



# ANKASAM

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### *Russia's Changing Nuclear Doctrine*

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### ANKASAM ANALYSIS

## Contributions of the Belt and Road Initiative to South America: The Example of Chancay Port



Ayşe Azra GILAVCI

In recent years, China's increasing economic and strategic influence in Latin America has attracted significant attention on a global scale. Chinese President Xi Jinping opened the Chancay Port project in Peru as part of his one-week diplomatic visit to South America on November 14, 2024. This \$1.3 billion investment by Beijing within the scope of the Belt and Road Initiative represents an important milestone that emphasizes China's strategic goals in Latin America. As part of this diplomatic tour, Xi went to Rio de Janeiro to attend the G20 summit on November 17 and hold comprehensive talks with Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva.

Located approximately 80 kilometers north of the capital Lima, the Chancay deep water port constitutes one of China's largest infrastructure investments in Latin America. Built by Cosco Shipping Ports, the megaport will house 15 berths capable of accommodating the largest cargo ships and will be an important connection point for trade between Latin America and Asia. Xi described the Chancay project as an important element of the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road and considered this project as part of the aim of creating a direct sea and land corridor between Asia and Latin America.[1].

According to estimates shared by Xi, the Chancay project will create annual revenue of \$4.5 billion, provide more than 8,000 direct jobs in Peru and reduce logistics costs on the Peru-China trade line by 20%. The construction of the port not only accelerates trade but also makes significant contributions to regional economic development.



While emphasizing the importance of relations with Brazil, Xi states that he visited the country four times and personally observed the developments in the last 30 years. Economic ties between China and Brazil are particularly strong. As reported by Xinhua; In the first 10 months of 2024, China's trade with Brazil increased by 9.9% compared to the same period in 2023.[2]. As the largest trading partner in Latin America, Brazil exports strategically important goods such as soybeans, iron ore and meat products to China. This increase in trade demonstrates the mutual benefits that the partnership provides to both countries.

The economic benefits of China's investments in Latin America extend beyond Peru to the entire region. Xi's meetings with Lula da Silva are expected to lead to greater cooperation between the two countries in the agriculture, infrastructure and energy sectors. Strengthening economic ties with China offer Latin American countries new opportunities for growth and modernization. Infrastructure projects such as the Port of Chancay not only increase trade efficiency but also create jobs and contribute to local economies. For Brazil, China is the most important market for agricultural exports and allows the agricultural sector to strengthen and attract investment. China's economic engagement offers Latin American countries an alternative to traditional Western partners and provides the region with more options for trade and development. However, this cooperation also has potential risks. Economic dependence on China may create geopolitical vulnerabilities. As they deepen their ties with key regional actors such as China, Brazil and Peru, Latin American countries need to strike a careful balance to derive maximum benefit from these relationships.

The Belt and Road Initiative aims to create a global trade and infrastructure network that strengthens China's connections with other regions. In the Latin American context, the Port of Chancay and potential collaborations with Brazil aim to secure China's access to natural resources and strengthen its economic partnerships in the region. With large-scale infrastructure investments, China is challenging the global influence of the United States by establishing long-term economic and political relationships.

Xi's visit to Brazil is a concrete example of this strategy. His contacts with President Lula da Silva to discuss development strategies prove that China is an indispensable partner for Brazil and other Latin American countries. Celebrating the 50th anniversary of China-Brazil relations highlights the enduring and thriving partnership of these two great economies. China's investments provide economic growth and infrastructure development in the region. Therefore, Latin American countries have to follow a complex balancing policy while managing their relations with China and the USA.

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[2]. "Chinese President Xi arrives in Brazil for G20 summit talks with Lula", Reuters, <https://www.reuters.com/world/chinese-president-xi-arrives-brazil-g20-summit-talks-with-lula-2024-11-18/>, (Date Access: 18.11.2024).



## ANKASAM ANALYSIS

# Russia's Changing Nuclear Doctrine



Prof. Dr. Şafak OĞUZ

The New Cold War, initiated by the United States' (US) withdrawal from the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty in 2002, reached a more perilous stage with Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2021. This escalation has prompted discussions among politicians, academics, media outlets, and commentators about the rapid approach toward a potential Third World War. Since the Cold War—and perhaps even since World War II—the likelihood of such a catastrophic conflict has never seemed more significant. The concept of nuclear deterrence is losing its relevance, and the belief that nuclear weapons could prevent global war diminishes with each passing day.

Both the US and Russia have intensified their efforts in nuclear armament. On March 1, 2018, Russia unveiled its new-generation nuclear weapons, accusing the US of instigating a nuclear arms race. Russia asserted that these advanced systems were developed in response to the US withdrawal from the ABM Treaty in 2002 and the deployment of missile defense systems on US soil and near Russia's borders.[1].

Just before its invasion of Ukraine, Russia enacted the "Basic Principles of the State Policy of the Russian Federation on Nuclear Deterrence"[2] on June 8, 2020. This document emphasized the role of nuclear weapons as a deterrent and outlined the circumstances under which Russia might use them:

- Reliable information of a ballistic missile launch targeting Russia or its allies.
- An attack on Russia or its allies involving nuclear or other weapons of mass destruction.
- An attack on critical Russian government or military facilities that undermines the nuclear response capability.
- A conventional military attack on Russia that **jeopardizes the survival of the state**.

These principles were frequently reiterated by Russian officials throughout the Ukraine War. They warned, explicitly or implicitly, that Russia would use nuclear weapons if the West intervened in the conflict. Early in the war, on February 24, 2022, President Vladimir Putin cited US and NATO activities as threats to **Russia's national existence**, indirectly referencing<sup>[3]</sup> one of the outlined conditions for nuclear weapon use. Subsequently, on February 27, 2022, Putin ordered an elevated alert status for Russia's nuclear forces.<sup>[4]</sup> Within two months of the invasion, Russia tested the SARMAT (SATAN) missile, its most powerful new-generation nuclear weapon.<sup>[5]</sup>

On March 22, 2022, Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov warned in an interview with CNN's Christiane Amanpour that Russia might use nuclear weapons if **its existence** were threatened, referencing the 2020 policy document.<sup>[6]</sup> Over time, Russia's rhetoric grew harsher, openly threatening states supporting Ukraine. For instance, Russian state media highlighted that the SARMAT missile could strike London within two minutes, effectively erasing the United Kingdom from the map.<sup>[7]</sup> Additionally, Russian media implied that one SARMAT missile could obliterate a region the size of Texas or all of France, signaling threats toward the US and France.<sup>[8]</sup>

Recently, Russian officials, particularly Dmitry Medvedev, have escalated the tone of these threats. For example, following the announcement of referendums in the Donbass region to join Russia, Putin declared a partial mobilization and accused the West of nuclear blackmail. He asserted that Russia would use all available means, including nuclear weapons, to defend its territorial integrity, explicitly stating that this was not a bluff.<sup>[9]</sup>

As Russia intensified its nuclear threats, Western support for Ukraine increased, testing the thresholds Russia considers its nuclear deterrence limits. The former Chairman of NATO's Military Committee, Czech General Pavel, described hybrid warfare as actions just below the threshold for invoking NATO's Article 5. Western actions appear to approach the brink of nuclear conflict. Notably, the Biden administration, which will leave office in January 2025, approved Ukraine's use of US-supplied ATACMS missiles against Russia. The United Kingdom supplied Storm Shadow missiles, which Ukraine soon used to attack Russian territory.<sup>[10]</sup>

Amid these developments, on November 19, 2024, the 1000th day of the Russia-Ukraine War, Russia revised its nuclear doctrine. The new policy lowered the threshold for nuclear weapon use, allowing for a nuclear response if a country attacked Russian territory with the support of another nuclear-armed state.<sup>[11]</sup> It also expanded the scope to include attacks by drones or warplanes. Additionally, an attack on Russia by a "member of an alliance" would warrant a nuclear response, with all member states of the attacking alliance considered parties to the conflict.<sup>[12]</sup>

Putin, while announcing the new doctrine, stated, "The aggression of a non-nuclear country, supported or joined by a nuclear-armed state, will be considered a joint attack." Medvedev, interpreting the doctrine, remarked, "The use of NATO missiles against Russia could be deemed an attack by NATO members on Russia. This would justify retaliation with weapons of mass destruction against NATO elements, anywhere. This is Third World War." Medvedev criticized the Biden administration for deliberately escalating tensions, adding provocatively, "Perhaps old Biden has decided to die gracefully, taking much of humanity with him."

In 2009, Democratic President Barack Obama articulated a vision of a nuclear-free world. By 2024, Democratic President Joe Biden acknowledged that the world was closer to nuclear war than at any time since the Cuban Missile Crisis. Meanwhile, Republican President Donald Trump has promised to end the Russia-Ukraine War. Intriguingly, during his previous tenure, Trump refrained from renewing the New START treaty, the last nuclear arms control agreement between the US and Russia. Biden, in one of his administration's early actions, extended this treaty. Now, as Biden authorizes the use of ATACMS in Ukraine, some speculate whether he is retaliating against the chaotic legacy of Trump's withdrawal from Afghanistan.

Russia views the potential resolution of the war with optimism regarding a Trump presidency. However, the prospect of Ukraine and Georgia joining NATO and the European Union remains a red line for Russia, representing a security threat significant enough to warrant the use of nuclear weapons. This expansion, encapsulating Russia within NATO and EU boundaries, especially in sensitive regions like the Caucasus and the Black Sea, constitutes a perceived existential threat.

Given this perspective, Russia's reliance on nuclear deterrence and overt nuclear threats appears logical. In comparing NATO and Russia's military capacities, nuclear deterrence becomes Russia's only viable strategy, particularly as its conventional forces face setbacks in Ukraine. For instance, the US allocated \$816 billion to its military budget in 2023, while Russia's defense budget stood at \$109 billion. Putin candidly acknowledged this disparity, stating, "Nuclear weapons are the ultimate guarantee of our state and citizens' security."

As the US, UK, and NATO test the limits of Russia's modern weapons, some speculate whether these actions aim to assess Russia's second-strike capabilities. Could the US be preparing to test its European Phased Adaptive Approach, with radar systems like those in Kürecik, Turkey? Are Western powers emboldened enough to risk escalating a nuclear confrontation?

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[7] "Putin confirms Sarmat ballistic missile deployment – how powerful is the 'Satan 2' rocket?", Express, <https://www.express.co.uk/news/world/1628895/putin-sarmat-ballistic-missile-deployment-powerful-evg>, (Date Accession: 30.11.2024).

[8] "Russia is planning to flight test new missile with a range of 6,200 miles and capable of destroying an area the size of France", Daily Mail, <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9110579/Russia-planning-flight-test-new-missile-capable-destroying-area-size-France.html>, (Date Accession: 30.11.2024).

[9] "Putin dras up to 300,000 reservists, backs annexation amid war losses", Washington Post, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/09/21/putin-speech-annexation-ukraine-russia/>, (Date Accession: 30.11.2024).

[10] "Ukraine fires UK-supplied Storm Shadow missiles at Russia for first time", BBC, <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c4g704g051go>, (Date Accession: 30.11.2024).

[11] "Rusya harekete geçirdi: NATO'dan olağanüstü toplantı kararı", NTV, [https://www.ntv.com.tr/dunya/rusya-harekete-gecirdi-natodan-olaganustu-toplantı-kararı,mEKrO\\_-BnEC\\_J2t15GuFlw](https://www.ntv.com.tr/dunya/rusya-harekete-gecirdi-natodan-olaganustu-toplantı-kararı,mEKrO_-BnEC_J2t15GuFlw), (Date Accession: 30.11.2024).

[12] "Putin, Rusya'nın yeni nükleer doktrinini onayladı: Nükleer silah kullanım koşulları genişliyor", BBC, <https://www.bbc.com/turkce/articles/cn0egdwnj1o>, (Date Accession: 30.11.2024).





## ANKASAM ANALYSIS

# South Korea and Malaysia Strategic Partnership



Berra KIZILYAZI

Established in 1960, the South Korea-Malaysia relations have continuously developed and reached the present day. The relations developed within the framework of mutual interests and regional cooperation are important for ensuring economic and political stability in ASEAN and the Asia-Pacific region. Additionally, dialogues conducted through the ASEAN platform are increasing multilateral cooperation in the region and playing an active role in mediating solutions that support diplomatic resolutions in contentious issues such as the South China Sea.

South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol and Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim have agreed to establish a strategic partnership to deepen bilateral cooperation in defense industry, trade, energy, supply chains, and other areas.[1].

In their joint statement, the two leaders praised the progress made in their relations in recent years and announced the establishment of a Strategic Partnership, which “expresses the determination of both countries to take their cooperation to new horizons in order to promote freedom, peace, and prosperity and to address future challenges.” The statement also presented a characteristically comprehensive and ambitious bilateral cooperation program. In this context, an agreement was reached to enhance defense exchanges and to continue exploring ways to collaborate in the fields of “research and development (R&D), military technology cooperation, and the defense industry.” This development follows an agreement in May 2023, in which South Korea is set to provide Malaysia with 18 FA-50M light fighter jets worth approximately \$920 million as part of efforts to modernize the Royal Malaysian Air Force.[2].

This comprehensive partnership not only strengthens the ties between the two countries but also means that South Korea will further enhance its connections with the ASEAN region through Malaysia, a member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). In this way, the relationship, which is highlighted by economic ties, has gained a strategic dimension. Especially when considering the centrality of ASEAN, the South Korea-Malaysia partnership is of critical importance in the multilateral cooperation process in the Asia-Pacific region. Because ASEAN develops its ties with countries such as China, South Korea, and Japan in the Asia-Pacific through platforms such as ASEAN+3 or the East Asia Summit (EAS), establishing a balanced and impartial framework in the region. Thus, conflicts that may arise in the region are effectively mitigated, thereby fostering balance and stability. In this context, the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), which promotes security cooperation, stands out. Defense industry cooperation between South Korea and Malaysia will be effective in increasing ASEAN’s security capacity and in more coordinated regional defense against external threats if South Korea supplies defense technology to ASEAN countries through Malaysia. This cooperation will enhance the trade dynamics between South Korea and ASEAN, which are mutually significant trade partners. As members of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), South Korea and Malaysia will similarly play an active role in strengthening trade on this platform. Thus, ASEAN’s effectiveness in trade will increase, contributing to regional integration economically as well.

Within the framework of the ASEAN-Korea Cooperation Fund, South Korea’s strategic partnership with Malaysia will further strengthen ASEAN’s trade ties with South Korea, enhancing both regional prosperity and the global influence of the Asia-Pacific. By ensuring regional stability and development, innovative projects will be initiated based on partnerships in the region. The strategic partnership between Malaysia, a member of ASEAN, and South Korea, which has a developed economy and advanced industry, will play a significant role in extensive integration and development due to its connections with many platforms.

The development of relations between South Korea and ASEAN will both increase mutual economic gains and enhance regional integration by serving as a strong example of cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region. Other ASEAN countries are likely to establish similar partnerships with South Korea, allowing South Korea to form broader partnerships. Additionally, the prominence of ASEAN as a regional platform at this point allows it to gain strength on the international stage.

In fact, the South Korea-Malaysia partnership will serve as a catalyst for the Asia-Pacific region. By affecting many areas such as the economy, regional stability, integration, collective defense, and security, it fosters cooperation and creates an environment for a more cohesive and resilient framework. In other words, this partnership, beyond the interests of the two countries, concerns the political, economic, and security policies of the entire region, possessing an inclusive and strategic characteristic.

On the other hand, Malaysia’s cooperation with China and South Korea is of critical importance in maintaining the strategic balance of power in the region. The cooperation between South Korea and Malaysia can be considered a step towards balancing the influence of the United States and its allies in the region. Moreover, the strengthening of ties between South Korea, and particularly China, and ASEAN member states under the Belt and Road Initiative significantly contributes to shaping the region’s balance of power policy. Malaysia, on the other hand, serves as a strategic nexus for the formation of mediating and multilateral collaborations.

[1]. “S. Korea, Malaysia forge strategic partnership to expand cooperation”, Yonhap News Agency, <https://en.yna.co.kr/view/AEN20241125004651315>, (Accessed date: 11.25.2024).

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## ANKASAM ANALYSIS

# The Evolution of Peace Building and the UN

Jameela RIZWAN

### Historical Context and the Need for Peacebuilding

In earlier eras, wiping out enemies completely (like with the Trojans or Carthaginians) was feasible, whereas contemporary disputes often involve unresolved issues necessitating peacebuilding efforts. Dealing with post-conflict situations can be difficult. Frequently, these issues involve deep psychological and cultural injuries that are not easily fixed quickly. Instances where one party suffers a clear defeat can contribute to a mindset of losing, making it harder to achieve reconciliation and lasting peace.

### Origins of Peacebuilding

Even though “peacebuilding” became popular following the 1992 UN’s Agenda for Peace, the idea has been around for a long time. The origins of peacebuilding can be linked back to the rebuilding of Western Europe and Japan after World War II.

Johan Galtung is frequently recognized as the person who introduced the concept of framed peacebuilding alongside peacekeeping and peacemaking in a tripartite approach. His thoughts on using associative methods to create peaceful infrastructures differ from the state-focused models used by organizations such as the UN.

### Post-Cold War Changes

The nature of conflicts was changed by the post-Cold War era. Interstate warfare decreased, while intrastate or ethnic disputes rose in frequency. In contrast to international conflicts with clear borders, intrastate conflicts demanded strategies for peaceful coexistence within the same state. Post-Cold War hope, fueled by nonviolent uprisings and democratic movements, fueled the growth of peacebuilding initiatives, opening doors for UN peacekeeping operations in countries like Namibia, Cambodia, and El Salvador.

This change, along with promoting democracy and advocating for human rights, led to a new way of resolving conflicts that focused on peacebuilding efforts addressing root causes, instead of just halting violence.

### Challenges of State Sovereignty and Humanitarian Interventions

The increasing emphasis on human rights over state sovereignty led to the development of fresh peace process strategies. This resulted in increased multilateral humanitarian interventions, raising questions about post-intervention societal reconstruction. The UN’s adoption of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) report emphasized the importance of the ‘responsibility to rebuild’, with a focus on security, justice, and development, taking into consideration local ownership.

### Liberal Peace Hypothesis and Criticisms

The manner in which the Cold War concluded, via peaceful revolutions toppling authoritarian governments, appeared to support the belief that global society was undergoing an irresistible trend towards democratization.

Following the Cold War, the liberal peace hypothesis gained prominence suggesting that democracies refrain from waging war against each other. Nonetheless, this concept was expanded to include conflicts within a state as well as conflicts between states, even though there was no empirical evidence to support it. President George W. Bush often cited the ‘transformative power of liberty’ to support US interventions, creating simplistic links between democracy and peace. This approach proved problematic in Iraq and Afghanistan, leading to difficulties in peace-building efforts.

### UN’s Role and the Agenda for Peace

There are two primary categories of peacebuilding scenarios: one involves recovering from civil conflict through actions like disarming, returning refugees, and reforming governance; the other addresses global conflicts by promoting collaborative initiatives for peace.

The initial peacebuilding actions of the UN were mainly after wars and concentrated on the last phases of violent conflicts, using a state-oriented method that frequently ignored grassroots participation and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

The UN’s attempts at promoting peace have been criticized for their shortcomings, particularly in situations such as those in Somalia, Rwanda, and Bosnia. The lack of international support and challenges in transferring power and peacebuilding tasks to local actors were blamed for these failures.

### The Peacebuilding Commission and Ongoing Challenges

The Brahimi Report and the Supplement:

Three years later, the 1995 Supplement to the Agenda for Peace broadened the idea of peacebuilding that was established in the original Agenda. The document acknowledged the importance of peacebuilding for preventing and resolving conflicts. After facing setbacks in Somalia and Rwanda, the Brahimi Report (2000) enhanced the UN’s peacebuilding strategy by emphasizing the need for improved capacities, increased funding, and better coordination. The report highlighted the importance of disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR), as well as the necessity to address spoilers and fight against corruption.

In 2005, the UN created the Peacebuilding Commission to tackle strategic and coordination shortcomings. Critics argue that despite being established, the commission has been slow to involve civil society and is lacking the power and resources needed for successful peacebuilding. The UN’s peacebuilding architecture review in 2010 pointed out deficiencies and requested enhancements, underlining the importance of local ownership and increased participation from civil society.

Peacebuilding is strongly connected to liberal principles advocating for democracy, human rights, and economic liberalization, yet this method has encountered substantial criticisms. Liberal peacebuilding may not take into account local factors like gender, ethnicity, and class divides, imposing outside solutions while overlooking local circumstances. Critics believe that focusing on state-driven methods can overlook the potential effectiveness of grassroots efforts in establishing lasting peace.

### Conclusion

The development of peacebuilding has been an ever-changing journey, influenced by global occurrences and the increasing understanding of the intricate, enduring aspect of reconstructing societies after conflict. Although peacebuilding has grown in importance in global conflict resolution efforts, it still faces significant obstacles such as addressing local dynamics, power structures, and fostering true cooperation between international and local entities.





## ANKASAM ANALYSIS

# Migration Crisis in the Balkans

Erdem Baran ALKAN

Throughout history, the Balkans have been a crossroads for people from many ethnic backgrounds and cultures with different beliefs. This explains the heterogeneity of the region. However, instability and fragility tend to arise more easily in heterogeneous structures. The history of the Balkans is also full of instability. Today, there are still conflicts that cause problems especially in the countries of the region such as Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The Balkans, particularly with the impact of the conflicts that occurred since 1990s, have sent migrants to Western Europe. Although this migration has decreased over time, it still continues. The countries in the region are trying to fill the labor shortage caused by migrations with cheap labor from the Middle East, Afghanistan and Pakistan.

This situation was particularly prominent on the agenda during the refugee crisis that peaked in 2015 and led to serious division in public. North Macedonia declared a state of emergency and other countries in the region were on alert.<sup>[1]</sup> Therefore, the Balkans played a leading role in the course of this migration crisis as it was located along the route. The route between the Middle East and Europe passes through the Balkans. For this reason, refugees, particularly those fleeing from Syria, aimed to reach Europe via the Balkans, which further worsened the region's complex dynamics.<sup>[2]</sup>

The route extending from Greece, through Bosnia and Herzegovina, and up to Croatia, after an announcement by the then German Chancellor Angela Merkel under the motto "We can do it" welcoming refugees fleeing from war, primarily the Balkan countries, along with the other countries on the route, organized bus and train services to transport the migrants in the south to the north. The route was officially closed in 2016 following the agreement between Turkey and the European Union (EU). However, irregular and illegal migrants have continued to use this route since then. The border of Bosnia and Herzegovina with Croatia is seen as the endpoint of this unofficial route. This border, which is the point where migrants attempting to cross into EU countries are stopped, has increased its importance in recent years.<sup>[3]</sup>

Numerous lawsuits have been filed against the harsh measures imposed by Croatian police on migrants in this border area and it has been stated that such actions are unlawful. However, it should not be forgotten that Croatia's policies are shaped by the EU. Ultimately, it is not only Croatia but also countries such as Austria and Slovenia that have resorted to similar practices, and they have been met with backlash from many activists and citizens. Therefore, over time, the countries in the region have increased border controls, but the process has undoubtedly had many impacts on the region from various perspectives.<sup>[4]</sup> The phenomenon of migration, which began to be used as a tool in political discourse in the countries of the region, has gradually become politicized both globally and in the Balkans, caused tensions in public opinion. The processes in question, with the contribution of their economic consequences, have been increasing divisions among the public, thus negatively impacting the already fragile structure of the region and calling into question the political legitimacy of government.<sup>[5]</sup>

The biggest example of this situation can be seen in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The change in public opinion in the country at the beginning of the crisis over time serves as a concrete example of the divisions mentioned above. There are many migrant camps in the country close to the Croatian border. The Bira and Lipa camps are at the forefront of these. These camps, closed due to the decisions of the authorities and a series of fires, have left many people homeless. EU pledged humanitarian aid after these incidents and warned the country about this inconvenient situation. Disputes between the government and local authorities have worsened the situation and many leading candidates in the 2020 elections appeared before the public with anti-migrant rhetoric.

Similar situations exist in Croatia as well. In addition to the situations mentioned above, pressures from law enforcement on many civil society organizations are increasing. The refusal by Croatian authorities of a migrant girl's request for asylum, followed by her death after being hit by a train while walking back to Serbia with her family, has increased public backlash against the government. The rise in rhetoric against irregular migrants is also present in Slovenia and Serbia. The policies of governments remain significant at this point, and discourses against irregular migrants are on agenda.<sup>[6]</sup>

Another important issue is the impact of migration on the economy. As mentioned above, the Balkan countries have taken steps to address the labor shortage resulting from emigration after the 1990s, managing the process through bilateral agreements and with the involvement of migrants. However, the overemployment of migrants has led to an increase in unemployment levels and fears among the local people. In addition, as low-wage migrants are the preferred choice for employers, the working conditions and motivation of already employed citizens can be negatively affected. Moreover, the countries in the region, especially those in the southern part of the Western Balkans, such as North Macedonia, have relatively weak economic capacities. Therefore, the presence of migrants in these countries becomes an additional burden on the economies of the countries. At this point, the migration situation in the region, which does not present a very parallel course, also brings dissatisfaction among the people. Therefore, in such processes, the resilience of countries depends on the funds of various organizations, primarily the EU. However, it should also be taken into account that these types of aids are not long-term and provide temporary solutions.

The proportion of the migrating population to the world's total population is not significantly different from historical levels; however, due to the processes and their derivatives mentioned above, this issue has become highly politicized, and opposition to migrants and xenophobia in the region has increased. This also explains the rise of far-right parties in Continental Europe in recent times. These anti-immigrant parties are expanding their base by creating public opinion. The election of presidential candidate from the conservative party in North Macedonia in recent months is also a concrete example of the shift to the right among the local population in the region.

The improvement of the migration situation in the Balkans does not appear to be very promising at this point. As mentioned before, the aid coming from organizations and groups does not provide a long-term solution, and the countries in the region need to increase cooperation among themselves and develop common policies. However, the separatist issues in Bosnia and other ethnic conflicts in the region lower the probability of this cooperation forming, thereby reducing the functionality of migration policies.



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## ANKASAM ANALYSIS

# Current Issues in Bangladesh's Textile Industry and the Future of the Sector



Itir BOZDAĞ

The "fast fashion" movement, which started in the 1970s and continues to grow on a large scale today, has become one of the main economic sources for countries in Asia. Due to economic instability, low wages, and unemployment in these countries, global brands prefer these nations as production sites, while for the same reasons, citizens are also turning to the textile industry. However, this situation brings up issues such as workers' rights and capitalism.

One of the notable countries in the textile industry, Bangladesh hosts factories for many fast fashion brands. While the existence of this sector is of great importance to Bangladesh, as it constitutes a large part of the economy, it has also brought about many problems. Recently emerging political issues in the country have raised questions about the future of this industry.

The problems in the energy sector that began in 2022 have worsened in 2024, causing significant issues in Bangladesh's textile industry. Factories have struggled to meet demands, with production capacities dropping by 40%. Additionally, workplaces have downsized, and there have been difficulties in paying workers' wages. Furthermore, international companies have shifted orders worth \$50 million to other countries such as Sri Lanka and India.[1]

As energy problems persist, disruptions in factory production processes in Bangladesh are expected to increase. The decrease in production capacity could lead to layoffs and, consequently, higher unemployment rates. Difficulties in paying wages may further deepen the country's existing economic issues. The shift of production to other countries could worsen the crisis in Bangladesh and lead to a prolonged downturn in the textile sector.



Due to the global economic crisis and a decline in sales in the West, buyers are demanding discounts of up to 20% on prices, despite production costs in the country rising by 20–33%. This has led to manufacturers missing delivery deadlines and being forced to reject low-priced orders.<sup>[2]</sup>

In this context, manufacturers may resort to methods such as reducing quality or increasing efficiency to balance costs. However, this could negatively impact the reputation of brands and their global market share in the long term. Additionally, the rejection of orders and delivery delays could weaken Bangladesh's reliability in the supply chain, accelerating the shift to alternative production centers. This could further complicate the position of the local economy in international markets.

Recent protests and the political atmosphere have also spread to the textile industry. At least four factories were set on fire, and producers have struggled to continue their operations under nationwide internet outages. The recent political unrest could lead to a "10–20% decrease in exports" this year. Considering that fast fashion exports account for 80% of Bangladesh's export income, this is not a negligible amount. Staff are protesting with various demands, including higher wages.<sup>[3]</sup>

Mohammed Hatem, President of the Bangladesh Sweater Manufacturers and Exporters Association, states that the unrest and protests in early August 2024, along with the disruptions, led to a 50% decrease in clothing production.<sup>[4]</sup>

The protests in the country have erupted due to economic reasons, directly affecting the textile sector, which constitutes a significant portion of the country's exports. The decline in the textile sector is leading to millions of people facing the risk of unemployment due to existing economic instability and issues such as unemployment. If wages do not increase and working conditions do not improve, protests are expected to continue, and production in factories may be disrupted.

Recent floods in the country are another factor that has disrupted the textile sector. With the flooding, issues arose in cotton supply to factories, and the factories have faced problems in meeting orders. Continued rainfall is expected in the country.<sup>[5]</sup>

Bangladesh and other South Asian countries are considered some of the most vulnerable regions to climate change. The impact of environmental factors on the textile industry is expected to increase. The current floods and heavy rains are likely to intensify, causing further difficulties in raw material supply.

Since a large portion of Bangladesh's economy relies on the textile industry, the future of this sector has a decisive impact on the country's economic issues. Diversifying the country's economic sectors and reducing dependence on the textile industry could be a solution strategy for the economic instability Bangladesh is experiencing.

It would not be correct to limit this issue to factors within Bangladesh alone. Global brands also play a significant role in this problem. If brands do not take on the necessary responsibilities and fail to make the required improvements in workers' conditions, it is unlikely that the issues in the textile sector will be resolved. While the fast fashion trend and the demand associated with it are seen by some as providing economic opportunities for countries like Bangladesh, the conditions of these countries (high population, low minimum wage, etc.), which are preferred as production sites, also bring with them major issues such as workers' rights, working conditions, and environmental sustainability.

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## ANKASAM ANALYSIS

# Development of the Digital Economy: The Cases of Malaysia and Thailand

Emin Mirbatur SEVAL

Southeast Asia is experiencing rapid growth in demand for data centers as the digital economy continues to expand. With the widespread adoption of cloud computing, the growth of the internet user base, and the increasing need for digital services, countries in the region have begun to build data centers to support this growth.

With a population of over 650 million people, Southeast Asia is a region of rapid adoption of digital technologies. Internet penetration is growing steadily, with millions of new users joining the digital landscape every year. The region's level of data consumption is rising as people increasingly turn to online services for everything from entertainment and e-commerce to business and education. This digital shift is creating a huge demand for cloud-based infrastructure and storage, resulting in the need for more data centers. Businesses and governments in the region are investing heavily in digital transformation. This creates a significant need for data storage, security and processing capabilities.[1]

In Southeast Asia, countries such as Singapore have long been leaders in data infrastructure due to their advanced technology ecosystems and stable business environments. However, as data usage and cloud services proliferate, other countries such as Thailand and Malaysia are rising to the prominence as emerging hubs for data center development.

Malaysia is rising as a major data hub in Asia. The country has seen significant growth in data center investments thanks to its strategic location, cost effectiveness and strong government support. This makes it a good option for regional and global companies looking to build infrastructure in Southeast Asia. The government's focus on technological innovation and investment in digital infrastructure has created a favorable environment for data center development. Malaysia's growth is expected to continue as demand for data processing and storage continues to increase.[2]

Alongside Malaysia, Thailand is also making significant strides towards becoming a leading country in Southeast Asia's data center market. With a growing number of local and international companies building state-of-the-art facilities in the country, Thailand is leading the way in data center investments in the region. Several global cloud providers are planning to establish data centers in Thailand, taking advantage of the country's strategic location within the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) economic region.[3]. The Thai government's Digital Economy Promotion Agency (DEPA) plays an active role in providing incentives for data center investments as well as developing key infrastructure such as high-speed broadband networks and power grids. This government support, combined with Thailand's increasingly tech-savvy workforce, has the potential to make the country a key player in the region's data center push.

The data center boom in Southeast Asia shows no signs of slowing down. The region's expanding digital economy, the shift to cloud computing and the growing need for localized data processing are driving demand for more data centers. In addition, companies looking to comply with increasingly stringent data regulations, such as the EU's General Data Protection Regulation, are opting for localized infrastructure to avoid cross-border data transfer issues.[4].

The race to build data centers in Southeast Asia is not without its challenges. One of the main concerns of data center operators is land and its cost. With rapid urbanization in many Southeast Asian countries, it is increasingly difficult to find large tracts of land for data centers in major metropolitan areas. This has led to higher land prices and longer infrastructure construction times for new facilities. Another challenge for data center developers in Southeast Asia is the frequency and vulnerability of the region to natural disasters. In Southeast Asia, where extreme weather events such as earthquakes, floods, etc. are common, data centers are taking these disasters into account and preparing for resilient infrastructures and recovery plans.

In addition, the power required to run data centers also raises a number of concerns. The energy consumption of large data centers is significant. As many countries in the region rely more heavily on non-renewable energy sources, there is increasing pressure to develop greener and more energy-efficient solutions. Many data center operators are looking to leverage renewable energy sources such as solar and hydropower to address these concerns.

Looking to the future, Southeast Asia's data center market is set to grow. As countries in the region look to build their digital infrastructure and capitalize on the opportunities created by the growing digital economy, demand for data centers will increase. Malaysia, Thailand and other Southeast Asian countries are positioning themselves as key players in the region's data center landscape, attracting significant investment and paving the way for future technological advancements. While challenges remain in terms of land, sustainability and natural disaster risks, these obstacles can be overcome with the right policies, technological innovation and investment in resilient infrastructure. As Southeast Asia continues to grow as a digital powerhouse, the region's data center market supports the development of the digital economy and continues to meet the demands of manufacturers and consumers.

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## ANKASAM ANALYSIS

# The Ethnic Conflict in Bosnia and The Role of United Nations

### Introduction

Jameela RIZWAN

Ethnic Conflicts are not a recent development. Although these conflicts have persisted for millennia around the world, they have gained public attention in the last 30 years following the fall of Communism and the events in Eastern Europe, which led to the breakup of the former Soviet Union.

The ability of states to uphold political stability was beginning to wane in the post-Cold War world. Third World nations mostly suffered from losing the backing of their previous patrons as a result of the two superpowers ceasing to compete for influence in the world. What had once provided stability was no longer there.

In Bosnia, the last decade of the twenty-first century was marked by genocides against entire societies. Bosnian Muslims were the target of ethnic cleansing carried out by Serbs between 1992 and 1995.

### Bosnia and The United Nations:

Bosnia and Herzegovina, a previous Ottoman province, has always been a multiethnic state. According to the 1991 census, 44% of the population were Muslims (Bosniak), 33% Serb, 17% Croat and 6% describing themselves as Yugoslav. In late 1991, the Croat region declared itself an independent state from Bosnia but it wasn't recognised internationally. While wanting to secede from the country entirely the Croats had agreed to cooperate with the government of Bosnia and Herzegovina. [1]

Bosnia Independence Referendum in 1992, voters said 'yes' to the Independence from Yugoslavia which President Alija Izetbegović officially proclaimed on March 3, 1992. Against this, the Bosnian Serbs made a self-declaration of their own state 'Republika Srpska' within the border of Bosnia, which received no recognition except from one, the Serbian and Montenegro Leader- Slobodan Milosevic, a hyper-nationalist who had a vision of creating a greater Serbian nation. It marks the start of war which continued till 1995. This paper discusses further details of war, ethnic cleansing, and Genocide in Bosnia and the role of the International community, the UN, and other Multilateral Institutions in it.[2]

The European Economic Community organized a conference in August 1991 to and Herzegovina from devolving into violence. The United Nations Security Council issued Resolution 713 imposing an arms embargo on the former Yugoslav territories on September 25, 1991, The Yugoslav People's Army (JNA) and the Serb forces were mostly unaffected by the embargo. On the other hand, the embargo had a significant impact in Bosnia and Herzegovina at the start of the Bosnian War as the Serbs had the armaments and the equipment of the JNA, and the Bosniaks had outdated weapons by Croatia breaching the embargo.

Following the United States and European Community's recognition of Bosnia and Herzegovina's independence on April 7, Bosnian Serb paramilitary groups opened fire on Sarajevo, and shortly after, Yugoslav army units (JNA) comprising Bosnian Serbs began bombarding the city and civilian population with Tanks, artillery and Sniper fire, killing thousands in a siege that would last for years, Their goal is to take the control of capital as soon as possible. To fight back, the Bosniaks and Croats ally to protect their chances for Independence. [3]

The UN made a swift effort to negotiate with Milosevic and the Serb forces, and they came to an agreement for the Yugoslav army to be withdrawn. But what happened is the JNA just gave up control of around 1 lakh Serb troops, who mostly continue fighting for the Serbs in Bosnia. For the remainder of that year, the front lines were held by a hastily constructed Bosnian government army and some more experienced Bosnian Croat forces, albeit their authority was steadily eroding in several areas of eastern Bosnia and Herzegovina.

A war with Croat forces in 1993-1994 and an international arms embargo both undermined the military might of the Bosnian government. However, Bosniaks and Croats decided to create a unified federation later in 1994. Although the UN Protection Force (UNPROFOR) forces facilitated the delivery of humanitarian aid, the UN declined to intervene in the Bosnian War. Later, the group expanded its responsibilities to include safeguarding several UN-designated "safe areas." But in July 1995, the UN was unable to keep the region of Srebrenica secure.[4]

Serbia had begun its "ethnically cleansing" campaign of eliminating all Bosnian Muslims, or Bosniaks, from Bosnian territory in April 1992. Using weapons from the former Yugoslavia, Serbia and ethnic Bosnian Serbs surrounded Sarajevo, the country's capital, and launched an attack on Bosniaks. Numerous Bosniaks were forced into concentration camps, where other civilians were malnourished, tortured, and killed, and women and girls were often gang-raped.

Srebrenica, Sarajevo, Goradze and other Muslim enclaves were designated safe zones by the United Nations Security Council in 1993 and would be guarded by a UN peacekeeping force. However, in one such area, Srebrenica, in July 1995, Serbs carried out the biggest genocide in Europe since World War II. An estimated 23,000 elderly, pregnant, and children were loaded onto buses and driven to Muslim-controlled territory, while 8,000 "battle-age" men were detained and slaughtered. The so-called safe area of Srebrenica fell without a single shot fired by the UN, and thousands of men were massacred, the Srebrenica genocide is still remembered as a failure of the UN and the International community who failed to intervene in this horrific massacre.

Almost 2,000,000 were displaced during the 1992-95 war. Subsequent studies concluded that the death toll was about 100,000.

The Serbs lost territory in Bosnia and Croatia after the conflict, in addition to their own region. In addition, following the conflict, Kosovo, Macedonia, and Montenegro all proclaimed their independence from the Serbs.

There is a belief in Yugoslavia that Christian Serbs are better than Muslim Serbs. The genetic corruption of Muslim Serbs led to their interbreeding with Turkish Muslims, even though Christian and Muslim Serbs were of the same race.

Muslims from Bosnia were forced to flee the UN safe zone because their neighbors were also involved in hostilities. But because of this circumstance, Bosnian Muslims became the target of Bosnian Serbs.



Post-Conflict Reconciliation era:

The International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) was established to prosecute war crimes, providing a form of justice and accountability for victims. The establishment of truth and reconciliation commissions, like the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Bosnia and Herzegovina, aimed to uncover the truth about war crimes and foster reconciliation. The sustained involvement of international organizations and peacekeeping forces has been instrumental in maintaining stability and fostering dialogue between ethnic groups. But Bosnia-Herzegovina remains ethnically divided, with separate entities for Bosniaks, Serbs, and Croats. Efforts at reconciliation have been slow and contentious, hindered by ongoing political tensions and nationalist rhetoric.[5]

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## ANKASAM ANALYSIS

# China's New "White Paper": Transportation in Sustainable Development



Berra KIZILYAZI

The White Paper published by the Information Office of the State Council of China on Friday, November 29, 2024, focuses on "Transportation for Sustainable Development". China has made notable achievements in the construction of rural roads, with increased overall length, higher technical standards and better accessibility. According to the White Paper, China has built paved roads in rural tourism centers, industrial parks, resource and mineral reserves, as well as economic growth points, making it easier to travel to remote areas, especially to mountainous areas.[1]

The White Paper is a document consisting of official reports explaining the Chinese government's official stance and policies on certain issues. Through this document, China's political goals and national interests are presented to both the public and the international community. The latest White Paper report emphasizes the development of rural roads and their importance in economic, social and cultural development. Moreover, the welfare level of the rural population and the work carried out within the framework of these policies set an example for other developing countries.

According to the White Paper, China's highway standards have been applied in dozens of countries and hundreds of projects around the world, including Indonesia's Surabaya-Madura Bridge Project and Mozambique's Maputo-Katembe Bridge Project. Besides, as a platform for cooperation and exchange, China has established the Global Sustainable Transportation Innovation and Knowledge Center to share China's experience in rural road development with the international community.[2]



China also shared its experience through international training sessions. The White Paper noted that the country organized 28 training sessions, including a training program on road design and management in Botswana and an advanced training program on highway engineering for countries participating in the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). China has supported and participated in rural road construction projects and provided support to numerous rural road infrastructure projects in other developing countries. According to the White Paper, since 2018, China has supported 24 developing countries, including Cambodia, Serbia, Rwanda, Namibia, Vanuatu and Niger, with highway and bridge construction and maintenance, helping them to improve their transportation infrastructure. [3].

The development of transportation infrastructures has increased local investments, prevented migration to urban areas and played an important role in maintaining the population of rural areas. This has also facilitated access to services and markets for people living in rural areas. Regional development has improved the living standards of these populations. Balancing migration has been beneficial in terms of preserving demographic and cultural integrity. In other words, both economic and social integrity and sustainable development have been achieved by balancing regional inequality.

As for BRI, the development of highways has facilitated international trade by increasing regional integration and strengthened connections in the region. Regarding land-based trade, the development of highways has been effective in reducing costs by accelerating the transportation of goods, creating alternative transportation routes to maritime routes and gaining strategic importance of trade corridors. This will increase the trade volume of the BRI countries with China and ensure regional and global integration on the basis of logistics infrastructure. Furthermore, increased highway activity will open up new business opportunities in sectors such as transportation and tourism, providing employment opportunities. Thus, China will have a strategic impact from economic growth to social development.

To conclude, according to the White Paper on the development of highways in China, not only rural areas but also many other regions have benefited from these developments in terms of transportation, logistics and trade. China has used highway projects as a strategic tool for sustainable development, thereby increasing its trade capacity and enhancing its power in international trade.

In terms of BRI, these roads have made multidimensional contributions such as increasing trade between countries and supporting sustainable development. Also, aligning with BRI goals, the strategic importance of highways in regional integration, economic and social development has been prioritized, and China's effectiveness in global trade networks has been emphasized.

The development of rural highways, highlighted in the White Paper, has contributed to China's economic and social development and played an important role in the development of the BRI and the Asia-Pacific region. This progress has strengthened ties between rural and urban areas, created a balance and had a global impact. The outcomes of China's highway initiatives have not only set an example for many countries in the Asia-Pacific and BRI, but have also strengthened ties in the cultural sphere by increasing interaction between countries.

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## ANKASAM ANALYSIS

# Georgia's Decision to Postpone EU Accession Negotiations Process and Its Effects



Ekin GÜLLÜOĞLU

The Georgian government's decision to postpone accession negotiations with the European Union (EU) until 2028 is not only a change of timetable, but also a turning point in the country's reshaping of its political, economic, and geopolitical orientation. This decision is a reflection of Georgia's efforts to ensure its domestic political stability and continue its search for balance in foreign policy. However, it has deeply affected both the expectations of the Georgian people and the EU's enlargement policies. While domestic political dynamics, Russia's influence in the region, and the EU's demands for reform were the most important elements of this process, the decision also had serious consequences for international relations.

The decision in Georgia was driven by increasing political tensions and difficulties in reform processes, especially in recent years. Criticism of Georgia on the rule of law, human rights, and freedom of the press, which are among the core values of the EU, played a decisive role in this decision. For example, regulations such as the "Foreign Agent Law" were perceived in the West as a trend towards authoritarianism. EU officials stated that such policies undermined the democratization process and contradicted Georgia's EU membership aspirations.<sup>[1]</sup> On the other hand, the Georgian government interpreted these criticisms as Western interference in the country's internal affairs and defended them as national security measures.<sup>[2]</sup>

Another important reason for Georgia's decision is its delicate relations with Russia. The 2008 Russo-Georgian War permanently increased tensions between the two countries. Russia's military presence in Abkhazia and South Ossetia and its recognition of these regions as independent states continue to threaten Georgia's territorial integrity. Georgia is aware that deeper integration with the EU could be perceived as a provocation by Moscow. Therefore, delaying the accession process can be seen as a strategic balancing act for Georgia. If Georgia moves closer to the West, there is a risk that Russia may increase its economic sanctions or intensify its military interventions.<sup>[3]</sup>

Inconsistencies in the EU's enlargement policies were another factor that influenced Georgia's decision. In 2022, Tbilisi was disappointed that Ukraine and Moldova were granted candidate status, while Georgia was only granted "potential candidate" status. Georgia believes that the EU should provide more support, arguing that it has taken important steps, especially in terms of democratization and rule of law reforms. However, the EU appears to link progress in the accession process not only to the implementation of reforms but also to broader geopolitical factors such as regional security and stability.

The implications of this decision for Georgia are not limited to foreign policy. The majority of Georgians see EU membership as a goal for the country's future. Polls show that more than 80% of the population supports EU membership.<sup>[4]</sup> The postponement of negotiations has therefore led to increased domestic political criticism of the Georgian Government. The opposition in particular uses this as evidence that the government is moving away from its European goals. At the societal level, the postponement of hopes for EU integration could undermine confidence in reforms and risk a setback in Georgia's democratization process.

At the international level, Georgia's decision has led to uncertainty in its relations with the West. While the EU continues to support Georgia's democratization efforts, the postponement of negotiations has created a perception that questions Tbilisi's commitment to the West. This could lead to new difficulties in Georgia's economic and diplomatic cooperation. On the other hand, Russia is likely to use this situation to increase its influence over Georgia. Moscow will be pleased to see the EU's influence in the region waning and will try to draw Georgia further into its sphere of influence.

How Georgia utilizes the period until 2028 is of critical importance for the country's future. Accelerating reforms and revitalizing relations with the EU should be one of Tbilisi's top priorities. This scenario could strengthen Georgia's economic development and international reputation. However, it is also possible that Georgia could develop closer ties with Russia if the process of integration with the West weakens. Such a scenario could jeopardize the country's independence aspirations and threaten regional security.

Alternatively, Georgia could pursue a more balanced policy vis-à-vis both the West and Russia by focusing on regional cooperation. This approach would allow Georgia to protect its economic and political interests while not completely excluding the EU accession process.

In conclusion, Georgia's decision to postpone EU accession negotiations has had a profound impact on the country's domestic dynamics, external relations, and regional balances. Georgia's continued commitment to reforms and strengthening its relations with the West could lead to a more stable path in the long run. Likewise, a more coherent and inclusive EU enlargement policy would be an important step to support the integration process of countries like Georgia.

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## ANKASAM ANALYSIS

# European Union Crisis in Georgia



Sena BİRİNCİ

The mass protests in Georgia, which have been ongoing since the end of November 2024, began after the government's decision to suspend negotiations with the European Union (EU) until 2028. This decision by the Georgian Dream Party government, led by Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze, was triggered by the European Parliament's rejection of the October 26, 2024 parliamentary election results and its call for new elections. Kobakhidze accused the EU and certain European leaders of "blackmail." The decision provoked widespread public outrage, while, given that support for EU membership in Georgia has reached approximately 80%, the magnitude of the protests has been deemed striking.[1]

The protests have been joined not only by voters, but also by diplomats, education sector workers, and civil servants. The Georgian people have clearly expressed that they will not abandon their European goals, and this has been evaluated by experts as a "strong signal of the Georgians' commitment to European values." [2] The EU membership goal, constitutionally guaranteed since 2017, holds an important place in the country's political agenda. While the government's decision to suspend the negotiation process is perceived by the public as a betrayal, the prevalence and continuity of the protests reveal the fracture in Georgia's political and social structure.

The Georgian Dream Party government's decision to suspend EU negotiations has brought the party's democratic backsliding tendencies back into focus. The government, which previously attempted to implement a regulation known as the "Foreign Agents Law," targeted civil society organizations and independent media with this law.[3] The law, which referred to similar regulations in Russia, received significant backlash from the international community on the grounds that it would jeopardize freedom of expression. This situation was interpreted as the Georgian government weakening its ties to European values and distancing itself from democratic standards.

The party recently enacted Kremlin-style laws restricting freedom of expression and LGBTQ+ rights. In a speech in parliament, Kobakhidze stated that the elections were "a referendum between immoral propaganda and traditional values," and that society chose traditional values.[4] The government's policies of seizing the state structure, manipulating elections, and undermining pro-European goals demonstrate that democratic values are under threat.

Kobakhidze, stating that they did not abandon their goal of EU membership, said, "We will not raise the issue of opening negotiations with the EU until the end of 2028. We will also not accept any budget grants from the EU until the end of 2028." [5] Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze, describing the protests as "violent" and "organized by foreign forces," defended the intervention of security forces against the protesters. While the police intervened in the protests with tear gas and water cannons, allegations of mistreatment of those detained drew the reactions of international human rights organizations.

The international community has not remained indifferent to the developments in Georgia. The EU has described the Georgian government's suspension of the negotiation process as "democratic backsliding," while the U.S. Department of State has regarded this decision as a step towards increasing the Kremlin's influence. Reports of the elections in Georgia not being free and fair have intensified Western countries' criticism of the Georgian Dream Party.

Experts emphasize that the international community should support democratic processes in Georgia, also stating that sanctions should bring to the agenda for those responsible for election manipulation and democratic backsliding. The deviation from Georgia's EU integration goals poses a risk of weakening the country's relations with the West.

Although Kremlin described the protests in Georgia as the country's internal matter, it likened the events to the Maidan protests in Ukraine. Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov, claiming that Georgia is being "dragged into a dark abyss," expressed the view that the protests were organized by Western powers.[6] Russia's approach can be interpreted as an attempt to increase its influence over Georgia, raising concerns that the Georgian government may grow closer to Moscow. This situation could have significant consequences for Georgia's geopolitical stance and the balance of power in the region.

While the long-term effects of the protests remain uncertain, the public's resistance to deviating from the pro-European path is increasing pressure on the government. The opposition parties in Georgia have widely participated in the protests, calling for a fight against the government's authoritarian tendencies. President Salome Zurbichvili, criticizing the government's policies, described the suspension of the EU membership process as Georgia's distancing from Europe.[7] Zurbichvili's statements have further deepened the political crisis and polarization in Georgia.

Prime Minister Kobakhidze announced that the government would refuse financial aid from Brussels, describing the decision as a matter of national independence and pride. However, such rhetoric carries the risk of weakening Georgia's integration process with the West and isolating the country internationally. The EU's decisions to impose sanctions on Georgia and halt financial aid could jeopardize the country's economic stability and further increasing public backlash. In particular, the commitment of the young population and educated segments to European values forms a strong resistance against the government's policies.

It is of great importance for the international community to continue supporting democratic values and civil society in Georgia during this process. Western countries' sanctions and diplomatic pressures on Georgia could lead the government to reconsider its policies. However, Moscow's efforts to increase its influence over Georgia could also affect the geopolitical balances in the region. Historically, as a country that has embraced the goal of integration with the West, Georgia finds itself at a critical juncture due to the tensions it is experiencing during this process.

The mass protests in Georgia have once again highlighted the tensions the country is experiencing in its EU integration process. These protests, which show that the people have not abandoned their European goals, offer an important opportunity to understand the dynamics of Georgia's political and social structure. The government's tendency to distance itself from democratic values fuels public resentment, while the international community's support for Georgia's democratic processes is crucial for the country's future.



As a result, the protests in Georgia have strongly demonstrated how committed the public is to the country's integration process with the EU. The government's decision to suspend negotiations not only heightened concerns about distancing from democratic values but also deepened the tension between the people and the government. Especially the support of the young and educated population for European values could play a critical role in determining the direction of this process.

The support of the international community for the democratic process in Georgia will be decisive in both internal and external dynamics. However, Russia's efforts to increase its influence in the region could make Georgia's geopolitical balance more complex. In this process, the public's commitment to European goals is the most important guarantee for the protection of democratic values. Georgia continues to struggle to remain part of the European family with its historical and cultural ties.

[1] Sarah Shamim, "Georgia protests: What's behind them and what's next?", Aljazeera, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/12/3/georgia-protests-whats-behind-them-and-whats-next>, (Date Accessed: 04.12.2024).

[2] Thomas Mackintosh, Maia Davies & Rayhan Demytrie, "Police use water cannon as Georgia EU protests erupt for second night", BBC, <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c62jp68p315o>, (Date Accessed: 04.12.2024).

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Lucy Davalou & Andrew Naughtie, "Georgian prime minister suspends EU membership talks until end of 2028", Euronews, <https://www.euronews.com/my-europe/2024/11/28/georgian-prime-minister-suspends-eu-membership-talks-until-end-of-2028>, (Date Accessed: 04.12.2024).

[6] Same Source.

[7] Sophiko Megreldze, "Georgia suspends talks on joining the European Union and accuses the bloc of blackmail", AP News, <https://apnews.com/article/georgia-cabinet-election-russia-european-union-kobakhidze-1291827f76eac552a2918b4b584fa5a0>, (Date Accessed: 04.12.2024).



## ANKASAM ANALYSIS

# Chinese Look on the Russia-North Korea Alliance



Simay GÜZEL

Relations between China, Russia, and North Korea exhibit a complex dynamic, shaped by historical, strategic, and geopolitical contexts. Within the framework of existing and potential co-operation, these relationships significantly influence the balance of power in the international system. Over recent years, China's sway over North Korea has diminished while Chinese concerns over Pyongyang's inability to curtail its nuclear ambitions mounted. These apprehensions have been presumably exacerbated by North Korea's significant tightening of ties with Russia this year.

In June 2024, North Korea and Russia signed a new alliance agreement, pledging mutual military assistance in the event of an attack on either nation. By October, various news and intelligence sources reported that Pyongyang had sent troops to Russia to bolster its efforts in Ukraine.<sup>[1]</sup> While official confirmation of North Korean troop deployments remains absent, the allegations, coupled with indications of potential support, underscore the deepening ties between the two countries. Such developments might have profound geopolitical ramifications on both regional and global scales.

Unlike the 1950s, a time when the Soviet Union surpassed China in all dimensions of hard power, Russia has, since the war in Ukraine, become a comparatively junior partner in its relations with China. Meanwhile, North Korea remains economically reliant on Beijing, importing almost all its trade and a significant portion of its energy from China since the post-Cold War era.<sup>[2]</sup> Within this context, the trilateral and bilateral interactions among China, Russia, and North Korea –three adjacent countries who are known to support each other in various means– play a pivotal role in shaping the balance of power in East Asia. For Beijing, this alliance presents both opportunities and risks. Consequently, the recent rapprochement between Russia and North Korea has amplified geopolitical concerns across the region.

China has refrained from making an official statement regarding allegations that North Korea has sent troops to Russia. It's typical of Beijing to adopt a cautious stance on such claims. On 21 November 2024, during a routine press briefing, prompted by a question about the presence of North Korean soldiers in Russia, the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated it had no information on the matter.<sup>[3]</sup> Some analysts believe that Beijing's reticence signals dissatisfaction with the evolving military alliance between Pyongyang and Moscow. This silence is likely to reflect an awareness of the precariousness and potential perils of the situation.<sup>[4]</sup>

As North Korea's primary trading partner, China plays a critical role in Pyongyang's economic and political stability, perceiving the smaller country as a strategic buffer against US influence in the region. Simultaneously, Western sanctions stemming from the war in Ukraine have driven Russia to fortify its ties within Asia. Moscow's rapprochement with North Korea represents a calculated move to mitigate its isolation and secure practical benefits, such as arms procurement.

Allegations of North Korea providing arms and military aid to Russia in the Ukrainian conflict might place China in a diplomatically challenging position. Given the fact that many politicians have already targeted China, Beijing was expected to react negatively to its two allies and neighbours. The US has been pressuring China to leverage its influence over North Korea to limit Pyongyang's military alliance with Moscow. However, openly opposing this alliance risks pushing North Korea further into Russia's sphere of influence, while overt support could provoke widespread international backlash. Although Beijing consistently advocates peaceful solutions, it is unlikely to adopt a hard-line stance against its two close neighbours, given its vested interests. This intricate balancing act narrows China's room for manoeuvre in the realm of international relations.

China regards its alliance with Russia as a valuable counterbalance in the international sphere. Openly opposing the Russia-North Korea partnership could jeopardise Beijing's relations with Moscow. At the same time, Beijing seeks to safeguard its commercial interests and preserve its standing on the global stage by steering clear of any indirect involvement in North Korea's role in the conflict in Ukraine. It is anticipated that diplomatic channels will be employed and a carefully calibrated policy of balance maintained to uphold strategic alliances and protect China's international reputation. The measures Beijing adopts in this context will be guided by its objectives of sustaining influence over North Korea, preserving its alliance with Russia, and ensuring regional stability. In this regard, China may adopt a stance of discreet criticism towards the Russia-North Korea alliance, articulating its concerns subtly rather than through overt opposition. Nonetheless, China's strategy encounters several significant challenges. The increasingly autonomous and unpredictable leadership of North Korea's Kim Jong Un is emerging as a critical factor undermining Beijing's leverage over Pyongyang. Moreover, sustained Western criticism could lead to accusations that China is indirectly supporting North Korea, potentially resulting in sanctions.

Within this context, it is crucial to acknowledge China's significant influence over both Russia and North Korea. Both nations rely on China's support to mitigate the effects of Western sanctions. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, North Korea has become profoundly dependent on China across various domains. Experts posit that Beijing could leverage this influence to temper the burgeoning alliance between North Korea and Russia.<sup>[1]</sup>

Thus far, China has pursued a meticulously balanced approach to the Russia-North Korea partnership, striving to safeguard its own interests while averting conflict. From the perspective of regional stability, the increasing sway of Russia over North Korea introduces complexities to China's strategic calculations in the region. Beijing's prospective measures might encompass diplomatic overtures as well as the application of economic leverage. While the challenges inherent in this process may constrain the efficacy of China's strategy, it is evident that Beijing will endeavour to manage the risks posed by the Russia-North Korea alliance, all while striving to uphold its stature as a regional power.

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