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Chapter 1 | Cambodia

Khim Tensopheaktra, Ung Khemara Bormeychan, and Pen Socheata

Introduction

In the first quarter of 2023, major development of domestic politics in Cambodia mostly centers on the preparation for the general election. Along the process, there has been a shutdown of a local media outlet and suppression of opposition parties. On socioeconomic affairs, Cambodia is on its path to recovery from COVID-19 by committing to fostering trade agreements, promoting capacity building for informal workers, attracting and increasing tourism, and welcoming foreign investment. Lastly, on foreign relations, Cambodia continues and extends cooperation by engaging with India, Maldives, and Laos on various ranges of focus from security to trade and development.

Domestic Politics

The National Election Committee¹ released an announcement on the register of political parties and the candidate list for the 7th National Assembly Election 2023 on their official website on February 3, 2023. According to the press, the registration of political parties and the list of candidates for the National Assembly Election 2023 will last 15 days, beginning on April 24, 2023, and ending on May 8, 2023. Furthermore, it is known that Voice of Democracy (VOD) was shut down after Prime Minister Hun Sen accused the outlet of publishing an “intentionally untruthful” article.² Hun Manet, Prime Minister Hun Sen’s son, and chosen successor, signed off on the provision of \$100,000 in aid to earthquake-hit Turkey on February 9, according to the Cambodian news outlet VOD, despite the fact that the prime minister is the only executive with authority to decide on such matters. VOD has repetitively published articles on such topics as corrupt practices and gang violence, which have a negative effect on Cambodians’ perceptions of the ruling government and Hun Manet. As the upcoming election approaches, many preparations have been done to construct a smooth election process. The National Election Committee (NEC) organized the two-day training workshop on December 28-29, 2022, which discussed the media’s role in the poll. Precisely, the NEC released the rules

and procedures for all relevant parties. The instruction contains the details of the functioning and organization of the parliamentary election. The rules mention the prohibition of all political parties from using any violence directly or indirectly against any candidate or political party and not involving in vote buying in any possible way. Moreover, none of the political parties can cause chaos during the election, and many other specific rules on what political party can or cannot do during or before the election.³

As reported by Radio Free Asia (RFA), “Candlelight Party regard Thach Setha’s arrest and detention as a politically motivated case as intimidation to scare Cambodian’s spirits not to participate with the opposition party and to provoke chaos of the upcoming election”. In response to this statement, CPP spokesperson, Sok Eysan, declaimed that the arrest was not politically motivated.⁴ Emphasizing this case, the National Election Committee said that the arrest of Thach Setha will not affect the process of organizing the national election and that they should not register with the NEC if the party views the elections will be somehow unfair, said Sok Eysan.⁵

In March 2023, another opposition leader, Kem Sokha, whose political party was dissolved in 2017, was sentenced to 27 years in detention for treason and totally suspended his political right to vote and to stand for election. According to Phil Robertson, deputy Asia director at Human Right Watch, “Kem Sokha’s case illustrates the absolute absence of independence in the Cambodia judiciary and the power of the governing party to regulate the political system to its liking. The international community, likewise, is sensitive to this case and views it as a restriction of human rights and a threat to people.”⁶

Socioeconomic affairs

On January 14, 2023, the Union of Youth Federation of Cambodia (UYFC)⁷ and Ezecom signed MOU to formalize their partnership in developing the youth population’s digital skills and contributing to the kingdom’s sustainable digital economy. The collaboration will focus on four main pillars, including internet connectivity, internet infrastructure, digital literacy for youth with disabilities and members of the tourism industry, digital literacy on cloud computing training, and public training and workshop with the Cambodia 4.0 center. The collaboration objectives are linked to digital-economic advancement and to further the implementation of the “Cambodian Digital Government Policy 2022-2035”. Moreover, the Royal Government of Cambodia has worked to implement initiatives that will advance women’s rights and give them more power in the tourist sector which is crucial for the industry’s inclusive and sustainable growth through providing training to staff in the informal economy under the cooperation of the Department of Entertainment Services and the Department of Tourism Vocation Training.⁸ In 2022, Cambodia saw an increase of international tourists totalling 2.2 million compared to 200,000 in 2021. Cambodia expects to welcome more international guests in 2023 as tourism can

generate \$4 billion annually. To promote tourism and attract guests, the Ministry of Tourism plans to form a “Visit Cambodia 2023” campaign for the upcoming Southeast Asian Games 2023 and ASEAN Para Games 2023. With this campaign, Cambodia expects to receive at least 15 million local visitors and 4 million international tourists.⁹ Fortunately, on January 8, 2023, China dropped the quarantine requirement measures and opened the border for the first time since its closure in early 2020. Thus, Cambodia looks forward to welcoming 2 million Chinese tourists among 4 million international guests.

In February this year, Cambodia and China signed the action plans to promote the Cambodia-China Free Trade Agreement (CCFTA), the ASEAN-China Free Trade Agreement (ACFTA), and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP). This newly-signed Action Plan on Trade and Economic Cooperation 2021-2023 is expected to enhance utilization of the preferential arrangements granted by the free trade agreement to boost trade and investment between Cambodia and China.

In addition, Cambodia has recently implemented the Law on Investment and the Law on Public-Private Partnerships, with the goal of providing non-discriminatory support to foreign investors in accordance with global rules.¹⁰ Moreover, Cambodia and China are subject to formalizing the “Fish and Rice Corridor” in the northwestern region of Cambodia, specifically around Tonle Sap Lake, to develop modern ecosystem agriculture near Southeast Asia’s largest freshwater lake by surface area. According to a statement published on Minister of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries Dith Tina’s Facebook page on February 12, the special corridor will facilitate the import and export of fish and milled rice.

Lastly, Cambodia’s economy is expected to grow 5.6 percent this year, down from 6.6 percent previously expected. According to Trading Economics’ global macro models and analysts’ forecasts, Cambodia’s GDP will likely reach 28.58 billion USD at the end of this year. According to econometric models, Cambodia’s GDP will be around 30.24 billion USD in 2024 and 38.39 billion USD in 2025 in the long run. Officials from Cambodia’s Ministry of Economy and Finance (MEF)¹¹ have taken a proactive move toward enhancing global trade by taking part in a training program on accumulating non-tariff initiatives (NTMs). The Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA) organized the training in collaboration with MEF. There were 16 attendees. The two-day course concentrated on identifying and comprehending NTMs, including their contribution and expectation, principles, rules, and data gathering.

Foreign relations

From 12-13 January 2023, Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen participated and spoke in “the Voice of Global South Summit” held by India.¹² In the summit, Prime Minister Hun Sen urged all countries to support multilateralism and dialogue to prevent military conflicts among states and maintain regional

and global peace and stability. On the environmental scheme, he encouraged all nations to advance green development and support sustainable socio-economic growth.¹³ Likewise, considering Cambodia's key policy is to enhance and strengthen bilateral relations, Cambodia continues to develop and make good relations with its partner countries.

From 15-17 January 2023, Prime Minister Hun Sen visited the Republic of Maldives. During the three-day visit, Cambodia and the Republic of Maldives agreed to expand their trade ties, and both countries were encouraged to export products from one another. Maldives pledged to import high-quality rice from Cambodia as well as other agricultural products and others such as garments, travel goods, and timber. At the same time, Cambodia will also consider importing fish such as tuna and others to meet local demand. Cambodia and Maldives also signed agreements in the tourism sector, such as the tourist visa exemption for the people of Maldives to travel to Cambodia for 30 days.¹⁴

Furthermore, on 14 February 2023, Prime Minister Hun Sen led a high-level diplomatic mission to Vientiane. Prime Minister Hun Sen and Laotian Prime Minister Sonexay SIPHANDONE had a thorough discussion about the state of bilateral ties and how to build on the foundations of traditional relationships and close relations, as well as collaboration in many sectors between the two nations, including political security, defense, border affairs, investment and trade, air connectivity, tourist industry, energy, and education.¹⁵ During the official visit, the two Prime Ministers signed bilateral historic paperwork: 1) the Treaty on the Delimitation of the State Border between the Kingdom of Cambodia and the Lao People's Democratic Republic; and 2) the Action Plan for the Comprehensive and Long-Term Strategic Partnership between the Kingdom of Cambodia and the Lao People's Democratic Republic (2023 - 2027).

Conclusion

Cambodia, in the first quarter of 2023 and onward, focused on the preparation for the national election, promoted socioeconomic development, and fostered cooperation and partnerships in various sectors with different countries. In the second quarter, there will be bolder focus on the national election which will likely be dictated by the ruling government's need to win voters and maintain social stability. The result of the upcoming election will lead to important implications for the future of Cambodia.

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Chapter 2 | Indonesia

Sovan Tepy, Sum Pichkanika, and Cheng Ousa

Introduction

The largest country in Southeast Asia, which borders Timor-Leste, Malaysia, and Papua New Guinea, is known as Indonesia, officially the Republic of Indonesia. It is a country located in Southeast Asia and Oceania between the Indian and the Pacific Oceans. It is famous for its volcanoes, beaches, and jungle, with an archipelago of over 17,000 islands. With over 275 million people, it is known as the most populous Muslim-majority country with the most populous country in the region. In the case of foreign relations, the world views the country as one of the proactive members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN); Indonesia plays a critical role as the chair of this regional organization this year. While looking at the economic sector, its economy is the largest in Southeast Asia, with the annual gross domestic product (GDP) at approximately USD 940.9 billion in 2016. Likewise, its economy is largely driven by domestic activity rather than exports. As Indonesia undergoes many developments; therefore, this paper focuses on briefing Indonesia's activities in the first quarter of 2023 in terms of domestic affairs, economy, and foreign relations.

Domestic Politics

Many things will dictate Indonesia's domestic affairs this year. First and foremost, Indonesia will be chairing ASEAN for the fifth time in 2023.¹ The result of the chairmanship, to a certain extent, will influence the tone of the upcoming national election. During the closing ceremony of the 40th and 41st ASEAN Summits and related Summits in Cambodia in 2022, Indonesian president "Jokowi Widodo" stated that Indonesia would adopt the theme "ASEAN Matters: Epicentrum of Growth " under Indonesia chairmanship. This theme implies that Indonesia will work with all ASEAN members to ensure the increasing relevance of ASEAN to the world and that ASEAN will continue to be the epicentrum of growth with a strong and empowered society. Furthermore, he also stated that ASEAN must be a

stable, peaceful region and needs to be an anchor for global stability. Jokowi also stated that ASEAN should remain neutral despite many obstacles and challenges such as the global recession and the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

Secondly, Indonesia is bracing for tumultuous politics during the upcoming general elections. The Indonesian court has delayed the 2024 general election to 2025.² Over the years, there have been problems regarding the extension of the election which could possibly pave the way for President Jokowi Widodo to serve a third term in office. Because of that, there is tension between President Widodo and The Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle's Chairwoman Megawati Soekarnoputri over the question of who will be the endorsed party in 2024. This problem is expected to be the uncertainty that could affect the nation's stability.³

Lastly, as a new ASEAN chairman, Indonesia is preparing a new strategy to speed up the negotiations on the Code of Conduct of the parties in the South China Sea (COC) and the need for new approaches in the case of the South China Sea. The tensions around the sea are one example where economic dependence and security issues create dilemmas. Indonesia wants to make sure that its territorial integrity around the Natuna Islands is respected. At the same time, China has now asserted control of more than 90 percent of the South China Sea. The maritime tension between China and Indonesia could weaken ASEAN, and Indonesia as a chairman itself, if it could not find new solutions to tackle the conflict. For instance, Indonesia's statement from the 32nd ASEAN Coordinating Council Meeting and the ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Retreat, which was issued on February 4, 2023, suggested that there is yet a new strategy to speed up the negotiations on the COC.

Socioeconomic affairs

If we look at the economic aspect in Indonesia, there is still dramatic growth despite gloomy global economic projections where economies are expected to experience a recession in 2023. Indonesia's economy is expanding rapidly, with its GDP increasing by 5.3 percent in 2022, owing to high prices for many of Indonesia's commodity exports as a result of the rising commodity prices driven by the Russian-Ukraine conflict. As such, Indonesia's commodity exports will continue to be the backbone of the economy in 2023. Growth is expected to remain strong, driven by domestic demand recovery and solid export performance.⁴ Indonesia's central bank, predicts that the country's economy will grow at a rate of 4.5-5.3 percent in 2023, one of the highest among G20 members, and will be supported by several important sectors, including commodities, infrastructure development, tourism, and high-value product manufacturing.⁵

Furthermore, Indonesia also plans to make the country the global Electric Vehicle (EV) hub,

according to the country's Coordinating Minister for Maritime Affairs and Investment, Luhut Binsar Pandjaitan, Indonesia aims to be one of the world's top three producers of EV batteries by 2027. To ensure this will be achieved, the Indonesian government has decided to provide incentives to those purchasing electric motorbikes at Rp7 million (460 USD) per unit. Luhut Binsar Pandjaitan said that the policy will take effect on March 20, 2023, and will last until December 2024. The aim is to encourage more Indonesians to buy EVs made with at least 40 percent of domestic components.⁶ It should be noted that the policy imposed is expected to reduce Indonesia's imported fuel which is in line with the government's commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and it will encourage job opportunities and state revenue as a whole. The effectiveness of these subsidies is down to how Indonesia addresses other key challenges that continue to limit its ambition of becoming a manufacturing hub for EV batteries. So far, the policies have attracted investment from South Korean companies, such as Hyundai and LG Energy, and Taiwan-based Foxconn to build local manufacturing sites. However, there are challenges, and the limited driving range of EVs continues to be a major factor hindering the widespread adoption of electric motorbikes, as it could not meet the typical daily commuting distance of about 100 km in Jakarta. This is a major disadvantage because conventional motorbikes have a maximum riding distance of 200km.⁷

Foreign relations

As Indonesia is the chair of ASEAN in 2023, there are many expectations and challenges that Indonesia must face. Under the theme "ASEAN Matters: Epicentrum of Growth", Indonesia intends to make ASEAN a sustainable, inclusive region economically, socially, and politically.⁸ As stated by Foreign Minister Retno LP Marsudi, as ASEAN Chair, Indonesia will not only focus on ASEAN, but also other four priorities, namely strengthening the diplomacy of sovereignty, toughening the diplomacy of protection, promoting economic cooperation, and undertaking the diplomacy of peace and humanity.⁹

Beginning in early 2023, Indonesia and the Republic of Korea marked 50 years of their friendship. Not only are they special strategic partners in various sectors, but they are also great partners in the creative and digital industries.¹⁰

Moreover, Indonesia took the leadership in ASEAN+3 Co-Chairmanship for 2023 alongside Japan to host ASEAN+3 Task Force Meeting in Nusa Dua Bali. It is important to note that the meeting is the first step in a series on the financial track for Indonesia's chairmanship of ASEAN and joint co-chairmanship of the ASEAN+3 cooperation forum with Japan, China, and South Korea.

Furthermore, 2023 also marks 65th Indonesia-Japan diplomatic relations. On March 6, 2023, Indonesian Foreign Minister Retno L.P. Marsudi travelled to Tokyo, Japan, to take part in the 8th Ministerial

Level Strategic Dialogue between Indonesia and Japan in order to foster their bilateral cooperation in various fields, namely trade and investment, infrastructure, energy transition, labor, and marine and fisheries.¹¹

The US-China rivalry is also one of the tensions that Indonesia must lead ASEAN on the right path. Indonesia is not only a resource-laden nation, but it also has a strategic location which is important for any potential confrontation over Taiwan. Therefore, China and the US want Indonesia as their ally.¹²

Looking far from Southeast Asia, the relations between Indonesia and European Union (EU) are currently on the rise. This year, EU and Indonesian negotiators met for the first time in Jakarta for their first face-to-face discussions in over three years regarding a trade pact that aims to enhance trade between Europe and Indonesia. As stated by EU representatives, they were optimistic that the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) negotiations would advance after the 13th round. The first round of negotiations began in 2016, and there have been ongoing grievances from Jakarta on European environmental legislation and concerns on both sides regarding the other's economic strategy. One of the main reasons behind this long continuous discussion is because of EU's deforestation initiative. This initiative sought to destroy the small-scale agriculture industry in Indonesia.¹³

Conclusion

Indonesia has seen various events in the first quarter of the year in all three main aspects. In terms of politics, Indonesia needs to prepare itself to deal with its upcoming election which is expected to take place in 2024. On top of that, as the ASEAN Chair in 2023, Indonesia also has to deal with different hot issues, including the Myanmar crisis and the Russia-Ukraine war. Regarding economy, as a resource-rich country, Indonesia is still growing fast economically with various bilateral trade relations between ASEAN and non-ASEAN member states. Using a non-alignment strategy, Indonesia remains an important player in navigating the US-China power rivalry while leading ASEAN. In terms of foreign relations, 2023 marks the bilateral relations between Indonesia and countries in East-Asia. As the biggest country in ASEAN and the 2023 ASEAN Chair, Indonesia's moves will be closely monitored regionally and globally.

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Chapter 3 | Myanmar

Him Rotha, Hai Sohem, Navy Roya, Sok Molyneang, and Vorn Manartra

Introduction

Myanmar, in the first quarter of 2023, is still in a volatile state. Internal conflict continues with no light of resolution. Even with the on-going fighting, the State Administrative Council (SAC) is preparing to have an election, tentatively in August 2023. On the other hand, the National Unity Government of Myanmar (NUG), still tries to claim legitimacy at home and overseas. Many other events have occurred. This update will briefly summarize what happened in Myanmar from January to March 2023.

Domestic Politics

The most outstanding issues within domestic politics are the preparation of a military-led general election and the ongoing fighting among all relevant armed groups within Myanmar. Another outstanding development is that SAC has prepared to repatriate the Rohingya ethnics from Bangladesh – the first move since 2017. SAC attempted to conduct business as usual, while the NUG has tried to claim legitimacy through diplomatic and rhetorical means. Ethnic armed groups, on the other hand, either aligned with the NUG or sided/in discussion with the military authority to prepare for the election in August.

State of Emergency Extension: Only 60% of Myanmar is “100% peaceful”

On February 1, in light of the second anniversary of the coup, the SAC Head, Min Aung Hlaing extended the state of emergency for another six months. During a national security meeting, Min Aung Hlaing stated that “only 198 townships [out of 330 townships] are 100 per cent peaceful while 65 townships need effective providing of security”.¹ The Senior General accused the instability was caused by terrorism conducted by the NUG’s armed wings, People’s Defense Forces (PDF) and the Ethnic Armed Organizations (EAO).

Preparation for the 2023 Election and Dissolving Aung San Suu Kyi's NLD

The preparation for the 2023 Election is underway, yet there are tricky events surrounding this. As of 25 March 2023, it is reported that there were at least 52 political parties re-registered for the August election. Only 12 political parties planned to contest nationwide.² Radio Free Asia reported that those political parties were either pro-military or ethnic political parties that lacked the supports.³ Back in 2020, there were 91 registered political parties.⁴

On March 29, the Myanmar military authority reportedly dissolved 40 political parties, including Aung San Suu Kyi's National League of Democracy (NLD), as they failed to re-register under the new electoral law.⁵ Nevertheless, although preparation is ongoing, media reports stated that the military authority might delay the election, with the national census to be conducted in 2024.⁶ The regime spokesperson, Zaw Min Tun told the media on 28 March that he did not know the exact election date. He, later on, got reprimanded.⁷ If the army is able to hold elections with opposition groups, which it can lure politicians unsatisfied with the NLD, countries in the region could relatively embrace it and encourage further rapprochement with Naypyidaw despite the unfree nature of the elections.

SAC's cabinet reshuffles: the new Foreign Minister, new SAC's approach?

Amidst the State of Emergency extension, the SAC reshuffled its cabinet, of which there was a change of the Foreign Minister. Than Shwe, former Myanmar Ambassador to the US and the United Nations, took over the top diplomatic post, replacing Wunna Muang Lwin. Myanmar Now reported that the regime was not satisfied with Wunna Muang Lwin's performance as the regime was snubbed off from important ASEAN mechanisms, and the relations with the West have been deteriorated.⁸

Preparation for Repatriating the Rohingya from Bangladesh to Myanmar

Another outstanding issue is related to the repatriation of the Rohingya from Bangladesh. In March, Myanmar military authority was in discussion with Bangladesh to initiate "pilot project" to repatriate Rohingya to Rakhine State, Myanmar, under vetting and verification by the Military Authority.⁹

The United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) declined any involvement in the project and stated that the current situation in Myanmar was not suitable for the return of the Rohingya refugees.¹⁰ Previously, UNHCR said that Rohingya refugee returns must be voluntary and meet international standards.

Socioeconomic affairs

Economically, according to the World Bank's report, the economic situation in Myanmar remains volatile. The country is projected for 3 percent economic growth in 2023. Trade is still resilient, but daily livelihood is disrupted due to armed conflicts. There were also reports that some big brands exited from Myanmar by selling their stakes to their local partners.

On the social aspect, there are two main developments during the first quarter of 2023. First, there was a national exam, of which only around 170,000 students registered, while before the coup, there were almost 1 million students. Second, there was a rumor that the military banned Western culture in the name of Buddhism.

3 percent Economic Growth in 2023 – World Bank

World Bank's January report projected that Myanmar's economic growth will top 3 percent in 2023.¹¹ Nevertheless, the macroeconomy remained volatile with the local currency; Kyat continued to depreciate, coupling with uncertain policy and disruption of business operations due to armed conflicts.

Some big brands, like Nestle and Chevron, left Myanmar in the first quarter of 2023 as these companies sold their stakes to their partners in Myanmar.¹²

National Examinations Season, only 20 percent of pre-coup students registered

March is the season for tenth-grade high school exams across Myanmar. However, this year, the number dropped to almost 180,000 registered students, while in the academic year of 2020-2019, the number was up to almost 1 million, a peak in Myanmar's education history.¹³

Rumor to ban Western Culture to uphold Buddhism

According to the Irrawaddy, Min Aung Hlaing instructed the regime's Education Minister to ban private schools from teaching "Western Democratic Culture" during a cabinet meeting in February.¹⁴

Foreign relations

Regarding Myanmar's foreign relations, it is observed that Myanmar's military government actively engaged with Russia, China, India, and Thailand. Other than that, the military authority has participated in ASEAN and the Mekong subregional affairs on the working group level.

The NUG, on the other hand, recently opened a new office in Washington D.C. after the U.S. approved the Burma Unified through Rigorous Military Accountability Act (BURMA Act) back in December 2022.

China has shown an active engagement with Myanmar's internal stakeholders as both the Chinese Ambassador, the Special Envoy in charge of Myanmar affairs, and Chinese Provincial Authorities held many meetings with the SAC and some key ethnic armed groups.

SAC's Diplomacy

This year, the SAC has shown itself as a normal government by engaging with relevant diplomatic stakeholders both in Myanmar and overseas. Min Aung Hlaing, the new Foreign Minister, and some of SAC's ministers held courtesy calls with ambassadors or international organizations' representatives based in Myanmar as publicized by its state media.¹⁵

Other than that, Myanmar's military-quota foreign services officials have joined various meetings on the working-group level with ASEAN and the Mekong subregional mechanisms. Myanmar's diplomats abroad are also actively involved in diplomatic events; their activities publicized on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Facebook page.

NUG's Diplomacy

Conversely, the NUG has attempted to utilize its available diplomatic platform to engage with the West. On NUG's Foreign Minister, Zin Mar Aung, NUG's Foreign Ministry's page, and NUG's Twitter, it is observed that the NUG's personalities appeared to have engaged physically or virtually with many Western diplomats.

The most outstanding one was the meeting between NUG's Foreign Minister with the UK's Foreign Minister, James Cleverly, back in February.¹⁶ In the same month, the NUG opened its office in Washington D.C. in order to liaise diplomatic engagement with the US after the US approved BURMA Act.¹⁷

The NUG's diplomatic stance usually called on the world to stop violence and ill-legitimize the military authority in Myanmar. In its world view, the NUG followed the West's footsteps; for instance, on the war in Ukraine, the NUG condemned Russia for the aggression against Ukraine.¹⁸

Russia deepened engagement with the SAC, while the West hit with another round of sanctions

Myanmar military authority frequently received Russia's delegations in these three months, as 2023

is the 75th anniversary of diplomatic ties between the two. Min Aung Hlaing alone met with Russian delegations three times; first in January with the Vice-President of the Russia-Myanmar Association for Friendship and Cooperation¹⁹, second in March with the Director of Fund RC-Investments²⁰, and third with the Russian Prosecutor-General²¹. Besides Min Aung Hlaing, many Myanmar and Russian officials met with each other at various working levels, both face-to-face meetings and virtual meetings.

Beyond diplomatic engagement, Myanmar military regime in February this year reiterated its support toward Russia regarding the war in Ukraine.²²

The West, including the US, Canada, the European Union, and the UK imposed another round of sanctions on Myanmar in March. The sanction targeted the export of jet fuels to the Myanmar Military Authority.²³

China actively engaged with relevant stakeholders in Myanmar

China actively engaged with Myanmar's internal stakeholders. Chinese Ambassador met with various SAC's senior personalities. China's Special Envoy in charge of Myanmar affairs, Deng Xijun (former Chinese Ambassador to ASEAN) held meetings three times with the SAC as well as held several meetings with ethnic groups in just only four months after his appointment.²⁴ Yunnan Provincial Authorities held many meetings with the SAC and some key ethnic armed groups.²⁵ The promotion of Yunnan-Myanmar trade and economic cooperation was among the key topics discussed by the two sides.

Thailand, ASEAN Chair – Indonesia, and the UN

One of the high-profile foreign relations actors is Thailand. Min Aung Hlaing held a meeting with Thai military general back in January. Subsequently, Thai officials and diplomats went to Myanmar to meet with various SAC's personalities. Other than that, Thailand also organized Track 1.5 discussion on the resolution to issues in Myanmar in Bangkok in March. The meeting invited experts and officials, notably the Head of Myanmar Foreign Ministry's think tank, Myanmar Institute of Strategic and International Studies.²⁶ More interestingly, it is suggested that Myanmar is one of the issues for the Thai election in May 2023.²⁷

Other actors include ASEAN under Indonesian Chairmanship and the United Nations. In the first quarter of 2023, the Myanmar seat was still empty in ASEAN's big-ticket meetings, like ASEAN Foreign Ministers' retreat. Indonesia, this year, said that they will not employ "megaphone diplomacy" on Myanmar. Indonesia revealed some plans, such as sending its Generals to talk with Min Aung Hlaing

and appointing the Special Envoy with a longer term, yet three months have passed, these plans remained to be seen.

The situation in Myanmar was brought to a private meeting at the United Nations' Security Council this March.²⁸ No outcome was publicized. However, one notable event was surrounding the UN Special Envoy to Myanmar, Noeleen Heyzer's remarks. She supported and intended to advance the idea of "Inclusive Humanitarian Forum (IHF)".²⁹ IHF will be composed of Myanmar's neighboring countries and regional actors as well as civil societies who will deliver aid to all available channels.

Conclusion

Myanmar, in the first quarter of 2023, is still in the midst of conflict. The way forward toward the second quarter is how ASEAN and the international community would approach Myanmar since there will be ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meetings and the ASEAN Summits in May 2023. Other than that, the preparation of the election in August will be on the watchlist, as the second quarter of 2023 will determine the probability of the election.

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Chapter 4 | Thailand

Long Sovitou, Hol Theaneth, and Kea Chanvoleak

Introduction

This paper provides an update on Thailand's domestic politics, economic affairs, and foreign affairs for the first quarter of the year 2023. The domestic political scene has been dominated by speculation and tensions surrounding the upcoming general election in May. The economy is showing signs of recovery, with positive growth expected in the tourism industry and the electric vehicle market. Meanwhile, Thailand has faced international criticisms for its ties with Myanmar's military junta. However, it has also made efforts to strengthen regional cooperation and trade relationships, including resuming negotiations for a free trade agreement with the European Union.

Domestic Politics

While Thailand has always had a long history of political violence and disagreement, many conflicts have occurred in its domestic and political affairs. Following the January 29 promulgation of two amended organic laws on elections, which gave Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha the legal justification to dissolve the House and call for an early vote, speculation about an early election has been reignited.¹ The House of Representatives term will end on March 23, so the election is tentatively scheduled for May. However, the law mandates that if the House is dissolved before March 23, a snap election must be held between 45 and 60 days after the dissolution. Just like speculations have been suggesting, on March 20, King Maha Vajiralongkorn endorsed a decree to dissolve parliament, with general elections scheduled to happen on May 14.²

Tensions rise as Thailand moves to the general election due to the undemocratic foundation of Thai politics and the growing competitiveness of the political parties. The opposition Pheu Thai party (PTP) is expected to perform strongly. It is likely to be included in the new coalition government, which will involve one or more military-backed parties. Paetongtarn Shinawatra, the Pheu Thai Party's most

visible candidate for prime minister, has been campaigning hard in the vote-rich rural strongholds of the Shinawatra family's Pheu Thai political juggernaut, betting that nostalgia can win millions of working-class votes.³ On a related note, Paetongtarn has recently refuted the assertion made by former lawmaker and massage parlor billionaire Chuvit Kamolvisit that the party is pursuing a covert agreement with the Palang Pracharath Party, claiming that Pheu Thai sought to create an alliance with the PPRP and propose "a certain person" as the future prime minister, referring to Gen Prawit, to which Paetongtarn Shinawatra refuted with the support of Pheu Thai leader Cholan Srikaew.⁴ Paetongtarn Shinawatra has also refuted rumours that the ruling Palang Pracharath party and the opposition Pheu Thai party made a political pact to make it easier for her exiled father to return to Thailand. Although Pheu Thai is expected to be the largest party in the election, its ability to take power is uncertain due to opposition from conservative royalists and the military. In efforts to prevent Thaksin-backed governments from resuming power, the military has rewritten the constitution and appointed loyal senators since the coup in 2014. Undoubtedly, senators could still prevent Pheu Thai from taking power but note that it would be difficult to exclude them from the next government if they win more than 200 seats out of the 500 seats.⁵

The election also follows the division of Prayuth and Prawit, both former army leaders, into opposing political factions to appeal to the country's ultraroyalist and pro-military conservative voters. This division marks the end of a time in which both generals work hand in hand to control the nation. Prayuth left the Palang Pracharath Party, a pro-military party that supported him in his bid for prime minister in the 2019 general elections, to join the newly established United Thai Nation Party. This clears the way for Prawit to run for the premiership as the Palang Pracharath Party's nominee.⁶

It is also worth mentioning that the secretary general and party leader of Sarng Anakot Thai formally joined Palang Pracharath. Uttama Savanayana, the leader of the Sarng Anakot Thai Party, Sontirat Sontijirawong, the party's secretary, and General Wit Dhephasdin na Ayudhya, the head of the Thailand Together Party, officially joined the Palang Pracharath Party. According to General Prawit, General Wit will assist the party with general affairs, while former ministers of finance Uttama and energy Sontirat will assist the party in economic matters. The two of them were invited to join the party by Prawit, according to Uttama, who left the party in July 2020 along with Sontirat and two other people. Uttama also stated that Prawit has made it clear that he wants to mobilize people from different sectors to collaborate.⁷

Although the opposition Move Forward Party (MFP) is confident that they will win the most seats in the capital during the general election, the party also experienced internal conflicts in recent weeks, with Chris Potranandana, a co-founder of the Future Forward Party, announcing his departure.⁸ Chris' leaving is unsurprising, given reports of high-profile disagreements between him and senior members

of the party over appointments and policy. Disagreements between Pita Limjaroenrat, the leader of the Move Forward Party, and Piyabutr Saengkanokkul, the secretary-general of the Progressive Movement, have been brought to attention; however, the two have resolved their differences.⁹ Both Piyabutr Saengkanokkul and Thanathorn Juangroongruangkit have endorsed Pita as the country's next prime minister.

The upcoming election in Thailand is characterized by intense campaigning and internal disputes within and between the parties. 36 political parties have signed an election campaign ethics code, agreeing not to engage in election fraud, vote buying, or mudslinging in a manner that could incite hatred or violence. Out of the 36 political parties, Palang Pracharath and United Thai Nation Party were not among the signatories.¹⁰ The future of Thailand's state of politics will depend on the results and how the different parties with links to or closeness to the military negotiate.

Socioeconomic affairs

Thailand's economy will recover more strongly in 2023 than in 2022 as the economy could grow as much as 4 percent this year, the fastest rate in five years.¹¹ Nevertheless, Supattanapong Punmeechaow, Thailand's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Energy stated on February 1 that although the Thai economy is still experiencing some challenges. Thailand's economic growth slowed in the fourth quarter as reduced exports and factory activity, together with tightening monetary conditions, curbed private consumption. Despite concerns about Thailand's economic outlook, the council's Secretary-General Danucha Pichayanan stated there is no reason to believe the economy will fall in the first quarter of this year due to an increase in visitor arrivals and government stimulus measures. Projections indicate that the country can expect GDP growth of close to 4 percent in 2023, primarily as a result of the tourism sector's recovery and China's reopening its border.¹² The fourth quarter of last year saw the economy stabilize thanks to the service sector, especially tourism. The export of services soared by 94.6 percent, partly due to an increase in visitor numbers. With China's reopening its border, the Economic Intelligence Center of Siam Commercial Bank predicted that the number of foreign tourists would rise to 30 million this year, up from 11.2 million in 2022, and Chinese visitors would make up at least 4.8 million.¹³

In an effort to hasten the recovery of the nation's critically important tourism industry, Thai officials have confirmed that visitors from China will be able to enter the country without having to undergo pre-departure COVID-19 tests. As a result of the government abandoning its hermetic "zero COVID" policy, there have been reports of unchecked outbreaks in several regions of China. Thailand's tourism authorities are happy to see the Chinese government relax its strict restrictions on international travel. The return of international tourists to Thailand this year could signal the start of a quick

recovery.¹⁴

Thailand is also making progressive steps to become the region's hotspot for the growth of Electric Vehicles (EVs). After many Chinese companies increased their efforts to enhance brand recognition and introduce Thai consumers to Chinese electric mobility technology, China is anticipated to play a significant role in Thailand's electric vehicle (EV) industry. As part of the Thai government's initiative to establish Thailand as a regional hub for EV sales and export, Chinese automakers, including Great Wall Motor, MG, and BYD, have announced plans to invest in the country. While selling their EVs in Thailand at lower prices than their foreign rivals, GMW, MG, BYD, and DFSK intend to assemble automobiles and batteries in Thailand for domestic and international sales.¹⁵

There is also an expected rebound in the real estate market with several developers, paving the way for positive effects on the economy. The CEO of Pruksa Real Estate, Piya Prayong, has completed 10 condominiums with a total of 3,000 units. At the same time, Apa Ataboonwong, president of Richy Place 2002, anticipates selling at least 300 to 400 units to Chinese investors. However, Property Perfect Plc does not build properties in the center of Bangkok, and Meesak Chunharakchot, president of the Thai Real Estate Association, thinks that easing Chinese property restrictions will help Thailand's real estate market recover. The pandemic did not have much impact on Chinese investors' interest in Thailand as evidenced by the high number of property transfers, according to Wichai Wiratkaphan, acting director of Government Housing Bank's Real Estate Information Centre. A 9.1 percent increase over the same period in 2021, the value of condo units transferred in the first half of 2022 totaled 22.33 billion baht.¹⁶

In terms of the e-commerce space, JD.com left Thailand after suffering its most significant loss in five years, partly due to concerns about Lazada and Shopee monopolizing the market. JD.com, a leading Chinese internet company, has cut its investment in JD Central, a joint venture with Thailand's Central Group. JD.com. The Chinese giant, along with Lazada and Shopee, is among Thailand's top 3 online marketplaces. Lazada and Shopee have already held over 50 percent of the market share, so experts worry that the closure of JD.com could lead to a duopoly of online marketplaces.¹⁷

Foreign Affairs

Although Thailand has enhanced tight ties with other ASEAN nations and external partners over the years in terms of commerce, finance, politics, and culture, the Thai government has recently come under fire from the international community for maintaining normalized relations with Myanmar's junta and downplaying alleged atrocities in its neighbor, which descended into disorder two years ago.¹⁸ On the same note, the ASEAN Parliamentarians for Human Rights (APHR) also urged the Thai

government to stop continuous engagements with the military junta.¹⁹ APHR also made a petition to the Thai authorities to provide help to refugees and asylum seekers fleeing persecution and military attacks from Myanmar.

On the international security front, Thailand has backed the UN resolution to end the war in Ukraine and demanded Russia's immediate withdrawal from the country.²⁰ This decision could help restore Thailand's international recognition, which in turn enhances its economic ties with the West. Besides, Thailand has recently hosted war games with the most prominent US attendance in a decade.²¹ With the most extensive U.S. participation in a decade, the nation launched an international military exercise as Washington looks to strengthen ties with a crucial security ally during a period of escalating geopolitical confrontation with Beijing.

On the economic front, resuming negotiations for a free trade agreement (FTA) between Thailand and the European Union (EU), Commerce Minister Jurin Laksanawisit and EU Trade Commissioner Valdis Dombrovskis announced that the two parties had reached an understanding. Both parties expect to conclude the negotiations in the first quarter of this year.²² Now, he will ask the Cabinet for permission to resume trade negotiations, and Dombrovskis will ask the EU's 27 member states for permission. This represents a big step forward for Thailand, which has been trying to get an FTA with the EU for almost ten years. Thailand's fourth-largest trading partner, behind China, the US, and Japan, is the EU. Thailand has also been working on enhancing regional cooperation through the Bay of Bengal Initiative. Four important documents were successfully signed at the meeting: Rules of Procedure for Core BIMSTEC Mechanisms, Rules of Procedure for Sectoral BIMSTEC Mechanisms, Rules of Procedure for BIMSTEC's External Relations, and Draft Terms of Reference for the Eminent Persons Group on the Future Direction of BIMSTEC are just a few of the documents that must be followed. Thailand has received praise from the group's secretariat and other members for its role in fostering collaboration among the seven South and Southeast Asian nations that comprise BIMSTEC: Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Thailand.²³

Conclusion

In all three key areas, Thailand experienced noteworthy events in the first quarter of the year. Thailand's economy will recover more quickly in 2023 than it did in 2022, as this year's growth could reach 4 percent, the fastest in five years. The Thai government has recently faced criticism from the international community for maintaining normalized ties with Myanmar's junta and for downplaying alleged atrocities in its neighbour, which descended into chaos two years ago, despite the fact that Thailand has developed close ties with other ASEAN countries and external partners over the years. With this, Thailand will resume talks with the European Union on a free trade agreement (FTA). Last

but not least, various political parties dangle promises in their campaigns ahead of the upcoming general election. The second quarterly update of this year will focus on the outcome of the election which will influence the next chapter of Thailand's approach to political, socioeconomic, and diplomatic affairs.

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Chapter 5 | Vietnam

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Introduction

Within the context of Southeast Asia and ASEAN, Vietnam has been seeing remarkable growth and development in terms of economic activities and regional diplomacy ever since the start of the radical change in Vietnam brought about by the Doi Moi policy, which was launched in 1986. Vietnam today enjoys a fast-growing economy and increasing standard of living, as well as a more prominent role in foreign relations within the Indo-Pacific and the development of its political powerhouse since the 2013 Constitution. In this report, there will be briefings on major headlines and events happening from the start of the year until mid-March, covering the political situation, socioeconomic headlines, and foreign affairs of Vietnam.

Domestic Politics

On January 5, 2023, the National Assembly of Vietnam voted to remove Pham Binh Minh and Vu Duc Dam from their positions as deputy prime ministers¹, and, on the same day, approved the appointment of Tran Hong Ha and Tran Luu Quang as the new deputy prime ministers.² On January 12, the General-Secretary of the Communist Party of Vietnam, Nguyen Phu Trong, presided over the 23rd session of the Central Steering Committee on Prevention and Control of Corruption and Negative Phenomena to review its operations in 2022 and determine its working agenda for 2023. He stated that it was necessary to examine and address any gaps and insufficiencies in policies and laws relating to finance, as well as draft laws related to anti-corruption, and promulgate the National Strategy on Corruption Prevention and Combat of 2030.³ On January 17, President Nguyen Xuan Phuc announced his resignation, as the anti-corruption scandal caused hundreds of Communist Party members to be investigated and him to be held accountable.⁴ The 13th Party Central Committee convened an extraordinary meeting on Tuesday to approve his resignation as President, member of the Politburo and the Committee, and chairman of the Council for National Defense and Security.⁵

On February 2, General-Secretary and head of the Central Steering Committee on Anti-Corruption, Nguyen Phu Trong, released his book, “Resolutely, Persistently Fighting Corruption and Negative Phenomena to Contribute to Building More Transparent and Stronger Party and State,” in a ceremony on February 2 in Hanoi.⁶ The first part includes an overview article by the General-Secretary that re-evaluates this work since the establishment of the Committee in 2013 up to now, four concluding remarks by the General Secretary at 2014, 2018, 2020, and 2022 national anti-corruption conferences, and conclusions at the 36 meetings of the Committee. The second part features 22 essays written by General-Secretary Nguyen Phu Trong about Party’s building, emphasizing the training of officials and party members, 14 articles discuss the Party’s development from the beginning of Doi Moi to the present, while 8 additional pieces, including those from the 1970s, discuss the training of officials and party members. The third part contains 62 opinions from all classes of people, 10 opinions from National Assembly deputies, and 24 opinions from politicians and scholars worldwide, showing the recognition, support, and trust of people from all walks of life.⁷ On 3 February, the Communist Party of Vietnam celebrated its 93rd anniversary. Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh, National Assembly Chairman Vuong Dinh Hue, a permanent member of the CPV Central Committee’s Secretariat Vo Van Thuong, Vietnam Fatherland Front President Do Van Chien, and Acting President Vo Thi Anh Xuan paid floral tribute to President Ho Chi Minh at his mausoleum in Hanoi.⁸

On March 2, Vietnam’s National Assembly selected Vo Van Thuong as the country’s new president, during a vote in an extraordinary session of the assembly, a day after the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Vietnam officially nominated him.⁹ On March 10, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Nguyen Minh Vu, made a proposal to the Chinese Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs, Nong Rong, in Hanoi. The two sides agreed to continue fully implementing the high-level perceptions and thoroughly prepare for the 15th meeting of the Steering Committee for Vietnam-China Bilateral Cooperation, coordination in managing and protecting the shared border, and the maintenance of peace and stability at sea.¹⁰ On March 14, Vietnam tax authorities planned to extend tax relief for 2023 to tackle the problem of liquidity for households and businesses to accelerate the economic growth momentum.¹¹

Socioeconomics Affairs

On January 3, General-Secretary of the Communist Party of Vietnam, Nguyen Phu Trong, approved a Politburo’s resolution outlining the goals and tasks for the development of Ho Chi Minh City by 2030, as the city is expected to reach annual growth of 8 percent to 8.5 percent per capita and contribute to 40% of Vietnam’s gross domestic product by 2030.¹² On January 30, Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh visited a construction site of the My Thuan 2 Bridge, which crosses the Tien River, connecting the Trung Luong-My Thuan and My Thuan-Can Tho expressways between Ho Chi Minh City and Can

Tho, with a total investment of USD 213.22 million. The construction of the bridge is expected to finish in 2023.¹³

On February 27, according to Nhan Dan, the aquaculture product exports were expected to bring in around USD 1 billion. Processing manufacturing and tourism industries in February increased compared to last year's period, such as the production of beverages, coke, refined petroleum, and chemicals. Moreover, the total area of sea culture is set to hit 280,000 hectares with an annual yield of 850,000 tons; according to the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, the country now has about 7,447 (85,000ha) aquaculture establishments, with an estimated 23.3 percent growth rate annually.¹⁴ According to the General Statistics Office on February 13, global consumer demand is reducing, causing the number of export orders and turnover to decrease, and the exports to some key markets recorded a decline, such as the EU (down 4.2 percent), South Korea (5.7 percent), Japan (5.9 percent), ASEAN (7.9 percent), and the US (21 percent). The slowing world economy also prevented foreign investors from expanding the scale of existing projects in Vietnam; as of the end of February, registered FDI capital reached 535.4 million USD, the lowest from 2019 to 2023.¹⁵

On March 12, the Ministry of Transport and Quang Nam People's Committee of Vietnam launched a road upgrade project on National Route 14E, which connects the east and the west sides of Quang Nam province to the Central Highlands region and neighboring countries of Cambodia, Laos, and Thailand. Under the upgrade project, 74 km of the route will be renovated with a total investment of over USD 75.8 million from 2021 to 2025.¹⁶ On March 13, a local property expert in Vietnam reportedly said the property market was expected to stay stalled throughout next year despite measures by the government to boost the market. According to the Vietnam Association of Construction Contractors chairman, Nguyen Quoc Hiep, the property market would not rebound until the end of 2024 as real estate developers still face financing pressure from higher interest rates and stricter rules on private placement bonds. The Vietnamese government has already extended tax payments by a maximum of two years for an extended negotiation period with bondholders on payment delay or exchange the bonds for other assets and implemented the VND 120 trillion support package for social housing projects for workers. However, experts have urged property firms to take efforts themselves first instead of depending on governmental support measures.¹⁷

Foreign relations

On January 11, Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh paid a two-day official visit to Laos, the first foreign leader to visit Laos since Prime Minister Sonexay Siphandone took office.¹⁸ The two prime ministers co-chaired the conclusion of the Vietnam-Laos, Laos-Vietnam Solidarity and Friendship Year 2022, agreeing to continue expanding investment, with a focus on projects in border localities while en-

hancing cooperation in justice, science-technology, culture, tourism, and cooperation among localities, especially those along the common border.¹⁹ On January 13, Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh told the Japanese Minister of State for Financial Services Suzuki Shunichi during a reception in Hanoi that Vietnam always considered Japan a strategic and long-term partner of top importance and that Vietnam would further maintain favorable conditions for Japanese companies to do business effectively in the country. This year also marks the 50th anniversary of both countries' diplomatic ties.²⁰

On January 26, Ambassador Nguyen Phuong Tra, Deputy Permanent Representative of Vietnam to the United Nations, said that Vietnam supported the expansion of the UN Security Council in terms of both permanent and non-permanent members with the fair representation of groups of nations, as well as improving the working method of the UNSC and limiting the use of veto power.²¹

On February 24 2023, Minister of Industry and Trade, Nguyen Hong Dien, stressed that Vietnam would continue its coordination with other CPTPP members to conclude the negotiations on the UK's joining the agreement, during his phone talks with the Secretary of State for the Department for Business and Trade of the UK, Kemi Badenoch, on February 23. Badenoch said joining the CPTPP is one of her top priorities and thanked Vietnam for its support for the process. Minister of State for Trade Policy, Greg Hands, said the UK joining CPTPP would help it grow its GDP to GBP 11 trillion (12% to 15% of global GDP).²²

On February 27, Deputy Prime Minister Tran Luu Quang met United Nations Secretary-General, António Guterres, and other foreign officials during the 52nd regular session of the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva. The UN secretary-general affirmed that the UN would continue its efforts in promoting good relations. Similarly, the Vietnamese Deputy Prime Minister affirmed that Vietnam would continue to support multilateralism and the UN's central role in global governance. At the meeting with Irish Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Defense, Micheál Martin, Quang suggested the Irish government create favorable conditions for Vietnamese goods to enter Ireland. Martin said that the Irish government would strengthen cooperation with Vietnam. Vietnam also pushed Norway to accelerate the negotiations of the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between Vietnam and the European Free Trade Association at another meeting with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Norway, Anniken Huitfeldt.²³

On March 13, the Deputy Minister of Industry and Trade, Tran Quoc Khanh, hosted a reception for his Lao counterpart Bunthong Duonsavan in Hanoi. At the meeting, Laos official briefed on Laos' economic difficulties in the first months of 2023 and that Laos was eager to learn experience related to management policies from Vietnamese ministries and sectors, especially regarding developing industrial parks and clean production centers, promoting renewable and green energy development,

and stabilizing the petroleum market.²⁵ On 14 March, Australian Ambassador Andrew Goledzinowski held a meeting with Deputy Prime Minister Tran Luu Quang at the Government headquarters in Hanoi. At the meeting, the Ambassador announced that Australia considered Vietnam a close-strategic partner. The bilateral trade between the two countries hit US\$16.1 billion last year, up more than 30 times compared to 2021. Australia is the 10th largest trading partner for Vietnam, and Vietnam is the seventh largest trading partner for Australia.²⁶

Conclusion

Vietnam has seen major events in the first quarter of the year in all three main aspects. In politics, Vietnam saw the resignation of its deputy prime ministers and president, a higher commitment to the fight against corruption, and a new president. Economically, Vietnam has aimed for more significant economic development with infrastructure and industries. Vietnam also has emphasized cooperation with regional and international partners in terms of economic cooperation and respect for international law. The understanding of the situation in Vietnam can play its role in the understanding of Vietnam for a more critical analysis of the nation's approach to political, socioeconomic, and diplomatic affairs.

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