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Asia Pacific in World Politics 7



The Role and Asia-Pacific Relations
Process · Opportunities · Constraints



ASIA PACIFIC IN WORLD POLITICS 7

Türkiye and Asia-Pacific Relations:
Process- Opportunities-Constraints

Editors

Prof. Dr. İsmail Ermağan
Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mehmet Özay

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Numan Hazar, Ambassador (R)

FOREWORD

Prof. Dr. Hamit Ersoy

Ambassador of the Republic of Türkiye to Brunei Darussalam

When exploring the Asia-Pacific region it quickly becomes clear that it is a vast, diverse and dynamic region unlike any other. The term itself is relatively new in modern history, with roots that can be traced back through the post-World War II era to the Western European Imperialist era. The need for an umbrella term to streamline foreign policy objectives geared towards protecting colonial or 'neo-colonial' assets, interests and influence in the changing geographic area, brought together two distinctly different regions: Asia and the Pacific.

The vast Asia-Pacific region, as it has come to be known, ties together several distinctly different cultures, customs and languages and represents a staggering 60% of the global population, covering 30% of the world's land mass. This is in stark contrast to the 17% of the global population residing in Europe and North America, according to open sources.

The significance of this diversity and dynamism becomes more critical to understand and negotiate as several nations have begun a 'pivot' to the region in terms of foreign policy interests and objectives. Given such pivots, it is essential to learn and better understand the political, economic and social dynamics at play to better inform state actors and policymakers. In this vein, this book explores the 'Asia Anew' foreign policy initiative of the Foreign Affairs Ministry of the Republic of Türkiye and offers an important and exclusive account and description of the bilateral relations between Türkiye and the nations in Asia-Pacific.

Bilateral relations are never formed in a vacuum and in this way it is worth taking a wider look at the region to understand the power dynamics that have a bearing on domestic and foreign policy within and without Asia-Pacific. China, having achieved and shown its 'great power' status on the global stage, calls this region home and has demonstrated its capacities and interests to exercise a form of regional dominance. Such advances toward regional dominance ultimately leads to confrontations with other great powers with conflicting interests, namely the United States the U.S.. The great power politics between

China and the U.S. inevitably impacts and shapes the region's relations, development and path forward.

With such developments in mind it is worth drawing a distinction between 'regionalism' and 'regionalization' as it is highly relevant to the area of focus of this book, and also helps to give context to the gap between several Asian nations and Australia, for example. According to the paper titled 'Regionalism in Asia' from the Asia-Europe Institute at *Universiti Malaya*, 'regionalism' "conveys the sense of intentional, top-down region building – involving inter-governmental collaboration", while 'regionalization' on the other hand, "refers to the growing density of interaction and co-operation between neighbouring countries".

Taken broadly it can be suggested that Asia-Pacific as two distinct regions being tied together is an exercise in regionalism, advanced through efforts of economic liberalization through various multilateral fora such as APEC (Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation) in the 1980s. In contrast, the region also has seen the regionalization of Southeast Asia through the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) – a markedly different approach towards addressing region-wide matters.

Meanwhile, we are witnessing China's economic stimulus measures bear fruit with a gradual recovery of their economy as the government has adopted an increased 'pro-market' policy strategies that may further boost business and household confidence, and in turn further increase import demand. In contrast, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka may hamper consistent measures to improve fiscal recovery – are all looking fixed to rely on assistance from the International Monetary Fund in line with the nations' abilities to implement revenue-raising and expense-reducing measures.

Furthermore, it has been forecasted that several currencies in the Asia-Pacific are likely to appreciate slightly against the US dollar, particularly the Japanese Yen, Chinese Yuan, the Australian Dollar and the Malaysian Ringgit. The Japanese Yen will get a boost by the Bank of Japan normalizing its monetary policy by ending its exercises in yield curve control.

The manufacturing sector is looking to see wage growth as more manufacturing relocates from China to India and Southeast Asian nations, which may bring about pressures on the limited supply of skilled labour to support and sustain the production of an increasing standard of quality and technicality. In powering much of the manufacturing and main economic

drivers of these nations, there will remain a heavy dependency on fossil fuels and coal in drives for more ambitious economic targets.

In tandem with shifts in the manufacturing sector more countries are seeking to develop their own resilient supply chains of critical minerals. Australia, India, Japan and South Korea are likely looking to reduce their reliance on processed minerals from China, while mineral-rich countries such as Australia, Indonesia and Malaysia may be expected to expand their mining output and develop downstream processing by drawing in foreign direct investment.

In addition to these factors, civil unrest risks and further policy instability are flaring up in the region. This can be seen in Cambodia, Myanmar and Thailand, or perhaps in debt-stressed nations like Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. In Myanmar, ethno-religious attacks and systemic discrimination against the Rohingya people have united the global community to condemn such actions. In the cases of Cambodia and Thailand, while far less widespread, there remains along several areas and border communities an ethno-religious tension that shapes and limits domestic objectives and policies and in extension, bilateral relations.

In re-addressing 'great power' politics and its bearing on the region, China-US trade and its related regulatory barriers are likely to further impact the wider region, effecting global trade and supply chains. While it seems like US tariffs on Chinese products in the green energy, biotechnology and semiconductors industries will only continue, it only urges China to seriously focus on self-sufficiency in these industries.

Such contests for regional dominance between China and US are likely to intensify into more non-military confrontations in the South China Sea (particularly between China and US-ally Philippines). It seems reasonable to expect an escalation between China and the US over the following key areas: firstly, the Xinjiang province where they may be an increased focus on Uyghurs through human rights discourse; and secondly, over Hong Kong and Taiwan with a focus on separatist forces that may be fuelled by democratic discourse on self-determination by the Western political bloc. It is also very likely that we will witness the Western political bloc, headed by the US, continue to exploit any questionable or contentious policy standing of its rivals and enemies to prolong their political standing on the global stage.

To close, it is worth noting the parallel between the US Cold War strategy of containment of the Soviet Union and its current actions and rhetoric

surrounding China. In its goal to contain the 'Soviet threat' the US leveraged its diplomatic network, institutional mechanisms, and all its overseas military assets from the 'Middle East' to the Pacific Islands to surround their target ideologically, economically and militarily. Similarly, today, as of time of writing, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) that was set up as a defensive organisation to 'safeguard' the Western liberal democratic project from the 'Soviet threat' has now expanded its network into Asia-Pacific under the pretext of containing Chinese regional dominance and achieving a balance of power to preserve the US-led world order.

Following World War II the US in their best efforts harnessed and utilized its heavy-handed diplomatic relations and overseas assets in allied nations in the Asia-Pacific to contain what they perceived as the 'communist threat'. Today, the US is apparently adopting the same policy template of containment toward a great power but placing China in its crosshairs. In other words, the same containment policy used as a weapon against the Soviet Union is now being used against China in the Asia-Pacific. In efforts to re-assert regional dominance in Asia-Pacific, the US and its Western allies continue to maintain, operate and strengthen strategic military bases surrounding China.

With these shifts and developments in mind, coupled with the increasing trend of countries' foreign policies looking towards Asia-Pacific, this book offers a valuable contribution to detailing, recording and communicating the role that Türkiye plays in the region as well as the progress of their policy initiatives and objectives on the bilateral, sub-regional and regional level. In extension it can reveal the role that Turkish relations and agreements play in geo-political affairs, with particular focus on the Asia-Pacific region. Additionally, by examining such relations between Türkiye and the nations of Asia-Pacific, it provides a window to view the nuanced political situation of the region, which requires careful negotiation on the diplomatic level and also offers valuable insights into the future of the region and the role that Türkiye will play in this development.

EDITORS' FOREWORD

The Mission of the Book and Recommendations for Türkiye in the Asia Pacific

This book fulfills the mission of a research center institution and for the first time in Türkiye, Türkiye's relations with the Asia Pacific countries are written in English in detail.

This work is an undeniable reference book for those from around the world who are curious about Türkiye's foreign policy, as well as for politicians, business people, students and the public in the country.

The editors underline the following suggestions for Türkiye regarding this region:

- A global perspective instead of a Western-centric perspective
- A "Central Country Türkiye" vision
- There is no single Asian identity
- Regional and sub-regional experts are needed.
- More effective Country Desks should be established in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Experts should be trained not only in Islam but also in Buddhism, Hinduism, etc.
- Documentaries should be shot and the region should be promoted
- Economic - regional cooperation should be institutionalized: For example, the signing of a cooperation agreement with ASEAN, the most important organization in Asia, in 2010 was an important step. Türkiye should continue to insist on becoming a member of the ASEAN Regional Forum by developing this cooperation. SHANGHAI should not be seen as an alternative but as an option for cooperation.
- Annual sectoral fairs should be organized.
- Regional economic experts should be trained.
- Technological, academic and cultural cooperation should be developed.
- Energy, geopolitics and security issues should be addressed with a different vision

- Regional Peacebuilding efforts should be kept in mind (e.g. Arakan or Philippine Muslims); ideological divisions should be avoided.
- Bilateral and multilateral cooperation should be organized with the Middle East, Africa, South Asian countries etc. towards Asia Pacific
- Active policy should be prepared in global issues in the Asia Pacific region.

We declare that the authors' ideas ultimately reflect their own stances.

İsmail Ermağan-Mehmet Özay

Chapter 1

A PARADIGM SHIFT IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONSHIP: A GENERAL OVERVIEW OF THE ASIA-PACIFIC REGION

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mehmet Özay¹

Abstract

Planned as a short view of the issue, the article has a limited focus on changing conditions in Asia-Pacific. As closely observed, in particular since the beginning of this century, the global eco-political dynamism has been restructured by the developments in this region, which contains two oceans, the Pacific and the Indian Oceans. It is beyond a power struggle between two rivals, The People's Republic of China (PRC) and the United States of America (the U.S.) While we are observing some attempts to launch a round of negotiations between two parties, the conflictual situation still dominates the relationships, and its efficacies are inevitably felt by the whole nation-state in the region and beyond. This paper considers the recent past and current situation of the Asia-Pacific region. In addition, the repositioning of Türkiye's foreign policy is dealt with concisely. In a general sense, I try to look at some issues to find an answer to the fundamental problem, namely whether there is stable and sustainable development in the whole region and how the reflections on a global scale.

Keywords: Asia-Pacific, Indo-Pacific, China, the U.S., paradigm shift, Türkiye.

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28.08.2025

To the IIUM Library,

Dear Sir/Madam,

I would like to confirm that Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mehmet Özay is one of the editors of the edited book entitled,

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And this book has just been recently published by our publication house ‘Nobel Akademik Yayıncılık’, Ankara, Türkiye.

In addition, Mehmet Özay is also co-writer of “Editor’s Foreword” (pages xi-xii), and contributed by his own chapter, namely Chapter One (pages 1-17) to the book.

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