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ANKASAM ANALYSIS

The 14th BRICS Summit: Did Pandora's Box Open?

International relations have been moving towards a new world order triggered by increasing competition. If we accept the unipolar Atlantic Order, which started during the Cold War and was shaped at the end of it, as the Thesis, it would not be wrong to agree with the Antithesis of this thesis as the rise of Asia in particular China and Russia started in the 2000s. Having completed the first two stages, the world entered the Synthesis or "New Hegemony War" period, which we can call the third stage, with

the withdrawal of the United States of America (USA) from Afghanistan and Russia's intervention in Ukraine.

The USA was the most effective figure shaping the international system throughout the thesis period, however during the anti-thesis age, China and Russia's alliance in favor of a multipolar world order against the unipolar one became the decisive factor. As a matter of fact, the declaration "Russian-Chinese Joint Declaration on



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a Multipolar World and the Establishment of a New International Order”,^[1] which was jointly signed by both countries in 1997, is remembered as one of the most glaring indications of China and Russia’s desire to reverse the Western-based international system and redesign it according to their own interests.

In contrast to the first two phases, when we look at the Antithesis period we are in, we have been witnessing an era of turbulence, which has no main determinant actor, regional powers can intervene in the system, new geopolitical regions without hegemon powers are formed, bilateral and multilateral military, economic and diplomatic structures emerge, and hybrid vehicles are used. The significance of the period in question is that the order that will emerge in the future will be shaped by the steps to be taken today. For this reason, the analysis of current events, their geopolitical projection and their future effects are vital for academics working in the field of international relations.

From this perspective, 14th BRICS Summit, hosted by China on June 22, 2022, is considered important in the context of the current conjuncture. As it is known, BRICS is evaluated in formations such as Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and Bao Form, which is created as an alternative to Atlantic institutions. BRICS, which is seen as a rival to the G7, undertakes a geopolitical task as well as an economic one in this sense. The formation, which was first brought to the agenda by Goldman Sachs Investment Bank President Jim O’Neill, with the word BRIC consisting of the initials of Brazil, Russia, India and China, was named BRICS with the getting involved of South Africa.^[2]

The role and contribution of the BRICS, an institution representing developing countries is significant to the world economy in terms of population (40%), GDP (25% nominal and US\$ 16.039 trillion), land coverage (30%), world trade (18%), and global forex (US\$ 4 trillion).^[3] The economic and political weight of the BRICS countries has increased over the years and has reached a level that can be seen as a substantial pole. Apart from the economy, however, the summit organized by the BRICS in 2022, was monitored within the scope of its political results rather than its economic outcome. Because, the developments in Afghanistan, and more importantly, the image that emerged after Russia’s intervention in Ukraine opened the door to a new order.

China and Russia, which have been gathering strength against the unipolar world order for years, have directly confronted the Atlantic system with the move of Moscow. In a similar vein,

the West, particularly the USA and England, utilized diplomatic, military, and economic instruments to wear out Russia and China through Ukraine and started a war of attrition against other poles. The majority of analysts believe that the 2022 BRICS Summit will represent a challenge to the West in the current environment of escalating sharpening among blocs, increasing proxy wars, and an unforeseen conflict. When we look at the recent strategies of China, which is the dominant power in the BRICS, it is seen that Beijing supports initiatives that put itself and Asia in the center.

In this context, the aim of the Global Development Initiative (GDI), which was announced at the G-20 Leaders’ Summit held in Rome, the capital of Italy in 2021, and the Global Security Initiative (GSI) expressed at the Bao Forum in 2022 by Xi, is to make Beijing the most powerful pole in the multipolar world and to gather the countries around itself. The goal of China, which cooperated in harmony with the West in the 2000s, is to include the whole of Asia in its goal of weakening the Atlantic with Russia by deepening the separation of Asia and the West, in other words, the South and the North. Unquestionably, China’s next step is to dominate the world system as the only hegemon by 2049.

The summit also had meaningful results for Russia, another strong actor that participated in the 2022 BRICS Summit and opposes the unipolar order. For Russia and Putin in particular, who are in a hard situation due to the economic and political sanctions of the West, the Summit presented a unique opportunity in terms of both visibility and legitimacy. In addition, Putin, who was looking for an alternative in Asia against the market he lost in the USA and European Union (EU) countries due to the sanctions, gave important messages in his opening speech. Drawing attention to the increase in oil supplies to India and China, Putin directly targeted the foundations of the Atlantic System by saying that Russia is looking at “alternative international transfer mechanisms” with BRICS nations in order to reduce their dependence on the Dollar and Euro.^[4] In addition, the fact that the BRICS leaders did not remarkable criticize Putin for the intervention in Ukraine was a noteworthy gain for Moscow.

It’s not inaccurate to argue that India, another BRICS member, benefited from the conference as well. Due to its recent neutral and objective policy, India is viewed as an independent actor that has gained prominence. Although it has strong partnerships with the West, New Delhi, which does not participate in the

oil embargo imposed on another important partner Russia and as a result, receives oil from Russia at a discount, is on the verge of becoming a regional pole. On the one hand, India, which is a worthy actor of US-based formations such as QUAD, on the other hand, has proven its flexibility in foreign policy by participating in Asian-based formations such as SCO and BRICS, and has become an indispensable actor for the opposing sides.

When we look at the Beijing Declaration of the 14th BRICS Summit released after the two-day summit, it is seen that a comprehensive text has been created. Certain messages draw attention in the 75 articles gathered under 7 sub-headings. The statement made clear that it did not take a position in the Ukraine crisis and supported the negotiations between Russia and Ukraine. It is possible to perceive this attitude as a maneuver in Russia’s favor even if it appears to be performing a mediating role. The developments in Afghanistan were also on the agenda of the summit. In article 23 of the declaration, the attitude of the member states on Afghanistan is explained as follows:^[5]

“We strongly support a peaceful, secure and stable Afghanistan while emphasizing the respect for its sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity, national unity and non-interference in its internal affairs. We emphasize the need for all sides to encourage the Afghanistan authorities to achieve national reconciliation through dialogue and negotiation, and to establish a broad-based and inclusive and representative political structure.”

Considering the recent increasing tensions in Afghanistan and the difficulties that the Taliban have experienced in controlling some provinces, the BRICS countries give the message that a possible conflict atmosphere in Afghanistan is not desired by the countries of the region. The text, which also refers to the Iran nuclear agreement, calls for the positive conclusion of the Iran Nuclear Agreement and supports bilateral and multilateral negotiations to resolve all issues pertaining to the Korean Peninsula, including its complete denuclearization, and maintaining peace and stability in Northeast Asia.

It was also underlined that the United Nations (UN), which has an Atlantic-centered structure, needs to change in order to increase its representative power. In particular, the change in the structure of the Security Council and the demand for further consolidation and strengthening of the working methods of UN Security Council Sanctions Committees to ensure their effec-

tiveness, responsiveness and transparency, are mentioned in the declaration in this context. The main idea that should not be overlooked is to emphasize that the UN is not inclusive and produces a deadlock, rather than the goal of making the reform demand more inclusive.

Member countries support the strengthening of the Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA) mechanism and deepening the cooperation among the Central Banks of the member countries in order to improve the global financial system. In addition, the call for major developed countries to adopt responsible economic policies includes criticism of the West-based system in general and the sanctions imposed by the West in particular.

Although it has not been given a name yet, the world is now experiencing a West-Asia or North-South split in a multipolar framework. This process was sped up by Russia’s intervention in Ukraine and Moscow opened Pandora’s box. International organizations like BRICS, G7, SCO, NATO, and QUAD are symbolized like silk gloves, which serve as a shield in the new order, While the USA and China are depicted as fists of steel within the silk glove.

[1] “Letter dated 15 May 1997 from the Permanent Representatives of China and the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General”, United Nations, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/234074>, (Date of Accession: 24.06.2022).

[2] Jim O’Neill, “Building Better Global Economic BRICs”, Goldman Sachs, <https://www.goldmansachs.com/insights/archive/archive-pdfs/build-better-brics.pdf>, (Erişim Tarihi: 24.06.2022).

[3], Badar Alam Iqbal. “BRICS as a Driver of Global Economic Growth and Development.” *Global Journal of Emerging Market Economies*, 2022, (Date of Accession: 24.06.2022).

[4] Sayan Ghosh, “Russian oil supplies to China and India are growing noticeably, says Vladimir Putin”, WION, <https://www.wionews.com/world/russian-oil-supplies-to-china-and-india-are-growing-noticeably-says-vladimir-putin-490706>, (Date of Accession: 24.06.2022).

[5] “XIV BRICS Summit Beijing Declaration”, BRICS2022, http://brics2022.mfa.gov.cn/eng/dtxw/202206/t20220624_10709295.html, (Date of Accession: 24.06.2022).



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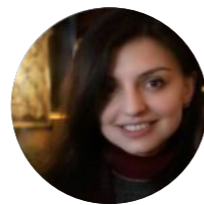
Results of the G7 Summit

The G7 Summit, held in Germany's Elmau Castle on 26-28 June 2022, has traditionally been the most protracted face-to-face meeting held annually with leading country leaders.[1] No other summit has lasted three days and included such an intense and sustained discussion of critical global issues. A week ago, the BRICS Summit held in China lasted only one day and was held in video format. It is clear that BRICS is not an alternative to the G7. In addition, two participants in the China virtual meeting, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and South African President Cyril Ramaphosa were invited to the video conference at Elmau Castle. There, the leaders of Great Britain, Germany, Italy, Canada, the United States of America (USA), France, and Japan, along with the leaders of Argenti-

na, Indonesia, and Senegal, who were invited to this Summit, discussed world problems posed mainly by the two BRICS leaders, Russia and China.

The G7 Summit is, directly and indirectly, dedicated to Ukraine. It is directly regarding the scope and timing of aid to Ukraine. Its indirectness removes Russia's threat to world development and balances China's challenge to market democracies. This does not mean that the focus of the G7 Summit has narrowed this year. However, it does mean that there are global consequences of Russia's war against Ukraine with the connivance of China.[2]

On the first day of the Summit, the general



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problems of the global economy, recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic in the face of geopolitical changes caused by Russian aggression and Chinese assertiveness, and the destruction of global supply chains were discussed. A global partnership for infrastructure development and investment focusing on climate and health was then questioned. On the first day, there was an exchange of views on the worldwide security architecture, although this was not the main topic of the G7.[3]

The second day started with a discussion on providing aid to Ukraine. Ukrainian President Vladimir Zelensky joined the G7 leaders via video link. This is perhaps the first participation of the Ukrainian leader in the G7 Summit after the 1990s when nuclear disarmament issues were discussed. This was followed by the discussion of investing in the climate agenda, energy programs, and health services, and the ongoing problems created by Covid-19 were addressed. The day ended with a session on global food security and gender equality. United Nations (UN) Secretary-General Antonio Guterres joined this discussion online.[4]

On the third day of the Summit, international cooperation issues were discussed in the context of creating an appropriate, rules-based digital governance.

The G7 Summit reached clear conclusions on Ukraine. The main issue for Ukraine is the G7's declaration of readiness to provide comprehensive support as needed, including on military, economic, and humanitarian issues. Attempts by Russia to forcefully change the borders will not be accepted. Just this year, Ukraine will receive \$28 billion to cover the budget deficit. Next, the process of organizing international assistance in post-war reconstruction and development commonly referred to as the "Marshall Plan" for Ukraine, will be initiated. This plan may involve the use of seized Russian assets, and the countries that seize these assets must make decisions according to their national laws.

Despite Russia's aggressive energy policy, previous plans to achieve carbon neutrality will not be canceled.[5] Deadlines remain in place to achieve these, including moving away from coal by 2035 and significantly reducing the world's dependence on oil and gas by the middle of the century. But how to achieve these goals has become a severe challenge with no simple answer. Rising energy prices have pushed global inflation, previously triggered by the measures taken to support leading economies in the context of the Covid-19 outbreak, to record levels. At the same time, high energy prices gave Russia resources to continue the war against Ukraine. Russia must be deprived of this resource, which has become the declared target of the G7.

The inflation rate has risen so much that there is a threat of recession for the G7 countries.[6] If a recession occurs, it can automatically solve the problem of energy prices; that is, prices will inevitably fall. However, a recession may not be a desirable economic prospect. The question is how to deprive Russia of its oil and gas exports, which are used to finance the war, while simultaneously reducing inflation in the leading economies by lowering energy prices.

Among the understandable measures adopted by the G7, in addition to the sanctions already imposed on Russia, is the ban on importing Russian gold, which provides Russia with an annual income of about 15 billion. It's not a cardinal income compared to oil and gas revenues, which generate hundreds of billions in revenue annually, but it is significant. There is also a ban on any semiconductor export to Russia. With this ban, Russia's electronics industry, including electronic equipment for weapons and military equipment, could come to an almost complete halt, just as the automotive industry has already been halted.

As for hydrocarbons, the option of establishing a special tax on imported Russian energy resources that would be directed to assist Ukraine was considered. However, this will not solve the high prices and rising inflation problem. There are many hopes for US President Joe Biden's visit to the Middle East countries, which could mean normalizing relations between the US and Saudi Arabia. Theoretically, the US-Saudi deal to increase oil production that led to the economic collapse of the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) in the 1980s could be repeated. Still, it is unlikely that Saudi Arabia will now readily agree to renegotiate obligations under OPEC+.

There is no cartel restriction on the exchange of Russian gas. Qatar is ready to increase its liquefied gas supply. However, several years are needed to change Russian ties completely. Preparations to switch the European Union (EU) to liquefied gas instead of the Russian

pipeline go so far that options are being considered to convert Nord Stream's onshore infrastructure into new liquefied gas terminals. But this will take time. Meanwhile, Russia is proactively reducing gas exports to Europe and trying to reverse gas embargo plans.

Given these issues, the G7 is considering the French idea of capping energy prices for its consumers through a cartel agreement. Such an attempt has already been made under the oil embargo by Arab countries in the 1970s, angered by the West's support for Israel.[7] Then the price crisis was finally overcome by market mechanisms by liberalizing the global oil market and diversifying oil resources. A new problem for the hydrocarbon consumers' cartel agreement is the need for Chinese support.

How the price crisis will be overcome this time is unclear. It is likely to reactivate national oil reserves, reduce the abandonment rate of coal and nuclear energy by countries that have decided to secede, primarily Germany, and use several tools. In any case, the G7, with the participation of India, South Africa, Argentina, Indonesia, and Senegal, did not consider it necessary to abandon its green transition plans and limit Russia's revenue from hydrocarbon sales.

The China issue was also discussed at the G7 Summit. The G7 agrees that the form and purpose of China's investment in the Belt-Road Project, which spans a hundred countries worldwide and has led to excessive debt with political implications, is a challenge to global development. In this context, a fund pool of 600 billion dollars has been decided to invest in infrastructure in low and middle-income countries. With these investments, it is aimed to reduce the global dependence on China.

No G7 summit presupposes immediate solutions to global problems, but it mostly means that the most influential countries are always ready to solve them without jointly compromising their core values. This time, the importance of global development coincided with the interests of Ukraine, and the Russia-Ukraine War left its mark on the G7 Summit.

[1] "German G7 Presidency". Deutschland.De, 2022, <https://www.deutschland.de/en/G7-at-a-glance-G7-Summit-2022>. (Date of Accession: 29.06.2022).

[2] "Саммит G7 в Эльмау: Под Знаком Войны в Украине | DW | 26.06.2022". DW.COM, 2022, <https://www.dw.com/ru/sammit-g7-v-jelmau-pod-znakom-voyny-v-ukraine/a-62253095>. (Date of Accession: 29.06.2022).

[3] "Как «Большая Семерка» Будет Останавливать Россию". Зеркало Недели | Дзеркало Тижня | Mirror Weekly, 2022, <https://zn.ua/international/kak-bolshaja-semerka-budet-ostanavlivat-rossiju-.html>. (Date of Accession: 29.06.2022).

[4] "G7'de Ukrayna'ya 'Gerektiği Sürece' Destek Taahhüdü". Www.Haberturk.Com, 2022, <https://www.haberturk.com/g7-liderlerinden-ukrayna-ya-gerektigi-surece-askeri-ve-mali-destek-taahhodu-3473017>. (Date of Accession: 29.06.2022).

[5] "Достижение Углеродной Нейтральности К 2050 Году: Самая Неотложная Глобальная Задача | Генеральный Секретарь ООН". Un.Org, 2022, <https://www.un.org/sg/ru/content/sg/articles/2020-12-11/carbon-neutrality-2050-the-world%E2%80%99s-most-urgent-mission>. (Date of Accession: 29.06.2022).

[6] "Bloomberg Сообщил О Планах Стран G7 Объявить О Помощи Киеву". Interfax.Ru, 2022, <https://www.interfax.ru/world/847945>. (Date of Accession: 29.06.2022).

[7] "Арабский Мир И Нефтяное Оружие". НЛО, 2022, https://www.nlobooks.ru/magazines/neprikosnovenny_zapas/126_nz_4_2019/article/21749/. (Date of Accession: 29.06.2022).



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Russia's Afghanistan Policy

Throughout history, Russia has given importance to Afghanistan in its foreign policy, as it describes Central Asia as its "backyard". During the Tsarist period, Russia played an important role in shaping the borders of Afghanistan within the scope of the "Great Game" with Great Britain. The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) tried to take Afghanistan under its influence by communistizing it within the scope of the "Socialism in One Country Doctrine" since it is neighbor to Afghanistan. In this context, the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan in 1979 un-

der the name of supporting the friendly government in addition to its strategic goals. In this process, also Western countries, especially the United States of America (USA), and Islamic States supported Mujahideen groups. Thereupon, the Soviet Union had to withdraw from Afghanistan in 1989 and the government it supported was overthrown in 1992.

The Russian Federation, describing itself as the successor state of the USSR, wanted to influence the Post-Soviet geography within the



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scope of the "Near Environment Doctrine". In this context, Russia created the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) in order to attract the Post-Soviet states to its side. In 1992, when the Mujahideen could not share power among themselves, the Taliban Movement emerged, which took advantage of the power vacuum. As soon as the Taliban captured Kabul, it executed Dr. Najibullah Ahmadzai and his brother. In addition, within the framework of its revisionist foreign policy, it allowed radical organizations that threaten the security of Russia and Central Asia to operate in Afghanistan. In the 1990s, the Moscow administration supported the Northern Alliance to ensure border security and stabilize the Taliban in Afghanistan.

Moscow, which supported the "Operation Enduring Freedom" of the USA after the September 11 terrorist attacks, gave the green light for Washington to establish a base in the Central Asian Republics in this context. It also participated in the Bonn Conference, supporting the government established instead of the Taliban. After the USA and the Coalition Forces defeated the Taliban, Russia began to perceive a threat from this, as it continued its presence in Afghanistan. After the terrorist organization DAESH-Khorasan Province (ISKP), which has a caliphate ideology, started to organize in Afghanistan since 2014, Russia's security concerns have escalated.

According to Moscow, DEASH is an organization that threatens the territorial integrity and national security of both itself and its allies in Central Asia within the scope of the ideology of the caliphate. The Taliban, on the other hand, only want to establish a (legitimate) government within Afghanistan, and most of its fighters are Afghans. Due to the "Afghanistan Syndrome" and the presence of foreign forces there, Russia supported the Taliban instead of directly intervening against DAESH. In 2015, Russia's Special Representative for Afghanistan Zamir Kabulov stated that they had established relations with the Taliban. Kabulov stated that the main reasons for these contacts were to ensure the safety of Russian citizens and to fight against DAESH. [1]

In the last 20 years, Russia has been developing policies towards the region, taking into account the US's Taliban policy. In this context, when Washington allowed the Taliban to open a Political Office in Doha, Moscow immediately established relations with the Taliban at a low level. When the USA defined the Taliban as a "security tool" against ISKP and started to negotiate directly with it, Russia also started openly negotiations with the Taliban. After the Doha Treaty, Russia saw the Taliban as

Afghanistan's "De Facto Government" and invited them to all conferences hosted by it. Russia's support to the Taliban has strengthened the Taliban both on the ground and at the table. Thus, the support of Russia played an important role in the re-domination of the Taliban in Afghanistan.

After the Taliban regained control of Afghanistan, Kabulov stated, "The Taliban have shown that they are more open to negotiations than the overthrown state of Afghanistan, which was established with the support of the West." Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov used the following statements regarding the recognition of the Taliban:[2]

"Russia is not in a hurry to recognize the Taliban, and an interim government in which all ethnic and sectarian groups participate is required for the solution of the Afghanistan Problem."

It is estimated that the re-domination of the Taliban in Afghanistan in front of the American soldiers was evaluated positively by Russia. Because Russia, by supporting the Taliban in the same geography, took the "vengeance of the USSR" from its rival, the USA. The point that draws attention here is that while the government supported by the USSR resisted alone for 3 years against the Mujahideen, the government supported by the USA was dissolved in front of its own eyes. Therefore, Russia continues the activities of the Kabul Embassy and develops its relations by accrediting the diplomats of the Taliban.

Although Russia does not recognize the Taliban administration, it tries to reduce the international pressure on it. In this context, Russia, on the one hand, keeps the Embassy in Kabul active, on the other hand, it sends aid to Afghanistan. However, Russia says that the West, especially the United States, is responsible for the situation in Afghanistan and that it should help for the rebuilding of Afghanistan. Finally, Russia wants the US to release the Afghan national reserves that it has blocked so that the economic and social structure of Afghanistan does not collapse. Instead of making decisions on its own in recognizing the Taliban, Russia acts together with both Western actors and regional powers within the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). In this context, Russia participates in the meetings held in Tehran, New Delhi and Islamabad from time to time with the USA, China and Pakistan as part of the enhanced Troika format.

The foundations of Russia's Afghanistan policy can be listed as filling the power vacuum created here with security concerns, gaining prestige over this country and leading the pro-

jects put forward. Moscow considers that its national security passes through Afghanistan. Although the Taliban claims that security is ensured by saying that they are dominant in all of Afghanistan, the ongoing activities of terrorist organizations, especially ISKP, radicalism, drug and weapons smuggling worries Russia. Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan are trying to build railways (reaching the Indian Ocean via Afghanistan and Pakistan-Iran) and pipeline (TAPI) projects through Afghanistan. Russia is uncomfortable with the export of Turkmenistan natural gas to Pakistan and India. Therefore, Russia may want also Russian companies to take part in the realization of these projects by establishing close relations with the Taliban.

Among the Russian officials, the person who is most sympathetic to the Taliban is Afghanistan Representative Zamir Kabulov. In a statement, Kabulov noted that the recognition of the Taliban took place step by step in practice. He also stated that the visit of the Taliban delegation to different states and their participation in the extraordinary meeting of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) is proof of this.[3] In his last statement, Kabulov stated that Moscow could recognize the interim government of the Taliban, and that it would not wait for the USA or other states in this regard. [4] Although Kabulov talked about the recognition of the Taliban, the Kremlin Spokesman stated that there was no such thing.[5] He said that this would be possible only if the Taliban fulfilled the demands of the international community (the demands of pluralist government, respect for human rights and the fight against terrorism).

Russia sees its interests in Afghanistan in not weakening the Taliban government. Therefore, it improves its relations with the Taliban, known as the main actor, and tries to marginalize its opponents. Zamir Kabulov, Russia's Special Representative for Afghanistan, said that the Penshir Movement, which was formed under the leadership of Ahmet Mesut, was an artificial movement, and said, "We know their feelings and wishes." [6] However, he stated that if the artificial movement turns into reality, a civil war will break out in Afghanistan and it will not be possible to provide prosperity and peace in Afghanistan. [7] Although Russia improves its relations with the Taliban, it increases its military presence in the Central Asian Republics to eliminate security concerns. Known to have 201 military bases and 6,000 soldiers in Tajikistan, Russia also organizes military exercises with the Central Asian Republics from time to time. [8]

Russia sees the USA as the main reason why the Taliban government is not accepted by the international community. In

addition, it thinks that the US policy of weakening the Taliban may bring major problems to the regional states, especially to itself. Because if the Taliban is weakened, terrorist organizations and dissidents will become stronger, thus increasing the possibility of Afghanistan will be dragged into a civil war again. Therefore, Kabulov makes a special effort for Russia to recognize the Taliban.

It would not be a correct inference to say that other states will take steps in this direction before a global state recognizes the Taliban administration. If the United States continues to press Russia further over the Ukraine Crisis and tries to further destabilize Afghanistan, Russia may choose to recognize the Taliban by acting with the logic of "the enemy of my enemy is my friend". Such a step could lead to the division of the international community into two. More importantly, such an attempt by Russia will mean that the US's Taliban policy has failed.

[1] "دنکیمی ینابیتش پ نابلط زا هی سور لی لد راه چ هب", Haşti Subh, <https://8am.af/4-reason-russia-support-taliban/>, (Date of Accession: 20.06.2022).

[2] هچ نابلط هب هقطنم یدیلک یاه تردق شنکاو: نانس نافع ا نارجب", BBC, <https://www.bbc.com/persian/afghanistan-58268582>, (Date of Accession: 20.06.2022).

[3] نایرج رد یلمع روطه نابلط ن تخانش تیمسر هب: هی سور", Tasnim Haber Ajansi, <https://l24.im/FnxOEq>, (Date of Accession: 20.06.2022).

[4] "میس انشب تیمسر هب از نابلط تسا نکمم: هی سور", Etilaatroz, <https://www.etalatroz.com/144859/russia-we-may-recognize-the-taliban/>, (Date of Accession: 20.06.2022).

[5] هب دروم رد یتبحص چیه وکسم رد: نی توب یوگنخس", Afintl, <https://www.afintl.com/202206159541>, (Date of Accession: 22.06.2022).

[6] "تسا یزاجم شبنج کی یلم تمواقم هه بچ: فولباک ریض", Sputnik, <https://l24.im/gLGui>, (Date of Accession: 20.06.2022).

[7] Ibid.

[8] "نانس نافع ا نابلط ددجم یریگ تردق لابق رد هی سور تسایس", Uluslararası Barış Çalışmaları Merkezi, <https://l24.im/h4sCmLw>, (Date of Accession: 20.06.2022).



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The New Government Established in North Macedonia and Its Regional Implications

The Balkan geography has witnessed the struggle of global and regional powers, especially since the end of the Cold War period. Recently, Russia's expansionist policy in Ukraine has triggered the fault lines in the region again, paving the way for a new polarization. The geography in question has an important geopolitical position in China's Belt-Road Project. For this reason, China's interest in the region has continued to increase. In addition, the United States (USA), displaying a more global and institutional appearance under the Joe Biden administration,

had some reflections on the Balkan geography. Although this situation is difficult for the European Union (EU), it brings some opportunities. Therefore, the case of the USA, Russia, and China during the epidemic has opened up space for the expansion of the union. Within the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) scope, a suitable ground has been established for the Biden administration and the follow-up of common policies for the EU's enlargement in the Balkan geography. European integration has been successful when channeled or main-



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tained by the United States. For this reason, the Biden administration's struggle to keep the Western Balkan countries on the agenda is significant for the expansion of the union.[1]

In parallel with this situation, the full membership of North Macedonia is a significant opportunity for the union. Thus, the global image of the union, which was damaged during the epidemic process, will be restored. However, the unstable structure in North Macedonia raises some question marks in this regard. The country in question is located in the heart of the Balkans geographically and is in a vital position regionally and globally. For this reason, the EU membership of North Macedonia can change the balance in the Balkans and can be referenced to other candidate countries. Therefore, the recent change of government in North Macedonia brings some risks and opportunities to this process.

Current Distribution in the North Macedonian Parliament

While the Union of Social Democrats of Macedonia (SDSM), the current government, restored confidence in the parliamentary elections held on 15 July 2020, its counterparts lost ground to their opponent. According to the official results, the "We Can" led by SDSM had 46 deputies with 327,408 votes (35.89%). Another Macedonian party, led by the Internal Revolutionary Organization of Macedonia-Macedonian National Democratic Union (VMRO-DPMNE), won 315,344 votes (34.57%) with 44 seats in the parliament with the "Renewal" Democratic Union for Integration (BDI), the largest Albanian party in the country, won 15 deputies with 104,587 votes (11.48%). Alliance for Albanians-Alternativa parties was represented by 81,620 votes (8.95%), with 12 deputies. The Left (Levica) Party received 37,426 votes (4.1%) and 2 deputies, and the Democratic Party of Albanians (PDSH) received 13,930 votes (1.53%) and 1 deputy. The Turkish Movement Party (THP) and the Turkish Democratic Party (TDP) also took part in the "We Can" led by SDSM, and they won one deputy each. In the newly formed cabinet, SDSM 11, BDI 6, BESA Movement, and Liberal Democratic Party were represented by 1 ministry. The new cabinet led by Prime Minister Zoran Zaev got a vote of confidence from the parliament.[2]

Local Elections and the Established New Cabinet

The second round of local elections held on 31 October 2021 resulted in a major defeat for the government led by Zoran Zaev. While the opposition VMRO-DPMNE coalition increased the number of municipalities it held from 5 to 42, including the capital city Skopje, the ruling party candidates lost a sig-

nificant part of the 57 municipalities they held and only won 16 municipalities. After his heavy defeat in the local elections, Zaev announced that he resigned from the prime ministership and SDSM party chairmanship. VMRO-DPMNE Leader Christian Mitskoski stated that the current government has lost its legitimacy and that early elections are urgently needed.[3] Zaev's resignation, on the other hand, has led to an unstable situation in the fragile ruling majority, which survived the pressure of the VMRO-DPMNE-led opposition for a vote of confidence.[4]

As a result of the negotiations in the parliament, 4 deputies of Alternativa, which had been on the opposing party until that time, played a role in the majority in the parliament in the vote of confidence with the support they gave to the current government and the transfer of psychological superiority to the existing power.[5] Dimitar Kovachevski, who played a critical role in the government's negotiations with Alternativa after Zaev officially resigned as SDSM chairman, won the intra-party elections on 12 December 2021. Subsequently, he took the oath on 17 January 2022, replacing Zaev.[6] In the session attended by 108 deputies in the North Macedonian Assembly, 62 yes and 46 no votes were cast, and the new government was established by the Macedonian Social Democrats Union (SDSM) Chairman Kovachevski was approved.[7] The SDSM, a new government found, consists of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), the Albanian Democratic Union for Integration (BDI), and Alternativa.[8]

The Role of Albanians in the New Government

Two coalitions led by SDSM and VMRO-DPMNE stand out in the political picture in North Macedonia. While the Union of Social Democrats, which holds power, adopts a political line on the axis of the EU and NATO, the opposition VMRO-DPMNE coalition follows a policy close to Russia.

According to official figures, 65% of the population of North Macedonia is Macedonian, and 25% is Albanian.[9] However, the influence of Albanians in the politics of North Macedonia is far beyond their ratio in the total population. The coming to power of these two alliances in the country's politics depends on the coalition they formed with the Albanian parties. In other words, the golden share in the politics of North Macedonia is in the hands of the Albanian parties. Albanian parties have close ties to the United States, and they do not hide the relationship in question.[10]

In the newly formed cabinet, the Albanian parties received the benefits of the advantage they gave to the power in the vote of

confidence in the parliament.10 of the 20 ministers in the cabinet are of Albanian origin. Granting strategically essential ministries such as the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Economy, and Diaspora to the Albanians will be influential in shaping the future of North Macedonia. In addition to the weight of the Albanian ministers in the government, according to the coalition protocol signed, Prime Minister Kovachevski will hand over the prime minister-ship to a deputy from the BDI 100 days before the end of the government's mandate. Thus, BDI's slogan "First Albanian Prime Minister" in the 2020 elections will be implemented. In line with the analyzes made from the Albanian front, Albanians will have more positions than Macedonians in state institutions, with the status of Albanians in the newly established government.

New Government and Foreign Policy

Albanians will have a say in the foreign policy of North Macedonia, thanks to their position in the new cabinet and their long-standing good relations with the United States. However, it is a mystery how effective the Albanian state was in the newly established government. After ZaeV's resignation, while the new prime minister is not yet known, it remains unclear to what extent Albanian President Ilir Meta's meeting with Kovachevski during his visit to North Macedonia played a role in the formation of the new cabinet. During the talks, Kovachevski said, "North Macedonia and Albania have done everything; it's the turn of the EU." He almost summarized the policies he would follow after he became Prime Minister.[11] Drawing attention to the fateful partnership of Albania and North Macedonia in the EU process, Kovachevski laid the foundations of his first regional alliance before he came to power.

Undoubtedly, the current government's most important foreign policy problem is relations with Bulgaria. Sofia put forward about 20 conditions that North Macedonia must fulfill for full membership of the EU. The new government in North Macedonia followed an active foreign policy and took steps to improve relations with Bulgaria, which is their country's most important foreign policy issue. Well-intentioned statements from both sides began to break the ice between the parties. During the visit of Bulgarian Prime Minister Kiril Petkov to Skopje, the two countries agreed to establish working groups in various fields such as infrastructure, culture, economy, education, and trade. [12]

Speaking to BNT during the said visit, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of North Macedonia, Bujar Osmani, announced that they

would appoint an ambassador to Sofia after two years and made the following statement:[13]

"We now want to join the EU within Yugoslavia. We want to develop our relationship in this direction. All the issues inherited from Yugoslavia's attitude towards Bulgaria should not be handed over to North Macedonia."

Ali Ahmeti, the leader of DUI, the largest Albanian party in North Macedonia, called for the acceptance of Bulgarian Prime Minister Petkov's demands, including adding the Bulgarian nation to the preamble of the constitution. Ahmeti, the leader of DUI, whose influence in the SDSM-led coalition government is growing, made the statement after meeting with Petkov.[14] As a result of the rapprochement of the two countries, the governments held a joint meeting. At the meeting, where the importance of European integration was emphasized, attention was drawn to the high-level diplomacy traffic between the parties in a short time, and these developments were found promising for the future of relations.[15]

In addition to the softening in relations with Bulgaria, which is the biggest obstacle to the integration of North Macedonia into Europe, its relations with NATO also gained momentum with the outbreak of the Ukraine crisis. Prime Minister of North Macedonia Kovachevski paid a two-day visit to Brussels. Here he first met with NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg. At the meeting attended by Foreign Minister Bujar Osmani and Defense Minister Slavjanka Petrovska, Kovachevski emphasized the strategic goal of North Macedonia to become a member of the alliance at the NATO headquarters in Brussels and stated that they continue the modernization process of the army in order to provide military integration to the alliance. At the meeting, it was emphasized that North Macedonia's NATO membership contributed to the regional stability in the Western Balkans and that great progress was made in cooperation with neighboring countries and especially with the alliance powers. During his meeting with NATO Secretary-General Stoltenberg, Kovachevski added that the Ukraine crisis should be resolved through diplomacy.[1]

Local elections held in North Macedonia resulted in a heavy defeat for the current government. The ruling party lost many municipalities, especially big cities such as Skopje, Ohrid, and Manastir, to the opposition. The tendency of the opposition to the current governments in North Macedonia to be formed through local governments can set an example for the elec-

tions to be held in Serbia in April 2022. Just like in North Macedonia, it is a strong possibility that the current power in Serbia will take a heavy blow in the local governments with the unification of the opposition voters in the metropolises. Although the local elections in North Macedonia resulted in the resignation of the current prime minister, the party maintained its power with the support of the Albanians.

It is against the natural flow of life to interpret this support to the current government in North Macedonia politics independently of the USA. However, it is a question of how long this situation will continue. As a matter of fact, the pro-Russian VMRO-DPMNE alliance, which is in opposition, seems to be ahead in the opinion polls.[16] In addition, it is a matter of curiosity how the current government will overcome the energy crisis, which is especially felt in the Balkans. In the current conjuncture where the Ukraine crisis broke out, it should not be forgotten that North Macedonia is a country that is 100% dependent on Russia in terms of natural gas.[17]

While the tension between Russia and Ukraine is increasing day by day, the crisis has started to become a burden on the Balkan geography with each passing day. The Balkans is close to witnessing new power struggles between the USA/NATO and Russia. Continuing military activity in the Balkans, US military shipments to Albania and Kosovo and Britain's attempts to increase its military presence in Bosnia and Herzegovina point to a new security dilemma between the West and Russia.

The negotiations between North Macedonia and Bulgaria should also be considered within this framework. As a country in the heart of the Balkans, North Macedonia is one of the countries that will be most affected by the crisis in question, with its geographical location and cosmopolitan structure. As a matter of fact, forming a front against Russia's policies in the Balkans may come to the fore. North Macedonia may draw attention as the new base of the security dilemma between Russia and the USA against the Iskender-M missiles that Russia plans to deploy to this country after the elections to be held in Serbia. In this case, it can be predicted that the EU membership processes of other candidate countries in the region, especially North Macedonia, may accelerate due to security concerns.

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ANKASAM ANALYSIS

Russia's Approach towards Greek Foreign Policy

The disputes on the militarization of the islands on the Aegean Sea, which is not legal according to international law, caused escalation of the tensions between Ankara and Athens. Moscow is also alarmed by the mention of a possible war between Türkiye and Greece. Recently, there was not an official declaration by Kremlin.

Yet the development in the region concerns Russia as well. In that sense, Greek policy is affecting the relations of Moscow-Athens negatively.

Russian-Greek relations started to be worsened at the end of 2021. Before the meeting between



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President of Russia Vladimir Putin and Prime Minister of Greece Kyriakos Mitsotakis on December 8, 2021, Russians have expressed that they are concerned about the transfer of the weapons of NATO through Alexandroupoli Port of Greece to Ukraine and gathering of NATO and US military power in Greece. While Kremlin's Spokesperson Dmitri Peskov is answering the question on what the concerns of Moscow on the updated defense cooperation agreement between Greece and US are, he claimed that "The question is quite easy. The NATO and US military is focusing on your region increasingly. Hundreds, even thousands of military equipment is being transferred to Greece. You are opening new bases for NATO and the same NATO declares us as enemies."

In that sense, Russia is concerned about the opening of Greek bases to the US and armament of the region with the agreement signed with US on October 14, 2021, concerned Russia. This is like Türkiye's concerns. Geographically, Greece is far away than Greece; however, ensurance of bases to the US negatively affected Moscow-Athens relations.

While Russia's reaction towards Greece is about the armament by the US, Athens' objection to Russia is about the sale of S-400 anti-aircraft missile system to Türkiye. When Greek side demanded Russia to not sell those weapons to Türkiye, Kremlin has claimed that S-400 system is the defense system, and the American weapons carried through Alexandroupoli are offensive weapons. According to Russian resources, on the Port of Alexandroupoli, where the US was deployed, there are many American military equipment and weapons transferred, including 120 helicopters, 1000 tanks, and armored vehicles.[1]

Another reason why Russia reacted to Greece is also the facilities for the US with the defense agreement between Greece-US. For instance, the US will be advantageous geopolitically and strengthen her presence in the Balkans, Aegean, Mediterranean and Black Sea, thanks to military bases developed in Greece.

The US possessing a serious military superiority in the Aegean will start to create a threat for Russian fleet going from the Black Sea to the Mediterranean as well. While Russia is busy with the Ukrainian War and cannot hold the success on the Ukrainian front; Greece had an attitude towards Russia. On April 6, 2022, 12 Russian diplomats were deported by Greece. The 8 of 12 diplomats that were declared as "persona non grata" by Greece were the senior representatives of Russian Embassy.

On May 8, 2022, Prime Minister of Greece Kyriakos Mitsotakis has declared that there are three ways to continue the policies towards Russia. The first one is Ukraine's armament for self-defense. The second is, the Western World must apply sanctions, which harm Russia seriously. The third one is, the communication canals with Russia must be kept open as much as possible. In addition, Mitsotakis indicated that the responsible of quadruple increase of energy prices in Europe and increase in electricity prices in Greece is Russia.[2]

Prime Minister of Greece Kyriakos Mitsotakis, who made official contacts in the US on May 16, 2022, he said that he will support Ukraine during the meeting with the President of the US Joe Biden and he repeated that he will collaborate to harm Russian economy seriously, while Biden said they will stand against Russia with Greece.[3]

It can be said that with those declarations, Greece has finalized her attitude towards Russia, and have taken up front openly. The basic aim of the visit of Mitsotakis to the US is to ensure Washington to make political pressure to Ankara and not give war planes. Besides, it was aimed to supply more modern weapons to the Greek Army. In return for this, Greece was on the side of the US against Russia.

Another area that Greek-Russian relations caused the conflict of interest is about energy security. Athens position on that issue is relevant for Türkiye as well. Greece is one of the countries dependent on Russian gas. Depending on the season, Russian gas holds 45-55% of imports.[4] Greece also aims at exporting the gas resources in the Eastern Mediterranean to Europe to decrease the dependency on Russia. Therefore, Greece not only aims at decreasing Russian gas internally, but also being the route of alternative resources for Russia in the European market. Besides, Greece endeavored building liquefied natural gas terminal in Alexandroupoli. Therefore, Greece intended to "eliminate" the dependency on Russian gas "strategically."

Greece, who is still dependent on Russian gas, demanded to quit the list of sanctions of Europe towards Russian energy sectors. According to Greece, for now they had to take that kind of decision due to not having an alternative resource. Yet in the future Greece will try to get rid of the dependency both by increasing the number of gas terminals in the country and pipelines. At the same time Greece is planning to be one of the centers that supply energy for Europe.

Taking the strategic relations with the US into next level, supporting Ukraine and having the attitude on “punishing Russia” means for Greece to challenge Moscow’s benefits directly. The decisions of Greece on energy security and policies is received by Moscow negatively.

Athens’ aggressive attitude towards Türkiye and Ankara restraining Greece by reacting this is to be seen on the benefits of Kremlin. Even punishing Athens may be met positively. However, on the other hand, the rapprochement of Greece to the US more and more due to security against Türkiye and turning Greece to a “military base” is not overlapping the benefits of Russia, who tries to make an influence in the Eastern Mediterranean over Syria. Russia wants less American naval power in the region. Especially, American fleet’s being superior on the Aegean transfer lines over Greece makes Kremlin concerned.

The attitude of Greece approaching to the US will be determining factor for Russia’s relations with Athens in the long term. While Greece came under the influence of the US; it is possible that Russia search for ways to support an actor provide the balance of power against this.

Due to Ukrainian Crisis, Ukraine continues to be the focal point of Russia. After the war ends, Russia will be needed to develop a new kind of relations with the countries of the region. It can be said that Greece will not be the prior for Russian policy. In other words, the “anti-Russian” attitude that Greece follows and prefers as a long-term strategy has started to seriously affect the Moscow-Athens relations.

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ANKASAM ANALYSIS

Belarus’ Desire to Become a Full Member of the SCO

Belarus has been on the broad agenda of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) for years and actively participates in the organization’s political-diplomatic, commercial-economic and cultural-humanitarian interactions. The status of Belarus, which became a “dialogue partner” in 2010, was raised to the level of “observer” in 2015. On 14 June 2022, it was

learned that Belarus applied for full membership to the SCO and hopes for its acceptance. This decision taken in an international environment where the war in Ukraine continues and the sixth package of sanctions against Belarus was introduced together with Russia; points out that the country wants to compensate for the losses caused by the sanctions against Bela-



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rusian businesses and is looking for alternative development paths.

First of all, Belarus seems to be interested in the economic aspect of cooperation within the framework of the organization. Under the sanctions of the European Union (EU), the United States (USA) and a number of other countries, the Minsk administration has lost a significant part of its market. According to the latest official data, the volume of damage suffered by the Belarusian economy due to Western sanctions is about 16-18 billion dollars per year.[1] In this context, the SCO, which covers almost two-thirds of the Eurasian continental area, is becoming more important than ever for Belarus as a growing market and an additional source of finance. Foremost, agricultural products are mentioned. The growth of eastern markets creates great opportunities for Belarusian products. In addition, SCO member countries, especially China, are considered an important technology and additional financial resource for Belarus.

In addition, Belarus will be able to derive significant benefits from participating in the promotion of the Silk Road Economic Belt, both in production and logistics, as emphasized in the SCO Development Strategy until 2025. As an example, the creation of the "Big Stone China-Belarus Industrial Park", whose main purpose is to establish a series of enterprises producing new generation products in the Minsk region, can be cited. In addition, Belarusian leader Alexander Lukashenko, in his statement on the occasion of the anniversary of the founding of the SCO on June 15, stated that they would actively participate in all dimensions of the organization and assured that they would contribute to the emergence of a great unity and partnership potential.[2]

In fact, admission to the SCO will provide an additional foothold for Belarus against Western countries and will help to remove the pressure of sanctions. In other words, Minsk sees the SCO not only economically, but also as a geopolitical alternative to the West. This position of Belarus also echoes in the foreign policy of Russia. It is in Moscow's interest to divert Belarus, which is included in the Eastern Partnership Program and is a buffer zone between Russia and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), away from developing cooperation with the EU. Two interesting points stand out in this context:

The news about the application to the SCO was first shared not by a Belarusian, but by a Russian official, the Special Representative of the President of Russia for SCO Affairs, Bakhtiar Khakimov.[3]

This decision was taken simultaneously with the discussion of the applications of Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia to obtain the status of candidates for EU membership.

From this point of view, we can say that Russia supports and encourages Belarus to be accepted into the SCO, which is perceived as a potential center of the multipolar world and has the capacity to create an alternative or balance against the USA and its allies. In addition, in the context of China's increasing influence in Central and South Asian countries, Russia wants to see its closest ally among the full members of the organization. In this sense, Minsk's full membership will make a significant contribution to strengthening Russia's position and balancing Beijing's influence. However, it is difficult to say how realizable Russia's aspirations are. In this sense, Belarus' desire to become a full member of the SCO points to another important factor. Despite his "strong allied relations" with Russia, Lukashenko does not want Belarus to become overly dependent on Russia. Considering that the Russian influence in the SCO is balanced by China, India and Pakistan, the importance of this structure in Minsk's foreign policy is increasing. The internal structure of the SCO helps to maintain a system of checks and balances by resolving the problems through compromise and allows the members of the organization to maintain balanced relations with Russia and China both within the organization and in terms of bilateral dialogues; They are considered indispensable opportunities for Belarus.

For China on the other hand, on the basis of the ongoing war in Ukraine, Belarus is becoming one of the few reliable land bridges between China-Europe, more broadly between the SCO-EU. Of course, this makes Belarus, which is also a member of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), important for China within the framework of the large-scale Belt-Road Project. It is clear that China, which is not interested in sticking to a country or a route, but in diversifying its trade routes as much as possible, needs Belarus, which establishes a link between Asia and Europe.

As a result, the combination of opportunities and benefits mentioned for Russia, China and Belarus is capable of significantly affecting the acceptance of Minsk as a full member of the SCO.

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ANKASAM ANALYSIS

A New Geopolitics in the Indo-Pacific: The US-South Korea-Japan Trilateral Alliance

As the United States-China rivalry intensifies in international relations that have transformed into a multipolar framework, developments in the Indo-Pacific region have been accelerating. Especially in the last period, US President Joe Biden's meeting of ASEAN leaders at the White House and his visits to Japan and South Korea, the security agreement signed by China with the Solomon Islands and the 10-day visit of the Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi to the Pacific Islands Countries were seen as promi-

nent developments in the Indo-Pacific agenda. However, there was another progress that attracted less attention in the region.

On June, 8, Republic of Korea (ROK) First Vice Foreign Minister Cho Hyundong, U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman, and Japan Vice Foreign Minister Mori Takeo met in Seoul to discuss how our three countries will work together to address the challenges of the 21st Century for the benefit of the region and



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the world.[1] In a joint statement after the meeting, the three countries stated that they discussed the latest events in the region within the framework of the Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy. The meeting, which was held at the level of the deputy minister, should be seen as significant in terms of its future effects, although it seems to be in the background due to the heavy agenda.

Despite being members of the Atlantic alliance, South Korea and Japan, which are considered one of the major powers in the region, have a troubled past. The most significant historical issue between South Korea and Japan still exists today as a result of Japan's invasion of Korea in 1910 and various human rights violations that occurred up to 1945. Another issue creating conflict between Japan and South Korea is the disagreement over the sovereignty of the Dokdo or Takeshima Island.

While the tensions between South Korea and Japan have been increasing and decreasing over time, the geopolitical effects of this situation are reflected in the region. Due to issues between them, USA allies Japan and South Korea are often unable to contribute to Washington's containment strategy against China at the desired level. This problem gives Beijing an advantage in the East China Sea, an important extension of the Indo-Pacific region. Beijing, which pursues a policy of increasing its presence in the South China Sea, especially through artificial islands, does not receive serious criticism from Japan and South Korea. This is a result of sovereignty disputes. Because the three nations which have the same problem have been utilizing this crisis as a blackmail tool against one another.

For the USA, which seeks to reduce and encircle China's growing influence within the "Free and Open Indo-Pacific" policy that it launched in recent years, the South Korea-Japan issue stands out as a drawback. The recent actions done by the USA to improve ties between the two nations are noteworthy, despite the fact that it does not appear to be a simple task to resolve the rivalry which has a long history. Joe Biden, who took office from Donald Trump, abandoned the "First America" narrative, opened more channels of dialogue with the countries of the region and took steps to deepen cooperation. In this sense, Biden saw Japan and South Korea as strategic allies.

The most recent Indo-Pacific report issued by the Biden Administration is the first of the recent initiatives created by the United States to pursue rapprochement between South Korea and

Japan. Contrary to the previous reports, this document, which contains a separate sub-title for the strengthening of the US-South Korea-Japan alliance, aims to establish a reconciliation, particularly in light of North Korea's threat of nuclear missile testing.[2]

"As the DPRK continues to develop destabilizing nuclear and missile programs, we will continue to seek serious and sustained dialogue, with the goal of complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula...At the same time, we are strengthening extended deterrence and coordination with the ROK and Japan to respond to DPRK provocations, remaining prepared to deter—and, if necessary, defeat—any aggression to the United States and our allies, while bolstering counter-proliferation efforts throughout the region. While reinforcing extended deterrence against nuclear- and ballistic-missile systems and other emerging threats to strategic stability, the United States will seek to work with a wide set of actors, including our rivals, to prevent and manage crises."

In addition, the following statements are included in the sub-title of "Expand U.S.-Japan-ROK Cooperation":[3]

"Nearly every major Indo-Pacific challenge requires close cooperation among the United States' allies and partners, particularly Japan and the ROK. We will continue to cooperate closely through trilateral channels on the DPRK. Beyond security, we will also work together on regional development and infrastructure, critical technology and supply-chain issues, and women's leadership and empowerment. Increasingly, we will seek to coordinate our regional strategies in a trilateral context."

The key driving forces behind the rapprochement process that the USA wants to initiate are to surround China more effectively in terms of economically and increase the involvement of South Korea much more toward the Indo-Pacific strategy. The USA, which desires to unite Japan and South Korea under a common threat (North Korea-China), also wants to see both countries on its side in the direction of the same goals. As a matter of fact, The Vice Foreign Ministers and the Deputy Secretary discussed the same targets such as a range of pressing regional and global issues, including our joint efforts to support Ukraine, restore Myanmar to a democratic path, bolster engagement with ASEAN and within ASEAN-led architecture, enhance cooperation with Pacific Island countries, strengthen economic and energy security, prioritize women's empower-

ment and workforce development, uphold international law, and promote a free and open Indo-Pacific, which is inclusive and they took a decision that the next meeting will hold in Tokyo.[4]

This process was also among the key items of the agenda at the Shangri-La Dialogue Forum 2022 organized by the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) in Singapore. The following commitment by Lee Jong-Sup, Minister of National Defense, the Republic of Korea on relations with Japan demonstrates that US efforts have evolved from theory to reality.[5]

"We seek to strengthen ROK-US-Japan trilateral security cooperation to respond to North Korea's nuclear and missile threats. While many bilateral issues remain unresolved between the ROK and Japan, we not only intend to have the two sides put their wisdom together to reach reasonable solutions in a way that is in line with the two countries' shared interests, but also intend to engage in a serious dialogue with Japan, not just to normalise ROK-Japan security cooperation but also to strengthen ROK-US-Japan trilateral security cooperation."

The meeting between Kishi Nobuo, US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin, and S. Lee Jong-sup at the Shangri-La Dialogue Forum was another major step. The meeting in the first 3-way meeting since the inauguration of South Korea's new government and the first such face-to-face meeting since November 2019, the parties took substantive decisions. In a joint statement, the defense chiefs strongly condemned North Korea's repeated ballistic missile launches, saying they clearly violate UN Security Council resolutions. In addition to this statement, the decision to resume joint exercises, which have been suspended since December 2017, to deal with North Korea's missile launches, came to the fore as the most tangible step taken. It is also noteworthy to emphasize the importance of peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait. Because it is the first time Taiwan has been mentioned in a joint statement of the 3-way defense ministerial meeting.[6]

When the efforts of the USA and the constructive attitude of Japan and South Korea are analyzed, it would not be wrong to say that a stronger objection to Beijing will arise in the East China Sea. The positive view of the Prime Ministers of South Korea and Japan towards the USA, the perception of China's military modernization as a threat and the message that the USA is comeback by increasing its dialogue with its allies will herald new developments in the Indo-Pacific. The USA and its allies will gain considerable geographic and coordination advantage thanks to Japan and South Korea's participation, which do not come together in the same formations to joint formations (such as South Korea's membership in QUAD).

[1] "Joint Statement on the Republic of Korea-U.S.-Japan Trilateral Vice Foreign Ministerial Meeting", The White House, <https://www.state.gov/joint-statement-on-the-republic-of-korea-u-s-japan-trilateral-vice-foreign-ministerial-meeting/>, (Date of Accession: 16.06.2022).

[2] "Indo-Pacific Strategy of The United States", The White House, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/US-Indo-Pacific-Strategy.pdf>, 2022. (Date of Accession: 16.06.2022).

[3] Aynı yer.

[4] "Joint Statement on the Republic of Korea-U.S.-Japan Trilateral Vice Foreign Ministerial Meeting", a.g.e, (Date of Accession: 16.06.2022).

[5] "The IISS Shangri-La Dialogue", IISS, <https://www.iiss.org/events/shangri-la-dialogue/shangri-la-dialogue-2022>, (Date of Accession: 16.06.2022).

[6] "Japan, US, S.Korea Agree to Resume Joint Military Drills to Counter N.Korea", NHK World Japan, https://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/en/news/20220611_14/, (Date of Accession: 16.06.2022).



ANKASAM ANALYSIS

The Russian-Ukrainian War in the Context of the Transnistria Question

The ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine and the recent explosions in Transnistria, a de-facto administration, brought to mind the possibility that the crisis in Ukraine could spread. In order to evaluate this possibility, first of all, the Pridnestrovian Republic of Moldova (PMR), which is a narrow strip of land between Moldova and Ukraine, which is expressed as Transnistria, needs to be defined.

Located between Ukraine and Romania in terms of its geographical location, Moldova became a part of Romania until 1940, and from 1940 it was integrated into the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) and continued its existence as the

Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic (Moldova SSR) until the collapse of the USSR. While the Transnistria region came into existence as a part of Ukraine in 1924, it was included in the Moldovan SSR in 1940. This situation maintained its current form until 1990, and in June 1990, the process took a different shape with the Moldovan government declaring itself as a sovereign state. Accordingly, also the Transnistria region responded to the current situation by declaring its independence in September 1990, and Transnistria, which has a de facto administration, took a separatist attitude by establishing its political institutions within this framework. Ultimately, this separatist attitude



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of the Transnistrian region, which has de facto independence but is not recognized by other countries and the United Nations (UN), has brought conflicts with it.

Although the roots of the conflicts between Moldova and Transnistria have deep traces, it can be stated that some policies implemented during the Cold War accelerated the emergence of the problem. Accordingly, the rise of the nationalist wave in the last decade of the Cold War period also brought along a series of decisions by the Moldovan administration in this context. However, in this period when the new cultural decisions of the Moldovan administration, whose purpose was to encourage its culture, were discussed, the existence of ideas of reunification with Romania, which is another discussion topic, disturbed certain segments of the society and triggered separatist desires.

The minor conflicts between the parties as of 1990 escalated in March 1992. In this process, Moldovan troops struggling to take control of critical places, especially important bridges, failed. Also, as a result of the Transnistrian troops pushing back the Moldovan troops behind the Dniester River, Moldova had to declare a ceasefire. Here, it can be stated that the support of the 14th Army of Russia to the Transnistrian troops is an important factor. As a result of the agreement signed between then-Russian President Boris Yeltsin and then-Moldova President Mircea Ion Snegur in July 1992, Moldovan administration had to accept Russia's presence in Transnistria. Accordingly, it was decided to establish a joint peacekeeping force consisting of the military units of Moldova, Transnistria and Russia, and a Joint Control Commission, which has the authority to control this force, in order to maintain the ceasefire and establish a safe zone. It was decided that the said Commission should also have authority over the safe zone. In addition to this, in this agreement, in which the possibility of Moldova to unite with Romania was taken into consideration, the Transnistria region was also given the right to determine its own destiny in case of a possible unification.

Although mediation activities have been carried out in partnership with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), Russia and Ukraine since 1993, for the resolution of the conflict between Moldova and the separatist Transnistria region, no progress has been achieved at the desired level. As of 2005, in line with the request of the Chisinau administration, the process takes place in a way that is also expressed as "5+2". Accordingly, while Moldova and Transnistria are involved in the negotiations, Russia and Ukraine are in the position of guarantor countries; the European Union (EU) and the United

States of America (USA) are in the status of observer countries. Also in this process, the proposed memorandum texts could not be put into practice for reasons such as the parties' different interpretations of the terms in the provisions. Accordingly, for example, the different interpretation of the concept of "common state" in the memorandum of understanding, also known as the Primakov Memorandum, in which the principles regarding the normalization of relations between the parties were determined, led to the inability to obtain results from the process. Similarly, a federal Moldova was mentioned in the agreement known as the Kozak Memorandum, proposed by Dmitry Kozak, an adviser to Russian President Vladimir Putin, in November 2003. This proposal, which did not comply with the current position of Transnistria, which demanded equal status between Transnistria and Moldova, was also not accepted. The Yushenko Plan, which came to the agenda in 2005, was welcomed by Moldova and it was accepted that the Transnistria region should be an autonomous region with legal status within Moldova. However, the decision of the Transnistria region to take a referendum in 2006 and then declare its independence brought the end of the process.

Although Russia does not provide official diplomatic support to Transnistria, it does provide military support to the Transnistrian forces of Russian peacekeepers. In addition, Russia is helping Transnistria not only militarily, but also financially. It is known that Russia provides over one billion dollars of funds to Transnistria every year with these economic aids, which include the free supply of natural gas and the support of the elderly with pensions.

On the other hand, it is stated that the military power of Moldova is smaller and weaker than the Transnistrian forces. Therefore, it seems very difficult for the Moldovan administration to gain control over the region under the current conditions. It is also known that Moldova's economy has not improved since its declaration of independence to the present day. Today, Moldova is one of the poorest countries in Europe with a population of about three million. Especially in the energy sector, its dependence on Russia to a large extent is one of its important vulnerabilities. In the last quarter of 2021, the representative of the Russian energy company Gazprom announced that if Moldova does not pay its natural gas debt in full, it will cut off its natural gas and that it is necessary to make a new agreement by the specified date. The problem here is beyond the fact that Moldova has difficulty in paying due to financial problems or asks for natural gas support from Ukraine. The defense of the territorial integrity of Moldova, including the Transnistria region, and therefore its claim to sovereignty over the region, also

brings with it responsibilities regarding the region. When the debt of Moldova to Gazprom is examined, it is observed that a significant part of the existing natural gas debt belongs to Transnistria. In this context, the acceptance of the Transdniet region as a part of its own territory also requires the undertaking of debts from a legal point of view. In this context, the fact that Moldova has not been able to actually control the region for more than thirty years is the reason why the country administration does not want to take on the obligations of the Transnistria region.

In addition to Moldova's dependence on Russian natural gas, the fact that a significant portion of the shares of its own natural gas company, Moldovagaz, is also owned by Gazprom makes things even more difficult. From this point of view, it can be said that although Moldova, which has applied for EU membership, has a pro-EU political orientation, the current dependency of the country prevents it from leaving Russia's orbit. Therefore, the existing situation in the region is considered important in preventing the possibility of Russia's close contact between Moldova and the EU, thereby persuading Moldova to remain in the Russian sphere of influence and at the same time join the Eurasian Economic Union (EEA).

Based on this general framework, the question of what makes Transnistria important for Russia comes to mind. When we try to reach the answer to this question, we encounter a Russia that wants to keep Moldova under its influence, which was a part of the USSR during the Cold War. In this sense, the Transnistria region allows Moscow to intimidate the Chisinau administration and limit its pro-Western aspirations. In other words, the presence of Russian troops in Transnistria is instrumental in putting pressure on a sovereign state to Russia and preventing the expansion of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) with the EU within Russia's perceived Russian sphere of influence. The most general meaning of Moldova's accession to NATO and the EU for Russia is that the cultural and linguistic ties with Russia will decrease and that Russia will feel threatened through the weakly built satellite states located between its borders and Europe and which it considers as a buffer zone.

In this context, the question of how likely it is for the war to spread, in other words, for Russia to advance towards the region, comes to mind again. Russian military commander Ustam Minnekaev, in his statement on April 22, 2022, emphasized that one of the duties of the Russian army is to provide full control over the Donbass and southern Ukraine and that the control to be established over the south of Ukraine will provide access to Transnistria, causing the eyes to turn to the Transnis-

tria region. In this sense, it can be stated that the Ukrainian War and the presence of Russian military units in Transnistria raise concerns that Russia's next move may be Moldova. However, current data do not yet give the impression that Russia will follow such a path.

On the other hand, although Transnistria seems to be an ideal site for Russia to launch an attack on Ukraine or Moldova, the ability of the pro-Russian Transnistrian government to fight Ukraine or Moldova in its current state is unlikely. Therefore, in such a case, the possibility of directing Russian troops to the region comes to the fore, and a possible military shipment of Russia may bring more problems in the course of the war with Ukraine. It is obvious that the priority for Russia is not to encounter new types of problems at the moment.

In addition, although Moldovan Prime Minister Natalia Gavriluța has declared that unlike Ukraine, Moldova does not want to join NATO and is in a constitutionally neutral status, the possible military shipment of Russia to the region may trigger the addition of international sanctions, as well as may cause its disappearance of relationship with Moldova. Well, it can be stated that if Russia, which is advancing step by step in the east of Ukraine, seizes Donbass, which is the primary target, it does not seem possible to stop. In the context of Transnistria, it is more likely that the new target would be the south of Ukraine in the likely scenario. In this sense, although the establishment of a Russian line extending to the Transnistria region is a promise, such a situation will not only provide a land connection to Transnistria, but also cut off Ukraine's connection with the Black Sea, which was cut off from the Sea of Azov. However, after this region, the possibility of the war spreading to Moldova is very low.

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4 July 2022

Ankara Center for Crisis and Policy Studies (ANKASAM) President Prof. Dr. Mehmet Seyfettin Erol made a statement to the World News Agency regarding the Constitutional Referendum planned to be held in Uzbekistan.

6 July 2022

ANKASAM International Relations Consultant Dr. Kadir Ertaç Çelik evaluated the current developments in foreign policy in the Channel B Morning News program.

8 July 2022

ANKASAM International Relations Consultant Dr. Kadir Ertaç Çelik evaluated the current developments in foreign policy on Bengütürk TV.



The latest issue of the International Journal of Crisis and Politics Studies, an international peer-reviewed journal operating within the Ankara Center for Crisis and Politics Studies (ANKASAM), has been published. Academic Keys, ASOS Index, CEEOL, Cite Factor, DRJI, Index Copernicus, Ideal Online, Research Bible, Sindex and TUBITAK DERGIPARK databases are scanned by our journal can be accessed via the link below.

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