

**Panel:** Regional Leadership in Southeast Asia: Can ASEAN Still Occupy the Driver’s Seat?  
(Orchid)

**Date/Time:** April 26, 2012 / 14:30 – 15:45

**Organizing Institution:** Pacific Forum CSIS

**Talking Points for:** Ian Storey  
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Asia’s strategic environment has entered a period of flux and uncertainty. The rising power of China and America’s “pivot” to the region is likely to intensify Sino-US competition. The rivalry between China and America will be played out in large part in Southeast Asia, a region that is increasingly seen as the “hinge” linking East and South Asia. The prospect of sharper Sino-US competition makes Southeast Asian elites distinctly nervous. The era in which they were spared having to “choose sides” may well be coming to an end. Southeast Asian leaders have put a great deal of faith in ASEAN’s “stewardship of the architecture of cooperation”, as its Secretary-General Surin Pitsuwan recently put it, to take the sharp edges off America and China’s competition for primacy. But many question whether ASEAN is up to this weighty task. ASEAN’s attempts to manage tensions in the South China Sea have brought into sharp relief divisions within the organization, divisions that do not engender confidence in its pretensions to “centrality”.

\* The views expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the views of the Asan Institute for Policy Studies.

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