

НАУЧНЫЕ ИССЛЕДОВАНИЯ

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ASEAN-EU Relations in the First Two Decades of the 21st Century and Some Impacts on Vietnam

Abstract. In the first two decades of the 21st century, the Indo-Pacific region has emerged as the epicenter of power competition in the global geopolitical landscape, influencing adjustments in national security strategies of regional and global powers. Amidst the complex fluctuations of the modern world political situation, the EU is actively intensifying strategic competition in the Indo-Pacific region for the benefit of its alliance. Among these efforts, ASEAN stands as one of the most crucial leading partners in the policies and strategies that the EU has been implementing in this region. The research findings are significant in elucidating the influencing factors and providing assessing ASEAN-EU relations in the first two decades of the 21st century and the impact of this relationship on Vietnam.

Keywords: Vietnam, EU, ASEAN, Indo-Pacific, international relations.

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Отношения АСЕАН и ЕС в первые десятилетия XXI в. и их влияние на Вьетнам

Аннотация. В первые два десятилетия XXI в. Индо-Тихоокеанский регион стал эпицентром конкуренции сил в глобальном геополитическом ландшафте, влияя на корректировки стратегий национальной безопасности региональных и мировых держав. Среди сложных колебаний современной мировой политической ситуации ЕС активно усиливает стратегическую конкуренцию в Индо-Тихоокеанском регионе в интересах своего альянса. Поддерживая эти усилия, АСЕАН выступает в качестве одного из важнейших партнеров по реализации его политики и стратегий в этом регионе. Целью данного исследования является оценка отношений АСЕАН—ЕС в первые десятилетия XXI в. и влияния этих отношений на Вьетнам.

Ключевые слова: Вьетнам, ЕС, АСЕАН, Индо-Тихоокеанский регион, международные отношения.

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Introduction

The 21st century, predicted to be the “Asia-Pacific era”, emphasizing the rise of China and the United States’ pivot strategy towards this region, has directly impacted the foreign security policies of regional and global powers [Lê Hoàng Kiệt, Nguyễn Văn Tuyên 2023]. In the first two decades of the 21st century, the Indo-Pacific region, particularly Southeast Asia, has become one of the world’s most economically dynamic regions, occupying a crucial position in the regional political and security structure [Bùi Hồng Hạnh 2020]. Consequently, the robust emergence of Southeast Asian nations post-colonialism has directly influenced the foreign policies of major powers towards this region. Among these, the EU stands as one of the foremost important partners that has comprehensively adjusted its foreign policy towards ASEAN.

In the history of international diplomacy, “ASEAN and the EU have established a longstanding relationship, particularly during the era of colonialism and imperialist expansion across the globe” [Moeller 2007]. To date, bilateral cooperation between ASEAN and the EU continues to be maintained and gradually elevated to higher partnership levels. Since 2003, the EU has issued a specific development strategy for ASEAN, also known as the “New Partnership with Southeast Asia” policy [Dang Minh

Duc 2020]. This is considered a move by the EU to clearly affirm ASEAN's increasingly important role in its development strategy for the 21st century. Conversely, ASEAN highly values the EU as a leading important partner and desires to further enhance bilateral cooperation across multiple domains to promote a deeper and more comprehensive ASEAN-EU strategic partnership. With the robust cooperation between ASEAN and the EU across various aspects, as a key member of ASEAN, Vietnam's role in this relationship warrants close examination.

Gilson's [2020] study on ASEAN-EU relations in the 2020s provides a valuable framework for understanding the broader regional context, highlighting the pragmatic inter-regionalism that characterizes these interactions. However, it lacks specific focus on Vietnam's role within this dynamic. Huong's [2016] research offers more targeted analysis, examining the potential impacts of the EU-Vietnam Free Trade Agreement (EVFTA) on Vietnam's pharmaceutical imports. While providing valuable sector-specific insights, its narrow focus limits broader applicability to the overall trade relationship. Shifting focus to security cooperation, Ha's [2018] work on non-traditional security approaches and ASEAN-EU counter-terrorism cooperation highlights an important aspect of the relationship, though it could benefit from a more explicit examination of Vietnam's role. Ha and Phuong [2021] forward-looking study on the main trends in Vietnam-EU relations leading up to 2030 offers a comprehensive overview of the bilateral relationship, yet requires more robust data to support its predictions. These studies collectively provide a multi-dimensional view of EU-Vietnam relations, covering trade, security, and developmental trends. However, several research gaps emerge, including the need for updated studies on the impact of the EVFTA since its implementation, deeper analysis of Vietnam's role in the EU's Southeast Asia strategy, and examinations of how global trends such as US-China competition impact this bilateral relationship.

Against this backdrop, this paper aims to analyze ASEAN-EU relations in the first two decades of the 21st century, with a particular focus on their impact on Vietnam. By examining the achievements and challenges in political-security, economic, and educational cooperation between ASEAN and the EU, this study seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of how these broader regional dynamics influence Vietnam's position and development. Therefore, this study will contribute to filling some of the identified research gaps by offering updated insights into Vietnam's role within the ASEAN-EU framework and examining the implications of recent global and regional developments on this important relationship.

ASEAN-EU cooperation relations in the first two decades of the 21st century

Achievements

First, in politics and security: To promote relations with ASEAN, "the EU has emphasized the importance of the region, considering ASEAN and the ARF as the focal points of political and security dialogue in Southeast Asia since its new strategy adjustment" [Gilson 2020]. In September 2003, the EU adopted the document "A New

Partnership with Southeast Asia” to revitalize bilateral cooperation, identify mutually acceptable key objectives, and develop policies and measures to ensure the continuous development of the relationship [Dang Minh Duc 2020]. This new partnership document set out six strategic priorities to promote EU-ASEAN relations, including: Supporting regional stability and counter-terrorism; Mainstreaming human rights, democracy, and good governance into all aspects of dialogue and cooperation; Focusing on justice and home affairs issues; Injecting new vigor into trade and investment relations; Continuing to support the development of less prosperous countries; Promoting dialogue and cooperation in specific areas [Trần Xuân Hiệp 2021: 381].

After the 9/11 event, ASEAN-EU political and security relations have made significant progress and become closer. Both sides share views on building a new multipolar world order and opposing unilateralism. To make political-security dialogue with Southeast Asia effective, the EU decided:

“Our dialogue with ASEAN and its member countries should help identify areas where ASEAN and the EU can work together on global security issues and global security challenges such as drugs and transnational crime” [Ibid. 383].

In the fight against terrorism, ASEAN and the EU adopted the “Joint Declaration on Combating Terrorism” on January 27, 2003, at the 14th ASEAN-EU Ministerial Meeting. This declaration was significant as it acknowledged a positive change in ASEAN’s perception of a new form of non-traditional security in the region, while providing a legal basis for EU cooperation programs, projects, and foreign strategies on global freedom, security, and justice [Nguyễn Thi Thu Hà 2018: 80].

One of the successes in political-security cooperation between ASEAN and the EU was the successful organization of the 23rd ASEAN-EU Foreign Ministers’ Meeting [Thu Phuong 2020]. Priority areas in cooperation between the two sides still focus on counter-terrorism, transnational crime, cybersecurity, and maritime security. Regarding the East Sea situation, ASEAN and the EU both emphasized the importance of practical measures that can reduce tensions, risks of accidents, misunderstandings, and miscalculations. Both sides stressed the importance of implementing confidence-building and preventive measures to enhance trust and confidence among parties, as well as continuing to maintain peace, stability, security, safety, freedom of navigation and overflight. They also emphasized non-militarization, restraint from actions that complicate the situation or increase tensions, and peaceful resolution of disputes in accordance with international law.

Furthermore, both sides also emphasized the importance of full and effective implementation of the 2002 Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the East Sea (DOC); maintaining and promoting a favorable environment for negotiating an effective and substantive Code of Conduct in the East Sea (COC) in accordance with international law. In the face of the outbreak and complex developments of the COVID-19 pandemic, both sides agreed to closely coordinate, support capacity building, and respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. Since the outbreak of the pandemic, the EU and ASEAN convened the ASEAN-EU Ministerial Video Conference on COVID-19 in March 2020. Both sides agreed to strengthen information sharing, experience, and policy coordination, especially in diagnosis, prevention of spread, and treatment of infected cases, as well as research and development of treatments and

vaccines. At the same time, the EU announced a support package of 800 million euros (920 million US dollars) for ASEAN to prevent and mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic [Huong Giang, Đức Hùng 2021]. As a result, ASEAN-EU political-security cooperation has achieved positive results throughout the first two decades of the 21st century.

Second, in economy and trade: The EU is ASEAN's third-largest export market and trading partner, with bilateral trade in 2022 reaching 295.2 billion dollars, an increase of 9.6 % compared to 2021, while FDI from the EU also reached 24 billion dollars, making the EU the third-largest source of FDI for ASEAN [WTO 2023]. To further strengthen current bilateral relations, both sides have accelerated the implementation of cooperation activities through the new EU-ASEAN Green Initiative worth 32.67 million dollars and the EU-ASEAN Sustainable Connectivity Package worth 65.35 million dollars, contributing to consolidating the ASEAN-EU strategic partnership and implementing the EU's "Global Gateway" strategy in Southeast Asia [Ibid.].

At the beginning of the 21st century, to further promote economic cooperation, the EU introduced many policies, even adjusting them at different times, such as the Trans-Regional EU-ASEAN Trade Initiative (TREATI). The purpose of TREATI was to create the necessary unity for ASEAN and the EU in the goal of developing foreign trade policy, paving the way for both sides to liberalize and implement non-protective mechanisms. To implement this policy, both sides established a Vision Group as agreed between ASEAN Economic Ministers and the EU Trade Commissioner in May 2005 to study the feasibility of negotiating and establishing an ASEAN-EU Free Trade Area to further enhance economic cooperation and integration between the two sides. Based on the Vision Group's report and recommendations, in May 2007, ASEAN Economic Ministers and the EU Trade Commissioner decided to launch negotiations on a Free Trade Area between the EU and ASEAN. Moreover, both ASEAN and the EU, although at different levels of integration, aim to build unified regional economic spaces on a large scale, which are drivers for trade and investment development.

Based on this Initiative, ASEAN and EU countries continued to develop the ASEAN-EU Trade and Investment Work Program. This will be the foundation for both sides to continue promoting a more trusting and sustainable relationship. The program includes the following main activities: (i) Annual meetings between ASEAN Economic Ministers and the EU Trade Commissioner, (ii) ASEAN-EU Business Summit, (iii) High-level and technical-level dialogues on issues of mutual interest, and (iv) Other existing economic cooperation programs [Yoshimatsu 2023].

In addition, ASEAN and the EU also organized the first ASEAN-EU Business Summit on May 5, 2011. This was the first activity successfully organized within the framework of the ASEAN-EU Trade and Investment Work Program. The summit aimed to expand business networks, enhance understanding of investment and trade opportunities between ASEAN and the EU; identify opportunities and challenges in market penetration as well as facilitate investment and trade relations between the two sides. Besides maintaining good ASEAN-EU relations on trade and investment, the EU is also the second-largest ODA provider to ASEAN after Japan. ASEAN has also requested the EU to support ASEAN in implementing programs to promote ASEAN's

trade and investment potential in EU countries. Therefore, the EU is committed to strengthening support for ASEAN in building the ASEAN Economic Community, sharing experiences, and actively supporting ASEAN's efforts in enhancing regional integration and connectivity. Additionally, the EU has established a special cooperation mechanism with ASEAN in regional connectivity, supporting ASEAN's connectivity efforts through the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity. Southeast Asian companies are increasingly penetrating the European market based on the rapidly developing trade and investment relationship between the two regions in recent years [Gilson 2020]. Currently, as of November 2023, both sides are coordinating to implement the ASEAN-EU Strategic Partnership Action Plan for the period 2023–2027. Through this, ASEAN-EU economic cooperation has achieved positive results throughout the first two decades of the 21st century.

Third, education and training: Since its establishment, ASEAN has focused on strengthening cultural exchange activities and enhancing understanding of cultures within ASEAN and beyond the region. Today, as ASEAN is building its Socio-Cultural Community, ASEAN needs to further enhance cultural exchange activities with the international community, including the EU. Accordingly, both ASEAN and the EU are committed to promoting cultural exchanges and people-to-people interactions, education and training, and human resource development. To enhance mutual understanding between the two regions, the EU and ASEAN established the ASEAN-EU University Network Programme (AUNP). The objective of the program is to strengthen cooperation between higher education institutions in the two regions, promote regional integration in ASEAN countries, and enhance common awareness of European and Asian cultural perspectives. The program was launched in January 2000 and was valued at nearly 7.8 million euros over 5 years [ASEAN-EU University Network Programme 2010].

In August 2017, the ASEAN-EU Action Plan replaced the Bandar Seri Begawan Plan of Action to Strengthen the ASEAN-EU Enhanced Partnership (2013–2017). According to the Action Plan, cooperation in education, academia, and cultural exchanges includes the following:

- a) Maximizing cooperation in student exchanges between ASEAN and the EU through EU education, training, youth, and sports programs, as well as national programs in EU member states and ASEAN member states.
- b) Enhancing cooperation between international educational organizations in ASEAN and EU member states to improve the quality of education in areas consistent with the ASEAN Work Plan on Education 2016–2020.
- c) Promoting deeper understanding and awareness of cultures between ASEAN and the EU, as well as sharing experiences and expertise on public policy in the cultural field and facilitating interaction between EU member states and the ASEAN University Network [Cultural Relations Platform 2018].

Additionally, the EU also supports scholarships for Southeast Asian students through the Support to Higher Education in the ASEAN Region (SHARE) program. Officially launched in 2015, SHARE is the flagship project of the ASEAN higher education sector aimed at promoting regional harmonization and introducing ASEAN scholarships inspired by the Erasmus scholarships in Europe, thereby creating an

ASEAN higher education space that supports a people-centered ASEAN Community. Accordingly, SHARE supports ASEAN's ambition to build an integrated ASEAN higher education area. Specifically, in 2016 alone, the number of scholarships awarded was 500. This number is expected to increase by at least another 300 by the end of 2022 [British Council in Vietnam 2017].

This is evidence of the EU's long-term commitment to ASEAN higher education as well as the initial positive results of SHARE. Overall, SHARE is a meaningful support program from the EU for ASEAN students and universities. The objectives and initial results of SHARE all demonstrate a strong commitment to building a more integrated and equitable ASEAN higher education space. This is certainly an important impetus for the further development of regional educational integration and the promotion of the strategic partnership between ASEAN and EU.

Some challenges

Alongside the recent achievements in the strategic partnership between ASEAN and the EU, there remain challenges and issues in the relationship between the two regions that need attention:

First, the "unity" of each bloc in implementing strategic partnerships with other partners. Both ASEAN and the EU need consistency between ASEAN's relations with the EU, ASEAN's relations with individual EU member states, and vice versa [Trần Xuân Hiệp 2021: 265]. In reality, some member states of each bloc have foreign strategies with specific security and trade priorities, as well as their own diplomatic approaches.

Second, the reconciliation of bilateral engagement and multilateral cooperation in the context of China's increasing assertiveness and the US's re-engagement with allies, pivoting to Asia [Dang Minh Duc 2020]. Clearly, the intertwining of interests, the rise of nationalism, strategic calculations, and increasingly fierce competition between major powers, along with the attraction and gathering of forces in the region and internationally, pose growing challenges for both sides.

Third, difficulties in finding common ground on norms and value concepts, issues of democracy, human rights, cultural differences, differences in positions on regional and inter-regional issues, as well as different interests among member states of each bloc [Nguyễn An Hà, Vũ Mai Phương 2021]. Creating space for implementing the strategic partnership will be an existing challenge.

Fourth, ASEAN countries also face the risk of being pulled by forces outside the region, challenging ASEAN's central position [Yoshimatsu 2023]. Through relationships with the entire ASEAN bloc and its member states, major powers desire to pull ASEAN to support their views and positions on international and regional issues. Although ASEAN's central role is declared, recognized and supported by major powers, ASEAN is at risk of becoming a forum for major powers to take advantage of, serving the goal of gathering forces, thereby diminishing ASEAN's central role. This puts ASEAN in a "dilemma" in relations with the two superpowers, while also leading to potential disagreements and divisions within ASEAN member states, affecting ASEAN's unity and solidarity.

Vietnam's contribution to ASEAN-EU relations

With the signing of the EU-Vietnam Free Trade Agreement (EVFTA), a new generation FTA between Vietnam and 28 EU member states, Vietnam has made positive contributions to the relationship between the two blocs, while demonstrating its role and position within ASEAN. As a core member of ASEAN, Vietnam has been and is actively and responsibly contributing to realizing the ASEAN-EU strategic partnership, aiming for peace, stability, security, and prosperity in each region and globally. These contributions include:

First, Vietnam contributes to the content of annual conferences and ASEAN-EU Summits with assessments and observations on global and regional situations, analyzing opportunities and urgent challenges that countries need to focus on solving, proposing initiatives, and jointly seeking solutions to common difficulties and challenges, building trust to create a solid foundation for the future. At these conferences, Vietnam always sends a strong message as a reliable partner and an active, responsible member of the international community, ready to join hands with other countries to discuss and find solutions to urgent, global challenges, contributing to peace, stability, and development in the region and the world [Trần Xuân Hiệp 2021: 311]. This also reflects the Party's foreign policy, continuing to promote and enhance the effectiveness of foreign affairs and international integration, promoting and elevating multilateral diplomacy.

Second, in the context of global and regional crises, divisions, and many fluctuations, within the framework of the ASEAN-EU strategic partnership, Vietnam always consistently demonstrates its peaceful foreign policy. The history of the Vietnamese nation also clearly shows our national tradition of "using great righteousness to defeat brutality, using humanity to replace violence". Peace has always been Vietnam's top priority method. Along with ASEAN countries, Vietnam strives to strengthen the bloc's central role in maintaining peace, security, and prosperity in Southeast Asia as well as the Asia-Pacific. Vietnam actively participates and promotes its role in multilateral mechanisms, especially ASEAN, the United Nations, regional cooperation mechanisms, inter-regional and Mekong sub-regional mechanisms, in accordance with specific requirements, capabilities, and conditions..., thereby projecting the image of a responsible Vietnam that upholds international law, strives to build consensus, and seeks satisfactory solutions to disputes and conflicts.

Third, together with ASEAN and EU countries, Vietnam has actively contributed to the international community's efforts to respond to global challenges and contribute to humanitarian activities. In 2021, Vietnam contributed 1 million USD to the COVAX Program, demonstrating international solidarity and Vietnam's responsibility in efforts to prevent and control the Covid-19 pandemic. Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh announced humanitarian support of 500,000 USD for Ukraine through international organizations [Thanh Hà 2022]. Regarding the resolution of disputes in the East Sea, Vietnam always shares with ASEAN and EU countries the interests and responsibility of maintaining peace, stability, security, and safety of navigation in the East Sea, a vital shipping route of the world. Vietnam emphasizes the importance of building trust and mutual confidence, restraint, not conducting activities that further complicate the situation, increase disputes or harm the marine environment, peacefully resolving

disputes in accordance with international law, including UNCLOS 1982. ASEAN is actively coordinating to soon complete an effective and efficient COC Code of Conduct that is consistent with international law and UNCLOS 1982.

With the desire to build a peaceful and stable environment in Asia-Pacific and the world together with ASEAN and EU countries, within the framework of the ASEAN-EU strategic partnership, Vietnam implements an independent, self-reliant foreign policy, diversifying and multilateralizing relations, proactively and actively integrating internationally, promoting multilateralism. Vietnam continues to be a friend and reliable partner with countries around the world, an active and responsible member of the international community. Vietnam has also made very high commitments at the COP26 Conference to share responsibility towards green and sustainable development. In the context of the world facing food security challenges due to climate change, the Russia-Ukraine conflict, and many other issues, Vietnam is committed to continuing to maintain and promote agricultural and food export activities.

Impact on Vietnam

Based on the summary of ASEAN-EU cooperation progress and the assessment of some achievements in various fields between the two sides in the first two decades of the 21st century, as well as the impact of this relationship on Vietnam, we can draw the following conclusions:

With its important geopolitical and geo-economic position, located on the East Sea, serving as a bridge between the maritime and continental economic regions of Asian and Southeast Asian countries, Vietnam has favorable conditions to enhance connectivity and promote cooperation and development with EU countries. Vietnam and the EU officially established diplomatic relations in 1990 and have experienced over 30 years of partnership. During this period, especially in the first two decades of the 21st century, as the EU strengthened its integration with ASEAN, Vietnam-EU relations have also developed rapidly both in breadth and depth across various fields. It can be said that Vietnam possesses many favorable factors aligning with the EU's strategy to increase influence in Southeast Asia, thus making Vietnam one of the EU's top choices for developing relations with ASEAN.

In 2005, Vietnam first adopted a comprehensive program to develop relations with the EU. It is also worth noting that Vietnam was the first country in Southeast Asia to announce a plan for relations with the EU, and simultaneously, the EU was the first partner with which Vietnam had a comprehensive strategy [Vu Thanh Huong 2016]. From 2008, the two sides officially launched negotiations for the Vietnam-EU Comprehensive Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA), which was formally signed in 2012. Accordingly, the PCA expanded the scope of Vietnam-EU cooperation beyond trade and economic cooperation to other areas such as environment, energy, technology, effective public governance, tourism, culture, migration, security, anti-corruption, and organized crime [Bùi Hồng Hạnh 2020]. Thus, the EU has become one of the most important partners due to its special position and role in Vietnam's development.

In the period 2000—2019, the total trade turnover between Vietnam and the EU increased 17-fold, from 4.1 billion USD (in 2000) to 56.45 billion USD (in 2019). Specifically, Vietnam’s exports to the EU increased 14.8 times, from 2.8 billion USD (in 2000) to 41.54 billion USD (in 2019). Vietnam’s exports to the EU focused on labor-intensive goods, including electronics assembly, phones, footwear, textiles and garments, coffee, seafood, and wooden products. Imports from the EU to Vietnam also increased 11.4 times, from 1.3 billion USD (in 2000) to 14.9 billion USD (in 2019). The EU’s main export items to Vietnam are high-tech products such as machinery, mechanical products, electrical equipment, and pharmaceuticals [European Commission 2022].

By 2022, Vietnam had become the EU’s 16th largest trading partner in the world and the EU’s largest trading partner in ASEAN, with total trade turnover reaching nearly 70 billion dollars [Ibid.]. With total FDI capital of nearly 8.8 billion dollars (in 2021), the EU is one of the largest foreign investors in Vietnam, with processing and manufacturing being the largest investment sector [Ibid.]. After 3 years of implementing the EVFTA (from August 1, 2020, to August 1, 2023), Vietnam exported goods worth nearly 128 billion USD to the EU [An Binh 2023]. Currently, Vietnam is the EU’s second most important partner in terms of total trade in goods and services (after Singapore). An increasing number of European companies are establishing branches in this country to set up regional centers serving the Mekong region.

With the EU promoting its “Asia Strategy”, it has clearly demonstrated its stance on promoting comprehensive cooperation with countries in the Asian region, especially ASEAN countries, where Vietnam holds a strategically important position as the gateway to the entire Southeast Asian region. Therefore, this strategy will certainly promote the EU’s comprehensive cooperation with Vietnam in the coming years. Additionally, one of the factors that prompted the EU to adjust its strategy towards Southeast Asia after the second decade of the 21st century was the “America First” policy of U.S. President Donald Trump and China’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Consequently, to ensure its international position and role in the global security structure, the EU has adjusted its foreign policy towards ASEAN, and bilateral relations have developed rapidly, contributing to creating a stable development environment in the region and the world. This creates opportunities for Vietnam to attract more investment projects from EU businesses and helps both Vietnam and the EU reduce their dependence on the Chinese economy.

In the rapidly developing trend of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, the EU has many advantages in developing the digital economy. Vietnam does not want to fall further behind in terms of development level in the context of the fourth technological revolution, so this issue will create both motivation and pressure for Vietnam to promote trade and investment relations with developed countries in the EU through the framework of PCA, EVFTA, and the EU-Vietnam Investment Protection Agreement (EVIPA) to access new technologies, new management skills, and participate more deeply in global value chains [Nguyễn An Hà, Vũ Mai Phương 2021]. Additionally, Vietnam needs to make efforts to leverage advantages in multilateral and bilateral forums to enhance competitiveness, strengthen integration into modern logistics value chains to become a bridge between ASEAN and the EU.

Conclusion

In the first two decades of the 21st century, comprehensive cooperation with the EU, one of the world's leading economic and political centers, has always been one of the priority orientations in the foreign policies of Southeast Asian countries as well as a factor contributing to the successful building of the ASEAN Community. Cooperative relations between the two sides in the fields of politics-security, economics, trade, investment, and education have been established within the framework of multilateral and bilateral cooperation, with many outstanding achievements. To further promote more effective and substantial cooperation between the two blocs, both ASEAN and the EU are strongly committed to enhancing coordination and cooperation in regional and international structures based on common values and interests in a rules-based international order and mutual consensus.

It can be said that entering the 21st century, especially the second decade, ASEAN-EU relations have occurred in parallel with the increasingly intense and uncontrollable strategic competition among major powers. Therefore, the upgrade of ASEAN-EU relations is not only the result of increasingly developing bilateral relations but also reflects the inherent needs of both sides, having great significance for both blocs in maintaining a peaceful and secure environment in the region and the world. Thus, with a long-standing tradition of friendship and increasingly good, comprehensive, and profound development, ASEAN-EU relations in the first two decades of the 21st century have seen new developments, culminating in the establishment of Strategic Partnership in various fields. This relationship has had many positive impacts on Vietnam's development, while also requiring Vietnam to enhance its adaptability and balance relations with major powers as these countries all want to increase their engagement in Southeast Asia in general and Vietnam in particular.

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