



NOUVEAUX REGARDS SUR L'ASIE

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EDITORIAL

by **Jean-Raphaël Peytregnet**

Director of Publication, former French Diplomat

A part from Xi Jinping's China, which was successively hit in February and March 2025 by two rounds of tariff sanctions (10% + 10%) imposed by the Trump administration —justified, according to Washington, by the Chinese authorities' inaction in taking adequate measures to curb the introduction of opioid products such as fentanyl into the United States (see Emmanuel Véron's article in our March issue)—Asian countries have so far been relatively spared from the retaliatory threats, akin to blackmail, issued in all directions by the 47th President of the United States. [1]

However, it is not impossible that the businessman-president may also turn against other Asian countries, primarily Vietnam, Taiwan, and Thailand, which generate the largest trade surpluses through their exports (measured as a percentage of their GDP) to the United States.[2]

For now, Donald Trump seems to be prioritizing China, his greatest rival, by further advancing the decoupling from the world's second-largest economy. He has thus shifted into high gear by targeting investments that benefit Beijing in its quest to impose, by the still-distant horizon of 2049—the 100th anniversary of the founding of the PRC—its global supremacy, replacing the current dominance of the United States. This is evidenced by the America First Investment Memorandum issued on

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February 21, 2025, by the President of the United States to all relevant departments of the U.S. administration. Some of its provisions could affect American or even foreign investors who "fail to distance themselves from China's predatory investment and technology acquisition practices." In this document, China—along with the Special Administrative Regions of Hong Kong and Macau—is classified as a "foreign adversary," on par with Cuba, Iran, North Korea, the Russian Federation, and Venezuela.[3]

Among the targeted sectors are Chinese investments in semiconductors, artificial intelligence, quantum computing, biotechnology, hypersonics, aerospace, and directed energy (such as lasers and microwaves). Clearly, the focus is on China's military-industrial complex, which has achieved spectacular advancements in recent decades.

Likewise, Donald Trump aims to restrict, on U.S. soil, investments from "persons affiliated with the People's Republic of China" in key sectors such as technology, critical infrastructure, healthcare, agriculture, energy, raw materials, and "other strategic industries."

The American president may not stop there. As indicated in the memorandum, he could suspend or terminate the 1984 bilateral agreement (which France also signed with the PRC at the same time) designed to avoid double taxation and prevent tax evasion on income taxes. He argues that this agreement—alongside China's admission to the WTO and the U.S. commitment to grant Beijing unconditional most-favored-nation status for its goods and services—has led to the deindustrialization of the United States and the technological modernization of the Chinese military.

Once again, the looming threat of China's technological and military catch-up—or even surpassing—the United States is at the forefront of American strategic thinking. Even if Beijing remains unfazed, the American measures against it come at a difficult time. China has struggled to restart its economy since the COVID-19 pandemic, burdened by a major real estate crisis, sluggish consumer spending, and persistently high unemployment—not only among young people but also among middle-aged workers, particularly those in

their 40s and 50s employed by foreign companies, including American firms, in China.

The American president did not hesitate to press where it hurts, using the pretext of COVID-19—"which came from Wuhan, China"—to justify his January 20, 2025, decision to withdraw the United States from the WHO. In his view, the organization was guilty of mishandling the pandemic. Meanwhile, the approximately 110,000 Burmese refugees living in a dozen camps along the Thai border will suffer from the Trump administration's decision to freeze foreign aid for three months. With a population of 57 million, Myanmar was, until recent years, the largest recipient of USAID contributions in Asia (USD 238 million in 2024, including USD 114 million allocated to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs' "2024 Humanitarian Response Plan").[4]

As for the United States' Asian allies—Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, and the Philippines—whose security against China's growing power depends on Washington, they now question America's reliability in defending their geopolitical and strategic interests. This uncertainty has been heightened by Donald Trump's reversal on Ukraine and the tense international context, which also affects their region due to the renewed trade war between the Trump administration and China—an escalation that is bound to impact them.

Although India is a Quad (Quadrilateral Security Dialogue) partner, its high tariffs—among the highest in the world—have led to its explicit designation as engaging in "unfair trade practices" in the presidential decree of February 13, 2025, alongside Brazil and the European Union. However, no retaliatory measures have been announced against India at this stage.[5]

A mere coincidence in timing? Just two weeks after the decree's publication, Delhi hosted European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and the EU College of Commissioners for "in-depth discussions" aimed at "further strengthening" their strategic partnership. This meeting was notably highlighted—perhaps intentionally—by Indian Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar on Elon Musk's platform, X. At the same time, both parties expressed their intention to accelerate



negotiations for a free trade agreement by the end of the year. A way for Brussels and New Delhi to give the American businessman-president a taste of his own medicine?

As for the United States' most important ally in the region—Tokyo—the Japanese capital, which, along with Taiwan, is the most threatened by Chinese expansionism, has so far adopted a stance of measured caution, though not without apprehension. When asked in the Lower House about the altercation at the White House between Trump/Vance and President Volodymyr Zelensky, Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba stated that his government had no intention of taking sides.

For the new head of government—known for his expertise in defense but politically vulnerable within his own party, the LDP (Liberal Democratic Party)—the priority was to maintain unity within the G7 (from which Moscow was excluded in the G7 + 1 format and later the G8 following its annexation of Crimea in 2014). Meanwhile, Foreign Minister Takeshi Iwaya (who served as Defense Minister from 2018 to 2019) declined to comment on the suspension of U.S. aid to Ukraine (which has since been reinstated), justifying his silence with a diplomatic statement that was anything but courageous: "the fluidity of the situation"... [6]

Following President-elect Yoon Suk Yeol's rapidly aborted declaration of martial law, which led to his arrest and subsequent conditional release (on April 4, the Constitutional Court unanimously validated the impeachment motion passed by the National Assembly in December 2024, effectively removing the South Korean president from office and calling for an early presidential election within sixty days) —South Korea's interim president urged government ministers on March 7 to continue working with the United States "to avoid any negative impact" on scientific, technological, and energy cooperation.

This plea came after the U.S. State Department designated its ally as a "sensitive" country. Donald Trump's shift in stance toward U.S. allies has thrown Seoul into political turmoil, even prompting discussions about developing its own nuclear weapons capabilities in response to the growing threat from its North Korean

neighbor—the only true ally of Beijing, which has also strengthened ties with Moscow by sending troops to fight alongside the Russians in Ukraine in exchange for technological assistance in advancing its nuclear-capable ballistic missile programs.

Regarding Taiwan, its democratically elected president, William Lai (Ching-te), has promised—under considerable pressure—that his country will "expand its investments and purchases in the United States to encourage a trade balance between the two nations," following threats of potential U.S. tariffs on the island's high-performance semiconductor exports. However, this commitment is far from feasible, as the president's Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) currently lacks a majority in Taiwan's Legislative Yuan.

An even more alarming prospect now looms for frontline allies like the Philippines: the rise of isolationist figures in the U.S. who openly advocate for a new strategic understanding—or even a "grand bargain"—with Beijing. Trump himself has repeatedly extended a hand to his (theoretical) main adversaries—Moscow, Beijing, and Pyongyang—and has openly entertained the idea of a potential "G2" partnership with China. As a result, Manila is anticipating shifts in the internal dynamics of its alliance with Washington. Trump's transactional approach could lead to negotiations on burden-sharing, particularly concerning the security guarantees and defense capabilities of the archipelago.

It is worth recalling that, in an unprecedented move, Trump invited Xi Jinping to his inauguration (though the Chinese president delegated Vice President Han Zheng in his place) while simultaneously lifting the ban on the TikTok app, despite strong opposition from his Republican allies. Just hours before returning to the White House, he took to his friend Elon Musk's social media platform to write: "I hope we will solve many issues together with China, and do so immediately.

We discussed trade balance, fentanyl, TikTok (China's Douyin equivalent), and many other topics." He then added regarding his pre-inauguration phone call: "President Xi and I will do everything in our power to make the world more peaceful



and secure."

That should put America's Western and Asian allies at ease... so to speak.

[1] On April 2, 2025, US President Donald Trump announced a 34% increase in tariffs on Chinese products imported into the United States. This was in addition to the 20% already in force, bringing the total tariff increase imposed on China to 54%, close to the 60% he had announced even before his return to the White House. China responded on April 4 with a 34% tariff increase on American products.

[2] Voir Patturaja Murugaboopaathy, Gauva Dogra, « Asian countries in the crosshairs of Trump's tariffs », Reuters, March 7, 2025, <https://www.reuters.com/markets/asia/asian-countries-cross-hairs-trump-tariffs-2025-03-06/>

[3] <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/02/america-first-investment-policy/>

[4] However, this American contribution is less than the total aid provided by the European Union and other European countries (United Kingdom).

[5] <https://www.whitehouse.gov/fact-sheets/2025/02/fact-sheet-president-donald-j-trump-announces-fair-and-reciprocal-plan-on-trade/>

[6] See the article by Le Monde's Tokyo correspondent Philippe Pons, published on March 5, 2025, "En Asie du Nord-Est, les alliés des États-Unis sur le qui-vive".



Jean-Raphaël Peytregnet

A career diplomat after devoting himself to Sinology in France, Jean-Raphaël Peytregnet has, among other things, served as Consul General of France in Guangzhou (2007-2011) and Beijing (2014-2018), as well as in Mumbai/Bombay from 2011 to 2014. He was head of Asia at the Centre d'Analyse, de Prospective et de Stratégie (CAPS) attached to the cabinet of the Minister of Europe and Foreign Affairs (2018-2021) then Special Advisor to the Director of Asia-Oceania (2021-2023).



Interview Nouveaux Regards

Katia Buffetrille, Ethnologist, Tibetologist, Research engineer

Interview by Jean-Raphaël Peytregnet

Jean-Raphaël Peytregnet: As an ethnologist and Tibetologist, you specialize in both ancient and modern Tibetan culture. What is the current situation of this "Tibet Autonomous Region" (TAR), as it was administratively delineated by Beijing, similar to Ningxia, Inner Mongolia, Xinjiang Uyghur, and Guangxi Zhuang?

Katia Buffetrille: The Tibet Autonomous Region, established in 1965, has nothing "autonomous" about it, as it is entirely dependent on funding and decisions from the central government. Since Xi Jinping came to power in 2012, the Chinese Communist Party's control over Tibet has significantly increased, especially in this region.

The appointment of Chen Quanguo, a former military officer, as the TAR Party Secretary from 2011 to 2016, played a major role. He implemented a highly effective and intrusive surveillance system, which has only strengthened over the years with technological advancements.

Added to this is the ever-growing number of Han migrants in the TAR, which is one of the key factors of the ongoing Sinicization of Tibet. During my last visit to Lhasa in 2024, I was struck by the considerable increase in the Han ethnic population compared to what I had seen in 2017, as well as the Sinicization of public spaces: Chinese flags on all houses and buildings, whether religious or not, along the roads, and the 2019 installation of Chinese-style pavilions on the steles erected in front of the Jokhang Temple in Lhasa. One of these steles, dating from 821/822, bears the peace treaty between the Tibetan Empire (7th–9th century) and the Tang Empire. Religious sites are also being desacralized,

for instance, with the installation of a KFC (Kentucky Fried Chicken) and a Pizza Hut along the Barkhor, the circumambulation path surrounding the Jokhang Temple, the most sacred temple in Tibet. Religious symbols are being repurposed for decorative and touristic purposes, such as prayer wheels in train stations or other inappropriate places, and stupas along roads.

What is the origin of the word "Tibet"? How do Tibetans themselves refer to their ancestral land?

Tibetans call their country Bö (Bod). The name Tibet appears to have been borrowed from Persian (Tibbat, Tibit, Tibbet) or Mongolian (Töböt). These Persian forms are believed to be based on the Arabic Tubbat, which appears in texts as early as the 9th century, itself possibly derived from the Sogdian Topet. The name Tibet appears in writings from the 11th–13th centuries, including those of John of Plano Carpini (1180–1252), William of Rubruck (1215–1295), and Marco Polo (1254–1324). Tracing further back, we find Töpüt in Turkic inscriptions from the 8th century.

Some scholars, such as Louis Bazin and James Hamilton, believe these various names are linked to the Turkic-Mongolic word töpä, meaning "summit, height." They argue that the name spread through the Tuyuhun, a people of the Turkic-Mongolic linguistic group who lived between the 4th and 7th centuries at the crossroads of Chinese, Turkic, and Tibetan worlds. Contemporary Chinese writers use the term Tubo.

Surprisingly, this term was used at the Guimet Museum in the context of an



exhibition on "Tang Dynasty China." During the Tang era, the Chinese referred to Tibet as Tufan, a term that modern pronunciation might render as Tubo. However, this claim was refuted as early as 1915 by the renowned sinologist Paul Pelliot (1878–1945). This designation, still used in the People's Republic of China when referring to the Tibetan Empire, allows Beijing to dissociate present-day Tibetans from their prestigious imperial past.

In 2024, the Guimet Museum demonstrated its willingness to comply with China's dictates by renaming its exhibition rooms from "Tibet–Nepal" to the vague term "Himalayan World," a designation no serious scholar would use for Tibet. This conveniently avoids the term Tibet, which is despised by Chinese authorities as it refers to a country and a people culturally, linguistically, and religiously distinct from the Han, the majority ethnic group (92%) in the People's Republic of China.

Just as the Chinese authorities pressured Bertrand Guillet, director of the Nantes Museum, to avoid using the terms "Genghis Khan, empire, and Mongol" in an exhibition on Genghis Khan in exchange for the loan of artifacts, one might assume similar demands were made to the Guimet Museum. However, while the Guimet Museum erased the word Tibet precisely as the commemoration of the 60th anniversary of Franco–Chinese relations began—marked by four exhibitions on China with artifact loans—the Nantes Museum chose to forgo collaboration with China to uphold the institution's "human, scientific, and ethical values."

Nonetheless, in 2024, a magnificent exhibition titled "Genghis Khan and the Birth of the Mongol Empire" was successfully held at the Nantes Museum, featuring artifacts from Mongolia's national collections, major European museums, and private collections. The use of Tubo in the Tang exhibition is a way to avoid mentioning the Tibetan Empire. The absence of any maps further contributes to this confusion. Everything in the exhibition seems designed to obscure the fact that the Tibetan Empire rivaled the Tang Empire in power and that the latter sought to maintain good relations through gifts and matrimonial alliances.

The term Tubo is unknown to the general public and only familiar to specialists. This allows it to be used in the exhibition to designate a people, an era, a style, or a culture. As a result, some labels read: "Tang Dynasty,

Tubo period," leading visitors to believe that Tubo refers to a specific period within the Tang Dynasty. The goal is to make visitors think that these "Tubo" were under Tang rule. The same process is used regarding Eastern Turkestan to create the illusion that the Uyghurs were also under Tang control, which is historically false. This is what rewriting history to fit the new Chinese narrative looks like.

The Chinese term for the Tibet Autonomous Region is Xizang. It appears in Chinese sources under the Manchu Qing Dynasty (1644–1912). Tibetans never use this term when speaking Tibetan. In 2023, Chinese researchers demanded its use during a conference in Beijing. Since then, all Chinese academic publications in Western languages have adopted it, and China is attempting to impose it internationally as well.

What should be understood by "historical Tibet" or "Greater Tibet," terms to which the Tibetan people seem deeply attached?

For Tibetans, Tibet consists of three provinces: Ütsang (Central Tibet), Kham (Eastern Tibet), and Amdo (Northeastern Tibet). From 1642 until the Lhasa Uprising in 1959, the government of the Dalai Lamas, known as Ganden Phodrang, ruled over a territory roughly corresponding to today's Tibet Autonomous Region. The regions of Kham and Amdo traditionally had various political structures, including kingdoms and chiefdoms under the authority of religious or secular rulers. However, all looked to Lhasa, where the Dalai Lama resided, as expressed in a famous saying: "Not going on a pilgrimage to Lhasa is to be only half human."

This vast territory, covering 2,500,000 km²—one-quarter of the People's Republic of China—had a low population density of about six million Tibetans. While local identities were strong, Buddhism, a distinct culture, a common written scholarly language, a shared mythology, and a common history gave the population of the immense Tibetan plateau a sense of belonging to a collective entity with numerous shared identity markers. It is true that the Manchu Qing Dynasty gradually established a form of protectorate over the Dalai Lama's government during the 18th century, exerting varying degrees of control depending on the period.

However, the Tibetan government remained in place, and the country's leaders were, for the most part, Tibetan.

In 1979, Deng Xiaoping invited Gyalo Thondup, the second eldest brother of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, to Beijing. On that occasion, he stated that, apart from Tibet's independence, all other issues concerning the region could be discussed and resolved. Deng proposed that the Dalai Lama send investigative delegations to Tibet to observe the living conditions of Tibetans. On March 14, 1980, the first Tibet Work Forum was held in Beijing, organized by the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the CCP and chaired by its then-General Secretary, Hu Yaobang. The following month, the first Tibetan delegation conducted an inspection tour in Tibet. Four more fact-finding missions followed between 1979 and 1985, along with two negotiation delegations (July 1980 and October 1984) led by Lobsang Samten, another elder brother of the Dalai Lama, in Beijing. After this period, a communication channel between Dharamsala and Beijing was maintained, but it seems that dialogue between the Chinese and Tibetan authorities has been at a standstill since 2010. What are the obstacles preventing these discussions from progressing, both on the Chinese and Tibetan sides?

The main issue in the discussions is that the Chinese only want to talk about the status of the Dalai Lama. In 1988, the Tibetan leader announced in a speech to the European Parliament in Strasbourg that he was renouncing Tibetan independence in favor of genuine autonomy for all Tibetan areas within the People's Republic of China, under the framework of the Chinese constitution. This demand now seems entirely unrealistic in the context of the current policies led by President Xi Jinping. It is true that some members of the Tibetan administration have stated that communication channels still exist today, but nothing has been officially disclosed regarding the content of any potential discussions.

Since 2014, Beijing has been implementing an assimilationist policy theorized by certain researchers. According to them, China's future lies in a single "Chinese nation" (zhonghua minzu), where the laws would be identical for all—Han and non-Han alike—eliminating the system of autonomy granted to non-Han regions and removing any mention of "nationalities" (minzu) from identity documents. They envision a fully Chinese China, where Han and non-Han would form a single Chinese nation.

His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso, is approaching the venerable age of 90 (he was born on July 6, 1935, in a village located in the

province of Qinghai, formerly Tibetan Amdo). The question of his succession arises, even though he has predicted at least twice that he will live to the age of 113, a wish one can only hope for him. How does he envision his succession after renouncing his temporal authority in 2011 in favor of the Tibetan government-in-exile, based in Dharamsala, in the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh, while retaining only his spiritual authority?

The Dalai Lama has indeed stated several times that he will live to 110 or 113 years old. According to some researchers, this could be his way of telling the Chinese authorities: I am the one you must negotiate with. He has also repeatedly stated that when he reaches 90, he will announce whether and where he will reincarnate. However, he has just written a book in which he clearly states that his reincarnation will be born in the free world, meaning outside of China and occupied Tibet. It is often difficult for Westerners to understand the importance of the Tibetan leader for his people. For Tibetans, the Dalai Lama is the emanation of Avalokiteshvara, the bodhisattva protector of Tibet.

It is highly likely that the Chinese authorities fear unrest when the Dalai Lama passes away. One might wonder whether the deployment of Han officials across towns and villages is intended to prevent uprisings at that time.

I have no doubt that the Chinese authorities will appoint their own Dalai Lama, just as they did for the Panchen Lama (the second-highest spiritual leader in Tibetan Buddhism). This has been announced multiple times, and the Chinese authorities are already working to convince foreign countries to accept their choice.



Katia Buffetrille

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Analysis

Northeast Asia Awaits Trump

By Yo-Jung CHEN

Northeast Asia—comprising China, Japan, the two Koreas, Taiwan, and, more distantly, Russia’s Far East—is a region that, to varying degrees, shares the influence of Chinese culture. Despite this cultural commonality, it remains deeply divided to this day by the bitter memories of World War II and the rivalries of the Cold War. At the same time, it is united by remarkable economic and technological growth, making it, along with Southeast Asia, the “new center of the world.”

Sustained by a significant U.S. military presence against the region’s authoritarian communist states (China, North Korea), lingering ideological and nationalist antagonisms have prevented Northeast Asia from moving beyond Cold War-era mentalities to achieve regional integration akin to that of the EU or ASEAN.

Politically, Northeast Asia remains deeply divided along a classic East-West fault line. On one side, the alliance of autocratic regimes—China, North Korea, and Russia—faces off against America’s democratic allies: Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan. Despite this enduring politico-military rivalry, both blocs—North Korea being the exception—are part of an intricate web of economic interdependencies centered around the increasingly dominant “Middle Kingdom” (Zhongguo).

Today, Northeast Asia anxiously awaits the potential upheaval of its geopolitical and geoeconomic order with Donald Trump’s return to the White House. This time, he appears even more erratic, impulsive, and uncompromising than during his first term in 2016. The concern is heightened by signals from the new U.S. administration that its geostrategic priority is shifting away from the “Old Continent” to Asia, with a particular focus on the People’s Republic of China, Washington’s greatest rival.

The region’s collective unease stems largely from a particular trait of Donald Trump and certain members of his new administration: while he has designated Asia as the focal point of his foreign policy, the 47th U.S. president displays a troubling ignorance of the region’s complexities. This concern is reinforced by incidents such as his Secretary of Defense, Pete Hegseth, being

unable to name a single ASEAN member state. Another telling example is Trump’s indignation over what he perceives as an unfair disadvantage” for America under the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty, which obligates the U.S. to defend Japan but does not require Japan to reciprocate in the event of an attack on America. In expressing this grievance, Trump fails to recognize that it was the U.S. itself that imposed this treaty on Japan in the 1950s as part of its strategy to contain communism in Asia.

A challenge to this treaty by the very nation that crafted it could upend the foundation of Japan’s national security since the end of the Pacific War. Furthermore, Trump’s threats to withdraw U.S. troops from Japan and South Korea further illustrate his lack of understanding—ignoring the fact that it was America itself that insisted on stationing these forces in Asia during the Cold War. He seems unaware that these U.S. military deployments serve his own country’s strategic interests more than those of the host nations !

Economically, no country in this region will escape the all-out trade war into which Trump-II has plunged, and each will have to find its own way to navigate it based on the state and nature of its relationship with America. Strategically, allies and non-allies of Washington alike are holding their breath in anticipation of the inevitable upheavals in the regional geopolitical landscape. With Trump-II, and given his open disdain for European allies and Ukraine, no one can count anymore on shared values or long-standing friendships and alliances with Washington. From now on, transactional deal-making, the hallmark of the new White House occupant, will dominate all of America’s relations with the rest of the world.



Even before Trump's return, the entire Asian region—whether allied with America or not—was already growing increasingly doubtful about the reliability of the “Pax Americana.” The comeback of an isolationist, transactional U.S. president who alienates his European allies only reinforces the foreboding felt by Asian allies such as Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan regarding America's commitment to their defense. Few believe that Trump would risk open war with a powerful China to defend Asian allies who, as he sees it, “don't even pay their share for U.S. protection.”

Taiwan's fate is the region's top strategic concern. Watching how Trump treats his European allies and Ukraine—while openly admiring a dictator like Putin—many in the region are convinced that the businessman in the Oval Office would not hesitate to “abandon” Taiwan in exchange for a favorable concession from the other dictator in Beijing. Such a scenario would have catastrophic strategic repercussions not only for other U.S. allies in Asia (Japan, South Korea, the Philippines...) but also for America itself.

Trump-II's uninhibited stance toward the Russian dictator in Europe over the Ukrainian issue has led observers in Asia to no longer rule out the possibility of him behaving the same way toward the region's two other strongmen: Xi Jinping and Kim Jong-Un. Depending on the extent of the concessions Trump might be willing to make to them, Tokyo and Seoul (and perhaps even Taiwan) could be tempted to embark on a path that has long been considered taboo—the acquisition of their own nuclear weapons to counter the nuclear-armed states in their vicinity, without relying on America. Northeast Asia would then find itself caught in a dangerous spiral of nuclear arms buildup.

Northeast Asia: Each Has Its Own Concerns with Trump

- **China**

As it continues its rise, China inspires both envy and apprehension—not only due to its immense economic potential but also because of its increasingly assertive military posture, which it does not hesitate to display toward its neighbors and Western adversaries. Emerging from the “century of humiliation” inflicted by Western occupation, Xi Jinping's China is demanding, in its own way, the same respect that the world once bestowed upon Han China (the Ming Empire) before the Qing

dynasty (1644–1911).

As the region's accelerating economic activity revolves around this new empire, the rise of the Chinese giant presents a security threat both to its neighbors (Japan, Taiwan, North Korea, and Southeast Asian countries), with whom territorial disputes persist, and to the United States, whose dominance over the Pacific is increasingly challenged.

For now, China's sweeping territorial claims over the entire South China Sea are heightening tensions with neighboring countries (Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia), the United States, and its Western allies.

In response to these illegitimate claims—rejected in 2016 by the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) in The Hague—the navies of the United States, France, Germany, the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, and Japan regularly conduct “freedom of navigation” operations in the region's international waters to prevent China from turning them into its own private domain.

Adding to the tensions is the Sino-Japanese dispute over the Senkaku Islands (called Diaoyutai by the Chinese), which were placed under Japan's administration by the United States at the end of World War II—a decision contested by China and, in a less vocal manner, by Taiwan. The frequent incursions of Chinese coast guard vessels into the territorial waters of these uninhabited islands pose a constant threat to Tokyo.

China's very real and imminent threat to Taiwan also looms large, with Beijing not ruling out the use of force to “unify” (in reality, annex) this democratic territory. Although Taiwan has always been autonomous (without being *de jure* independent) and has never been governed by the People's Republic of China since its founding in 1949, Beijing continues to consider it part of its territory.

On a larger scale, China's expanding maritime ambitions are increasingly challenging America's strategic dominance in the Pacific. For now, China's naval capabilities—comprising two, soon to be three, aircraft carriers and nuclear attack submarines—remain geographically constrained, as its forces must navigate through the first “island chain” formed by Japan's Okinawa and Taiwan to reach the open Pacific. However, Beijing is already laying the groundwork for broader access by securing port agreements



with Pacific island nations in exchange for generous economic cooperation. Recently, Australia and New Zealand—America's two key allies in the Pacific—were caught off guard when three Chinese warships, without prior warning, conducted a live-fire exercise in the Tasman Sea, the body of water separating the two countries.

The timing couldn't be worse for Beijing, which is currently experiencing a dramatic slowdown in economic growth. At its latest annual National People's Congress in early March, China set an "official" growth target of a rather modest 5%, without much confidence in its ability to achieve it (though the CCP can always ensure that it does). The first tariff-related punitive measures signed by Trump have already triggered the beginnings of an exodus of foreign businesses established in China, primarily American ones, for whom the business environment had already significantly worsened in the current unfavorable political and economic climate, making China look less and less like an economic paradise.

With the prospect of further tariff sanctions from Washington, China is digging in and asserting its determination to respond tit for tat by targeting American products. Strategically, ahead of the upcoming U.S.-China summit in June, it remains unclear what Trump specifically plans to do against China or Asia more broadly. His stance on the sensitive Taiwan issue, for instance, shifts chaotically on a daily basis, raising concerns about a worrying lack of understanding. He is, however, justifiably outraged by the massive trade imbalance favoring Beijing.

He also laments China's growing global presence, particularly at both ends of the Panama Canal (whose ports have since been bought back by Washington) and in Greenland, which he describes as annexation projects (alongside Canada!). Additionally, he accuses China of flooding the U.S. with fentanyl, a highly addictive and lethal opioid.

Despite these tensions, China appears somewhat optimistic about its ability to engage in constructive dialogue with its American rival. Given its struggling economy, Beijing currently seeks to avoid direct confrontation with the U.S. Furthermore, having closely observed

Trump's personality since his first term—particularly his affinity for autocrats—Xi appears confident that he can negotiate a "win-win" deal with the self-proclaimed "deal-making genius" on key issues affecting both superpowers.

China has much to gain from such dialogue, especially if it manages to pique the U.S. president's interest in its major global initiatives, such as the Belt and Road Initiative or the proposal it once made (unsuccessfully) under Barack Obama for an equal division of the Pacific Ocean between the two superpowers.

- **Japan**

As America's closest ally in Asia, Japan—once the world's second-largest economy—has lost much of its past economic prestige over the past decade, facing stiff competition from China and other emerging powers like South Korea and Taiwan.

Due to its mishandling of historical grievances from a war it initiated nearly a century ago, as well as ongoing territorial disputes with all its neighbors without exception, Japan remains largely unpopular across Northeast Asia. Beyond ideological tensions, China continues to accuse Japan of refusing to acknowledge its wartime crimes from over 80 years ago—an accusation shared by South Korea, a former Japanese colony, despite being a strategic ally of both Tokyo and Washington. Meanwhile, North Korea, with its uncontrolled and rapid development of ballistic missiles and nuclear weapons, poses an urgent threat to both Tokyo and Seoul, alongside China.

Russia, a close ally of both Beijing and Pyongyang, refuses to return the four Kuril Islands north of Hokkaido, which the Soviet Union seized after Japan's defeat in 1945—leaving the official end of hostilities between the two nations unresolved. The only country in the region that remains genuinely pro-Japanese is Taiwan, which itself is under constant threat of annexation by China. Under the protective umbrella of the U.S. nuclear deterrent since the end of World War II, Japan, in return, hosts over 70 American military bases and 50,000 U.S. troops across its territory under the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty—effectively making the U.S. military the real power in the country.

Against this backdrop, Tokyo's primary concern regarding a second Trump



administration is his broad threats of additional tariffs against global trading partners. Given Japan's heavy economic dependence on the U.S., it is scrambling to secure "special treatment" from the new American president. Unlike other countries, Japan does not even consider retaliating in kind in this trade war. Instead, it has been unsuccessfully trying to persuade Trump's team to recognize his personal friendship with the late Abe Shinzo, the former prime minister assassinated in 2022, as well as Japan's massive past and future investment commitments in the U.S., in hopes of obtaining the preferential treatment it so desperately seeks.

It is true that the new occupant of the White House often makes "friendly" remarks about Japan and received the current Prime Minister, Ishiba, as soon as he took office (right after Benjamin Netanyahu). However, this apparent friendly attitude did not prevent Mr. Trump from taking offense at the enormous trade deficit his country has with Japan and crying foul upon discovering a so-called imbalance to the detriment of the U.S. in the provisions of the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty (see above). These positions taken by Mr. Trump were enough to convince Tokyo that it would inevitably have to "pay" more to satisfy the businessman-president. The Japanese capital has resigned itself to paying additional tariffs imposed by Mr. Trump, particularly on its car and steel exports. For example, tariffs on its car exports to the U.S. will increase from 2.5% to 25%.

Furthermore, with its national security entirely reliant on the U.S.-Japan security framework, and despite its "pacifist Constitution," Tokyo, under sustained American pressure (it is never a question, in Tokyo's mindset, of resisting America's wishes!), has resigned itself to significantly increasing its defense budget. Initially set to rise to 2% of its GDP by 2027, it is now expected to reach 3% in the long run, according to statements from Elbridge Colby, the new Deputy Secretary of Defense. Japan will also have to pay more for the upkeep of U.S. forces stationed on its soil.

- **South Korea**

Facing the constant threat from its northern neighbor since the armistice that (provisionally?) ended the Korean War, Seoul is the second most important U.S. ally

in the region after Japan. A prosperous and highly industrialized democracy, it heavily depends on the more than 30,000 U.S. troops stationed on its soil to maintain a fragile peace against Pyongyang.

Economically, this rising industrial power seems resigned to bearing the full brunt of additional American tariffs. The country is currently paralyzed diplomatically due to the severe political crisis it is undergoing, with its head of state impeached, arrested, and indicted for declaring martial law in December 2024. The ensuing political paralysis prevents Seoul from taking the necessary initiatives with Washington to secure preferential treatment.

That being said, the strategic importance of this country—facing what is arguably the most dangerous authoritarian state in the world—does not allow America, even under an unpredictable and isolationist president, to ignore it. Trump has previously threatened to withdraw U.S. troops unless Seoul paid more for their upkeep in the peninsula. Anticipating the American demand, Seoul has already increased its contribution by 8.3% between 2026 and 2030 (reaching \$1.3 billion per year).

Beyond Trump's renewed pressure on South Korea to increase its defense spending, South Koreans also have reason to worry about the well-known personal friendship between Mr. Trump and Kim Jong-Un, who met several times during his first term. Given Donald Trump's unpredictable nature, Seoul cannot rule out the possibility of being betrayed by the U.S. in the wake of a Trump-Kim deal.

Growing uncertainty over the reliability of its American ally appears to have reignited debate in Seoul over the need for greater national defense autonomy. This debate includes the possibility of South Korea acquiring nuclear weapons to protect itself from North Korea, which Donald Trump (perhaps inadvertently!) already recognized as a "nuclear power." Such a move has always been categorically rejected by the U.S. due to non-proliferation concerns. However, America is no longer what it once was, and it is uncertain whether its new leader even understands the meaning of non-proliferation.

Some experts, based on statements made by Mr. Colby during his Senate confirmation hearing, suspect that the new administration in Washington might be considering pushing



Seoul to take charge of its own national security—allowing U.S. forces stationed in South Korea to be redirected toward a potential conflict with China in the event of an attack on Taiwan.

- **Taiwan**

As described in *Japan Trapped Between China and Taiwan* (see the January 2025 issue of *Nouveaux Regards sur l'Asie*), the island—Asia's first democracy and a prosperous nation—remains at the center of strategic concerns in this part of the world. Constantly under the threat of forced annexation by China and excluded from the international community due to Beijing's pressure, Taiwan owes its survival to the United States' determination to protect it.

Taiwan's fate has major implications for the overall security of the region. If the U.S. were to abandon the island following a deal between Xi Jinping and Donald Trump—similar to the approach Trump seems to be taking with Ukraine—it would completely undermine the credibility of America's alliances in the region. Such a total loss of trust in the U.S. would inevitably push Tokyo and Seoul (and perhaps Taiwan itself?) into an arms race, potentially leading them to develop nuclear weapons, given their technological capabilities.

This scenario would significantly heighten tensions with nuclear-armed China and North Korea, turning the region into a dangerous powder keg.

Another, less confrontational yet equally damaging scenario for U.S. hegemony in the region is also possible: Taiwan's potential loss would mean that China gains control over the vital supply routes for raw materials (oil, gas, etc.) from the Middle East, which pass near the island. As a result, Japan and South Korea—both U.S. allies—would find themselves increasingly pressured by Beijing's demands and could eventually drift into China's sphere of influence.

The entire region is holding its breath, waiting to see how the businessman in the Oval Office will handle the sensitive Taiwan issue. His well-documented respect for President Xi, along with his tendency to prioritize economic interests over democratic values—as seen in his dealings with European allies—raises concerns. For now, Trump remains ambiguous about

his stance on Taiwan. At times, he dismisses the idea of risking war with China to defend an island that "hasn't even paid for its protection." At other times, he threatens to impose 200% tariffs on China if it attempts to take control of Taiwan.

In February, Trump launched a scathing attack on Taiwan, accusing it of having "stolen" the U.S. semiconductor industry. In reality, Taiwan—through its company TSMC—is the world's leading supplier of advanced microchips, a strategic advantage for its national security. The sudden accusation from the most powerful man in the world sparked outrage in Taipei and prompted TSMC to announce a \$100 billion investment in Arizona to avoid alienating Trump. The announcement pleased the former president, though he couldn't resist adding a comment that suggested a more troubling subtext—or perhaps just another of his signature offhand remarks: "Now that TSMC's cutting-edge technology is coming to us, we no longer need to worry about Taiwan's fate!"

Fortunately for Taipei, despite the uncertainty surrounding Trump's intentions, the new U.S. administration appears to continue operating under the framework of Taiwan's defense, in line with the legally binding Taiwan Relations Act (TRA). However, Taiwan is expected to significantly increase its defense budget—potentially up to 10% of its GDP, as suggested by the newly appointed Deputy Secretary of Defense. The island will also need to make large-scale purchases of American weaponry to placate Trump's grievances over the trade imbalance.

Some experts, based on statements made by Elbridge Colby during his Senate confirmation hearing, suspect that Washington's new leadership may be considering encouraging Seoul to take full responsibility for its own national security—potentially freeing up U.S. forces stationed in Korea to focus on a future conflict with China over Taiwan.

- **North Korea**

A pariah state, North Korea is continuously condemned by UN resolutions and subjected to international sanctions due to its relentless pursuit of nuclear weapons and increasingly powerful ballistic missiles.

Under the leadership of KIM Jong-Un, this frenzied arms race has left its population starving and alarmed its neighbors,

particularly Seoul and Tokyo. Even Beijing, North Korea's only real ally, has grown uneasy over Pyongyang's recent rapprochement with Moscow. The deployment of North Korean troops alongside Russian forces in the war against Ukraine has been met with Russian support for Pyongyang's ballistic missile development, further destabilizing the region.

Based on its past actions—nuclear tests and intercontinental missile launches—one might suspect that the North Korean dictator's ultimate goal is to gain recognition from Washington as a "nuclear power," putting him on par with other nuclear-armed nations. His three meetings with Trump—I—June 2018 in Singapore, February 2019 in Hanoi, and June 2019 in Panmunjom—did not yield this recognition, nor did they lead to any lasting agreements. However, Trump, seemingly unaware of the significance of his words, referred to North Korea as a "nuclear power" this past February—an acknowledgment that the international community, especially the U.S., has deliberately avoided until now.

By doing so, he granted Kim Jong-Un the validation he had been seeking for years. It is entirely possible that Trump-II, who frequently boasts about his friendly relationship with Kim, will continue on this path of détente with Pyongyang. If that happens, a deeply concerning question for America's traditional allies in Asia is whether the U.S. president would push this policy to the detriment of his country's interests in South Korea, potentially even reducing the American military presence in the region.

Such a scenario would plunge Northeast Asia into unprecedented strategic uncertainty.



Yo-Jung CHEN

Born in 1947 in Taiwan, CHEN Yo-Jung grew up in Vietnam and Hong Kong. He pursued higher education in Japan before serving for 23 years at the French Embassy in Tokyo as a press attaché and translator-interpreter. Naturalized as a French citizen in 1981, Chen Yo-Jung became a permanent civil servant at the Quai d'Orsay in 1994. He served as deputy consul/press advisor at several French diplomatic and consular posts, including in Tokyo, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Singapore, and Beijing, before retiring in Japan in 2012.



Analysis

Where is Thailand headed?

By Yves Carmona

The author of these lines would be hard-pressed to find an article on Thailand in any of his articles: they all focus on a more general framework, ASEAN or otherwise. It's true that daily life is covered, but here we try to adopt a more general point of view without writing at the length of a book, of which there are many on the "Land of the Thais".

Thailand is primarily known as a tourist destination: stunning beaches, still-clear waters, a variety of landscapes and locations, and attractive young people who are highly accessible to those engaging in sex tourism.

From time to time, it also appears in the media as a shadowy hub, facilitating illicit activities, particularly along its many and not always well-controlled borders with Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia, and Malaysia. A glance at recent history shows that this kingdom served as a major logistical base for the United States during the Vietnam War (1954–1975).

It supplied American troops with stimulants to endure the horrors of war. However, after peace was restored, it managed to reconcile with its communist neighbors—Laos, Vietnam, and Cambodia—within ASEAN, founded in 1967 by Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, and the Philippines. ASEAN later expanded to include Brunei (1984), Vietnam (1995), Laos and Myanmar (1997), and finally Cambodia (1999).

Unlike its neighbors, Thailand was never colonized—something it takes pride in. A constitutional monarchy since 1932, it remains a democracy constantly under strain. Since August 16, 2024, it has been led by a young Prime Minister, Paetongtarn Shinawatra, who was 38 at the time of her election. Her aunt, Yingluck Shinawatra, had been overthrown by the military in 2014. Indeed, dynastic politics thrive across Southeast Asia. Thaksin Shinawatra, a telecommunications tycoon and former Prime Minister—also the father of the new head of government—stated during a grand gala held in his honor on August 22, 2024, that the opposition's vision of equality was "impossible in Thai society" due to the

"seniority system." His own party, he argued, seeks to "provide equal opportunities" for the less fortunate.

Even so, military coups remain common—12 since 1932, along with 7 failed attempts. The Thai military has always played a major role in the country's political landscape. A complex and unpredictable institution, the army has historically defended its own interests, alternating between alliances with the monarchy and with the lower classes, using nationalist and populist rhetoric. The most extraordinary scene in the recent history of the conflict between the military—an institution not immune to corruption—and its opponents took place in 1992. Activist Chamlong Srimuang, former governor of Bangkok (1985–1992) and a deeply pious general, was revered by 200,000 protesters. A recipient of the Ramon Magsaysay Award (Government Service category) for his integrity,^[1] he faced off against Prime Minister Suchinda Kraprayoon.

The confrontation was only temporarily resolved by the intervention of King Bhumibol Adulyadej, before whom both opponents prostrated themselves in a gesture of submission.

The current King, Rama X, who succeeded him on October 13, 2016, does not enjoy the same popularity and, as was already the case before his coronation, prefers to live in Bavaria.

Thailand is no longer a developing country. Its vibrant youth benefits from some of the region's best universities, with Bangkok's top two being Chulalongkorn and Thammasat. The country's education system is of a high standard, with a literacy rate of 93%. Schooling is compulsory for nine years, and education is free up to the age of 18. The young Prime Minister, however, is a wealthy heiress with a taste for luxury



watches, handbags, and cars.

Her leadership has drawn sharp criticism, particularly in the capital, where young men and women are determined not to be silenced and continue their relentless fight for democracy.

The diversity of the "Land of the Thais" extends beyond politics. Spanning over 500,000 km², Thailand displays significant topographical, linguistic (with more than 60 officially recognized languages), cultural, religious, and culinary variations across its provinces, stretching from north to south. Strategically positioned, the country wields considerable influence in Southeast Asia. However, being surrounded by seas makes it particularly vulnerable to climate change.

Since 2004, its southern provinces bordering Malaysia (Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat), home to the majority of the country's 5% Muslim population, have been plagued by a separatist insurgency that has claimed numerous lives. Despite these challenges, patriotism—a deep sense of pride in being Thai—remains strong.

According to the World Bank, Thailand is a development success story, having transitioned from an agriculture-based economy to a modern, industrialized, and export-driven model. Between 1960 and 1996, its average growth rate was 7.5%, dropping to 5% from 1999 to 2005. Poverty levels fell from 42.5% in 2000 to 6.3% in 2021. However, stagnation has set in since the mid-2010s, exacerbated by COVID-19, while the economic divide between urban areas and the southern and northeastern regions continues to widen. Thailand has the highest inequality rate in East Asia and the Pacific, as measured by the Gini coefficient.

Post-COVID recovery has been sluggish, with a projected growth rate of 2.4% in 2024 and 2.7% in 2025, according to Supavud Saicheua, president of the National Economic and Social Development Council. Economic forecasting remains uncertain due to global instability and the significant size—nearly half—of Thailand's informal economy. More critically, climate-related disaster mitigation will be costly. The 2011 floods caused heavy casualties and resulted in \$46 billion in damages.

That said, pollution levels have improved considerably. In the 1980s, Bangkok's air

quality was so poor that traffic police at intersections had to be rotated every 20 minutes. It was said that taxi drivers' first priority was to remove their exhaust pipes to speed up their vehicles. Today, despite severe traffic congestion, air pollution has significantly decreased.

Despite its heavy reliance on tourism, which accounts for only 8% of GDP, Thailand remains relatively resilient in times of crisis, such as during COVID-19. It boasts the second-largest GDP in ASEAN, with most of its exports directed toward the regional bloc, ahead of the European Union and China. Thailand remains vulnerable in many respects, particularly on the natural front: the 2004 tsunami caused a significant number of casualties.

It is also vulnerable in relation to its powerful neighbor: China's influence is steadily increasing. A friend living in Southeast Asia who frequently visits Bangkok recently observed:

"Chinese investments are overtaking those of the Japanese. Visually, one can see large Chinese billboards along the highway leading to the airport, especially for electric vehicles, which are replacing traditional manufacturers like Toyota and its supply chain. There are so many Chinese electric car brands on the streets that, as a non-expert, I find it difficult to recognize them all. I think it is only a matter of time before BYD replaces Toyota in this part of the world."

- In the streets of Bangkok, while the majority of cars are still Japanese, they are mostly older-generation models, likely on the verge of disappearing. The "Detroit" of Asia is becoming Chinese, as sleek and silent Chinese electric vehicles surpass their Japanese competitors.

One cannot help but compare this situation to the American automobile market in the 1970s, when U.S. automakers shifted from a dismissive attitude toward the first Japanese cars to a desperate attempt to secure a Voluntary Export Restraint (VER) agreement from the American government to limit Japanese competition.

- The key question is how legacy automakers, whether American or Japanese, can respond to the overcapacity of Chinese manufacturers, who benefit from government subsidies.



- What will happen with artificial intelligence?

The Thai automobile industry is already operating 15% below its historical peak, after having been a prime location for Japanese brand relocations.

The Thai auto market has had a challenging start in 2025, with sales dropping by 10% in the first two months compared to the same period last year.

Total vehicle sales reached approximately 97,000 units, with industry giants Toyota and Isuzu, along with electric vehicle manufacturer BYD (Buy Your Dream), all experiencing notable declines.

This slowdown is attributed to a combination of factors, including sluggish economic recovery, high household debt, and tighter credit conditions. The one-ton pickup truck segment, a key economic indicator, remains particularly weak. The Chinese industry, for its part, primarily produces for the domestic market.

Another vulnerability is the “Golden Triangle” (Thailand, Laos, and Cambodia), which has long been a lawless zone. The author of these lines recalls an organized trip where the guides urged clients to cross borders without visas. Today, dismantled criminal operations—casinos, brothels, and cybercrime networks fueled by Chinese gangs (“triads”)—quickly reappear. Behind its romanticized image, the Golden Triangle was historically a major supply point for opiates and other substances used by U.S. troops fighting a grueling war in Vietnam.

The Mekong River remains a hub for lucrative trafficking. With neighboring Myanmar and China—whose governments either exert little control over these remote areas or turn a blind eye—Thai authorities are battling “cyber-slavery.” According to the UN, around 220,000 people have been lured into forced labor for fraudulent call centers. It is no surprise that a Taiwanese newspaper recently labeled Thailand, Vietnam, Laos, Myanmar, and Cambodia as “dangerous.”

Despite Thailand’s crackdown on Burmese call centers, which has had some positive effects, the country remains vulnerable due to ongoing operations in Myanmar, Cambodia, and Laos.

In February, seven Taiwanese nationals were among 260 foreign nationals transferred from Myanmar to Thailand.

According to a Thai general, many of those coming from African countries reported being drugged before being smuggled across the porous border from Thailand’s Mae Sot district in Tak Province to Myawaddy in Myanmar, where they were forced to work in scam call centers. But were they truly forced?

The safety of 35 million foreign tourists is of vital importance to the Thai government and economy.

During a February 2025 meeting between Thai Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra and Chinese President Xi Jinping, both parties pledged to “continue security and legal cooperation” to combat fraud-related crimes.

Just ahead of this visit, Thailand announced it would cut electricity to certain border areas with Myanmar, a country engulfed in civil war, to disrupt criminal activity. However, this crackdown on fraudsters could backfire: Chinese tourists are crucial to Thailand’s tourism industry, yet their numbers are declining. By the end of 2024, only 6.7 million Chinese visitors are expected, compared to 11 million in 2019 before the COVID-19 pandemic.

This is why Thailand has recently ramped up efforts to ensure the safety of foreign tourists and launched an awareness campaign to help people avoid scams.

In conclusion: The Thailand of the past—of klongs (canals), Chiang Mai’s old Chinese quarter, meticulously maintained rice fields, and lotus-filled countryside—has lost some of its charm. Over-tourism in Pattaya and Phuket has reached concerning levels. For some—especially expatriates—Thailand remains the “Land of Smiles,” an ideal vacation destination with impeccable service. But is it the same for the Thai people?

After staying at a pleasant holiday bungalow, the author continues to receive relentless advertisements from the establishment. When the great tsunami of 2004 struck, a message quickly reassured visitors that the hotel was still operational—but there was no way to know whether the local staff had survived.



[1] Founded in 1957, this award recognizes individuals who have demonstrated excellence in Asia. It is divided into six categories: government service; public service; community leadership; journalism, literature, and creative communication arts; peace and international understanding; and emerging leadership. Named after former Philippine President Ramon Magsaysay (1953–1957), the award is often regarded as the Asian Nobel Prize.



Yves Carmona

A former ENA student and diplomat, Yves Carmona has spent most of his career in Asia: twice Foreign Affairs Counsellor in Japan, First Counsellor in Singapore and Ambassador to Laos and then Nepal (2012–2018). In these positions, as in those he held in Paris, he focused his attention, including as a student of Japanese, on the very rapid evolution of Asian countries and their relations with France and Europe. Now retired, he is committed to making his experience available to those to whom it may be useful.



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