

Pioneering Practices in Global Governance: Building an ASEAN-China Community with a Shared Future



**Research Center on Building
a Community with
a Shared Future for Humanity**

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FOREWORD

Wang Fan, Director, Research Center on Building a Community with a Shared Future for Humanity

The current international system is undergoing profound and complex transformation. The global balance of power is evolving at an accelerated pace, while geopolitical risks and transnational challenges are increasingly intertwined. Imbalanced development, governance failures, and trust deficits form a set of overlapping ‘symptoms of the times’. Unilateralism and protectionism are on the rise, placing additional pressure on global rules and multilateral institutions. These trends compel all parties to consider how to build governance arrangements that, in a world that is becoming increasingly multipolar and diverse, balance efficiency with fairness, national interests with common interests. This has become a core challenge facing both international relations scholarship and policy practice.

Against this backdrop, China has proposed building a community with a shared future for humanity and introduced the Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative, the Global Civilization Initiative, and the Global Governance Initiative. These initiatives advocate extensive consultation, joint contribution, and shared benefits, oppose zero-sum games and bloc confrontation, and emphasize bridging differences through dialogue and consultation, expanding common interests through win-win cooperation, and improving global and regional governance architectures through institutional innovation. This vision transcends conventional thinking in international relations and systematically responds to global governance deficits, providing a crucial perspective for observing the evolution of the international order.

In the active pursuit of building a community with a shared future for humanity and implementing the four major global initiatives, China-ASEAN relations hold a special position and carry special significance. China and ASEAN are linked by mountains and seas and have maintained longstanding exchanges. They are among one another’s most important partners and ASEAN is a priority in China’s neighbor-

hood diplomacy. Since the establishment of their dialogue partnership, the two sides have steadily pushed forward from a 'partnership for peace and prosperity' to a 'closer community with a shared future'. Within a framework where multilateral and bilateral mechanisms are intertwined, the two sides have continuously built political mutual trust, deepened the integration of interests, and broadened areas of cooperation, gradually forming a virtuous dynamic that combines structural interdependence with institutionalized interaction. China-ASEAN relations have thus become an important lens to observe the evolution of Asia's regional order and understand the collective rise of the Global South.

From the perspective of political and security governance, China and ASEAN, on the basis of mutual respect and equality, have strengthened policy communication and strategic alignment through the China-ASEAN Summit, the Foreign Ministers' Meetings, and multi-level dialogue and working mechanisms. They have accumulated experience that suits Asia in handling sensitive issues and managing differences. Addressing both traditional and non-traditional security challenges, the two sides have expanded cooperation in maritime affairs, combating transnational crime, public health security, disaster management, and other fields. Prioritizing dialogue and consultation, and supported by preventive diplomacy and confidence-building measures, they have explored a regional practice characterized by the vision of common, comprehensive, cooperative, and sustainable security. This approach provides institutional support for building a peaceful and tranquil shared home.

From the perspective of economic development and cooperation, China and ASEAN have continued to consolidate the material and institutional foundations for building a community with a shared future through enhanced rules alignment and mechanism upgrading. High-quality Belt and Road cooperation has been increasingly aligned with ASEAN development strategies and regional connectivity initiatives. The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) has further advanced Asia-Pacific economic integration. The upgraded China-ASEAN Free Trade Area Version 3.0 introduces a series of high-standard institutional arrangements in emerging fields such as digital economy, green development, supply chain cooperation, and support for small and medium-sized enterprises, marking a new leap in the level of economic cooperation. These developments provide strong support for fostering a large, integrated regional market and building an open world economy.

From the perspective of people-to-people exchanges and social connections, China and ASEAN increasingly recognize the importance of public support and social bonds in building a community with a shared future. Exchange mechanisms across

education, culture, tourism, media, youth, and think tanks have been continuously improved, with cultural mutual learning and social dialogue becoming more active. The China-ASEAN Year of People-to-People Exchanges has achieved the goal of ‘new activities every week and new highlights every month’, encouraging various sectors of society in China and ASEAN countries to break stereotypes and enhance mutual understanding, thus advancing the concept of ‘a community with a shared future’ from political documents to social awareness. Focusing on issues such as poverty reduction, sustainable development, health, ecological environment protection and climate change, the two sides have advanced policy exchange and capacity building through mechanisms combining South-South cooperation and multilateral cooperation, injecting new practical momentum into enhancing the inclusiveness and representativeness of global governance.

From the perspective of global governance, building a China-ASEAN community with a shared future holds multifaceted significance. First, it provides an example of how developing countries can enhance overall development capability and improve resilience against external impact through institutionalized cooperation. Second, it offers strong support for upholding the multilateral trading system and rejecting protectionism and economic bullying through an open and inclusive regionalism amid multipolar trends. Third, it offers important insights into how, in a world of diverse civilizations, dialogue and cooperation can advance mutual learning among civilizations and help avoid confrontation between ideologies and social systems. In this sense, China-ASEAN relations have transcended the traditional bilateral or ‘1+1’ cooperation, gradually evolving into a vital platform for promoting regional stability and shaping the global governance agenda.

In an era when international relations theory and practice are interacting in increasingly dynamic ways, building a China-ASEAN community with a shared future carries not only distinct practical significance but also rich theoretical implications. The vision of order and security reflected in security dialogue mechanisms and crisis management arrangements, the structural power dynamics embodied in economic connectivity and rule coordination, the shift in development perspectives underlying redistribution and inclusive growth, and the new practical experiences in people-to-people exchanges and social governance—all provide valuable material for deepening the study of global governance and enriching the knowledge production and international communication of building a community with a shared future with neighboring countries and a community with a shared future for humanity.

As a priority in China’s neighborhood diplomacy, China-ASEAN relations have

become an important testing ground and a successful model for building a community with a shared future for humanity and advancing global governance initiatives. In recent years, the two sides have continued to achieve substantive progress in cooperation across diverse domains. Dialogue and cooperation in security and governance have become increasingly institutionalized. The depth and breadth of economic and trade cooperation have continuously expanded. People-to-people and social connections have been further strengthened. Together, China and ASEAN have advanced the China-ASEAN community with a shared future from a conceptual consensus to the continuous accumulation of institutional arrangements and tangible outcomes, laying a solid foundation for building a closer China-ASEAN community with a shared future and contributing valuable experience with both Asian characteristics and global significance to the evolution of a more just and equitable global governance system.

Grounded in the aforementioned trends and practices, this report analyzes and explains the underlying logic, practical pathways, and contemporary significance of building a China-ASEAN community with a shared future. Through systematic review and in-depth assessment, it aims to provide the international community with an analytical lens that combines policy relevance and academic insight, thereby facilitating a deeper understanding of the current development of China-ASEAN relations and the future of global governance.

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Part I.
**China and ASEAN Forging
a New Paradigm of Regional
Cooperation**

What's "New" in China-ASEAN Security Cooperation?

Xu Liping, Fan Jiaqi

China and Southeast Asia have a long history of exchanges. Recent history saw both sides afflicted with ruthless exploitation by Western colonizers and fascist invasion during WWII. In the face of such difficulties, China and Southeast Asian countries upheld mutual assistance and fought together tenaciously, thus forging a deep friendship. After WWII, with progress in the independence of nation-states, China successively established diplomatic relations with Southeast Asian countries. Since the inception of the China-ASEAN dialogue process in 1991, China-ASEAN relations have achieved all-round development, which have already become the most vibrant relations in the Asia-Pacific. The two sides fully recognize that peace is the prerequisite for development, and that their greatest common interests lie there as well.

A New Paradigm for Regional Security Cooperation

Currently, China-ASEAN security cooperation is building a new paradigm for regional cooperation, which can be reflected in the following aspects.

First, China and ASEAN have built

effective dialogue mechanisms for political security at both the bilateral and multilateral levels. Generally, the leaders' meetings on East Asian cooperation have become a major platform for heads of state of China and ASEAN countries to conduct multilateral dialogues. Guided by close high-level interactions, China and ASEAN countries have carried out multilateral political security cooperation at all levels, with major dialogue and consultation mechanisms, including the China-ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting and the China-ASEAN Defense Ministers' Informal Meeting.

Bilaterally, China also maintains close interactions with ASEAN countries in political security, achieving multiple outcomes in mechanism-building. For instance, in 2023, the China-Indonesia Joint Foreign and Defense Ministerial Dialogue mechanism was officially established, which is the first foreign and defense ministerial dialogue mechanism established by China in the world. In April 2025, its First Ministerial Meeting was held in Beijing. Earlier that month, China also established foreign and defense ministerial dialogue mechanisms with Malaysia and Cambodia. Additionally, in December 2024, China and Vietnam established the "3+3" Dia-

logue on Diplomacy, National Defense, and Public Security. These demonstrate breakthroughs in bilateral cooperation in political security between China and ASEAN countries. Under the premise of supporting ASEAN centrality, China carries out sub-regional cooperation with ASEAN countries as well. A fine example is the Lancang-Mekong Cooperation mechanism, which is jointly built with five ASEAN countries under the advocacy of China.

Second, China-ASEAN consultations on a code of conduct in the South China Sea (COC) are steadily moving forward. The South China Sea serves as a key international channel for transporting commodities as well as an important fishing area. It provides the people along the coast with resources that they can rely on to make a living. Upholding peace and stability in the South China Sea is the shared aspiration of the people in the region. However, due to the instigation and manipulation of some countries outside of the region, recent years have witnessed the escalation of the South China Sea issue. In both bilateral and multilateral occasions, China and ASEAN countries have been advocating the full implementation of the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC) and the conclusion and signing of the COC as early as possible. Despite frequent interference from outside the region and disturbance resulting from internal political developments of

countries within the region, the momentum to safeguard stability in the South China Sea remains strong overall, and the conclusion and adoption of the COC are promising.

Third, China-ASEAN cooperation has achieved remarkable outcomes in the field of non-traditional security. Since the beginning of the 21st century, globalization has advanced profoundly, while an accompanying side-effect is the surging non-traditional security issues in the world. Due to geographical proximity and close personnel exchanges between China and ASEAN, the two sides are both confronted with serious non-traditional security issues. This not only poses severe obstacles to the stable operation of the economies and societies of countries, but is also quite difficult to solve due to its covert and transnational nature. China and ASEAN have carried out cooperation in various fields to jointly address non-traditional security issues. In terms of natural disasters, problems such as typhoons, floods, and earthquakes frequently haunt China and ASEAN countries. Moreover, the geographical proximity between the two sides makes the social problems arising from natural disasters cross-border. For instance, the Lancang-Mekong area has long been confronted with droughts and floods. To tackle this problem, China and ASEAN have established ministerial meetings on disaster management for coordination. China often provides funds, technolo-

gies, personnel, etc., to support ASEAN's disaster management authorities as well. In terms of the prevention and control of telecommunication (telecom) crimes, cross-border telecom fraud has brought heavy property losses to countries in the region. Cross-border telecom crimes are hard to track, and the scam sites are mostly at the country borders. Therefore, international cooperation becomes a must. For this purpose, in 2024, China and ASEAN issued the Joint Statement on Combating Telecommunication Network Fraud and Online Gambling, demonstrating the shared determination to defend the interests of the people in the region.

A Vivid Practice of the Global Governance Initiative

China-ASEAN security cooperation is a vivid practice of the Global Governance Initiative (GGI). China has been upholding mutual respect and non-interference in each other's internal affairs in its cooperation with ASEAN, which reflects the principle of sovereign equality in the GGI. In both bilateral and multilateral cooperation, China not only positively promotes institution building, but also upholds extensive consultation, joint contribution, and shared benefit in the building process. For instance, traditional security cooperation between China and ASEAN emphasizes both regular dialogue mechanisms and consensus-based decision-making, which re-

flects the principles of international rule of law and multilateralism in the GGI. Besides, in international cooperation, China places the needs of the people first. For instance, in the governance of illegal migration in the Lancang-Mekong area, the Lancang-Mekong Cooperation mechanism, advocated by China, pays more attention to protecting the rights and interests of the people compared with other mechanisms. It upholds that all actions should be beneficial to the people, which highlights the principles of the people-centered approach and real results in the GGI.

Generally, current China-ASEAN security cooperation shows stark differences with cooperation between Southeast Asia and other international actors in the past. During the colonial era, most of Southeast Asia directly became part of the suzerain in terms of internal administration, while being completely dependent on the foreign policies of the suzerain externally. During the Cold War, although Southeast Asian countries were nominally independent, the bipolar pattern and tense regional situation still had a negative impact on their strategic choices. Be it the colonial era or the Cold War, security cooperation of Southeast Asian countries was all restricted by the "core-periphery" structure, while the current China-ASEAN security cooperation has completely broken away from it. The cooperation model of China has been widely welcomed by ASEAN coun-

tries. Judging from the practical effect, China-ASEAN security cooperation has also provided important support for the economic and trade cooperation between the two sides.

In the future, China and ASEAN will stay committed to expanding such a new paradigm for regional cooperation. In 2021, at the Special Summit to Commemorate the 30th Anniversary of China-ASEAN Dialogue Relations, General Secretary Xi Jinping proposed that the two sides should build “a peaceful, safe and secure, prosperous, beautiful, and amicable home” together, further outlining the direction for China-ASEAN political security cooperation. The year 2026 will witness the 5th anniversary of the China-ASEAN Comprehensive Strategic Partnership. With the further improvement of productivity and social living standards in all countries, China-ASEAN political security cooperation will embrace more opportunities. There is extensive space for cooperation in areas such as the governance of emerging technologies like artificial intelligence, biosecurity governance, and climate change governance. In the landscape of accelerating transformation unseen in a century, China-ASEAN regional cooperation will also provide experience for Global South cooperation and become a major component of an equal and orderly multipolar world.

the National Institute of International Strategy and director of Southeast Asia Research Center of Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, and a doctoral student in the School of International Politics and Economics of the University of Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.

The Common Development Centered Around People

Chen Lijun, Yuan Chunsheng

Economic Integration and Connectivity: Innovative Practices for Building a Prosperous Home

Development underpins both security and civilization. Only when all countries achieve prosperity and progress can peace endure and civilizations advance. China and ASEAN, closely aligning with the region's development needs, have taken deepened regional economic integration as the core, infrastructure connectivity as the key link, and innovation in digital economy cooperation as a breakthrough area. Through institutional opening up, infrastructure connectivity, and digital empowerment, the two sides are jointly shaping a development landscape that is "mutually beneficial, diversified and balanced, secure and efficient."

First, upgrading free trade areas and harmonizing rules have advanced the region's institutional opening up to a new level. Institutional innovation is the foundation of high-level opening up. In May 2025, China and ASEAN will have fully completed negotiations on Version 3.0 China-ASEAN Free Trade Area (CAFTA 3.0). The further reduction of tariffs, removal of barriers, and simplification of customs procedures mark a transition in

bilateral economic and trade cooperation from traditional, factor-based openness to a new stage of modern, institutional opening up. CAFTA 3.0 incorporates the Global Development Initiative into the cooperation framework, focusing on frontier areas such as the digital economy, green economy, and supply chain connectivity. It introduces modernized rules on cross-border data flow, mutual recognition of green trade standards, and conformity assessment procedures for the first time, and establishes eight priority cooperation areas including green trade, investment, and standards. Through mutual recognition of standards and technical regulations, small and medium-sized economies can share the dividends of institutional opening up. This will guide regional economic cooperation toward greater openness, inclusiveness, and shared benefits.

More than three years since the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) came into force, member countries have forged closer and deeper cooperation across industrial and supply chains. China's trade in goods with partner countries has consistently accounted for over 30% of total trade. The high-quality Belt and Road cooperation has taken root in ASEAN member

countries, where numerous projects have been completed and are delivering tangible benefits. They have generated tax revenues, created jobs, and promoted local development, bringing real gains to the people.

China, together with Indonesia and other countries, launched the *Initiative of International Cooperation on Resilient and Stable Industrial and Supply Chains*, fostering an inclusive regional partnership in the sectors. The two-way advancement of China-ASEAN economic and trade cooperation has significantly enhanced regional trade and investment ties, gradually forming a deeply interdependent and mutually reinforcing network of industrial and supply chains. This has unleashed new momentum for regional economic integration and offered a new paradigm of “consultation, joint contribution, and shared benefits” for regional and even global economic governance.

Second, infrastructure connectivity has woven a golden network for regional development. Landmark projects such as the China-Laos Railway and the Jakarta-Bandung High-Speed Railway have turned the vision of transforming “natural barriers into thoroughfares” and “landlocked countries into land-linked countries” into reality, benefiting both China and ASEAN member countries and improving people’s livelihoods. The rail-sea intermodal trains of the New International Land-Sea Trade Corridor now reach 577 ports in 127 coun-

tries and regions around the world. The cross-border transport network of the China-Laos Railway already covers 19 countries including Laos, Thailand, Singapore, and Bangladesh, and handles over 3,300 types of goods. This has significantly boosted China-ASEAN trade, tourism, and regional cooperation. The Jakarta-Bandung High-Speed Railway has shortened travel time between Jakarta and Bandung from three hours to just 40 minutes, greatly facilitating travel and stimulating development along the route in commerce, industry, and tourism. It has also supported key projects such as the “Two Countries, Twin Parks” initiative and the “Regional Comprehensive Economic Corridor,” further expanding space for in-depth bilateral cooperation. Strengthening “hard connectivity” in land, sea, air, and digital infrastructure and improving port throughput capacity across ASEAN member countries have dramatically increased logistics, personnel, capital, and information flows, and further deepened China-ASEAN economic integration. The mutually beneficial partnership between the two sides continues to reach new heights.

Third, digital economy and innovation cooperation have energized new drivers of regional development. Productive forces determine productive relations, and the emergence of new quality productive forces driven by digital innovation has become an important opportunity for regional industrial transformation and up-

grading. China and ASEAN have focused on developing new cooperation highlights in areas such as digital infrastructure, smart cities, 5G, artificial intelligence (AI), cross-border e-commerce, big data, and blockchain. ASEAN's release of the *ASEAN Community Vision 2045* and the joint launch of the *ASEAN Economic Community Strategic Plan 2026-2030* by Malaysia and the ASEAN Secretariat are expected to unleash ASEAN's development potential and help it become the world's fourth-largest economy.

ASEAN attaches great importance to aligning its digital policies with those of China. In 2019, both sides issued the *China-ASEAN Leaders' Statement on Smart City Cooperation Initiative*. In 2021, they signed the *China-ASEAN Digital Economy Partnership Initiative*, and the same year, the *ASEAN Digital Masterplan 2025* was adopted at the ASEAN Digital Ministers' Meeting. In 2024, China and ASEAN jointly signed the *ASEAN-China Joint Statement on Facilitating Cooperation in Building a Sustainable and Inclusive Digital Ecosystem* and the *ASEAN-China Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Cooperation in Communications, Digital and Technology for 2024-2029*. During the China-ASEAN Expo and the China-ASEAN Business and Investment Summit held in September this year, the two sides announced the establishment of the China-ASEAN Business Council Artificial Intelligence Committee and issued the *Nanning Initiative on China-ASEAN In-*

dustrial Cooperation in Artificial Intelligence. These efforts have strengthened the alignment of development strategies and promoted digital economy cooperation between China and ASEAN. In the future, China and ASEAN will use big data and AI as bridges to build cross-border "intelligent chains" in fields such as smart cities, smart manufacturing, and smart agriculture, sharing the dividends of new quality productive forces.

Green Transition and Ecological Co-governance: Eastern Wisdom for Building a Beautiful Home

China and ASEAN share the belief that "lucid waters and lush mountains are invaluable assets," regarding it as a common pursuit for sustainable development. Through cooperation in clean energy, green agriculture, and regional ecological connectivity, both sides aim to build a robust regional ecological security barrier.

First, clean energy cooperation has created a demonstration of the green engine. A series of clean energy projects undertaken by Chinese enterprises in ASEAN member countries have become models of China-ASEAN energy cooperation, embodying the principle of building a "green growth engine" and jointly advancing global green and low-carbon transition. Projects such as the 55-MW Lumut Balai Unit 2 geothermal power plant and Thailand's Ubon Ratchathani floating solar farm, the ecological pro-

tection of Laos' Nam Ngum 5 hydroelectricity project, and the photovoltaic project of the northern interconnected clean energy base (Phase II) exemplify innovative practices in China-ASEAN green development. Looking ahead, the two sides will deepen cooperation under frameworks such as the *Framework for Circular Economy for the ASEAN Economic Community*, the *ASEAN Strategy for Carbon Neutrality*, the *ASEAN Plan of Action for Energy Cooperation (APAEC)*, and the green provisions of RCEP, to continuously ensure energy security and jointly build a "Green ASEAN" for sustainable, resilient, and inclusive regional economic integration.

Second, green agriculture development has paved an innovative path toward low-carbon transformation. Green agriculture is the optimal approach to achieving the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. China's technological expertise and experience in ecological and organic agriculture, combined with ASEAN's favorable ecological environment, create vast potential for cooperation in green crop cultivation, certification, standards setting, and trade. The *China-ASEAN Action Plan on Green Agricultural Development* covers eight areas, including soil health management and biodiversity conservation. Documents such as the *China-ASEAN Joint Statement on Deepening Agricultural Cooperation* and the *China-ASEAN Action Plan on Green Agricultural Development*

(2023-2027) emphasize deepening mutually beneficial cooperation through new concepts, ideas, and measures, promoting a transition toward green, circular, low-carbon, and resilient agriculture via technological collaboration and mutual recognition of standards.

As a result, an increasing number of projects promoting sustainable agricultural practices are being implemented. China has established five agricultural experiment stations in Vietnam, Myanmar, Laos, Indonesia, and Cambodia. In Vietnam's Mekong Delta, a low-carbon rice pilot project uses alternate wetting and drying irrigation technology to increase yields and reduce carbon dioxide emissions. In Thailand, contract farming links producers with overseas markets, forming a green premium mechanism. Green agricultural development helps reconcile food security and ecological protection, allowing agricultural progress to benefit the people and fostering a virtuous cycle between regional economic growth and ecological home construction.

Third, joint ecological protection cooperation has safeguarded regional ecological security. China and ASEAN countries share several international rivers and are situated in key global biodiversity areas. Jointly strengthening ecological protection and governance to build a regional ecological security barrier and promote sustainable economic and social development is a shared responsibility and mu-

tual interest. Through policy dialogues on environmental protection, the establishment of the ASEAN-China Environmental Cooperation Forum as a standing mechanism, and the creation of cooperation platforms for ecological governance, both sides are building an ecological community with a shared future.

China and ASEAN also enhance multilateral coordination to address climate change, co-hosting the China-ASEAN Environmental Cooperation Forum, promoting joint efforts in pollution control and biodiversity protection, and expanding cooperation on the use of digital and green technologies for environmental monitoring, early warning, and carbon reduction. They have jointly developed and implemented policy documents and initiatives such as the *ASEAN-China Strategy on Environmental Cooperation*, the *ASEAN-China Environmental Cooperation Strategy and Action Plan (2021-2025)*, and the *ASEAN-China Green Value Chain Partnership (GVCP)*. Both sides are now working on the new *Framework of ASEAN-China Environmental Cooperation Strategy and Action Plan (2021-2025)*. At the China-ASEAN Expo, a Climate Change and Ecological Environment Forum has been established, and under the Lancang-Mekong Cooperation Mechanism, projects such as the *Lancang-Mekong Environmental Cooperation Strategy and Action Framework (2023-2027)*, the “Green Lancang-Mekong Initiative,” and the “Lancang-Mekong Sweet Spring Ac-

tion” have been launched to jointly address transboundary ecological security challenges.

These initiatives are turning the vision of a “beautiful home” into reality through concrete action, by safeguarding regional ecological security, improving joint responses to climate and environmental challenges, and enhancing the influence and discourse power of regional environmental protection.

People-to-People Connectivity and Mutual Learning Among Civilizations: The Human Bond for Building a Amicable Homel

China and ASEAN take people-to-people exchanges as a bridge, fostering vitality in cooperation through civil interactions, cultural exchanges, educational cooperation, and youth engagement. These multifaceted initiatives deepen friendship and strengthen the shared sense of a community with a shared future. By advancing mutual learning among civilizations, China and ASEAN cultivate a cultural symbiosis characterized by mutual inclusiveness, thus injecting lasting dynamism into the region’s pluralistic civilizational development.

First, establishing regular mechanisms for civil exchanges and friendly interactions. People-to-people exchanges are the “capillaries” that connect public sentiment between nations. China and ASEAN countries have signed numerous friendship and cooperation agreements,

with hundreds of Chinese provinces and cities forming sister-city relationships with their ASEAN counterparts. Long-term initiatives such as “sister schools” and “friendly communities” have promoted enduring local engagement. Chinese youth volunteers have participated in small-scale projects in ASEAN countries, offering medical aid, poverty alleviation, and rural development services. These quiet yet powerful actions have helped nurture friendship at the grassroots level and embed it deeply in people’s hearts.

The 2024 China International Friendship Cities Conference held in Kunming issued the Kunming Initiative, calling on friendship cities and local governments worldwide to strengthen unity, mutual assistance, and cooperation. It also saw the establishment of two new sister-city partnerships between Lincang, Yunnan, and Kep Province, Cambodia, as well as between Yuanjiang County, Yuxi, Yunnan, and Vang Vieng County, Vientiane Province, Laos. In 2025, the 14th Conference on ASEAN-China People to People Friendship Organizations released the *Nanning Initiative*, which advocated for deepening urban friendship exchanges, enhancing city-level economic cooperation, and promoting mutual understanding among peoples. The successful implementation of “small yet beautiful” China-ASEAN people-to-people projects has turned the vision of a “amicable home” from an abstract idea into a

tangible lived experience, laying a solid foundation of public support for the China-ASEAN community with a shared future.

Second, promoting cultural exchange to advance mutual learning among civilizations. Culture serves as the carrier of civilization, and cultural exchange is the spiritual bond of an amicable home. Rooted in the fine traditional Chinese culture, the Global Civilization Initiative advocates respect for the diversity of world civilizations, offering Chinese wisdom for global coexistence. The civilization model represented by Chinese modernization has transcended that of Western capitalism. ASEAN member countries strongly identify with this vision of civilizational diversity, actively upholding Asian values of peace, cooperation, openness, and inclusiveness. Through dialogue, ASEAN and China encourage different civilizations within the region to understand, inspire, and learn from one another, pursuing the ideal of appreciating others’ beauty and achieving harmony in diversity.

Although theories such as “hegemonic stability” and “clash of civilizations” remain prevalent in international discourse, China and ASEAN adhere to the principles of mutual learning, openness, and cooperation. Upholding civilizational equality, dialogue, and inclusiveness, they use exchange to transcend estrangement, learning to transcend conflict, and inclusiveness to transcend superiority.

Extensive exchanges in education, sports, arts, science and technology, academia, healthcare, tourism, think tanks, media, and religion have infused cultural vitality into the building of an amicable home.

The joint endeavor of China and ASEAN to build a “prosperous home,” a “beautiful home,” and an “amicable home” represents a vivid regional practice of the community with a shared future for humanity. Both sides are writing a new chapter in the China-ASEAN community with a shared future through concrete actions. They have become a model of regional cooperation under this global vision and contributing to the creation of a world that is “peaceful, secure, prosperous, open, inclusive, clean, and beautiful.”

Author: Vice President and Senior Research Fellow of the Yunnan Academy of Social Sciences; Deputy Director of the Institute of Thai Studies, Yunnan Academy of Social Sciences.



Part II.
**The Driving Forces for
Building a China-ASEAN
Community with a Shared
Future**

ASEAN's Governance Approach: Strategic Autonomy and Regional Centrality

Zhai Kun and Wang Lina*

Amid the profound transformations unseen in a century and the intensifying major-power competition, ASEAN member countries have demonstrated remarkable strategic composure. They refuse to take sides, remain committed to unity and self-strengthening, and take regional centrality as an institutional pathway to advance their fundamental goal of strategic autonomy. This approach is highly in line with China's Global Governance Initiative (GGI). Through high-standard strategic coordination, both sides not only deepen the building of a community with a shared future, but also pioneer a new model in which sovereign states achieve autonomous development, shape an inclusive regional order, and contribute to global governance.

Regional Centrality as the Driving Force of ASEAN's Strategic Autonomy

Since its establishment in 1967, ASEAN has regarded strategic autonomy as the fundamental goal of its survival and development. In response to post-Cold War power restructuring and intensified major-power rivalry, ASEAN has creatively adopted regional centrality as its

institutional pathway, forming a unique model of regional governance.

ASEAN leads multilateral mechanisms to maintain dominance in norm formulation. ASEAN has been the principal architect of multilateral cooperation mechanisms in East Asia since the Cold War. From spearheading the establishment of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) in 1994 to launching the more strategically oriented East Asia Summit (EAS) in 2005, and then to the ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting Plus (ADMM-Plus) and ASEAN Plus Three (APT), ASEAN has firmly held core powers over agenda-setting, membership admission, and norm formulation. This "small horse pulling a large cart" model, which driven by ASEAN and participated by major powers, is the most direct institutional manifestation of its centrality. Furthermore, ASEAN is committed to being a provider of normative frameworks. Anchored in the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC), ASEAN has developed a set of behavioral norms widely accepted by both regional and non-regional powers. By opening TAC to accession by non-regional countries, ASEAN has significantly enhanced its voice in regional rule-making, marking a crucial shift from "excluding major pow-

ers” to “incorporating and constraining major powers” in order to preserve its autonomy.

ASEAN practices a strategy of non-alignment to balance major-power influence. First, it incorporates rather than excludes. ASEAN proactively brings all key actors, including China and the United States, into ASEAN-led mechanisms such as the EAS and ARF. The aim is to prevent antagonism that might arise from excluding any party. Second, it maintains equidistant engagement. ASEAN sustains broadly balanced diplomatic relations with major powers to avoid excessive dependence on, or provocation toward, any single actor. As former Malaysian Foreign Minister Syed Hamid Albar observed, equidistance will consolidate neutrality and the non-aligned regional policy, which will encourage and solidify the withdrawal of major powers from Southeast Asian affairs. This is a succinct articulation of ASEAN’s art of balance. Third, it constrains behavior through norms. By leveraging the ASEAN Way of consensus and the principles of the TAC, ASEAN guides, and at times restrains, major-power conduct in the region, thereby reducing risks of conflict. Supporting ASEAN centrality has become a “passport” through which major powers demonstrate cooperative intent and obtain regional legitimacy. Fourth, it leads agenda-setting and serves as a hub for crisis management. Through dense multilateral platforms such as annual

leaders’ summits and foreign ministers’ meetings, ASEAN steers regional discussions toward ASEAN-prioritized topics including connectivity, non-traditional security, and sustainable development. On regional flashpoints, ASEAN functions as the primary venue for dialogue and consultation, positioning itself as the central coordinator for crisis management.

ASEAN focuses on building resilience and regional order to advance strategic autonomy. First, it safeguards survival through neutrality. Marked by the 1971 Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality Declaration (ZOPFAN), excluding great-power interference and avoiding entanglement in conflicts constituted ASEAN’s initial motive and core commitment in constructing its centrality framework. Despite the evolution of its connotation from passive exclusivity to proactive inclusiveness, non-alignment remains essential to sustaining the credibility of ASEAN centrality. Vietnam’s “Four Nos” policy (no partaking in military alliances, no siding with one country to act against another, no foreign military bases in the Vietnamese territory or using Viet Nam as leverage to counteract other countries, and no using force or threatening to use force in international relations) and repeated statements by leaders across the region reflect adherence to the principle of neutrality, which is also the prerequisite for maintaining regional centrality. Second, it strengthens

foundations through resilience-building. ASEAN deepens economic integration and advances community-building to enhance its overall capacity and cohesion, reduce external dependence and vulnerabilities, and reinforce internal resilience. At the same time, ASEAN pursues economic diversification and expands engagement with Europe, the Middle East, and other external economic partners, promoting a diversified network of strategic partnerships and enhancing external resilience. Third, it broadens strategic space through order-shaping initiatives. ASEAN introduced the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP), advocating an order vision grounded in openness, inclusiveness, dialogue, and cooperation. By upgrading ties with middle powers such as South Korea, Australia, and India, and by attracting African and Latin American states to accede to the TAC (such as South Africa and Colombia in 2020), ASEAN extends its centrality into a broader Global South centrality.

ASEAN-China Community with a Shared Future Empowers ASEAN's Governance Practice

During his visit to Southeast Asia, President Xi Jinping underscored the need to strengthen high-level and high-standard strategic coordination with relevant countries to reinforce strategic mutual trust. The strategic partnership between China and ASEAN has moved beyond the confines of traditional bilat-

eral cooperation and has evolved into a systematic collaborative mechanism that empowers ASEAN's pursuit of strategic autonomy and regional centrality. China not only respects and reinforces ASEAN's core role in regional governance but also provides essential support for achieving its governance objectives.

China and ASEAN, through cultural and cognitive strategic coordination, provide value-based legitimacy for aligning their governance approaches. First, China and ASEAN promote the mechanisms of civilizational dialogue. During President Xi Jinping's visit to Southeast Asia in April 2025, China and Malaysia agreed to advance Confucian-Islamic civilizational dialogue and establish interfaith dialogue platforms, translating Asia's values of peace, cooperation, openness, and inclusiveness into actionable mechanisms; China and Cambodia jointly launched the International Day for Dialogue among Civilizations and established the Asian Cultural Heritage Alliance, thereby asserting cultural autonomy through Asian standards in heritage protection and restoration. Second, China and ASEAN strengthen the autonomy of knowledge production. The "Red Study Tour" jointly carried out by China and Vietnam cultivates youth identity through shared historical memory between the two parties, forming a soft defensive line against Western ideological penetration. The establishment of the China-Malaysia International Institute for Advanced

Studies and the China-Cambodia collaboration on Luban Workshop vocational programs contribute to an autonomous system of knowledge production. Third, China and ASEAN advance the facilitation of people-to-people linkages. China and Cambodia implemented the “Lancang-Mekong Visa”; China and Malaysia realized full mutual visa exemption; China introduced an “ASEAN visa” scheme for Southeast Asian countries, issuing five-year multiple-entry visas for eligible business travelers and other personnel, thus creating a cross-border facilitation network. Through multilayered cooperation, China and ASEAN strengthen civilizational subjectivity and reinforce the theoretical foundations for their governance approaches.

China and ASEAN, through strategic coordination in the security domain, provide institutional support for deep inter-embedding of their governance architectures. First, China and ASEAN promote the mechanisms of high-level dialogue. China and Cambodia have implemented a “2+2” foreign and defense ministers’ mechanism; China and Vietnam have elevated the “3+3” strategic dialogue among their foreign affairs, defense, and public security ministries to the ministerial level; China-Malaysia and China-Indonesia have established their respective “2+2” consultation platforms. These mechanisms translate leaders’ consensus into routine policy formulation and implementation. Second, China

and ASEAN systematize security cooperation. China-ASEAN security cooperation extends beyond traditional military domains and aims to develop a multidimensional network. Examples include enhanced cooperation between China and Vietnam across defense, public security, judiciary, and prosecutorial institutions; deepened joint exercises, mutual visits, and personnel training between China and Malaysia; and expanded collaboration between China and Cambodia in new areas such as combating online gambling, disaster prevention, and emergency response. Third, China and ASEAN promote the mechanisms multilateral coordination. China firmly upholds ASEAN’s central role in regional cooperation, actively advances the integration of the Lancang-Mekong Cooperation framework and the “Five Homes” initiatives with the ASEAN community building, and accelerates substantive consultations on the *Code of Conduct in the South China Sea*. Through a series of high-standard institutional arrangements, China and ASEAN achieve deep institutional alignment in their governance architectures.

China and ASEAN, through economic and technological strategic coordination, provide material support for the practice of their governance models. Their cooperation on development rights focuses on building an autonomous and sustainable economic foundation, with core support embodied in deep coordi-

nation across industrial chains, financial architecture, and rule-making. First, industrial and technological collaboration. Projects such as the China-Cambodia Industrial Development Corridor and the Fish-Rice Corridor, the alignment of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area with Vietnam's "Two Corridors and One Economic Circle," and the upgrading of the China-Malaysia "Two Countries, Two Parks" initiative have created cross-border industrial closed loops, optimizing regional resource allocation through spatial linkage. Joint efforts such as the China-Malaysia AI and New Materials Laboratory, the China-Vietnam standard-gauge railway project, and China-Malaysia cooperation on semiconductors all contribute to reducing technological path dependence and elevating the region's industrial positioning. Second, reshaping the regional financial architecture. China and Cambodia, Vietnam, and others continue expanding bilateral local-currency settlement and facilitate ASEAN financial institutions' access to China's RMB cross-border payment system. China and Vietnam are exploring cross-border QR code interoperability and the expansion of local-currency settlement to enhance resilience against financial risks. These innovations in regional financial infrastructure offer feasible pathways to mitigate dollar-cycle risk and strengthen monetary autonomy. Third, development-oriented rule innovation. Focusing on core interests of de-

veloping countries, China and ASEAN jointly advance high-standard implementation of Version 3.0 of the China-ASEAN Free Trade Area and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP). By establishing new institutional arrangements aligned with regional realities, they enable greater capability to shape development trajectories.

ASEAN, with regional centrality as the institutional engine for strategic autonomy, has not only ensured long-term peace in Southeast Asia but also fostered political, economic, and social stability and prosperity through constructive interaction with all stakeholders. In its cooperation with ASEAN, China promotes civilizational dialogue, security coordination, and development integration to shape a successful model of a neighborhood community of a shared future. It demonstrates that countries with different systems and sizes can build an equal and mutually beneficial symbiotic relationship. Also, this experience offers a new paradigm for global governance and provides a feasible pathway for promoting a more just and equitable global governance system and advancing the building of a community with a shared future for humanity.

Authors: professor at the School of International Studies and deputy director of the Institute of Area Studies, Peking University; lecturer at the Department of Diplomacy and Foreign Affairs Management, China Foreign Affairs University

The Shared Vision between ASEAN and China in Building a Community

Ge Hongliang, Deputy Dean, College of ASEAN Studies, Guangxi Minzu University

In October 2013, China reviewed China-ASEAN relations through the lens of the ‘Community with a Shared Future for Humanity’ concept and formally proposed jointly building a China-ASEAN community with a shared future. For over a decade, this initiative has served as a key guiding principle for China’s dialogue, exchanges, and cooperation with ASEAN, fostering remarkable achievements in political security, economic and trade cooperation, and people-to-people exchanges. Meanwhile, the development of this community has been profoundly influenced by the interplay between regional dynamics and global transformation in recent years. However, dialectically speaking, these changes have become the driving forces behind the building of a China-ASEAN community with a shared future.

ASEAN’s View of China and China’s View of ASEAN

From the perspective of ideas and perceptions, the key impetus for building a China-ASEAN community with a shared future primarily stems from two aspects: first, the growing mutual trust and sup-

port between China and ASEAN; second, the high degree of consensus between China and ASEAN on regional community building, regional governance, and regional integration.

The mutual trust and support between China and ASEAN form the prerequisite and foundation for building a China-ASEAN community with a shared future. ASEAN’s perception of China changed significantly after the 1997 Asian financial crisis, when China’s concrete actions during the crisis led ASEAN countries to recognize China as a responsible and supportive partner. Entering the new century, ASEAN has increasingly viewed China’s development as an opportunity, regarding China as a constructive force for maintaining regional security and balance. In the meantime, China has increasingly viewed ASEAN as the ‘steering force’ of regional cooperation and the organizer and coordinator of the ASEAN Plus Three cooperation, showing growing interest in ASEAN and the regional multilateralism it champions. The establishment of the China-ASEAN Strategic Partnership in 2003 marked a new height in political mutual trust between the two sides. In 2013, the joint statement on commemorating the 10th Anniversary of the China-ASEAN Strategic

Partnership reaffirmed mutual political support. China reiterated its continued support for ASEAN's community building, connectivity, solidarity, and ASEAN's leading role in the evolving regional architecture, while ASEAN emphasized that China's development presented an important opportunity for the region and that ASEAN supported China's peaceful development. To this day, ASEAN's view of China and China's view of ASEAN remain the perceptual foundation for the joint endeavor to build a China-ASEAN community with a shared future.

Regional multilateralism and regional integration have served as the key vehicles for these shared perceptions, and have been manifested in the building of a community. The idea of the ASEAN Community emerged shortly after the 1997 Asian financial crisis. The ASEAN Vision 2020 first outlined this vision, and the Bali Concord II in 2003 officially established the ASEAN Political Security Community, ASEAN Economic Community, and ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community as the 'three pillars' of the ASEAN Community. In 2007, the ASEAN Charter provided a comprehensive set of institutions and mechanisms to support the development of the ASEAN Community.

The ASEAN Political Security Community aims to foster shared identity and strengthen solidarity among member states through institutional development, while seeking to expand dialogue plat-

forms and enhance ASEAN centrality in regional and international forums. The ASEAN Economic Community seeks to establish a common market and production base to promote regional economic restructuring and upgrading, building a competitive regional economy, and integrating into the global economic system. The ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community focuses on achieving solidarity, stability, and unity among ASEAN peoples and countries, shaping a shared identity and building a caring, sharing, inclusive, and harmonious society.

Following the establishment of the ASEAN Community in 2015, ASEAN successively proposed ASEAN Vision 2025 and ASEAN Vision 2045, updating the content of the 'three pillars' in line with the times and introducing the strategic blueprint for ASEAN connectivity. China, recognizing that 'a united, prosperous, and dynamic ASEAN aligns with China's strategic interests', has continued to support ASEAN's central role in the regional multilateral framework, and has supported the ASEAN Community and its connectivity initiatives through concrete actions. China launched the Lancang-Mekong Cooperation with countries in the region, actively supported subregional and micro-regional cooperation such as the Indonesia-Malaysia-Singapore Growth Triangle, and proposed to align the high-quality Belt and Road cooperation with the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific and the

Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity. As ASEAN Secretary-General Kao Kim Hourn noted in an interview, ASEAN and China indeed share a common future and need joint efforts to safeguard regional peace, achieve prosperity, and promote governance.

Cooperation Upgrading as a Fundamental Driving Force

The continuous advancement and upgrading of dialogue and cooperation between China and ASEAN serve as the fundamental driving force for building a China-ASEAN community with a shared future.

On the one hand, the proposal to jointly build a China-ASEAN community with a shared future is the natural outcome of the development of bilateral relations. From the establishment of dialogue relations in 1991 to the 2013 proposal of building this community, China and ASEAN had progressed through the three political phases of consultation relationship, full dialogue partnership, and strategic partnership. In the field of economic and trade exchanges, bilateral trade volume expanded rapidly. By 2012, it reached USD 400.1 billion, 7.3 times the figure in 2002, and the China-ASEAN Free Trade Area was also established in 2010. In the field of security cooperation, the two sides jointly established multilateral mechanisms such as the ASEAN Regional Forum and signed a series of important documents, including

the Joint Declaration on Cooperation in Non-Traditional Security Issues (2002), the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC, 2002), the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (2003), and the Guidelines for the Implementation of the DOC (2011). Facing non-traditional security threats, including financial crises, tsunamis, and earthquakes, China and ASEAN supported each other through thick and thin. The continuous advancement of bilateral relations gave rise to the concept of building a China-ASEAN community with a shared future.

On the other hand, the upgraded dialogue and cooperation between China and ASEAN form the most important driving force for continuously advancing a China-ASEAN community with a shared future. Following the proposal to build a China-ASEAN community with a shared future and promote high-quality Belt and Road cooperation, dialogue and cooperation between China and ASEAN countries have developed in an all-dimensional, multi-tiered and all-sectoral manner. This upgrading has become a key driving force for the comprehensive development and maturing of bilateral relations. Centered on the 'three pillars' of political security, economic cooperation, and people-to-people exchanges, China and ASEAN adopted the China-ASEAN Strategic Partnership Vision 2030, elevated their relationship to a comprehensive strategic partnership in 2021, main-

tained each other as their largest trading partners since 2020, signed the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, and achieved continuous upgrades of the China-ASEAN Free Trade Area from 1.0 to 3.0. As leaders from both sides have observed, the China-ASEAN partnership has been enhanced both in quantity and quality, laying the foundation for building a closer China-ASEAN community with a shared future and becoming a model of regional cooperation.

**Facing Global Transformations:
Advancing Continuous Optimization
of the China-ASEAN Community with a
Shared Future**

The accelerating evolution of ‘profound global changes unseen in a century’, particularly the deep interaction between regional dynamics and global transformations, propels both sides to continuously better build the community with a shared future.

The world is undergoing accelerated transformation, while China’s neighborhood landscape is characterized by rapid changes, increased uncertainties, and rising risks and challenges. Against this backdrop, building a China-ASEAN community with a shared future must naturally keep pace with the times by achieving further optimization in both its substance and development pathways. The broad consensus between China and ASEAN in the face of such transformations provides a solid foundation for

this optimization.

As fellow emerging market economies and members of the Global South, China and ASEAN countries now share a strong consensus on upholding multilateralism, defending fairness and justice, and opposing protectionism and hegemonism. They hold aligned views on advancing regional economic integration and deepening globalization reforms, share the same perspectives on improving regional and global governance, and have similar aspirations for creating new growth drivers and transforming development momentum through ‘Industry 4.0’ and the new technological revolution. On this basis, the evolution of the pathway for building the China-ASEAN community with a shared future from the ‘three pillars’ framework to the ‘Five Homes’ vision has become a natural progression. On November 22, 2021, at the summit commemorating the 30th anniversary of China-ASEAN dialogue relations, President Xi Jinping proposed to build a peaceful, safe and secure, prosperous, beautiful, and amicable home together. This proposal was warmly received, appreciated, and valued by ASEAN member states. In 2022, both sides signed the Joint Statement on Strengthening Common and Sustainable Development, further underscoring the strategic significance of the China-ASEAN partnership and injecting lasting momentum into building the China-ASEAN community with a shared future.

“China-ASEAN+”, A New Exploration in Global Governance

Zhu Feng, Xu Qianang

The convening of the 2025 China-ASEAN-GCC Summit marks a new stage in cooperation, moving from the ASEAN-centered “ASEAN+” mechanism to a cross-regional cooperation model of “China-ASEAN+”, with China and ASEAN as the main partners and open to the world. In an era of insufficient global public goods and obstructed North-South dialogue, this model not only provides an inclusive development path for the Global South but also offers a new institutional paradigm for building an open, equitable, and win-win global governance system.

“China-ASEAN+” from Concept to Practice

The history of cooperation between China and ASEAN reflects the continuous deepening of their relationship, from mutual trust to synergy, and from bilateral to multilateral. In 1991, China initiated dialogue with ASEAN. In 2003, China established a strategic partnership with ASEAN. As an ASEAN dialogue partner, China was among the first to accede to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia, officially launching the China-ASEAN Free Trade Area

(FTA). The FTA was fully established as scheduled in 2010. This was the first time China had established a free trade area with a regional economy primarily composed of developing countries. During this phase, both sides gradually built trust and dispelled doubts, moving from “good neighborliness and mutual trust” to a strategic partnership.

In 2013, Chinese President Xi Jinping delivered a speech at the Indonesian Parliament, proposing to jointly build a closer China-ASEAN community with a shared future. Subsequently, China-ASEAN relations entered a “diamond decade” from a “golden decade”, with both sides completing negotiations on an upgraded version of the Free Trade Area 2.0 and establishing a comprehensive strategic partnership. In 2022, the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) officially came into effect.

With the establishment of a “comprehensive strategic partnership” in 2021 as a new strategic starting point, cooperation between China and ASEAN entered its third phase. Its core characteristic is a shift from bilateral relations to a new phase of “cross-regional co-construction” with both sides as a common axis, linking third-party regional organizations. The successful hosting of the first Chi-

na-ASEAN-GCC Summit in 2025 marks the transformation of “China-ASEAN+” from concept to practice.

Unlike the previous ASEAN+ mechanism, which was led by ASEAN and aimed to link multiple dialogue partners, “China-ASEAN+” emphasizes China and ASEAN as a mature and highly coordinated “cooperative whole”, jointly building an equal, open, and inclusive cooperation network globally. This is not only an expansion of the scale of cooperation but also an elevation of its nature, revealing the continuous deepening of the core driving force of a community with a shared future and the updating of its infrastructure.

Actively Filling the Vacuum in Global Governance

The formation of the “China-ASEAN+” cooperation model is the result of multiple internal and external factors. From the perspective of its dynamic structure, its foundation includes both the ability and willingness of both sides to deepen cooperation and the evolution of the international landscape.

First, the “China-ASEAN+” cooperation model has stable institutional support. At the 2023 Central Conference on Foreign Affairs, China established “promoting global governance based on consultation, joint contribution, and shared benefits” as the path to building a community with a shared future for humanity. This is highly consistent with the

“ASEAN Way”, which emphasizes mutual respect, consensus-building, and consideration for the comfort of all parties. In promoting cross-regional cooperation and global governance, the fundamental concepts and top-level designs of both sides are compatible, providing stable institutional support for cross-regional expansion.

Economically, in 2024, the bilateral trade between China and ASEAN reached US\$982.3 billion, more than double that of 2013. The two sides have been each other’s largest trading partners for five consecutive years. Between 2019 and 2024, trade between China and ASEAN showed strong two-way growth. ASEAN’s exports of metals, agricultural products, and resource-based products to China generally increased by more than 50%, with steel and non-ferrous metals showing particularly significant growth. During the same period, China’s exports of manufactured goods such as machinery, electronics, and chemicals to ASEAN also grew by more than 70%, demonstrating a high degree of industrial complementarity. Driven by both the Free Trade Area and the RCEP, China and ASEAN are working together to transform a market accounting for a quarter of the global market into a more dynamic growth pole. The core of this cooperation paradigm lies in its spillover effect—the incremental opportunities it creates are destined to benefit a wider range of regions and partners, injecting confidence

into cross-regional cooperation.

Second, shared concepts and values strengthen the willingness to cooperate.

Faced with a global landscape of political confrontation and value divergence, both China and ASEAN adhere to the core principles of inclusive multilateralism, development priority, and win-win cooperation. This shared vision stems from both sides' similar development experiences and social structures, and reflects their common value choice to resist hegemonic politics and zero-sum thinking. In May 2025, ASEAN released its "Vision 2045", a foreign policy that places greater emphasis on an "outward-looking" approach, explicitly stating its commitment to addressing the complex geopolitical and socio-economic environment in the Indo-Pacific and beyond. In August, China released the "Action Plan for the China-ASEAN Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (2026-2030)", supporting ASEAN's Indo-Pacific Vision in relevant areas and strengthening strategic mutual trust and mutually beneficial cooperation among regional countries, guided by the purposes and principles of the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia.

Third, changes in the international landscape provide a historic opportunity for cooperation. Currently, the global governance system faces a crisis of overlapping deficits in peace, development, security, trust, and governance. The "transactional diplomacy" and geopoliti-

cal alliances pursued by the US and the West have weakened the stability of multilateral mechanisms. Against this backdrop, China and ASEAN's promotion of non-exclusive institutional cooperation through the community of shared future initiative is a positive step in filling this global governance vacuum. At the same time, the rise of anti-globalization and the restructuring of global supply chains pose a risk of "islanding" to traditional regional cooperation. Against this backdrop, the "China-ASEAN+" framework aims to connect different regional organizations and economies, achieving not only in-depth development from "hard connectivity" in infrastructure to "soft connectivity" in rules and standards, but also building a cross-regional "coordinated connectivity", thereby effectively addressing increasing global pressures with an open and inclusive networked structure.

Fourth, external pressures are forcing regional countries to maintain their strategic autonomy. Unilateralism, isolationism, and intensified geopolitical competition have forced ASEAN countries to seek collective security and development support. In April 2025, the US announced a plan for reciprocal tariffs on its global trading partners, with Southeast Asian countries becoming the hardest hit. Tariffs on goods imported from Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, and Myanmar to the US all exceeded 40%. Building on this foundation, the US-led

Indo-Pacific Strategy, along with its instigation of the Quad (US-Japan-India-Australia Quadrilateral Security Dialogue), the AUKUS (US-UK-Australia Trilateral Security Partnership), and other smaller multilateral mechanisms such as the US-Australia-Japan-Philippines, has further weakened ASEAN's central role in the Indo-Pacific region and increased regional strategic uncertainty by courting and dividing ASEAN member states.

Against this backdrop, China and ASEAN, through deepening the building of a community of shared future, have formed a non-confrontational institutional self-protection mechanism to maintain regional strategic stability and policy autonomy. Furthermore, the multipolarization of the international system and the collective rise of the Southern countries have given China-ASEAN cooperation broader international moral legitimacy. It is not merely a passive response to external risks, but a strategic choice to actively participate in shaping global institutions.

The formation and expansion of the China-ASEAN community of shared future stems from the coupling of two driving forces: subjectively, China and ASEAN are "able" to cooperate and "willing" to jointly build a community, reflecting the endogenous logic of economic strength, institutional compatibility, and value resonance. Objectively, the global governance crisis and anti-globalization pressures have both "prompted" both sides to deepen cooperation and, to some

extent, "forced" them to form institutional linkages. It is this interaction between "subjective ability and willingness" and "objective opportunity and urgency" that shapes the driving force behind the China-ASEAN community of shared future.

A Model of Institutional Innovation

The significance of the "China-ASEAN+" model lies not only in the deepening of regional cooperation, but also in providing a scalable institutional innovation for contemporary global governance. Faced with the profound reshaping of the global landscape and the weakening of the multilateral system, it demonstrates strong vitality and institutional creativity, with inclusive cooperation and a development-oriented approach at its core.

First, the "decentralized" cooperation model provides a scalable paradigm for global cross-regional cooperation. The value of "China-ASEAN+" lies in breaking through geographical limitations, using development as a link and openness as a principle to form a cooperation framework that can be flexibly integrated with other regional mechanisms. For example, "China-ASEAN+African Union" can cooperate in areas such as infrastructure connectivity, agricultural modernization, and digital inclusive finance; "China-ASEAN+Pacific Islands Forum" can focus on climate change and ocean governance; "China-ASEAN+ League of Arab States" can strengthen energy transition and production capacity coopera-


tion; and “China-ASEAN+CELAC” can promote manufacturing upgrading and green investment. This model, based on the principles of consultation, joint contribution, and shared benefits, emphasizes equality among partners and coordinated development, providing a systemic model for the Global South that transcends traditional geopolitical divisions.

Second, the institutionalized practice of the concept of a community with a shared future injects new momentum into global governance. The “China-ASEAN+” model is a concrete practice of the concept of a community with a shared future for humanity at the regional level. Guided by mutual trust, centered on development, and driven by cooperation, it constructs a practical system of consultation, joint contribution, and shared benefits. By promoting open, inclusive, balanced, and universally beneficial development cooperation, it demonstrates a people-centered development philosophy and embodies the values of “a global family” and “harmony and coexistence”. This practice is both a response to unilateralism and hegemonic politics and a positive exploration of the democratization and equalization of international relations.

Third, it builds a globally oriented cooperation platform, promoting exchanges and co-governance between North and South countries. At a time when North-South dialogue is hampered and

geopolitical barriers are rising, the “China-ASEAN+” mechanism constructs a multilateral platform focused on development and transcending geopolitical competition. This platform, focusing on functional collaboration and mitigating ideological differences, aims to foster consensus on issues such as the digital economy, green transformation, and supply chain stability. By establishing permanent dialogue channels, a collaborative project database, and capacity-building initiatives, the platform provides space for pragmatic cooperation among participants from different political systems and stages of development, driving North-South relations from competition to win-win outcomes, and from dialogue to collaborative governance.

The authors are respectively the Dean of the School of International Studies at Nanjing University, and a Research Assistant at Center for Collaborative Studies of the South China Sea.



Part III.
**The Global Significance and
Contemporary Value of
China-ASEAN Practice**

Injecting Strong Confidence into South-South Cooperation

Song Qingrun, Professor, School of Asian Studies, Beijing Foreign Studies University

President Xi Jinping solemnly proposed the Global Governance Initiative, contributing Chinese wisdom and solutions to address global governance challenges. China is the world's largest developing country, while ASEAN is the most important regional organization in East Asia, with most of its member states also being developing countries. ASEAN represents a key priority direction in China's neighborhood diplomacy and a vital region for high-quality Belt and Road cooperation. Under the strategic guidance of leaders from both sides, China and ASEAN have deepened practical cooperation across various fields. Their collaboration has transcended the scope of mere bilateral or regional cooperation, evolving into a 'testing ground' and a 'successful model' for implementing the Global Governance Initiative. Through tangible achievements, the two sides have consolidated the foundation of the China-ASEAN community with a shared future, and through their outstanding practice of 'South-South cooperation', contributed a new narrative and new pathway that transcends the 'clash of civilizations', injecting positive

momentum into the reform of the global governance system.

A Convincing Regional Model of Governance

The Global Governance Initiative re-centers 'development' in global governance, advocating an inclusive, interconnected, and sustainable governance model. Situated at the crossroads of the Asia-Pacific, ASEAN is characterized by cultural diversity and varied levels of development. The integration process within ASEAN and the East Asian cooperation process spearheaded by ASEAN itself represent complex challenges in regional governance. China regards ASEAN as a priority in its neighborhood diplomacy and a key region for high-quality Belt and Road cooperation. The increasingly closer China-ASEAN community with a shared future precisely embodies the core essence of the Global Governance Initiative.

A model of 'extensive consultation': equality, mutual respect, and consensus-building.

China was the first major country to sign the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC) and the first to endorse 'ASEAN Centrality'. This commitment has been consistently upheld

in mechanisms such as East Asia cooperation and the Lancang-Mekong Cooperation. This signifies that China has always positioned itself as a supporter and partner in ASEAN's integration process, rather than a leader or competitor. The advancement of all cooperation agendas between China and ASEAN strictly adheres to the ASEAN-led 'ASEAN Way', which seeks the greatest common denominator through consultation and consensus.

China and ASEAN have jointly formulated multiple declarations and rules concerning regional development and stability through equal and consultative means. From the Joint Declaration on the China-ASEAN Strategic Partnership for Peace and Prosperity and its Plan of Action (2021–2025), to the consultations on the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea, and the conclusion of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, China has consistently engaged in friendly consultations with ASEAN countries, jointly formulating regional development plans and rules on an equal footing. Although this consensus-based decision-making process may take time, its outcomes carry greater legitimacy, sustainability, and inclusiveness.

A model of 'joint contribution': pragmatic cooperation and connectivity.

'Joint contribution' in China-ASEAN cooperation is manifested in the comprehensive connectivity development in

both hard and soft infrastructure, with the Belt and Road Initiative serving as the primary platform. Landmark connectivity projects such as the China-Laos Railway, the Jakarta-Bandung High-Speed Railway, and the New International Land-Sea Trade Corridor have been completed or advanced, greatly improving regional transport and logistics conditions and transforming geographical proximity into economic integration advantages.

China and ASEAN have strengthened standard alignment and policy coordination in areas including customs, inspection and quarantine, and trade facilitation. For instance, customs clearance facilitation projects like the China-Vietnam Smart Port have been completed or advanced, greatly facilitating bilateral trade and people-to-people exchanges. The entry into force of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), jointly participated in by ASEAN and China among others, has established the world's largest free trade area. Through unified tariff commitments, rules of origin, trade and investment liberalization and facilitation measures, as well as other trade rules, the RCEP has harmonized 27 trade arrangements and 44 investment agreements among member states within the region. It substantially reduces institutional transaction costs, effectively advances the multilateral trading system, safeguards production and supply chains, and establishes a high-standard model for regional and

global ‘soft connectivity’.

Through human resources development cooperation, technology transfer, scholarship programs, and other initiatives, China has cultivated tens of thousands of professionals across various fields for ASEAN countries. This model of ‘teaching people to fish rather than just giving them fish’ has strengthened the endogenous momentum for independent development in ASEAN nations, solidifying the foundation of our cooperation. Likewise, the ASEAN countries have also trained a large number of professionals for China. Both sides have cultivated a large number of professionals familiar with each other’s countries, continuously enhancing people-to-people connectivity, strengthening development capabilities, and accelerating the development of bilateral cooperation.

Such all-round, multi-layered ‘joint construction’ between China and ASEAN has not only elevated their respective development capacities and cooperation levels while driving regional economic growth, but also fostered shared interests and a sense of responsibility through joint actions.

A model of ‘shared benefits’: development dividends and a shared destiny.

The ultimate goal of international cooperation is for the people to share the fruits of development. The ‘sharing’ feature of China-ASEAN cooperation is particularly remarkable. In trade, bilateral trade volume has repeatedly reached

record highs, with China maintaining its position as ASEAN’s largest trading partner for 16 consecutive years, and ASEAN as China’s largest trading partner for 5 consecutive years. As of September this year, the China-ASEAN Expo has been held for the 22nd time, and in October, the China-ASEAN Free Trade Area 3.0 Upgrade Protocol was signed, heralding even brighter trade prospects. In investment and engineering projects, cumulative investment between China and ASEAN had exceeded US\$450 billion as of July this year, while Chinese enterprises had completed engineering contracting projects worth US\$480 billion in ASEAN. ASEAN’s agricultural products, tropical fruits, and electronic goods have entered the Chinese market in large quantities, while China’s high-quality goods and capital have met the development needs of ASEAN countries. The deeply intertwined industrial and supply chains have created a mutually beneficial relationship where ‘everyone’s interests are closely entwined’. Numerous enterprises and citizens have benefited from the bilateral economic and trade cooperation.

In public health, during the COVID-19 pandemic, China provided substantial vaccines and medical supplies to ASEAN countries, held multiple video conferences on pandemic prevention and control experiences, and established the China-ASEAN Vaccine Friends platform. In poverty reduction, China’s ex-

perience has taken root in ASEAN countries through initiatives like the East Asia Poverty Reduction Cooperation Pilot Project. Under the Lancang-Mekong Cooperation framework, China has strongly supported Myanmar and other countries in their poverty reduction efforts. In addressing climate change, both sides have jointly advanced green and low-carbon transition, expanding cooperation in clean energy, electric vehicles, and other areas. The provision of these non-exclusive public goods embodies the true spirit of a community with a shared future.

Through sustained dialogue and cooperation, particularly consultations on the Code of Conduct in the South China Sea, China and ASEAN countries are committed to building the South China Sea into a sea of peace, friendship, and cooperation. The overall peace and stability of the region represent the most valuable strategic dividend shared by both sides.

All these demonstrate that China-ASEAN cooperation provides the most vivid and convincing regional model for the Global Governance Initiative.

Providing Strong Momentum for Global Governance Reform

The global significance of China-ASEAN cooperation also lies in its success in breaking the theoretical constraints of Western-centricism, offering a new narrative and a strong reforming impetus for the future of global governance.

For a long time, Western theories such

as the ‘clash of civilizations’ have propagated a pessimistic narrative that countries of different civilizations and systems are inevitably heading toward confrontation. However, the cooperation between China and ASEAN demonstrates that countries of different civilizations, different social systems, and different levels of development can achieve common prosperity through equal dialogue and mutually beneficial cooperation.

China, cradle of Chinese civilization, and ASEAN, home to diverse cultural traditions including Confucianism, Buddhism, and Islam, have long maintained respect toward each other and have jointly written a remarkable chapter of exchanges and mutual learning among civilizations. The development of China-ASEAN relations is rooted in shared aspirations for development and a better life. This approach of ‘harmony without uniformity’ and ‘coexistence in diversity’ offers the world a more constructive and people-centred narrative for international relations.

The successful China-ASEAN cooperation exerts powerful demonstration and spillover effects.

China-ASEAN cooperation consistently focuses on the central theme of ‘development’. Whether in infrastructure construction or industrial capacity cooperation, the fundamental objective is to advance industrialization, urbanization, and modernization. It encourages the global governance system to pay greater

attention to the real needs of developing countries, channeling more resources toward pragmatic areas such as poverty reduction and infrastructure development.

The conclusion of the RCEP marks a landmark event in China and ASEAN jointly leading the establishment of regional economic rules. It demonstrates that developing countries have the capacity to establish a set of high-standard economic and trade rules that better align with their own interests and are more inclusive, thereby promoting global economic governance toward greater fairness and balance.

In the face of unilateralism and protectionism, and amid setbacks to global multilateralism, China and ASEAN have consistently stood together to uphold the UN-centred international system and the international order based on international law, to advance multilateral cooperation, and especially to deepen the development of East Asian cooperation. This solidarity and collaboration have injected valuable stability and certainty into multilateral cooperation at a time of turbulence.

China-ASEAN Cooperation Addresses Key Challenges Facing Global Governance

Zha Wen, Professor, Institute of International Relations, China Foreign Affairs University

The current global governance system, standing at a historic crossroads, is undergoing profound transformations. Traditional multilateral cooperation mechanisms face severe challenges. Unilateralism and protectionist tendencies are on the rise, eroding the foundation of international mutual trust. Geopolitical conflicts are frequent, and the outdated zero-sum mindset still persists, casting a shadow over the themes of the times of peace and development. In addressing transnational challenges such as climate change, public health crises, digital governance, and economic recovery, the existing governance architecture has exposed structural shortcomings, including inadequate representation, weakened effectiveness, and insufficient provision of public goods. Rule-making is often dominated by a small number of countries, failing to fully reflect the demands and interests of the vast majority of developing countries. This has led to increasingly pronounced ‘deficits’ and ‘imbalances’ in global governance.

Amid this global conundrum, the international community urgently calls

for new, pragmatic approaches to break the deadlock. These should neither be mere patchwork fixes to the old system nor a reincarnation of power politics. Instead, they must constitute a new cooperation paradigm grounded in equality and mutual benefit, focused on shared development, and committed to collaborative innovation. For instance, how can the contest over rule-making power be resolved? How can the center-periphery framework be reset? Can development and security be reconciled? The collaboration between China and ASEAN countries, which has advanced hand in hand and against significant challenges, has answered many of these profound questions confronting global governance reform with its remarkable achievements and unique model. It has contributed invaluable Eastern wisdom and innovative public goods to the evolving global governance system.

Three Key Insights for Global Governance

China-ASEAN multilateral regional cooperation is not a simple replication of Western models. Rooted in Asian culture, it emphasizes pragmatism, a development-first orientation, and autonomy. This approach precisely addresses the

common challenges and core demands of developing countries in their processes of modernization and regional cooperation, offering at least three key insights for Global South participation in global governance.

The first insight that China-ASEAN cooperation brings to global governance is prioritizing the right to development and transcending ideological divides. The global governance system has long been shaped by agendas dominated by developed countries, which often tie political values, human rights, and other issues to development aid. China-ASEAN cooperation is premised not on identical political systems, but on a shared aspiration for development. From tariff reductions under the RCEP to coordinated industrial chain development, the cooperation consistently centers on the fundamental truth of creating wealth and improving people's livelihoods.

China-ASEAN collaboration empowers the Global South to collectively reshape the global governance agenda. It demonstrates that developing countries have the right to place development at the center of their international engagement and to confidently demand that the global governance system pay greater attention to substantive issues such as poverty reduction, industrialization, and debt relief. The China-ASEAN model encourages developing countries to unite, avoid being instrumentalized in geopolitical games, and jointly call for a

fairer and development-focused global economic order.

The second insight China-ASEAN cooperation brings to global governance is replacing procedural inertia with effective governance. When developing countries uncritically replicate Western multilateral models, they often fall into governance deadlocks of discussion without decision and decision without action, causing development opportunities to slip away during protracted negotiations. China-ASEAN cooperation emphasizes pragmatism, prioritizing the preferences and practical needs of participating countries over the pursuit of formally perfect legal texts. For developing countries, an ordinary but affordable meal is much preferable to an ideal banquet that is out of reach. China-ASEAN cooperation addresses the pain points of traditional global governance mechanisms, particularly the sluggish response to developing countries' concerns and the tendency to offer empty promises. It demonstrates that in global governance, especially regarding the core interests of Global South countries such as development financing, infrastructure construction, and technology transfer, the ultimate measure of governance effectiveness must be whether projects are implemented and whether people's livelihoods are improved. This pragmatic spirit represents the most fundamental respect for the development rights of developing countries.

The third insight China-ASEAN cooperation brings to global governance is replacing dependency with autonomous development and connectivity. Historically, developing countries often fell into one-sided dependency on central countries. China-ASEAN cooperation, however, emphasizes development empowerment and joint system-building. Through a deep alignment between the Belt and Road Initiative and ASEAN connectivity plans, both sides jointly forge ‘hard connectivity’ of infrastructure and ‘soft connectivity’ of industrial coordination and regulatory standards. For instance, the construction of the Jakarta-Bandung High-Speed Railway not only provided Indonesia with a modern railway but also catalyzed comprehensive upgrades in local engineering technology, operational management, and supporting industries. The China-Malaysia ‘Two Countries, Twin Parks’ project pioneers a new model of seamless cross-border industrial and supply chain integration, propelling ASEAN countries deeper into the mid-to-high segments of global value chains. China-ASEAN cooperation exemplifies an approach of ‘teaching people to fish rather than just giving them fish’ to global development cooperation, demonstrating that effective global governance should empower developing countries to cultivate their endogenous capacity for self-sustaining growth. What China-ASEAN cooperation builds is not a collection of isolated proj-

ects, but a self-driving and self-upgrading development ecosystem.

A Profound Awakening of Rule Consciousness

In the realm of global governance, the power to set rules and standards has long been viewed as the core of power struggles and has often been dominated by a handful of developed countries, creating insurmountable institutional barriers for developing countries. China-ASEAN cooperation, however, has transcended the dichotomy of merely following or fighting against the existing rules, pioneering a new model of collaborative innovation. It demonstrates that the evolution of global rules should not stem solely from power dynamics but rather from the resonance and integration of development needs. The collaborative innovation of China-ASEAN rules and standards returns rules to their fundamental purpose of serving development. RCEP Cumulative Rules of Origin, by lowering thresholds, integrating production, and facilitating trade and investment, has elevated East Asia and Southeast Asia from mere trading partners to a production community. This provides fresh institutional momentum for regional economic integration and the restructuring of global supply chains, while challenging the simple logic that ‘the higher and stricter the rules, the better’. It demonstrates that effective global rules must be inclusive and capable of accommodating countries

of varying sizes and development stages, rather than a one-size-fits-all straitjacket. Rules should serve as tools to promote development, not as rods to punish late-comers.

Negotiations for the China-ASEAN Free Trade Area 3.0 have now been concluded. This new version focuses on jointly creating rules, and it incorporates nine new chapters covering areas including digital economy, green economy, and supply chain connectivity, rather than merely tariff reductions and trade facilitation. Particularly in emerging domains such as the digital economy, where China stands as the world's second-largest digital economy and ASEAN is among the fastest-growing digital economies globally, and where a global regulatory framework is still largely undeveloped, China and ASEAN have not waited for or fully adopted predetermined standards from any single party, nor have they copied Western models. Instead, on the basis of shared needs and with a flexible and pragmatic attitude, China and ASEAN are exploring differentiated regulatory approaches tailored to data types and specific scenarios, seeking to balance efficiency and security. This is a regional initiative for jointly creating rules with a global outlook.

The most profound value of China-ASEAN rule coordination lies in its marking the transformation of Global South countries from passive recipients to active co-creators of global rules,

achieving a profound awakening of rule consciousness. This return to subjectivity is the fundamental driving force for making the global governance system more democratic and equitable. It encourages developing countries in regions like Africa and Latin America to move beyond being mere rule-takers and become co-designers of the rules.

Developing a New Model of Mutual Reinforcement Between Development and Security

China-ASEAN cooperation, with its unique model of positive interaction between development and security and its institutionalized dialogue and consultation mechanisms, offers a regional practice model worthy of in-depth study for the current global governance system that undergoes profound changes. Traditional governance models often treat economic development and security issues separately, undermining the sustainability of governance outcomes. China-ASEAN cooperation, however, achieves synergistic gains through systematic arrangements, creating a virtuous circle in which development promotes security and security safeguards development. This virtuous interaction is fully embodied in the Lancang-Mekong Cooperation mechanisms, where collaborative efforts in combating transnational crimes and maintaining the safety of shipping lanes have provided essential guarantees for sustainable development. By jointly envi-

sioning peace, tranquility, prosperity, and beauty for the region, it unifies development and security.

In managing differences, China and ASEAN have established mature and stable dialogue and consultation mechanisms, providing valuable experience for conflict resolution in global governance. Through multi-tiered dialogue frameworks such as the China-ASEAN Summit and Foreign Ministers' Meeting, both sides have ensured unimpeded communication channels. Particularly on the sensitive South China Sea issue, all parties have adhered to advancing the Code of Conduct in the South China Sea through consultation, demonstrating a firm commitment to settling disputes peacefully through institutionalized dialogues. This culture of dialogue is not confined to official channels, but is also deepened through Track II avenues such as think tank forums and people-to-people exchanges, thereby forming a comprehensive, multi-level dialogue network. Among all major countries, China is the one that has consistently respected ASEAN's centrality in the regional architecture, upheld the purposes and principles of the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia, and supported ASEAN's efforts to maintain the Southeast Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone through concrete actions. This approach of treating large and small countries equally embodies the true spirit of multilateralism.

The practice of China-ASEAN coop-

eration offers significant insights for reforming the global governance system. It demonstrates that the virtuous cycle between development and security can effectively address complex governance challenges; it shows the superiority of dialogue and consultation over confrontation in resolving differences; and it evidences the feasibility of equitable cooperation among countries with different development levels and social systems. Against the backdrop of rising unilateralism and protectionism globally, China and ASEAN, by upholding the principles of openness, inclusiveness, and mutual benefit in their cooperation, have not only safeguarded regional stability and prosperity but also offered an 'Asian approach' that the global governance system can draw upon to improve its functioning.

In summary, the China-ASEAN cooperation model demonstrates that regional governance based on equal consultation, common security, and shared development can provide a practical foundation for building a more just and equitable governance system. As the China-ASEAN Comprehensive Strategic Partnership continues to deepen, this cooperation model will remain an important reference for the cooperation and modernization processes among Global South countries.

Insights for Building Communities with Shared Future with Other Regions

Liu Qing, Vice President and Senior research fellow at China Institute of International Studies

The concept of a community with shared future for humanity serves as an Eastern proposal for overcoming global governance dilemmas and addressing common human challenges. It must be transformed into real driving force through solid regional practices. The China-ASEAN experience in advancing the building of a community with shared future has crystallized a model of win-win cooperation and shared destiny. This experience not only injects strong intellectual momentum into deepening regional integration, but also offers useful references for building communities with shared future between China and other regions. Also, it provides timely insights for improving global governance and promoting the building of a community with shared future for humanity.

Four Core Experiences of Greatest Value

The vitality of the China-ASEAN community with shared future lies in its rejection of the old mindset of zero-sum competition and winner-takes-all logic. It has established a new cooperation framework grounded in mutual respect,

win-win cooperation, mutual assistance, and inclusiveness and mutual learning, which constitute four core experiences of greatest value.

Mutual respect is the foundation of cooperation. Its essence lies in the thorough practice of sovereign equality and non-interference in internal affairs. Unlike regional cooperation frameworks in which major powers dominate the agenda, China has always regarded ASEAN as an equal partner, ensures equal consultation throughout the entire process of cooperation. Whether in the insistence on the principle of consensus in the consultation on the “Code of Conduct in the South China Sea,” or in formulating the *ASEAN-China Comprehensive Strategic Partnership* and aligning with the *ASEAN Community Vision 2045*, the “ASEAN perspective” is fully embodied. Such equality is not symbolic. Instead, it translates into tangible consideration for the interests of smaller states. For instance, in the negotiations on the Version 3.0 China-ASEAN Free Trade Area (CAFTA) upgrade, faced with ASEAN’s less-developed members’ concerns over difficulties in harmonizing technical standards, China did not impose uniform rules but instead established special funds to support the development of local certification systems.

In infrastructure cooperation, China respects local environmental standards and cultural customs. It is precisely this posture of conducting equal dialogue rather than adopting a patronizing attitude that enables ASEAN member countries of different sizes and development levels to forge cooperation consensus. Through their own vivid practices, China and ASEAN have demonstrated that “all countries, big or small, are equal.”

Win-win cooperation is the engine of cooperation. The key lies in building a cooperative ecosystem that shares benefits and distributes risks jointly. China and ASEAN do not confine cooperation to a single sector but extend it across all areas, creating multidimensional and mutually reinforcing linkages. In trade, tariff-reduction measures raised bilateral trade volume from USD 54.8 billion in 2002 to nearly USD 1 trillion in 2024, with both sides remaining each other's largest trading partner for five consecutive years. In infrastructure, the China-Laos Railway and the Jakarta-Bandung High-Speed Railway have not only opened regional logistics arteries but also boosted local employment and industrial upgrading. In livelihood, the “China-ASEAN Health Shield” initiative has shared public-health expertise, while the “Luban Workshops” have trained tens of thousands of skilled workers in ASEAN member countries. In security, both sides have institutionalized strategic communication and expanded coopera-

tion in joint training, personnel training, peacekeeping, counterterrorism, and disaster relief. This cooperation does not pursue unilateral gains but achieves mutual benefit through reciprocal efforts.

Mutual assistance is the underlying tone of cooperation. It is rooted in emotional resonance of heart-to-heart connection and standing side by side through thick and thin. The two sides have consistently stood together in times of difficulty, converting crises into drivers of cooperation and forming a unique response mechanism that reinforces mutual trust. During the 1997 Asian financial crisis and the 2008 global financial crisis, both sides leveraged leaders' meetings, foreign ministers' meetings, and other mechanisms to strengthen policy communication and jointly safeguard regional stability and development. During the COVID-19 pandemic, China overcame logistical disruptions to donate protective supplies to ASEAN and to maintain the normal functioning of regional cooperation platforms. After the 2025 Myanmar earthquake, the Secretariat of the China-ASEAN Expo swiftly initiated assistance, dispatching medicines and essential supplies to disaster-stricken areas, exemplifying the “pauk-phaw” friendship through concrete action. In the face of trade coercion and unilateralist shocks, China and ASEAN pressed ahead against headwinds, signing the ASEAN-China Free Trade Area (ACFTA) 3.0 Upgrade Protocol, shifting from tar-

iff reduction to institutional openness. It has strengthened the resilience of regional industrial and supply chains, and built an economic safety net amid anti-globalization trends.

Inclusiveness and mutual learning constitute the broader vision of cooperation. The key lies in seeking common ground while shelving differences and learning from each other. Despite differences in history, culture, political systems, and development stages among China and the 11 ASEAN members, the two sides transcend ideological divides, refrain from imposing their own preferences on others, and respect each other's chosen development paths. They have been respecting and embracing each other. They have moved beyond developmental gaps, learning from each other in practice and continuously improving the quality of cooperation. China and ASEAN consistently reject "exclusive blocs" and uphold the openness of regional cooperation. As the core driving forces behind the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), they worked with all parties to bring the agreement into force and implementation, and have actively aligned with high-standard economic and trade frameworks such as the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) and the Digital Economy Partnership Agreement (DEPA) to expand openness. The China-ASEAN experience demonstrates that only by respecting diversity

with an inclusive mindset, learning from each other to bridge gaps, and embracing the world with an open posture can countries overcome entrenched biases and build a community with shared future in which they stand together through thick and thin.

Insights for Building Communities with Shared Future with Other Regions

The experience accumulated by China and ASEAN in advancing the building of a community with shared future is not a mechanical or dogmatic template. Rather, it serves as an important reference for China in building communities with shared future with neighboring countries and other regions. These experiences complement and reinforce one another, converging into an intellectual force for promoting the building of a community with shared future for humanity.

The gradualist cooperation philosophy and the institutionalized mechanisms of China-ASEAN cooperation offer guidance for advancing the China-Central Asia community with shared future. The construction of these two regional communities echoes each other and jointly constitutes two important wings for promoting the building of a community with shared future with neighboring countries. Since President Xi Jinping proposed the building of the "Silk Road Economic Belt" during his visit to Central Asia in 2013, China-Central Asia integration has advanced rapidly. In 2022, at the Virtual Summit to Commemorate the 30th

Anniversary of Diplomatic Relations Between China and Central Asian Countries, President Xi proposed building an even closer China-Central Asia community with shared future, which received unanimous support from regional countries. In 2023, the six countries held their first summit and, under the guidance of head-of-state diplomacy, established a multidimensional, multi-track cooperation architecture. In 2025, at the Second China-Central Asia Summit, President Xi summarized the key lessons of bilateral cooperation as the “China-Central Asia Spirit,” defined as mutual respect and equal treatment, deepening mutual trust and mutual responsiveness, mutual benefit and common development, and mutual assistance and solidarity. This spirit is deeply embedded in the China-ASEAN cooperation experience, injecting strong intellectual momentum into advancing the building of a community with shared future with neighboring countries.

China-ASEAN cooperation experience in infrastructure development and people-to-people connectivity provides useful reference for building the China-Arab community with shared future. Since the launch of the Belt and Road Initiative in 2013, China-Arab cooperation has entered a new stage of qualitative enhancement and expansion, shifting from a focus on economic and trade cooperation to multidimensional integration. In connectivity, signature ASEAN Belt and Road projects such as the China-Laos

Railway and the Jakarta-Bandung High-Speed Railway have indirectly radiated into the Arab region, accelerating the progress of landmark projects such as Egypt’s New Administrative Capital. Guided by the spirit of inclusiveness and mutual learning, both sides have strengthened cultural exchanges and enhanced people-to-people connectivity. In 2022, at the first China-Arab States Summit, President Xi emphasized the China-Arab spirit of mutual assistance, equality and mutual benefit, and inclusiveness and mutual learning, which received active support from Arab partners, who agreed to jointly build a China-Arab community with shared future for the new era. This important spirit is highly aligned with the China-ASEAN experience. In 2025, ASEAN, China, and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) held a summit, recognizing the enduring and profound historical and civilizational ties and economic linkages among the three parties and committing to closer cooperation. As the core component of the China-Arab community with shared future, the GCC has formed an interconnected cooperation framework with ASEAN. This embodies the synergistic empowerment between the China-Arab and China-ASEAN communities with shared future. Through cross-regional coordination and resonant cooperation, the three sides jointly contribute to the symphony of building a community with shared future for humanity.

The mature cooperation experience of China and ASEAN in institutionalized dialogue and people-to-people exchanges also provides valuable lessons for building the China-Latin America community with shared future. Since President Xi advocated the building of a China-Latin America community with shared future at the China-CELAC Forum in 2015, the comprehensive cooperative partnership between the two sides has continued to gain new substance. Despite vast geographical distance and significant cultural differences, China and Latin America have strengthened civilizational dialogue, deepened mutual understanding through inclusiveness and mutual learning, and overcome geographic and perceptual barriers. The two sides have established regular high-level dialogue mechanisms and promoted coordination between the China-CELAC Forum and regional organizations in Latin America, such as MERCOSUR. In economic and trade cooperation, drawing on the dispute-settlement mechanism experience under RCEP, negotiations on a China-Latin America free trade agreement have incorporated an efficient dispute-resolution mechanism to reduce business risks and transform distant partners into a close-knit community. President Xi has emphasized that the defining character of the China-Latin America community with shared future is equality and mutual respect, its strong driving force is mutual benefit and win-win cooperation, its es-

sential quality is openness and inclusiveness, and its fundamental purpose is to benefit the people. The community possesses strong vitality and broad prospects for development.

China-ASEAN cooperation in practical cooperation and institutional development also provides an important model for building the China-Africa community with shared future. During President Xi's visit to Africa in 2013, he first articulated the principles of sincerity, real results, amity and good faith and the principles of pursuing the greater good and shared interests. They provided fundamental guidance for strengthening China-Africa friendship and cooperation in the new era. China and Africa have consistently adhered to the principles of non-interference in internal affairs and mutual respect, consolidating a political foundation of equality and mutual trust. They enhanced alignment between the Belt and Road Initiative and the African Union's Agenda 2063, and expanded trade and investment facilitation to leverage complementary strengths. China has also increased assistance to Africa, with Africa accounting for 45% of China's foreign assistance from 2013 to 2018. China and Africa have deepened people-to-people ties through educational exchanges, technical training, and public-health cooperation, solidifying the foundation of popular support. In 2024, China and all African countries with diplomatic relations elevated their bilateral relations to

the strategic level, positioning China-Africa relations as an all-weather China-Africa community with shared future for the new era.

Implications for Improving Global Governance

Today's world is confronted with deficits in peace, development, security, and governance. The tolerance of international relations is declining, conservatism is on the rise, power politics is resurfacing, and the law of the jungle is regaining traction. Faced with these severe challenges, the world urgently needs to find a path forward. Over more than three decades, China-ASEAN relations have advanced from economic complementarity and political trust-building to institutional coordination and deeper regional integration. The valuable experience accumulated in the process of building a China-ASEAN community with shared future offers an Eastern approach to addressing current global governance dilemmas and advancing the implementation of a community with shared future for humanity, carrying profound contemporary implications.

To bridge civilizational divides and consolidate the value foundation for building a community with shared future for humanity, inclusiveness and mutual learning must be used to overcome the civilizational barriers in global governance. A deep-rooted challenge in global governance lies in the tendency of some countries to turn civilizational

differences into antagonistic boundaries and to promote civilizational superiority and value-based confrontation. The China-ASEAN community-building process has consistently upheld inclusiveness and mutual learning as a core principle. This experience underscores that global governance must return to the essence of civilizational equality and dialogue. Improving global governance requires abandoning the arrogance of civilizational superiority, transcending ideological prejudice. Just as China and ASEAN have done, it requires building platforms for civilizational exchange and mutual learning. Whether at the regional or global level, it is essential to respect each country's choice of development path, enabling civilizational mutual learning to serve as the "adhesive" that forges global consensus and injecting into the community with shared future for humanity the value essence of harmony in diversity and mutual appreciation.

To address the responsibility deficit in global governance and consolidate the material foundation for building a community with shared future for humanity, a relationship of shared interests must be used to overcome the failures of responsibility-sharing. Faced with pressing global challenges, some countries ignore the common interests of humanity, withdraw from international commitments, shirk responsibilities, and pursue protectionist and unilateralist policies. They adopt beggar-thy-neighbor approaches,

promote decoupling and supply-chain disruption, and artificially fracture industrial and supply chains, resulting in a severe shortage of global public goods. In responding to various regional challenges, China and ASEAN have adhered to mutual respect and dialogue-based consultation, employing mutual benefit and win-win cooperation as their guiding logic and sharing development dividends through networks of shared interests. This practice offers a key lesson for global governance: use the process of addressing shared challenges as an opportunity to coordinate diverse interests and realize shared responsibilities and shared benefits. Global governance should focus on the most pressing and difficult issues, build communities of interests, and rely on shared interests to drive the effective fulfillment of global governance responsibilities.

To address systemic failures in global governance and improve the institutional framework for building a community with shared future for humanity, rules must be co-created to strengthen global governance mechanisms. How to establish and improve the global governance system is a question the international community must answer. The building of a China-ASEAN community with shared future has forged a path of rule co-creation. From the signing of the free trade area framework agreement in 2002, to the completion of upgrade negotiations in 2015, and to the signing of the Ver-

sion 3.0 Upgrade Protocol in 2025, cooperative rules have been progressively elevated. This experience points the way for improving global governance: the reshaping of global rules must follow the principle of extensive consultation, joint contribution, and shared benefits. Global affairs should be jointly managed by all countries, international rules jointly formulated, and development outcomes jointly shared. All countries should enjoy equality in rights, opportunities, and rules. Through rule alignment and integration, multilateral consensus can be forged while rejecting exclusive rule-making, ensuring that the global governance system consistently evolves toward greater fairness and equity and providing stable institutional support for building a community with shared future for humanity.

As Xunzi observed, “Without the accumulation of small steps, one cannot reach a thousand miles; without the convergence of small streams, one cannot form a river or sea.” Every step of practical experience accumulated in building the China-ASEAN community with shared future contributes to the global realization of a community with shared future for humanity. As the China-ASEAN community continues to deepen, its experience will be increasingly drawn upon by other regional cooperation practices. It will guide the global governance system toward greater fairness, rationality, and resilience, and ultimately trans-

form the vision of a community with shared future for humanity into a reality that benefits the world.