

# ASEAN BRIEFS

The Outlook on US-China Rivalry  
in the Indo-Pacific



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**ASEAN Briefs** is a regular publication about current developments on ASEAN regionalism, especially in the Political-Security, Economic as well as Socio-Cultural Pillars.

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# Executive Summary

The Indo-Pacific region undergoes a significant shift with the rise of Chinese influence and the resurgence of powers like Australia, India, Japan, and South Korea, alongside the more prominent role played by ASEAN. China’s ambitions for a regional order prompted the US to reassert its presence through the Indo-Pacific Strategy, reflected in initiatives like Quad, AUKUS, and the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF). Despite China’s rejection of the Indo-Pacific concept, it has effectively exerted influence, notably through the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), leading to increased competition between the US and China in the region.

To enhance its role in the Indo-Pacific region, ASEAN must accelerate the implementation of the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP). AOIP should be viewed not only as a developmental platform but also as a mechanism for driving dynamics in the Indo-Pacific, achieving priorities through confidence-building measures. After its ASEAN Chairmanship, Indonesia should assume an interlocutor role in the implementation of AOIP implementation to ensure its inclusive nature. Moreover, the US, China, and other external actors are urged to adhere to international law and observe ASEAN centrality to maintain regional stability.



## Introduction: The Indo-Pacific Construction and Global Order Reshaping

The Indo-Pacific concept has become a pivotal geopolitical idea in today's world. It is primarily because of its economic importance, strategic relevance, and the shifting power dynamics involving regional and global players. The concept has evolved into a significantly expanded global region, emphasizing the immense geoeconomic and geostrategic importance of the Indian and Pacific oceans. In general, the Indo-Pacific encompasses the geographic expanse from the western shores of the United States (US), through Asia and India, and to the east coast of Africa.<sup>1</sup> In the narrowest sense, the geographical area of the Indo-Pacific ranges from the western shores of the US to the western coast of India.<sup>2</sup> In the context of geostrategic conversations, the Indo-Pacific covers the triangular area defined by Japan, Australia, and India as its defining points.<sup>3</sup> Nonetheless, the geographical perception of the Indo-Pacific varies among countries, following their geopolitical interests. In recent years, the Indo-Pacific region has

witnessed significant political, economic, and security dynamics. It is marked by the growing strength and influence of emerging powers, such as the rise of the economy, technology, political and military power of China and India, Japan's pursuit of a greater political role, Republic of Korea's expanding global influence as a middle power, and ongoing efforts by multilateral organizations like Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to foster integration. Geopolitics is dynamic and the constructs drawn from it are often interconnected to the power contest. This idea is not novel and the Indo-Pacific construct exists as its evidence. Historically, the US had been known for its superior influence in the region until China's emergence seemed to compete for its supremacy with its power and diplomatic expansions to its immediate regions, including Southeast Asia, South Asia, and the Pacific. From the above samples of how each of the nations tried to expand their presence in the region, there seems to be differing visions from both of the competing actors—one seeks to maintain its leadership, while another seeks to overtake it.

<sup>1</sup> Anwar, D.F. (2020). Indonesia and the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific. *International Affairs*, 96(1), 111-129. <https://doi.org/10.193/ia/iiz223>

<sup>2</sup> Wada, H. (2020). The "Indo-Pacific" Concept Geographical Adjustments and Their Implications. *RSIS Working Paper*, (326), p 19.

<sup>3</sup> Anwar, D.F. (2020). Op. Cit.

## US and the Indo-Pacific: Biden Transforming the US Presence in the Region

The US has been maintaining a substantial military presence in the region and is influential in shaping the defense strategies of significant nations like Japan and Australia. However, the US viewed the aforementioned geopolitical dynamic in the Indo-Pacific as a challenge to its global dominance and regional influence. In order to maintain the US' dominance, President Trump and President Biden employed the idea of a Free and Open Indo-Pacific. This concept aligns with the core principles of US engagement in the Indo-Pacific, such as establishing security alliances and partnerships, promoting economic prosperity, and advancing good governance. Looking into its foreign policy development, President Obama began its pivot to Asia in 2011. It was then articulated by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton in her article 'America's Pacific Century.'

Hillary Clinton saw the Asia-Pacific as a strategic unity of a vast region extending from the Indian subcontinent to Western America, encompassing the Indian and Pacific oceans.<sup>4</sup> Access to Asia's market would create opportunities for investment, trade, and technological transfer, which was crucial for domestic economic recovery, while strategically, peace and security in the region would also strengthen the US position in protecting navigation rights in the South China Sea, addressing North Korea's proliferation concerns, and promoting transparency in the military actions of regional actors.<sup>5</sup> However,

<sup>4</sup> Clinton, H. (2011). America's Pacific Century. *Foreign policy*, (189), 56.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

the Indo-Pacific terminology has only been officially introduced by President Trump at the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Summit in 2017. Since then, 'Indo-Pacific' has become the preferred term in US official statements and documents.

Under Trump's presidency, US foreign policy strongly emphasized collaborating with multiple nations. In his significant visit to Asia in late 2017, President Trump took the opportunity to revive the Quad, which is a quadrilateral dialogue involving the US, Japan, Australia, and India. The Quad, originally named the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QSD), was first initiated by President Bush in 2007. From the beginning, the Quad's foundation rested on three key factors: managing China's influence, fostering practical collaboration, and shaping the regional order. However, the Quad's explicit opposition to China has negatively impacted the region's politics, economics, and security dynamics.<sup>6</sup> While it does not intend to become an Asian NATO, the Quad is suspected of strengthening cooperation and policy alignment to balance against and compete with China. However, its future is uncertain, depending on the evolving China-US relations.<sup>7</sup>

Meanwhile, an unintended consequence of this revival was the weakening of the successful implementation of the Free and Open Indo-Pacific initiatives during the Trump administration. The US foreign policy, centered around domestic priorities encapsulated in the "Make America Great Again" slogan, limited US involvement in regional engagement. President Biden introduced three main initiatives to show US

<sup>6</sup> Wei, Z. (2022). The evolution of the 'QUAD': driving forces, impacts, and prospects. *China International Strategy Review*, 4(2), 288-304.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

commitment and reclaim its influence in the Indo-Pacific region through several official state visits. In September 2021, the US introduced a trilateral security pact between Australia, the UK, and the US (AUKUS). The primary step within AUKUS entails a commitment to support Australia in acquiring nuclear-powered submarines for its Royal Australian Navy. The second step focuses on enhancing collaborative capabilities and fostering cooperation, specifically focusing on areas such as cyber capabilities, artificial intelligence, quantum technologies, and the expansion of undersea capabilities.<sup>8</sup>

Later in October 2021, the US also announced the establishment of the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF). By not focusing solely on free trade agreements for market access, IPEF encompasses a broader set of aspects, including clean energy, supply chain management, anti-corruption measures, and promoting fair and resilient trade.<sup>9</sup> IPEF is regarded as a robust and essential economic strategy to advance US commercial, diplomatic, and strategic interests, particularly in response to China's growing economic influence in the region. With other countries actively engaged in trade negotiations in the region, there is a pressing need for the United States to intensify its efforts and work towards the realization of IPEF. Furthermore, during the ASEAN-US special summit in 2022, ASEAN and the US committed to establishing the ASEAN-US Comprehensive Strategic Partnership. This

commitment will become a platform for the US and ASEAN to continue working together to institutionalize and expand cooperation and advance a free and open region that is increasingly connected, prosperous, secure, and resilient.<sup>10</sup>

### Xi Jinping and China's Postures in the Indo-Pacific

Chinese authorities describe China's relationship with neighboring countries using the term "community of common destiny," introduced by China's President and the General Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party, Hu Jintao, during the 17th National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party in 2007. Initially, this term was used to label the dynamic between Mainland China and Taiwan. Afterward, Xi Jinping reused the term during his visits to Africa and ASEAN in 2013 as the core of the "China Dream" to maintain peace and stability in the region. This term serves as a framework for restructuring global relations to ensure peace and stability while effectively addressing the root causes of tensions and instability.<sup>11</sup>

With the envisioned construction of a regional order of its own, China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has been an example of the instrument the country used successfully to cement its presence in the region. BRI combines the Silk Road Economic Belt and the Maritime Silk Road, aiming to build transportation infrastructure from landlocked Central Asia

to the Western region and connect maritime routes in the Indo-Pacific. China's approach in improving connectivity in the region has been achieved in a rather welcoming gesture—as seen from how its development initiative has grown in the past few years. As Baruah noted in her work, the lack of alternatives to cope with the increasing demand for infrastructure led to many welcoming China's investments.<sup>12</sup> Through its ten years of implementation, the BRI has broadened its emphasis on connecting people and evolved into various subsets like the Digital Silk Road, the Polar Silk Road, the Health Silk Road, the Space Silk Road, and the Green Silk Road.<sup>13</sup> As of September 2023, 154 countries have joined BRI, covering almost all Asia and Sub-saharan countries and half of Pacific and South American countries.<sup>14</sup>

As the anxiety over China's growing presence was perceived as among the factors of the emergence of the Indo-Pacific construct,<sup>15</sup> it would only be logical if the impression of China being excluded from the festivity had become a general perception in the Indo-Pacific discourse. As for China, the antagonizing and exclusion have become the reasons for refusing the Indo-Pacific construct. China, with its "China Dream," aims to construct the regional order on its own where it could accommodate fair relations between developing nations, which he deemed as out-of-reach with the status quo—hence the "community of common destiny".<sup>16</sup> While the BRI originally prioritized

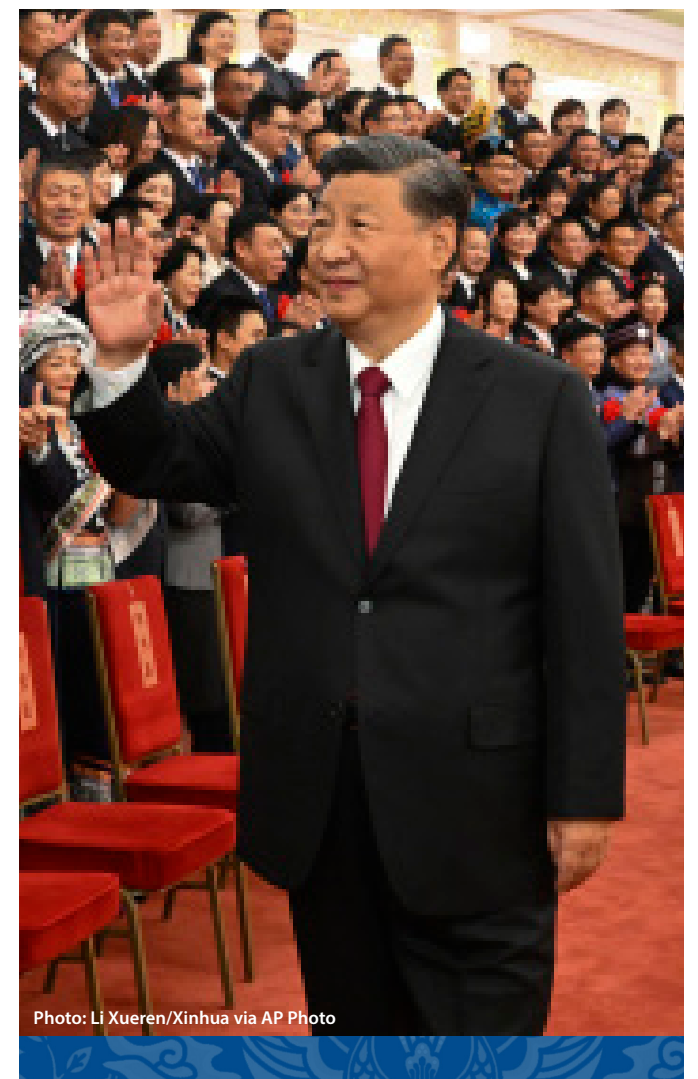


Photo: Li Xueren/Xinhua via AP Photo

economic development, experts believed that its substantial infrastructure investments might have significant geopolitical implications for the Indo-Pacific region. Given its extensive scope and scale, China's BRI is also seen as an equivalent to the US Indo-Pacific Strategy. The BRI is gradually reshaping China's global security strategy because of the necessity to safeguard its economic interests and protect its citizens in regions involved in the BRI. Consequently, China is taking a more proactive approach to assert its influence in the Indo-Pacific, potentially escalating security competition, especially with the US.<sup>17</sup>

8 Canberra, U. S. E. in. (2023, July 21). *Aukus Joint Leaders' statement*. U.S. Embassy & Consulates in Australia. <https://au.usembassy.gov/aukus-joint-leaders-statement/>.

9 The United States Government. (2022, May 22). *Fact sheet: In Asia, President Biden and a dozen Indo-Pacific Partners Launch the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity*. The White House. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/05/23/fact-sheet-in-asia-president-biden-and-a-dozen-indo-pacific-partners-launch-the-indo-pacific-economic-framework-for-prosperity/>

10 Jakarta, U.S.E. (2023) *Fact sheet: U.S.-Asean Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, one year on, U.S. Embassy & Consulates in Indonesia*. Available at: <https://id.usembassy.gov/fact-sheet-u-s-asean-comprehensive-strategic-partnership-one-year-on/> (Accessed: 24 September 2023).

11 Tobin, D. (May 2020). *How Xi Jinping's "New Era" Should Have Ended US Debate on Beijing's Ambitions*. Center for Strategic and International Studies. Available at: [https://csis-website-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/publication/200508\\_Tobin\\_NewEra\\_v4%5B2%5D.pdf](https://csis-website-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/publication/200508_Tobin_NewEra_v4%5B2%5D.pdf)

12 Baruah, D. M. (2020, June 30). *India in the Indo-Pacific: New Delhi's Theater of Opportunity*. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. <https://carnegieendowment.org/2020/06/30/india-in-indo-pacific-new-delhi-s-theater-of-opportunity-pub-82205>

13 Tiezzi, S. (2023, September 15). *How China's belt and road took over the world*. – The Diplomat. <https://thediplomat.com/2023/09/how-chinas-belt-and-road-took-over-the-world/>

14 Ibid.

15 Pan, C. (2014). The 'Indo-Pacific' and Geopolitical Anxieties About China's Rise in the Asian Regional Order. *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, 68(4), 453–469. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10357718.2014.884054>

16 Jaknanihan, A. A. (2022). Beyond inclusion: Explaining China's rejection on the indo-pacific regional construct. *Global: Jurnal Politik*

*Internasional*, 24(1), 42. <https://doi.org/10.7454/global.v24i1.667>

17 Mingjiang Li, 'The Belt and Road Initiative: geo-economics and Indo-Pacific security competition', *International Affairs*.





Photo: Commander, U.S. 7th Fleet

## The US–China Rivalry in the Indo-Pacific

The US has settled its presence in the Indo-Pacific well with the Quad, AUKUS, and IPEF. However, another factor that counts for the US in its Indo-Pacific calculus might be its closest allies. For instance, the US seems to be the crux of Japan and Australia's Indo-Pacific plates. Japan and Australia are bound to the US strongly in the economic aspect and have become the US' important partners in nurturing security in the Indo-Pacific.

Since the infamous “Confluence of the Two Seas” speech delivered by the late Shinzo Abe in 2007, Japan has been thriving on its own Indo-Pacific strategies. By partnering with its Quad partners, the country opened up its diplomatic doors from East and Southeast Asia to Eastern Africa, and the Pacific and Indian Oceans as an integrated region and promoted peace and prosperity under FOIP.<sup>18</sup> At the same time, Australia has

also regarded the Indo-Pacific with significant importance to its security and prosperity. To support its strategy, Australia established its Indo-Pacific vision as a region ranging from the eastern portion of the Indian Ocean to the Pacific Ocean connected by Southeast Asia, including India, North Asia, and the US.<sup>19</sup>

Although Japan and Australia could add ample contributions to the US' Indo-Pacific Strategy, Washington still has more partners to explore to keep the vision growing. The Republic of Korea might be a proper example of the said partnership. The Republic of Korea unveiled its Strategy for a Free, Peaceful, and Prosperous Indo-Pacific Region late last year. It has been serving as the country's foreign policy blueprint for becoming a global pivotal state ever since.<sup>20</sup> Bearing in mind that the relations between the Republic of Korea and the US have been timeless and stipulated as

a global comprehensive strategic alliance,<sup>21</sup> a shared vision between both countries could provide room for the US to subsume the strategy and cooperate more constructively with the Republic of Korea.

Over the years, the Indo-Pacific construct, which had been said to thwart China's visionary strategy, has, however, shifted to be more inclusive and provided a way for China to engage with more actors under the construct. This could be attributed to the fact that more regional actors become more invested in growing their Indo-Pacific strategies. In assessing how it has become more inclusive, it is important to emphasize that many regional middle power actors—such as India and ASEAN – still hold religiously and adhere to the non-alignment values to most of its foreign policy agenda.<sup>22</sup> As for India, this value has set the country apart from other US allies in the region. This is evident in India's growing interest in the Indo-Pacific and how the country developed its idea of what the Indo-Pacific is for them.

Being the power in the Indian Ocean, India redefined its vision of the Indo-Pacific to be a region spreading from the shores of Africa to that of the Americas. Prime Minister Narendra Modi himself elaborated specifically the definition of Indo-Pacific to include ASEAN, Japan, the Republic of Korea, China, the Americas, the Indian Ocean region, Australia, New Zealand, Pacific Island nations, Russia, and Africa during his remarks at the Shangri-La Dialogue in 2018.<sup>23</sup> Apart from exhibiting

some sort of expansion from its past Indo-Pacific definition, which referred only to the eastern portion of the Indian Ocean, Modi's redefinition of the Indo-Pacific has exhibited the inclusivity of India's Indo-Pacific vision, which might be reasoned by India's hedging gesture, giving a wider range of options for the country to not be excessively dependent to a particular side.

Among the pressing issues in the region, security-centered issues such as the South China Sea (SCS) dispute and the Cross-Strait relations have become the hot buttons within the US and China rivalry. The SCS has been deemed an area of strategic, political, and economic importance to the US and its allies. Maneuvers that China made in the area, such as armed actions by its maritime forces to assert its claims against competing claims by regional neighbors and also the island and base construction activities at sites that occupy the Spratly Island, have increased the concerns that China is gaining effective control of the SCS. The US' partnerships with the Philippines and Taiwan have given the edge to the US in enhancing its position in regard to this issue. Almost a decade ago, the US and the Philippines refined their security partnership through the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA). The EDCA guarantees access for the US at nine military bases in the Philippines—some of them facing directly to the South China Sea and maritime area surrounding Taiwan.

Taiwan and its strategic location have been considered immensely important for both the US and China. Aside from the shared value of democracy, Taiwan is essential to the US for its freedom of navigation in the maritime lane connecting the “Indo” to the “Pacific”. Meanwhile, China deemed the Taiwan issue

19 2017 Foreign Policy White Paper. Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. (2017). September 2023. <https://www.dfat.gov.au/sites/default/files/2017-foreign-policy-white-paper.pdf>

20 Ahn, J. (2023, July 27). U.S.-South Korea policy coordination toward the indo-pacific region. Council on Foreign Relations. <https://www.cfr.org/blog/us-south-korea-policy-coordination-toward-indo-pacific-region>

21 Ministry of Foreign Affairs. (2023, January 6). Strategy for a Free, Peaceful, and Prosperous Indo-Pacific Region . Ministry of Foreign Affairs. <https://www.mofa.go.kr/viewer/skin/doc.html?fn=20230106093833927.pdf&rs=%2Fviewer%2Fresult%2F202306>

22 Jaknanihan, A. A. (2022). Loc. Cit. p. 46.

23 Prime Minister's Keynote Address at Shangri La Dialogue. Ministry of External Affairs. (2018, June 1). September 2023. <https://www.mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/29943/Prime+Ministers+Keynote+Address+at+Shangri+La+Dialogue+June+01+2018>

18 Wada, H. (2020). Op. Cit. pp. 8-10.



part of its territorial integrity. The US–Taiwan unofficial relations are governed by the Taiwan Relations Act 1979. The act allows important measures the US could take should China attempt to change the status quo in the Taiwan Strait, which includes the US delivering defensive weapons to Taiwan. Last May, the US approved USD 619 million worth of missiles for Taiwan’s F-16 fleet in a new arms deal with Taiwan—sealing the deal of the ninth arms sale during Biden’s presidency.<sup>24</sup> Guessing China’s way in responding to the US maneuvers in the Cross-Strait issue has never been tremendously difficult—it might go with the military drills. China has utilized the pretexts, such as Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi’s visit to Taiwan and, lately, the arms deal, to hold military drills around the Taiwan Strait. It created some uneasiness in the area deemed as one of the most dangerous places on earth by The Economist.<sup>25</sup>

It is worth noting that the US and its allies may not ignore the fact that China has a wide network to compete in the entirety of Indo-Pacific geostrategic competition. China has forged several partnerships with the actors in the region—for instance, Russia. China has long been a close partner of Russia and upgraded their relations several times between the 1990s to 2022. The latest upgrade in 2022 has placed China and Russia at the level of a “no-limits” strategic partnership—allowing both countries to touch upon every possible area of cooperation,<sup>26</sup> including the military. Aside from Russia, China has deepened

its partnership with Cambodia, Laos, and Pakistan.<sup>27</sup> These partnerships could easily become a set of instruments of power enhancement to compete against the US.

With the rivalry intensified between the US and China, one of the most significant compromises in the region would be stability—especially from the war of narrative and actual war. Countries within China’s periphery have been the venue where China expanded its power and diplomacy, as evident in some countries in South Asia, Southeast Asia, and even those in Africa and the Pacific Ocean. In response to China’s move, as Brazinsky likened the situation to those during the Cold War, much of what the US might do is promoting its vision of a world divided between democratic and authoritarian countries—ones that play by the rules and those that threaten international peace and stability.<sup>28</sup> Beyond the war of narrative, there might also be the possibility of actual war and the spillover effect from the great power rivalry in the region. While the capacity of most of these middle power countries in the region is somewhat below those of either the US or China, these countries might be on the edge of the security threat from spillover should an actual war take place.

ASEAN & the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP) amidst the Great Power Rivalry The Southeast Asian countries saw the US-China rivalry beyond the ideological competition. As Kamaruddin argued, for them, survival is important as in any case of



possible conflict between the great powers, the losers would always be the small, weaker countries caught in the middle, especially with territories that comprise the likely conflict zone.<sup>29</sup> This circumstance has influenced the position that ASEAN holds when responding to the dynamics that might involve one or both of the great powers in the region.

With its strong non-alignment upbringing, ASEAN has been thriving for not choosing a side, being the driver in regional dynamics, and creating initiatives that strengthen ASEAN-centered cooperation.<sup>30</sup> This has manifested in the concept of ASEAN Centrality—described as the primary driving force in its relations and cooperation with its external partners. Although many have doubted its efficiency, ASEAN’s institutional framework has accommodated the ASEAN Centrality to materialize.<sup>31</sup> It has been seen that ASEAN’s

institutional framework has been built on three critical aspects: consensus, institutional arrangements, and inclusivity in mechanism arrangement. These aspects also constitute the AOIP as ASEAN’s response to the growing Indo-Pacific concept in the region.

Amidst the divided region and intensified US-China rivalry, the AOIP could significantly mitigate the divergence of interest. The value of inclusivity could prospectively help ASEAN to promote regional cooperation in the outlook’s four priorities – maritime cooperation, connectivity, the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals 2030, and economy—by engaging both the US and China. Moreover, with ASEAN putting importance on creating an enabling environment for dialogues, its Indo-Pacific outlook could serve as a platform for building trust among the relevant actors. Indonesia’s ASEAN Chairmanship succeeded in bringing to life the ASEAN Indo-Pacific Forum (AIPF) this September and marked the initial implementation of the AOIP.

24 Singh, T. (2023, April 28). Indian Council of world affairs. Indian Council of World Affairs. [https://www.icwa.in/show\\_content.php?lang=1&level=3&id=9334&lid=6056](https://www.icwa.in/show_content.php?lang=1&level=3&id=9334&lid=6056)

25 Lin, C. N. (2021, May 1). Taiwan Strait most dangerous place on earth: ‘Economist’. Taipei Times. <https://www.taipetimes.com/News/front/archives/2021/05/01/2003756631>

26 Joint Statement of the Russian Federation and the People’s Republic of China on the International Relations Entering a New Era and the Global Sustainable Development. President of Russia. (2022, February 4). <http://en.kremlin.ru/supplement/5770>

27 Ebbighausen, R. (2023, January 5). How China’s rise is reshaping Indo-Pacific Security Order – DW – 12/31/2022. dw.com. <https://www.dw.com/en/how-chinas-rise-is-reshaping-indo-pacific-security-order/a-64165164>

28 Brazinsky, G. A. (2023, March 30). U.S.-China rivalry: The dangers of compelling countries to take sides. United States Institute of Peace. <https://www.usip.org/publications/2023/03/us-china-rivalry-dangers-compelling-countries-take-sides>

29 Kamaruddin, N. (2021, July 22). US-China rivalries: What matters for ASEAN. Lowy Institute. <https://www.loyinstitute.org/the-interpretor/us-china-rivalries-what-matters-asean>

30 Brazinsky, G. A. (2023, March 30). Op. Cit.

31 Wicaksana, I. G., & Karim, M. F. (2023). How regional organisation survives: ASEAN, Hedging and International Society. Contemporary Politics, 1–21. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13569775.2023.2216031>



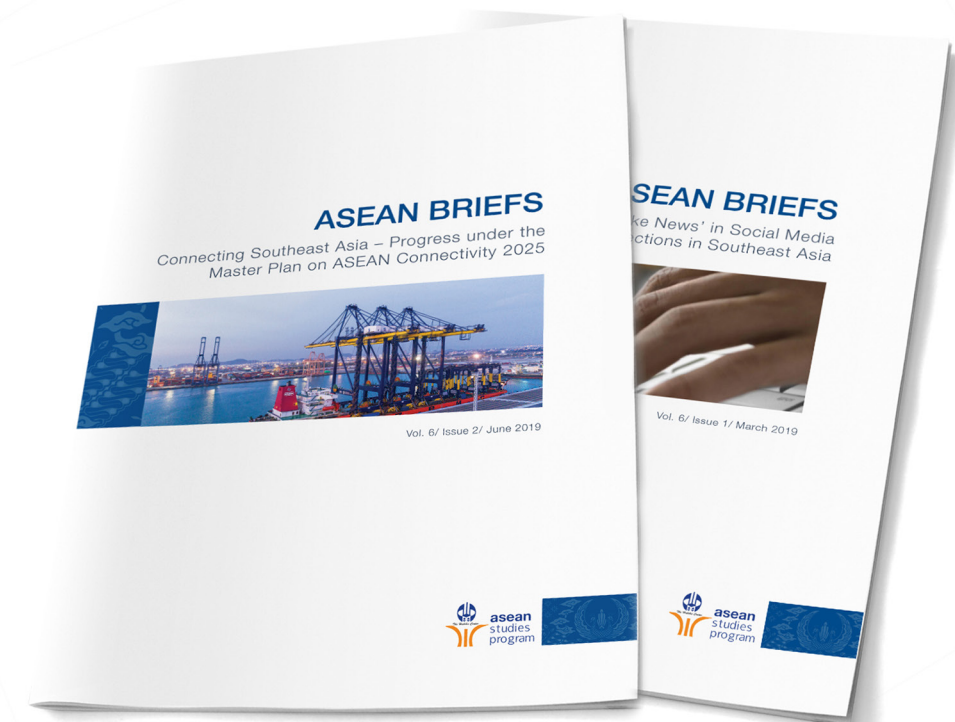
## Conclusion and Recommendations

Growing Chinese influence and the return of emerging powers such as Australia, India, Japan, and the Republic of Korea, added to the more visible role that ASEAN plays, have inevitably transformed the dynamics in the Indo-Pacific. Chinese ambition to establish its regional order has triggered the US to reclaim and maintain its substantial regional presence by introducing the Indo-Pacific Strategy. US measures are reflected by Quad, AUKUS, and IPEF. Despite China's refusal of the Indo-Pacific construct, China has succeeded in asserting its influence in the region, primarily through its power as visible in the BRI. Subsequently, the competition between the US and China would impact the region.

In order to accelerate its role in the Indo-Pacific region, ASEAN should accelerate the implementation of AOIP, in line with the outcome of the 43rd ASEAN Summit. ASEAN should not see AOIP as a sole development platform but also as a vehicle to drive the dynamics in the Indo-Pacific to achieve its priorities through the confidence-building measure. Indonesia, in this matter, should take more of an interlocutor role in implementing AOIP despite the end of its ASEAN Chairmanship to ensure the inclusivity of the initiative.

The US, China, and other relevant actors should act according to international law in making maneuvers in the region to preserve stability and not cause uneasiness. Moreover, the external partners should see ASEAN Centrality in a positive light, interpreting it as an opportunity to engage with broader actors in a manner that is not harmful to any actors in the region. Taiwan should support the implementation of initiatives that would accelerate the preservation of peace and

stability in the Indo-Pacific—such as AOIP—and take part in the initiative by utilizing the resources needed to foster maritime cooperation, connectivity, and development in the Indo-Pacific.



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## About The Habibie Center

The Habibie Center was founded by Bacharuddin Jusuf Habibie and family in 1999 as an independent, non-governmental, non-profit organisation. The vision of The Habibie Center is to create a structurally democratic society founded on the morality and integrity of cultural and religious values. The mission of The Habibie Center are first, to establish a structurally and culturally democratic society that recognizes, respects, and promotes human rights by undertaking study and advocacy of issues related to democratization and human rights, and second, to increase the effectiveness of the management of human resources and the spread of technology.

## About ASEAN Studies Program

The ASEAN Studies Program was established on February 24, 2010, to become a center of excellence on ASEAN related issues, which can assist in the development of the ASEAN Community by 2015. The Habibie Center through its ASEAN Studies Program, alongside other institutions working towards the same goal, hopes to contribute to the realization of a more people-oriented ASEAN that puts a high value on democracy and human rights. The objective of the ASEAN Studies Program is not merely only to conduct research and discussion within academic and government circles, but also to strengthen public awareness by forming a strong network of civil society in the region that will be able to help spread the ASEAN message. With the establishment of ASEAN Studies Program, The Habibie Center aims to play its part within our capabilities to the ASEAN regional development.

## About Talking ASEAN

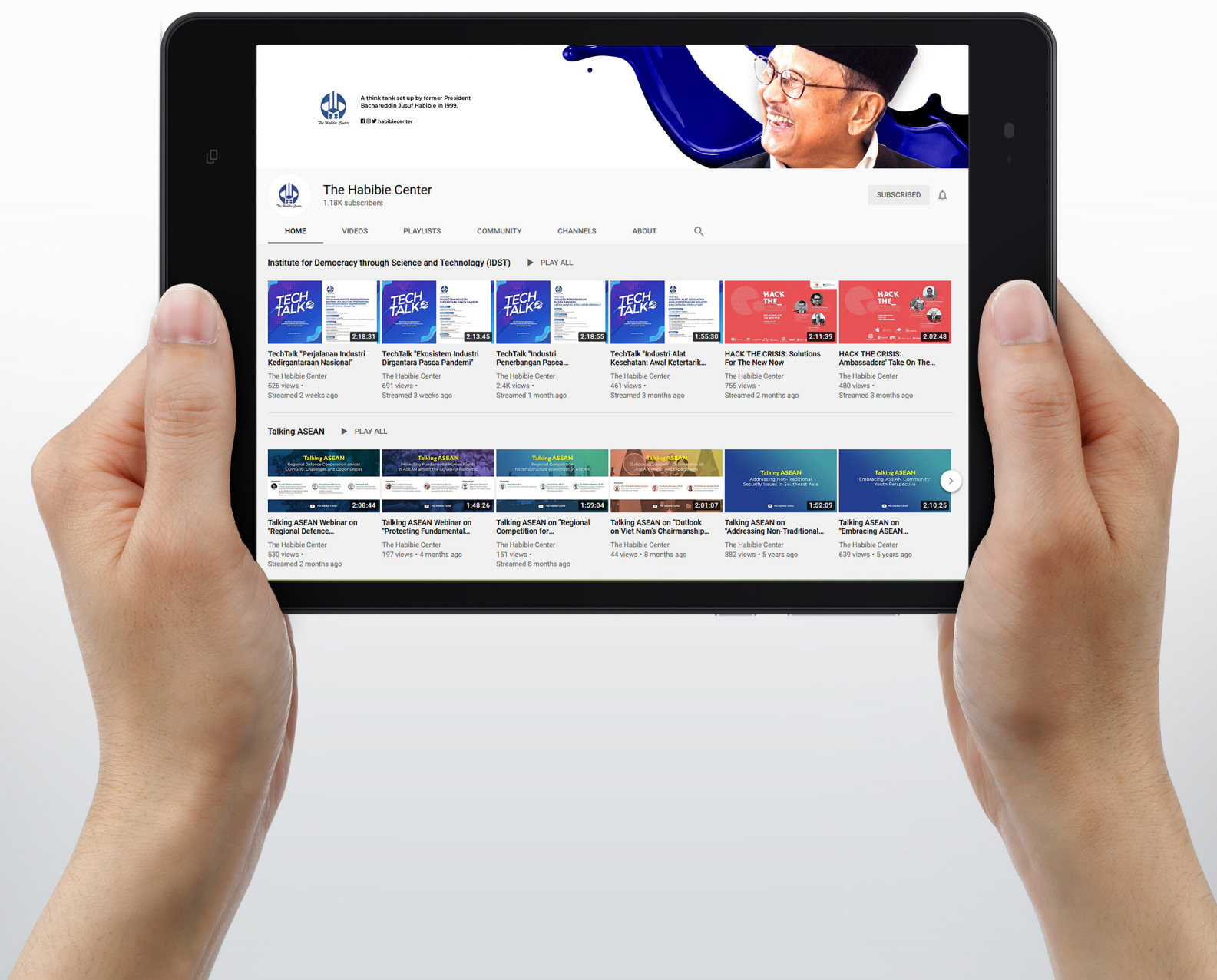
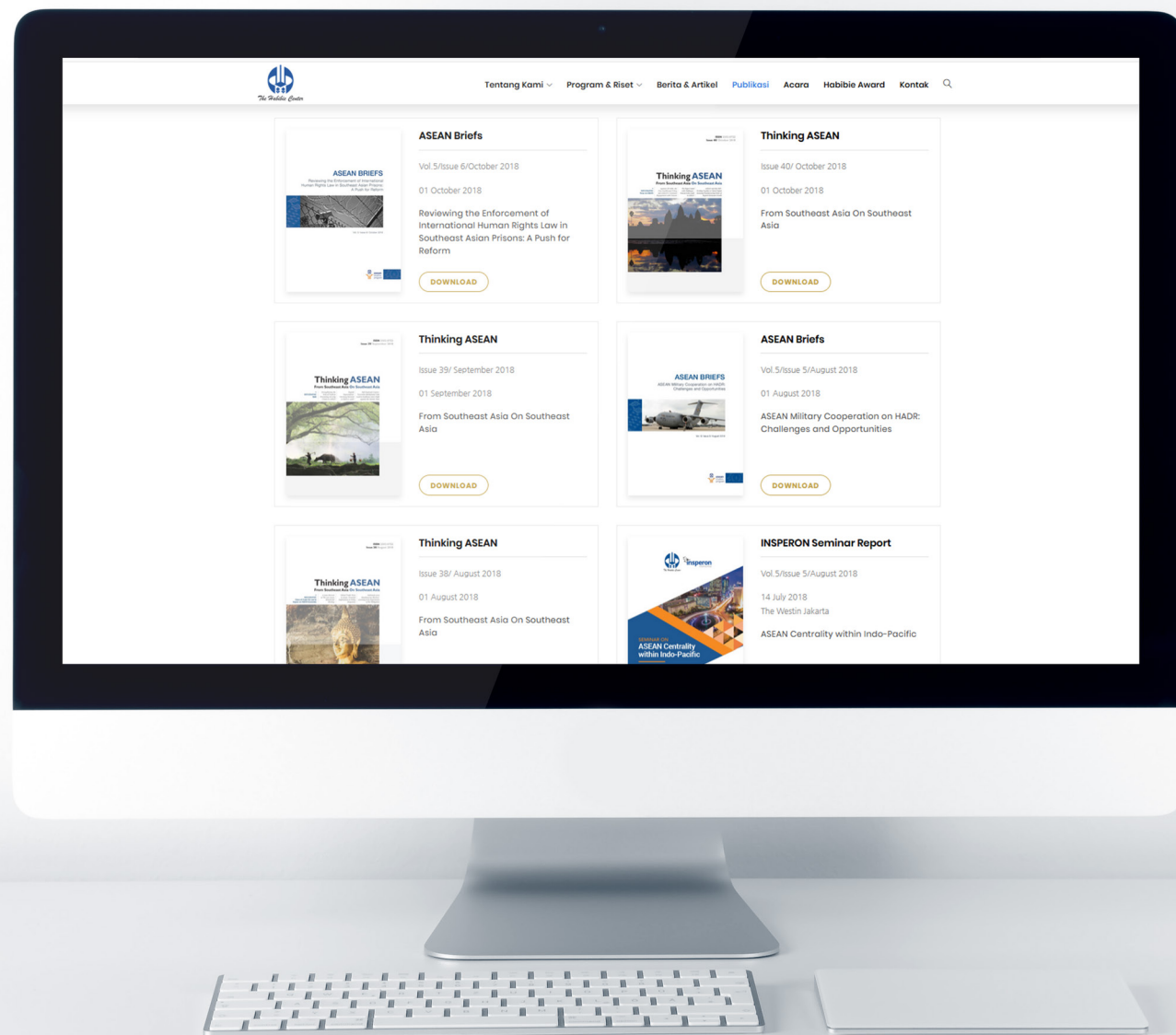
Talking ASEAN is a monthly public dialogue held at The Habibie Center in Jakarta. Covering a wide array of issues related to ASEAN, Talking ASEAN addresses topics of: Economic Integration, Socio-cultural, & Democracy, human rights and regional peace, among others. Featuring local and visiting experts, Talking ASEAN is one of a series of twelve dialogues regularly held each month and open to a target audience consisting of ASEAN officials, foreign ambassadors & diplomats, academics, university students, businesses, and the media.

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