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The Balance Game in Southeast Asia: China and Vietnam Cooperation

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ANKASAM ANALYSIS

Can the European Union Develop a Common Foreign and Security Policy?

Erdem Baran ALKAN

The European Union, a supranational organization established in stages after the Second World War under the name of the "European Project" in order to make future conflicts practically impossible, took an important step towards this goal of establishing a federal structure and established the Common Foreign and Security Policy with the Maastricht Treaty that entered into force in 1993. The organization established the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy with the Treaty of Amsterdam in 1999 and this post was expanded and strengthened to the Vice-Presidency of the Commission with the Lisbon Treaty in 2009. The 2004 Constitutional Treaty provided for the creation of a Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the organization, but this was not created due to the rejection of the Treaty by France and the Netherlands in 2005.[1]

The Commission is seen as the authority representing the EU abroad. In addition, the President of the Council has important responsibilities in this respect. The Commission's budget for the Common Foreign and Security Policy is also used for civil affairs and disarmament processes where necessary within the Commission, with a major role for the Foreign Policy Service, advised by the European External Action Service. The High Representative also manages the coherence and function of the EU's foreign policy and acts as a bridge between external and internal balances. The post is still relatively new and many researchers have criticized the officials appointed to the post as low-profile. The office is of course open to criticism because of its newness. But it is clear that what is called the Common Foreign and Security Policy is not common. While there is some common rhetoric and tasks on issues where all EU states have similar policies, the current situation has the potential to tarnish the reputation of an organization that calls itself supranational.

The biggest example of these missions is Operation Atalanta. This mission is called the European Union Naval Force (EU NAVFOR) Somalia and was created to combat maritime piracy in the Indian Ocean off the Horn of Africa.[2]. This is an example that can be carried out by any security organization if they find common ground. Therefore, with such examples, it cannot be claimed that the European Union's Common Foreign and Security Policy is functioning as expected.

The biggest example of this argument is the attitude of the European Union countries in the Russia-Ukraine War. The European Union, which has imposed sanctions against Russia since the beginning of the war, is experiencing contradictions and dilemmas within itself due to its dependence on Russia for its energy needs. In addition to this, even though a stance against Russia is taken in the discourse, Slavic-majority countries such as Hungary and Slovakia, in particular, have not expressed their support for sanctions at the levels emphasized in the organization. Hungary, in particular, differed from the other countries by vetoing the 50 million euros in aid to Ukraine earlier this year. [3] In the end, a summit was organized in Brussels to convince Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban and this aid was provided. This example shows how far the organization is from being a partner, especially in terms of foreign policy.

In addition, the discourse of EU countries varies in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict. While humanitarian missions and common rhetoric against banditry, disinformation and organized crime are important, the inability of the organization to take a common stance in important events that concern the whole world, such as the Russian-Ukrainian War and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, implies that the European Union is no different from any other organization on this issue.

In such a situation, unanimity in adopting decisions on important security and foreign affairs is another issue that hinders the common foreign and security policy. The different interests, political cultures and views of countries in foreign policy make unanimity largely impossible. The biggest reason for this is seen as the national sovereignty concerns of the countries. The concept of national sovereignty, which has been seen as a problem throughout the European Union Integration process, is still an obstacle for the EU in its goal of establishing a federal structure.[4]

In general, and not only in foreign and security policy, sanctions for disagreement in the European Union are mild. They take the form of fines and lawsuits against countries that take actions that are incompatible with their values. But more precise and decisive sanctions are important in this respect. It can be said that the medium and small states within the member states have used the European Union for economic development and to have a voice in the international arena. The interests are mutual, but the European Union is already making concessions at a high level. Hungary, Poland under the previous government and Slovakia are among them. There is currently no expulsion procedure against states that constantly express their disagreement with different rhetoric and are perceived to want to use the EU as a tool for development and reputation, except for the suspension of membership in case of serious violations. This suspension also requires a majority vote, which is enough to make the situation uncertain. Therefore, taking the UK as an example, for a country to leave the European Union, it would have to initiate these withdrawal procedures itself.

This is a major problem for the European Union, which at the end of the day desires a federal structure. Ultimately, the lack of harsh and dissuasive sanctions such as expulsion from membership in case of non-compliance with values and policies in order to create a federal structure hinders this process. But the European Union is building the "European Project" slowly and step by step. It took 50 years for the organization to become a legal entity in 2009 with the Lisbon Treaty. This shows how slow and consensual the process has been. However, while the creation of deterrent sanctions has the potential to go against EU principles in the name of consent, the slow pace of this process can also lead to deepening disagreements within the organization, potentially leading to fragmentation. Germany's recent resumption of border control is a case in point. Therefore, establishing a common foreign and security policy within a federal structure is a long and arduous process. But even with the possibility of changes of government, the process lacks hope and the slower it slows down, the more fragmented it becomes within the organization. It is therefore unclear whether the European Union can withstand all this.

[1] "European Union Border Assistance Mission in Rafah, What is EU Foreign Policy", European Union External Action, <https://eubam-rafah.eu/en/node/5063>, (Date Accession: 17.12.2024).

[2] "EU Naval Force Operation ATALANTA", European Union External Action, <https://eunavfor.eu>, (Date Accession: 17.12.2024).

[3] Liboreiro, Jorge (2024), "It has gone very far: 'EU countries voice exasperation over Hungary's vetoes on Ukraine aid, euronews, <https://www.euronews.com/my-europe/2024/05/27/it-has-gone-very-far-eu-countries-voice-exasperation-over-hungarys-vetoes-on-ukraine-aid>, (Date Accession: 17.12.2024).

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ANKASAM ANALYSIS

El Salvador's Cryptocurrency Diplomacy



Ayşe Azra GILAVCI

In September 2021, El Salvador made history by declaring Bitcoin a legal tender alongside the US dollar, marking a global first. Spearheaded by President Nayib Bukele, this bold policy positioned the Central American country as a testing ground for state-level cryptocurrency integration. While this attempt garnered worldwide attention, it also faced criticism, particularly from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), citing financial and legal risks. Recent developments, including a \$1.4 billion IMF loan agreement and the government's decision to continue Bitcoin purchases, highlight the complex interplay between national cryptocurrency policies and international financial frameworks.

El Salvador's Bitcoin Law was implemented with the goals of enhancing financial inclusion, attracting foreign investment, and reducing remittance costs. To promote Bitcoin adoption, the government made significant investments, including developing and encouraging the use of a "Chivo Wallet" application. Additionally, the creation of a tourism hub called "Bitcoin Beach," emphasizing Bitcoin transactions, aimed to bolster the country's reputation as a cryptocurrency hub.

Despite these efforts, the law has faced numerous challenges: volatility, public skepticism, and IMF opposition. Bitcoin's volatility, with fluctuations more unpredictable than traditional currencies, has raised financial concerns. Moreover, many Salvadorans, particularly the unbanked population, have expressed reluctance to adopt digital currency. The IMF has repeatedly warned of macroeconomic instability and urged El Salvador to limit its dependence on Bitcoin.

On December 18, 2024, reaching a \$1.4 billion loan agreement with the IMF marked a significant turning point for El Salvador's economic stability.[1] However, the agreement came with several conditions:

- The rollback of policies related to Bitcoin.
- Restricting tax payments to the US dollar.
- Implementing reforms to ensure Bitcoin acceptance remains voluntary for private businesses.

Despite these conditions, the Salvadoran government announced plans to continue Bitcoin purchases and reaffirmed the cryptocurrency's legal tender status. Stacy Herbert, the Director of the National Bitcoin Office, emphasized the strategic importance of maintaining Bitcoin reserves.[2]

President Bukele's strong support for Bitcoin reflects a blend of domestic and international political considerations. One of the primary motivations is the pursuit of economic sovereignty, as Bitcoin adoption symbolizes a departure from traditional financial systems dominated by institutions like the IMF. Furthermore, Bukele's administration strategically cultivates a populist image, presenting Bitcoin as a tool for empowerment and innovation. On the global stage, El Salvador's promotion of Bitcoin positions the country as a pioneer in the emerging digital economy, aiming to attract investment and tourism. Simultaneously, the government's insistence on this policy serves as a tactical measure to counter potential criticism from Bitcoin advocates and maintain its credibility as a trailblazer in cryptocurrency adoption.

El Salvador's Bitcoin policy has significant implications on both global and domestic fronts. The decision to continue Bitcoin purchases keeps relations with the IMF delicate, as it may complicate future negotiations. Although the IMF recently stated that financial risks have "not materialized," its cautious stance indicates ongoing concerns about long-term economic stability. From a geopolitical perspective, El Salvador's policy challenges the dominance of traditional financial institutions and sets a precedent for other countries considering cryptocurrency integration by establishing a new framework for economic development. However, this strategy carries both potential benefits and risks. While it may bolster Bukele's international reputation as a reformist, persistent public skepticism could erode domestic support, particularly if the promised economic advantages fail to materialize.

The Salvadoran government's decision to expand its Bitcoin reserves aligns with a broader global trend of increasing cryptocurrency adoption. Recent remarks by U.S. President-elect Donald Trump about the potential establishment of a strategic Bitcoin reserve underscore the growing acceptance of digital assets in the international financial arena. By bolstering its reserves, El Salvador aims to position itself as a key player in this evolving financial landscape, leveraging the rising significance of digital assets in global markets to secure a strategic advantage.

El Salvador's Bitcoin experiment represents a bold departure from traditional economic policies and serves as a catalyst for global discussions about the role of cryptocurrency in national economies. The recent IMF agreement highlights the delicate balance between pursuing innovative financial strategies and adhering to established international financial norms. While the long-term effects of this policy remain uncertain, El Salvador's approach continues to shape the global narrative surrounding cryptocurrency adoption.

[1] "IMF Reaches Staff-Level Agreement with El Salvador on an Extended Fund Facility Arrangement", International Monetary Fund, <https://www.imf.org/en/News/Articles/2024/12/18/pr-24485-el-salvador-imf-reaches-staff-level-agreement-on-an-eff-arrangement>, (Erişim Tarihi: 20.12.2024).

[2] "El Salvador says it will keep buying bitcoin despite IMF warning", Reuters, <https://www.reuters.com/markets/currencies/el-salvadors-bitcoin-wallet-be-sold-or-discontinued-after-deal-with-imf-official-2024-12-19/>, (Erişim Tarihi: 20.12.2024).



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From Eastern Europe to the Far East: Moscow's Pursuit of Regional Influence



Ergün MAMEDOV

The war initiated by Russia against Ukraine in 2022 not only altered the geopolitical balance in Eastern Europe but also had repercussions extending to the Far East. Seeking to counter the economic and diplomatic impacts of Western sanctions, Moscow enhanced its cooperation with China and North Korea in the Asia-Pacific region, thereby increasing its strategic significance in the area. Joint military exercises with China and a deepening strategic partnership with North Korea have been interpreted as a challenge to U.S.-led alliances. Simultaneously, Russia's pivot toward Asian markets reflects its efforts to bolster economic independence and create alternatives to Western sanctions. The repercussions of the war in Eastern Europe have led to significant shifts in the balance of power in the Far East, both economically and in terms of security, with long-term implications for the global strategic system.

South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol strengthened the U.S.-led alliance structure through sanctions against North Korea, efforts to resolve historical disputes with Japan, and a firm stance against China. However, the sudden imposition of martial law and the lack of public support during this process led to Yoon's removal from office, weakening his foreign policy legacy. In the event of a Democratic Party government, foreign policy is expected to focus on dialogue with North Korea, more balanced relations with China, and a tougher approach toward Japan.[1] This scenario complicates Washington's alliance strategies in Northeast Asia, creating significant uncertainties in regional security and trade dynamics. Progress in relations with Japan lacked public support, and Yoon's harsh rhetoric toward China drew criticism from the international community. These criticisms not only reflected backlash against China's economic and diplomatic power but also raised questions about the sustainability of U.S.-led alliances in the region. The transactional approach of the Trump administration and the uncertainties surrounding regional alliances contributed to perceptions of Yoon's policies as a bold yet destabilizing legacy.

The joint military activities of China and Russia around South Korea are viewed as clear evidence of escalating power struggles in the Asia-Pacific region. On November 30, 2024, the ninth joint strategic air patrol over the Sea of Japan showcased the coordinated military capabilities of the two countries in a noteworthy operation.[2] The inclusion of H-6N strategic bombers in the operation aimed to enhance the two nations' military technologies and power projection capabilities. These activities served as a clear deterrent message against U.S. plans to deploy intermediate-range missiles in Japan. However, countries such as Taiwan and South Korea have regarded these operations as provocative and threatening. South Korea's firm response, including scrambling jets in reaction to air defense identification zone violations, further intensified the already complex security dynamics in the region.

Operations conducted by China and Russia are not limited to testing their military capabilities but are also regarded as a strategic challenge to U.S.-led alliances. This situation has the potential to reshape regional power balances while profoundly affecting global strategic equations. Joint activities by China and Russia push U.S. allies in the region to seek closer cooperation while deepening instability in the Asia-Pacific region.

Russia's deepening strategic partnership with North Korea holds the potential for long-term impacts on the balance of power in Northeast Asia. Pyongyang's active support for Moscow in the Ukraine war, by sending over 11,000 troops and expanding this assistance with military capacities such as artillery ammunition and missiles, underscores the extent of strategic dependence between the two countries.[3] This partnership partially mitigates North Korea's international isolation while contributing to Russia's efforts to overcome Western sanctions. Pyongyang's positioning of its nuclear program as a non-negotiable matter significantly narrows policy options for the U.S. and its allies on this issue. Such collaboration not only complicates the U.S. strategy of containing China and North Korea but also risks triggering an arms race in the region. In response to these dynamics, the U.S. has strengthened its security cooperation with South Korea and Japan, which is critical for the continuity of regional alliances. However, joint military maneuvers by Russia and North Korea test this cooperation and further complicate the U.S.'s strategic position in the region.

Meanwhile, in the East, one of the region's leading states, India, continues its commitment to preserving and expanding strategic ties with Russia despite Western pressure. At the 2024 India-Russia Intergovernmental Military Cooperation Commission meeting held in Moscow, India sent strong signals of its intent to maintain its strategic partnership with Russia.[4] Following the Ukraine war, India increased its oil imports from Russia by 40%, highlighting the economic dimension of this strategic dependence. However, rising transportation costs and diminishing discounts on energy imports have pushed India to seek alternative sources, such as the U.S. The decline in India's defense imports from Russia is a result of policies emphasizing domestic production. U.S. sanctions threats have heightened sovereignty concerns in India and bolstered demands for foreign policy independence. In this context, Washington must adopt a more pragmatic approach that considers India's historical ties with Russia. Additionally, India's role as a mediator in the Ukraine crisis is seen as a critical move to maintain strategic balance in the region.

More than 70% of Russia's industrial exports are directed toward Asia, which is viewed as part of its strategy to counterbalance Western sanctions and integrate into Asian markets.[5] Increased trade with major economies such as China, India, and South Korea contributes to sustaining Russia's economic activity; however, this dependence renders Moscow economically vulnerable. At the same time, Japanese Prime Minister Ishiba Shigeru's proposal for a NATO-like collective security alliance is perceived as a challenge to Russia's strategic interests in the Asia-Pacific. Nonetheless, Russia's potential to deepen military and economic ties with China in response to this initiative should not be overlooked.

In this context, while Russia's strategy, spanning from Eastern Europe to the Asia-Pacific region, focuses on security and economic cooperation, the dynamics within the Asia-Pacific have become increasingly complex amid strategic competition between Russia, China, the United States, and regional actors. The strategies pursued by each country hold the potential to reshape regional balances, yet the long-term effects remain an ongoing and uncertain process.

Following the Russia-Ukraine War, Moscow has sought to enhance its influence in the Asia-Pacific as a strategic response to Western sanctions. In this regard, Russia's deepening military cooperation with China and North Korea has been interpreted as part of a balancing strategy against U.S.-led alliances. North Korea's military support for Russia during the Ukraine War demonstrates how the ties between the two countries have evolved into mutual strategic dependence. However, this cooperation risks exacerbating the ongoing arms race in the Asia-Pacific, further destabilizing regional security. Simultaneously, Russia's pivot in energy trade and its established and potential economic ties with major economies such as China, India, and South Korea have increased its integration into Asian markets while deepening mutual interdependence with these countries. Yet this process places Moscow in a more vulnerable position, especially against major actors like China.

South Korea's search for a balancing policy in response to these dynamics could reshape regional geopolitical equations. The Trump administration's distance from multilateral security mechanisms like NATO and the possibility of the U.S. adopting a more transactional strategy in the region may encourage South Korea to develop balanced relations with China and Russia. Seoul could consider restarting relations with Moscow; however, such a step might depend on conditions like the loosening of military ties between North Korea and Russia. South Korea's concerns over energy security and regional isolation make such an initiative more likely. This scenario indicates that while Moscow seeks strategic opportunities in the Asia-Pacific, its actions also complicate U.S.-led efforts to strengthen alliances in the region. Ultimately, Russia's multifaceted strategic moves in the Asia-Pacific hold the potential to create lasting impacts on global geopolitical balances.

[1] Choe Sang-Hun, "Impeachment in South Korea Has Cost Washington a Staunch Ally", New York Times, <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/12/16/world/asia/south-korea-us-diplomacy.html>, (Access Date: 21.12.2024).

[2] "China And Russia Intensify Military Maneuvers Near South Korea", The Pinnacle Gazette, <https://evrimagaci.org/tpg/china-and-russia-intensify-military-maneuvers-near-south-korea-73445>, (Access Date: 21.12.2024).

[3] Edward Howell, "Any new Trump-Kim summit risks another no deal. The US must nurture old alliances to contain North Korea", Chatham House, <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2024/11/any-new-trump-kim-summit-risks-another-no-deal-us-must-nurture-old-alliances-contain-north>, (Access Date: 21.12.2024).

[4] Rushali Saha, "US Needs to Accept the Reality of India-Russia Relations", The Diplomat, <https://thediplomat.com/2024/12/us-needs-to-accept-the-reality-of-india-russia-relations>, (Access Date: 21.12.2024).

[5] "Boleye 70% Rossiyskogo Nesryevogo Eksporta v Aziyu Sostavlyayut Promyshlennyye Tovary", Kommersant, <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/7384518?erid=F7NfYUJCUnEP5ILXRazh>, (Access Date: 21.12.2024).



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The Rise of China's EV Sector and Its Impacts



Simay GÜZEL

China's rapidly growing electric vehicle (EV) industry has reshaped the economic, political, and competitive aspects of its international relations, particularly with the European Union (EU) and the United States (US). The EV sector has become at the center of both trade wars and strategic collaborations, boosting China's global influence. Through its manufacturing capacity, technology development, and strategic policies, China has gained influence in this field both regionally and globally. Behind China's leadership position are strategic planning, strong industrial policies, and market conditions.

Global trends in renewable energy and clean technology have propelled China to a leading position in the EV sector, while these developments are reshaping the country's economic, environmental, and geopolitical strategies. Dominating the most critical components of the EV ecosystem, including electric vehicle batteries, charging infrastructure, and innovative manufacturing methods, China is the market leader, accounting for more than 50% of global EV sales.[1] With this dominance, it can be said that China has strengthened its strategic power in international trade.

China's success in EV technologies has enhanced economic cooperation between countries. Through agreements with the EU, China has become a key player in setting new standards in battery technologies. Partnerships with South Korea and Japan have introduced the concept of "coopetition" (competition and cooperation) in battery production. These economic ties can be seen as factors that provide alternative solutions to China's energy dependence while expanding commercial corridors.

China's EV industry, with its potential to reduce carbon emissions, and the policies it follows in this regard, support environmental sustainability goals.[2] These policies have strengthened China's global commitments to reducing carbon emissions within the framework of the Paris Climate Agreement. EV exports and technological support have become diplomatic tools that emphasize China's environmental leadership. Additionally, technology transfer agreements with developing countries also support China's soft power strategy.[3]

In addition to these steps, efforts focused on battery recycling aim to strengthen environmental sustainability. Technological investments in battery recycling and charging infrastructure have enabled China to increase its influence in the Asian, African, and European markets in alignment with its Belt and Road Initiative. These investments support infrastructure and energy transfers, thereby strengthening diplomatic ties. Furthermore, critical minerals used in EV production and the battery supply chain have become a key part of China's international cooperation strategy. In terms of lithium-ion battery technology and its raw materials, China has similarly strengthened its commercial relations with South American and African countries. Agreements on cobalt mining with countries such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo have increased China's control over this critical sector.[4]

China's EV manufacturers (such as BYD, Nio, Geely, etc.) have expanded into international markets. In this regard, China is targeting not only other countries but also developed markets such as the EU and the US in EV exports. In Europe, BYD's sales have increased, while Nio's innovative battery swapping stations are bringing a new dynamism to the sector. These exports, while strengthening economic ties, also naturally bring about increased commercial competition. The EU's investigation into subsidies for China highlights the impact of the EV sector on economic competition. China's strong subsidy policies provide advantages to local manufacturers, raising concerns in other countries.

It can be said that the biggest concern in recent times is the pressure of competition. Traditional European automotive giants, such as Volkswagen and Renault, are facing significant competitive pressure due to China's cost-effective EVs. While Volkswagen attempts to maintain its presence in the Chinese market through local partnerships and production facilities, China often uses these collaborations to contribute to its own technological advancements. Recent news reflecting Volkswagen's struggles suggests that China's rapidly growing market share may have a direct or indirect impact on this situation.[5] Despite being under significant competitive pressure in the Chinese market, Volkswagen appears to be pursuing a long-term strategy by maintaining its partnership with the Chinese automotive company SAIC Motor. Volkswagen's recent extension of its agreement with SAIC until 2040 reflects China's leadership in the sector and, despite the current trend, shows Volkswagen's effort to increase production capacity, gain cost advantages, and secure a stronger position in the electric vehicle market.[6]

China's success in the EV sector is also increasing competition with the United States. Chinese manufacturers, such as BYD, are challenging Tesla's global leadership with cost-effective models. As of 2023, it has been announced that BYD and other Chinese companies have surpassed Tesla's sales.[7] Tesla's Gigafactory in Shanghai helps the company maintain a strong presence in the Chinese market. The potential re-election of Donald Trump has also become a development that could influence these dynamics.[8] Trump's tough policies against China and the new tariffs he has proposed could potentially create disadvantages for China. However, policies supported by Elon Musk, who has good relations with Trump, could provide advantages for Tesla. Nevertheless, a potential trade war between the US and China, along with geopolitical risks, could pose a significant threat to Tesla's growth strategies, especially when compared to BYD, which has already established a strong presence in the domestic market.

China's leadership in the EV industry has largely been achieved through a combination of state-supported policies, technological investments, and a large domestic market. This leadership is not only shifting global economic balances but also providing China with geopolitical superiority. Competition with Tesla will be a key factor in shaping China's long-term success in the global market. How China achieves its sustainability goals and how it manages to compete with innovative companies like Tesla will be decisive for the future of the EV industry.

China's electric vehicle industry is not only a tool for economic growth but also a key part of its international strategies. Leadership in the EV sector has not only increased China's global influence but also enabled the creation of new trade routes, diplomatic alliances, and sustainable development models. Along with technological innovations, China's diplomatic power will continue to grow in line with its sustainable development goals. The sustainability of this impact will depend on the balance of competition and cooperation with other countries in the coming years.

[1] Yukun, L., "Nation poised to hold more than half of Global EV fleet by 2025", China Daily, <https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202411/29/WS6749120ea310f1265a1d02dd.html>, (Date Accession: 03.12.2024).

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[7] Carson, E., "Tesla stock near highs as FSD V13 launches; BYD sales hit new high", Investor's Business Daily, <https://www.investors.com/news/tesla-vs-byd-ev-sales-robotaxis/>, (Date Accession: 03.12.2024).

[8] Ibid.



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ASEAN and the Myanmar Crisis: Thailand's Mediation Role



Ezgi KÖKLEN

Thailand's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Maris Sangiampongsa, chaired separate consultative meetings with members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) on December 19–20, 2024, as part of discussions aimed at finding a solution to the ongoing crisis triggered by the 2021 coup that overthrew the civilian government led by the National League for Democracy in Myanmar. These meetings highlight the Thai Government's intention to play a more active role in resolving the conflict in Myanmar and hold critical importance for ensuring stability in Southeast Asia, assessing ASEAN's capacity for crisis management, and understanding the dynamics of regional power balances.

An informal consultative meeting was held on Thursday with the participation of representatives from Myanmar's neighboring countries—China, India, Bangladesh, Laos, and Thailand—along with Myanmar's junta-appointed Foreign Minister, Than Swe. This meeting is noteworthy as it marks the first instance of Myanmar and its five neighboring countries coming together. On the other hand, since the meeting was not held under ASEAN's auspices, it does not directly reflect the organization's official policy on the Myanmar crisis. Indeed, since the coup, ASEAN has not recognized Myanmar's military leaders and has allowed only representatives without political status to participate in regional-level leaders' and foreign ministers' meetings.

As stated by Thailand's Foreign Minister Maris, the five countries that participated in Thursday's meeting emphasized their consensus on the critical and necessary nature of direct engagement with Myanmar.[1] This approach reflects the greater understanding displayed by these countries due to their geographical proximity to Myanmar compared to others.[2] Thailand's interest in Myanmar's stability stands as a notable example in the context of regional security. Similarly, neighboring countries such as China, India, and Bangladesh harbor serious concerns regarding the potential spillover of conflicts in Myanmar into their border regions. This underscores the need for a more comprehensive and cooperative approach to preserving regional stability and ensuring border security.

Within this framework, the meeting held on Thursday focused on addressing shared challenges, including border security, transnational crime, and the management of water resources. Furthermore, Myanmar's junta-appointed Foreign Minister, Than Swe, briefed regional counterparts on the military administration's political roadmap and the preparations for the elections scheduled for next year. According to Nikorndej Balankura, spokesperson for Thailand's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Myanmar's neighboring states generally expressed a positive stance toward the proposed election plan.[3] This favorable approach may be shaped by concerns over a potential power vacuum in the event of the military administration's overthrow and skepticism regarding the ability of resistance movements to achieve success against the junta.

China views the elections as an opportunity to safeguard its infrastructure projects in border regions and to promote stability in the area. This approach aligns with the key motivations shaping China's peace initiatives in Myanmar, particularly the investments in the China-Myanmar Economic Corridor and the Belt and Road Initiative projects in Rakhine State, which represent primary drivers of Beijing's stability efforts in the region. China's approach aligns with the policies of other neighboring countries, such as Thailand, India, and Bangladesh. Bordering Myanmar, these nations are profoundly affected by increasingly acute challenges, including refugee inflows, cross-border crime, and economic instability. Consequently, they support a Myanmar-centered solution to mitigate the transboundary effects of instability.

During the discussions held on Friday, ASEAN foreign ministers convened to address issues concerning Myanmar and to deliberate on ASEAN's "Five-Point Consensus" plan. This development highlights that the Five-Point Consensus continues to serve as a foundational reference point for ASEAN in resolving the ongoing political crisis in Myanmar. Adopted by ASEAN in April 2021, the Five-Point Consensus plan aims to bring an immediate end to violence in Myanmar, initiate an inclusive national dialogue among all relevant parties, enable the ASEAN special envoy to assume a mediatory role, and facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance through ASEAN mechanisms.

However, despite the passage of three years, the military junta in Myanmar has flagrantly violated these commitments by escalating violence and obstructing the delivery of humanitarian aid. This situation has raised serious questions about ASEAN's crisis management capacity and the viability of the Five-Point Consensus. ASEAN's adherence to a consensus-based decision-making process and its principle of non-interference in internal affairs significantly constrain the organization's ability to compel the Myanmar military to implement the Five-Point Consensus or to impose sanctions in the event of its violation. Indeed, Bolbongse Vangphaen, Director-General of Thailand's ASEAN Affairs Department, remarked during Friday's discussions that no concrete agreement was reached on overcoming these challenges.[4]

One of the greatest obstacles to resolving the conflict in Myanmar is the indifference of the parties toward the negotiation processes. Over the period following the coup, the internal war, shaped by the autonomy demands of ethnic groups, has evolved into a zero-sum power struggle aimed at achieving absolute dominance over the country's future. In this context, keeping the Five-Point Consensus plan on the agenda is of critical importance in establishing ASEAN's credibility and defining its role, both regionally and internationally, in its approach to the Myanmar crisis. ASEAN's approach to this crisis is regarded not only as a test of solidarity among its member states but also as a process that shapes the organization's position as a strategic actor in the eyes of the international community. The absence of negotiations in Myanmar and the transformation of the crisis into a zero-sum dynamic further underscore the importance of ASEAN's ability to implement this plan effectively.

Thailand holds a unique diplomatic position in the context of the crisis in Myanmar due to its relationships with both the military junta and revolutionary groups. Its financial and diplomatic support for the junta, particularly through investments in Myanmar's oil and gas sector, plays a vital role in enabling the military administration to sustain its operations. In addition, Thailand holds a significant position of influence over revolutionary groups, possessing substantial potential to de-escalate conflicts and facilitate dialogue between the parties. These multifaceted relationships position Thailand as an ideal actor for mediating the Myanmar crisis. Thailand's role within ASEAN assumes even greater significance in this context. It is a rational course of action for Thailand to sustain its leadership position, given its role in ensuring regional stability and enhancing efforts to address the humanitarian crisis in Myanmar. Such leadership has the potential to contribute to ASEAN's formulation of more effective and holistic strategies to address the crises in Myanmar.

In conclusion, the Myanmar crisis represents a test of ASEAN's leadership capacity in maintaining regional security and stability. The strategies to be developed to resolve the crisis will not only ensure Myanmar's stability but also play a determining role in shaping ASEAN's reputation and influence on the international stage. Although Thailand's mediation efforts and the cooperation of other regional countries provide a promising basis for establishing a joint resolution process, these efforts must be supported by ASEAN's holistic approach. The cross-border impacts and economic risks in the region make it imperative for ASEAN to adopt a more decisive stance in addressing the crisis.

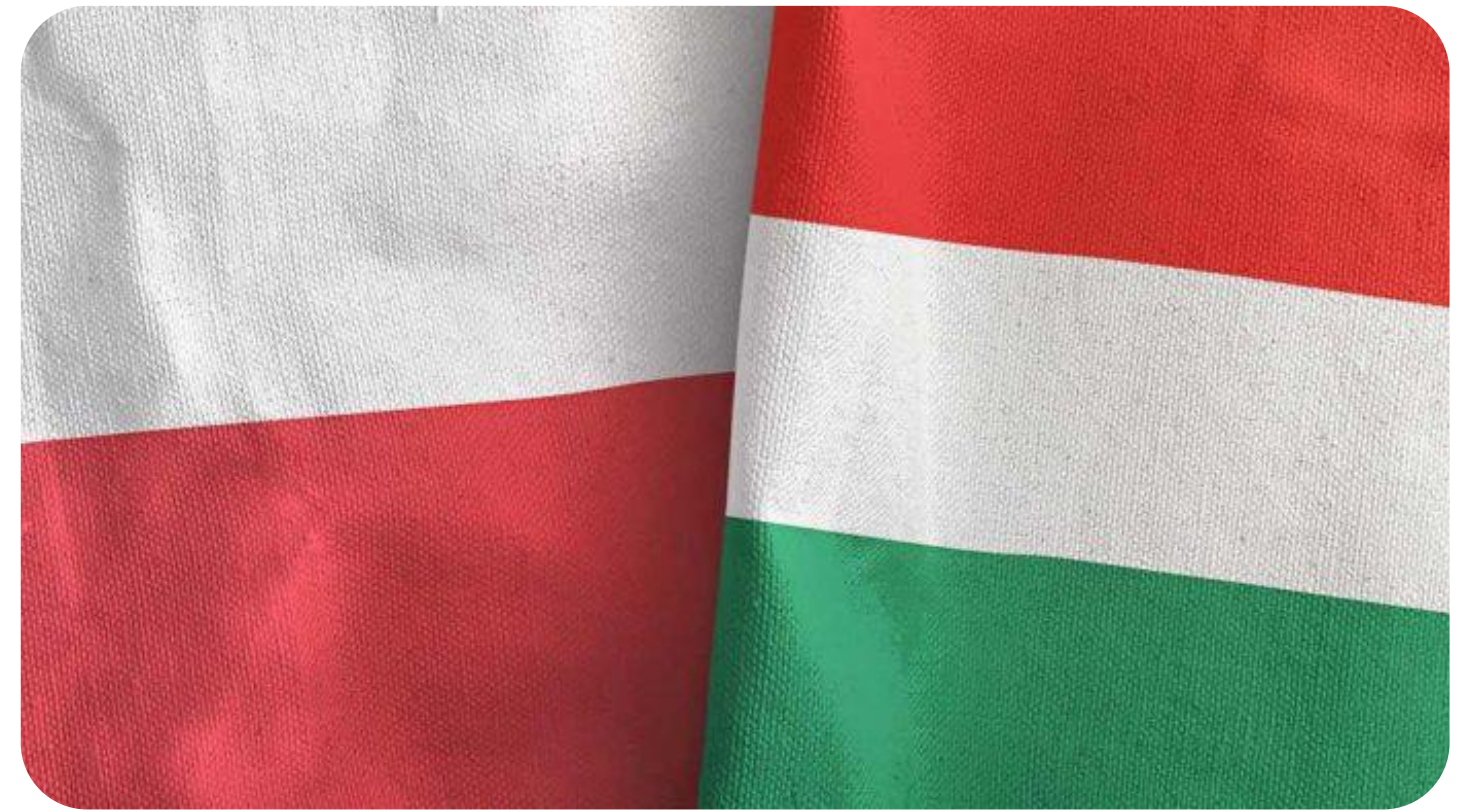
In this context, Malaysia's assumption of the ASEAN Chairmanship in January 2025 holds the potential to shape the future of regional efforts addressing the Myanmar crisis. The Langkawi Summit offers a critical opportunity to clarify ASEAN's stance on Myanmar and to develop a joint roadmap for crisis management. The decisions to be made at the summit will test ASEAN's regional leadership capacity through key issues such as the feasibility of the Five-Point Consensus, the role of the ASEAN special envoy, and the promotion of an inclusive political process. The approaches to be developed during this process will be decisive not only for Myanmar but also for ASEAN's long-term influence at the regional and international levels.

[1] "Thailand hosts regional talks to find solutions to Myanmar's bloody civil war", AP News, <https://apnews.com/article/myanmar-conflict-asean-diplomacy-8b05c4d22e649f88aeb1449bcf052710>, (Date of Access: 20.12.2024).

[2] Ibid.

[3] "Myanmar's Election Ambitions: Insights from Than Swe's Diplomatic Plans in Bangkok", Thai News, <https://thai.news/news/thailand/myanmars-election-ambitions-insights-from-than-swes-diplomatic-plans-in-bangkok>, (Date of Access: 21.12.2024).

[4] "Thailand calls regional talks on war-torn Myanmar frank but short on agreement", VOA News, <https://www.voanews.com/a/thailand-calls-regional-talks-on-war-torn-myanmar-frank-but-short-on-agreement-/7909022.html>, (Date of Access: 21.12.2024).



ANKASAM ANALYSIS

Tensions Between Poland and Hungary



Sena BİRİNCİ

The tensions between Poland and Hungary in recent years arise from differences in their strategic positions and national interests within the European Union (EU). While the two nations have long co-operated around shared values and policies, their approaches have increasingly diverged on issues such as the rule of law, migration policies, and the EU's budgetary decisions. This divergence now impacts both bilateral relations and the broader cohesion of the EU. Poland's aspirations for regional leadership and Hungary's pursuit of a more independent foreign policy have further heightened these tensions, with the potential to shape the political trajectory of Central Europe.

In a 2016 speech in Kraków, Poland, Viktor Orbán highlighted the strength of Polish-Hungarian friendship, stating: "There is no people in the world that appreciates Poland and Poles as much as Hungarians, and Poles appreciate Hungarians as much."^[1] Within eight years, however, this amicable tone gave way to stark criticism. Speaking at the Tüskányos summer camp in 2023, Orbán accused Poland of pursuing "the most hypocritical policy in Europe," signalling a deepening rift. Poland's strong reaction to this remark further exacerbated the strain in relations.^[2]

The previously close relationship between Hungary's Fidesz party and Poland's former ruling Law and Justice Party (PiS) has been undermined by the Ukraine war and political shifts. The situation escalated with Donald Tusk's 2023 electoral victory, which brought a centrist coalition to power in Poland. Relations between Orbán and Tusk deteriorated sharply, as Orbán's anti-European Union stance contrasted with Tusk's pro-EU policies. Orbán's earlier alliance with the PiS, rooted in resisting EU concerns over democracy and the rule of law, faltered under the strain of geopolitical events.

The war in Ukraine fractured this alliance further. Poland emerged as one of Ukraine's strongest supporters, while Hungary maintained close ties with Russia. Orbán's remarks on the conflict provoked outrage in Poland, with Donald Tusk condemning Hungary's stance and urging Poles to "vote out the most pro-Putin government in Europe".^[3] Tusk's electoral victory isolated Orbán further and allowed Poland to refocus on mending its relationship with the EU. Unlike Orbán, Tusk aims to restore Poland's democratic values and secure EU funding. Consequently, Polish-Hungarian relations reached an unprecedented low. Hungarian political scientist Zgut-Przybylska encapsulated the situation: "The Orbán government has decided to end Polish-Hungarian friendship completely."^[4]

Relations deteriorated further when Hungary granted political asylum to former Polish Deputy Minister of Justice Marcin Romanowski, triggering a new diplomatic crisis. Romanowski, accused of 11 charges including misusing funds for crime victims and attempting to defraud the state, became a symbol of the discord. The Polish government deemed Hungary's decision a 'hostile attitude' and a violation of EU principles.^[5]

Orbán defended his actions, asserting that Hungary would offer asylum to those fleeing 'political persecution' in Poland. In response, Poland summoned Hungary's ambassador and vowed to appeal to the European Commission for intervention. This move not only strained bilateral ties but also raised broader concerns about rule-of-law standards within the EU. Such a development deepened the rift in relations between Poland and Hungary, despite their ideological affinity. The two countries risked becoming increasingly isolated within the EU.

The Romanowski case underscored the growing divide between Poland's efforts to restore the rule of law and combat corruption, and Hungary's increasingly authoritarian governance. While the two countries once shared ideological affinities, this incident exposed their deepening divergence. Hungary's decision is widely perceived as contrary to EU values, fuelling ongoing debates about judicial independence and governance. The repercussions of this crisis risk further isolating both nations within the EU, potentially weakening their alliance and creating new conflicts within the bloc.

Viktor Orbán alleged that the government led by Donald Tusk was orchestrated by the European Union to unseat the prior right-wing populist administration.^[6] However, Orbán has provided no evidence to substantiate these claims. The Polish government came to power following the 2023 elections, which witnessed a record voter turnout. In response, Orbán drew parallels to Hungary, suggesting that the EU sought to topple his own government and replace it with what he described as a puppet regime. ^[7] The Polish Foreign Ministry dismissed these allegations, underscoring that the current government reflects the will of Polish voters.

Orbán's rhetoric aligns with his enduring clash with the EU, which intensified after the Union withheld funds due to Hungary's alleged violations of democratic norms. Simultaneously, Hungary's alignment with Russia and China, coupled with its pursuit of investments and loans from authoritarian regimes, has fuelled Orbán's increasingly strident criticism of Brussels.

To summarise, the tensions between Poland and Hungary underscore their sharply diverging political trajectories and the mutual recriminations that now characterise their relationship within the European Union. Hungary's decision to grant political asylum to a Polish opposition figure and Orbán's depiction of the Polish government as an EU 'puppet' have aggravated the discord. Poland, for its part, perceived Hungary's actions as overtly antagonistic.

These tensions carry significant implications for the two nations' standing and alliances within the EU. Poland, under Tusk's leadership, has committed to restoring democratic values and adherence to the rule of law, while Hungary, under Orbán, has embraced a more authoritarian approach, distancing itself from the Union. The once-close alliance between the two nations has splintered, contributing to the broader fragmentation within the EU. This schism could complicate efforts to foster unity and co-operation within the Union.

[1] Csongor Körömi, "Fratricide: How Poland and Hungary went from friends to foes", Politico, <https://www.politico.eu/article/poland-hungary-krakow-viktor-orban-politics-eu-europe-brussels/>, (Retrieved: 22.12.2024).

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Vanessa Gera, "Diplomatic spat erupts after Hungary gives asylum to Polish politician suspected of corruption", AP News, <https://apnews.com/article/poland-hungary-asylum-politician-dispute-6c528154f2ca2a67ef45fad333aa1984>, (Retrieved: 22.12.2024).

[6] Justin Spike, "Hungary's Orbán claims Poland's center-right government was installed by the EU", AP News, <https://apnews.com/article/orban-polish-government-installed-eu-a2754cd1727ff01c7b5ce19b94bf41de>, (Retrieved: 22.12.2024).

[7] Adam Easton, "Hungary sparks row with Poland by granting asylum to ex-minister", BBC, <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c9dp6lweeggo>, (Retrieved: 22.12.2024).



ANKASAM ANALYSIS

Russia and China in the Face of the “Asian NATO” in the Asia-Pacific



Ergün MAMEDOV

In recent years, changes in the global security environment have demonstrated the intensification of competition among major powers in both Europe and the Asia-Pacific region. The United States (US) has sought to enhance its global influence by not only expanding the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in Europe and exerting strategic pressure on Russia through Ukraine but also by establishing new security architectures in the Asia-Pacific region against actors such as China, Russia, and North Korea. In this process, defense initiatives involving Japan, one of the US's closest allies in the region, and the increasing military deployments by Western countries have drawn significant attention. These developments have deeply impacted regional dynamics not only in terms of defense policies but also in terms of geopolitical balances.

Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba has embarked on efforts to reshape the region's security dynamics by calling for the creation of an “Asian NATO” in response to the growing military cooperation between China, Russia, and North Korea. Under the Biden administration's strategy, referred to as the “Interwoven Security Architecture,” defense cooperation between the US, Japan, and other regional partners has intensified. Regular meetings within the framework of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD) involving Japan, India, and Australia, the AUKUS alliance, and increasing cooperation between Washington, Tokyo, and Seoul are key components of this strategy. In an article for the Hudson Institute, Ishiba characterized these developments as a success, arguing that tensions over Taiwan could be mitigated through a NATO-like defense mechanism. However, while these initiatives are viewed as positive steps by the US and Japan, they are perceived by other regional actors as indicative of a broader strategic threat.[1]

These efforts illustrate that the US has extended its global deterrence strategy beyond the Asia-Pacific to also address the threat posed by Russia in Europe. Military aid provided to Ukraine under NATO leadership has heightened Russia's perception of threat and accelerated Moscow's efforts to strengthen both conventional and strategic deterrence capabilities. Statements by Russian Defense Minister Andrey Belousov regarding the need to prepare for a potential war with NATO underscore Moscow's continued view of the West as a strategic threat. Decisions made at NATO's July summit, support provided to Ukraine, and new doctrines regarding unmanned systems have reinforced this perception in Russia.[2]

The connection between these two regions demonstrates that the United States is attempting to implement similar strategic models in both Europe and the Asia-Pacific. Russia's perception of threats in the Asia-Pacific region has become more complex, not only due to pressures originating from the West but also due to the formation of regional alliances led by Japan and the United States. Russia's Chief of the General Staff, Valery Gerasimov, stated that a military alliance similar to NATO is taking shape in the Asia-Pacific under the leadership of the United States, Japan, and South Korea, identifying Russia, China, and North Korea as primary adversaries. [3] Highlighting that the current ASEAN-based security system is being transformed into U.S.-controlled alliances, Gerasimov noted that a force of approximately 400,000 troops has been deployed in the region. The U.S. provision of modern weaponry to Taipei and the continuation of naval activities in the Taiwan Strait, which exacerbate tensions around Taiwan, have been described by Moscow as provocations.[4]

During this process, the deployment of a carrier strike group by France, a member of both NATO and the EU, to the Asia-Pacific region has emerged as a significant element of the West's strategic direction. With this move, France aims to strengthen the EU's collective defense identity and its global strategic influence. Joint naval exercises in the Indo-Pacific region with the navies of the U.S., Japan, Australia, and Canada are intended to deepen France's regional partnerships but are perceived by actors such as China as external interference. Similar deployments by the United Kingdom and Italy have further escalated tensions in the Asia-Pacific and undermined efforts to establish a regional security framework.[5]

These developments are combined with NATO's efforts to reorganize the global distribution of power by assuming the role of coordinating Western military aid from the U.S. The “NATO Support and Training Mission for Ukraine” (NSATU), decided upon at the NATO Washington Summit in July 2024, has been headquartered in Wiesbaden, Germany, and aims to ensure a support mechanism for Ukraine with a structure involving 700 personnel. This transition has been seen as a precaution against the possibility of newly elected U.S. President Donald Trump reducing military aid to Ukraine. However, the fact that the U.S. remains Ukraine's largest supplier of weapons and the policies of the Trump administration limit the impact of this transition. As the Biden administration allegedly plans to deliver large quantities of ammunition to Ukraine before leaving office, Trump's advisors have raised a plan that includes the possibility of halting military aid if Kyiv does not commence negotiations with Moscow. This further complicates the West's efforts to maintain sustainable support for Ukraine.[6]

In the same period, the concept of an “Asian NATO” has emerged as a significant term in the context of international security and cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region. However, the practical feasibility of this idea appears to be limited. Donald Trump's foreign policy approach, shaped by the slogan “Make America Great Again,” suggests that during a second Trump administration, the United States would prioritize national interests and adopt a strategy based on leadership rather than multilateral alliances. Considering Trump's criticisms of NATO and his distant stance toward collective defense mechanisms in Europe, the likelihood of the U.S. supporting the establishment of a NATO-like alliance in the Asia-Pacific is considerably low. The security strategy developed by Japan in close cooperation with the U.S. under the Biden administration is expected to shift toward more bilateral and limited collaborations during the Trump era. Japan's adoption of a more independent and pragmatic regional security approach in the post-Biden era could reshape the regional power dynamics in the Asia-Pacific.

Russia and China's responses to this process will likely focus on achieving strategic alignment in Eurasia and the Asia-Pacific. In Eurasia, Russia may deepen its economic, diplomatic, and military ties with China to establish a joint defensive front against U.S. power-shifting policies in both Europe and Asia. The active involvement of allies such as North Korea in this bloc could further complicate regional equations. Additionally, China's economic expansion policies under the Belt and Road Initiative and its infrastructure projects in the Asia-Pacific could increase the economic dependency of regional countries, weakening the influence of U.S.-led alliances. China's hardening stance on Taiwan and its counter-strategies against U.S.-backed military maneuvers could further intensify regional security dynamics.

In this context, due to the U.S.'s lack of leadership and resource constraints, the formation of an “Asian NATO” as a concrete alliance is considered highly unlikely. Regional allies are expected to develop their security strategies more independently and pragmatically in the absence of direct U.S. leadership. Japan might adopt a more balanced approach to managing Taiwan tensions and countering China's growing regional influence. Meanwhile, Russia and China could capitalize on this situation, expanding their existing collaborations to tilt the regional balance in their favor. In this sense, the idea of an alliance resembling NATO in the Asia-Pacific is likely to remain a political rhetoric and will not lead to a significant change in the regional security architecture. This scenario could herald a long-term geopolitical transformation that strengthens a multipolar order and weakens U.S. global leadership.

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- [2] Boldizar Gyori, "Russia Must be Ready for Potential Conflict with NATO 'within 10 years,' Defense Minister Says", The Kyiv Independent, <https://kyivindependent.com/russia-preparing-for-possible-conflict-with-nato>, (Access Date: 21.12.2024).
- [3] "Gerasimov: Belyy dom Stremitsya Sozdat v ATR 'Aziatskuyu NATO'", TASS, <https://tass.ru/armiya-i-opk/22703811>, (Access Date: 21.12.2024).
- [4] "Russia warns of emerging US-led 'Asian NATO'", News.Az, <https://news.az/news/russia-warns-of-emerging-us-led-asian-nato>, (Access Date: 21.12.2024).
- [5] Guo Yuandan, "By Deploying Carrier Strike Group to Indo-Pacific for 1st Time in 40 years, France Aggravates Tensions in Asia-Pacific: Expert", Global Times, <https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202412/1325358.shtml>, (Access Date: 21.12.2024).
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ANKASAM ANALYSIS

Atlantic Dialogue: Morocco's Global Vision and Regional Influence



Göktuğ ÇALIŞKAN

The Atlantic Dialogue is a globally and regionally influential platform that aims to increase mutual cooperation by bringing together the countries bordering the Atlantic Basin. Morocco's capital Rabat hosted the 13th conference of this dialogue in 2024, once again demonstrating the country's diplomatic effectiveness. Organized since 2011, these conferences provide an opportunity to discuss a wide range of strategic issues such as economic development, security, migration and energy. One of the main objectives of this event is to address the growing disparities between the northern and southern axes of the Atlantic Basin. Hosting hundreds of politicians, academics and business representatives every year, the Atlantic Dialogue has succeeded in strengthening the multilateralism of the Atlantic Basin countries.

The 2024 Atlantic Dialogue was held in Rabat, the capital of Morocco, on December 12-14 and attracted international attention. The program was attended by representatives from several strategically important countries, including the United States, Brazil, Nigeria and Germany. In addition, prominent figures such as Omar Hilale, Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Morocco to the United Nations, and Josep Borrell, Foreign Representative of the European Union, took part in the opening sessions of the conference. One of the most notable outcomes of the program was the announcement of a \$3 billion international fund for Africa's energy transition. In addition, a "Solidarity Framework" was developed to address the migration crisis in the Atlantic Basin and Morocco came to the forefront as both a mediator and a solution partner in this process. These results are in line with Morocco's vision of sustainable development and strengthen the country's regional leadership position.

Morocco's role in the Atlantic Dialogue is not limited to being a host country, but also contributes significantly to its intellectual and diplomatic framework. The organization of the conference in Morocco reinforces the country's role as a bridge between the Atlantic Basin and Africa. In this context, the main themes of the Atlantic Dialogue, such as energy security and renewable energy sources, support Morocco's leadership position in solar and wind energy. These events, organized in cities such as Rabat and Marrakech, further Morocco's ambition to become a regional hub.

The global impact of the Atlantic Dialogue is also evident in its capacity to strengthen economic and trade cooperation among the countries of the Atlantic Basin. At the last conference, issues such as green energy and sustainable development were particularly prominent. Morocco's goal of meeting 52% of its energy needs from renewable sources by 2030 is a concrete achievement within the framework of this dialogue. At the same time, trade and finance issues discussed at the conferences aim to revitalize the economic potential of the Atlantic Basin countries, totaling 2.3 trillion dollars.

Morocco's contribution to the Atlantic Dialogue has led to deeper relations between African countries and the Western World. In particular, the initiatives of the Rabat-based Royal Atlantic Initiative have led to a stronger representation of African countries in the international arena. Concrete proposals such as alleviating Africa's debt burden and increasing regional cooperation mechanisms were also presented at the conference. This approach aims to give a positive impetus to the economic development processes of African countries.

At this year's event in Rabat, cybersecurity and counterterrorism were prioritized on the common agenda of the participating countries. Morocco has positioned itself as a regional security provider through effective strategies in this field, both at the national and international level. Morocco's diplomatic initiatives and military contributions in the fight against instability in the Sahel region have been highly appreciated internationally. In particular, Moroccan-led initiatives on information sharing and joint operations against terrorist groups play an important role in regional stabilization. Morocco's approach has led to stronger security ties between countries in the Atlantic Basin.

Migration management and human rights issues have also provided an important backdrop for Morocco to showcase its humanitarian diplomacy capacity. As a strategic transit point between Europe and Africa, Morocco has adopted an exemplary, innovative and people-oriented approach to migration policy. In particular, Morocco's proposals to increase humanitarian assistance and protect the fundamental rights of migrants have been widely accepted. Morocco also stands out as a center of "humanitarian diplomacy" in the international arena with its social programs for the integration of migrants. This creates new opportunities for cooperation not only between the countries of the Atlantic Basin and Morocco, but also with other parts of Africa. Morocco's proposals for a global solution to the migration crisis have also been supported at the United Nations.

At the last meeting, issues such as the digital economy and technology transfer were also discussed in detail, aiming to increase the economic integration of the Atlantic Basin countries. Morocco aims to develop its start-up ecosystem and become a regional leader in digital transformation processes. The cooperation mechanisms provided within the framework of the Atlantic Dialogue have contributed to boosting Morocco's global technological competitiveness. One of Morocco's standout projects has been the proposal for a regional technology fund to strengthen digital infrastructure. These initiatives make the Atlantic Dialogue an important lever in Morocco's economic development strategies.

With innovative projects such as the Noor Solar Power Project on the agenda, the meeting highlighted Morocco's contributions to energy policies. Renewable energy projects and efforts towards sustainable development contribute to Morocco being seen as a leading actor in international energy strategies. With this project, Morocco is not only meeting its local energy needs but also leading Africa's energy transition.

The fact that cities such as Rabat and Marrakech host the Atlantic Dialogue also contributes greatly to Morocco's tourism sector. The annual conferences attract thousands of participants, boosting the cultural and economic dynamism of the country. This situation positively affects both Morocco's prominence as a conference tourism center and the country's global perception.

The Atlantic Dialogue stands out as a critical platform for Morocco to realize its multilateral foreign policy objectives. Through this dialogue, the country is forging stronger ties of cooperation with countries in the Atlantic Basin. Morocco's success in this process is not only in the economic or diplomatic spheres, but also in being perceived internationally as a "model country".

In the future, the Atlantic Dialogue's global influence will only increase. Morocco will continue to play a leadership role in this process and will lead the development of relations between African countries and the countries of the Atlantic Basin. The implementation of the decisions taken at the 2024 Atlantic Dialogue will reveal the concrete results of this cooperation. Morocco's global role will be further strengthened, especially in areas such as green energy, digital economy and humanitarian aid.

For Morocco, the Atlantic Dialogue is not only a diplomatic tool, but also a platform to support its national development strategy. Through such conferences and programs of international importance, the country's international reputation is enhanced, and its regional integration goals are concretized. In this context, Morocco's leadership role in the Atlantic Dialogue is considered a win not only for the country, but also for the Atlantic Basin as a whole.

In conclusion, the Atlantic Dialogue enhances Morocco's influence in the international arena and contributes significantly to regional cooperation and development processes. Through this platform, the country continues to defend the common interests of both Africa and the Atlantic Basin. Morocco's strategic moves in this process will enable the country to become an even stronger regional and global actor in the future.

[1] Amina Elghoubachi, "Atlantic Dialogues 2024 in Rabat: Explore Atlantic Basin Cooperation, Challenges." *Barlaman Today*, 12 Aralık 2024. <https://www.barlamantoday.com/2024/12/12/atlantic-dialogues-2024-in-rabat-explore-atlantic-basin-cooperation-challenges/>, (Дата обращения: 21.12.2024).



ANKASAM ANALYSIS

Trump's Trade War and Relations with the EU

Erdem Baran ALKAN

Donald Trump was elected as the 47th President of the United States of America in the elections held on November 5, 2024. While crucial breakdowns were happening in the relations between USA and European Union during the previous Trump era, the dynamics of transatlantic relations are wondered in the new era.

The Europe which has been under the US economic and military umbrella since the Second World War, has experienced danger of losing that protection and felt it up close drastic approach of Trump to Europe. In the first period, a 25% tariff was imposed on steel imports and a 10% tariff on aluminum. In contrast, EU starts impose tariff to new American products which its values up to 6 billion dollars, a trade war had been in question between two side[1]

Entering of Europe which has felt under a a threat in the escalating Russia-Ukraine war era to a new trade war with USA probability, is sufficient to disturb and to cornering the block. After the threat under which impose 25 percent to Canada and Mexico Trump has indicated that new tariff will be applied unless more American gas and oil is purchased by EU.[2] In response, Jovita Neliupsiene, EU Ambassador to the US, had stated that EU would launch a missile strike in such a situation. Additionally, the Head of Commission Ursula Von Der Leyen has referred that transform Russian gas into American LNG is a cheaper alternative and this is fruitful to and profitable to the block and so it could be debatable over. Thus, changing ideas are in question within the block on the topic. However, it is seen precise that this policy of Trump will affect both EU and international economic order.

The Bretton Woods Conference convened in 1944 during the Second World War had envisioned a post-war global economic system that would be liberal. In this direction, World Bank International Money Fund and firstly Custom Tariff and Trade General Agreement and after that constituted various institutions with the name of World Trade Organization in the Tour of Uruguay in 1995 had constituted as the building blocks of the system. Bretton Woods regime had put a burden on the US. US had started to live drastically fluctuations in its economy with the effect and help of European Continent and and developing countries that US is over of them.

Also, the biggest contributions to institutions in question had been made by US again. Then US President Richard Nixon brought several application that includes cancelling transforms dolar into golden application in order to relieve the situation in the internal economy in the period which named as Nixon Shock between 1971-1973 years but these could not be accomplished and finally he had to resign after Watergate Scandal.[3]

The Bretton Woods regime collapsed with the effect of OPEC Oil Crisis and economical situation in the world entered a period of stagnation. After this period, it is supported that developing countries to have a say in global economic system with such as Washington Agreement processes over the critics of economist Joseph Stiglitz . And also, it is aimed at establishment of liberal economic system as stated in Bretton Woods, as left out protective and mercantilist policies over time.

Government interventions in domestic economy in the post-war period and liberal order sought in foreign trade were reminiscent of a Keynesian system and the interventions in question were intended to be eliminated but this never happens. Despite ,The Doha Round which is the last tour of World Trade Organization get started in 2001 but it has not stil been concluded, is a major indicator of the growing anti-Americanism, first in the 1990, and then in the fact that this liberal economic system has never been fully implemented. Beyond this, the economic system that it has been a mercantilist structure more, is continuing as a liberal structure in question that limited with tarif and on the occasion of non-tarif barriers, the so-called new protectionism that emerged during the Tokyo Round from 1973 to 1979.

The fact that the trying to establishment of liberal economic system directly reveal from the relations between US and Europe, trade ralations between two sides have a profound impact on the global economic system that they are trying to buid at the moment. At this point, the fact that triggering to enter of the sides to a trade war who compose to the system which has been revealed by Donald Trump and it is considered as liberal as it is liberal, affects worse the international economic system efforts. This type mercantilist and extreme preventionist approaches are the obstacles in front of the providing the stability as a particular proportion in international economy and the approaches develops non-eligible trade practises. This approach which exacerbated the growing pressure in Europe in the midst of the Russian-Ukrainian War creates a big disappointment for the Europe.

The fact that welfare of the continent depends on USA as a big proportion. This situation both damage blocks's indepence and create an obstruction against to its self-sufficiency. In such an environment, the EU's course is to find and alternative to the US. It could be considered that Asian energy sources are conveyed by the pipelines plans such as Lapis Lazuli over Bakū to EU countries. This scenery serves as a reminder that it is essential for the EU and the West to try to recover the battle for influence in the Caucasus, which it has largely lost to Russia. However, against Azerbaijan that will play a critical role in such a this scenery in the EU countries are stil busy with taking various decisions in it's disputes with Armenia.

In addition, as Ursula von der Leyen pointed out, the purchase of US gas as a cheaper alternative to Russian gas can be seen as a way to turn Trump's threats into an advantage.[4] At the end of the day, the EU is late in creating self-sufficiency and will therefore continue to be influenced by the U.S. In today's economic system, protectionist policies are inevitable and this leads to the need for a country or bloc to be self-sufficient, thus, another mercantilist principle. In this situation, even if the liberal system is undermined, it is essential for the EU to create alternatives to it and, as mentioned above, to create its own advantage, especially by creating rational policies against Trump's protectionist measures.

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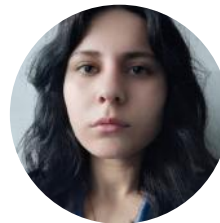
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ANKASAM ANALYSIS

Japan's Cultural Industry and Exports



İtir BOZDAĞ

Japanese culture is known for its uniqueness and elements that have been preserved over many years. In recent years, it has gained international recognition and been embraced by large audiences, especially in areas like food and cinema. Japan has adopted strategies to export its cultural industry not only to the domestic market but also to international markets. These policies have evolved with advancing technology and practices.

Japan's efforts to promote its cultural elements date back many years. In the late 19th century, World Expositions held in Paris and other locations provided an early opportunity to introduce Japanese elements to the Western world. In the first half of the 20th century, Japanese culture spread to various regions of Asia. In the years following World War II, there was a growing interest in Japanese martial arts and, by extension, Zen Buddhism, which had a significant impact on philosophy, poetry, cinema, and the arts. [1]

The international recognition of Japan's cultural elements and practices is not a new trend; rather, it has been a situation that has existed for over 100 years. Japanese culture began to influence a wide geography from Asia to Europe, and in the increasingly globalized world, the spread of culture has gained momentum. In this context, Japan's ability to preserve its historical and cultural heritage over many years has also played a significant role.

Many scholars working on the transnational movement of political pop culture have examined the political and economic dimensions of this process. In this context, the global spread of Japanese media products is sometimes seen as representing a new form of cultural imperialism, often referred to as Japan's "soft power." [2]

The spread of Japanese culture internationally can be seen as parallel to Japan's increasingly growing technological and economic influence in the world. This situation can be compared to the economic growth of the United States during the 1950s, when American culture spread across many countries. Furthermore, it can be said that Japan has been trying to build bridges with other countries and deepen its relationships through cultural exports.

Japan's export of animation, which began in the 1960s, has been steadily growing. The Japanese content industry has grown to the point where its export value can compete with that of the steel industry. In 2022, the total overseas sales of Japanese content reached 4.7 trillion yen, while the steel industry reached 5.1 trillion yen, and the semiconductor industry reached 5.7 trillion yen. The content industry also generates economic benefits through tourists visiting locations related to anime and other works. [3]

It would not be incorrect to say that Japan has a unique formation in the animation and content sector. Indeed, the international recognition of Japanese animations is widely accepted, and it is a sector that is steadily growing within the country. The contribution of animation and other content to Japan's economy continues to increase every year, and this sector positively influences Japan's image in the world.

Japan's success in exporting popular culture stems not only from creating attractive products but also from developing innovative methods to market and spread them. Additionally, by leveraging technological advancements, Japan has reduced costs and made popular culture products affordable for people from all economic classes, localizing its products to appeal to middle-class audiences worldwide. [4]

The success of Japan in spreading its cultural elements in the international market is significantly influenced by its strategies to eliminate economic constraints. Being aware that consumption is largely carried out by the middle class, Japan has marketed its popular culture elements at a level accessible to them. From another perspective, Japan has worked to adapt its popular culture, not just as it is, but tailored to specific markets, and has succeeded in doing so.

For Japanese popular culture to be more successful in other markets, Japanese and local companies have collaborated to translate products into the local language. Japan's pop culture boom has had a highly positive impact on the country's image and identity. This is because Japan is exporting a carefully selected image it wants to present to the world. This image focuses on the superficial aspects of popular culture and national identity. [5]

Another success in Japan's cultural exports lies in overcoming the language barrier. This has made its spread and adoption by other countries much easier. Moreover, Japan has used its popular culture elements to create a Japanese identity on the international stage. While this identity suggests that preserved traditions are being maintained, it also represents a unique Japanese culture distinct from the West.

Japan has worked to develop popular culture at the local grassroots level, which is different from Western-style popular culture typically managed by large corporations. Japanese companies, before exporting their products to other countries, have expanded from local markets to national ones, determining what works in their domestic market before venturing into international markets. [6]

The uniqueness of Japanese cultural elements can be seen as coming from local markets. It can be said that Japan's strategy differs from the West in that it not only avoids neglecting the domestic market but also allows for the preservation of local elements. Existing cultural elements are being reconstructed on a broader scale and presented to both domestic and international markets.

The "Cool Japan" initiative: The "Cool Britannia" policy in the United Kingdom inspired Japan's current "Cool Japan" movement. Over a decade has passed since the "Cool Japan" concept was first proposed, became a Cabinet policy, and began to be gradually implemented in Japan. The broad concept of "Cool Japan" encompasses all aspects of Japanese culture, from subculture products like manga and Japanese animation to traditional cultural heritage. [7]

Japan's support for the development and spread of its cultural industry is evident. This can be seen as part of the policies Japan has developed to become an influential country in other continents. It also demonstrates the importance Japan places on its international image. Similar to Japan's efforts to adapt its culture to the languages and economic classes of other countries, Japan has also integrated the United Kingdom's policy into its own. This initiative not only spreads Japanese culture in the West but also generates economic contributions.

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ANKASAM ANALYSIS

Is a Turkish Influx to the United States on the Horizon After Trump's Victory?

Ali Caner İNCESU

In the United States (U.S.) presidential election held on November 5, 2024, Donald Trump, the Republican Party candidate, secured victory. During his tenure as President from 2017 to 2021, Trump became particularly prominent on the global stage due to his controversial and highly restrictive immigration policies. The Trump administration implemented substantial reforms to immigration policies, which heralded a particularly challenging era for immigrants.

Among the notable anti-immigrant policies during Trump's presidency were the removal of the right for victims of domestic violence to apply for asylum, the extension of the waiting period for work permit applications from 150 days to 365 days after the U.S. judicial authorities accepted the asylum application, the conduct of asylum processes in Mexico instead of U.S. borders, and the rejection of work permit applications for those who entered the country illegally.

Another highly controversial policy of the Trump administration was the travel restrictions imposed on certain Muslim-majority countries, which drew widespread criticism from the international community. These restrictions targeting countries with a high Muslim population, such as Iran, Libya, Syria, Sudan, and Yemen, have often been described as "anti-Islamic" and "discriminatory" by religious communities, affected countries, and international organizations.[1]

With Joe Biden assuming the presidency of the U.S. in 2021, a significant portion of the restrictions imposed on immigrants during the Trump era has been lifted. This change has facilitated the decision-making processes for individuals planning to seek asylum in the U.S. It can be stated that the immigration policies of the Biden administration have created a more favorable environment for many immigrant groups, including Turks.

The increase in the number of Turks seeking asylum in the U.S. since 2021 supports this situation. In 2021, the number of Turks seeking asylum in the U.S. was 4,989, while in 2022, this number reached 19,470.[2] The number of Turkish asylum seekers recorded as 18,986 in 2023 has been reported as 13,311 in 2024.[3] The number of Turks entering the U.S. using the Mexican border has exceeded 40,000. [4] It can be said that the immigration policies of the Biden era played an important role in the process of Turkish immigration to the U.S.

The re-election of Donald Trump in the 2024 U.S. presidential election has caused serious concern among immigrants.[5] During the election campaign, his statements about reinstating the harsh policies he had implemented in the past have increased expectations of a significant influx of Turkish immigrants at the U.S. border before he takes office on January 20, 2025.[6] The immigrants' hasty attitude is related to the fear that past restrictions will be reimposed.

It is likely that this potential wave of migration will create a crisis situation by exceeding the capacity of the migrant camps at the U.S. border. Additionally, it is anticipated that the surge in asylum applications will place a significant burden on U.S. immigration courts. It is highly likely that this expected migration movement will have unforeseen consequences not only in the U.S. but also on the Mexican side of the border. Especially considering the effective role of Mexican cartels in U.S.-Mexico border crossings, it is assessed that the dense population of migrants expected to accumulate in northern Mexico until the date Trump takes office as President could lead to instability in the region.

Trump's stringent immigration policies continue to exert a profound influence not only on individuals but also on the international relations and societal dynamics of the U.S. The issue of immigration continues to be an important topic that will shape the future administrations and international reputation of the U.S. Especially for Turkish immigrants, the fact that the relatively favorable conditions created by the Biden administration will become more difficult again during the Trump era is a harbinger of the challenges immigrants will face in the coming years. This situation could lead not only to individual tragedies but also to an increase in humanitarian crises at the U.S.-Mexico border.

In conclusion, Donald Trump's immigration policies have shaped not only the lives of immigrants but also the global perception of the U.S. and its stance on human rights. Although Joe Biden's withdrawal of these policies has created some relief for immigrants, it is anticipated that a difficult period for immigrants will resume with Trump's return to the presidency. The intense interest of Turkish citizens in the U.S. and the activity at the Mexican border reveal that the immigration policies of the U.S. are not only a local issue but also a global one.

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ANKASAM ANALYSIS

The Balance Game in Southeast Asia: China and Vietnam Cooperation



Berra KIZILYAZI

Vietnam Communist Party Central Committee Secretary General To Lam met with Chinese Defense Minister Dong Jun in Hanoi on Thursday. According to the Xinhua News Agency, Dong and his accompanying delegation attended a grand meeting organized on the occasion of the 80th anniversary of the founding of the Vietnam People's Army. Vietnam places great importance on China's support for its national liberation, independence, and socialist construction. It views friendly relations with China as a strategic priority in its foreign policy. Dong stated that the Chinese side values the traditional friendship between the two countries and two armies, and is ready to follow the guidance of the consensus reached by the top leaders of both countries, deepen practical cooperation in various fields including maritime security with the Vietnamese side, enhance strategic mutual trust between the two armies, promote the continuous development of mutual relations, and jointly safeguard regional peace and stability.[1]

In this meeting, relations based on friendship and mutual interests were emphasized, and steps towards cooperation in the fields of defense and security were aimed at maintaining regional stability. While China advances its relations with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries, Vietnam has actively played a role in establishing balance and stability in the region by expanding its historical and geopolitical relations with China, one of the world's major powers, into the fields of defense and security. Vietnam's signing of the "U.S.-Vietnam Comprehensive Strategic Partnership Economic Dialogue (CSPED)" with the United States on June 25 and its agreements on security cooperation with China are indicative of Vietnam's pursuit of a multilateral foreign policy. Vietnam aims to maintain mutual trust with China in the region while benefiting from U.S. technology. Thus, while Vietnam pursues a multilateral balancing strategy in line with its national interest protection goals, it has also taken on a key actor role in the Southeast Asia region.

The foreign policy strategy implemented by Vietnam, particularly in relation to ASEAN countries, is also significant in terms of regional cooperation and multilateralism. Vietnam's neutrality towards both the USA and China has supported ASEAN's neutral stance. Vietnam's increase in cooperation with the US in areas such as defense and technology has paved the way for ASEAN countries to find areas where they can also work together with the US. Additionally, Vietnam has supported ASEAN in forming a strategy to maintain its neutrality in the ongoing China-US competition on the international stage. Vietnam has strengthened its economic ties with China while maintaining security cooperation with the United States. This approach has served as an example for ASEAN to adopt a similar policy. Thus, ASEAN has been able to develop strategic relations with the USA while not taking a stance against China. Especially in sensitive matters such as the South China Sea, maintaining a balanced stance has allowed ASEAN to foster constructive relations with both China and the USA. In this context, it is observed that Vietnam, which has taken on a leading role in maintaining regional power balances through multilateral diplomacy, holds an important position not only within ASEAN but also internationally.[2]

On April 11-12, 2024, the eighth Vietnam-China Border Defense Friendship Exchange was held under the co-chairmanship of Vietnamese Defense Minister General Phan Van Giang and his Chinese counterpart Dong Jun. At the end of the discussions, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed regarding the establishment of a telephone line between the Vietnam National Defense Ministry's Naval Forces Service and the Southern Theater Command of the People's Liberation Army of China.[3]

This development indicates more constructive and peaceful relations between the two countries. This development fosters mutual trust, enhances border security cooperation, and facilitates constructive dialogue in tense situations. Additionally, in terms of developing security and defense cooperation with other countries in the region and providing confidence-building measures for the stability of regional peace, the China-Vietnam cooperation serves as an example.

Chinese Defense Minister Dong Jun met with his Vietnamese counterpart Phan Van Giang in Beijing on August 20, 2024, and emphasized that the two armies need to accelerate their efforts to enhance the quality and efficiency of their cooperation. Dong stated that efforts should be made to maintain the momentum of cooperation in various areas, including personnel training, joint exercises, and international collaboration, while expanding new fields for more practical results.[4] This meeting, like other discussions, holds critical significance for the deepening of both Vietnam and regional security collaborations, ASEAN's pursuit of more neutral and flexible policies with major powers, and the foundation of international balance and security policies. Additionally, as China's influence in the Asia-Pacific region increases, similar agreements and discussions have contributed to the development and security of many countries in the region, such as ASEAN countries. Vietnam's cooperation with the USA and Japan has paved the way for multilateral security agreements aimed at regional peace, leading to an increase in multilateral collaborations in the Asia-Pacific region.

In summary, the recent meeting between China and Vietnam, as a result of previous discussions, holds strategic importance in terms of deepening military cooperation and ensuring mutual trust between the two countries. Vietnam, which adopts the principle of neutrality, offers security-based cooperation with China, providing both regional stability and a diplomatic approach to resolving potential tensions. China-Vietnam collaborations significantly contribute to balancing power dynamics within ASEAN and fostering stability between major powers. Vietnam's cooperation with China and its simultaneous establishment of strategic ties with the USA have enabled it to maintain regional stability and protect its national interests through multilateral diplomacy. Thus, Vietnam has positioned itself as a balancing force among the great powers.

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📌 24 December 2024

ANKASAM President Prof. Dr. Mehmet Seyfettin EROL is on Habertürk TV!

📌 25 December 2024

ANKASAM President Prof. Dr. Mehmet Seyfettin EROL is on TRT Voice of Türkiye Radio!

📌 26 December 2024

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



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