

-RESEARCH ARTICLE-

SINO-US RIVALRY IN THE INDO-PACIFIC REGION: A NEO-FUNCTIONALIST APPROACH ON COOPERATION AND POWER DYNAMICS

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Abstract

This article explores the evolving power dynamics between the US and China in the Indo-Pacific region, focusing on how rivalry between these actors can be reduced to foster greater cooperation and regional integration. ASEAN's role in promoting stability and institutional cooperation is examined as a key factor in shaping the region's security. The paper discusses whether diplomatic and economic cooperation, despite rising Sino-American tensions, can contribute to the development of regional institutional cooperation mechanisms. Using a functionalist/neo-functionalist framework, it analyzes how the conflict-cooperation dichotomy between the US, China, and their interactions with ASEAN and other regional actors impacts the Indo-Pacific security structure. The study argues, consistent with neo-functionalist postulates, that mutual cooperation, including ASEAN's diplomatic efforts, is crucial for enhancing regional integration and stability. Addressing the security dilemma requires strategic cooperation that considers all actors' concerns, such as open trade routes and energy security. The paper concludes that a new Cold War-like scenario between Washington and Beijing, where both vie for regional hegemony, is unlikely in the Indo-Pacific's multipolar context. Instead, ASEAN plays a vital role in fostering regional stability through institutional mechanisms, making institutional cooperation a viable model for reducing tensions and creating stability in the region.

Keywords: *Neo-functionalism, Foreign Policy of the United States, Foreign Policy of the PR China, International Relations, Indo-Pacific.*

JEL Codes: *F50,F51,F52,F53,O57.*

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HİNT-PASİFİK HAVZASINDA ÇİN VE ABD REKABETİ: GÜÇ DENGELERİ VE İŞBİRLİĞİ ÜZERİNE NEOFONKSİYONALİST BİR YAKLAŞIM²

Öz

Bu makale, Hint-Pasifik bölgesinde ABD ve Çin Halk Cumhuriyeti arasındaki güç dinamiklerini inceleyerek, bu rekabetin nasıl azaltılabileceğini ve bölgesel işbirliği ile entegrasyonun nasıl geliştirilebileceğini araştırmaktadır. ASEAN'ın bölgesel istikrarı sağlama ve aktörler arasındaki kurumsal işbirliğini teşvik etme potansiyeli, bölgenin güvenlik yapısına önemli katkılar sağlayan bir faktör olarak ele alınmaktadır. Makalede, artan Çin-ABD rekabetine rağmen, diplomatik ve ekonomik işbirliği mekanizmalarının bölgesel işbirliğini geliştirme potansiyeli incelenmektedir. Fonksiyonist/neo-fonksiyonist uluslararası ilişkiler kavramları perspektifinden hareketle, ABD ve Çin arasındaki işbirliği ve çatışma ikilemi incelenecektir. Ayrıca, ASEAN teşkilatı ve diğer bölgesel aktörlerin Hint-Pasifik stratejik dengesi ve bölgesel istikrara yönelik etkileri değerlendirilecektir. Bu araştırma, neo-fonksiyonist ilkeler doğrultusunda, ASEAN üye devletlerinin diplomatik çabalarının da dahil olduğu, karşılıklı işbirliğinin bölgesel entegrasyon ve istikrarı sağlamak için önemli olduğunu savunmaktadır. Güvenlik çıkmazının aşılması için stratejik işbirliğinin elzem olduğu sonucuna varılmıştır. Sonuç olarak, Washington ve Pekin'in bölgesel hegemonya mücadelesi verdiği yeni bir Soğuk Savaş senaryosu, Hint-Pasifik'in çok kutuplu yapısı nedeniyle olası görünmemektedir. Bu süreçte ASEAN'ın, bölgesel istikrarı sağlama ve kurumsal mekanizmalar oluşturma konusundaki kritik rolü, belirleyici bir unsur olarak değerlendirilmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Neofonksiyonizm, ABD dış politikası, Çin dış politikası, Uluslararası İlişkiler teorisi ve tarihi, Hint-Pasifik.

JEL Kodları: F50,F51,F52,F53,O57

“Bu çalışma Araştırma ve Yayın Etiğine uygun olarak hazırlanmıştır.”

² Genişletilmiş Türkçe Özet, makalenin sonunda yer almaktadır.

1. INTRODUCTION AND THEORETICAL OUTLOOK

The evolving power shift in East and South East Asia, defined by Sino-US military rivalry and China's growing economic influence in the region has left regional actors confronted with the need to adapt themselves to new economic and security challenges. Diverse actors as Countries such as India, Japan, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, the Philippines, Indonesia, and Malaysia have been increasingly facing growing Chinese influence. This, subsequently, has been leading to the gradual rise of military tensions between the PRC and the US. The Obama administration responded with greater engagement and the so called "Pivot to Asia" initiative. This initiative aims to counter China's mix of hard and soft power strategies through enhanced military presence in the Indo-Pacific. (Tehseen, 2017: 1-17).

Japan under the leadership of the late PM Shinzo Abe, leaned even closer towards the US, while simultaneously expanding its security structure, calling for a "free and open Indo-Pacific", which mirrored US security concerns. (Koga, 2020:49-73). The United States pledged greater regional cooperation, advocating for an enhanced role of ASEAN in both economic and security cooperation under the banner of a "rule-based, free and open Pacific" (Hu, 2020:127-142). Recognizing China as a "pacing threat", the US Department of Defense stated that Beijing seeks to challenge the post-war regional order. In response, Australia, India, Japan, and the US created the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD) to restore a rule-based order in the region. However, ASEAN states have shown more cautious stances towards this strategy. Some member states of Asean, however, are still showing certain reservations towards that strategy (Kuik,2023:1181-1214).

China, for its part, has focused less on an official counter-strategy and has continued its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) while fostering cooperation through tailored solutions with regional actors (Hu, 2020: 127-142). Nevertheless, China's military response to growing US influence in the Pacific involved a systematic enhancement of operational capacities alongside strategic soft power maneuvers, such as extending economic aid to smaller Pacific island nations (Keefe, 2020: 94-112).

At first glance, this problem may seem rooted in the realist theory of international relations, where both China and the US seek security in an anarchic world, leading to a security dilemma (Williams, 2023: 35-48). The state, as the omnipotent actor, enhances its power to navigate this environment (Gilpin, 1996: 3-26). However, "idealistic realism," proposed by Herz during the Cold War, argued that states can resolve the security dilemma through cooperation and trust-building mechanisms (Herz, 1950: 157-180).

China, under Xi Jinping, has consistently spoken against the creation of "spheres of influence," advocating for the equality of all nations and a multilateral approach in foreign policy. By rejecting "monopolies" in global affairs, Xi has challenged the US's rule-based order in the Indo-Pacific region, promoting instead a doctrine rooted in the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence (Xi, 2017: 43). These principles, originally

articulated by Chinese Foreign Minister Zhou Enlai during the Cold War, were later reaffirmed by Premier Wen Jiabao, emphasizing "sovereign equality" (Wen, 2004: 363-368). While this stance could be seen as a challenge to US hegemony in the region, it might also be interpreted as a call for the establishment of neo-functionalism mechanisms of cooperation.

This paper argues that cooperation and trust-building mechanisms in the Indo-Pacific could foster institutional trust through processes outlined by neo-functionalism IR theory. The primary question addressed is whether the region is doomed to re-enact a Cold War scenario or if all actors, including Beijing and Washington, can profit from mutual trust and cooperation. The increase or decrease of regional confrontation can either hinder or contribute to the creation of regional cooperation mechanisms. Evaluating how the clash of interests that creates insecurity may be managed, this article furthermore researches how cooperation on a regional level may foster structures and that do enhance regional cooperation. This article proposes that regional cooperation structures and institutions foster integration and stability, echoing Haas's neo-functionalism perspectives on institutional spillover (Haas, 1970: 607-646).

The methodology employed here draws from both realist and neo-functionalism postulates to explore how non-confrontational economic and defense policies can be seen as dynamic externalizations of regional integrative policies. Theoretical frameworks of functionalism and neo-functionalism are applied to explain the positive effects of institution-building mechanisms on both development and security. Regional integrative processes in South and Southeast Asia, alongside institutionalized goal-setting, can lead to mutual cooperation, reducing the risks posed by bilateral security dilemmas.

In conclusion, the paper argues that mutual cooperation and de-escalation mechanisms between actors in South and Southeast Asia, notably between the US and China, are essential for regional integration. The region's multipolar power structure makes the classical concept of hegemony less feasible, with institutionalized cooperation offering a more stable path forward for all actors. The neo-functionalism approach provides an ideal model for fostering stability and peaceful cooperation mechanisms in the Indo-Pacific region.

1.1. Functionalism and Neo-functionalism as integrative analysis model for the Pacific Region

Functionalism and neo-functionalism are applied as preferred IR frameworks for the Indo-Pacific region because, as stressed by Haas, states remain the primary actors in international relations and their policy actions are influenced by both deterministic and normative processes. This theoretical model is well-suited to a geographically and politically fragmented region like the Indo-Pacific, where diverse policy goals coexist among multiple actors. In such a fragmented environment, intrastate institutions and societal actors play a critical role in fostering communication, which in turn enhances social learning and the effective exchange of information between states. This

communication process helps to reduce misunderstandings, paving the way for improved diplomatic and cooperative outcomes. (Haas, 1970: 607-646)

Neo-functionalism with its focus on integration assigns particular emphasis on so called spillover processes as key determinants of integration and cooperation. Originally rooted in economic theory, as noted by Lipsey, the concept of spillover refers to how cooperation in one area tends to influence and lead to cooperation in other areas as well. (Lipsey,1992:23) From a technical standpoint, that state bureaucracies and non-state actors are driven to create favourable conditions for cooperation under the pretext of maximizing mutual and individual gains (Rosamond, 2000:52). In this context, state actors—guided by rational behaviour models—are expected to cooperate when the benefits of collaboration outweigh the costs.

The more cooperation advances, the greater the likelihood of similar "spillovers" into other sectors, fostering deeper regional integration. Additionally, institutions and legally binding agreements provide a stable framework that reinforces these cooperative processes. This institutional support has been one of the core tenets in the development of international relations as an academic discipline. As Zimmern argued, institutions formalize cooperation, making interactions between states more predictable and systematic (Zimmern,1933:15). While these integrative processes are often evaluated through the lens of the European integration experience, which resulted in a transfer of sovereignty from national to supranational institutions, the Indo-Pacific presents a different scenario. In the Indo-Pacific context, sovereignty transfer is not a likely outcome, yet institutional cooperation aimed at trust-building remains a viable and important approach to regional stability. (Saurugger, 2014:37).

As stressed by Rosamond, neo-functionalism emphasizes the role of institutions in fostering cooperation between states and actors as they create interdependent networks, even in politically fragmented regions like the Indo-Pacific. However, in order to achieve a viable ground for cooperation, the regional economies have to be already well integrated prior to the creation of an integration programme. (Rosamond, 2000:52). To foster economic integration before creating such interdependent networks, states can institutions encourage states to work together more effectively. This approach can be applied to test whether similar institutional cooperation mechanisms may be adaptable to the regional dynamics between China, the US, and other key actors in the Indo-Pacific (Rosamond, 2000: 124).

In the case of the Indo Pacific region, while sovereignty transfer may not be viable, an integrative approach through institutional trust-building remains a realistic and practical option. This is particularly relevant given the dynamic nature of Sino-US relations in the region, which oscillate between rapprochement and tension. Such an approach not only encourages cooperation between greater powers and other regional actors, but will also decrease tensions between China and the US. The US has not only sought closer cooperation with regional allies but also, at times, extended certain cooperative overtures to China, particularly in areas like trade and environmental policy (Tehseen, 2017: 1-17). This example can be cited as a practical example of

positive spillover processes. When the US is still reluctant to make commitments in certain environmental policies, China, even if just paying lip service may enhance its soft power in the field of global climate action, as stressed by Buzan (Buzan,2021.1-12).

At the same time, neo-functionalism's cooperative outlook contrasts with the intergovernmentalist perspective, where national sovereignty and self-interest remain central. Intergovernmentalists like Moravcsik argue that, unlike neo-functionalism, cooperation is limited by realpolitik concerns, where states only cooperate when it aligns with their direct national interests. (Moravcsik, 1993:473-524) This seems to be particularly important for the Indo-Pacific region where the upbuilding of great power rivalry imposes certain limits on the development of a balanced institutional cooperation. Lau notes that the policies of the “pivot to Asia” and the “Trans Pacific Partnership”, initiated by President Obama and in one form or the other continued by his successors pose a limitation for Beijing’s foreign policy development in the region (Lau,2019:169).

Within the confines of realist and neo-realist paradigms actors may still pursue cooperation when it aligns with the respective national interests. Within that scope, functionalism and neo-functionalism offer a complementary perspective, arguing that regional cooperation on a more institutionalized scale could benefit both regional and great powers such as the US and China. Starting from “low politics” (i.e. economic policy) with a focus on integrating certain economic sectors, spillover expects create political integration and possibly security coordination (known as “high politics”) that is assumed to be following economic cooperation (Rosamond,2000:52). As safety and security are the primary aims within the intergovernmental school of IR theory, cooperation is pursued when aligned with national interests, and the possibility of reaching acceptable outcomes through peaceful means is achievable. In this framework, states may pursue security cooperation when it aligns with their core strategic interests. As and safety and security are the actors’ most important aims within the intergovernmental school of IR theory, the possibility of reaching acceptable outcomes through peaceful means is achievable. (Hu, 2020:127-142).

But do those theoretical models withstand the strategic goals of actors whose strategic goals often collide? As example, the premise of a “free and open Indo-Pacific”, a policy goal adopted commonly by Japan and United States, is at odds with China’s policy of naval expansion. (Koga, 2020:49-73). Likewise, India’s geostrategic ambitions, exemplified by its “Security and Growth for All in the Region” (SAGAR) initiative, present a challenge to China, as India seeks dominance in the Indian Ocean and supports the freedom of navigation (Aswani, R. S., Sajith, S., and Bhat, M. Y. ,2021: 1-19). According to Medcalf, this strategy represents a bold attempt by the US to adapt to China’s ambitions to strengthen its own influence in the Indo-Pacific through multilateral cooperation, with the US having more know-how, resources and historical experience at its disposal (Medcalf,2020:206).

The American call for greater institutional cooperation on the levels of trade and defence policy is less an amiable invitation towards Beijing. In contrast, it seeks to include European powers as France and the United Kingdom with its traditional allies, the former dominions of Australia and New Zealand within the “Quadrilateral Defense Coordination Group”. The declared aim of that strategy is to secure the unhindered flow of goods in the Indo-Pacific (Brattberg, E., and Le Corre, P., 2019: 8).

From an IR standpoint, the dichotomy between Chinese and US interests presents a challenge to functionalist and neo-functionalist perspectives. The US seeks to reinforce its security and economic cooperation with traditional allies like Thailand and the Philippines, while also enhancing contacts with former adversaries like Vietnam. Meanwhile, China extends its own network of economic and security cooperation to Commonwealth countries such as Sri Lanka, which historically aligned more with the UK and US, and actively engages with Pakistan to counterbalance India. (Aswani, R. S., Sajith, S., and Bhat, M. Y. ,2021:1-19).

The neo-functionalist approach suggests that the emergence of competing regional networks must not necessarily lead towards confrontation. As reiterated by Allison, the mutual acceptance of international institutions, mutual economic interdependence and lessons learned from history could foster long-term cooperation, encouraging institutional trust-building (Allison,2019:188). However, the challenge posed to regional stability is the exclusive attitude of both Beijing and Washington towards each other. In other words, the region faces a classic security dilemma involving unilateral vs. multilateral concepts of power balance (Wu,2000:479-497).

It is noteworthy that both powers are approaching security and economic cooperation within the scope of establishing, securing or challenging regional hegemony. Smaller regional actors incline towards to find an equilibrium within that atmosphere. As demonstrated by Murphy, ASEAN member countries’ leverage is consisting mostly of soft power and the ability to maneuver between the rivalry of Washington and Beijing. While ASEAN member states prefer to avoid being bound towards one of the big hegemons, the block itself does not possess enough leverage to restore the regional balance of power on its own terms. However, ASEAN’s handling of soft power, with regional initiatives for a rule and institutional based order is exemplary for the implementation of neo-functionalist policies within the microcosm of the broader hegemonic competition in the Indo-Pacific (Murphy,2017:50-78). Although neo-functionalism’s integration potential is highlighted in this paper, the regional security dilemma posed by the confrontative rivalry of American and military expansion remains as a significant hurdle for institutional cooperation, particularly when national security interests are at stake."

This paper aims to explore alternative approaches to this problem, pointing out the possibility of institutional cooperation and institution building between the rival “hegemons”, China and the US. The development of hegemonic rivalry in the Indo-Pacific region shall also be researched on the example of ASEAN member states

alternative approaches and cooperation initiatives, aiming to mitigate the emergence of big power blocks. While ASEAN member states seek “regional solutions for regional problems”, the fact that regional actors’ security is closely linked to the hegemonic powers’ security architecture puts certain limitations upon regional states foreign policy leverage. (Acharya,2003:51)

Linking seemingly conflicting national interests with the realist/neo-realist paradigm of power as a guarantee of security need not contradict the postulates of functionalist or neo-functionalist theories. In fact, Lau points out that a trade war based on the setting up of tariff barriers in the long term would neither serve US nor Chinese interests. Instead, he opts to show both powers economies’ to be complementary (Lau,2020:100). This approach illustrates how the Sino-US-China trade relationship in the past has periodically functioned as a stabilizing factor, demonstrating the neo-functionalist principle of spillover effects from economic cooperation to broader diplomacy.

It is, however, important to remember that while the aforesaid theories have been primarily applied within the context of the European integration process, they are not necessarily limited to the European geography (Diez &Wiener,2003:2). It must also be stressed that integrational processes are quite possible with active support from the nation state as an independent entity. Furthermore, integrative processes are possible with active support from nation-states as independent entities. The creation of integration mechanisms need not lead to political union as the ultimate goal of regional stability. Acharya provides non-European perspectives on comparative regionalism, demonstrating how institutional mechanisms have developed in regions such as South America and South Asia, and how these processes could be applied to the Indo-Pacific context (Acharya,2016:109-130).

Within this theoretical framework, we can give due credit to the nation-state while evaluating neo-functionalism alongside other IR theories such as liberalism and realism/neo-realism. From a neo-Marxist perspective, hegemonic relationships are clearly defined, with the hegemon seeking legal or societal acceptance (Cox,1983:162-175). Furthermore, a hegemon per se usually strives to include peripheric areas, and seeks to mitigate any anti-hegemonic tendencies within the state’s elites or its population. The realist approach, by contrast, views hegemony as a function of raw power, where the hegemon dominates without seeking approval. (Gill,1991:55). Neo-functionalism, however, suggests that integration processes do not follow a linear trajectory but evolve through complex interactions between state actors, institutions, and external pressures (Rosamond, 2000:140).

Built on that theoretical framework, we may assume that integration processes are not necessary following a linear, quasi-Hegelian line of progress. Furthermore, the concept of externalization can be understood as both a driving force and a result of regional integration processes. Basically, we may assume that clashing definitions of national security and the process of overcoming those fault lines for all actors are to be labelled as externalization. Particularly, the freedom of navigation and territorial

integrity consist the main concern for regional actors. Challenged by China's naval expansion, US presidents have responded with varying strategies. Under the Trump administration, despite aggressive rhetoric, Washington pursued a somewhat isolationist course, whereas the Biden administration has adopted a more assertive stance (Guillén/ Torres, 2023:247-272).

Therefore, the neo-functional interpretation focuses more on all actors' intentions to build leverage through partnerships through regional structures contrasting with the realist approach of hegemony through direct confrontation. Medcalf provides a comprehensive analysis of how the interplay of geopolitical rivalry and the need to enhance economic relations in the Indo-Pacific evolves through both cooperation and competition, underscoring the potential for institutionalized cooperation (Medcalf,2020:220). The rising profile of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) as a platform for multilateral security dialogue gives more opportunity for institutional cooperation within neo-functional confines (Acharya,2003:5).

In principle, hegemonic relationships, both on the state and institutional levels, can be described as evolving through the vicissitudes of bilateral relations, particularly between the US and China. A notable example of deviation from the typical anti-institutionalist stance of the US is seen in the Trump administration's 2018 dialogue policy with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). This policy, while remarkable in its divergence, was ultimately short-lived. Beijing, in response to this development, reasserted its close ties with Pyongyang to safeguard its strategic interests. In this context, the establishment of a discreet dialogue mechanism involving Pyongyang, Beijing, Washington, and Seoul can be viewed as an initial step toward regional integrative processes (Kim/Snyder, 2019:75-90).

However, integration in the Indo-Pacific remains hindered by the multipolar nature of hegemonic relations, particularly as the region's dynamics unfold against the backdrop of a volatile global security environment. Ongoing conflicts, such as the Israeli-Palestinian and Russo-Ukrainian wars, further exacerbate instability in the region. Close US allies have not really gained more leverage compared to China's cooperation partners, alleviating the tensions between more liberal and authoritarian political allegiances (Auslin,2017:135). Auslin provides a detailed examination of how the strategic rivalry between Beijing and Washington creates challenges for institutional cooperation. (Austin,2017:123). While Allison does not evaluate the escalation of Sino-US relations in the region as inevitable, he still draws attention to the possibility of a military confrontation (Allison,2019:167) From that perspective, we have to assume that Sino-US relations bear the potential to evolve and deteriorate in a similar way as US-Soviet relations during the heydays of the Cold War. This is not necessary and not a determined outcome, but we should remember that President Xi Jinping in 2012 specifically demanded a "new type of great power relations" with the United States (Zeng&Breslin,2016:773-779). Here, we can assert a clear request for a balance of power in terms of hegemony; yet we must also note that President Xi pointed towards the establishment of a constructive dialogue that did led to a de-escalation of

tensions between the US and North Korea, as mentioned before. (Schoen and Kaylan,2015:36).

However, China's approach to international relations, particularly its peculiar and self-confident view on sovereignty and non-interference, contributes to the mounting tensions with the US based on China's alternative view of the international world order. This confidence seems to rest on the foundations of China's rising economic might (Weiss,2019:92-102). Evaluating the geostrategic developments in the Indo-Pacific region, we must recognize that regional integration processes, particularly in the Indo-Pacific, do not follow a linear trajectory. This is in line with Neo-functionalism postulates, rejecting clear linear and deterministic processes (Rosamond, 2000:70).

Furthermore, Kuang emphasizes that ASEAN's delicate balancing act—maintaining relations with both China and the US—offers an alternative view of how competing hegemonic powers may coexist within an institutional framework. This is in line with the neo-functional perspective, postulating that regional integration can emerge from cooperative frameworks and mechanisms, even in politically charged environments (Kuang,:136-154).

1.2. The dichotomy of conflict and de-escalation in building institutional cooperation mechanisms

The enhancement of regional cooperation mechanisms by all actors, despite the ongoing rivalry in the Indo-Pacific region, may be seen as an alternative to a new Cold War scenario. The emergence of a global multipolar order forces all sides to choose between the cauldron of escalation and distrust or the enhancement of dialogue. Australia's closer cooperation with the US within the QUAD mechanism and Canberra's countering of naval advances of Beijing are an example of enhancing geopolitical rivalry, explainable with a realist stance in IR theory (Marshall,2021:31). Liu and He emphasize that the decision between conflict or cooperation is principally driven by economic interests and point towards a behaviorist interpretation of how actors (in that case the US and China) are viewing each other (Liu and He,2023:11-43).

An example of this dichotomy can be seen in the Obama administration's policy towards the Indo-Pacific (2009-2017). Despite divergent views on global institutions such as the WTO and conflicting positions on international trade, cooperation between the two countries in sectors like energy helped foster a more positive atmosphere for broader institutional cooperation. The U.S.-China Clean Energy Research Center (NEERC), a collaborative initiative between government, academia, and private sectors, is a prime example of a neo-functional spillover process where cooperation in green energy research facilitated broader cooperation in other areas (Lewis, 2014:546-554).

However, while institutional cooperation advanced in economic and environmental sectors, China's growing naval policy and the threat of nuclear proliferation on the Korean Peninsula compelled the US to adopt a more traditional containment policy on the military and diplomatic levels. Larus and Hargis (2017) point out that US concerns over China's maritime expansion in the South China Sea pushed the Obama administration to maintain a military presence in the region through Freedom of Navigation Operations (FONOPs) and alliances with regional actors like Japan and Australia. (Larus and Hargis, 2017: 7-29).

Obama's China policy displayed clear elements of realism, reflecting traditional US foreign policy goals of securing geopolitical interests through both economic and military power. Obama's "Pivot to Asia" strategy, which aimed to redirect US attention to the Indo-Pacific, sought to counterbalance China's rising influence. When suitable, it promoted dialogue, when necessary, it also focused on robust military power (Green,2017:521). However, this mix of liberal, neo-functionalism and realist approaches did not eliminate the possibility for cooperation or institution-building, particularly in areas where mutual interests could align, such as trade and environmental policy. The Obama administration's "Pivot to Asia" strategy, was a geopolitical shift that besides containing Chinese military ambitions continues to be Washington's part of a broader regional approach that seeks to balance combined security alliances with regional partners and economic cooperation to contain China's growing influence in the Indo-Pacific. It employs neo-functionalism institutional cooperation but is rather focused on cementing the cooperation with US allies as demonstrated in the FONOPS and QUAD strategies.

However, it is notable that such institutionalist cooperation perspectives with the potential to create spillover processes have also always been subject to the impact of short-term political developments. As example, the "Strategic Economic Dialogue", initiated between Presidents Bush and Hu Jintao in 2006 was first upgraded to the high level "U.S.–China Strategic and Economic Dialogue", covering top priority economic and political issues between decision makers on the highest echelons. However, in 2018, the Trump administration abruptly terminated this dialogue, branding China as a strategic threat based on trade imbalances, intellectual property theft, and national security concerns. (Savkovich and Cherepanova,2018:53-57)

While US domestic politics with a focus on Anti-Chinese tariffs and populist slogans under the Trump administration clearly did play a role in ending the "Strategic Economic Dialogue", the Obama administration's shift towards cooperation with, inter alia, Australia, India and New Zealand already pointed towards a more reserved approach towards China. The enhancement of cooperation in intelligence ("five eyes") as well as QUAD's enhancement during the Trump administration demonstrate a certain long-term geopolitical strategy in the Indo-Pacific that is not only linked to domestic concerns (Marshall,2021:35). The Trump administration's shift towards economic decoupling and trade wars was therefore reflected a broader strategic recalibration from institutional cooperation to outright rivalry, citing national security concerns (Shambaugh,2020:81). Remarkably, the Biden administration's Indo-Pacific strategy, after a short effort for enhanced dialogue with its Pacific antipode,

seems to continue this policy that is more in line with realistic IR theories of seeking security via means of military power.

While the termination of mechanisms like the U.S.-China Strategic and Economic Dialogue or the Joint Commission on Commerce and Trade (JCCT) signaled a downturn in bilateral cooperation, these moves have not entirely eliminated the potential for future institutional cooperation. Despite all geostrategic rivalry, the ongoing economic interdependence between the US and China remains a stabilizing force (Christensen,2015:87).

To evaluate the stimulants for cooperation from a neo-functionalist perspective, a non-Europe centered perspective of institutionalized cooperation and policy convergence provide a perspective for the Indo Pacific region (Acharya, 2016:109-130). In this multipolar field, a more diverse approach to political norms, shared values, and red lines is evident among actors in the Indo-Pacific. It is unrealistic to assume full agreement on matters of economic and defense policy from a realist perspective within the sphere of national interests. As noted by Shambaugh, ASEAN countries proactively and constantly recalibrate their cooperative stance towards each Washington and Beijing. Remarkably, besides traditional US allies as the Philippines, Singapore or Thailand, Vietnam also strives to establish closer towards strategic cooperation with Washington (Shambaugh, 2020:243). However, a dialogue-driven, institution-based cooperation process, aligned with neo-functionalist propositions, is more likely to generate spillover effects, which in turn contribute to long-term regional stability (Börzel,2016:41-63).

Smaller actors in South East Asia, working together within the confines of ASEAN demonstrate how the evolution of institutional cooperation mechanisms, despite diverse and often shifting political and economic interests promotes regional stability. ASEAN countries have to deal with a major power transformation and seek ways how to harmonize diverging economic and foreign policy interests (Murphy,2017:50-78). Under changing auspices, ASEAN continues to employ a strategy of soft institutionalism, consulting and consensus mechanisms, emphasizing common goals and non-confrontation. In line with neo-functionalist postulates, institutional mechanisms as the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) or the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), have provided a framework for dialogue on economy and security issues, successfully seeking o reduce conflict potential (Acharya,2003:200).

An example of this is the diverse and shifting relationship Vietnam with China, the US and other ASEAN countries. Vietnam, while maintaining significant economic ties with China, subtly moved towards strengthening security relations with its former foes in Washington. Remarkably, Hanoi even has participating in freedom of navigation operations in the South China Sea. This balancing act reflects a neo-functionalist approach where economic cooperation with Beijing creates political and economic stability and spillover processes, while security relations with the US are actively enhanced to balance the emergence of Chinese military power in the region (Thayer,2016,200-220).

As Börzel (2016) stresses, states lead the way in building formal institutions for cooperation at the regional level, reducing transaction costs and providing non-state economic actors with a larger role in decision-making (Börzel,2016:41-63). Despite the ongoing US-Chinese rivalry, ASEAN countries largely manage to promote policy convergence through multilateral institutions. This cooperation helps to create a buffer against the escalation of great power competition. ASEAN's ability to balance China's economic power with US security partnerships via dynamic cooperation mechanisms provides a model of institutional cooperation that benefits smaller states security interests. China's own foreign policy vision for Asia centers upon mutual prosperity and regional security based on good unneighborly relations. The Chinese-ASEAN Free Trade Agreement of 2011 may be cited as institutional based cooperation mechanism (Shulong,2017:333-358). However, ASEAN does not pose an alternative power block and cannot fully mitigate great power rivalry. The strategic rivalry in the South China Sea continues to be the most relevant hindrance towards the continuous lowering of international tensions.

As stressed previously, both Tokyo and the US, seeking to contain China's naval ambitions, have focused on building a web of strategic cooperation aimed at countering Beijing's influence in the region. This includes bolstering military alliances and economic partnerships with regional powers, particularly through mechanisms such as freedom of navigation operations (FONOPs) in the South China Sea. (Koga, 2020:49-73). Japan is taking a demonstrative stance within its traditional security partnership with the US and has recently taking steps to proactively enhance its armed forces strategic and operational role in the region (Smith,2019:125).

India's "Security and Growth for All in the Region/SAGAR" initiative is also a largely naval geo-strategic move to contain Beijing, a strategy that obviously is in harmony with US interests. (Aswani, R. S., Sajith, S., and Bhat, M. Y. ,2021: 1-19). As a navy-based, geo-strategic move to contain China, SAGAR aligns closely with US interests. The US-India defense cooperation is growing, reflecting shared concerns over China's increasing assertiveness. This cooperation is evidenced by joint naval exercises such as Exercise Malabar, which now includes Japan and Australia—further reinforcing India's alignment with the US-led Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD) (Suryanarayana,2023:1-4).

Within that scope, the US has sought multi-level cooperation with a wide range of countries in the Indo-Pacific. China' influence has also been challenged by the inclusion of Washington's Cold War allies, France and the United Kingdom. Furthermore, the former British dominions of Australia and New Zealand as well as India have been included within the "Quadrilateral Defense Coordination Group"(QUAD), which focuses on security cooperation and aims to counterbalance China's growing naval power. This alliance has declared its primary goal as ensuring the unhindered flow of goods and safe trade routes in the Indo-Pacific. Beyond this stated economic purpose, the strategic exchange of military intelligence and enhanced cooperation on a strategic level point toward a more robust form of military deterrence

(Brattberg, E., and Le Corre, P., 2019: 7). The QUAD has held theoretical war games, conducted joint naval manoeuvres, and developed frameworks for political-military dialogue, all of which underscore the militarization of the Indo-Pacific in response to Chinese expansion. This militarization, combined with the deepening of regional alliances, reveals certain limitations of achieving inclusive institutional cooperation in this security-heavy environment. (Regaud,2016:1-12) It seems indeed that certain neo-functional postulates are mirrored in a diverse coalition that seeks cooperation but also wants clearly to contain Beijing as its rival.

Could it be that this strategy, while leading to the development of institutionalized cooperation processes, mirrors aspects of the former European Economic Union's evolution? The EEU, not only a trade and customs union, also served as a Cold War, anti-Soviet coalition built on shared economic interests and security concerns. If this analogy holds, one might merely replace Moscow with Beijing and the Indo-Pacific becomes a new theater where the US, as an ever-vigilant hegemon, plays a similar role.

Nevertheless, under these circumstances, neo-functional IR theory would be constrained by a significant limitation: it would imply that institutional cooperation processes and any resulting spillover effects can only occur if two conditions are met:

- a) an economic and geopolitical rival or bloc exists, and
- b) a hegemon assumes leadership of the cooperative structure.

However, there is a crucial distinction: the Cold War unfolded in a bipolar world, whereas today's global situation is multipolar. This is particularly true for the Indo-Pacific, where multiple powers—the US, China, India, and various ASEAN states—seek influence. In this multipolar environment, the neo-functional approach can still be applied, offering an inclusive, stability-enhancing framework for cooperation among all actors. While hegemonic competition between the US and China is evident, neither power appears capable of establishing uncontested dominance in the region. India's growing role as a regional actor and ASEAN's resilience demonstrate that multipolarity offers room for regional cooperation alongside great power rivalry, even if some ASEAN decision makers were critical whether “legalistic” Western models of regional cooperation would prove successful (Acharya,2003:5). This is ever more important as both the US and China highlight the importance of their respective definitions of national security and the “freedom of the high seas”. More important, the US has been calling for the emergence of a “Sino-Asean code of conduct” that should include mechanisms as hotlines and emergency procedures (McDevitt,2017:389-422). All sides, while establishing their respective vital strategic interests, seem to be aware of the need for mutual cooperation and institution-based solutions for possible political crises.

In contrast to the US's imperative on a rule-based order - often referred to as Pax Americana- China rejects that policy as attempt towards a unilateral, US centred international system (Ikenberry, 1989:375-400). In line with Xi Jinping's foreign

policy leanings, the interdependent nature of China's interaction with the world is stressed perpetually (Xi, 2017: 481). China stresses its preference for a multipolar world order, emphasizing multilateral security and cooperation without ideological prerequisites. Security alliances focused on alternative models of institutional and multilateral cooperation, not necessary in line with liberalist or democratic viewpoints, are a central concept of that approach (Wu, 2000:479-497). This is reflected in China's participation in various regional forums, such as ASEAN-led initiatives like the East Asia Summit and Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP). Security is framed as a mutual concern, focused on land and sea borders, the Korean Peninsula, and Taiwan (Shambaugh,2020:246).

Therefore, the main theoretical debate is centred around the subject of the definition of security and hegemony. In a realist IR perspective, power is equivalent to hegemony, with the hegemon seeking to establish absolute domination (Gill,1991:24). However, in a neo-Marxist interpretation, as expressed by Gramsci and Cox, the hegemon needs the tacit approval of elite groups and parts of the population, making hegemony more fluid and open to institutional compromise (Cox, 1981:126-155). This opens the door to neo-functionalist institutional cooperation, where even powerful actors can benefit from spillover processes that lead to economic and political stability.

Within that context, China's position emphasizes its reluctance to gain the perception of a hegemon in the classical sense, a stance that is influenced by cultural, historical, and strategic preferences. Whether China in reality is the antipode to the US and therefore factually assumes a hegemonic role is open to debate. China proactively positions itself as a proponent of a multipolar world order, where power is more evenly distributed among various regional and global actors (Xi,2017: This stance aligns with the postulates of Kenneth Waltz, who argues that a balance of power—particularly in a bipolar world—could provide the necessary stability to prevent global conflict (Ashley, 1984:225-286).

Despite these proclamations, however, China's approach to achieving a multipolar world order reflects both its strategic ambitions and the desire to create a regional balance of power that challenges US influence in the Indo-Pacific. The member states of ASEAN seek to contain the emergence of a single hegemon and experiment with new cooperative mechanisms (Acharya,2003:202). While China promotes multilateral security, its growing military presence, particularly in the South China Sea, suggests a more complex dynamic. China's military modernization and the creation of artificial islands for strategic use are often seen as actions aimed at projecting power rather than maintaining an entirely cooperative, multilateral approach (Smith, 2019:76-98).

Within that scope, China likes to stress its ambitious Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) as a model for multipolar and peaceful institutional cooperation, albeit centred on Asia as a focal point (Xi, 2017: 543). Cooperation with the with the energy-rich former Soviet Republics highlights how regional economic and political actors can generate

institutional cooperation that serves mutual interests. These projects indeed create of spillover effects, with economic ties leading to greater political stability (Wang, 2022:133-156). On the other hand, the very focus on that geopolitical and economic project provides China with international leverage and the possibility to create alternative institutional cooperation mechanisms. Models of soft power diplomacy, ranging from economic cooperation over educational diplomacy and cultural diplomacy are proactively employed in the Indo-Pacific region (Shambaugh,2020:158).

ASEAN member states are already trying to navigate between Chinese and American models of institutional cooperation. Laksmana referring to Indonesia's foreign policy approach between the power blocs as "pragmatic equidistance", describes this process as creating several fields of cooperation with both Washington and Beijing (Laksmana,2017:113-135). Lee-Brown highlights ASEAN's "soft-institutionalist" approach, which relies on consensus-building and informality to maintain stability among its diverse member states (Lee-Brown,2021:20).

As China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) continues to expand, ASEAN states like the Philippines, Myanmar, Indonesia, and Sri Lanka seek inclusive cooperation alternatives to avoid alignment with any single great power. Kuik describes this strategy as active impartiality, where smaller states diversify their economic and political relationships to avoid becoming pawns in the US-China rivalry (Kuik, 2023:1181-1214).

In essence, neo-functionalism offers a theoretical model where regional integration can emerge even in the context of great power competition. By fostering institutional cooperation, smaller states in the Indo-Pacific can protect their security interests while avoiding the dominance of unilateral actors. Low politics, such as trade and economic cooperation, can act as the basis for broader integration without infringing on issues of national sovereignty. A neo-functionalist approach, if applied effectively, can help the Indo-Pacific region achieve stability in a multipolar world.

As China continues to enhance its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in parallel with the US-led ASEAN and QUAD strategies, other regional actors such as the Philippines, Myanmar, Indonesia, and Sri Lanka are actively seeking more inclusive and cooperative alternatives. ASEAN had originally been founded as a security community, ruling out warfare among each other to focus on economic and societal development. Parallel to China's economic and diplomatic efforts towards the Indo-Pacific, the US has been forced to reassert its strategical role in the region. Under the Clinton administration the US also added an ideological component, stressing its "steadfast support for democracy and human rights" in the Asia Pacific region. Green stresses that this is also a reference to Wilsonian idealism in terms of IR theory (Green,2017:532).

With China adopting a more nationalist foreign policy, pursuing, despite the contrary rhetoric, hegemonic ambitions in the South China Sea, the US has developed a grand naval strategy that focuses inter alia to bind in ASEAN and other regional states

defense capacity. The doctrine of open seas and trade lines is another important element of that strategy. The ASEAN Regional Forum's cautious support for US grand strategy in the Indo-Pacific is an act of balancing this stance with Chinese economic and geo-strategical interests (Ott,2017:359-88). These developments point out that ASEAN has adapted its institutional cooperative mechanisms to incorporate defense policy as well. In that case, neo-functionalist spillover processes present possibilities to be flexible and adaptive towards transnational security interests as well.

Kuik describes the response of smaller states in the Indo-Pacific as one of active impartiality and inclusive diversification. These actors analyze risk factors through the lens of domestic and structural concerns, preferring a strategy of risk diversification to avoid strict alignment with either major power (Kuik,2023:1181-1214).

This risk diversification policy could serve as a fertile ground for the application of neo-functionalist models, where regional integration processes emerge not from monolithic alliances but from pragmatic, utilitarian approaches to cooperation. If we accept that states pursue their interests in a utilitarian manner, greater regional integration could provide a platform for smaller actors in the Indo-Pacific to align and balance their security and economic interests against unilateral pressures. This aligns with the neo-functionalist emphasis on how spillover effects from one area of cooperation (such as trade) can lead to broader political and security cooperation. However, this view also draws on social-constructivist as well as utilitarian assumptions, particularly in terms of rational actors and logical decision-making processes (Ruggie,1998:855-885).

The neo-functionalist approach works well in analyzing the behavior of regional states, particularly in distinguishing between "low politics"—technical issues often delegated to supranational institutions. The other distinction deals with "high politics"—issues like national sovereignty that remain under national control. This division allows for technical cooperation to advance without infringing on core sovereignty concerns, which is particularly attractive in a region as politically fragmented as the Indo-Pacific (Fjaeder, 2012:73-101).

In other words, regional stability in the Indo-Pacific is more achievable through a diversified, less hegemony-dominated approach that balances the interests of both smaller and larger states. Hegemony, viewed as the strive for security by one dominant actor, inherently involves a Kantian "a priori" and total quest for control. (Hinsch,1985:383-409) If all parties realize that the mutual acceptance of security interest may be reached by integrative mechanisms, overall stability in the Indo-Pacific region is more likely to be achieved. The success of ASEAN in fostering a platform for dialogue—through initiatives like the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF)—has also demonstrated how institutional cooperation can function even when states are wary of alliances that may compromise their sovereignty (Acharya,2003:51).

CONCLUSION AND FINDINGS

Neo-functionalist, integrative, and institution-based dialogue policies present a viable alternative to neo-realist foreign policy in the Indo-Pacific region. The concept of creating institutional mechanisms that possess the potential to evolve into permanent dialogue and lasting cooperation is, however, challenged by the hegemonic confrontation models between Beijing and Washington. Both powers seek to establish their dominance in the region, leading to tensions that could undermine neo-functionalist cooperation models. From a historical perspective, a China- or US-driven integration process that excludes the other risks recreating a Cold War-like scenario.

If we take this argument further, neo-functionalist integration theories—historically speaking—seem feasible only when a) there is a common enemy to stimulate cooperation and b) a hegemon guarantees stability for smaller states. However, this scenario does not fully apply to the Indo-Pacific region, where the geopolitical order is multipolar, not bipolar. As a result, neither Washington nor Beijing can fully assume the role of hegemon without creating significant tensions. In this multipolar environment, regional actors, particularly ASEAN, play a crucial role in maintaining institutional balance and facilitating cooperation.

ASEAN has demonstrated the ability to foster regional cooperation mechanisms, such as the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), despite geopolitical tensions. These multilateral frameworks are essential in providing smaller states the platform to navigate between the competing interests of China and the US. By enhancing inclusive and cooperative initiatives, ASEAN has shown that smaller states can use risk diversification strategies to avoid aligning too closely with either hegemonic power. This strategy offers an important neo-functionalist model for how cooperation can emerge despite power rivalries.

Within this more optimistic scenario, the two great actors, China and the US, along with the regional states of the Indo-Pacific, may be inclined to cooperate and establish institutionalized mechanisms for cooperation. If regional cooperation among all relevant actors in the Indo-Pacific is enhanced and multilateral, non-hegemony-centered policies are embraced, neo-functionalist theory provides a solid theoretical framework for analyzing these developments.

Stimulants for this more diverse, multipolar approach include both economic and security concerns, along with the growing realization that pursuing a hegemonic monopoly on regional security leads to adverse effects. The further enhancement of neo-functionalist mechanisms for institutional development and dialogue would provide the opportunity to create positive spillover effects—particularly in areas of technical cooperation (low politics)—without depriving any of the parties of the ability to retain sovereignty on matters of national security (high politics).

Neither China's regional ambitions nor the US-promoted QUAD mechanism should be treated as steps toward strategic rivalry if all parties recognize the need for permanent, institutional cooperation. By strengthening regional cooperation mechanisms and open those institutions to all participants, these initiatives can be channeled into cooperative frameworks rather than confrontational strategies. This approach would allow smaller states to balance their economic and security interests while contributing to regional stability.

In conclusion, a shift away from the Kantian-inspired concept of absolute, total hegemony—manifested in the rivaling pursuit of regional dominance—toward a multipolar, neo-functional dialogue-driven mechanism is more likely to provide stability for the Indo-Pacific region. ASEAN's soft-institutionalist approach, coupled with multilateral security cooperation, offers a viable model for navigating the complexities of great power rivalry. This model provides the necessary infrastructure for further economic cooperation, diplomatic ties, and the development of a lasting security framework for the region.

HİNT-PASİFİK HAVZASINDA ÇİN VE ABD REKABETİ: GÜÇ DENGELERİ VE İŞBİRLİĞİ ÜZERİNE NEOFONKSİYONALİST BİR YAKLAŞIM

1. GİRİŞ

Soğuk Savaş'ın nihayete erimesinden beri, Hint-Pasifik bölgesi ile Güney-Doğu Asya, ABD ve Çin Halk Cumhuriyeti arasındaki stratejik rekabetin tırmanışına sahne olmuştur. Küresel güç dengesinin yeniden şekillenmesiyle Hint-Pasifik bölgesindeki jeopolitik manzarası derinden etkilenmiştir. Çin'in Hint-Pasifik havzasında ABD ile girdiği rekabet, çok kutuplu dünya düzenine yönelik süreci hızlandırmıştır. Bu rekabetin bölgedeki istikrarı nasıl etkilediği, ASEAN üye devletlerinin kurumsal işbirliği mekanizmalarının stratejik dengeyi nasıl etkilediği konusu tetkik edilecektir. Bunun yanı sıra, ASEAN teşkilatının kurumsal intibak ve entegrasyon sürecine de değinilecektir. Uluslararası ilişkiler teorilerinden neo-fonksiyonalizm düşüncesine teorik açıdan ağırlık verirken, realizm ve liberalizm teorilerine de başvurulacaktır. Büyük güçlerin ve bölgesel devletlerin karşılıklı münasebetleri incelenirken, ayrıca hegemonya kavramına kısaca değinilecektir. Özetle, bu çalışma, Doğu Asya/ Hint-Pasifik'teki devletlerin karşılıklı etkileşimi ve daha küçük bölgesel devletlerin „hegemon güç“ (ABD ve Çin) faktörüne karşı dengeleme tutumlarını inceleyecektir. ABD'nin „kurallara dayalı“ uluslararası düzenine karşı, çok kutupluluk arayışı betimlenecektir. Bununla beraber, ABD ve Çin Halk Cumhuriyetinin hegemonluk rolünün kabul görme stratejisi de tartışılacaktır.

2. YÖNTEM

Bu makale, Hint-Pasifik bölgesinde hızla değişen stratejik dengeyi inceleyerek, Çin-Amerikan geriliminin azaltılmasına yönelik stratejilere de yer verecektir. Bu bağlamda, bölgesel devletlerin kurumsal işbirliği mekanizmalarının istikrara katkıda

bulunup bulunmayacağı mevzu da tetkik edilecektir. Uluslararası İlişkiler teorilerinden neo-fonksiyonalist ekol tercih edilmiştir ancak liberal ve realist ekollerine de yer verilmiştir. Vaşington ve Beijing'in karşılıklı diplomatik, ekonomik ve jeostratejik etkileşimlerinin yanında ASEAN devletlerinin kurumsal işbirliği mekanizmaları da neo-fonksiyonalist ekol yardımıyla incelenmiştir. Çin-ABD-ASEAN stratejik dengesi ve dinamiği neo-fonksiyonalist parametreler kullanarak analiz edilecektir. Hint-Pasifik ve Doğu Asya bölgesinde değişen güç ilişkilerinin yapısına ışık tutmak amacıyla aktüel ve tarihi örnekler de incelenecektir.

3. BULGULAR

Bu makale Hint-Pasifik Okyanusu havzasında meydana gelen güç dengesinin değişimine ışık tutarak, artan Çin etkisi ve buna bağlı olarak Çin-ABD arasındaki çatışma riskinin ihtimalini incelemektedir. ASEAN ve bölgedeki diğer devletlerin kurumsal işbirliği mekanizmaları sayesinde dengeyi koruyarak istikrarın artmasına katkıda buldukları tespit edilmiştir. Bu suretle neo-fonksiyonalist teorik parametrelerin sadece AB'ye münhasır olmadığı, başka bölgelerde de uluslararası ilişkiler teorisi açısından incelenebilir olduğu sonucuna varılmıştır. Ancak, bu teorik modelin tatbikinin, ilgili devletlerde kesin stratejik rekabet ve hayati güvenlik algılarının mevcut olduğu durumlarda daha zor olduğu belirtilmelidir. Diğer bir ifadeyle, neo-fonksiyonalist teorik çerçevenin bölgedeki gelişmeleri incelemek için uygun olduğu tespit edilmiştir. ASEAN devletleri, daimi mekanizmaları sayesinde (ARF, RCEP) kurumsal işbirliği sürecini istikrara yönelik politikaların gelişimi için kullanmışlardır.

4. TARTIŞMA

Makale, teorik çerçeve yapısını analiz ederek, uluslararası ilişkiler bakımından özellikle realist ve neo-fonksiyonalist perspektifleri ele almaktadır. Bilindiği üzere, realizm bilhassa güç dinamikleri ve güvenlik ikilemine vurgu yaparken, neo fonksiyonalist teorisi, karşılıklı işbirliği mekanizmasının bölgesel entegrasyon ve istikrar için elzem olduğu varsayımını taşımaktadır. Her iki teorik model nazarı dikkate alındığında, yakın diplomatik ve ekonomik münasebetlerin oluşturulmasıyla , istikrara yönelik kurumsal mekanizmaların katkıda bulunduğu düşünülmektedir. Ancak realist parametreler tatbik edilince, güvenlik ve güven sorunlarının aşabilmesi için neo-fonksiyonalist modelin güvenlik politikaları açısından yetersiz kalabileceği gerçeği de göz ardı edilmemelidir. ASEAN devletleri, kurumsal işbirliği mekanizmalarını hem ekonomik hem de kısmen güvenlik politikalarının uyumu için başarıyla tatbik ederken, Çin ve ABD gibi hegemon devletler bu aşamaya henüz ulaşmamıştır. Bununla birlikte, bölgesel istikrarın artırılması ve karşılıklı güvenin tesisi ile çatışma potansiyelinin azaldığı tespit edilmiştir.

SONUÇ

Bu makale, Hint-Pasifik ve Doğu Asya havzasındaki realist/neo-realist dış politika yaklaşımlarına alternatif olarak neo-fonksiyonalist teoriyi incelemektedir. Bu çerçevede, neo fonksiyonalizmin entegrasyon teorisi ve işbirliği mekanizması olarak yalnızca Avrupa kıtasıyla sınırlı kalmadığı, aynı zamanda Hint-Pasifik ve Doğu Asya havzası için alternatif istikrar modelleri sunduğu tespit edilmiştir.

Bu bağlamda kurumsal işbirliği ve güven artırıcı mekanizmalar yoluyla diyalog zeminin kurulabileceği düşünülmektedir. Neo-fonksiyonalist diyalog ve işbirliği yaklaşımının gerginliğin azalmasına yönelik yeni bir perspektifi sunduğu, bu suretle Hint-Pasifik bölgesinde kalıcı istikrarın sağlanabileceği önerilmektedir. Çin-ABD rekabetinin bölgesel barış için daima bir tehdit potansiyeline sahip olduğu hakikati devam etse dahi, Hint-Pasifik havzasında kurulması mümkün olan kurumsal işbirliği mekanizmasının üç ön şartla gelişebileceği belirtilmektedir:

- a) hegemon devletler arasındaki hayati önem taşıyan güvenlik parametreleri karşılıklı olarak ihlal edilmemelidir
- b) bölgede, ASEAN devletleri arasında tesis edilen kurumsal işbirliği mekanizmalarının güvenlik boyutu genişletilmelidir
- c) bölgesel/ASEAN devletlerin, n kurumsal işbirliği mekanizmaları, mümkün mertebede hegemon devletlere yönelik genişletilmelidir

Bu suretle bölgesel devletler , riski çeşitlendirerek ve çok taraflı diplomatik girişimlere iştirak etmekle, Çin-ABD rekabetinin karmaşıklığı içerisinde kendi çıkarlarını muhafaza edebilmektedir. Ayrıca Çin ve ABD için uzun vadede stratejik dengeleme ve işbirliği mekanizmaları geliştirilebilir. Bununla birlikte, bölgesel entegrasyon kavramına odaklanan ve neo-fonksiyonalist entegrasyon modellerini benimseyen ASEAN devletleri, tek taraflı hegemonik hakimiyete boyun eğmemenin yollarını aramaktadır.

Özetle bu makale, bölgesel dinamiklerin nüanslı bir yorumunu savunur ve kurumsal işbirliği ile açık görüşmelere odaklı yaklaşımların istikrar ve refahın tesisi için destek unsuru olabileceğini vurgulamaktadır. Diğer bir ifade ile, neo-fonksiyonalist teoride ifade edilen ilkelerin uygulanmasıyla, Hint-Pasifik havzasında yeni bir Soğuk Savaş senaryosunun ötesine geçilerek kapsayıcı işbirliği ve karşılıklı refah yolunda somut adımlar atılmasının mümkün olduğu düşünülmektedir.

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Fikir veya Kavram / <i>Idea or Notion</i>	Araştırma hipotezini veya fikrini oluşturmak / <i>Form the research hypothesis or idea</i>	Mehmet YILMAZATA
Tasarım / <i>Design</i>	Yöntemi, ölçüğü ve deseni tasarlamak / <i>Designing method, scale and pattern</i>	Mehmet YILMAZATA
Veri Toplama ve İşleme / <i>Data Collecting and Processing</i>	Verileri toplamak, düzenlenmek ve raporlamak / <i>Collecting, organizing and reporting data</i>	Mehmet YILMAZATA
Tartışma ve Yorum / <i>Discussion and Interpretation</i>	Bulguların değerlendirilmesinde ve sonuçlandırılmasında sorumluluk almak / <i>Taking responsibility in evaluating and finalizing the findings</i>	Mehmet YILMAZATA
Literatür Taraması / <i>Literature Review</i>	Çalışma için gerekli literatürü taramak / <i>Review the literature required for the study</i>	Mehmet YILMAZATA