthened cooperation with ASEAN as a whole and individual ASEAN member states in fields such as economy and maritime security through "dual-track diplomacy."

### *2.1 Strengthening Cooperation with ASEAN in the Economic Field*

Japan has been promoting cooperation with ASEAN through the signing of the Vision Statement and Implementation Plan, aimed at jointly leading economic prosperity and development in the

Indo-Pacific region. In December 2013, at the Japan-ASEAN Leaders' Meeting, the "Japan-ASEAN Friendly Cooperation Vision Statement" and its corresponding "Implementation Plan" were adopted, with the objective of advancing bilateral relations into a new phase of collaboration to enhance economic growth in the Indo-Pacific. (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2023) Economic cooperation between Japan and ASEAN encompasses critical areas such as energy, environment, and artificial intelligence. In 2022, the Japanese government introduced initiatives focused on supply chains, sustainable development, and energy transition, namely the "Asia Future Investment Initiative (AJIF)" and the "Asia Energy Transition Initiative (AETI)," expressing its intent to share future opportunities in these domains with ASEAN. Building on this foundation, in 2023, Japan's Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry proposed a new economic cooperation framework termed the "Japan-ASEAN Economic Co-Creation Vision." (Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, 2023) This concept is based on the new era and shows the direction of future economic cooperation between Japan and ASEAN.

Japan has proposed the "High-quality Infrastructure Partnership" plan and increased assistance for infrastructure construction in Southeast Asia. In October 2018, at the 10th "Mekong-Japan Summit", both sides agreed to promote cooperation in infrastructure construction and realize a "free and open Indo-Pacific region." The "Tokyo Strategy 2018" was adopted. Japan will provide financing for 150 projects in the next three years, such as expanding airports in Laos and building irrigation facilities in Cambodia. (Indo-Pacific Defense Forum, 2019) At the 22nd Japan-ASEAN Leaders' Meeting held in November 2019, Japan proposed the "ASEAN Overseas Loan and Investment Initiative." (Bi, 2021) The initiative decided to raise 3 billion US dollars from various financial institutions, including overseas loans and investments totaling 1.2 billion US dollars raised by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), which will be used to assist in high-quality infrastructure construction in ASEAN from 2020 to 2022. (Zhang, 2023)

Japan is accelerating the promotion of its economic security strategy. Through policies such as proposed the "Plan for Building a Resilient Economic Structure," it strengthens supply chain cooperation with ASEAN to achieve supply chain resilience. In combination with the current international environment of the game between China and the United States and the long-term domestic economic downturn, Japan has begun to accelerate the promotion of its economic security strategy. With the "decoupling and severing of chains" proposed by the United States, Japan has also begun to actively promote the transfer of industrial chains and transfer some production bases to Southeast Asia. In fiscal year 2020, Japan launched the "Plan for Building a Resilient Economic Structure." In this plan, Japan's budget for assisting the diversification of overseas supply chains is as high as 35.58038 billion yen. In order to achieve the strengthening of the supply chain between Japan and ASEAN, Japan will provide the necessary funds for equipment and corresponding implementation activities required for strengthening supply chain resilience. In October 2022, the "Infrastructure System Export Strategy 2025" released by the Kishida government proposed strengthening support for supply chains, digital innovation and other aspects in ASEAN countries including the Mekong River Basin. In December

2022, in the "Japan - ASEAN Friendly and Trustworthy Partnership Relationship" common vision statement, Japan and ASEAN pointed out that they would jointly strengthen economic security and establish elastic, safe supply chains and economic systems. (Prime Minister Office of Japan, 2023)

Japan has expanded bilateral trade and investment flows with ASEAN. On August 1, 2020, the first protocol of the ASEAN-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (AJCEP) officially came into effect, aiming to enhance trade and investment liberalization between Japan and ASEAN. The agreement not only consolidates the existing cooperation framework centered on trade in goods but also supplements regulations on trade in services and investment liberalization, marking that cooperation between Japan and ASEAN in the fields of trade and investment will reach a new height. On the eve of the 2023 Japan-ASEAN Leaders' Summit, Prime Minister Kishida clearly pointed out in his speech that Japan and ASEAN are important trading partners to each other. For ASEAN, Japan is the second largest source of direct investment after the United States. In recent years, Japan's annual direct investment in ASEAN is about 2.8 trillion yen.(Prime Minister Office of Japan,2023) Japan's investment in ASEAN has maintained a strong momentum for a long time. Many Japanese enterprises have established branches in this region, forming a broad and in-depth cooperation network. In 2023, Japan's total direct investment in ASEAN was 26.7 billion US dollars. It is the second largest source of direct investment in ASEAN, and the bilateral trade volume reached 268.5 billion US dollars.() This figure fully demonstrates the prosperity and vitality of the economic and trade relations between the two sides.

### *2.2 Closely Cooperating with ASEAN in the Maritime Security Field*

In the process of promoting the introduction of Japan's "Indo-Pacific Strategy," during high-level meetings between Japan and ASEAN, Japan continuously emphasizes the importance of dialogue and cooperation in the field of security, especially maritime security. At the 2013 Japan-ASEAN Leaders' Summit, Japan emphasized that in order to maintain peace and stability in the region and the world, it will promote cooperation with ASEAN in the field of security and defense in accordance with the concept of "proactive pacifism." (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2013) After Japan launched the "Indo-Pacific Strategy," it actively strengthened cooperation with island countries in ASEAN in the field of maritime security. In 2016, at the second "Japan-ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting," the Japan-ASEAN Defense Cooperation Initiative, namely the "Vientiane Vision," was adopted, providing guiding principles for Japan and ASEAN to strengthen defense cooperation. The implementation of this initiative is the first security cooperation between Japan and ASEAN on maritime security and infrastructure projects. During the "Japan-ASEAN Leaders' Summit" in 2023, both sides agreed to strengthen dialogue and cooperation in maritime security. In the statement, both sides said they will enhance maritime domain awareness and promote cooperation between coast guards and relevant law enforcement agencies, and strengthen cooperation in maritime capacity building.

Japan has lifted its original arms embargo policy and provided defense equipment and related technologies to ASEAN countries to strengthen their defense and law enforcement capabilities in the

maritime field. In April 2014, the Japanese government lifted the arms export restriction and passed the draft of the "Three Principles on Transfer of Defense Equipment," that is, a policy that allows the export of defense equipment under certain conditions. In November of the same year, at the first defense ministers' meeting between Japan and ASEAN, then Japanese Defense Minister Eto Akinori stated at the meeting that Japan will promote the provision of equipment and technologies to ASEAN, aiming to strengthen bilateral defense cooperation to jointly address regional security issues. After the South China Sea arbitration case in 2016, under the guise of safeguarding ASEAN centrality and international law, Japan stated at the "Japan-ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting" that it will seek to enhance the territorial sea awareness and defense capabilities of coastal ASEAN countries by dispatching coast guard ships and maritime aircraft to ASEAN countries such as Indonesia, the Philippines, and Vietnam in the maritime field. (Japan Ministry Of Defense, 2016) In February 2016, Japan and the Philippines signed the "Agreement on Transfer of Defense Equipment and Technical Cooperation." The Japanese government stated that it will provide defense equipment such as small and medium-sized and large patrol ships to the Philippines free of charge, thereby strengthening the Philippines' warning and surveillance capabilities in the South China Sea. (Li & Xing, 2024) In September 2021, Japan and Vietnam signed the "Agreement on Transfer of Defense Equipment and Technology between Japan and Vietnam" in Hanoi. This agreement legally allows Japan to transfer defense equipment and related technologies to Vietnam, further enhancing the modernization of Vietnam's maritime equipment and the technical capabilities of relevant military personnel. (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2023) In April 2023, the Japanese government officially released the "Implementation Plan for Strengthening Support for the Government's Security Capability Enhancement" (OSA), and it is expected to invest 2 billion yen in 2023 to provide support to ASEAN member countries such as the Philippines and Malaysia. In November of the same year, Japan provided coastal surveillance radars to the Philippines, aiming to enhance the security capabilities of the recipient country through official security assistance.

Japan conducts joint military exercises with some ASEAN member states, thereby deepening defense cooperation between them. In June 2023, Japan, the United States, and the Philippines jointly held their inaugural maritime joint military exercise, signifying the deepening of maritime defense cooperation among these three nations. From August 31 to September 13, 2023, Japan, the United States, Indonesia, and other countries' armed forces carried out the "Super Garuda Shield - 2023" joint exercise, which led to heightened tensions in regions such as the South China Sea and Southeast Asia. On April 7, 2024, the four countries of the Philippines, the United States, Japan, and Australia held their first joint maritime military exercise in the South China Sea. Japan and other extra-regional countries such as the United States, in an attempt to contain China, express so-called support for countries like the Philippines and Indonesia that have territorial disputes with China. Conducting joint military exercises with them is aimed at increasing interoperability among them and containing and confronting China.

### *2.3 Adopting "Dual-Track Diplomacy" towards ASEAN*

Japan endeavors to coordinate policies with ASEAN through bilateral or multilateral institutional frameworks and promote the implementation of the “Indo-Pacific Strategy.” One of the main objectives of Japan's implementation of the “Indo-Pacific Strategy” is to maintain an international order favorable to itself. However, formulating and maintaining an international order cannot be achieved unilaterally. Consequently, Japan must obtain the political support and commitment of as many regional and non-regional countries as possible. Southeast Asia is Japan's strategic hinterland and an important arena for Japan to realize the “Indo-Pacific Strategy.” In order to avert the risk of being rejected and marginalized by ASEAN, Japan asserts that based on the framework of the “Indo-Pacific Strategy,” it will not only strengthen cooperation with ASEAN as a whole but also deepen bilateral cooperation with individual ASEAN member states. Compared to ASEAN as a whole, ASEAN member states possess the advantages of small size and flexibility. Japan can achieve more tangible results by collaborating with them. Japan has adopted its customary “dual-track diplomacy” towards ASEAN, not only enhancing cooperation with ASEAN as a whole but also attaching great significance to bilateral cooperation with individual ASEAN member states.

First, Japan has begun to incorporate some of ASEAN's core principles into its "Indo-Pacific Strategy" to lower ASEAN's vigilance and gain ASEAN's recognition. Japan has stated that it will provide long-term support for ASEAN's "centrality" and its integration process, as ASEAN can play an important role in maintaining the multipolar order in the Indo-Pacific region in the future.(Kei,2022) If Japan wants to achieve a leading position in the Indo-Pacific order and safeguard and expand its own interests and influence, it naturally needs to cooperate closely with ASEAN countries. Japan cooperates with ASEAN through the "Japan-ASEAN Integration Fund" (JAIF) and provides assistance to support the construction goals of the ASEAN community.

Second, Japan has provided targeted assistance according to the national conditions of ASEAN countries. For example, providing patrol ships and other equipment to island countries such as Vietnam and the Philippines, as well as cultivating relevant talents to strengthen their marine capacity building; for countries with relatively developed industries such as Singapore, Indonesia, and Thailand, not only providing assistance in the economic and trade fields but also emphasizing cooperation in the field of security and disaster response; for countries such as Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam that are relatively backward in all aspects, further providing technical cooperation and financial assistance to help them carry out infrastructure construction and strengthen investment in the economic and trade fields to promote the economic development of these countries. In the future, Japan will implement targeted policies for ASEAN countries in a "broad sense" and ASEAN itself in a "narrow sense". This will be beneficial for Japan to deepen its relations with ASEAN and its member states and play a positive role in promoting Japan's "Indo-Pacific Strategy".

Furthermore, in order to expand its influence in Southeast Asia and smoothly promote the implementation of the "Indo-Pacific Strategy", Japan actively engages in dialogue with ASEAN and its member states and seeks to strengthen bilateral and multilateral cooperation. During the 2015 East Asia

Summit and ASEAN Leaders' Meeting, then Prime Minister Shinzo Abe not only participated in the Japan-ASEAN Leaders' Meeting but also held bilateral talks with the leaders of ASEAN member states, aiming to further strengthen the ties and cooperation between Japan and Southeast Asian countries. In addition, since Fumio Kishida became prime minister, he has visited ASEAN countries many times, demonstrating his firm commitment to maintaining long-term friendly and cooperative relations with ASEAN member states. In particular, in 2023, which marks the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and ASEAN. During the summit between Japanese and ASEAN leaders, Fumio Kishida took this opportunity to hold in-depth talks with the leaders of ASEAN member states except Myanmar to consolidate and expand bilateral cooperation. Fumio Kishida signed agreements with Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim and Indonesian President Joko Widodo respectively. Japan provides official assistance to them to enhance the maritime security capabilities of the recipient countries.

### **3. ASEAN's Perception of Japan's "Indo-Pacific Strategy"**

ASEAN believes that its own leadership cooperation mechanism will be marginalized by the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD) mechanism constructed by Japan's "Indo-Pacific Strategy", and ASEAN will be unable to continuously play a leading role in regional construction. Moreover, there are differences in the understanding of it among ASEAN member states, which will cause division within ASEAN and undermine ASEAN's centrality. Japan's "Indo-Pacific Strategy" has an obvious tendency to contain China. ASEAN is worried that it will affect its relationship with China and it will be difficult to maintain neutrality in the competition among major powers. At the same time, after the introduction of Japan's "Indo-Pacific Strategy", it has provided assistance to ASEAN countries in multiple fields. ASEAN believes that this strategy not only helps in its own development but also serves as an external force that can reduce its excessive dependence on China.

#### *3.1 Considering that Japan's "Indo-Pacific Strategy" challenges ASEAN's Centrality*

ASEAN has long played a leading role in maintaining the order in the Asia-Pacific region. Japan's "Indo-Pacific Strategy" emphasizes the concept of "Indo-Pacific", and the importance of "Asia-Pacific" seems to be relatively weakened. Correspondingly, it dilutes ASEAN's influence and marginalizes its central position. Initially, ASEAN did not accept the "Indo-Pacific" concept proposed by the Japanese government. It believes that regarding the Indian Ocean as a geographical "place" exaggerates the "maritime" nature and seems to completely ignore or downplay the Southeast Asian subregion (continent). (Wilkins, 2020) ASEAN is worried that the change in geopolitical focus will weaken its central position in diplomacy. Therefore, in the official statement "ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific" (AOIP) issued by ASEAN, "Indo-Pacific" is described as "although not a continuous territorial space, it is a closely integrated and interconnected region", (ASEAN Main Portal, 2019) which means that ASEAN's definition of the "Indo-Pacific" concept is an expansion and extension based on the original "Asia-Pacific" concept.

ASEAN believes that the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD) advocated by Japan's "Indo-Pacific Strategy" will lead to the marginalization of ASEAN-led security cooperation mechanisms in diplomacy and weaken ASEAN's central position in the regional security architecture. After Shinzo Abe came to power again in 2012, he stated that Japan would promote security cooperation with Australia and India through "values diplomacy" means and attempt to shape a regional order centered on QUAD without clearly defining ASEAN's status and role in it. The connotation of "ASEAN centrality" that has long supported ASEAN's development is that ASEAN must continuously be at the core of the Asia-Pacific region, and mechanisms such as the East Asia Summit (EAS) and the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) led by ASEAN will be in a leading position in regional institutions for a long time. (Hosoya, 2019) As Japan's "Indo-Pacific Strategy" advocates maintaining peace and stability in the region through the new dialogue mechanism of QUAD in the Indo-Pacific region, it will lead to ASEAN losing the initiative to establish new regional mechanisms in the Indo-Pacific region and will also marginalize ASEAN's central position. Indonesia clearly stated that the region should be based on ASEAN mechanisms and optimize the existing architecture rather than introducing a new regional architecture. (Feng, 2021) At the 2019 Shangri-La Dialogue, when then Singaporean Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong talked about the "Belt and Road Initiative" and the "Indo-Pacific Strategy", he said: "We support regional cooperation initiatives. These initiatives not only provide an open and inclusive platform for countries to conduct constructive cooperation but also promote the deepening process of regional integration." In addition, he added and emphasized: "These initiatives should strengthen the existing cooperation mechanisms centered on ASEAN. They should not undermine the existing architecture, let alone establish hostile blocs, deepen divisions, or force countries to take sides." (Wei, 2019) To a large extent, ASEAN member states believe that for Indo-Pacific cooperation, attention should be paid to the existing framework led by ASEAN instead of promoting it through newly established organizations.

Due to the differences in geographical locations and the complexity of political systems among ASEAN member states, and as member states have their own interests to consider, there are differences in their understandings of Japan's "Indo-Pacific Strategy". After Japan proposed the "Indo-Pacific Strategy", it carried out "strategic fulcrum" diplomacy to ASEAN countries and actively strengthened maritime security cooperation with the South China Sea claimant countries in ASEAN. Japan uses the South China Sea issue to play up the "China threat" and provides defense equipment such as coast guard ships and patrol ships to some member states, and is committed to improving their defense capabilities to check and balance China. The national strategic goals of ASEAN member states are not the same, and there are differences in their understandings of the South China Sea issue, making it difficult to reach a consensus. (Saha, 2018) South China Sea claimant countries such as the Philippines and Vietnam maintain a tough stance towards China on the South China Sea issue. While non-claimant countries such as Laos, Cambodia, and Thailand, benefiting from the "Belt and Road Initiative" and the Lancang-Mekong dialogue cooperation mechanism, are closely cooperating with China and bringing

benefits to themselves, and are not willing to have conflicts with China. This makes it difficult for ASEAN member states to reach a unified stance, further increasing strategic differentiation and challenging ASEAN's centrality.

### *3.2 Some ASEAN member states believe that Japan's "Indo-Pacific Strategy" has a Color of Containing China*

Some ASEAN member states believe that Japan's "Indo-Pacific Strategy" has an exclusive tendency. In essence, it is to diplomatically isolate China and weaken China's influence in the Indo-Pacific region. ASEAN is the lifeline of Japan's maritime transportation, and its geographical location is crucial for Japan to implement the "Indo-Pacific Strategy". Japan attempts to expand its alliance network through "values diplomacy" under the framework of the "Indo-Pacific Strategy" and form a broader "encirclement network against China". After the Liberal Democratic Party led by Shinzo Abe came to power again at the end of 2012, in order to contain China's rise, it began to actively carry out cooperation in diplomatic, political, economic and other fields with the United States, India, and especially Southeast Asian countries and other countries, attempting to weaken China's political and economic influence in Southeast Asian countries and surrounding regions. Therefore, Japan deepens cooperation with ASEAN in economic, security and other fields and continuously promotes the so-called "democratic values" to ASEAN, aiming to obtain ASEAN's support. However, Japan's so-called "values" do not conform to ASEAN's regional cooperation concept, and are prone to causing conflicts and confrontations between countries and increasing regional instability. (Liu,2020) ASEAN has long advocated the principles of inclusiveness and neutrality to manage its relations with major powers and exert its own influence. ASEAN is worried that following Japan's "Indo-Pacific Strategy" will not only affect its long-term friendly relationship with China, but also lead to actions that deviate from the principle of maintaining a balanced foreign relationship and undermine ASEAN's strategic autonomy. (Lee, 2018) At the 25th Pacific Economic Cooperation Council (PECC) held in May 2018, Indonesian Foreign Minister Retno Lestari Priansari Marsudi declared that "the 'Indo-Pacific' concept should not be used as a containment strategy." In March 2018, Singaporean Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong said: "We hope that the Indo-Pacific strategy will ultimately present an inclusive and open regional architecture where all countries can interact with each other in a peaceful and constructive way. We do not want to end up with hostile blocs or being forced to take sides."(Tomotaka,2021) ASEAN is cautious about the "Indo-Pacific Strategy" and is worried that it will evolve into a strategy aimed entirely at confronting China. Therefore, ASEAN will not give full support to it.

Japan has targeted the exertion of influence on countries such as the Philippines, Indonesia, and Vietnam. Some ASEAN member states believe that this move is aimed at countering China. Under the pretext of maintaining the security order in the South China Sea, Japan has targeted the strengthening of defense cooperation with ASEAN. By providing assistance to ASEAN member states in building maritime security capabilities, it is actually attempting to play a more active role in South China Sea affairs. In December 2022, the Japanese government adopted the "Guidelines on Strengthening

Maritime Security Capabilities." This document emphasizes that China's activities in the East China Sea, South China Sea and other fields "are making the regional maritime security situation tense." It can be seen that Japan is deliberately creating a "China threat" and undermining the relationship between China and ASEAN. Japan uses the South China Sea issue to hope to draw in ASEAN countries to oppose China. However, ASEAN has long relied on an external peaceful environment to promote economic development within the region, and there is close cooperation between China and ASEAN in fields such as economy and trade, humanities, and the environment. Based on considerations of national interests and regional situations, the ruling elites of Malaysia adopt a flexible and pragmatic policy and believe that China is not a "security threat." Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar has repeatedly emphasized in public that Malaysia will not "take sides" and will not waver in developing equal-distance relations with major powers due to the escalation of major power competition. Indonesia, which held the rotating presidency of ASEAN in 2023, has also clearly emphasized many times that ASEAN will never become an agent of major power competition nor a "battlefield" of major power competition.

### *3.3 Believing that Japan's "Indo-Pacific Strategy" Is Beneficial for its own Development and can Enhance Strategic Autonomy*

ASEAN believes that Japan's "Indo-Pacific Strategy" will contribute to its own economic development. First, ASEAN believes that Japan's "Indo-Pacific Strategy" will help improve infrastructure construction in Southeast Asia. The infrastructure development indexes of ASEAN countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines are all relatively high in the global rankings, indicating their strong demand for regional infrastructure construction and development. In May 2015, Japan proposed the concept of building a "Partnership for Quality Infrastructure" and planned to cooperate with international financial institutions such as the Asian Development Bank (ADB). From 2016 onwards, it will provide about 110 billion U.S. dollars for infrastructure construction investment in Indo-Pacific countries within four years. At the "Japan-ASEAN Leaders' Summit" in November 2017, ASEAN expressed its support and recognition for Japan's initiatives in high-quality infrastructure and talent cultivation. (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2017) On March 14, 2024, when Vietnamese Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh met with Takebe Tsutomu, special advisor to the Japan-Vietnam Friendship Parliamentarians' Alliance, he said: He hoped that Japan would quickly provide a new generation of official development assistance (ODA) for the railway project from the center of Hanoi to the Hoa Lac high-tech park in Vietnam. (Socialist Republic of Vietnam Government News, 2024) Second, ASEAN believes that deepening the construction of a future-oriented partnership with Japan will enhance its own economic vitality and promote the construction of the ASEAN Community. In 2019, at the 34th ASEAN-Japan Forum, ASEAN recognized the important role played by Japan in trade and investment with ASEAN. And it is expected that Japan will continue to support the construction of the ASEAN Community. (Association of Southeast Asian Nations, 2019) In 2023, ASEAN Secretary-General Kao Kim Hourn stated at the press conference of "ASEAN Secretary-General and the Federation of

Japanese Chambers of Commerce and Industry in ASEAN (FJCCIA)" that ASEAN and Japan agreed to establish the "ASEAN-Japan Co-Created Vision" to jointly promote the deepening and practicality of bilateral relations and promote sustainable economic development. Economic cooperation between ASEAN and Japan will boost the vigorous growth of the economies of both sides and achieve regional win-win results and prosperity.

ASEAN believes that Japan's strengthening of its marine defense capabilities and maritime law enforcement capabilities will help address possible challenges and ensure regional security. In November 2019, the "Japan-ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting" adopted "Vientiane Vision 2.0." Japan will support ASEAN countries in enhancing their information collection and warning and surveillance capabilities in the field of maritime security, thereby realizing the so-called maritime order emphasized in Japan's "Indo-Pacific Strategy." On January 30, 2024, at the 13th "Japan-ASEAN Deputy Defense Ministers' Level" meeting, Vietnamese Deputy Defense Minister General Hoàng Xuân Chiển expressed support for the "Vientiane Vision 2.0" initiative and looked forward to strengthening the defense cooperation relationship between ASEAN and Japan to ensure regional peace and stability. On April 29, 2024, Japan provided the Japanese-made TPS-P14ME mobile radar system to the Philippines, which will significantly enhance the Philippines' maritime domain awareness. Philippine Defense Secretary Gilbert Teodoro Jr. said at the handover ceremony held at Camp Aguinaldo in Quezon City that the Japanese-made air surveillance radar has "added eyes" for the Philippines, (Indo-Pacific Defense Forum, 2024) which will help strengthen the combat capabilities of the Philippine Armed Forces.

ASEAN believes that the introduction of Japan's "Indo-Pacific Strategy" is an external force for it to hedge against China's rise and reduce its excessive dependence on China, thereby enhancing its own strategic autonomy. With the significant improvement of China's economic power and military capabilities, ASEAN's trade, personnel and other connections with China have become closer and the degree of dependence is also continuously increasing. ASEAN expects to rely on external forces to reduce its dependence on China and thus maintain its central position. (Sudo, 2023) After Japan introduced the "Indo-Pacific Strategy", it strengthened cooperation with ASEAN in fields such as digital innovation, human resource investment, and infrastructure. ASEAN can use Japan's economic and political strength to strengthen its own influence in regional affairs and enhance its international status. At the same time, as conflicts between China and some ASEAN member states in the South China Sea intensify, the QUAD promoted by Japan's "Indo-Pacific Strategy" has strengthened its hostile stance towards China in the Indo-Pacific region. Some people in Southeast Asia believe that the QUAD advocated by the United States and Japan is a mechanism to check and balance China and maintain their own security. In 2018, Huong Le Thu, a Vietnamese scholar at the Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI), conducted a survey on Southeast Asians' views on QUAD. Among them, 35% of the respondents believed that QUAD is a cooperation mechanism to deal with China's rise and can maintain their national security. (Le Thu, 2018) In a survey conducted by the Southeast Asia Research

Center of the ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute among the people of Southeast Asia in 2020, 45.8% of the respondents believed that QUAD has a "positive" or "very positive" impact on regional security. This shows that some people in Southeast Asia believe that the QUAD promoted by Japan's "Indo-Pacific Strategy" has a positive effect on maintaining their own regional security. (ISEAS -Yusof Ishak Institute, 2020)

#### **4. ASEAN's Response to Japan's "Indo-Pacific Strategy"**

In the context of intensified geopolitical games today, ASEAN has introduced the "ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific" (AOIP) to ensure its own centrality, providing a guiding plan for maintaining ASEAN's central position in the future. ASEAN hopes to balance the interests and influences of major powers in the region, and actively cooperate with extra-regional countries through the community model, and seek a "third way" for regional order construction. Considering its own interests, ASEAN is unwilling to be involved in the confrontation and competition between major powers. Therefore, ASEAN has long adopted the "hedging strategy" to maintain its traditional strategic goal, that is, to ensure the independence and autonomy of Southeast Asia and maintain ASEAN's idealized inclusive regional order. ASEAN implements hedging between China and Japan to lead regional cooperation in order to obtain economic benefits as much as possible.

##### *4.1 Introducing the "ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific" to Maintain its Own Centrality*

To maintain its central position in regional multilateralism and refuse to let external forces interfere in internal regional affairs, ASEAN has introduced the "ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific" (AOIP) that conforms to its own Indo-Pacific concept. Most ASEAN member states were once overseas colonies of great powers, and Southeast Asia was affected to varying degrees by the competition between major powers during the Cold War. Due to historical factors, ASEAN member states reject extra-regional major powers from interfering in their own internal affairs and resolutely maintain their own centrality. (Yuzawa, 2022) With the successive introduction of "Indo-Pacific strategies" by the United States, Australia, India, Japan and other countries, to a large extent, it means that ASEAN has lost the ability to lead the development of the "Indo-Pacific" concept. ASEAN realizes that if it cannot effectively participate in the construction of a new regional order and make corresponding responses, ASEAN may be marginalized. In view of factors such as strategic competition between China and the United States and various versions of "Indo-Pacific strategies" introduced by other countries, Indonesia has proposed an Indo-Pacific outlook centered on ASEAN. In 2018, Indonesia submitted the draft of the "ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific" to ASEAN. After Indonesia lobbied other ASEAN member states and after long-term consultations among member states, in June 2019, ASEAN adopted the "ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific" at the 34th summit. (Anwar, 2020) In the "Outlook", ASEAN emphasizes the basic principles of its own development of foreign relations, that is, maintaining ASEAN's central position, and on this basis, ensuring that the Indo-Pacific region is open, transparent and inclusive. This document introduces ASEAN into major power balance diplomacy and plays the

strategic role of ASEAN as a regional coordinator, marking the formation of ASEAN's version of the "Indo-Pacific vision". (Suzuki, 2021) The "Outlook" is ASEAN's response to the US and Japanese versions of the "Indo-Pacific Strategy", but it is different from the values and normative principles it emphasizes and is more in line with ASEAN's principles of inclusiveness, consensus-building and emphasizing normative methods.

To safeguard its leading position in regional cooperation, ASEAN emphasizes that the Asia-Pacific regional cooperation mechanism led by it will not be replaced by the mechanism advocated by the "Indo-Pacific Strategy". At the ASEAN summit in 2019, ASEAN emphasized to its dialogue partners that ASEAN member states unanimously agree that all initiatives and concepts related to the Indo-Pacific region should maintain ASEAN's central position, and that dialogue and cooperation within the region should be based on ASEAN-led mechanisms such as the East Asia Summit (EAS) and the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF). ASEAN emphasizes in the AOIP that it will continue to use ASEAN-led mechanisms such as the East Asia Summit as a platform for dialogue and cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region, indicating that ASEAN does not intend to establish a new mechanism or replace existing mechanisms, (Gill, 2023) but rather wants to use existing mechanisms to strengthen regional cooperation and unity. ASEAN has introduced the AOIP, seeking initiatives that conform to the connotations of the current era, and is committed to maintaining its own leading cooperation mechanism and avoiding being marginalized in diplomacy by other cooperation organizations.

ASEAN seeks to continue to play the role of "middleman", providing a dialogue platform for mediating major power competition and avoiding being forced to take sides and undermining its centrality. In response to the new geopolitical competition in the Indo-Pacific region, ASEAN has introduced the AOIP based on the principle of "openness, transparency and inclusiveness" with unique regionalist guidelines. It mentions "ASEAN community building" and "greater sense of community" many times, and emphasizes being committed to playing a "central and strategic role". In the past few decades, regional cooperation frameworks led by ASEAN such as the East Asia Summit (EAS) have played an active role in maintaining peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific region. ASEAN not only continuously engages with other East Asian countries but also attempts to conduct dialogue and exchanges with all major powers in the current international landscape. The inclusive principle in the AOIP supports such exchanges. By introducing the AOIP, ASEAN has built a platform for dialogue among major powers, aiming to reconcile and resolve conflicts among major powers and countries within the region that arise in the process of promoting the construction of regional order, so as to ensure the stability of regional order and enhance its own voice in regional affairs. This reflects ASEAN's hope to continue to serve as a bridge for communication and cooperation among countries and maintain its central position in the Indo-Pacific region.

#### *4.2 Strengthening Cooperation with External Countries to Expand Strategic Autonomous Space*

In today's pattern of major power competition, ASEAN seeks to establish partnerships with countries inside and outside the region through the community model and attempts to find and create a broader

strategic space in the Asia-Pacific region. ASEAN continues to play a leading role in regional community building. ASEAN's community model is regarded as the "third way" in addition to the US alliance system and China's institutional network. In the game pattern among China, the United States and Japan, ASEAN can use the community model to attract more extra-regional partners to participate in the "ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific", so as to balance the interests and influences of major powers in the region and then achieve comprehensive security and development in the Indo-Pacific region. In August 2018, the ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting released the "Joint Communiqué", expressing the relationship between major powers' regional strategies and ASEAN centrality: "We discussed new proposals put forward by extra-regional partners aiming to deepen regional engagement... Agreed to explore reciprocal cooperation on the basis of maintaining ASEAN centrality... We emphasized the need to strengthen an ASEAN-centered, open, transparent, inclusive and rules-based regional framework." By issuing official reports, ASEAN conveys its stance of strengthening cooperative relations with extra-regional partners.

ASEAN enhances its voice and influence in regional affairs and expands its strategic influence by strengthening cooperation with other countries or regional organizations. In April 2018, ASEAN leaders issued a statement at the 32nd ASEAN Summit: reaffirming the importance of maintaining ASEAN's central position and unity in the process of building the ASEAN community and engaging with external partners. In 2022, ASEAN's relationship with India was upgraded to a comprehensive strategic partnership, marking that the two sides will deepen cooperation in multiple fields. The cooperation field between ASEAN and India began to shift to regional defense and security, and the two deepened cooperation in the maritime field. At the "ASEAN-India Summit" in 2023, the two sides issued the first joint statement centered on maritime cooperation. It indicates that the two sides will deepen cooperation in the maritime field and jointly address challenges and threats in the maritime field. In September 2023, during the 43rd ASEAN Summit and a series of meetings held in the capital of Indonesia, ASEAN, the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IOPA) and the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) jointly signed a memorandum of cooperation. Indonesian Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi said that ASEAN and Indian Ocean and Pacific countries must work together to maintain peace and stability in the region. In September 2023, ASEAN and Canada established a strategic partnership at the "ASEAN-Canada Summit". Canada stated that it will actively participate in the regional architecture mechanism led by ASEAN and support ASEAN's central position. As major power strategic competition intensifies, the United States and its allies have carried out all-round "containment and interception" of China, and the pressure on ASEAN countries to "take sides" is also increasing day by day. ASEAN's choice to cooperate with countries such as India and Pacific island countries is exploring a new path for regional development and shaping a regional structural system centered on ASEAN.

ASEAN invites extra-regional countries to participate in building regional order and developing an inclusive regional architecture, bringing a broader development space for itself. In order to promote the continuous growth of the regional economy, ASEAN invites countries such as China, Japan, and South

Korea to jointly participate in building a free trade area and promoting the implementation of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP). The successful conclusion of RCEP in 2020 marks a significant achievement of ASEAN in leading the construction of regional economic order. It not only demonstrates ASEAN's leadership but also represents that ASEAN has explored a regional cooperation path independent of the traditional major power-led models such as China, the United States, and Japan, injecting new vitality into regional economic integration. By building a dialogue platform, ASEAN invites extra-regional partners to jointly participate in building a peaceful and prosperous Indo-Pacific region. From September 5 to 6, 2023, Indonesia promoted the convening of the first "ASEAN-Indo-Pacific Forum (AIPF)". The theme of this forum is "Implementing the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific", aiming to deepen cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region and achieve prosperity and harmony in the Indo-Pacific region. ASEAN actively strengthens cooperation with extra-regional countries in order to expand its strategic autonomy space in the complex and changing competitive landscape.

#### *4.3 Hedging between China and Japan to Seek Its Own Interests*

ASEAN places bets on both sides between China and Japan. It not only wants to ensure the peace and stability of the surrounding environment but also expects to safeguard its own interests in the changing geopolitical landscape. On the one hand, most ASEAN member states are worried that Japan's "Indo-Pacific Strategy" will undermine the existing peace in the region and affect the friendly relations established between ASEAN and China. Japan's "Indo-Pacific Strategy" contains its own political and military intentions. The policy tone of the Japanese Self-Defense Forces shifting from "defense" to "offense" will increase regional instability. As China's own national defense construction is increasingly strengthened, ASEAN seeks to maintain close cooperation with China to maintain regional peace and stability. On the other hand, ASEAN is worried that excessive dependence on China will lead to the loss of strategic autonomy and hopes to use Japan's power to hedge against China's power and maintain regional balance. (Hanada, 2019) ASEAN has close bilateral trade and investment relations with China. The economic growth of ASEAN countries benefits from the support and assistance of China's "Belt and Road Initiative". However, there is an unbalanced return in ASEAN's cooperation with China. ASEAN is worried that excessive dependence on China will lead to the loss of strategic autonomy. Therefore, ASEAN not only seeks cooperation with Japan's "Indo-Pacific Strategy" to reduce its asymmetric interdependence with China, thereby ensuring its own central position and leadership in regional affairs. It also looks forward to continuing to deepen economic cooperation and contacts with China to achieve mutually beneficial and win-win economic growth to promote its own economic and social development and jointly maintain regional prosperity and stability.

ASEAN absorbs the policy principles and cooperation concepts emphasized by China and Japan, and then adjusts its own foreign policies to seek its own interests. In the AOIP, ASEAN not only expresses the expectation of further discussing the Indo-Pacific concept but also mentions its regard for China as

an important partner. For example, in the AOIP, ASEAN mentions being committed to maintaining a "rule-based regional architecture", emphasizing respect for international law and ensuring freedom of navigation and overflight at sea. This stance is in line with the norms and principles followed by the United States and Japan in managing maritime affairs. The concept of "establishing strategic mutual trust and win-win cooperation" is consistent with the concept of developing regional partnerships advocated by China. ASEAN adopts various hedging strategies and cooperates with countries such as China and Japan, hoping to seek its own interests to the greatest extent. ASEAN is exploring possible cooperation with Japan's "Indo-Pacific Strategy". In November 2020, in the "Joint Statement on AOIP Cooperation at the 23rd Japan-ASEAN Summit", ASEAN confirmed that AOIP and FOIP will cooperate in fields such as maritime cooperation. When cooperating with China, ASEAN attaches importance to fields such as economic development and connectivity. For example, in November 2019, at the China-ASEAN 10+1 leaders' meeting, the "Joint Statement on the Synergy between the Belt and Road Initiative and the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity 2025" was issued. This marks that ASEAN actively deepens cooperation with China in pursuit of its own interests.

In addition, ASEAN has not only upgraded its partnership with Japan under the framework of the "Indo-Pacific Strategy", but also maintained and deepened its cooperative relationship with China under the background of the "Belt and Road Initiative". In September 2023, Japan and ASEAN issued a joint statement at the 26th Japan-ASEAN Leaders' Meeting, upgrading their relationship to a "Japan-ASEAN Comprehensive Strategic Partnership". The establishment of this relationship not only helps ASEAN enhance its resilience to deal with major power competition, but also enhances its strategic autonomy. At the same time, in order to expand the intersection of economic interests between the two sides, China and ASEAN are vigorously promoting the construction of the China-ASEAN Free Trade Area and further strengthening economic and trade ties and cooperation between the two sides. From April 22 to 26, 2024, ASEAN and China held the sixth round of negotiations on promoting the China-ASEAN Free Trade Area 3.0 version in Singapore. The two sides are vigorously promoting consultations in multiple fields such as the digital economy, green economy, and supply chain connectivity, demonstrating ASEAN's support and recognition for China's promotion of economic prosperity and development in the region.

## 5. Conclusion

The international community is in a period of historical transition. Emerging market countries such as China and India are constantly rising, while countries in the West such as the United States are relatively weakened, and the original international paradigm has changed. Located between Asia and Oceania, ASEAN connects the Pacific Ocean and the Indian Ocean and has important strategic significance for ensuring maritime and air routes. Therefore, ASEAN is one of the key areas for global competition in the future. The introduction of Japan's "Indo-Pacific Strategy" presents both opportunities and challenges for ASEAN countries. ASEAN can seize the opportunities brought by the

"Indo-Pacific Strategy". Through Japan's assistance in economic, technological and environmental fields, it can improve its own infrastructure construction, promote internal connectivity, and stimulate the vigorous economic development of various countries to promote the construction of the ASEAN community. The challenge lies in how ASEAN can master the "degree" of contact with Japan's "Indo-Pacific Strategy" to ensure that it can not only use external resources to promote its own development, but also continue to safeguard its own interests in major power competition and enhance its influence and status in international affairs. ASEAN can cooperate with areas in Japan's "Indo-Pacific Strategy" that are in line with its own interests and avoid the risks that may be brought by excessive dependence or being involved. China should adopt a pragmatic and flexible strategy to eliminate ASEAN's concerns about itself. China should be based on supporting ASEAN's central position and conduct all-round cooperation under ASEAN-led regional cooperation mechanisms such as the RCEP. When dealing with the South China Sea issue, it should be resolved through joint consultation, reject external forces from interfering in South China Sea affairs, properly manage South China Sea differences, jointly maintain a stable and peaceful regional environment, and jointly address regional security challenges.

#### **Acknowledgement**

This article is a phased achievement of the basic scientific research project of colleges and universities of the Liaoning Provincial Department of Education in 2024: "Research on the reconstruction of the regional security pattern under the security cooperation framework of the United States, Japan and South Korea and its impact on China (Number: LJ112410172017)".

#### **References**

- Anwar, D. F. (2020). Indonesia and the ASEAN outlook on the Indo-Pacific. *International Affairs*, 96(1), 111-129. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iiz223>
- ASEAN Main Portal. (2019). *ASEAN outlook on the Indo-Pacific*. Retrieved February 22, 2024, from [https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/ASEAN-Outlook-on-the-Indo-Pacific\\_FINAL\\_22062019.pdf](https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/ASEAN-Outlook-on-the-Indo-Pacific_FINAL_22062019.pdf)
- Association of Southeast Asian Nations. (2019, June 04). *ASEAN, Japan to strengthen ties*. Retrieved June 17, 2024, from <https://asean.org/asean-japan-to-strengthen-ties-2/>
- Bi, S. H. (2022). Japan's diplomacy towards ASEAN from the perspective of its "Indo-Pacific strategy". *East Asian Affairs*, 02(1). <https://doi.org/10.1142/S273755792250005X>
- Feng, Z. N. (2021). ASEAN's perception and response to the US "Indo-Pacific strategy". *Journal of the Party School of XPCPC of C.P.C.*, (1), 61-70.

- Gill, D. M. (2023). ASEAN outlook on the Indo-Pacific: Motivations, opportunities, and challenges. In *China and the Indo-Pacific: Maneuvers and manifestations*. London: Palgrave Macmillan. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-19-7521-9\\_5](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-19-7521-9_5)
- Government News Website of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. (2023, December 17). *Prime Minister attends ASEAN-Japan commemorative summit*. Retrieved June 22, 2024, from <https://en.baochinhphu.vn/prime-minister-attends-asean-japan-commemorative-summit-111231217163801673.htm>.
- Hanada, R. (2019). ASEAN's role in the Indo-Pacific: Rules-based order and regional integrity. German Marshall Fund, 2019(9).
- Hosoya, Y. C. (2019). FOIP 2.0: The evolution of Japan's free and open Indo-Pacific strategy. *Asia-Pacific Review*, 26(1). <https://doi.org/10.1080/13439006.2019.1622868>
- Indo-Pacific Defense Forum. (2019, November 11). *Japan plays prominent financing role in region's development, preservation*. Retrieved June 22, 2024, from <https://ipdefenseforum.com/2019/11/money-for-the-mekong/>
- Indo-Pacific Defense Forum. (2024, May 13). *Japanese-made radar bolsters Philippines' surveillance capabilities amid South China Sea tensions*. Retrieved June 05, 2024, from <https://ipdefenseforum.com/2024/05/japanese-made-radar-bolsters-philippines-surveillance-capabilities-amid-south-china-sea-tensions/>
- ISEAS - Yusof Ishak Institute. (2020). *The state of Southeast Asia: 2020 survey report*. Singapore: ISEAS. Retrieved June 22, 2024, from [https://www.iseas.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/pdfs/TheStateofSEASurveyReport\\_2020.pdf](https://www.iseas.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/pdfs/TheStateofSEASurveyReport_2020.pdf)
- Japan Ministry of Defense. (2016, November 16). *Vientiane vision: Japan's defense cooperation initiative with ASEAN*. Retrieved March 02, 2024, from [https://www.mod.go.jp/en/d\\_act/exc/vientianevision/index.html](https://www.mod.go.jp/en/d_act/exc/vientianevision/index.html)
- Koga, K. (2022). Strategising institutional arrangement in Japan's FOIP. In *The Indo-Pacific theatre strategic visions and frameworks*. London: Routledge India. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003342311-3>
- Le, T. H. (2018). *Southeast Asian perceptions of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue*. Australia: The Australian Strategic Policy Institute.
- Lee, J. (2018). *Trends in Southeast Asia: The "Free and open Indo-Pacific" and implications for ASEAN*. Singapore: ISEAS - Yusof Ishak Institute. <https://doi.org/10.1355/9789814818643>
- Li, K. S., & Xing, X. M. (2024). Analysis of Japan's policy of strengthening the maritime security capability of ASEAN countries and its influences. *Strategic Decision Research*, 15(02).

- Liu, A. M. (2020). ASEAN's perception and response to the U.S. Indo-Pacific strategy. *Southeast Asian Affairs*, (2), 15-27.
- Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry. (2023, August 22). *Final version of "ASEAN-Japan Economic Co-Creation Vision" and "Future Design and Action Plan" released*. Retrieved June 22, 2024, from [https://www.meti.go.jp/english/press/2023/0822\\_004.html](https://www.meti.go.jp/english/press/2023/0822_004.html)
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. (2013, October 09). *The sixteenth Japan-ASEAN summit 2013*. Retrieved March 01, 2024, from [https://www.mofa.go.jp/region/page3e\\_000108.html](https://www.mofa.go.jp/region/page3e_000108.html)
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. (2017, November 13). *Japan-ASEAN summit meeting*. Retrieved March 02, 2024, from [https://www.mofa.go.jp/a\\_o/rp/page3e\\_000791.html](https://www.mofa.go.jp/a_o/rp/page3e_000791.html)
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. (2023, April 13). *Japan-ASEAN integration fund*. Retrieved February 11, 2024, from [https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/area/asean/j\\_asean/jaif.html](https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/area/asean/j_asean/jaif.html)
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. (2023, December 17). *The commemorative summit for the 50th year of ASEAN-Japan friendship and cooperation*. Retrieved June 21, 2024, from [https://www.mofa.go.jp/a\\_o/rp/pageite\\_000001\\_00062.html](https://www.mofa.go.jp/a_o/rp/pageite_000001_00062.html)
- Prime Minister Office of Japan. (2023, December 17). *Implementation plan of the joint vision statement on ASEAN-Japan friendship*. Retrieved April 30, 2024, from <https://www.kantei.go.jp/cn/content/000140984.pdf>
- Prime Minister Office of Japan. (2023, December 23). *[Contribution by Prime Minister Kishida] Japan-ASEAN special summit: The future of the Indo-Pacific created together based on trust*. Retrieved February 06, 2024, from <https://japan-forward.com/japanese/156816/>
- Saha, P. (2018). *The QUAD in the Indo-Pacific: Why ASEAN remains cautious*. Observer Research Foundation.
- Shoji, T. (2021). "Belt and Road" vs. "Free and open Indo-Pacific": Competition over regional order and ASEAN's responses. National Institute for Defense Studies.
- Socialist Republic of Vietnam Government News. (2024, March 15). *Vietnam, Japan elevate ties to comprehensive strategic partnership*. Retrieved June 05, 2024, from <https://en.baochinhphu.vn/viet-nam-japan-elevate-ties-to-comprehensive-strategic-partnership-11123112721364056.htm>.
- Sudo, S. (2023). Japan's Indo-Pacific strategy and ASEAN: Collaboration or containment. In *ASEAN and regional actors in the Indo-Pacific*. Singapore: Springer Nature Singapore. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-99-4020-2>
- Suzuki, S. (2021). ASEAN's Indo-Pacific policy and the responses of Japan and China. The Japan Institute of International Affairs. Retrieved February 06, 2024, from <https://www.jiia.or.jp>

- Wei, Z. Y. (2019). "The centrality of ASEAN" from an Indo-Pacific perspective and challenges to U.S.-ASEAN relations. *Southeast Asian Affairs*, (3), 1-11.
- Wilkins, T. S. (2020). *Searching for a middle path: ASEAN and the "Indo Pacific"*. Japan: The Japan Institute for International Affairs. Retrieved February 22, 2024, from [https://www.jiia-jic.jp/en/policybrief/pdf/PolicyBrief\\_Wilkins\\_200211.pdf](https://www.jiia-jic.jp/en/policybrief/pdf/PolicyBrief_Wilkins_200211.pdf)
- Yuzawa, T. (2022). ASEAN's order strategy and Indo-Pacific concept. The Japan Institute of International Affairs. Retrieved February 20, 2024, from <https://www.jiia.or.jp>
- Zhang, T. F. (2023). Policy tools and dual logics of Japan's economic diplomacy towards Southeast Asia. *Pacific Journal*, 31(4).