



Asia's Post-Pandemic Order and Integration: Outlook of ASEAN and the Indo-Pacific at Crossroads

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Title and Synopsis

Session 2: Southeast Asia between India and China: Reimagining Asia and Regional Indo-Pacific Order

Amitav ACHARYA, School of International Service, American University, Washington, D.C.

ASEAN and Asian Security in the Age of Pandemics

This presentation will assess the impact of COVID-19 on US-China competition, China-ASEAN relations, and ASEAN centrality in the regional architecture of Indo-Pacific. While the pandemic has far-reaching effects on Asia, it is too early to assess its long-term effects. The pandemic might accelerate the rise of Asia, but fears of a Chinese hegemony are far-fetched, as China faces distrust and pushback on its own pandemic diplomacy.

Rahul MISHRA, Asia-Europe Institute, University of Malaya, Malaysia

Where 'Act East' meets Indo-Pacific: Mapping India's Southeast Asia engagement

Launched in 2014, the Act East policy, known as Look East policy, aims to comprehensively engage India in the region at the political, strategic, cultural, connectivity, and people-to-people levels. This paper maps the key achievements of India's Act East policy and analyses how it is contributing in fulfilling India's Indo-Pacific vision, as articulated by PM Modi in his 2018 Shangri La Speech. Shedding strategic inhibitions is an important component of the Act East policy which intends to build stronger defense trade ties, strengthening infrastructure and connectivity linkages and reviving cultural connections. The Indo-Pacific construct is bringing a major shift in the way Southeast Asian countries and its major stakeholders perceive the regional dynamics. Despite China's lukewarm response, support for the Indo-Pacific is gathering momentum with the US and its allies – Japan and Australia – acting as its leading proponents. One of the central features of the Indo-Pacific construct is its emphasis on the prominent role of India. That the Japanese, American, and Australian leaders have reiterated their commitment with India in making the Indo-Pacific a reality, is in complete contrast with the Asia-Pacific construct, propounded three decades ago by these powers.

Surat HORACHAIKUL, Indian Studies Center and Faculty of Political Science, Chulalongkorn University

Explaining and Understanding ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific: A Neo-classical Realist Account

This article employs a lens of neo-classical realism to argue that the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP) is the best outcome for what ASEAN's member states could compromise in the context of BRI led by China and Indo-Pacific led by the United States. To satisfy the title, the article is divided into four parts. The first part delineates AOIP and the criticisms against AOIP. The second part addresses ASEAN's member states' different national interests and ASEAN's centrality. The third part examines the Chairman's Statement on the ASEAN Leaders' Meeting held in April 2021 in Indonesia to show how the Myanmar coup issue reflects the struggling ASEAN's centrality and AOIP. The last part summarizes and ends with some implications on the future of ASEAN.

Session 3: The Indo-Pacific from Southeast Asian Perspectives: Centrality and Multilateralism in Uncertain Times (1)

TRAN Thi Anh-Dao, University of Rouen (France) & Research Institute on Contemporary Southeast Asia (IRASEC, Thailand)

ASEAN's perspectives in Asia-Africa Growth Corridor Partnership

Since the 2008 global crisis, the weight of South-South exports has exceeded that of South-North exports: in 2018, 57.6% of total exports from developing countries (here referred to as "the South") were destined for other developing economies. Evidence does seem to show a new geography of international trade with renewed and growing interest in South-South trade cooperation. On this basis it is possible to understand increasing trade ties between ASEAN (especially the developing members, labelled here ASEAN8) and Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). In the wake of this trade revival, the objective here is to analyze the intensified trade between ASEAN8 and SSA: how has developed this trade segment in a more general trend connecting Africa and Asia on the one hand, and in inter-regional South-South relations on the other hand? What are the major obstacles to this commercial momentum in the Indo-Pacific context, and which kind of policies would be required to cope with them?

Indonesia: Dewi Fortuna ANWAR, Research Center for Politics-Indonesian Institute of Sciences, Jakarta

Southeast Asia and the Indo-Pacific: some general observations

Great power politics has been a persistent feature of history and there are differences with regard to how countries view the regional order, including how Southeast Asian countries view "Indo-Pacific." There are various interpretations on the meaning and what the concept entails have been put forth by various countries/regions. There is the geographic understanding of the Indo Pacific, i.e. the geographic location that is formed by the Pacific and Indian Oceans. There is also the strategic meaning, which describes Indo-Pacific as an exclusive security/strategic cooperation among a number of states. And then there is an interpretation offered by Southeast Asian countries through the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific.

After several months of intense effort, the ASEAN Outlook on Indo-Pacific (AOIP) was finally adopted at the ASEAN Summit on 23 June 2019. Aplauded as an important breakthrough, AOIP also disappoints many of those who had high expectations. AOIP does not provide responsive measures in the case of conflict escalation. Two years after its conception, the promotion of AOIP is no longer as grandeur as before. Identification upon the existing and the forthcoming hotspots are necessary before being able to bridge differences in the Indo-Pacific region.

Malaysia: LAU Sim Yee, Faculty of International Studies, Reitaku University, Tokyo

Strengthening Pluralism in the Indo-Pacific and the Role of the ASEAN

Indo-Pacific has become a place where 24 allies are dividing themselves with their alleged challenger, China. Containment strategy executed by the US and its allies, humanitarian interventions in failed states, freedom and prosperity expounded by liberal democracy and capitalism, and the Biden's assertion of the rivalry between US and China as "a battle between the utility of democracies in the 21st century and autocracies" are conventional wisdoms that add fuel to the fire. Concerted efforts, at least to extinguish the flame, are crucial for peace, stability, and prosperity in and beyond the region. The diversity of Southeast Asia region is based on the linkages with Indian and Chinese civilizations, Islam, and Christianity. With this distinct pool of diversity, the ASEAN is a trustworthy group to serve as the main navigator for guiding the sail to the post-Covid peaceful coexistence in Indo-Pacific. The ASEAN is required to initiate a process of conversations with member states of Indo-Pacific group, but also with the alleged challenger, China. A constructive dialogue means the establishment of a pragmatic and mutually acceptable architecture of peaceful coexistence in Indo-Pacific.

Philippines: Joefe B. SANTARITA, Asian Center, University of the Philippines

ASEAN's Positioning in a multipolar Indo-Pacific

In Indo-Pacific and regional context, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) finds itself in a strategic vantage point relative to the United States, China, and other middle powers due to its nonthreatening posture and its capacity to perambulate through the "hierarchical" nature of global affairs. As a follow up to the Singapore based think tank's commentary, this paper discusses ASEAN's positioning to include the role as pivotal actor in creating an environment for economic development and people-centered prosperity in the region without undermining the participation of other states. Beyond the maneuverings and foreign policy dynamics of great powers in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the ASEAN can also maximize its well-established network to explore new areas for cooperation beyond the pandemic in 2021, to sustain and elevate the existing rules-based international and regional order.

Session 3: The Indo-Pacific from Southeast Asian Perspectives: Centrality and Multilateralism in Uncertain Times (2)

Cambodia: Vannarith CHHEANG, Asian Vision Institute and Invest in Cambodia

How Can ASEAN Navigate Through Geopolitical Rivalries

The evolving US-China power rivalry causes significant threats to regional peace and stability and put constraints on the foreign policy options for the small states. Maintain agency is the matter of survival for small states. ASEAN is widely perceived as the shield to protect the interests of small states and middle powers in Southeast Asia. By exercising collective agency, ASEAN could enhance its relevance and leverage. The ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP) is one of the key regional initiatives to navigate ASEAN through US-China rivalry by strengthening ASEAN centrality and engagement in the Asia Pacific and Indian Ocean regions, connecting ASEAN with other regional mechanisms in both regions. Therefore, operationalizing the AOIP is critical to enhancing the collective agency of ASEAN. First, ASEAN needs to further build strong consensus on ASEAN centrality- what are the core principle and values constituting ASEAN centrality. Second, ASEAN needs to deliver concrete results on the key cooperation areas, including maritime cooperation, connectivity, UN Sustainable Development Goals 2030, and economic and other possible areas of cooperation. Third, ASEAN needs to proactively engage non-state actors in regional integration and community building process, including political parties, private corporations, and civil society groups.

Myanmar: Chaw Chaw SEIN, International Relations Department, University of Yangon

Myanmar in the Indo-Pacific: Engaging with Regional Powers

Myanmar is at the heart of strategic environment between the Indian Ocean U.S. Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) Strategy and China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Due to its strategic location, Myanmar has drawn attention to major powers rivalry in terms of both security and economy. ASEAN has stated its "ASEAN Outlook on Indo-Pacific" at the 34th ASEAN Summit, held in Thailand. It is necessary to clarify how ASEAN will stand on this statement as a centrality. On the other hand, it is necessary to trace China's BRI whether it is going with one belt one road for one country and what it means for ASEAN as a whole. In this context, strategic competition of major players is concern for small power like Myanmar which is yet to political transition. Based on this backdrop, this paper will try to address how can Myanmar engage with regional powers in the complex interplay of their interests.

Thailand: Panitan WATTANAYAGORN, Faculty of Political Science, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok

Thai policy face to US/China competition and possible confrontation

This presentation argues that, on the one hand "ASEAN Centrality" has been an important element in Thailand's national security strategy and foreign policy. The concept has not only been highlighted in the current official documents, but also implemented by the Thai governments in practice for the past decades. Recent research also indicates that Thailand has placed an importance of ASEAN among its top foreign policy priorities. The objective in

doing that is to achieve a “strategic new equilibrium” for a more stable regional order. This trend is likely to continue in the short and medium terms. However, on the other hand, this presentation also argues that since Thai diplomacy is well known for its pragmatism. Recent developments also indicate that Thailand is moving or “hedging” towards China. In the much longer term, or in the events of a war or an open conflict between China and the United States, it is quite possible that Thailand maybe forced, much like during the WWII, to align itself with China. The consequences to Thailand and to the ASEAN multilateral strategy could be catastrophic.

Vietnam: Thị Liên Claire TRẦN, Research Institute on Contemporary Southeast Asia (IRASEC), Bangkok

The Indo-Pacific: An Opportunity for Vietnam

This paper shows how the Indo-Pacific strategy has become a major issue of the Vietnamese foreign policy. More than ever, Vietnam seeks multilateralism to manage its necessary political and economic partnership with the neighbouring China and its military pressure in the South China Sea. This paper highlights the opportunities for Vietnam’s economic, security and diplomatic to play a significant role in the Indo-Pacific and defend its own strategic priorities: rules-based regional order without hegemony, freedom of navigation and overflight in the South China Sea and inclusive regional open trade. It also focuses on its efforts to maintain a favourable regional balance of powers through a strong partnership with the US and the other key players in the Indo-Pacific region (India, Japan and Australia in particular). At least, it suggests that the Indo-Pacific strategy contributes to enhance Vietnam’s leadership as an emerging middle power in ASEAN and in the international order.

ASEAN: Shafiah F. MUHIBAT , Department of International Relations, Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), Indonesia

Southeast Asia and the Indo-Pacific: some general observations

Great power politics has been a persistent feature of history and there are differences with regard to how countries view the regional order, including how Southeast Asian countries view “Indo-Pacific.” There are various interpretations on the meaning and what the concept entails have been put forth by various countries/regions. There is the geographic understanding of the Indo Pacific, i.e. the geographic location that is formed by the Pacific and Indian Oceans. There is also the strategic meaning, which describes Indo-Pacific as an exclusive security/strategic cooperation among a number of states. And then there is an interpretation offered by Southeast Asian countries through the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific. After several months of intense effort, the ASEAN Outlook on Indo-Pacific (AOIP) was finally adopted at the ASEAN Summit on 23 June 2019. Aplauded as an important breakthrough, AOIP also disappoints many of those who had high expectations. AOIP does not provide responsive measures in the case of conflict escalation. Two years after its conception, the promotion of AOIP is no longer as grandeur as before. Identification upon the existing and the forthcoming hotspots are necessary before being able to bridge differences in the Indo-Pacific region.

Session 4: Geopolitics in the Indo-Pacific: The Intersecting Interests of Other Major Powers

China: HOO Tiang Boon, RSIS, Singapore

Chinese Perspectives of the Indo-Pacific Concept and Major Power Relations

In recent years there have been growing attention on, and increasing usage of, the term “Indo-Pacific” to characterize the political geography of the Asia-Pacific region. While the concept itself is not new and has multiple origins, it gained new levels of prominence when Washington began to evoke the parlance in its policy documents and rhetoric from around 2017. American employment of the term as well as its subsequent international popularization have since garnered the attention of the Chinese scholarly and policy community. This talk will explore Chinese perspectives regarding the notion of the Indo-Pacific. While the dominant strands in this debate have been an ambivalent blend of concern and skepticism, there are also more nuanced perspectives. This talk will also discuss possible Chinese responses to the evolving Indo-Pacific geopolitical dynamic, as well as the implications of these developments on the regional order.

Europe: David CAMROUX SciencesPo, Honorary Research Fellow, Center for International Studies (CERI), Paris

Europe Rediscovered the Indo-Pacific... Xi Jinping and Joe Biden

It was the German General K Haushofer, in his *Geopolitik des Pazifischen Ozeans* (1924) who created the denomination ‘Indo-Pacific’. A century later, in October 2020, the German Foreign Ministry framed its Asia policy guidelines as directed towards an Indo-Pacific region. As is often the case, it was its French counterpart which had paved the way publishing in mid 2018 a policy paper on an inclusive Indo-Pacific region. On November 2020, the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs joined the chorus with its own Indo-Pacific policy paper. Finally, on 19th April 2021 the European Union published its “EU Strategy for cooperation in the Indo-Pacific”. A definitive version should be adopted by the European Commission and the Parliament in Fall. As for the UK, since Brexit, promoting a Global Britain involves a “very British tilt towards the Indo-Pacific”. Referring to these various policy documents and present European foreign relations practice, my paper has two purposes. Firstly, to contextualize diverse European views of the Indo-Pacific in relation to domestic considerations. Secondly, to situate strategies within a larger multilateral and geopolitical environment, in particular, Sino-American rivalry. I raise the issue as to whether EU-ASEAN relations will become a casualty in the new European pan-regional orientation.

India: Shankari SUNDARARAMAN, Centre for Indo-Pacific Studies (CIPS), Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), New Delhi

India’s Approach to the Indo-Pacific: Assessing the Critical Shifts in the Post Covid 19 Period

The regional balance in the Indo-Pacific has been seeing considerable shifts for nearly two decades with structural changes pushing regional geopolitics to the forefront. Even as the US China rivalry will remain the determining factor for the immediate future of the international order, several states are beginning to take a distinct approach in how they respond to the

challenges that are emerging in this context. The impact of Covid 19 on the regional and the international space will remain critical in the years to come and has necessitated a fresh look at certain foreign policy options for various regional countries, including India. This paper will look at India's approach to the Indo-Pacific even as the pandemic has led to certain critical shifts in international relations in Asia.

Japan: Maiko ICHIHARA, Graduate School of Law, Hitotsubashi University, Japan, and visiting scholar at Carnegie Endowment for International Peace

Japan's Approach to Free and Open Indo-Pacific

This presentation looks at Japan's approach to the Free and Open Indo-Pacific vision, and analyzes that Japan promotes liberal values with an incrementalist and pluralistic approach. Japan is uniquely positioned to operate in the diplomatic space between the value-laden approach of Western democracies and the realities of governance in the Asia-Pacific. It can use its influence in governments around the Asia-Pacific to help promote the agenda of liberal democracies in a way that is appropriate for the country in question. Finally, I suggest that without substance, Japan's values-oriented diplomacy could crumble, and Japanese policymakers should do more to ensure that a mismatch between rhetoric and action does not end up undermining Japan's diplomatic efforts.

USA: Dr. Thomas PARKS, Asia Foundation

Prospects for a multi-polarity in ASEAN

The China-US strategic rivalry has galvanized interest in Southeast Asia in ways not seen since the Cold War. However, the rivalry also threatens to bifurcate the ASEAN group of nations should countries be forced into a strategic alignment with superpowers. ASEAN member states have been at the center of great power competition before, but the conditions today are much more conducive for the interests of the region's middle powers. The regional order is going through rapid transition, and while many are presuming a new Cold War is starting, in fact there are important signs of an emerging multipolar order. How will ASEAN member states navigate this new reality? How can other external powers, beyond the US and China, help to ensure that the region remains an open and dynamic region? What are the stumbling blocks to a prospective multipolar order?

Session 5: Asia's Post-Pandemic Integration: What the Indo-Pacific Should Stand for?

Fukunari KIMURA, Faculty of Economics, Keio University, and Chief Economist, Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA)

Can India and South Asia Take Part in Factory Asia?

The economic context of Indo-Pacific has not well developed yet due to a currently thin economic relationship between ASEAN/East Asia and India/South Asia in the international

division of labor. India and South Asia have not participated in the East Asian task-by-task division of labor centered by machinery industries where the existing mega-FTA strategy may make a breakthrough for it. Talks on digital connectivity between India/South Asia and ASEAN/East Asia, which is necessary for the coming digital world, are not properly organized yet, either. To further strengthen Factory Asia, ASEAN/East Asia must extend its economic integration to India/South Asia.

Mia MIKIC, Advisor at Large, ARTNeT and Visiting Fellow, Institute for Euro-Asian Studies, Zagreb University

Asian integration: Post-pandemic realities

Before the global pandemic, there were several challenges to the Asian trade environment – globalization, weakened multilateral trade regime, diverse participation of Asian economies in the Factory of Asia and sharply increased uncertainty primarily due to trade tensions between the US and China. The pandemic-driven disruptions of supply chains, reduction of economic activity, FDI, trade, etc., added to the already existing angst from globalization and things/people “foreign,” raising a level of distrust among governments that needed to work together in the context of fighting the global pandemic. Looking into the post-pandemic future of Asian economic integration requires assessing the following dimensions: trade, FDI, equity, migration, tourism with a view of identifying the key factors which hinder integration, especially from a perspective of diversifying value chains and establishing production networks in the region and the needs of sustainable recovery and development. Are the two obvious paths (RCEP and CPTPP) with their opportunities to include new members sufficient to deal with the obstacles? Additionally, and importantly, the role of re-building trust in regional and multilateral cooperation will be discussed, especially with the embrace of competitive interdependence approaches from both the US and the EU. Would adopting a symbiotic interdependence in Asia be an advantage?

Jayant MENON, ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute

Asia's Post-Pandemic DisIntegration? Dealing with Disruptive Technologies and Divergent Demographics Amid Pandemic Fallout

New variants of the coronavirus are producing the worst outbreaks in many countries in the Indo Pacific. Progress with vaccine rollouts has been uneven, further contributing to inequality of outcomes. The pandemic could have lasting effects by reinforcing nationalism, protectionism, and other trends that are already undermining globalisation. The most serious challenge posed by a pandemic induced acceleration towards a digital economy is the disruption to labour markets, made worse by divergent demographic trends in the region. Policies that increase factor mobility can narrow differences in capital-labour ratios and assist in productivity catch-up to promote more inclusive growth. The reduction in labour and capital mobility during the pandemic may continue into a post-pandemic new normal, however. Since commodity movements can partly substitute for factor movements, regional initiatives that liberalise trade can also reduce adjustment costs.

Amita BATRA, Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), New Delhi

India, ASEAN and the Quad

The geography of the Indo Pacific remains fluid. The strategic dimension has, however, been developed through the four-member Quad. More significantly, the Quad has, during the pandemic, announced some concrete economic initiatives, specifically for supply chain resilience. These include the SCRI (Supply Chain Resilience Initiative) among three of its members that was announced in September, 2020 and a working group on technology innovation, announced in March 2021. India is a member of the Quad and the and its economic initiatives. India is also in the process of orienting its trade policy away from single source dependence for its imports. ASEAN, meanwhile is also seeking to strengthen supply chains through diversification and broader regional integration as well as through the RCEP. This presentation will examine these diverse economic elements and approaches towards making regional supply chains more resilient as the regional order evolves in the post pandemic period.

Piti SRISANGNAM, ASEAN Studies Center, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok

ASEAN Community Amidst Post-COVID Indo-Pacific Conflict

The year 2021 is when Global Value Chains (GVCs) are at their lowest point. Many believe the GVC will fully recover to the volume of 18 trillion USD again in 2023. International trade advantages through the new trade negotiations is what everyone wants in order to gain the better integration momentum from this GVCs recovery. Unfortunately, the conflict of the great power nations from the transformation of the New World Order could complicate the situation in Indo-Pacific region.

Session 6: ASEAN amidst Competing Connectivity Strategies and Integration Challenges

Suthiphand CHIRATHIVAT and Charit TINGSABADH, ASEAN Studies Center, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok

Between the Two Seas of Indo-Pacific: From Kra Isthmus to Thai Canal and Landbridge in Southern Thailand

Recent regional strategic changes have generated an exceptional relooking of two seas' linkages of Indo-Pacific, in conjunction with the revival of Kra Isthmus in Southern Thailand. The issue is not new as it is the narrowest part of Malay-Thai peninsular and could represent the most direct maritime route to link South China Sea to the Indian Ocean and the wider world. More than 3 centuries ago, under King Narai's reign, The French proposed to dig the Kra Isthmus to channel the two sides of the oceans, but the idea never materialized. Since then, Kra Isthmus was repeatedly figured but only in discussion. Until China's BRI takes shape, Kra Isthmus morphed into its new name, Klong Thai (Thai canal), supposedly initiated by local interest groups. Only the project size too big to fail, thus it gave, the Prayuth government, to advance an interim alternative, landbridge, linking the two provinces of Chumporn and Ranong between the two seas of Indo-Pacific. The paper tries to answer why such reviving

interests of Kra Isthmus at present? Who could benefit? And at what costs? And whether landbridge, as an alternative, could open a new era of Thailand-ASEAN connectivity and BRI linking to the Indo-Pacific?

Sineenat SERMCHEEP, Faculty of Economics, Chulalongkorn University

Digital Connectivity in ASEAN: Opportunities and Challenges

Digital connectivity is a crucial component for ASEAN's post-pandemic recovery and competitiveness. During the COVID-19 pandemic, many economies and industrial sectors have accelerated the adoption of digitalization to respond to the pandemic and to mitigate its effect. Improving digital connectivity helps to enhance the regional digital transition. It is also a prerequisite for national and regional competitiveness and a key driver of development in the digital era. What should ASEAN member states do to improve digital connectivity? What are the opportunities and challenges? How can ASEAN digital connectivity be forged with a broader region of the Indo-Pacific?

Venkatachalam ANBUMOZHI, Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA), Jakarta

Cross-Border Electricity Trade and Climate Stabilization: Key Policy, Regulatory and Market Challenges in South and Southeast Asia

Recognising the various benefits of Cross Border Electricity Trade (CBET) for meeting energy security and climate stabilization, both ASEAN and SAARC member states formulated directions. As the political climate is becoming increasingly more conducive for CBET, the power sectors of the countries are at different stages of evolution in regulatory frameworks. National policy and investment frameworks and other aspects of facilitating energy trade across the borders are not exhaustive. Without a consistent and coherent inter regional regulatory framework in place, investment opportunities and consequently, large scale energy between India and ASEAN that could benefit both importing and exporting nations may not happen. This paper examines the current status and future of cross border energy trade in the context of climate change stabilization. It concludes that deeper energy connectivity between India and ASEAN will be driven by sound climate economics that would in turn depend on the demand and supply balance in each country as well as the policy and regulatory environment.

Anupama DEVENDRAKUMAR, Faculty of Arts and Sciences, VinUniversity, Vietnam

Asia's Post-Pandemic Order and Regional Integration: ASEAN Perspectives

The Covid-19 pandemic is raising difficult political-economic, socio-cultural, institutional questions. The ongoing impact of the pandemic has not only questioned the integration processes but also has laid bare the loopholes in them. The leaders, scholars, academia, businesses, and the public are divided on the future of integration and the imminent changes that will mark the post-pandemic order. Extreme views on globalization such as the possibility of its reversal, demise, transformation, among others. The divided views are compelling the economies and societies across the world to reconsider the role of the state, public policy, institutions. In this context, this analytical paper will examine how the nature of integration

in Asia might change and shape the post-pandemic economic order. The paper will focus on the pandemic experiences of ASEAN countries. ASEAN member countries' performance in tackling the pandemic, its impact, the immediate coping strategies, and the long-term recovery plan will be explored under the selected themes: the role of the state, ASEAN institutions, the public policy, external partners, market actors, and social actors.

Session 7: Security Issues and Strategic Challenges in the Indo-Pacific

Jean-Pierre CABESTAN, Department of Government and International Studies, Faculty of Social Science, Hong Kong Baptist University

Divide and Rule: China's Responses to the various Indo-Pacific Initiatives

This paper focus on China's responses to the various Indo-Pacific initiatives that have been made public since Shinzo Abe coined the very idea of Indo-Pacific in 2016 and how these responses have impacted on China-ASEAN relations. Actually, it is China's rise and, in 2013, Xi Jinping's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) that have been the main drivers of all the Indo-Pacific initiatives taken subsequently. Xi's BRI and later Japan's and, in 2017, US's Trump Administration's Indo-Pacific strategies have been the real game changers. Additional Indo-Pacific initiatives have been taken later by other actors as India, Australia, France, the EU, Germany and the ASEAN. These initiatives have directly contributed to intensifying China's activism on all fronts with the risk of antagonising more countries, including among its ASEAN partners. All in all, Beijing's divide and rule strategy has been rather successful and is likely to be maintained, even if today, it is facing more pushback among ASEAN capitals and among other capitals, especially Washington, Tokyo, Delhi and Canberra, in other words the Quad.

Vice Admiral Pradeep CHAUHAN, Director-General of the National Maritime Foundation (NMF), New Delhi

Security issues and strategic challenges in the Indo-Pacific

The "Indo-Pacific" has been gaining new geopolitical construct over the last few years. There is also a growing consensus in understanding the geographical scope and economic and strategic approaches towards Indo-Pacific. The Indo-Pacific obtained renewed vibrancy when ASEAN, in June 2019, and India, in November 2019, came out with their respective Indo-Pacific visions, namely, the ASEAN Outlook on Indo-Pacific (AOIP), and, the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI), respectively. Given above, this presentation will discuss unfolding Indo-Pacific architecture, underscoring the growing regional and extra-regional convergence evident in its conceptual and geographic construct as a predominantly, but not exclusively, maritime space. Several countries and regions have introduced their respective Indo-Pacific visions including India. For India, the Indo-Pacific is not a "strategy" but a "strategic geography" — a free, open, and inclusive region, founded upon a consensually derived, cooperative, and collaborative, rules-based order, marked by comity amongst all stakeholders that operate within it. This presentation aims to review the perspectives of Indo-Pacific that are shared by different countries and discuss the areas of cooperation. Further, the

presentation will discuss the central role of ASEAN-led fora in attaining the necessary conditions of stability in Indo-Pacific region.

Éric FRÉCON, visiting academic, Universiti Brunei Darussalam and Research Institute on Contemporary Southeast Asia (IRASEC CNRS)

The South China Sea disputes in a Covid and Indo-Pacific context

For years, standoffs and clashes off the Spratleys and Paracels Islands have given plenty of food for thought, for many conferences. Nowadays, is it time to admit that the South China Sea disputes should fall into the category of the endless conflicts, getting back into line – and that the idea of a proper Code of Conduct is becoming hopeless? Regarding the big powers, this sea is only one of the numerous frontlines, either physical (Mekong, Himalaya) or virtual (trade and cyber wars). Among the second rank powers, the newcomers like France, Germany and the United Kingdom seem to see the South China Sea more like a springboard for their own Indo-Pacific strategies. Lastly, even the littoral states, which are obviously directly involved, are divided in terms of relationship with China: both diplomatically (more or less vocal towards Beijing) and internally (across the ministries and their different concerns about sovereignty versus investments... and vaccines). That said, it does not mean to drop its guard in this new context. Besides the navies, new actors come into play: coastguards, think tanks.... Can these post-post-Cold War paradigms bring a peaceful and sustainable status quo? Or is it an antechamber to the best... or the worst?

Arabinda ACHARYA, Rabdan Academy in Abu Dhabi

From Covid-19 Pandemic to Cyber Pandemic: What do we have now and how do we cope?

The pandemic Covid-19 has more wide-ranging and pervasive effects on the world, its inhabitants and its ecosystems than the terrorist attacks (9/11/2001). It has changed life patterns besides indefinite closures of most business. At the same time, the criminal enterprise and extremists and terrorist organizations are exploiting the emerging vulnerabilities in our overall security. From a cyber security perspective, all these have put new demands in terms of technology dependence and exposed us to new threats. Critical business assets and functions have become victims of more targeted cyberattacks by criminals and rogue states. More importantly, hospitals and healthcare services have been hit particularly hard by new types of cyber threats designed for connectivity disruptions and denial-of-service attacks. Extremist and terrorist groups are using the pandemic especially in respect of their propaganda and fundraising efforts. There are also questions involving human rights, particularly measures that virtually put countries in states of seize. Is Covid-19 really changing the world risking “Life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness,”? How much freedom are we prepared to give up, for how long and onto whose hands? How do we make sense of the rapidly changing threats to our security and are we prepared to respond?

Kavi CHONGKITTAVORN, veteran journalist on regional affairs, Bangkok Post

Mekong Subregion: Great powers' new strategic competition

The rise of China and its implications for peace and security will be the key issue that the countries in the Indo-Pacific region have to ponder. Apart from the US, other major powers such as India, Japan, Australia and Europe are also fully engaged in shaping the new strategic landscape. Within the Indo-Pacific region, China has been playing a leading role in trade and, more recently, regional public health and maritime security, especially in Southeast Asia. For the past five years, China has also invested heavily in the Mekong subregion across all dimensions through its signature mechanism, the Lancang-Mekong Cooperation, knowing full well that this part of mainland Southeast Asia will be crucial to maintaining its sphere of influence. In response, as a regional stakeholder, all lower riparian countries have revitalized their decade-old cooperative under the ACMECS framework to strengthen their cooperation with assistance from international consortia of funders. The Mekong subregion is the new battlefield for greater powers' strategic competition which could yield unexpected outcomes.

Min ZIN, University of California, Berkeley, and former director of the Institute of Strategy and Policy, Myanmar

Myanmar Crisis: The Unprecedented Test for ASEAN Centrality and its Indo-Pacific Imagination

Since the putsch on Feb. 1 in Myanmar, both the military coup-makers and the widespread public opposition movement do not appear to perceive that they have reached an intolerable mutually hurting stalemate and are still pursuing unilateral strategies in hopes of prevailing over the other. Myanmar's crisis thus far resists any efforts – through either direct negotiation by the conflicting parties or mediation with third-party assistance – to arrive at political resolution and have become an intractable conflict. This crisis, therefore, presents unprecedented challenges to ASEAN, which has found itself unable to follow through on its own five-point consensus concerning Myanmar conflict. The notion of ASEAN Centrality, which in the past conveniently received recognition from competing great powers as if the bloc was at the heart of the regional institutional architecture, is losing its charm. ASEAN's mediation effort that aims to achieve a political settlement in Myanmar will serve not only Myanmar's interest but also ASEAN's relevancy in broader regional geopolitics.