



# ANKASAM

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## ANKASAM ANALYSIS

# Anti-Terrorism Meeting in India and Security of Eurasia

India hosted Regional Anti-Terrorism Structure (RATS) meeting, which is an organ of Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), to examine terrorist threats in Eurasia especially in Afghanistan, between 16-19 May 2022. Pakistan, which is one of the nine members of the organization, has sent a commission for summit in New Delhi.[1] Since March 2022, India has attempted for organizing military drills and challenging against terrorism. Lastly on March 25, 2022, it

was decided to realize two military drills under SCO, in the RATS meeting in Tashkent, headed by India. The first common anti-terrorism drill was decided to operate on October 2022 in New Delhi, was named as "Manesar-Antiterror 2022". The second one was "Friendship Border", which is expected to be exercised under SCO in Kazakhstan.

It is significant that India and Pakistan have met



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in SCO meetings, led by China, although they do not show up in regional meeting. For instance, in 2021, a community from India came to the city of Pabbi in Pakistan to join SCO-RATS drills.[2] All of those developments demonstrate that, recently, SCO members and especially India and Pakistan have shown that they are intended to cooperate for Eurasian security. Because latest developments in Europe and Pacific left no option but cooperation for regional security. In other words, the world may not deal with another new and more important crisis in Asia, while security threats are escalating due to Taiwan after Ukraine.

In addition to Europe and Pacific, security risks in Asia became evident. Therefore, there are too many reasons for India and Pakistan to come together. Primarily, as in the whole world, regional political-economic-security environment dynamically changes. The actors that were enemies to each other yesterday can search for cooperation ways the other day. The most concrete example for this happened in Pakistan. At the end of Imran Khan period, it was observed inclination towards China and Russia; in current situation Islamabad administration is trying realizing rapprochement with the United States of America (US). That means, Pakistan's foreign policy is reshaping again with the new administration of Shahbaz Sharif. Regarding that, Washington administration has started to revise policies on Pakistan and India.

Besides that, there are escalating numbers of terrorist attacks in Pakistan and Afghanistan. In addition, border dispute between China and India is continuing without any appeasement. On the other hand, Western powers such as the US and Canada are involved in questions regarding Tibet Autonomous Region of China. For example, US Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues Uzra Zeya has visited India on May 17, 2022, for focusing on cooperation on human rights, democracy, and governance.[3]

All those developments point out that security risks will escalate over Pakistan-India-China line. That means security of Eurasia is in a threat. It is questioned that whether the regional actors are aware of those dangers. In the current situation, China and India coming together under SCO, may find themselves into a new conflict in the border in future. Similarly, if actors out of the region and especially USA escalates terror, Pakistan's relations with China and India may worsen.

Increasing problems of terror in Afghanistan and Pakistan and in that sense dangerous situation of Eurasia is not a coincidence. From a wider perspective, Europe is dealing with their own problems due to Russian-Ukrainian War.

On the other hand, China's military and security moves towards Taiwan risk the security of the Pacific. Developments based on Afghanistan and Pakistan may waste the moves for unification in Eurasia. This is how the Westerners believed: Russia and China are acting together by moving in a coordination in their close environment.

This situation will cause increase of the positions of Russia and China together and decreasing of the West. Eurasian security is threatened by three ways. Those are based on China, the USA and Russia.

Firstly, China may threaten Eurasian security since she copies Russia's attack on Ukraine. To put it more clearly, China concluded positive lessons from Russian-Ukrainian War for herself. Regarding that, Pekin has seen that starting a land war or a hybrid war, as Russia did, is quite important for building global hegemony. In that sense, China could take Russia as an example, and may start security moves in Central Asia, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Kashmir. As China would not start a war resembling Russia's war, at least she may aim to protect those war fronts in the West, keeping the tension high, and intervene if it is needed. Both the officials of American intelligence and the officials of India are expressing that China is trying to open a new front in the Western border of China or trying to keep Kashmir front always alive.[4] Therefore, even India tries to solve border disputes, China may not approach this in a positive manner.

Secondly, the USA is risking Eurasian security intentionally. She demands to contain China and pressure her by escalating terrorism in Afghanistan and Pakistan. That means Washington desires to contain Beijing in Eurasia after Pacific. This can be identified as "opening two different fronts against China."

Kashmir and terrorism issue is the red flag of India. Since the USA knows this, she may focus on this crisis between China and India. In that sense, the evaluations claiming that Washington is trying to suspend New Delhi from Beijing and Islamabad, are significant. For instance, officials from the US have explained that India will use S-400 missile systems against the threats coming from China and Pakistan.[5] In short, Washington may be trying to use the terror problems in India's inner circle to distance New Delhi from Beijing, Islamabad and Moscow. In addition, by provoking the Tibetan Question, it tries to open the gap between India and China. If India tries to get more involved in issues like Tibet; China may launch new attacks on the border and attempt to completely seize the territories it claims (Aksai Chin and Aranucal Paradesh).

Thirdly, Russia may pose a security threat not only to Europe but also to the greater Eurasian geography. Western powers have realized that it will not be enough to stop Russia only in Europe, and that additional measures must be taken in Eurasia. Because it does not seem like a reasonable solution to make this geography open to the influence of Russia and China and to expect each other to clash. According to the West, it is necessary to engage Russia and China with new and big security problems in Eurasia. It has been the mistake of the West to expect China to clash with Russia. On the contrary, Beijing draws positive lessons for itself from Russia's Ukraine War and stays away from confronting Moscow in Eurasia.

After all, while Westerners were interested in Russia in Eastern Europe; China is starting to become a bigger problem in both Asia and the Pacific. However, Westerners do not know how to deal with either Russia or China. The best solution they have found is to foment terrorism in Afghanistan and Pakistan. In this way, it is aimed to remove India from the Pakistan-Russia-China axis. In this context, the responsibility of New Delhi for the security of Eurasia is very important. The coming together of Pakistan, India and China in the fight against terrorism is not only in Eurasia; can change the balance of power all over the world. However, considering that China will act together with Russia, at least for a while, it can be said that Beijing may fail or disappoint especially New Delhi and Islamabad.

[1] "India Hosts Key Meet to Counter Terror Threats in Eurasia, Including Af-Pak", Economic Times, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/india-hosts-key-meet-to-counter-terror-threats-in-eurasia-including-af-pak/articleshow/91607343.cms>, (Date of Accession: 18.05.2022).

[2] "China, Russia, Pakistan to Attend SCO Anti-Terror Meet in Delhi", The Hindu, <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/china-russia-pakistan-teams-to-attend-sco-anti-terror-meeting-in-delhi-next-week/article65411734.ece>, (Date of Accession: 18.05.2022).

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[5] "ABD, Hindistan'ı Rusya Silahlarından Silah Yardım Paketi ile Vazgeçmek İstiyor", Bloomberg, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-05-17/us-seeks-to-wean-india-from-russia-weapons-with-arms-aid-package>, (Date of Accession: 18.05.2022).



## ANKASAM ANALYSIS

# Referendum and Period of New Kazakhstan

Amending the Constitution by referendum has always been a fundamental practice of direct democracy. It is one of the ways of public participation in making decisions that are important to both the state and the citizens. Today, Kazakhstan emerges as a state that is open to constructive dialogue and supports the active participation of citizens in decision-making processes. An explicit confirmation of this is the submission of the issue of the adoption of amendments and additions to the Constitution to the Republican referendum on June 5, 2022.

The initiative to hold a referendum belongs to the President of Kazakhstan, Mr. Kasım-Cömert Tokayev, on April 29, the XXXI of the People's Assembly of Kazakhstan. During his session, he made the following statement:

"I initiated amendments to the Constitution that had fundamental characteristics and radically changed the country's political system. We are moving to a new model of the state, a new form of state-society interaction. This qualita-



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tive transition may be called the Second Republic."

In his message to the public, Mr. Tokayev stated that the Constitutional amendment aims to build a "New Kazakhstan."<sup>[1]</sup> In this context, the constitutional referendum, with 56 amendments and additions proposed in 33 articles, is aimed at three specific objectives strengthening the separation of powers,<sup>[2]</sup> the check and balance mechanism, the rule of law, and democratic processes.

A major amendment to the Constitution focuses on the redistribution of powers of the President, Parliament and Government. For example, according to the planned changes, President, the incumbent, will not be a member of a political party and his close relatives will not be able to work under the leadership of public companies. In other words, attempts to prevent the concentration of powers in the country will act as an unwavering guarantor of equal opportunities for all citizens and representation of all segments of the population, without leaving any special opportunities to anyone.

As for the parliament, it is envisaged that Mazhilis deputies will be elected with a mixed electoral system. 30% of the Mazhilis will be composed of deputies elected from "single-authorized regions," and voters will also have the right to withdraw their mandate. This, in turn, will enable voters to reflect their interests better and strengthen the political culture of mutual responsibility in the country. In addition, the establishment of a Constitutional Court with 11 judges will contribute to further increasing access to justice and the development of legal culture.

Another critical aspect of the amendments to the Constitution concerns the strengthening of the mechanism of protecting the rights of citizens and expanding the participation of the population in running the country. Thus, the Constitution establishes the final and unequivocal rule that land and subsoil, water, flora and fauna, and other natural resources belong to the people. Property rights are exercised by the state on behalf of the people. The introduction of this change will lay a solid foundation for full-fledged public participation in the fair distribution of state revenues from the economic and productive use of Kazakhstan's land and its wealth of natural resources. In addition, the state will reflect the interests of the people and be accountable to the people.

. In addition, the death penalty was abolished at the Constitutional level. The rejection of such state measures for crimes accords to the world practice of humanizing criminal legislation. In particular, upon the request of citizens, the Constitutional Court will evaluate the normative legal regulations that directly affect their fundamental rights and freedoms in terms of conformity with the Constitution. Citizens of Kazakhstan are given the right to apply now to the Constitutional Court during the consideration of a particular case. In addition, the Human Rights Commissioner will be able to act independently from other state bodies and authorities in exercising his powers to promote the restoration of violated human and civil rights and freedoms. This strengthens the exercise of independent control over the observance of the rights and freedoms of man and citizen. All these changes prove once again that Kazakhstan prefers the development option in line with democratization and a state that "Hearing the Voice of the People."

According to another significant change, the President will not have the right to dismiss district, provincial and rural district governors. Thus, the President's powers regarding local governments were reduced and concentrated on governors at the regional level. This change is based on increasing the responsibility of local representatives, bringing authorities closer to the people, hearing them, responding to their demands, and ultimately strengthening general well-being and stability. Especially the tragic events in January once again revealed the necessity of establishing a solid relationship between the center (state) and the periphery (people).

Therefore, the constitutional reform in Kazakhstan is systemic and ultimately aims to increase the efficiency of the state model further. In other words, the "New Kazakhstan" movement, initiated by Mr. Tokayev, entered a new era with this referendum, with its strong "social contract" centered on the understanding of the state that "Hearing the Voice of the People."

The data and results that emerged in the referendum contain important messages. According to the data in question, 77.18 percent of the citizens approved the constitutional amendment. 7,986,293 citizens voted in the elections, and the participation rate was % 68.06.<sup>[3]</sup> The participation of the voters in determining the fate of the country with such a large proportion is a vivid indicator of the will of the people and the comprehensive democratization process.





The constitutional amendment referendum emerges as solid support to the “New Kazakhstan” process, which centers the state-people unity, and the will put forward in this context. In other words, the result of the said referendum can be regarded as the public’s trust and support for Mr. Tokayev’s initiatives. This is the approval given to the New Kazakhstan process in the referendum at the ballot box. In this context, the adoption of the amendments and additions to the Constitution by referendum revealed the common desire of the Kazakhs to build a fair, democratic, and developed Kazakhstan. It is also worth emphasizing that this process will not be limited to internal changes. It will positively affect Kazakhstan’s relations with other international actors, accelerate regional integration in Central Asia, and strengthen the country’s international image.

To sum up, with the referendum, “New Kazakhstan” has taken a step forward in the transition to the East-West synthesis. The referendum’s result revealed the determination of the people of Kazakhstan to make their country a regional and global center, especially in Central Asia and Eurasia, with its potential, especially in energy, and its multi-vector foreign policy.

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## ANKASAM ANALYSIS

# The Importance of Open Balkan Initiative for Serbia

Russia’s aggressive policies in Ukraine once again turned its eyes to the Balkan geography, where two world wars broke out. This geography, which is not a member of the European Union (EU) and continues to exist as the only area for the expansion of the union, is stuck under the influence of Russia and the West today. Particularly Serbia, countries with slow progress in EU membership processes such as North Macedonia, Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina started to need each other more when both regional and global developments are considered. At this point, the first agreement

of the Open Balkan Initiative, which included North Macedonia and Albania, which was initiated under the leadership of Serbia in the fight against the global economic contraction and food shortage experienced especially after the epidemic process, entered into force on January 3, 2022. With the agreement, customs procedures were minimized in areas such as food safety, phytosanitary and veterinary medicine. Thus, product analyzes will now be carried out only in the country of origin of the product and physical control and laboratory tests will not be applied at other borders.



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The Open Balkan Initiative, which was founded in 2019, aims to increase cooperation and create a common regional market between the three countries with a trade volume of 420 million dollars. Beginning from January 1, 2023, it is planned to establish a common customs system between member states.[1] According to the estimates made by the World Bank, the annual contribution of the said initiative to the region will be 3.2 billion dollars. [2] The leaders of the three states argue that the Open Balkan Initiative is not an alternative to the EU, but on the contrary, it is an important preparatory stage to eliminate some of the problems that may occur after full membership to the union.[3]

#### US's Attitude

Serbia which stuck between Russia and the West after the Ukraine Crisis, has to follow a very thin balance policy in order to get out of the current chaotic environment with less damage. The Open Balkan Initiative is a result of this necessity. A short time ago, Serbian President Aleksandr Vucic and United States (US) Ambassador to Serbia Christopher Hill held a 3-hour meeting where they discussed Serbia's role in the region and its relations with Kosovo. In a statement made after the meeting, US Ambassador Hill stated that they support the Open Balkan Initiative and are ready to help it develop rapidly.[4]

In parallel with these developments, Serbian European Integration Minister Jadranka Joksimovic signed two amendments providing Serbia with a US grant of 19.5 million dollars, together with US Ambassador Christopher Hill and US Agency for International Development (USAID) Serbian Deputy Head of Mission Danny Robertson. The amendments are aimed at improving the functioning of public administration and increasing the competitiveness of the market economy. Joksimovic stated that the grants are part of the 105 million dollars aid package planned for Serbia by the end of the year. US Ambassador Hill emphasized that the purpose of this cooperation is to strengthen Serbia's institutional infrastructure, as well as to contribute to good relations with its neighbors.[5]

In addition to its support for the initiative, the US also expresses opinions about the future of the initiative. Washington's Envoy for the Western Balkans, Gabriel Escobar, attended the meeting on the Open Balkan Initiative held in the Serbian Parliament via video conference, and that regional initiatives should be equally open to all countries and emphasized the need for the initiative to cover six Balkan countries (Serbia, Montenegro, Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania, North Macedonia).[6] The motivation of the

countries in the Open Balkan Initiative on this issue coincides with the approach of the US. The Presidents of Serbia and North Macedonia, who came together at the World Economic Forum held in Davos, expressed their satisfaction with the Open Balkan Initiative and the development of bilateral relations.[7] In the same forum, Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic invited Montenegrin Prime Minister Dritan Abazovic to the "Open Balkan Summit" that will take place in Ohrid, North Macedonia on 7-8 June, and Abazovic also stated that he would attend the summit.[8] This situation indicates that the initiative will expand its sphere of influence in the Balkans in the coming period.

#### Russia and China Factor

Russia's return to the Balkans after 1989 and China's Belt-Road Project increase the importance of Serbia for the two countries. In particular, the question of whether the Ukraine Crisis will reflect on the Balkans has brought Belgrade to an important position in terms of Beijing and Moscow. The energy crisis, which swept the whole world after the Ukraine Crisis, left Serbia, which imports almost all of its natural gas from Russia, in a difficult situation against this country. It has been stated that Serbia will purchase Russian gas at a price of 270 dollars per thousand cubic meters until June 1, and then a new ten-year agreement will be signed with Russia on natural gas supply.[9] Two days before this date, Vucic announced that he would soon make a 3-year natural gas purchase agreement with Russia. Serbian President Vucic stated that they will pay Russia between 310 and 408 dollars for one thousand cubic meters of natural gas if the agreement comes into effect.[10]

Serbia is dependent on Russia in terms of defense expenditures. Spokeswoman of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs Mariya Zakharova stated that the security of Serbia depends on Russia's readiness to respond to threats against this country. Serbian defense budget, which was around 700 million dollars in 2018, reached 1.5 billion dollars by 2021.[11] In addition, trying to balance his foreign policy between the West and Russia, Vucic emphasized the territorial integrity of Ukraine, but did not support the sanctions against Russia.[12]

China, on the other hand, currently has an investment (indebtedness) volume of 7 billion dollars in Serbia. Beijing considers the country in question as its "gateway to Europe". Serbia currently owes China more than 3 billion euros, and it is estimated that this debt will increase severalfold with new project plans spread over the coming years. Some experts claim that there are more than 20 projects agreed with China and their value exceeds 15 billion

euros.[13] Before the elections which was held last April, the Serbian Government faced criticism from the opposition for distributing 100 euros of state aid to young people aged 16-29. While it was pointed out that the amount of the aid amounted to 1.4 billion Euros, Danica Popovic, a faculty member at the Faculty of Economics of the University of Belgrade, claimed that there was a deficit in the Serbian budget and that the country would have to borrow money due to the aid distributed to the youth. Emphasizing the possibility of the said source coming from China, Popovic underlined the lack of a transparent understanding of the conditions under which this money will come.[14] There is a possibility that Serbia will face China's debt trap in the upcoming period.

#### Conclusion

The new Cold War, which emerged as a result of the Ukraine Crisis, increased the importance of Serbia in the region. However, this situation also brings some difficulties for Serbia. In this case, the Open Balkan Initiative could be an important factor for Serbia to overcome these difficulties. For Serbia, faced with Russia's increasing military demands and China's debt trap, the said initiative serves as an important foreign policy alternative, both regionally and globally. Due to the current conjuncture in the Balkans, there are several reasons for the US to support this initiative. At this point, Serbia's economic dependence on China is increasing day by day, and for this reason, it is a possible scenario that the US will encourage trade between the countries of the region in order to balance the situation. This situation shows that the US wants to keep Serbia in its hands in terms of its interests in the region. Another reason for the US to support the said initiative is its strategic alliance with Albania, which it has maintained for many years.

After the Ukraine Crisis, the US placed troops on Albanian territory and increased its presence in the region. It is highly likely that Albania will attach importance to its involvement in this initiative in order to reduce the negative reflections of the global economic crisis, which has made its impact felt all over the world. Albania is in a very important position for the region due to being a port city. In addition, both Albania and Serbia are highly dependent on Russia in terms of natural gas. In such a case, a project that will partially support the economies of these countries will reduce the dependence of these countries on Russia. This is very important for the US. Serbia, on the other hand, can make good use of the potential of the Open Balkan Initiative and create a balancing factor in foreign policy against Russia and China. There are also many problems

among the members of the initiative in question. The development of economic relations between these countries will also facilitate the solution of these problems. The decision of the Serbian Orthodox Church to recognize the North Macedonian Orthodox Church in the past days gives an idea about the policies that the existing countries will follow in the coming period.

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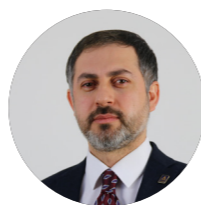
## ANKASAM ANALYSIS

# Kyrgyzstan: The US's Search for Allies in Central Asia

Donald Lu, Assistant to the US Department of State for South and Central Asian Affairs, visited Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kazakhstan between 23-27 May 2022, respectively. In a statement made before the visit, the ministry stated that the purpose of these contacts is to "advance joint efforts to strengthen the United States' relations with the region and to build a more connected, prosperous and secure Central Asia."

The delegation chaired by Lu consists of Eric Green, Chairman of the US National Security Council for Russia and Central Asia, Rebecca Zimmerman, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Central Asia, and Anjali Kaur, Deputy Director of the Asia Bureau of the US Agency for International Development and Naz El-Hatib, Vice President of Policy at the US Development Finance Corporation.

The main objective of the US delegation's visit



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to Central Asia is to enhance cooperation in the security and economic fields and to reinvigorate the C5+1 format. The C5+1 format, established during the Obama period, envisages increasing collaboration between the parties in areas such as security, energy, economy, transportation, infrastructure, and environmental protection. According to Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, the actual purpose of the C5+1 project is to weaken the ties of the countries of the region with Moscow and redirect them to cooperation with their southern neighbors, Afghanistan and Pakistan.[1] Therefore, according to Moscow; The USA is again engaged in geopolitical struggle in Central Asia.

The second visiting point of the American delegation was Kyrgyzstan. Kyrgyzstan is essential for Washington and US Delegation Chairman Lu in several respects. Kyrgyzstan is important for Washington and US Delegation Chairman Lu in several respects. First, Lu was Ambassador in Bishkek until 2021. Therefore, Lu is closely acquainted with Kyrgyzstan and its problems. The second is Kyrgyzstan; Like Tajikistan, it economically depends on Russia and China. Economic sanctions against Russia affect the Kyrgyzstan economy more Economic issues in the country can lead to political instability. In addition, the business world in the country has very close relations with China. It may depend more on China to protect its commercial interests and prevent economic instability. Third, it may need Russia or China more to ensure its security in the face of threats originating from Afghanistan, as it is one of the weakest countries militarily.

Considering the strategic position of Kyrgyzstan, the USA is trying to re-establish previously weakened relations. It tries to re-establish its relations in return for providing support in solving the problems of Kyrgyzstan.

On May 23, 2022, Lu, during his meeting with the representatives of the Kyrgyz authorities, said that they discussed a new cooperation agreement between the two countries; Kyrgyzstan invited the new Foreign Minister Jeenbek Kulubayev to Washington for the signing of this agreement, Foreign Minister Antony Blinken is looking forward to this meeting, and lastly, he wanted to establish a high-level relationship between governments.

In his meeting with Kulubayev, Lu announced that they agreed to work together to ensure security and stability in Central Asia and improve the investment environment in Kyrgyzstan. In the statement made by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Kyrgyzstan, it was stated that the parties discussed regional and global issues as well as current issues.[2]

Lu served as the US Ambassador to Bishkek until 2021. After the end of his diplomatic mission in Kyrgyzstan, Lu, in his statement in May 2021, said that he had been working on the adoption of a new agreement between Kyrgyzstan and the USA for almost three years and that the negotiations on technical issues had been completed, and that the political will of Bishkek and Washington was needed to sign the agreement.[3]

Uzra Zei, the US Assistant Secretary of State for Civil Security, Democracy, and Human Rights, met with Kyrgyzstan Deputy Prime Minister Edil Baisalov in Bishkek on April 15, 2022, during his visit to Central Asia. During the negotiations, cooperation on strengthening democracy, fighting corruption, and simplifying visa requirements was discussed, and Zei said that the United States is ready to sign a new cooperation agreement with Kyrgyzstan. [4] Baisalov took a similar stance and stated that his country would be pleased to intensify its cooperation with the United States.

President of Kyrgyzstan Sadir Caparov, who called for the issue not to be politicized, said in his statement on April 25, 2022, that Kyrgyzstan should sign an economic cooperation agreement with several countries, including the USA, to ensure economic growth. Kasparov said, "Kyrgyzstan carries out the same foreign policy with all the countries of the world. We need to think about the measures to be taken to country's economy and pay off foreign debts. Therefore, we need to sign an economic agreement not only with America, but with all countries."[5]

The foundations of cooperation between Kyrgyzstan and the USA are based on the cooperation agreement signed in Washington in 1993. After the US operation in Afghanistan in 2001, bilateral relations were raised to a "strategic partnership" level. In 2001, the USA established an air base near Bishkek. But later, when relations started to deteriorate, Kyrgyzstan tried to close the American base in the country. Because the worsening of the US-Kyrgyzstan relations began in February 2009, when the President of Kyrgyzstan, Kurmanbek Bakiyev, announced that the US military base in Manas would be closed during his visit to Moscow. According to Bakiyev, the reason for this decision was issued as economic compensation for the presence of the American base on the territory of Kyrgyzstan and the case of the murder of a Kyrgyz citizen by an American soldier, which has not been resolved in recent years. Although Kyrgyzstan wanted to close the military base because of internal issues, the pressures of Russia and China on Bishkek in this direction were also



influential.

Resisting the pressures of Kyrgyzstan, the USA could extend the base's license period until 2014 due to the strategic location of the "Manas Transit Center," playing a decisive role in bilateral relations and being the only military base in Central Asia. However, on July 11, 2014, Kyrgyzstan announced that it had terminated the agreement on the operation of the said military base. In 2015, the Bishkek administration announced that it unilaterally terminated the basic cooperation agreement signed with Washington in 1993. This decision was taken to protest the awarding of the US State Department Human Rights Award to human rights activist Azimjan Askarov, who was sentenced to life imprisonment in the south of Kyrgyzstan in June 2010 for organizing mass uprisings in the country and complicity in the murder of a law enforcement officer.

With the withdrawal of American troops from Afghanistan in August 2021, Washington became interested in re-increasing its military presence in the Central Asian region. Russia has declared that it is against the efforts of the USA to re-establish activity in the region. On the subject, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said on August 24, 2021, that he does not want to see American soldiers in Central Asia, that this region constitutes a common security area and this area is under his obligations, and that the issues related to the deployment of foreign armed forces on its territory are discussed in the Collective Security Treaty Organization was based on the consent of all its allies.[6]

After the US withdrawal from Afghanistan and the Taliban came to power, Russia deployed a brutal military force in the region, especially in Tajikistan, and strengthened the existing ones. After the Ukraine intervention, Russia's military and the political focus shifted to the West. This has also impacted the foreign policies of Central Asian countries. In addition, the sanctions against Russia negatively affected the region's countries.

The USA started to look for ways to increase its influence in the region by considering both the relations of the countries in the region with Russia, the situation in which Russia fell, and the economic problems of the countries in the region.

Kyrgyzstan is at least as necessary as other countries in the region. The USA aims to solve the problems of previous years and rebuild the broken relations. Kyrgyzstan primarily needs new partners to find solutions to its economic problems. The traditional multi-dimensional foreign policy principle allows for developing relations with the USA as well as with Russia. The relations it has established with global and regional powers since its independ-

ence contributed to the increase of Kyrgyzstan's importance in the eyes of these actors. Thus, the Bishkek administration has practised that it can establish relations with any actor who wants to cooperate with it. Considering the economic situation of Russia, Kyrgyzstan needs more foreign support.

As well as the economic expectations, Kyrgyzstan aims to gain an advantage in its competition with the region's countries by getting support from the great powers. While the Taliban issue remains uncertain, border disputes with Tajikistan continue. For Kyrgyzstan is more likely to conflict with Tajikistan in the current conjuncture. Russia considers Tajikistan more important than Kyrgyzstan because it is on the border with Afghanistan. Due to threats from Afghanistan, Tajikistan is gaining significant foreign support because of the anti-Taliban stance it has adopted. On the other hand, Kyrgyzstan remains in the background in this process and is uncomfortable with it.

Kyrgyzstan needs more foreign support to solve its economic problems and ensure its national security; The USA's desire to be active by re-developing its relations with Central Asia ensures that the interests of both countries overlap. The signing of a dysfunctional cooperation agreement between Kyrgyzstan and the USA will bring a significant success in the US's regional policy.

Bilateral relations with Kyrgyzstan has a strategic value for the United States due to factors such as Tajikistan's getting closer to Russia and then China, Uzbekistan's non-bloc policy, and Kazakhstan's fear of Russia and therefore not being able to get far from Moscow and Turkmenistan's neutrality status. The USA's developing relations with Kyrgyzstan and then increasing its dialogue with other countries in the region will prepare an important ground for it to compete in the region against Russia and China.

[1] "Центральной Азии протянули руку помощника", Kommersant, <https://www.kommersant.ru/amp/5369342>, (Date of Accession: 27.05.2022).

[2] "Помощник госсекретаря США рассказал, о чем беседовал с главой МИД Кыргызстана", 24 KG, [https://24.kg/vlast/234419\\_pomoschnik\\_gossekretery\\_ssha\\_rasskazal\\_onbspchem\\_besedoval\\_snbspglavoy\\_mid\\_kyrgyzstana/](https://24.kg/vlast/234419_pomoschnik_gossekretery_ssha_rasskazal_onbspchem_besedoval_snbspglavoy_mid_kyrgyzstana/), (Date of Accession: 27.05.2022).

[3] "Новое соглашение о сотрудничестве США и Кыргызстана готово к подписанию", 24 KG, [https://24.kg/vlast/234951\\_novoe\\_soglashenie\\_osotrudnichestve\\_ssha\\_ikyrgyzizstana\\_gotovo\\_kpodpisaniyu/](https://24.kg/vlast/234951_novoe_soglashenie_osotrudnichestve_ssha_ikyrgyzizstana_gotovo_kpodpisaniyu/), (Date of Accession: 27.05.2022).

[4] "США готовы подписать с Кыргызстаном новое соглашение о сотрудничестве", 24 KG, <https://knews.kg/2022/04/15/ssha-gotovy-podpisat-s-kyrgyzstanom-novoe-soglashenie-o-sotrudnichestve/>, (Date of Accession: 27.05.2022).

[5] "Киргизия хочет подписать соглашение об экономическом сотрудничестве с США", Nezavisimaya Gazeta, [https://www.ng.ru/cis/2022-04-25/5\\_8426\\_news1.html](https://www.ng.ru/cis/2022-04-25/5_8426_news1.html), (Date of Accession: 27.05.2022).

[6] "Россия не хочет видеть военных США в Центральной Азии, заявил Лавров", Ria Novosti, <https://ria.ru/20210824/aziya-1747032227.html>, (Date of Accession: 27.05.2022).



## ANKASAM ANALYSIS

# Mitsotakis' Visit to the USA

Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis started his visit to the United States of America (USA) on May 16, 2022. On May 17, he became the first Greek Prime Minister to speak at the joint meeting of the US Senate and the House of Representatives. It is remembered that the Greek Minister of Foreign Affairs, Niko Dendias, made a statement in the Greek Parliament on May 12, 2022, saying, "Imagine whether the USA reserved this honor for Mr. Erdogan or not?" which mobilized the opposition to Türkiye in his country. In fact, this speech does not stem from Mitsotakis' political achievements. It is a meeting that commemorates the 200 years (!)

independence of Greece. In fact, Greece became independent in 1830, not in 1821. However, the Greeks and the West recognize the year 1821, which was revolted against the Ottoman Empire, as the beginning of the independence process. For this reason, it was thought that the said speech will be held in 2021. However, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the meeting in question was held on May 17, 2022. At this point, "What topics were discussed in Mitsotakis' trip?" question needs to be stated. According to the information reflected in the press, energy, current developments (F-16, F-35) and familiar Greek arguments were the topics discussed



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with the US officials.

#### Greece's Efforts to Become an Energy Base

The Athens administration is striving to turn its country into an energy base. In fact, this is the strongest side of Greece. Greece attaches great importance to both renewable energy and solid fuel and gas energy. In this context, Greece is making various attempts to become the energy base of the Balkans region.

As it is known, Greece has inaugurated the largest double-surface solar farm in Europe on April 13, 2022, which can provide energy to 75,000 homes per year. Established with an investment of 130 million Euros, the farm has 500,000 double-faced panels. The country aims to provide 35% of its energy consumption from renewable sources by 2030. This farm of Greece is also in line with the Green European goal of the European Union (EU).

The United Nations (UN) also does not take kindly to solid fossil fuels. On the other hand, because of the War in Ukraine, the EU tends to turn to solid fuels. But the UN warned the Union on this issue. Therefore, Greece has studies that are compatible with both modern energy and EU and UN requirements. For example, the increasing LNG loads coming to the liquefied natural gas terminal and facilities in Revithussa, an islet west of Athens, Greece, have been contributing to the Bulgarian market since April 27, 2022, when Gazprom turned off the tap and met 90% of its natural gas needs.

Again, Greece established a Floating Storage and Re-Gasification Unit in Alexandroupoli on May 5, 2022. It was inaugurated by US Ambassador to Greece Geoffrey Pyatt, together with the President of the European Council Charles Michel and the leaders of Bulgaria, Macedonia and Serbia, as a demonstration of his regional leadership.

#### Energy Transmission and EastMed

On May 9, 2022, Greek, USA, Greek Cypriot Administration (GCA) and Israel Foreign Ministers Dendias, Antony Blinken, Yanis Kasulides and Yair Lapid held a virtual meeting in the form of 3+1. Dendias, at the meeting, "emphasized the importance that Greece attaches to interconnector and energy security."

As is known, the shipment of Russian gas to Europe has been

almost completely cut off due to the Russia-Ukraine War. The parties apply energy sanctions to each other. Both sides seek to change both their markets and routes. At this point, EastMed is seen as a hope for the EU. However, the USA stated that it did not find the project in question feasible on the grounds that it passed through the disputed region and withdrew from the initiative. Therefore, Greece wants to persuade the USA in energy transportation and in the issue of returning to the EastMed by saying, "I am the energy base".

In this complex energy environment, Melina Travlos, President of the Greek Shipowners Association, said: "The Greek fleet continues its leading role in the maritime field" and "represents 59% of the EU fleet. It inspects 32% of the world's tanker fleet, 25% of bulk carriers and 22% of LNG ships"[1]. However, the decision to sanction Russian oil will negatively affect Greek sailors due to the obligation to comply with the sanction. In fact, the transportation business will benefit the Turks and the Chinese.

As might be expected, Mitsotakis also discussed this issue with US President Joe Biden and other US officials. Athens advocates an approach such as "Greek sailors should either be exempted from the oil sanctions imposed on Russia or the Turks should join these sanctions". If Greece cannot get the USA and EU to accept this request, the Greek shippers will either carry the US and African oil to the EU or they will continue to carry Russian oil illegally.

Undoubtedly, Greece, which is economically bankrupt, needs this transportation. As of the end of 2021, Greece's external debt is 556.4 billion Euros.[2] An additional 9 billion Euros was paid to the debt-ridden country by the European Commission on 12 May 2022, in return for Greek bonds, within the scope of the Next Generation EU Recovery Fund. Therefore, energy comes first among the topics discussed during Mitsotakis' visit.

#### Turkish Dimension of the Issue

On October 15, 2021, the 2nd Amendment Protocol to the USA-Greece Mutual Defense Cooperation Agreement was signed. The protocol was adopted by the Greek Parliament on May 12, 2022, with 181 votes for and 119 against. In his speech at the parliament on the day of the vote, Mitsotakis both criticized Türkiye and revealed that the Agreement was directed to Türkiye, saying that "The Agreement is a vote of confidence against all kinds of madness of our neighbors".

#### Upgrading of F-16s

On October 15, 2021, when the protocol was signed, the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs noted that it welcomed Washington's interest in joining Athens' F-35 fighter jet programme, highlighting some of the country's recent updates to its F-16 jets and Sikorsky helicopters. Foreign Minister Dendias stated that he would oppose the modernization of the Turkish F-16 at the meeting that Mitsotakis will hold in the USA on May 12, 2022. In this context, Dendias said, "Modernizing the Turkish arsenal is a serious problem for the form. Greece's view on this issue is clear and we will clearly state it during the visit."

Türkiye conveyed its desire to purchase 40 new F-16s and upgrade its existing 80 F-16s to the same version in October 2021. It is thought that especially the Russia-Ukraine War has increased the importance of Türkiye in the eyes of the USA. Therefore, it is expected that Ankara's request will be accepted. This, on the other hand, creates discomfort in Athens.

#### Production and Delivery of F-35s

Greece has announced that it wants to be included in the F-35 fighter jet program that Türkiye was removed from. It is planned that Greece will deliver the S-300 air defense missiles in its possession to Germany, and that Germany will deliver these old missiles to Ukraine after modernizing them. The GCA bought these missiles from Russia in 1997; but after Türkiye's reaction, it was handed over to Greece. Missiles are known to have been deployed to Crete. Believing that these missiles are still useful for itself, even though they are old technology, Greece does not look warmly at giving the S-300s to Ukraine. But there is the possibility of giving the missiles in exchange for the F-35. On the other hand, it should not be ignored that this situation may cause some tensions in Athens-Moscow relations.

Since it bought S-400 defense missiles from Russia in 2017, Türkiye was excluded from the F-35 manufacturing process and was subject to CAATSA sanctions. It is thought that Türkiye suffered a loss of around 1.4 billion dollars from this exclusion. At the moment, many statesmen in the USA think that they punished Türkiye for its rapprochement with Russia, but that more would mean losing Ankara.

#### Aegean and Eastern Mediterranean

Mitsotakis, in his speech on May 12, 2022, announced that Türkiye's flights would be discussed during the visit. In addition, it was learned that he brought the Cyprus and Pontus issues to the agenda.

On the other hand, the issue of hydrocarbon studies and maritime jurisdictions in the Eastern Mediterranean is a field struggle for Greece. In this sense, Athens wishes to receive the support of the Washington administration and even believes that this support is vital. In fact, the Athens administration's approval for the establishment of a second naval base in Suda (Crete) for the USA is a reflection of the aforementioned search for support. At the same time, this situation is related to Greece's national plan of action and its decision to establish a permanent presence in the Eastern Mediterranean.

In line with all this information, it is possible to evaluate Mitsotakis' visit to the USA on two dimensions. The first of these is the energy issue. In fact, energy is one of the main issues that brings the two states together. The second is Greece's efforts to find international support for its problems with Türkiye, which it sees as an enemy. In other words, it is a Greek protest Türkiye to the USA.

[1] "Greeks own 59% of EU fleet", Ekathimerini, <https://www.ekathimerini.com/economy/1184280/greeks-own-59-of-eu-fleet/>, (Date of Accession: 13.05.2022).

[2] "External debt", Bank of Greece, <https://www.bankofgreece.gr/en/statistics/external-sector/external-debt>, (Date of Accession: 14.05.2022).



## ANKASAM ANALYSIS

# Security of Central Asia: Threats and Opportunities

In the traditional security understanding of the modern period, factors such as the use of force, territorial integrity and border security were important. In addition to these, many factors such as food safety, environmental security, energy security and cyber security have begun to be taken into account in the new security understanding of the post-modern period. The importance of such factors was most recently recognized once again during

the Russo-Ukrainian War. This war negatively affected the security of not only Europe, but the whole world. The power struggle in the world has focused on Europe, the Pacific and Central Asia. Each region has turned into a trump in the hands of great powers. While Russia is busy with Europe; China is focused on the Pacific.

Western powers do not know how to fight both Russia and China at the same time. The best



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solution they found might be to threaten the security of Central Asia, where Russia and China have common security concerns. Thus, neither China will be able to focus more on the Pacific nor Russia will be able to deal more with Europe.

There is one issue that China has been insisting on lately: it worries about the growing footprints of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the United States of America (USA) in Asia. [1]Beijing believes that many security problems that are closely related to Central Asia today are deliberately produced by NATO-USA. Beijing, in the first place, thinks that the withdrawal of American troops from Afghanistan is a trap prepared for itself. For the past year, it has been claimed that China has established a base for border security within the territory of Tajikistan. It has been stated that the factor causing this is the terrorist problems originating from Afghanistan. Moreover, it is claimed that the weapons left by NATO in Afghanistan led to the escalation of terrorism in Kashmir.[2]In order to prevent the spread of terrorism in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, China may consider building outposts across the border. But it seems unlikely that China will take over the region's gendarmerie, as the US does. Here, there is a handicap for China. In the past, while the USA provided this security, China was able to comfortably carry out its economic projects. But now it has to make efforts itself to ensure the safety of these corridors. However, it is known that China has made it a principle to respect the territorial integrity and sovereignty of other countries and does not favor a cross-border military engagement. However, it is not easy to solve the problems of Central Asia without intervening in the region. Since the Western powers know this principle of China very well, they aim to threaten the security of Central Asia and to occupy it with the problems in its west. In this way, China will not be able to remove its face from the problems in Asia and will not be able to deal with the problems in the Pacific.

When protests broke out in Kazakhstan before Russia's intervention in Ukraine, the Western powers thought that Moscow could no longer turn its face to the West, that it would be busy with the problems in Central Asia and that the operation in Ukraine would take at least 2-3 months.[3]However, the President of Kazakhstan, Mr. Kasım-Cömert Tokayev's application to the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) to suppress the protests and overcoming of the problem with the rapid intervention of the organization, has made the West to concern and ask "Is the Russian influence increasing in the region?".

The political-economic rivalry between Russia and China, especially over Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, seems to be in line with the interests of the Western powers. Russia came back from this crisis by strengthening its hand in Central Asia. It provided moral support for its war in Ukraine. So much so that these moves of Moscow have also been met with concern from the point of view of China.

Essentially, Russia did not want any more problems in Central Asia in order to deal with Ukraine and had to rely on China in this regard. China, on the other hand, may have learned some positive lessons for itself from Russia's Ukraine War. In this sense, Beijing has seen how important it is to start a ground war or hybrid war in its immediate vicinity, as Russia has done. Therefore, China may think that Russia may begin to threaten the security of Central Asia just as it threatens Europe. For this, it can take steps to show a military presence in Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Afghanistan. In other words, Russia may not have a friend to lean on in Central Asia. While Russia wants China to be more interested in the Pacific; on the other hand, China wants Russia to focus on Europe.

There are a number of opportunities, threats and challenges for both Russia and China in Central Asia. First of all, there are some difficulties in establishing a NATO-like collective defense organization in the region. Despite the fact that the Russian-led CSTO has a joint intervention force and a collective defense principle, the decisions to send troops to a country are made more difficult compared to NATO. Moreover, the fact that China is not a member of the CSTO increases the need for a strong collective organization in Eurasia. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), on the other hand, could not go beyond being a regional organization that focused more on border issues and where China is more at the forefront.

The most discussed issue in the world lately is collective security. China's biggest criticism of NATO and the USA also is in this direction. The Beijing administration is concerned that NATO may become involved in problems in both the Pacific and Central Asia. If China cannot establish a NATO-like security platform under its own leadership, it will fall behind in the race for hegemony in the world.

Russia and China do not think that the CSTO and SCO, respectively, can come up with a global concept. Because these or-



ganizations are not in the capacity to deal with the crises in the world, both in terms of their members and their establishment goals and objectives. That's why China has called on the BRICS countries to create a global security platform.[4] This approach indicates that China can establish a new security organization centered on or including the BRICS countries. In addition, Beijing is aware that for the security of Central Asia, the terrorism problem in Afghanistan and Pakistan must be resolved first. For this, it needs the support of India. In this context, the fact that New Delhi remains hostile to Islamabad may actually be a situation that China does not want. Because this conflict increases the risk of war not only in Kashmir, but in the entire region. Therefore, Beijing wishes and supports India to contribute more to regional security within the framework of the SCO.

In this context, India pioneered the execution of two exercises within the framework of the SCO in 2022. The first of these is the joint counter-terrorism exercise called "Manesar-Antiterror-2022", which will be held in India in October 2022. The second is the joint border operation called "Friendship Border", which is planned to be held in Kazakhstan. China, in particular, aims to bring Pakistan and India together within the framework of the SCO. Both China and Russia consider it valuable to cooperate with India in terms of the security of Central Asia.

New Delhi is not involved in Central Asia as a competitive actor, but as a partner that prioritizes cooperation. Nevertheless, India may want to put itself at the forefront by taking advantage of the Russia-China rivalry in Central Asia. For example, the Taliban look at India as an actor that can balance Pakistan. In other words, when it cannot get what it want from Pakistan, the Taliban can use their relations with India as a trump against Islamabad. In short, India, which is involved in the region as a third power, is accepted as an attractive actor for all parties.

As a result, it is important to gain the support of new actors such as India in order to establish the security of Central Asia. On the other hand, the threats to the security of the region are much greater than the opportunities seized. To be able to prevent these threats, first of all, depends on the steps to be taken by the powers in the region.

[1] "China in Eurasia Briefing: Why The Ukraine War Matters For Asia", RFERL, <https://www.rferl.org/a/ukraine-war-matters-for-asia/31856235.html>, (Date of Accession: 21.05.2022).

[2] "How NATO Weapons from Afghanistan Are Impacting Kashmir's Militancy", DW, <https://www.dw.com/en/how-nato-weapons-from-afghanistan-are-impacting-kashmirs-militancy/a-61838513>, (Date of Accession: 21.05.2022).

[3] "«Острие копья» срочно поворачивают на Запад", Rosbalt, <https://www.rosbalt.ru/world/2022/01/13/1939298.html>, (Date of Accession: 21.05.2022).

[4] "Çin, BRICS Ülkelerine 'Küresel Güvenlik Topluluğu Kurma' Çağrısı Yaptı", Haberler, <https://www.haberler.com/guncel/cin-brics-ulkelerine-kuresel-guvenlik-toplulugu-14954907-haberi/>, (Date of Accession: 30.05.2022).

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ANKASAM President Prof. Dr. Mehmet Seyfettin Erol evaluated the current developments in foreign policy on TRT Ankara Radio Agenda program.

## 8 June 2022

ANKASAM Chief Advisor to the President, Retired Ambassador Aydın Nurhan, evaluated the latest developments in foreign policy on TRT Arabi.

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## 8 June 2022

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## 10 June 2022

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## 11 June 2022

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



*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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