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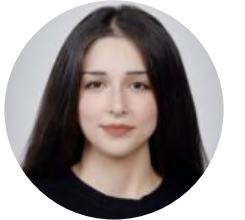
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ANKASAM ANALYSIS

The "Martial Law" Crisis in South Korea and its Future



Zeynep Çağla ERİN

South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol declared martial law in a midnight television address on 4 December 2024. He stated that this declaration was a necessary step to 'protect the country from North Korea's communist forces and eliminate anti-state elements'. According to footage broadcast by local media outlets, army troops stationed at the parliament building in the capital Seoul, with the support of opposition lawmakers and several treasury members, attempted to hold a session and gain access to the main building in an attempt to invalidate martial law.^[1]

President Yoon Suk Yeol's statement was criticised as illegal and unconstitutional by South Korean politicians. Criticism was not limited to the opposition; the President's own party also reacted. The leader of the conservative People's Power Party opposed this decision, describing Yoon's action as 'an act against democracy'.

These developments have the potential to lead to both deep political polarisation within the country and intense debates on democratic norms. It should be noted that the last time martial law was declared in South Korea was in 1979, after the assassination of Park Chung-hee, the long-time dictator of the time, during a coup d'état. Since the 1987 transition to parliamentary democracy, martial law has not been imposed in the country.

President Yoon's declaration of martial law deepened domestic political polarisation and raised international concerns about South Korea's democratic values. Criticisms that the declaration of martial law was used to characterise the opposition as 'anti-state' without providing concrete evidence undermined trust in Yoon's leadership. While these developments were considered as a test of democratic norms in South Korea, the existence of civil and political resistance was interpreted as a promising sign of the strength of democratic institutions.

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Following the President's announcement, General Park An-su, the South Korean Chief of General Staff, was appointed as the martial law commander. In his first orders, Park announced a ban on parliamentary sessions and other political gatherings that could lead to social unrest. In addition, the military demanded that doctors, who had been on strike for months against plans to increase student quotas in medical faculties, return to their duties within 48 hours.[2]

Having lost its parliamentary majority, the Yoon government was unable to pass the laws it wanted and was limited to vetoing bills approved by the opposition. In the context of women's rights violations in South Korea, Yoon's anti-feminist and conservative public support also suffered a serious decline. While his approval ratings dropped to as low as 17 per cent, his presidential term was marred by many corruption scandals. For example, Yoon's wife became the centre of criticism for allegedly accepting Dior bags. There were allegations that names linked to Yoon's presidential team were involved in stock manipulation in the stock market.[3]

Deputies of the Democratic Party, which has a parliamentary majority, reached the National Assembly and voted to make a formal request to the President to lift martial law. According to the Constitution, martial law must be lifted upon the request of a parliamentary majority. According to the South Korean Constitution, martial law must be lifted upon the request of a parliamentary majority, and in this case, the majority of opposition MPs was effective in making a quick decision. Hours later, 190 of the 300 deputies in the National Assembly participated in the vote and all of them supported the lifting of martial law. This decision was supported by 18 deputies from President Yoon Suk Yeol's party[4].

President Yoon, who appeared on television again in the morning after the vote, made the following statement:[5]

"The National Assembly has just requested the lifting of martial law and we have withdrawn the army units deployed for martial law operations. We will accept the decision of the National Assembly and lift martial law at the cabinet meeting."

In addition, Yoon, who has had difficulty in advancing the government's agenda with the opposition-controlled parliament since he took office in 2022, argued that he had no choice but to declare martial law. It should be emphasised that this decision was taken after the Democratic Party passed a declining budget bill in parliament and submitted impeachment motions against a state auditor and attorney general.[6]

Before the markets open on 4 December 2024, the statements made by economic and financial officials are noteworthy. They expressed their readiness to deploy a fund of 10 trillion won (approximately \$7.06 billion) to stabilise the stock market at any time. This announcement had a significant impact on the market, causing the South Korean stock market index to close down by 1.44% on Wednesday 4 December 2024. However, losses exceeding 2% in the early hours of the day were partially recovered after opposition lawmakers initiated impeachment proceedings against the government.[7] However, given South Korea's critical role in the global supply chain, it is necessary to monitor developments carefully.

Considering the lifting of martial law hours later and the parliamentary majority, a two-thirds majority is required by law for the impeachment to succeed in the 300-member National Assembly. With 200 votes, this support seems possible, given that the opposition parties hold the majority. After parliamentary approval, the nine-member Constitutional Court considers the case, and if six members of the court vote in favour of impeachment, the President is removed from office. The impeachment of the president in South Korea has occurred twice in history; Roh Moo-hyun in 2004 and Park Geun-hye in 2016.

Martial law may have a negative impact on the economy by increasing domestic political instability. Domestic unrest and growing public resentment towards the government could adversely affect consumer confidence. Economic growth may slow down, particularly in terms of investment and trade decisions, which may create uncertainty. This could lead to disruptions in relations with trading partners, especially in the Asian market. Moreover, such a political crisis could adversely affect South Korea's external trade structure and supply chains. Prolonged instability could disrupt trade and production in the country. President Yoon's announcement of martial law as a security measure against anti-state forces, disagreements with opposition parties, blocked budget approvals and the government's inability to implement key economic policies create negative public perceptions of the effectiveness of the administration. In a weakened economy, such political moves will undermine investor and business confidence.

South Korea's internal turmoil is not only at the local level. In particular, South Korea's strong alliance relations with the United States could be affected by this crisis. Prolonged domestic instability could disrupt South Korea's regional security cooperation and create uncertainties in critical areas such as military cooperation with the United States. As a strong ally in the Asia-Pacific region, the United States will assess the strategic implications of instability in South Korea. The possibility of further provocations by North Korea, taking advantage of the internal turmoil in South Korea, poses another regional danger. President Yoon tried to justify martial law by describing North Korea as a threat. However, such political rhetoric has historically created tension between the two Koreas.

Internationally, regional competitors, especially China and Japan, are carefully monitoring this internal turmoil in South Korea. Economically, China and Japan could be directly affected by disruptions in South Korea's supply chains.

The declaration of martial law by South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol has not only affected political dynamics at the national level, but also has important geopolitical implications on a regional and global scale. Yoon's move by defining his political rivals and the opposition as 'anti-state' is considered as a significant intervention in terms of undermining democratic foundations. South Korea is considered to be one of the most developed democracies in Asia, and in this context, Yoon's decision to impose martial law has led to the questioning of the democratic structure of the country and the legitimacy of the government.

It can be foreseen that such overly interventionist policies may not only cause domestic political crises, but also negatively affect South Korea's democratic profile at the international level. The international repercussions of this development have become even more critical, especially considering the bilateral relations with the United States. The US is considered as an important actor in defence of democracy and human rights on a global scale. In this context, South Korea's commitment to democratic standards plays a decisive role not only in domestic politics but also in regional security dynamics. Such a decision by Yoon may create a situation that questions the US commitment to democracy and human rights in the region. For Western powers, the healthy functioning of South Korea's democratic structure is critical for stability in the Asia-Pacific region.

Such interventionist steps by Yoon have the potential to threaten the country's national security and jeopardise domestic stability. South Korea's foreign policy framework is based on the defence of democratic values and the rule of law, but domestic political crises can undermine the effectiveness of this foreign policy framework and limit the country's manoeuvrability in foreign affairs.

In conclusion, while Yoon's declaration of martial law is historically reminiscent of Park Chung-hee's authoritarian style of governance, the social, economic and international conditions of contemporary South Korea are different. In particular, democratic reforms and democratic institutionalisation in 1987 have made the country's public opinion and civil society much more resilient to such interventions. Today, South Korea is recognised as a country with a strong democracy, an independent judiciary and freedom of the media.

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ANKASAM ANALYSIS

The Problem of Air Pollution in South Asia: Bangladesh, India and Pakistan

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Home to more than 1.9 billion people, South Asia is one of the world's most polluted regions. Increasing air pollution, particularly in Bangladesh, India and Pakistan, has become one of the most significant problems affecting health, the environment and the economy. In these countries, air quality often exceeds safe limits, resulting in a wide range of health problems, economic losses and social challenges. One of the important criteria in air pollution is the level of fine particulate matter (PM2.5) in the air. These are much smaller than the diameter of a human hair and constitute the most harmful microscopic particles in the air. These particles can penetrate deep into the lungs and enter the bloodstream, causing many respiratory and heart diseases.

PM2.5 levels in Bangladesh range from 60 to 100 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ annually on average across the country, reaching 90 to 100 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ in the capital Dhaka. These values are well above the air quality standards (5 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$) recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO). During the March–November period, these levels can rise to two or three times the annual average due to drought. Breathing the air of Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh, is equivalent to smoking 1.7 cigarettes. The World Bank reports that air pollution in Bangladesh causes more than 70,000 premature deaths a year, the majority of which are respiratory and heart diseases. Air pollution also more severely affects vulnerable groups such as children, the elderly and those with pre-existing health conditions. In Bangladesh, the main sources of this pollution include industrial emissions, vehicle exhaust, brick kilns and solid waste incineration. Agricultural burning activities in neighboring countries such as India also contribute to the seasonal increase in pollution levels.

Delhi, the capital of India, is one of the most polluted cities in the world, with air quality often reaching hazardous levels. Major contributors to Delhi's air pollution include vehicle emissions, industrial activities and agricultural burning in nearby states such as Punjab and Haryana. During the winter months, as cold weather traps polluted air, the city experiences a large increase in air pollution levels as stubble burning coincides with cold weather. Delhi's air quality index is as high as 1,700 in some parts of the city. While the maximum index considered healthy by the WHO is 50.^{[2][1]}

In India, many measures have been tried to prevent this air pollution, but without success. Measures such as improving public transportation and banning fireworks during festivals have been insufficient to address the fundamental problems. Longer-term, sustainable solutions, such as switching to clean energy and reducing agricultural emissions, are needed. According to experts, tackling Delhi's air pollution requires a holistic approach that addresses all contributors to pollution, from transportation to industry and agriculture.^[3]

[Air pollution is also high in Pakistan. The country's major cities, including Lahore, are under a thick fog of pollution, especially during the winter months. The annual average PM2.5 concentration in Lahore regularly exceeds 200 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$, well above the dangerous threshold set by the WHO. Pakistan's record polluted air is forcing many people, especially children, to stay indoors.^[4]

The sources of air pollution in Pakistan are similar to those in India and Bangladesh. Industrial emissions, vehicle exhaust and agricultural burning activities are high contributors to air pollution. In addition, unplanned urbanization and poor waste management have exacerbated the problem. In response, the Government of Pakistan has tried to alleviate air pollution by taking measures such as limiting vehicle emissions, improving public transportation and closing schools on peak pollution days. However, these efforts have failed to provide a lasting solution. As in India, the problem lies in the inadequate enforcement of regulations and the lack of comprehensive policy solutions.

Air pollution in South Asia is not only a public health issue, but also a serious economic problem. Air pollution is estimated to cost India billions of dollars each year in lost productivity and health expenditures. In Delhi, workers are unable to perform their jobs effectively during times of high pollution, resulting in reduced output in many sectors, including manufacturing, agriculture and services. Health expenditures due to air pollution are a significant drain on public resources. In such cases, air pollution costs India almost 3% of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP).^[5] The economic losses of South Asian countries affect not only the region but also the global economic structure.

Air pollution in these countries is not a problem specific to their home countries. Air pollution in neighboring countries also affects each other. For example, agricultural burning practices in northern India led to air pollution that affects other countries near Delhi, such as Bangladesh and even Nepal. Countries in the region can therefore work together to fundamentally and sustainably address common sources of pollution such as agricultural burning, vehicle emissions and industrial pollution. With better international cooperation, these countries can significantly improve air quality across the region by sharing knowledge and practices as well as adopting common policy measures.

The air pollution crisis in South Asia is a multifaceted problem that requires urgent and coordinated action. With air quality levels in cities such as Dhaka, Delhi and Lahore regularly exceeding safe limits, the health and economic losses are becoming a huge burden. Regional cooperation is essential to tackle the transboundary nature of pollution. It is critical that countries in South Asia work together sustainably on key issues to improve air pollution. Only by adopting a comprehensive and cooperative approach can South Asia succeed in sustainably addressing the air pollution crisis and protect the health and economic well-being of its citizens.

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ANKASAM ANALYSIS

Gender Approaches to Nation and Nationalism

Jameela RIZWAN

Gender approaches to nation and nationalism critically examine how concepts of nationhood and nationalism are constructed, represented, and experienced through a gendered lens. These perspectives highlight the role of women and the influence of gender in shaping nationalist movements, ideologies, and practices. Gender approaches reveal the often-overlooked contributions of women to nationalist struggles and critique the ways in which nationalism reinforces patriarchal structures.

Historical Assumptions: Early theories of nationalism (e.g., Gellner, Kedourie, Smith) treated nations as “gender-free” zones, focusing on unity and shared goals. Recent scholarship (e.g., Enloe, Jayawardena, Walby, Yuval-Davis) critiques this approach, arguing that gender is central to national processes.

Gender Relations in Nationalism: Gender approaches emphasize the varied forms of gender relations at stake, such as the balance between domestic (family-focused) and public (politics, employment, education) roles for women.

Contested Models of Womanhood: Nationalist projects often select preferred gender roles, which may appear consensual but are frequently contested. These contests shape national ideals.

Varieties of Gender and Nationalist Ideals

Intersection of Gender and National Identity: Nations are often imagined as gendered entities, with metaphors like “Motherland” or “Fatherland” symbolizing the nation. Women are frequently depicted as symbols of cultural purity, tradition, and national honor, while men are seen as protectors and warriors.

Feminist Critique of Nationalism: Feminist scholars argue that nationalist ideologies often marginalize women by confining them to symbolic roles rather than active participants.

Nationalism tends to reinforce traditional gender roles, portraying women as custodians of the home and culture while excluding them from decision-making processes.

Women’s Roles in Nationalist Movements

While nationalist movements often mobilized women, their participation was shaped by the broader patriarchal structures of their societies.

Cultural Symbols: Women are often represented as embodiments of the nation’s purity, virtue, and morality. In India, the depiction of “Bharat Mata” (Mother India) symbolized the nation as a nurturing and sacred mother figure.

Control Over Women’s Bodies: Women’s sexuality and bodies were often seen as sites of national honor, making them vulnerable to exploitation in communal and colonial conflicts.

Women as Participants in Nationalist Struggles: Women actively participated in anti-colonial struggles, such as India’s freedom movement, Algeria’s war for independence, and Ireland’s nationalist efforts.

In India, leaders like Sarojini Naidu, Aruna Asaf Ali, and Kasturba Gandhi played significant roles in mobilizing women for movements like Non-Cooperation, Civil Disobedience, and Quit India.

Patriarchy and Nationalism: Nationalist ideologies often reinforced patriarchal norms, using traditional gender roles to justify women’s marginalization.

Women were expected to fulfill roles as mothers, wives, and cultural preservers, reinforcing the dichotomy between the public (male) and private (female) spheres.

Women’s Dual Burden: Women were burdened with the responsibility of preserving cultural identity while simultaneously contributing to nationalist struggles.

For example, in colonial India, women were expected to embody traditional values at home while participating in protests.

Post-Independence Marginalization: After achieving independence, many nationalist movements sidelined women, despite their contributions to the struggle.

Women’s rights and gender equality were often considered secondary to nation-building and state consolidation.

Codification of Patriarchy: Laws and policies in many post-colonial nations institutionalized gender inequalities. For instance:

In India, personal laws based on religion often reinforced patriarchal norms, especially in matters of marriage, inheritance, and divorce.

Right-Wing Nationalism and Women: Right-wing nationalism often promotes traditional roles for women, such as motherhood and domesticity, as symbols of cultural purity.

In Francoist Spain, for instance, women were idealized as “indoor heroines,” contrasting them with “liberated” European women. This confined women to domestic roles while glorifying them symbolically.

Even within right-wing ideologies, women participated actively in politics to defend traditional gender norms.

Class and Caste: Nationalist movements often overlooked the experiences of marginalized women, such as lower-caste or working-class women, focusing instead on middle- and upper-class women.

For instance, in India, Dalit women faced a double burden of caste and gender discrimination, even within nationalist discourses.

Religious Influence on Gender Roles: Nationalist projects linked to religion often reinforce domestic roles for women, contrasting with secular democratic movements that encourage public participation.

Organized religions, led predominantly by male hierarchies, often marginalize women within national projects.

Colonialism and Global Feminism: Feminist critiques highlighted how colonial powers used the condition of women in colonized societies to justify imperial rule.

At the same time, women in colonized nations navigated both the struggle against colonialism and the fight for gender equality.

Women and Internationalism

Pacifist Tendencies: Women have historically supported peace movements and internationalism over militarized nationalism (e.g., Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom).

Marginalization in International Politics: Despite feminist activism, women’s organizations were frequently excluded from decision-making in global political arenas.

Conclusion

Gender approaches to nation and nationalism reveal how gender is deeply embedded in the formation and functioning of nations. While women have played pivotal roles in nationalist struggles, their contributions have often been symbolized or marginalized within patriarchal frameworks. Feminist critiques and movements continue to challenge these narratives, advocating for a more inclusive and equitable vision of nationalism.



ANKASAM ANALYSIS

Pacific Islands and the Impacts of Climate Change



Ekin GÜLLÜOĞLU

The application of the Pacific Island nation of Vanuatu to the International Court of Justice (ICJ), the highest court of the United Nations (UN), marks a new threshold in the global climate justice debate. It seeks clarification of countries' legal obligations in the fight against climate change and recognition of the damages caused by their contribution to global warming.[1]. Vanuatu's call stands out as an important example of an effort by small island states to address climate change not only as an environmental issue, but also as a legal problem to be solved.

Climate change is a crisis that affects hundreds of millions of people and requires collective action by the international community. This crisis is not only environmental and economic, but also goes beyond politics and has begun to be discussed on a legal basis. In this sense, Vanuatu's call to the ICJ is considered a critical step in making the role of international law in environmental protection more prominent.

The effects of climate change are felt all over the world. Consequences such as rising temperatures, rising sea levels, diminishing natural resources and more frequent extreme weather events make international cooperation in tackling this crisis imperative. Questions such as who is responsible and to what extent, and what legal obligations should be fulfilled in this struggle still remain to be answered. In the past, the ICJ has made important decisions on the link between the environment and human rights, pointing out that environmental degradation can be considered crimes against humanity or other violations of international law. Vanuatu's application, however, goes beyond these decisions and seeks to determine the consequences of states' inaction in the face of climate change in the context of international law.

Island states such as Vanuatu are among the countries that feel the impacts of climate change most deeply. Sea level rise, coastal erosion, intense tropical storms and degradation of ecosystems threaten their natural environment as well as their social and economic infrastructure. This leaves island states facing an existential crisis. Vanuatu in particular is known for its natural beauty and rich biodiversity, but this unique island community is vulnerable to the devastating effects of climate change.[2]

As Ralph Regenvanu points out, Vanuatu has had to be at the forefront of a crisis that it did not create. This raises the question of historical responsibility. Much of the carbon that has accumulated in the atmosphere as a result of industrialization is due to the economic activities of developed countries over many decades. However, the obligation to address climate change has been recognized as a common but differentiated responsibility of all countries.[3]. Sea level rise leads not only to loss of land, but also to damage to key economic activities such as agriculture, tourism and fisheries. This threatens the sovereignty and sustainable future of countries. The Paris Agreement underlines this principle of responsibility and provides an important framework to support Vanuatu's claim. Developed countries, as historically higher emitters of carbon, take more responsibility for investing in environmentally friendly technologies and climate finance. However, how effective these responsibilities are in practice is still a matter of debate. Since the beginning of industrialization, most of the carbon accumulated in the atmosphere has come from the economic activities of developed countries. Since combating climate change requires a concerted effort, the international community has adopted the principle of "common but differentiated responsibility". This principle is one of the cornerstones of the Paris Agreement and envisages developed countries taking on more obligations in line with their historical responsibilities.[4]. The Paris Agreement requires developed countries to invest in environmentally friendly technologies and provide climate finance to developing countries. However, the extent to which these commitments are being honored remains a matter of debate in practice. Vanuatu's application adds a new legal dimension to the global climate struggle by demanding that these responsibilities be more clearly defined by international law.[5].

Vanuatu's call to the ICJ has received the support of more than 100 states and international organizations. This shows that a global consensus against climate change is beginning to emerge. Despite this support, divergent views and conflicts of interest persist within the international community. Developing countries draw attention to the inadequacy of legal mechanisms to compensate the damages of countries that have historically had no part in creating this crisis. On the other hand, developed countries continue to avoid commitments that would limit their economic growth. This leads to different positions on climate finance, technical assistance and legal liability.

Vanuatu's submission is an important milestone in the global struggle for climate justice. It has the potential to shape the international community's understanding of collective responsibility for climate change. The ICJ's decision on this issue could have important consequences not only for Vanuatu and other island states, but for the whole world. It will also test how effective international law can be in the areas of environmental protection and sustainable development. If the ICJ more clearly defines countries' obligations to combat climate change, it will not only be a legal victory, but also a step towards building a fairer global system. Vanuatu's historic application opens the door to new debates on climate justice around the world. The international community's ability to reach a common solution to this major crisis facing humanity will play a critical role in shaping not only the present, but also the future.

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ANKASAM ANALYSIS

Fifth China and Central Asia Foreign Ministers' Meeting



Berra KIZILYAZI

The Fifth China–Central Asia Foreign Ministers' Meeting, which was chaired by Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, was held on Sunday, December 1, 2024 in Chengdu, southwest China's Sichuan Province. Wang Yi, together with the foreign ministers of the five Central Asian countries (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan), reviewed the implementation of the outcomes of the inaugural China–Central Asia Summit and held in–depth discussions on preparations for the second summit scheduled for Kazakhstan next year. The meeting strengthened mutual trust and friendship and clarified the direction of future projects.[1]

China and Central Asian countries' trade relations, which started with the Silk Road in the past, have evolved into a comprehensive strategic partnership with energy projects such as oil and gas pipelines, security under the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), and infrastructure projects under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). This meeting is important for strengthening relations between China and Central Asian countries and deepening regional cooperation. The developing relations between the countries have enabled Central Asia to play a more active role in international trade, while enabling China to interact with Eurasia through Central Asia, thus creating a strategic importance for economic development.

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, summarized the results and consensus of the Fifth China–Central Asia Foreign Ministers' Meeting following:

- Stick to the guidance of heads of state to develop and strengthen the China–Central Asia mechanism.
- Commitment to modernization goals and deepening of all–round cooperation.
- Shared responsibility for security, focusing on maintaining regional peace and stability.
- Promoting mutual learning among civilizations and building a solid foundation for lasting friendship.
- Defending multilateralism to safeguard international fairness and justice.

At the meeting, Wang also emphasized maintaining the leadership by heads of state to strengthen the China–Central Asia mechanism, continuing to implement the consensus reached at the China–Central Asia Summit in Xi'an, and the importance of advancing China–Central Asia cooperation. The leaders expressed their support for Kazakhstan in hosting the summit next year and agreed to begin the process of signing a joint declaration, an action plan for high–quality joint construction of the Belt and Road Initiative, a Treaty of Good Neighborliness and Friendly Cooperation among China and Central Asian countries, and other key documents. The meeting also aimed to build a "China–Central Asia Spirit" on the basis of shared ideas and values developed during long–term cooperation.[2]

China imports oil and natural gas from Central Asia and energy cooperation is developing through projects such as the China–Kazakhstan oil pipeline and the Turkmenistan–China gas pipeline. China is also one of Central Asia's largest trade and investment partners. These investments among the parties increase China's economic influence in the region and contribute to the economic development of Central Asian countries. Especially the transportation routes developed under the BRI have facilitated access to global markets and strengthened regional logistics networks.

Chinese President Xi Jinping chaired the first China–Central Asia Summit in Xi'an on May 18, 2023. The format reflects the ministerial–level C5+1 Diplomatic Platform established in 2015 between the United States and five countries in the region, but also includes heads of state. This represents a shift for Beijing, which has focused on Central Asia's economic issues for a long time, particularly through the Belt and Road Initiative.[3]

The summit played a critical role in revealing the strategic importance of the relations that started as neighbors through investments and cooperation for the future, thus ensuring the development of relations on the basis of mutual benefit in the international arena in political terms. In addition to areas that promote trade, such as transportation infrastructure or railways, interaction has been achieved in many areas in line with modernization goals, such as the establishment of 5G networks in Central Asia and Chinese language education through Confucius Institutes. Thus, the role of Central Asian countries in the international arena has increased, while China's economic and cultural influence in the global arena has increased, especially in terms of reaching Europe through the BRI.

During the summit, a number of multilateral and bilateral documents were signed, plans for cooperation in various fields were drawn up, and consensus was reached on key cooperation initiatives, including the establishment of the China–Central Asia energy development partnership and support for the development of the trans–Caspian international transportation corridor. Wang Yi said that this historic summit completed the platform–building and overall planning of China–Central Asia cooperation and opened a new door for cooperation to move to a higher level.[4]

Cooperation based on equality, respect, openness, inclusiveness and mutual support among the parties sets an example for the region and the world in general in terms of multilateral cooperation. They also represent a critical partnership that combines both economic and security perspectives, while preserving geopolitical sensitivities in the process of shaping a multipolar world order.

To conclude, China's economic and security cooperation with Central Asian countries not only increases China's effectiveness in global trade but also helps the development of Central Asian countries through projects such as various infrastructure and transportation corridors. These cooperations also enable stronger political ties. In fact, in the process leading to a multipolar world order, trade relations among Central Asian countries and China reduce the West's economic influence in the region and create a balance to the Western–centered order. Moreover, the BRI's projects with Central Asia have strengthened China's global trade networks and stabilized security and power balances with geopolitically key actors in Eurasia.

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ANKASAM ANALYSIS

China's New Moves in the Middle Corridor Strategy



Ergün MAMEDOV

China's Middle Corridor strategy has drawn attention as an initiative focused on expanding global trade networks and enhancing its economic power through trade revenues. Europe's high purchasing power and growing markets offer a critical opportunity for China to leverage its production capacity on a global scale, while the Middle Corridor has emerged as a strategic logistics route accelerating this trade flow. Collaborations with developing economies through platforms like BRICS have diversified China's trade network, while shipments to Europe via the Middle Corridor have stood out for their cost and time advantages. Through infrastructure investments and partnerships along this route, China has continued to enhance its commercial efficiency, thereby creating a power center that supports its economic growth. Today, this strategy focused on the Middle Corridor has not only facilitated China's trade but also become a tool that reinforces its influence in the global economy.

On November 22, 2024, the Trans-Caspian International Transport Route Association (TITR) organized a roundtable titled "Trans-Caspian Connection: Experiences, Changes, and Outcomes" during the "Logitrans International Transport Logistics Fair 2024" in Istanbul, Republic of Turkey. The event aimed to strengthen international cooperation in transport and logistics, promote infrastructure development projects, and solidify partnerships among TITR member countries. The discussions covered challenges in the development of the Trans-Caspian transport system, the application of modern technologies, and best practices in cargo management. Special emphasis was placed on opportunities to increase efficiency, integrate innovative solutions, and further strengthen international collaboration.[1]

Shortly before the meeting on November 22, an agreement was signed between Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and China to construct a new intermodal cargo terminal over a 40-hectare area at the Baku International Sea Trade Port in the Alat settlement. This project, signed by Nurlan Sauranbayev, Chairman of the Board of Kazakhstan Railways, Taleh Ziyadov, General Director of the Baku International Sea Trade Port, and Yuan Xiaojun, General Manager of Xi'an Free Trade Port Construction and Operation Company, was made possible through Azerbaijan's provision of land, existing piers, and terminal capacity. The terminal aims to increase the volume of container trains on the China-Europe-China route via TITR, reduce delivery times, and lower transportation costs. Its construction is planned to be completed in 2025, offering a strategic contribution to regional logistics capacity.[2]

On November 24, 2024, a block train consisting of 62 forty-foot containers departed from Baku to reach China's Xi'an Port via Kazakhstan. Previously used primarily for transit and import cargo from China to Azerbaijan, the Middle Corridor now also allows for export shipments in the reverse direction, aiming to boost efficiency and grow cargo volumes east-west. Under a project launched with the participation of representatives from Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan Railways, the TITR secretariat, and Xi'an Changba International Port, a total of 15,000 tons or 600 containers of export cargo are planned to reach China by the end of the year. Through collaboration among local operators such as Azerbaijan Railways, the Absheron Logistics Center, the Baku International Sea Trade Port, and the Azerbaijan Caspian Sea Shipping Company, export products that previously used Georgia's Black Sea ports are now shipped directly via national routes. The number of container block trains arriving from China to Azerbaijan this year is expected to exceed 300 by the end of the year and reach 1,000 by 2025, further strengthening the Middle Corridor as a strategic artery in east-west trade.[3]

The "Xi'an-Middle Corridor-Europe" route, which became operational on August 13, 2024, marked a significant step in reinforcing the geostrategic importance of the Middle Corridor within China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) transportation strategy. The connection of the route through Kazakhstan via the Altynkol Border Gate and the Aktau Port, crossing the Caspian Sea to Azerbaijan's Baku Port, and further linking to Georgia's Poti Port has established a network aimed at integrating Central Asia's energy and logistics hubs with Europe. Transport to Bulgaria's Burgas Port across the Black Sea is provided by specialized container ships, reducing dependence on third-party public services in China's logistics chain and accelerating processes. Deliveries to strategic centers in Europe, such as Belgrade, Mannheim, and Hamburg, within 5-8 days have enabled the route to become a competitive alternative.[4]. In November 2024, China's infrastructure investments in the Middle Corridor accelerated further. The China Railway Container Transport Corporation (CRCTC) announced its participation in the Middle Corridor Multimodal joint venture, emphasizing that this decision aligns with BRI's efforts to strengthen diversified trade routes along the Europe-Asia axis. The volume of goods transported via the Middle Corridor this year reached 27,600 TEUs, solidifying the route as a competitive alternative.[5]. These developments highlight that the Middle Corridor is not merely a commercial route but also a geopolitical tool supporting China's deepening cooperation with Europe, Central Asia, and South Caucasus countries.[6]

In this context, China's focus on high-capacity port investments in the Caspian Basin will strengthen the commercial and logistical infrastructure of the Middle Corridor strategy. Joint projects with Kazakhstan at the Aktau Port and with Azerbaijan at the Baku Port will not only expand the Middle Corridor's trade volume but also enhance China's influence on Europe-Asia trade routes. These investments will reduce transit times and increase China's economic influence in the region while deepening trade partnerships through infrastructure financing under BRI.

From an international relations perspective, such projects also offer significant opportunities for the Caspian Basin countries. Increasing port capacities expands Kazakhstan's and Azerbaijan's trade networks, fosters regional cooperation, and positions the Caspian Sea as a more central hub within the Middle Corridor. In this regard, China's investments in both Aktau Port in Kazakhstan and Baku Port in Azerbaijan have enhanced the strategic importance of the Middle Corridor. These investments have contributed to strengthening the Middle Corridor's global competitiveness in trade and logistics.

In the fourth quarter of 2024, discussions emerged regarding the potential decline in Washington's global engagement following Donald Trump's return to the U.S. presidency and the revival of the "America First" policy. Such a scenario is expected to increase China's interest in the Middle Corridor strategy and accelerate steps to strengthen regional cooperation. Should the U.S. influence in the global trade system diminish, Beijing is anticipated to deepen multilateral relations primarily with Turkic states (Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan) and through BRICS while diversifying infrastructure projects along the Middle Corridor.

By 2025, China's influence over the Middle Corridor is expected to further solidify. Aktau and Baku ports in the Caspian Basin are likely to become logistics hubs with modern infrastructure facilitating trade flows, thanks to Chinese investments. With the support of BRICS, China is expected to enhance its economic presence in the region and implement innovative solutions that reduce transit times and trade costs along the Middle Corridor. The U.S.'s "America First" policy may increase the West's dependency on Central Asia and the Caucasus, presenting Beijing with an opportunity to assert economic dominance and expand its influence in the region.

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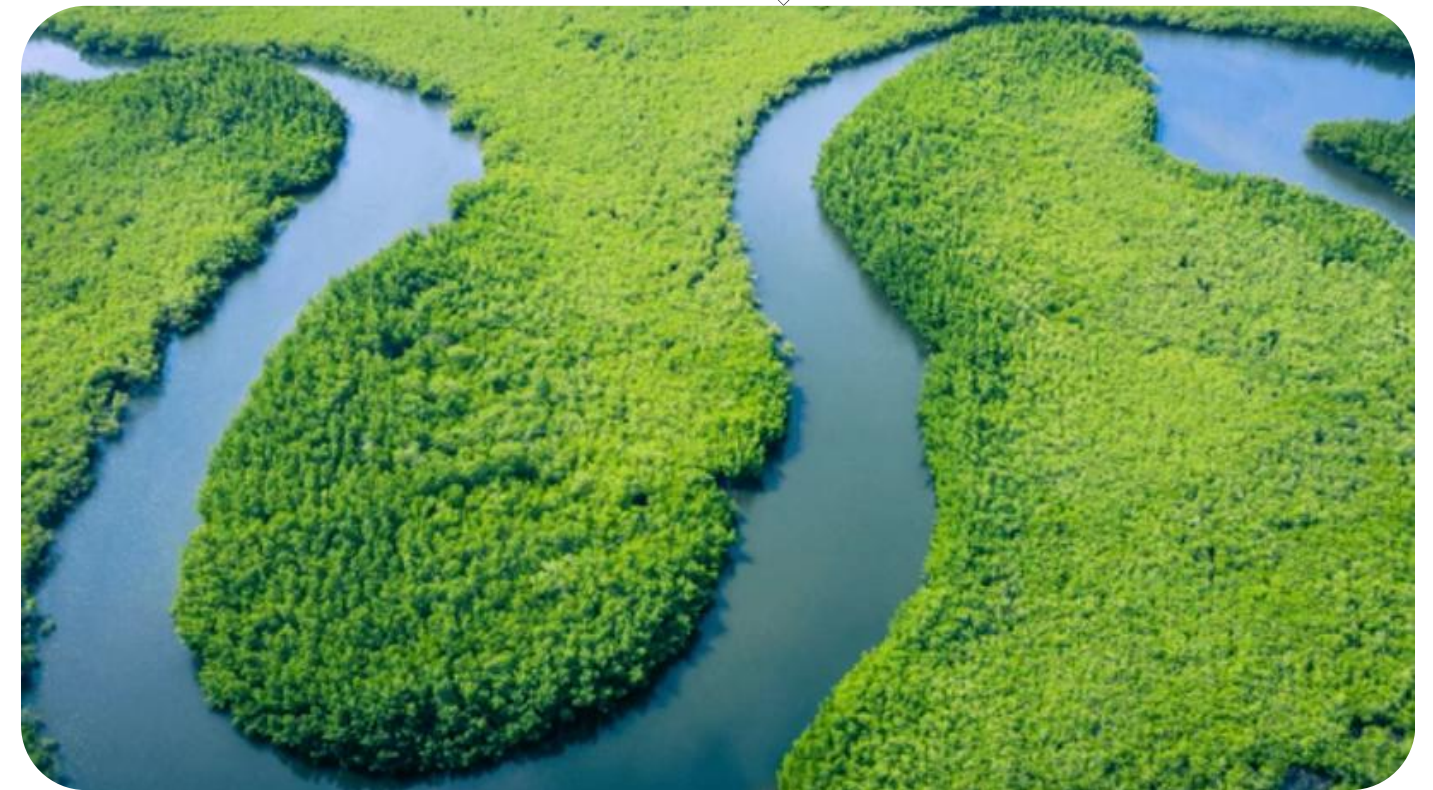
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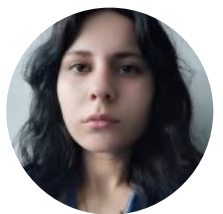
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ANKASAM ANALYSIS

Environmental Policies of the Lula Administration and the Protection of the Amazon Forest



Itir BOZDAĞ

Home to 60% of the world's largest rainforest, Brazil's environmental policies, particularly those affecting the Amazon, frequently capture global attention. The tenure of former President Jair Bolsonaro was marked by criticism, primarily due to increased deforestation and the depletion of natural resources. Under Bolsonaro's leadership, deforestation in the Amazon reached alarming levels, prompting numerous international and environmental organisations to intervene.

President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, who assumed office following the 2022 elections, has drawn notice for his commitment to protecting the Amazon and curbing deforestation. One of his earliest actions was the reactivation of the Amazon Fund, dormant during Bolsonaro's term. With \$1.2 billion at its disposal, the fund is dedicated to combating deforestation and promoting rainforest sustainability. Within the first six months of Lula's presidency, deforestation in the Amazon decreased by 34%, and mining activities were prohibited in six newly recognised indigenous reserves in April 2023.[1]

These measures signal the Lula administration's resolute stance on preserving the Amazon and may herald the implementation of broader initiatives. Nonetheless, the ecological damage wrought during Bolsonaro's presidency and the ongoing effects of the climate crisis could impede swift progress. To overcome these challenges, Brazil may need to foster international cooperation and develop joint programmes to mitigate environmental degradation.

In 2023, the government unveiled its Amazon protection plan, a collaborative effort involving 15 ministries. The plan incorporates advanced methods to monitor and curb illegal deforestation, including the expanded use of satellite technology to detect unlawful logging, farming, and mining. Additionally, it proposes a certification system to trace the origins of wood and agricultural products linked to vulnerable ecosystems. Other measures include the standardisation of land titles and the introduction of incentives for sustainable agriculture and other “green”[2] activities.[3]

The prominent role of technology within the plan reflects a strategic approach to achieving tangible outcomes. If successful, these modernised policies could inspire broader adoption globally. For instance, the standardisation of land titles may enhance transparency and accountability in land use, reducing the risk of misuse. Furthermore, by prioritising sustainable practices, the plan aspires to create lasting environmental and socio-economic benefits.

The inclusion of indigenous communities in these policies underscores the administration’s inclusive approach. Lula has distinguished himself from his predecessor through his emphasis on indigenous rights, notably establishing the Ministry of Indigenous Peoples upon returning to power in 2022. In 2023, he vetoed significant provisions of draft law 2903, which sought to curtail the recognition of ancestral indigenous lands.[4]

By prioritising indigenous participation in Amazon protection initiatives, Lula’s government fosters not only biodiversity conservation but also the preservation of cultural heritage. This cooperative framework between indigenous communities and the government has the potential to enhance the resilience and sustainability of the Amazon’s ecosystem.

At COP28, Brazil introduced the Tropical Forests Forever Facility (TFFF), a global initiative for protecting tropical forests across more than 60 countries. While the Amazon Fund rewards Brazil for reducing deforestation, the TFFF offers fixed annual payments to all tropical forest nations for each hectare of forest safeguarded. Conversely, payments will decrease for areas subject to deforestation or degradation.[5]

Unlike the Amazon Fund, the TFFF adopts a more inclusive and global perspective. This initiative highlights the ecological and climatic significance of tropical forests, emphasising their value to the entire planet rather than a single nation. Such an approach signals Brazil’s intent to lead international efforts against deforestation and climate change.

In a bold declaration, Lula has pledged to eliminate deforestation in the Amazon by 2030. However, opposition within Brazil’s National Congress poses a significant challenge. In June, legislation was passed transferring oversight of rural land and wastewater management from the Ministry of Environment to other ministries. Additionally, the Ministry of Indigenous Peoples was stripped of its authority to demarcate indigenous lands, a responsibility now assigned to the Ministry of Justice and Public Security.[6]

Both the Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Indigenous Peoples are instrumental in advancing Lula’s environmental agenda. Curtailing their powers risks undermining the administration’s efforts to protect the Amazon and its indigenous communities. Nevertheless, if Lula’s policies yield tangible successes, they could serve as a model for other nations, underscoring the Amazon’s global importance.

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ANKASAM ANALYSIS

Migration in the New Era of US-Cuba Relations Politics



Ayşe Azra GILAVCI

The United States (US)-Cuba Migration Agreements, established in 1984, provide a legal framework governing the movement of migrants between the two countries.[1] Under these agreements, Cuba has accepted deportations of its citizens living illegally in the United States. However, this has generally been done in a small and controlled manner. Since the Biden administration took office, the US has deported small numbers of migrants to Cuba, and Cuba has accepted deportations by air and sea.

These agreements reflect a more measured approach aimed at preventing chaotic and mass migration. In this framework, both countries are expected to manage migratory flows in a more predictable way, avoiding potential humanitarian crises.

President-elect Donald Trump’s mass deportation proposal reflects a dramatic departure from the Biden administration’s more measured approach. Trump has pledged to deport 1 million migrants a year, and Vice President JD Vance estimates that 1 million people a year will leave the country.[2] Trump’s new border official, Tom Homan, has stated that deportations will focus on criminals and people with recent deportation orders, but has not said whether there will be exemptions for certain groups or nationalities.

For Cuba, such a proposal is highly problematic. Cuban Deputy Foreign Minister Carlos Fernandez de Cossio emphasized that mass deportations from the US to Cuba are unrealistic. He stated that deportations should be carried out within the framework of existing migration agreements. The Cuban government’s resistance to mass deportations is motivated by both practical and diplomatic concerns. Mass deportations could strain Cuba’s resources, as the individuals subject to deportation may not have lived in Cuba for many years or may have family in the United States. Moreover, mass deportations could further strain relations between the US and Cuba, making cooperation on immigration policy and other bilateral issues more difficult.

The Trump administration’s rhetoric on migration, especially in the context of deportations, should be seen in the broader geopolitical relations between the US and Cuba. Under Trump, US policy toward Cuba has become more hard-line, reversing the diplomatic openings initiated by the Obama administration. This change is particularly evident in the areas of trade, travel and migration. In this context, Trump’s deportation proposals targeting Cuban migrants can be seen as a means of pressure on the Cuban government; this is in line with other policies Trump has previously implemented. For example, tightening sanctions and limiting remittances.

The Biden administration, on the other hand, has adopted an approach to protect existing agreements on migration and aims to maintain the validity of these agreements in the ongoing migration negotiations between the two countries. While these negotiations do not directly address Trump's deportation proposals, they are a reminder that both countries recognize the importance of cooperation on migration issues.

The Trump administration's proposed mass deportations present significant practical challenges, particularly in the case of Cuban deportations. The Cuban government has shown little willingness to accept large numbers of deportations and US demands for mass deportations could create a diplomatic crisis. It is also clear that such a move could create significant challenges for US domestic policy. This is because deportations can be particularly damaging to vulnerable or politically important groups, such as Cuban refugees or those fleeing political repression.

Given that the United States is already facing a broader immigration crisis, devoting resources to mass deportations may prevent other pressing issues from being addressed. For example, issues such as asylum seeker processing, border security, and the root causes of irregular migration from regions such as Central America may take precedence.

Cuba's national interests shape its position on Trump's migrant deportation proposals. The Cuban Government recognizes the potential impact of mass deportations on the internal situation.^[3] Deportations could lead to many individuals returning to Cuba having not lived in Cuba for a long time or having lost contact with Cuba, which could pose problems for integration and social stability. Cuba has made it clear that deportations should be carried out within the framework of existing migration agreements, and it is contrary to this understanding for the United States to carry out such large-scale deportations unilaterally.

Moreover, Cuba sees migration issues as a tool for diplomacy and mass deportations can be seen as a US policy to isolate Cuba internationally. The Cuban Government has expressed the hypocrisy of the US on human rights and migration policies, citing the US treatment of its citizens, in particular the Cuban Adjustment Act.

As a result, the debate over US deportation policies, especially those targeting Cuban migrants, reflects the broader context of Cuba-US relations. The Trump administration's mass deportation proposal may contravene existing migration agreements, but it can be seen as part of the geopolitical struggle between the two countries. Cuba's tough stance on this issue can be understood as an effort to protect its sovereignty and a resistance to prevent the humanitarian impact of the US harsh policies on migrants.

In the future, it is important that both countries engage in diplomatic talks on cooperation on migrants and other bilateral issues. Given the difficulties of implementing mass deportations, a more pragmatic approach by the US to stick to existing migration agreements could strengthen both countries' relations and offer a more sustainable solution.

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ANKASAM ANALYSIS

"Minilateralism" in European Security and Defense



Gamze BAL

The book "Europe in the Arc of Fire" by Josep Borrell, the High Representative of the European Union (EU) for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, focusing on the past year of EU foreign policy, was made accessible on November 25, 2024, just a few days before he handed over his position to Kaja Kallas. The book primarily draws attention to the events in Ukraine, the Middle East, the South Caucasus, the Sahel and the South China Sea, stating that Europe's future is more at risk than ever before. It asserts that the only way to tackle this danger is for Europe to ensure its own security.^[1]

European security, in essence, began to take shape around the growing Russian threat following the Russia-Ukraine War and was accepted under the aegis of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), led by the United States (US). However, considering the socioeconomic consequences caused by Europe's energy dependence on Russia, reliance on the US for European security began to be questioned. This scrutiny intensified, particularly after Donald Trump's victory in the US presidential elections, accelerating efforts to disengage from the US umbrella in Europe's security and defense policies.

Certainly, for those supporting the integration of European security, the ultimate goal is the creation of an autonomous European defense with its own military. The Russia-Ukraine War has provided the conducive environment for the realization of this goal, namely the establishment of European defense. However, the idea of European unity in defense, which has frequently been brought up since the founding years of the EU, faces several obstacles, such as the European-Atlanticist divides among member states, capacity and cost limitations, and the prioritization of national defense development. These challenges make the creation of a common European defense more difficult. On the other hand, Europe, known as the “Welfare Continent” after World War II, has faced threats like never before in recent years. Particularly, conflicts are escalating in Ukraine, which is defined as the red line of European security.^[2] Moreover, even if the conflicts come to an end, Russia is expected to continue threatening European security, either directly or indirectly, from Eastern Europe to the South Caucasus.

In this regard, European countries, which are struggling to establish a common defense against threats to European security, are increasing their national defense expenditures while also turning to minilateral security coalitions in European security and defense. Notwithstanding that minilateralism in defense and security is not a new phenomenon for Europe, in today’s world, where geopolitical rivalries and conflicts dominate, it can be seen as a pragmatic option that allows for burden-sharing and strengthens the continent.

The establishment of an effective minilateral security coalition by Europeans could facilitate the protection of European interests and enhance Europe’s deterrence in a European war where the use of nuclear weapons is at stake. It could also influence the design of European security and defense, which began undergoing a transformation as of February 24, 2022. Since the contribution of a minilateral group within the EU to the shaping of European security should not be expected to have the same effect on the European security architecture as minilateralism involving non-EU countries. A minilateral European security coalition, whether formed among EU members or with the inclusion of third countries to EU members, can contribute to the creation of a more resilient Europe against the uncertain policies of the post-Biden Trump era and to the Europeanization of European security in any case. At the same time, it can take on the task of promoting a broader and more comprehensive formation in European security and defense. This is because the Western European Union was the first step on the road to NATO.

From this perspective, the meeting of the defense ministers of the United Kingdom, Germany, France, Italy and Poland which convened on November 25, 2024, to discuss European security and defense issues, is noteworthy. The formation, referred to as the E5 Group by the UK Defense Secretary,^[3] consists of the countries in Europe with the highest military expenditures.^[4] At the same time, these countries are known as the leading actors of the EU in terms of economic and political power capacities. These actors are primarily focused on providing assistance to Ukraine. Indeed, on November 19, 2024, the foreign ministers of the Group of Five, who gathered together, expressed their readiness to provide military and financial support to Ukraine.^[5] The E5, which does not limit security to Ukraine, operates with the aim of strengthening European defense to tackle current and future threats. At the same time, it has been decided that the policies of the E5 group will be developed independently of NATO and EU provisions. As a result, it is expected that decisions regarding European security and defense will be made and implemented rapidly, as there will be no need for approval from EU or NATO members.^[6]

The E5 Group, considering the capacities and capabilities of its actors as well as their objectives, is an effective example of a minilateral security and defense policy. This minilateralism, which could enhance the capacity to tackle the challenges facing European security, and the new minilateral collaborations that will emerge, are thought to be led by France, alongside the United Kingdom, which left the EU with Brexit. Claims regarding the two countries’ plans to send Western and mercenary soldiers to Ukraine^[7] support this perspective.

Essentially, there has been a lack of trust between France and the United Kingdom, deepened by AUKUS, alongside the Europeanist-Atlanticist rivalry between the two countries. On the other hand, France, which places importance on European integration, prefers to prioritize strengthening its cooperation with Germany. However, the conjuncture brings France and the United Kingdom closer together. On the one hand, France and Germany, the two major powers of the EU capable of leading European defense, are facing domestic political challenges; on the other hand, in an uncertain geopolitical environment, Europe has been forced to confront numerous threats, as Borrell has also pointed out. France and the United Kingdom, which share similar characteristics, are two strong European countries capable of tackling these threats. Both countries possess the continent’s largest armies in terms of manpower and are nuclear-armed states. They are also permanent members of the United Nations Security Council and NATO members. Furthermore, as demonstrated during the intervention in Libya, the two countries have experience in leading joint minilateral security coalitions. Therefore, the establishment of European defense under the leadership of France and the United Kingdom could strengthen European security.

A minilateral security coalition led by France and the United Kingdom can be said to align with France’s goal of establishing European security independent of the United States, advocating strategic autonomy. From the perspective of the United Kingdom, it could gain the opportunity to be an effective actor in shaping European security and defense without entering into a common commitment such as the EU Common Foreign and Security Policy. Additionally, the minilateral group formed against the unpredictable policies of the Trump era could assume a deterrent role.

As a result, Europeans, who have difficulty in creating a common European defense, are resorting to minilateralism to ensure the security of the continent. Minilateralism offers an opportunity for the Europeanization of European security and defense. On the other hand, European countries aim to establish a defense line not only against Putin’s Russia but also against Trump’s United States through minilateral formations. This policy increases the importance of non-EU regional powers in strengthening European security and defense.

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ANKASAM ANALYSIS

Political Turmoil in France: The Government Crisis



Sena BIRINCI

In recent years, France has faced numerous crises threatening its political stability. Social mobility, economic challenges, and deepening polarisation rank among the critical dynamics shaping the nation's political future. Within this context, the ongoing government crisis is perceived not merely as a weakness in governance but also as a harbinger of profound changes in France's democratic framework. Parliamentary deadlocks, tensions between the executive and legislature, and irreconcilable differences between political parties further exacerbate the dimensions of the crisis.

These developments compel a re-examination of France's political system, simultaneously eroding public confidence in the government. French Prime Minister Michel Barnier resigned after a mere three months in office when deputies from the far-right and far-left united to bring down his administration. For the first time in over 60 years, a French government has been toppled by a vote of no confidence. Barnier's invocation of Article 49.3 of the Constitution to pass legislation without parliamentary approval galvanised opposition forces.[1]

The far-right party Rassemblement National (National Rally, henceforth referred to as the RN), led by Marine Le Pen, collaborated with left-wing factions to oust the government. Barnier's resignation plunged France into political turmoil, further undermining President Macron's leadership.[2] Presently, Macron faces the options of calling early elections or appointing an interim government. However, given the current parliamentary composition, the longevity of any new administration appears uncertain. This precarious scenario threatens France's economic stability and risks diminishing its leadership role within Europe.

Additionally, the budget crisis looms large, posing potential threats to the living standards of the populace. Resolving this crisis swiftly and effectively will be crucial for Macron's political future. Following the vote of no confidence, which Macron described as 'choosing disorder,' France now finds itself without a budget for 2025, compounding the political uncertainty.[3]

The RN party, under Marine Le Pen, opposed the Barnier government's budget proposal, citing unmet demands regarding the social security budget. Le Pen justified her stance by asserting that the vote safeguarded the business community from increased labour costs, taxes on domestic production, and cuts to apprenticeship benefits.[4] This episode illustrates the RN's broader strategy to expand its far-right policies and consolidate support.

However, while Macron's weakened government presents short-term opportunities for Le Pen, it may also alienate moderate voters. Le Pen, who aims to rebrand her image ahead of the 2027 presidential elections, seeks to leverage the current instability. Yet, concerns over the far-right's potential economic mismanagement could deter centrist voters, complicating her long-term ambitions.

The political crisis presents both challenges and opportunities. While it may bolster support for far-right policies, it also offers centrist parties a chance to address the electorate's desire for stability. However, prolonged uncertainty could deepen public discontent and exacerbate France's economic difficulties. Macron must now appoint a new prime minister while striving to stabilise the nation's political landscape.

In his efforts to secure a governing majority, Macron has sought to expand alliances with centrist and centre-left parties, deliberately excluding those of the far-right and far-left. The government's preparations for the 2025 budget hinge on the appointment of a new prime minister. Nonetheless, Macron's strategy to ensure political stability might inadvertently heighten economic and political uncertainty. Relying on the support of the National Unity party, the President refused to appoint a new prime minister.[5]

Following the collapse of Barnier's government, Macron convened a meeting at the Elysée with all political parties, underscoring the importance of avoiding reliance on Le Pen's RN. His priority remains forming a consensus with centre-left factions to ensure the durability of the next administration. However, the refusal of left-wing parties to yield on their preferred candidates has rendered negotiations increasingly fraught. The fall of Michel Barnier's government represents a watershed moment, marking the first successful no-confidence vote since 1962. Barnier's controversial use of Article 49.3 to bypass parliamentary approval on the 2025 social security budget provoked backlash across the political spectrum, sealing his administration's fate.[6]

Macron must now navigate a fragmented National Assembly to appoint a new prime minister. Among potential candidates are Defence Minister Sébastien Lecornu and Lucie Castets,[7] though some analysts suggest allowing MPs to propose a compromise candidate might ease tensions. Macron's decisions during this period will be pivotal. Should the budget fail to pass by 20 December 2025, the government may be compelled to enact it by decree.[8]

Political instability could further aggravate France's economic outlook, with the European Union criticising the country for its widening deficits. France's financial trajectory now hinges on President Macron's forthcoming decisions. This crisis not only underscores weaknesses in governance but also signals potential shifts in the country's democratic framework. As President Emmanuel Macron strives to forge a broader political consensus, the crisis intensifies. Prior to appointing a new prime minister, Macron firmly stated that the government should not rely on support from the far-right National Union party. Efforts are underway to broker an agreement with centre-left parties; however, the main left-wing factions' insistence on advancing their own candidates for the premiership, coupled with Macron's refusal to accept them, complicates the path to resolution. The future of France depends on its ability to break this political stalemate and ensure governmental stability.

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[7] Sophia Khatsenkova, "France's government has collapsed. What happens next?", Euronews, <https://www.euronews.com/my-europe/2024/12/04/frances-government-has-collapsed-what-happens-next> (Retrieved: 12.12.2024).

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📌 11 December 2024

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📌 12 December 2024

ANKASAM President Prof. Dr. Mehmet Seyfettin EROL is on TRT Ankara Radio!

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