

**VIII ЯЛТИНСКИЕ ФИЛОСОФСКИЕ ЧТЕНИЯ. «ФЕНОМЕН РУССКОЙ ФИЛОСОФИИ
В МИРОВОМ ДУХОВНО-ИНТЕЛЛЕКТУАЛЬНОМ ПРОЦЕССЕ»**

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**ENGAGEMENT AND BALANCE STRATEGIC PERSPECTIVE TO ANALYZE ASEAN
COUNTRIES' POLICIES TOWARDS CHINA - TAKE THAILAND AS AN EXAMPLE**

Abstract: *With the deepening of ASEAN regional integration, close contact between China and member states, it's necessary to examine the historical backgrounds, political factors for member states to adopt the compromise policies of positive engagement and balance between great powers. On this basis, the paper tends to put forward China's policies and means. In terms of ASEAN's strategic preference, members need to take into account multiple objectives such as national autonomy, security and economic interests when formulating foreign policies. Obviously, pursuing multiple goals at the same time does not mean that can be achieved simultaneously, so there are trade-offs when ASEAN in formulating China policies. Taking use of the theoretical research method of analytical eclecticism, this paper takes Thailand as an example to analyze the engagement - balance policy with great power adopted by ASEAN countries towards China. The author believes that strategic preference, autonomy, security and welfare considerations, can be the focus of the domestic hierarchical variables. How these variables affect the setting of strategic preferences can be examined in the analysis of specific country situations.*

Key words: *ASEAN, Thailand, Engagement-balance policy, towards china strategy*

1、 Literature review

Domestic researches on the exchanges between ASEAN countries and China focus on the above three aspects, emphasis on the analysis of the history, status quo and problems of the exchanges between China and ASEAN countries. The state of China is often taken as the research subject for analysis, which lacks due attention to ASEAN countries, and scholar prefer summarizing the historical process of bilateral exchanges and the influence of relations between the United States and ASEAN-China exchanges.

The status quo, challenges and countermeasures of China-ASEAN relations.

Wei Min¹, a researcher at the China Institute of International Studies, pointed out that under the new situation of economic transformation and upgrade of China and ASEAN countries, they should establish all-round cooperation with investment, and the "Belt and Road" initiative should be utilized to break the bottleneck of FTA upgrading. Xu Bu and Zhang Bo², researchers from the China Institute of International Studies, reviewed the development course of China-ASEAN relationship and said that

¹Wei Min, Building an Upgraded Version of China-ASEAN Free Trade Area: Issues and Direction, *China International Studies*, no.2, 2015.

²Xu Bu and Zhang Bo, Current situation, problems and prospects of China-ASEAN trade relations, *Asia-pacific Security and Marine Studies*, 2017.

China and ASEAN countries should properly deal with the problems that encountered in trade cooperation to make relations truly become the anchor stone of China-ASEAN economic and trade cooperation.

The influence of free trade zones such as TPP and RCEP on ASEAN's policy towards China.

Zou Guoyong¹, associate professor of Wuhan University, pointed out that ASEAN and China have a certain competitive relationship in the economic chain and export industry in the Asia-Pacific region, which also causes ASEAN countries to be entangled in the formulation of China policies. Foreign affairs college institute for international economists Caihua Zhu² compare the difference of the TPP and RCEP, under the background of the United States pushing the TPP cooperation, with the intention of cooperating with strategic shift situation, also indirectly impacted on the leadership of the member of ASEAN in regional cooperation, enhanced the safety awareness of the ASEAN countries, accelerated the establishment of the RCEP to ensure the integrity of regional integration.

Third parties such as the United States influence and contain ASEAN countries in their relations with China.

Guangsheng Lu³, vice President of the Yunnan University institute of international relations, said the structural contradiction between the two countries (China and U.S.) cannot be solved in the short term, as the "third party" between China and the United States, the reality has forced ASEAN to re-examine its relations with China and the United States.

Few foreign scholars have studied the factors, ways and influences of ASEAN countries' exchanges with China, mostly focusing on the economic benefits brought to ASEAN countries by the signing of RCEP and the impact and influence on the original centrality of ASEAN. Foreign scholars show a negative academic attitude towards the RCEP signed in 2021, and the overall research shows the characteristics of little single and insufficient. Many in-depth links and historical origins between TPP, RCEP and ASEAN countries tend to focus on surface sorting, rather than in-depth excavation.

In the context of the strategic game between China and the United States, the ASEAN countries are seeking for developing ways.

HAREN Ke in *ASEAN in the Middle of US and Chinese Rivalry: ASEAN Cooperation with RCEP in Reducing the Impact of the Trade War*⁴ pointed out that the strategic game between China and the US affected the stability of ASEAN members, especially in the economic field. Driven by pressure, ASEAN member states actively promoted the establishment of RCEP to promote trade and investment, alleviating the pressure brought by the Sino-US trade war.

The signing of RCEP and TPP agreements has a negative impact on the Center position of ASEAN

Lukas Maximilian Mueller⁵ criticized that most of the discussions and explanations on THE centrality of ASEAN in existing studies are not specific and precise. ASEAN plays a positive role mainly in the economic field, but its role has been gradually diluted by the economic development of other sovereign states. The article *ASEAN at the Crossroads: Trap and Track between CPTPP and*

¹Zou Guoyong, Wu Lin-ling, The Construction of China-ASEAN Free Trade Area in the context of TPP and RCEP: Challenges and countermeasures, *Journal of Jishou University (Social Science Edition)*, 2016.

²Zhu Caihua, New Choices for East Asian Economic Cooperation :TPP or RCEP? *Peace and Development*, 2013.

³Lu Guangsheng, Nie Jiao, China-ASEAN Relations under the Background of Sino-US Trade War: Impact, Risk and Response, *Studies on Southeast Asian Issues*, no.1, 2019.

⁴HAREN Ke, "ASEAN in the Middle of US and Chinese Rivalry: ASEAN Cooperation with RCEP in Reducing the Impact of the Trade War", *International Journal of Science and Society*. (2019) .

⁵ Lukas Maximilian Mueller, "ASEAN centrality under threat—the cases of RCEP and connectivity". *Journal of Contemporary East Asia Studies* (2015).

RCEP¹ points out that ASEAN countries are at a Crossroads between the TPP and RCEP, It is practically difficult for ASEAN countries to achieve the central position in RCEP, because four out of ten ASEAN members have also joined the US-led TPP and are subject to the US at the same time, and US Strategic actions will also affect ASEAN's strategic position and original benefits.

2、 The identity orientation and strategic judgment of ASEAN towards China

In terms of ASEAN's identity positioning and strategic judgment towards China, it can be analyzed from two perspectives: On the one hand, china is ASEAN's partner in economic and cultural exchanges; On the other hand, china's rise and development is accompanied with uncertainty. ASEAN believes that China is a big country in the Asia-Pacific region, and the solution of regional problems existed in the Asia-Pacific needs China's participation. After the end of cold war, the United States and the Soviet union in the focus of competition in the ASIA-pacific region and the relative importance has been abate, chinese government put forward the "one belt one road", "community with a shared future for mankind" and "diplomacy with Chinese characteristics" and other global strategies in political, economic level, and gradually grow into a force plays an important role in the region. ASEAN members considered the impact of China's rise from different perspectives.

For one thing, in recent years, Hong Kong amendment and boundary issues in the South China Sea have appeared frequently. ASEAN scholars point out that²"China is now facing many domestic problems, such as unbalanced economic development, low efficiency of state-owned enterprises and boundary issues". To solve these problems, China must maintain the sustainable and healthy development of its economy.³

Under the logic of realism, they worry that China will have relatively strong national strength and power after its rise, it will use force to recover the territory once owned by virtue of the construction of the *Belt and Road Initiative* and the substantial improvement of its military capabilities. China will also interfere in other countries' internal affairs and become a hegemony.

Thailand and China have a long complicated relationship, with periods of conflict, such as the Cold War. Recently, after the Asian economic crisis, China-Thailand relations developed on the basis of renewed diplomatic, cultural exchanges and bilateral investment. China has become an important diplomatic, economic and strategic partner since Thailand's military junta came to power. Its military government sees a strategic partnership with China as the crucial way to ensure country's security.⁴

In particular, after the successful cooperation between China and Thailand on the settlement of the Cambodian issue, the two sides have established a relatively profound relationship on the basis of mutual trust. For this reason, Thailand began to pursue the engagement-balance strategy that is, cautiously handle relations with China and cater to the interests of China to avoid unnecessary conflicts.

For another, it implemented the strategy of "balanced diplomacy" and paid attention to the development of cooperative relations with the United States, Japan and other asia-pacific powers to balance the growth of China.

3、 Overview of engagement - balance strategy

The definition of engagement - balance strategy

¹ Chien-Huei Wu, "ASEAN at the Crossroads: Trap and Track between CPTPP and RCEP" , 21 *Journal of International Economic Law* (2019).

²Wang Guanghou, Analysis of ASEAN's Strategy towards China after the Cold War, *Pacific Journal*, 2005.

³Wang Guanghou, Research on China-ASEAN Strategic Relations after the Cold War, *Jilin University Press*, 2008.

⁴Li Xiaojun, The evolution of Thailand towards China policy after the Polemic, *Southeast Asian Studies*, 2007.

The engagement-balance strategy¹ adopted by ASEAN countries towards China can be understood as a diplomatic engagement means as the mainstay and balance. The means of implementing engagement strategy are optional. It mainly through various international organizations and transnational contacts to closely link the interests of the target country with international community, until their interest values form a whole, so as to eliminate the dissatisfaction of the target country and realize the transformation of the "socialization". Thailand is embracing China in a gradual way, pushing forward the strategic reshaping of ASEAN-China relations through a policy of positive engagement.

"Great power balance" ² refers to "the near-equal power of several states in the international community." Different from the "balance of great power" in the traditional sense, the "balance of power" in ASEAN does not contain the meaning of seeking hegemony. The main point is that ASEAN member countries maximize their own interests by taking advantage of the contradictions among the major powers outside the Southeast Asian region and making use of inter-state checks and balances.

For ASEAN countries, the balance of great powers is an all-round diplomatic strategy based on the considerations of autonomy and security, and the realistic consideration that China's rise will impact ASEAN's status and may form competitive and unequal relations.

Key ways to implement engagement and balance strategies

In ASEAN's view, political "engagement" with China is based on recognition that China is an important power in the Asia-Pacific region. Through such recognition, ASEAN hopes China will see the benefits of regional cooperation and good relations with neighboring countries, as well as assume the responsibilities of a regional members. ASEAN's political "contact" with China has been realized through two levels of ASEAN organization and its members.

In economic terms, along with the inverse wave of globalization, the rise of trade protectionism, and the unfavorable situation caused by long-term downturn of the world economy in 2020, ASEAN and China signed the RCEP agreements, they will provide a competitive for the development of the ASEAN member countries to share common market and manufacturing base. To a certain extent, if ASEAN make China benefit from the current world economic order, in turn, China will become a defender of the world economic order.

Since the end of the Cold War, ASEAN has actively carried out all-round diplomacy and played an increasingly important role in regional and international affairs. Since 1978, ASEAN has held annual dialogue meetings with its partners to exchange views on major international political and economic issues. In order to ensure the autonomy of regional actions and enhance security, ASEAN mainly tries to use the strength of the United States, Japan and other countries to form pressure on China, so as to avoid China's encroachment on its own interests and urge China to develop in the direction of its own expectations.

4、 Take Thailand as an example to analyze the engagement with China

Background of Thailand's strategy implementation toward China

This paper focuses on the period of military coup in Thailand after May 2014. Over the past few years, there has been a growing consensus among scholars abroad that China-Thailand relations are growing rapidly and represent a certain degree of Thailand's distance from its longtime ally, the United States.

Under the influence of the changing international environment and the continuous political change of Thai leaders, Thailand's policy towards China is constantly being changed. Before the formal diplomatic relations establishment between Thailand and China, Thailand's domestic political factors

¹Wang Guanghou, Analysis of ASEAN's Strategy towards China after the Cold War, *Pacific Journal*, 2005.

²Wang Guanghou, Analysis of ASEAN's Strategy towards China after the Cold War, *Pacific Journal*, 2005.

played a significant role in the exchanges with China. In the field of economy and trade, with the development of China's market reforms and good diplomatic relations established in the late 1970s, trade and economic cooperation have become the focus of bilateral relations. By 2013, China had overtaken Japan to become Thailand's largest trading partner.

In short, trade between China and Thailand has been in active, while Chinese investment in Thailand is still relatively limited. However, the Thai military government believes that the rise and development of China's economy means the possibility of investment in Thailand increases.

Contents of Thailand's engagement and balance strategy with China

After the Thai military government came into power, the country's economic development became the primary goal of the Thai government. The *Tiwali* government was forced to step down in advance because it failed to effectively prevent the outbreak of the crisis. Therefore,

Promoting the sustainable and stable development of Thailand's economy has become a top priority for Thailand's ruling elite, and the economic development strategy has also affected the formulation and implementation of Thailand's internal affairs and diplomacy.

With the in-depth development of economic globalization, Thailand, as a producer of primary products and a processing place of raw materials, has a high degree of dependence on foreign trade for its economy and needs external forces to revive its economy. As a result, Thai leaders have been trying to expand emerging markets including China, South Asia, the Middle East, Eastern Europe and South Africa, with China as the prime target.

On the other hand, trade competition between China and its neighbors in the ASEAN region has become a major concern for many regional policy makers. In the short term, the export competition between ASEAN and China in major third markets such as Japan and the United States is intensifying. Based on this reality, On the one hand, Thailand needs to ensure that its market share will not shrink, improve its relative market competitiveness and promote necessary structural adjustment to achieve the best regional division of labor; On the other hand, Thailand cannot give up China's market, carry out positive economic contact and trade cooperation with China, and actively promote globalization so as to accommodate the export growth of most east Asian economies.

ASEAN member states cannot guarantee the security of the region simply by relying on their own strength. Therefore, Thailand will constantly make strategic adjustments to the regional powers. Thailand's foreign policy has always been based on the basic starting point of ASEAN.¹ For a small country in Southeast Asia (Thailand), only through mutual coordination and cooperation can it occupy a good posture in regional affairs. If other ASEAN countries encounter setbacks in their exchanges with China, which may affect the normal development of Thailand-China relationship. Although it will not fundamentally change policy to china, negative impact is inevitable.

Take the South China Sea issue as an example. When dealing with the South China Sea disputes, Thailand insists on the integrity and consistency of ASEAN decision-making and handling issues. A single country does not have the bargaining power with China, so Thailand sticks to the same position with ASEAN countries and negotiates with China from the standpoint of ASEAN as a whole. For another, when dealing with regional disputes with China and foreign affairs, Thailand insists on introducing multilateral mechanisms of big powers outside the region to maintain balance of power, prevent the formation of a dominant situation of one party, avoid being led by big powers and restrict its own actions, and insist on seeking the dominant position of ASEAN in the balance.

Thailand needs to bring in American power in its dealings with China, when it is clear that the relations between China, Thailand and the United States are about to be out of control, Thailand will

¹*Ou Lan*, The impact of China's rise on Thai-China relations, *Shandong University*, 2014.

withdraw decisively and issue a statement on the peaceful settlement of disputes and problems. At the same time, It keeps interacting with the United States to enhance its deterrence.

The influence of Thailand's strategy on China

As China-Thailand relations deepen, Chinese companies are increasingly interested in Thailand's cheap production base, expanded market and investment opportunities. There are great constraints in the implementation of the engagement - balance strategy towards China.

First of all, while Thailand's economic pragmatism and direct engagement policy is the main strategy to promote cooperation with the Chinese government and enterprises and to resolve the South China Sea issue. However, Thailand still has many concerns regarding the South China Sea dispute. If due to political reasons and the collective decision of ASEAN is not conducive to the sound development of China-Thailand relations, resulting in serious problems, economic cooperation will be interrupted.

Secondly, the key to great power engagement strategy is to rely on other powerful countries and regions. However, as a small country in the region, Thailand's military strength is limited. At the same time, due to the global impact of COVID-19, its comprehensive national strength, including economic strength, has declined. Thailand needs economic, medical and health assistance from major countries, which determines its unequal status with major countries. That is to say, for Thailand, a great power is indispensable, but for a great power, Thailand is only one aspect of its many strategic interests, and its policies and attitudes towards Thailand are easy to change rapidly with the changes in the reality of international relations. These changes will influence Thailand's engagement and balance strategy with China now and future.

Thirdly, a stable regional environment plays an important role in Thailand's own development. Thailand has a similar ideology to China, and Thailand has an important strategic position for China. China's development pattern and choice of development path are of great reference value. Thailand wants to keep pace with China. However, due to its weak comprehensive national strength, Thailand has a big gap with China, which is a kind of asymmetric relationship in politics.

Therefore, Thailand does not dare to irritate China too much. Finally, although the United States is a strategic partner of Thailand, both sides remain cautious about the close strategic cooperation between the two countries because of the impact of the U.S. Asia-pacific rebalance strategy on Thailand's centrality and strategic interests in the ASEAN region, as well as the differences in historical concepts between China and Thailand.

5、China's strategy to deal with ASEAN's engagement and balance strategy towards China

Guided by the RCEP, ASEAN countries should raise economic expectations for China

China's economic construction needs a stable external environment, and its development and take-off are inseparable from the support of neighboring countries and regional economic cooperation. In successful regional integration organization, member must have high homogeneity, deeper mutual trust foundation and economic exchanges. At the end of 2020, the signing of the RCEP, China and ASEAN countries will be more in-depth in economic and trade exchanges and development of deeper economic cooperation space.

The signing of this agreement will further promote ASEAN countries' economic exchanges with China and hold a more moderate and positive attitude towards China's rise. China should make good use of existing trade agreements and cooperation mechanisms to actively promote the construction of the Maritime Silk Road and further enhance ASEAN countries' economic expectations towards China.

Establishing and improving inter-regional political cooperation mechanisms to mitigate security precautions against China

Under the influence of historical exchanges and realistic factors, there is still a lack of trust in china-Thailand relations. Not only Thailand, but also other ASEAN members are concerned about China's rise. In the future, China and Thailand should further deepen their cooperation mechanism. China should remain committed to not seeking hegemony or practicing power politics in the region, strengthen friendly relations with other countries on the Indo-China Peninsula and make positive efforts to jointly maintain stability in the region.

In the political and security field, China should always maintain friendly relations with all sectors of Thai society, especially the Thai royal family. China should respect Thailand's current political system and the role of the royal family in Thai society, and actively engage in communication and cooperation with the Royal family so as to increase the trust of all sectors of Thailand in the Chinese government.¹

Depending on the cultural similarities between East Asia, Promote cultural cooperation and cultural identity

The long history of exchanges between ASEAN and China has contributed to the collective identity based on the practice of long-term benign mutual trust. In fact, East Asia developed gradually on the basis of "Chinese circle", Confucian culture and Buddhist thought. China and Thailand can make use of the similarities in ideology, culture and living habits to promote closer and more natural integration, which will remove estrangement, build mutual trust and maintain lasting peace and stability in East Asia.

6、 Conclusion

Under the consideration of multiple factors, the ASEAN regional order has entered an era of risk. In the face of diverse regional challenges, ASEAN countries have formed a great power balance -- positive engagement strategy. In the analysis of asean countries' attitudes towards China, ASEAN member states' policies are not the same. For the sake of independence, security and economic welfare, Thailand tends to follow the great power balance - engagement policy. At present, academic studies on ASEAN region and China policy are still not detailed enough, and there is a lack of in-depth studies on the formation, influence and development of ASEAN regional mechanism and the domestic and foreign affairs of ASEAN member states. In the future, ASEAN's hedging strategy will face greater challenges, ASEAN's own cohesion still needs to be improved, at the same time, regional risks, especially great power competition, are rising rapidly. How to cope with the growing difficulties under the new circumstances is the long-term challenge facing ASEAN countries.

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**СТРАТЕГИЧЕСКАЯ ПЕРСПЕКТИВА ВЗАИМОДЕЙСТВИЯ И БАЛАНСА ДЛЯ
АНАЛИЗА ПОЛИТИКИ СТРАН АСЕАН В ОТНОШЕНИИ КИТАЯ - НА ПРИМЕРЕ
ТАИЛАНДА**

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Аннотация: По мере углубления региональной интеграции АСЕАН, тесных контактов между Китаем и государствами-членами, необходимо изучить исторический фон, политические факторы, чтобы государства-члены приняли компромиссную политику позитивного взаимодействия и баланса между великими державами. Исходя из этого, газета имеет тенденцию выдвигать политику и средства Китая. Что касается стратегических предпочтений АСЕАН, члены должны принимать во внимание множество целей, таких как национальная автономия, безопасность и экономические интересы, при формулировании внешней политики. Очевидно, что преследование нескольких целей одновременно не означает, что их можно достичь одновременно, поэтому при формулировании политики в отношении Китая АСЕАН идет на компромиссы. Используя теоретический метод исследования аналитического эклектизма, в этой статье Таиланд в качестве примера анализирует политику взаимодействия и баланса с великими державами, принятую странами АСЕАН в отношении Китая. Автор считает, что стратегические предпочтения, автономия, безопасность и благосостояние могут быть в центре внимания внутренних иерархических переменных. Как эти переменные влияют на установку стратегических предпочтений, можно изучить при анализе ситуации в конкретной стране.

Ключевые слова: АСЕАН, Таиланд, Политика взаимодействия-баланса, к китайской стратегии

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