

Original article. Political science

UDC 327(5)

DOI: 10.31696/2072-8271-2025-3-3-68-025-037

## **CHINA, SOUTHEAST ASIA AND THE BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE: DEVELOPING LEGAL TOOLS FOR DOING BUSINESS AND THEIR DIGITAL SUPPORT**

Evgeny A. KANAEV<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> IMEMO RAS, Moscow, Russia,

e.a.kanaev@gmail.com, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7988-4210>

**Abstract:** The article explores by what legal tools and their digital support the People's Republic of China (PRC) shapes the business landscape in Southeast Asian through the prism of its strategy to develop the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). On exploring major directions of China's policy in Southeast Asia and assessing the interim results obtained, the author proceeds to systemizing the legal tools of the Belt and Road Initiative and revealing their development in the digital space to finally turn to specifying their implications for doing business in Southeast Asia. The paper argues that Southeast Asia is a prime testing ground for the PRC to implement its legal tools, including those in the digital space, aimed at supporting the BRI. The novelty of the article stems from its research focus that is on the intersection of economic, business and legal fields, which makes the research an interdisciplinary exercise. The relevance and the practical significance of the research account for the establishment of the ASEAN Community 2025 and the finalization of ASEAN-China Free Trade Area (ACFTA) 3.0 with prospects for further increase in China's influence in the region. With those factors in view, the article contributes to expanding academic knowledge on the ASEAN integration model through the prism of its dialogue with external partners, exemplified by China. Although there is no dearth of papers focusing on ASEAN's policy, especially in the year of the establishment of the ASEAN Community 2025, the article stands out due to its multidisciplinary component as a foundation of its academic and practical value added.

**Keywords:** *China, Southeast Asia, ASEAN, Belt and Road Initiative, integration, legal tools, prospects*

**For citation:** Kanaev E.A. China, Southeast Asia and The Belt and Road Initiative: Developing Legal Tools for Doing Business and Their Digital Support. *Yugo-Vostochnaya Aziya: aktual'nyye problemy razvitiya*, 2025, T. 3, № 3 (68). Pp. 25–37. DOI: 10.31696/2072-8271-2025-3-3-68-025-037

Научная статья. Политические науки

# **КИТАЙ, ЮГО-ВОСТОЧНАЯ АЗИЯ И ИНИЦИАТИВА «ПОЯС И ПУТЬ»: ВЫРАБОТКА ПРАВОВЫХ ИНСТРУМЕНТОВ ПРЕДПРИНИМАТЕЛЬСКОЙ ДЕЯТЕЛЬНОСТИ И ИХ ПРАВОВОЙ ПОДДЕРЖКИ**

Евгений Александрович КАНАЕВ <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> ИМЭМО РАН, Москва, Россия,  
e.a.kanaev@gmail.com, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7988-4210>

**Аннотация:** В статье проанализировано, при помощи каких цифровых инструментов и элементов их цифровой поддержки Китайская Народная Республика (КНР), действуя в русле стратегии по развитию Инициативы «Пояс и Путь» (ИПП), формирует деловую среду в Юго-Восточной Азии. Проанализировав основные направления политики Китая в ЮВА и дав оценку достигнутым к настоящему времени результатам, автор систематизирует правовые инструменты ИПП, определяет их развитие в цифровом пространстве и уточняет их последствия для ведения бизнеса на пространстве ЮВА. Согласно позиции автора исследования, ЮВА является основным плацдармом для внедрения КНР своих правовых инструментов, в том числе в онлайн-сфере, поддержки ИПП. Новизна статьи обусловлена ее исследовательским ракурсом, находящимся на пересечении экономики, бизнеса и права, что придает исследованию междисциплинарный характер. Актуальность и практическая значимость проделанной работы обусловлены формированием Сообщества АСЕАН 2025 и завершением согласования параметров Зоны свободной торговли АСЕАН и Китая 3.0, способной привести к дальнейшему усилению влияния Китая в ЮВА. Учитывая эти моменты, статья способствует приращению научного знания о модели интеграции АСЕАН сквозь призму ее сотрудничества с внешними партнерами на примере Китая. Хотя в исследовании различных аспектов политики АСЕАН, особенно в год формирования Сообщества АСЕАН 2025, недостатка нет, уникальность подготовленной статьи определяется элементом междисциплинарности как основой ее научной и практической ценности.

**Ключевые слова:** Китай, Юго-Восточная Азия, АСЕАН, Инициатива «Пояс и Путь», интеграция, правовые инструменты, перспективы

**Для цитирования:** Канаев Е.А. Китай, Юго-Восточная Азия и Инициатива «Пояс и Путь»: выработка правовых инструментов предпринимательской деятельности и их правовой поддержки // Юго-Восточная Азия: актуальные проблемы развития, 2025, Том 3, № 3 (68). С. 25–37. DOI: 10.31696/2072-8271-2025-3-3-68-025-037

Since the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) was launched, Southeast Asia has been one of its crucial directions. Revealingly, two corridors of the Economic Belt Silk Road and part of the Maritime Silk Road of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century run through Southeast Asia, while the region accounted for 20% of China's investment within the BRI framework in the early 2020s<sup>1</sup>. China premises its regional policy on a firm and diversified foundation presented by its populous and influential diasporas, rising popularity of mass consumption goods, recognizable brands in the mass-market and, since recently, the premium class segment. Among the PRC's tools, ASEAN-China Free Trade Area (ACFTA) stands out, as it has significantly strengthened China's positions in Southeast Asia. Additionally, China links the industrial and the digital dimensions of cooperation, by means of this, promoting its companies and, eventually, building a complex ecosystem across the region. As a result, as exemplified by, for instance, trade statistics, China's influence in Southeast Asia has increased exponentially.

As the Belt and Road Initiative extends across a vast geographical area and carries far-reaching implications, it appears natural that China aims to equip it with powerful legal tools and support them digitally. To trace the latter in synergy with China's policy in Southeast Asia amid the establishment of the ASEAN Community 2025 and on the eve of the 35th anniversary of China-ASEAN dialogue is a timely and relevant exercise.

### **The Evolution of China's Policy in Southeast Asia before and after the BRI Launch**

Southeast Asia has traditionally loomed large in China's policy. A of today, China has created strategically important assets necessary for promoting its commercial interests across the region. A shift in the PRC's policy towards a more intense cooperation with the regional countries, as well as with ASEAN as an international actor, in the early 1990s gave China's efforts a strong impetus. As a result, the PRC's presence in Southeast Asia became comprehensive and multidirectional with a strong positive multiplier effect. The latter is understood as mutual influence of security, politics, economy and business to the best advantage of China's interests.

After the Asian financial and economic crisis 1997-1998, China took steps that helped it markedly increase its influence in Southeast Asia. Most importantly, China did not depreciate its currency and opened up its market to exports from Southeast Asian states. Additionally, it provided Thailand and other Asian states with financial assistance (according to Chinese estimates, the overall volume was over four billion dollars)<sup>2</sup>. Furthermore, China did not support ethnic Chinese during the anti-Chinese riots in Indo-

nesia in May 1998. Lastly, China's Defense White Paper, published in 1998, resonated well with ASEAN's key documents<sup>3</sup>. Unsurprisingly, this policy was enthusiastically welcomed across Southeast Asia.

In these circumstances, the PRC's influence in Southeast Asia skyrocketed. It was reinforced by China's practical steps, as it supported ASEAN+3 and actively participated in the launch of the East Asia Summit. Amidst those developments, China-ASEAN trade increased from 7,9 billion dollars to 39,5 billion dollars in 1991 and 2000 respectively<sup>4</sup>.

Against this background, China offered the association to launch the ASEAN-China Free Trade Area (ACFTA). For the association, it might bring considerable advantages, as ASEAN harbored ambitious plans aimed at strengthening resilience of its member states, hedge risks and explore new economic and commercial opportunities in dialogue with external partners. Nevertheless, ACFTA was perceived differently in China and in ASEAN countries. China aimed to achieve several major goals from CAFTA, which included strengthening its positions in Southeast Asian markets, decreasing the US' influence and weakening Taiwan's positions. Unsurprisingly, China had mostly positive expectations from ACFTA. Specifically, Beijing aimed to create a peaceful regional milieu and expand its access to the Indian Ocean (mostly, by intensifying cooperation with Myanmar), as well as to develop the PRC's provinces that border Indochina. In their turn, the ASEAN countries had a mix of positive expectations and apprehensions. The former included distance-related advantages (and, by extension, low transportation costs), implications of China's economic growth (it allowed ASEAN to increase its own economic performance and competitiveness) and prospects for Japan and South Korea catching up with China in the economic field in Southeast Asia, to the best advantage of ASEAN and its member states. The apprehensions, however, were no less serious. Prospects for China's political dominance as an aftereffect of its economic preponderance were a realistic scenario. Additionally, producers of ASEAN countries could suffer from massive losses due to China's low cost advantage. Finally, as Taiwan had established strong presence in Southeast Asia, prospects for decreasing its influence generated growing disappointment.

The ASEAN-China Framework Agreement on Comprehensive Economic Cooperation (ACFTA) was signed in 2002 and entered into force in 2010 (CAFTA 1.0). Between 2003 and 2009, China and ASEAN made a series of preparatory steps. In 2004, 2007 and 2009 respectively, the ASEAN-China Trade in Goods Agreement, the ASEAN-China Trade in Services Agreement and the ASEAN-China Investment Agreement were

signed. Simultaneously, the PRC initiated large-scale infrastructure projects, mostly in the transport sector (the Kunming-Singapore Rail Line as the most representative example) with a clear objective to create a single transport and logistics complex with the PRC as the center of economic gravity. Finally, Beijing intensified the processes of the renminbi regionalization by proposing payments in the Chinese currency in trade between the PRC's southeastern provinces and the ASEAN countries. As a result, ASEAN's trade with China exceeded corresponding figures in ASEAN's trade with its other external partners the year before ACFTA entered into force. In 2009, ASEAN-China accounted for 178,2 billion dollars, while ASEAN-EU 27, ASEAN-Japan and ASEAN-US trade stood at 161,4 billion dollars, 160,9 billion dollars and 149,6 billion dollars respectively in 2009<sup>5</sup>.

Substantially, ACFTA was a large-scale and ambitious undertaking, as it "called for the elimination of all tariffs on 6,682 tariff posts in 17 sectors: 12 in manufacturing and 5 in the agriculture, mining, and maritime sectors"<sup>6</sup>. After ACFTA became operational (January 2010), trade between ASEAN and China skyrocketed from 280,4 billion dollars to 772,3 billion dollars (trade in goods) in 2010 and 2024 respectively<sup>7</sup>. This outcome was premised on many factors. Most importantly, geographic proximity, substantiated by the PRC-led infrastructure construction, mattered. Additionally, China could rely upon its diasporas as promoters of its economic and commercial interests in the ASEAN countries. Since recently, China has been developing its value chains, both producer and consumer, across Southeast Asia. After China launched the Belt and Road Initiative, it synergizes the BRI with ASEAN-led projects and initiatives, most importantly, the ASEAN Economic Community and the RCEP. Finally but importantly, China develops digital tools to promote its economic and commercial interests in Southeast Asia, from supporting Chinese companies that construct 5G infrastructure to expanding the presence of its e-commerce platforms and promoting payments in the digital renminbi. Each of these factors individually, not to say about them all collectively, contributes to a marked increase in Chinese economic and commercial presence across the region.

ACFTA has gone through several rounds of upgrade. Negotiations on ACFTA 2.0 were launched in September 2014, and ACFTA 2.0 entered into force in November 2018. Then, negotiations on ACFTA 3.0 upgrade started in November 2022, and ACFTA 3.0 was signed in October 2025<sup>8</sup>. ACFTA 3.0 includes nine chapters and expands areas of cooperation from traditional ones like customs procedures and standardization to new fields, namely, digital economy, green economy, sustainable development, supply

chain connectivity, consumer protection, competition, MSME support<sup>9</sup>. Remarkably, ACFTA 3.0 was signed amidst the US tightening its grip on trade policy. As it generates apprehensions across Southeast Asia, China has ample reasons for portraying itself as a key provider of benefits (at least, as a safety mechanism against the US tariffs) to the region.

Overall, ASEAN welcomed the launch of the Belt and Road Initiative. Most importantly, the BRI expands sources of financing the construction of trans-boundary infrastructure in the ASEAN countries, which is a key enabler of their competitiveness. The more so since three years before the BRI launch, the association had issued the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity as one of its key visionary documents. If so, attempts to synergize ASEAN's priorities with the BRI became a matter of time. A significant step was made in 2019, as the association and the PRC agreed to synergize the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity 2025 and the Belt and Road Initiative. Notably, the directions of this synergy are diversified, ranging from the launch of the Initial Rolling Priority Pipeline of ASEAN Infrastructure Projects, in order to incentivize China to support them financially, to fostering ties between relevant institutions, for instance, the ASEAN Connectivity Coordinating Committee (ACCC) and Chinese Committee of the China-ASEAN Connectivity Cooperation Committee (CWC-CACCC)<sup>10</sup>.

A point to make independently relates to China's growing attention to ASEAN-led multilateral economic initiatives, mostly, the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP). The RCEP has a great global potential, since, as portrayed by an ISEAS expert, it “covers 30 per cent of global GDP, half of the world’s population, and a quarter of world exports<sup>11</sup>.” China has strong motives concerning the RCEP. For instance, as follows from Chinese Premier Li Qiang’s speech at the recent ASEAN Summits, the PRC welcomes a possible RCEP expansion (at present, prospects for Hong Kong, Sri Lanka, Chile and Bangladesh the RCEP’s new members are discussed<sup>12</sup>). Since Beijing aims to synergize the BRI and the RCEP, the latter’s expansion will help China to increase its control over those economic actors. No less importantly, the PRC offers the European corporate sector to use cooperation with Chinese companies as a point of entry in the RCEP. Main advantages include, but are not limited to, streamlining rules of origins, harmonizing customs procedures, facilitating trade in services and investment, to mention just a few outcomes<sup>13</sup>. Finally, by developing the RCEP, China has good chances to portray itself as a committed supporter of openness and the development of multilateral trading system, with positive implications for the regional economic integration, as

well as the humanity as a whole<sup>14</sup>. In the current circumstances, it is especially important for the association due to the aftereffects of the US tariff policy. An extra benefit that China may obtain relates to undermining the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework Agreement. Taken together, those factors evidence that Beijing aims to use the RCEP as a multi-purpose tool to promote the BRI and simultaneously expand the spectrum of its economic possibilities.

In sum, Southeast Asia loomed large in the PRC's order of international priority both before and after the BRI was launched. At present, as China-US controversies are intensifying, this perception is being reinforced. In response, China is further upgrading its regional policy that becomes increasingly effective, and its components are in mutual synergy with a strong multiplier effect. As China sees the BRI cooperation as commercially promising, logically, it aims to equip its policy with powerful legal tools. Southeast Asia stands out as a crucial direction of this effort.

### **The BRI Legal Tools and Their Digital Component in the Doing Business Field: Implications for Southeast Asia**

As the Belt and Road Initiative aims, among other things, at re-organizing the BRI corporate map completely, the PRC's leadership cannot ignore the legal dimension of this task. The key objective is to make the BRI area receptive to China's interests and allow Chinese companies to obtain major advantages. With this factor in view, China's policy includes the visionary and the practical track.

From a visionary perspective, of special note is the document 'Opinions Regarding Establishment of Belt and Road International Commercial Dispute Resolution Regime' that the General Office of the State Council and Organization Department of the Communist Party of China Central Committee published in 2018 ("Opinions"). In the "Opinions", the PRC's approach to handle trans-boundary commercial disputes is outlined. Specifically, Beijing attempts to create a comprehensive China-centric legal ecosystem in which litigation, arbitration and mediation are intertwined. Arguably, the PRC aims to shape the evolution of the current dispute-resolution environment in a way favorable to China rather than to change it radically. Regarding the practical side of this task, the PRC develops its policy along three tracks.

The first track stands for tailoring the tools of China's state courts to the BRI development. In 2018, China set up two China International Commercial Courts (CICC) with the objective to handle international commer-

cial disputes arising across the BRI area (in Shenzhen for the Maritime Silk Road, and in Xi'an for the Silk Road Economic Belt respectively). Both are supervised by the Chinese Supreme People's Court and both are linked with Chinese institutions of arbitration and mediation. It evidences that China aims to establish a seamless ecosystem to handle international commercial disputes across the BRI area.

Simultaneously, China sets out its own rules of resolving international investment disputes. In 2017, the China International Economic and Trade Arbitration Commission (CIETAC) published its investment arbitration rules as a tool to settle investment disputes between Chinese companies and those from other BRI countries. In 2019, a similar step was made by Beijing Arbitration Commission. It demonstrates that the PRC aims to decrease the influence of the International Center for Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID) Convention and instead build a China-centric investment dispute resolution ecosystem.

The second track accounts for supporting alternative dispute resolution venues that might be useful for promoting the BRI. Specifically, China attaches much importance to Hong Kong International Arbitration Center (HKIAC). The reason is clear, as the HKIAC is a globally-renowned center of legal excellence, and the corporate sector across the world, including companies from the BRI countries, sees it as a world-class legal institution with high-quality, as well as relatively inexpensive, services. Revealingly, as far as recent arbitration caseload figures are concerned, the HKIAC is more or less equal to global arbitration centers like London Court of International Arbitrators (LCIA), Singapore International Arbitration Center (SIAC) and Stockholm Chamber of Commerce (the latter has its own Arbitration Institute)<sup>15</sup>.

Due to the afore-mentioned factors, the HKIAC looms large in the PRC's BRI-related priorities. Revealingly, several tools focusing specifically on the BRI were launched within the HKIAC. The BRI Advisory Committee includes twelve members with experience in the industries along which cooperation between the BRI partners largely proceeds. In its turn, the Resource Center is a database on the BRI projects, dispute-resolution options etc. These developments evidence that the HKIAC plays a crucial role in China's strategy for the BRI.

No less importantly, China stakes upon international mediation. The latter increases its popularity, both across and beyond the Asia-Pacific region, due to its distinct advantages. The latter center on quick dispute resolution, low fees comparing with arbitration and litigation, confidentiality and a "friendship-oriented approach", as in case disputing parties want to

maintain good relations regardless any situational circumstances, mediation is an ideal option. Events of profound significance took place in 2019-2020, when the UN Convention on International Settlement Agreements Resulting from Mediation (the Singapore Convention on Mediation, or Singapore Mediation Convention – SMC) was signed and entered into force.

Revealingly, China turned its attention to mediation before it signed the SMC and even before it launched the BRI. Specifically, Shanghai Commercial Mediation Center was established in 2011. Exploring the niche of mediation, China expects to gain huge advantages. They include the direct enforceability factor, as the SMC aims, among other things, at “enabling disputing parties to easily enforce and invoke settlement agreements across borders”<sup>16</sup>. More than that, mediation is cheap, quick and flexible enough to overcome cultural and other differences among the BRI participants. Finally but importantly, Chinese micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSME) find mediation convenient as the cost and time of arbitration and litigation prevent Chinese MSME from participating in transboundary commercial activity. With these factors in view, as well as aiming to become a globally renowned commercial mediation actor, China develops mediation-related tools that, as the PRC expects, will be adopted across the BRI area.

The third direction, which partially overlaps with the previous one, relates to Beijing’s attempts to establish dispute resolution-related organizations supervised and managed by China. Among the most representative examples, the International Commercial Mediation Center for the Belt and Road and the International Commercial Dispute Prevention and Settlement Organization (ICDPASO) stand out. The former aims at creating a pool of well-trained mediators across the BRI area, while the latter offers services that include mediation and investment arbitration and enjoys support from globally renowned institutions, like, for instance, the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO). These developments further evidence Beijing’s intention to shape the BRI legal landscape to China’s best advantage.

In specific terms, there are plenty of examples of mediation centers established and jointly managed by China and its partners, including those from Southeast Asia. For instance, in 2017 agreements between the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade (CCPIT) and Singapore International Mediation Center (SIMC), as well as CCPIT and Malaysian Mediation Center, on establishing joint mediation centers for BRI disputes were reached. The implications of this policy for Southeast Asia are far-

reaching, as the region is facing a risk to slip into further dependence on China.

Conclusive evidence demonstrates that China develops a comprehensive approach to the legal dimension of the Belt and Road Initiative. More importantly, Beijing's vision is supported by effective and diversified policy tools. At the same time, however, their potential is different. Litigation is constrained by the so-called reciprocity principle: a Chinese court recognizes a decision made in another country in case a similar decision made in China was recognized and enforced in that country. In its turn, mediation has not yet gained widespread popularity as a widespread dispute resolution tool. With these factors in mind, arbitration is and is likely to remain the most attractive option for China's BRI partners.

Taken together, these developments suggest far-reaching implications for Southeast Asia. As the Belt and Road Initiative places a strong emphasis on the trans-boundary infrastructure construction, the latter requires huge investments. Additionally, Southeast Asia is at the intersection of the BRI two land corridors and part of the Maritime Silk Road of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Although the corporate sector of the ASEAN countries prefers to settle international commercial disputes in the Singapore International Arbitration Center (SIAC) and the Singapore International Mediation Center (SIMC), the HKIAC will increase in demand as China-ASEAN dialogue on economic issues gains momentum. Finally, China's attempts to establish and operate international mediation centers together with its regional partners will increase its influence in the dispute resolution field across Southeast Asia. In these circumstances, the PRC's afore-mentioned policy directions make a profound impact on the doing business landscape in the region.

This assessment becomes all the more realistic since China develops digital tools along with all the three tracks discussed afore. Since recently, the HKIAC has been developing digital tools to make its services more efficient. Specifically, the HKIAC Case Connect, an online platform to manage and streamline internal processes (like, for instance, uploading documents with notifying users, tracking deadlines etc.<sup>17</sup>), was launched in 2021. More specifically, in 2025 the HKIAC started to develop the Hub, a new initiative aimed at harmonizing the priorities of arbitrators and legal technology providers with regard to usage of technologies in the field of arbitration<sup>18</sup>.

As far international litigation is concerned, China set up an online platform that offers litigants services they need and facilitate the process<sup>19</sup>. International Commercial Center for the Belt and Road follows the same

track, as online mediation is on a par with offline while promoting “a harmonious, reciprocal and equal mediation culture”<sup>20</sup>. Article 52 of ICDPASO Investment Arbitration Rules mentions a possibility to use information technologies “including but not limited to, online filing, service and hearings”<sup>21</sup>. Generally, as exemplified by Liu Xiaohong, President of the Shanghai University of Political Science and Law, China attaches great importance to equipping transboundary judicial cooperation with digital tools<sup>22</sup>.

In sum, as the afore-discussed developments demonstrate, the PRC implements a multi-faceted strategy aimed at making the legal dimension of business landscape in Southeast Asia conducive to its interests. As China’s legal tools, as well as their digital support, become powerful, sophisticated and eventually effective, Beijing’s chances to shape doing business conditions in the region increase considerably.

### Conclusion

The analysis of how the PRC equips the Belt and Road Initiative with legal tools and provides the latter with digital support, with a focus on Southeast Asia through the prism of China’s regional policy before and after the BRI was launched, reveals several broad assessments.

Southeast Asia has been and is likely to remain a crucial component of the Belt and Road Initiative. China has accumulated considerable assets upon which it premises its policy. Although the implementation of the BRI has been uneven since China launched it, nevertheless, remarkable success is obvious. At present, China is further expanding the spectrum of its policy tools, as exemplified by the recent developments, mostly, by the finalization of ACFTA 3.0.

Ample and, more importantly, growing evidence suggests that China pays close attention to both re-drawing the corporate map of the BRI area and upgrading legal tools relevant to that task. Since Beijing attaches profound significance to the ongoing digital transformation, it supports its legal tools digitally. As the BRI develops, more Chinese efforts to implement digitally enabled legal tools and their increasing sophistication are likely to take place. Additionally, there are convincing reasons to expect that the PRC-built legal ecosystem supporting Chinese companies will become more advanced and comprehensive.

In these circumstances, Southeast Asia is likely to remain a testing ground for the PRC to implement new legal practices and tools in order to support the BRI, with a broadening digital dimension as an indispensable component. Arguably, Southeast Asia stands as the most suitable candidate

to play a pathfinder role, as more digitally supported legal tools and their combination are developed by the PRC. Although this process will inevitably be long and gradual under any scenario, China has strong chances to succeed in performing this task.

#### ИНФОРМАЦИЯ ОБ АВТОРЕ

КАНАЕВ Евгений Александрович, доктор исторических наук, ведущий научный сотрудник ЦАТИ, Национальный исследовательский институт мировой экономики и международных отношений имени Е.М. Примакова РАН, Москва, Россия

Статья поступила в редакцию 03.11.2025;  
одобрена после рецензирования 15.11.2025;  
принята к публикации 30.11.2025.

#### INFORMATION ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Evgeny A. KANAEV, DSc (History), Leading Researcher, Center for Asia-Pacific Studies, Primakov Institute of World Economy and International Relations (IMEMO RAS), Moscow, Russia

The article was submitted 03.11.2025;  
approved 15.11.2025;  
accepted to publication 30.11.2025.

<sup>1</sup> Strong Push from the BRI. Share of Chinese FDI Flows to ASEAN [% of Share.] Born D., Yu Wang, Gschwendtner C. The Rise of Southeast Asia: Can It Become the New Manufacturing Hub of Choice? // Roland Berger. August 25, 2023. P. 4. URL: <https://www.rolandberger.com/en/Insights/Publications/The-rise-of-Southeast-Asia.html>

<sup>2</sup> Pro-Active Policies by China in Response to Asian Financial Crisis. Ministry of Foreign Affairs. People's Republic of China [n.d.] URL: [https://www.mfa.gov.cn/eng/zy/wjls/3604\\_665547/202405/t20240531\\_11367571.html](https://www.mfa.gov.cn/eng/zy/wjls/3604_665547/202405/t20240531_11367571.html)

<sup>3</sup> China's National Defense. China's National Defense Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China. July 1998, Beijing. URL: <http://www.china.org.cn/e-white/5/index.htm>

<sup>4</sup> Forging Closer ASEAN-China Economic Relations in the Twenty-First Century. A Report Submitted by the ASEAN-China Expert Group on Economic Cooperation. October 2001. P. 7. URL: <https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/File01.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Table V.12. ASEAN Trade by Trading Partner, 2002-2009. ASEAN Statistical Yearbook 2010. Jakarta, the ASEAN Secretariat, 2010. P. 69. URL: [https://www.aseanstats.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/ASYB\\_2010.pdf](https://www.aseanstats.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/ASYB_2010.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> Leebeer Leebouapao, Sthabandith Insisienmay, Vanthana Nolintha. ASEAN-China Free Trade Area and the Competitiveness of Local Industries: a Case Study of Major Industries in the Lao People's Democratic Republic. Asian Development Bank Working Paper Series on Regional Economic Integration № 98. July 2012. P.2. URL: <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/29894/wp98-lao-pdr-local-industries.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> Table V.12. ASEAN Trade by Trading Partner, 2004-2011. ASEAN Statistical Yearbook 2012. Jakarta: the ASEAN Secretariat, 2013. P. 69. URL: <https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/ASEAN-Statistical-Yearbook-2012.pdf>; ASEAN-China Trade in Goods (IMTS), Quarterly, HS 2-Digit, in US\$. 2024. ASEANstats. URL: <https://data.aseanstats.org/trade-quarterly>

<sup>8</sup> ASEAN-China Free Trade Area (ACFTA) 3.0 Upgrade. ASEAN Powers Ahead with Next-Generation Trade Agreements and Global Engagement at the 47<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Summit. Singapore Ministry of Trade and Industry. October 28, 2025. URL: <https://www.mti.gov.sg/newsroom/asean-powers-ahead-with-next-generation-trade-agreements-and-global-engagement-at-the-47th-asean-summit/>

<sup>9</sup> ASEAN and China Sign Updated Free Trade Area Agreement. TV BRICS. October 28, 2025. URL: <https://tvbrics.com/en/news/asean-and-china-sign-updated-free-trade-area-agreement/>

<sup>10</sup> ASEAN-China Joint Statement on Synergising the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity 2025 and the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The ASEAN Secretariat. November 3, 2019.

URL: <https://asean.org/asean-china-joint-statement-on-synergising-the-master-plan-on-asean-connectivity-mpac-2025-and-the-belt-and-road-initiative-bri/>

<sup>11</sup> Tham Siew Year. Advancing RCEP Integration: Forging a More Resilient and Inclusive Economic Future. Fulcrum. October 27, 2025. URL: <https://fulcrum.sg/advancing-rcep-integration-forging-a-more-resilient-and-inclusive-economic-future/>

<sup>12</sup> Baharudin H. ASEAN Leaders Push for Stronger Trade Ties among RCEP Members and Other Partners. The Straits Times. October 28, 2025. URL: <https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/asean-leaders-push-for-stronger-trade-ties-with-rcep-members-and-other-partners>

<sup>13</sup> For more detail, see: Huld A. Accessing the RCEP via China – Strategies for European Companies. China Briefing. September 10, 2025. URL: <https://www.china-briefing.com/news/rcep-trade-through-china-strategies-for-european-companies/>

<sup>14</sup> China Will Safeguard Multilateral Trading System with Greater Resolve – Premier. Xinhua. October 27, 2025. URL: [https://english.www.gov.cn/news/202510/27/content\\_WS68ff42e9c6d00ca5f9a07159.html](https://english.www.gov.cn/news/202510/27/content_WS68ff42e9c6d00ca5f9a07159.html)

<sup>15</sup> Clanchy J. Arbitration Statistics 2024: Surveys –v – Reality. LexisNexis. Research & Legal Analysis. July 30, 2025. URL: <https://www.lexisnexis.co.uk/blog/research-legal-analysis/arbitration-statistics-2024-surveys--v--reality>

<sup>16</sup> Singapore Convention on Mediation [n.d.] // <https://www.singaporeconvention.org/>

<sup>17</sup> Case Connect [n.d.]. HKIAC. URL: <https://www.hkiac.org/arbitration/case-connect>

<sup>18</sup> HKIAC Launches the Hub. HKIAC Press Release. May 9, 2025.

URL: <https://www.hkiac.org/news/hkiac-launches-hub>

<sup>19</sup> Cao Yin. One-Stop Commercial Dispute Service Goes Online. China International Commercial Court. July 22, 2021. URL: <https://cicc.court.gov.cn/html/1/219/208/209/2097.html>

<sup>20</sup> Beijing Retio Legal and Commercial Service Center for the BRI [n.d.].

URL: <https://www.bnrmediation.com/EN/About>

<sup>21</sup> International Commercial Dispute Prevention and Settlement Organization (ICDPASO). Investment Arbitration Rules [n.d.]. P. 31. URL: <http://en.icdpaso.org/upload/file/202412/5fba35eb-de99-4400-bd11-a3345e6efe18.pdf>

<sup>22</sup> Liu Xiaohong. The Development of Commercial Court and Cross-Border Judicial Cooperation in the Digital Age. China International Commercial Court. December 4, 2024.

URL: <https://cicc.court.gov.cn/html/1/219/208/203/12547.html>