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ANKASAM ANALYSIS

Different Security Concepts and Strategies of China and Russia

According to the West, Russia and China are trying to create strong military alliances in Asia in order to improve bilateral cooperation in the field of security as well as to limit the power of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). In this context, it is claimed that the security structure of the West was challenged by Russia through its formation of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), and by China forming the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). Western powers, namely the Anglo-Saxon states are trying to expand the ju-

risdiction of NATO by claiming that Russia and China threaten the rules-based international order and thus global security. Beijing, which opposed the influence of NATO most particularly in Asia,[1] gradually started to agree with Russia's security concerns and took a stance supporting Moscow in the beginning of the Ukraine War.

China might have seen Russia's Ukraine War as an opportunity to destroy the Western-led international system or to promote its own sense



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of security to the world. What Russia and China agree on is that the West acts with the Cold War mentality. According to this idea, the security structures of the West (NATO, Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad), and AUKUS) pose the risk of political blocking and make the world unsafe. Another security issue that the two countries agree on is to constantly fight against the West in solidarity, whether it be the time of war or peace. The point where the two countries differ in thought is the security arguments they use in the fight against the West and the security strategies they need to follow.

To clarify the issues they agree on; first of all, the two countries advocate combating NATO's enlargement together. According to them, Western powers endanger the security of the neighboring states in order to establish their own security. Russia calls this the "indivisible security principle". China also initially supported this idea; however, it has since separated its security strategy from Russia. Second, China and Russia agree to use hybrid warfare or fourth-generation warfare methods where the distinction between war and peace against the West is blurred.

Western officials have made statements supporting this idea. For example, General Wayne Eyre, the Chief of the Canadian Defense Staff, said that Russia and China do not differentiate between peace and war and actively try to challenge the West.[2] Again, according to former Prime Minister of Finland, Alexander Stubb, the means of fighting against Russia have changed, and the line between war and peace has blurred.[3] Referring to Mark Leonard's book, Stubb said, "We live in an age of non-peace.". Indeed, it can be said that the anarchic order in the world has become evident and that the peace environment has gradually disappeared due to the war being carried out by Russia and China against the West by using many tools such as currencies, energy, information and technology.

Their difference in approach is about their security concepts and strategies. In fact, this also applies to NATO member states. It became more evident after the Russia-Ukraine War how difficult it is to develop a uniform understanding of security even within Europe. Although they are members of the same alliance, states can exhibit hostile attitudes towards each other. For this reason, even within the strongest military-defense alliances, it is very difficult for states to have the same, similar or overlapping security interests. From this point of view, while Russia and China advocate fighting against NATO, it should be considered natural for them to think differently about their methods. China turning to separate its security concept from Russia is closely related to the course of the Ukrainian War. More specifically, as the Ukrainian War progressed, Beijing saw that their thoughts in the field of security were different from Moscow, that they essentially defended a different security concept, and experienced this difference personally.

The war in Ukraine has been an opportunity for China to review its military cooperation with Russia and security strategies. About two months after this war, Chinese President Xi Jinping first mentioned the Global Security Initiative at the Boao Forum for Asia. This initiative, which China offered as an alternative to the Western-led security order, remained ambiguous in terms of concept and content in the early stages, and Beijing tried to fill this initiative throughout its operational life. The first of these efforts was seen at the BRICS Leaders Summit held in Beijing in June 2022. During the summit, Jinping frequently emphasized the expansion of BRICS and global security, and called to stay away from "block politics" and "Cold War mentality". Beijing argued that the expansion of BRICS within the framework of multipolarity would be a contribution to the Global Security Initiative.

Later, China acted on the assumption that the SCO would contribute to China's security concept. In this sense, Jinping frequently mentioned the Global Security Initiative in the sessions and bilateral meetings of the SCO Leaders Summit held in September 2022 in Samarkand, Uzbekistan. Azerbaijan, Belarus, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan gave the message of their readiness to work with China with their use of a supportive language regarding this initiative.[4] Russia has previously supported Jinping's security vision and stated that it is "very important".[5] Allegedly, only India and Tajikistan did not support the initiative among the SCO members.[6]

It was observed that the security concept and strategies that China has explained to the interlocutors at both the BRICS and the SCO summits were different from those of Russia. In fact, this concept was initially viewed in the same regard as the "indivisible security" principle that Putin used to justify Russia's invasion of Ukraine. However, according to the Beijing administration, states cannot jeopardize the security of other states in order to ensure their own security. Currently, China plans to build a total security system in the world

by opposing NATO's expansion; however, it advocates a different thesis from Russia when it comes to the management of this system. In other words, China tries to present a concept different from the Russian security theses to the regional states, especially to the members of the SCO, and then to the world. China makes regional states feel how dangerous Russia's security-related theses can be. For example, Jinping pledged support for the independence and territorial integrity of Kazakhstan during his Astana visit before going to the SCO Summit. In this respect, Beijing gave Astana the message "I am with Kazakhstan against the Russian danger".

Unlike Russia, China claims that in order to ensure global security, states must first ensure their own domestic security. For this, the Chinese leader emphasizes that the law enforcement forces of the countries should be strong in the fight against terrorism. In this context, the SCO proposed the establishment of a China-SCO base to provide counter-terrorism training to the military personnel of the member states of the SCO.[7] This way, Beijing will be able to set an example for the SCO states in the field of security and take over the present leadership of Russia in Central Asia. In this regard, Beijing might be aiming to eliminate the need for the CSTO and Moscow by reminding the regional states how important it is to ensure their own security.

As China's Global Security Initiative is slowly shaping, the emerging security strategy looks like the following: The way to ensure international security is for states to provide security within their own borders. In this respect, China's security strategy is inward-looking and based on the security of states. It is against any blockade through supranational organizations. On the other hand, Russia's security strategy is outward-looking. It is based on protecting (ensuring) the safety of its immediate vicinity through power. As in the case of the CSTO, supranational organizations can be used as a means of ensuring the security of states when necessary.

As a result, China has begun to decouple its security concept and strategies from Russia in relation to the course of the war in Ukraine. The greatest contribution of the Russia-Ukraine War to China may be this new security concept.

[1]"China Denounces NATO's Asia Reach As 'Dangerous' as Bloc Intensifies Anti-China Rhetoric Ahead of Summit", Global Times, <https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202206/1268916.shtml>, (Date of Accession: 10.10.2022).

[2]"Military Chief Warns China and Russia Are 'At War with The West' And Canada Is Not Ready", National Post, <https://nationalpost.com/news/politics/military-chief-warns-china-and-russia-are-at-war-with-the-west>, (Date of Accession: 10.10.2022).

[3]"NATO Found 'Renewed Purpose' Amid Ukraine War, Says Former Finnish PM", Euractiv, <https://www.euractiv.com/section/defence-and-security/news/nato-found-renewed-purpose-amid-ukraine-war-says-former-finnish-pm/>, (Date of Accession: 10.10.2022).

[4]"Xi Kicks off Campaign for a Chinese Vision of Global Security", USIP, <https://www.usip.org/publications/2022/10/xi-kicks-campaign-chinese-vision-global-security>, (Date of Accession: 10.10.2022).

[5]"President Xi Holds a Phone Conversation with Russian President Putin on Wednesday", China Daily, <https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202206/15/WS62a9b928a310fd2b29e62eae.html>, (Date of Accession: 10.10.2022).

[6]"Xi Kicks..", *ibid*.

[7]*ibid*.



ANKASAM ANALYSIS

Factors That Ensure Afghan Currency Maintains Its Value

On August 15, 2021, Taliban has gained sovereignty in Afghanistan again. International society, including the United States of America (US), do not recognize the newly-established government, claiming that the Taliban did not fulfill their commitments under the Doha Agreement. Moreover, the international society is applying sanctions towards the Taliban administration. In that sense, the US blocked national reserves of Afghanistan. In the current situation, states do not make official agreements because they do not recognize the Taliban; foreign compa-

nies avoid investing in the country. In addition, drought and natural disasters cause the problems in the country to deepen.

As it is known, Afghanistan's economy has been built on foreign aid for the last two decades. When these aids decreased, the country came to the brink of economic collapse. Indeed, the humanitarian situation is getting worse. The International Labor Organization (ILO) claimed that five hundred thousand people lost their jobs after the Taliban took control of Afghanistan and that this number would rise to one



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million by the end of 2022.[1] The United Nations Development Program (UNDP), on the other hand, claims that twenty million people in Afghanistan are at risk of starvation. [2] It is seen that some people sell their kidneys due to unemployment and poverty. In addition, suicides among people have increased.

While economic and social problems deepen in Afghanistan under the Taliban; it is noteworthy that the national currency of the country, the afghani, did not depreciate against foreign currencies and especially against the dollar. As a matter of fact, in a post on his social media account, Taliban Spokesman Zabiullah Mujahid stated that 1 US dollar equals 87 Afghani. It is seen that this has decreased to 85 Afghani in recent days.[3] It is remembered that in the beginning of the second Taliban era, 1 US dollar was equal around 80 Afghani. Based on these data, it can be said that there has not been a serious depreciation in the Afghan national currency in the last year. However, the Pakistani Rupee, which is the neighbor of Afghanistan, is rapidly depreciating against the dollar.

There are many reasons for maintaining the value of the afghani against foreign currencies. The first of them is the hot money sent by the international community as humanitarian aid. According to the data of the Central Bank of Afghanistan, since August 2021, the international community has sent approximately \$1.3 billion in humanitarian aid. The money first enters the International Bank of Afghanistan (AUB), and then it is converted into Afghan money and distributed to the Afghan people either directly or by purchasing food and clothing. For instance, US Special Envoy to Afghanistan Tom West announced that his country is sending \$1.1 billion in humanitarian aid to Afghanistan.[4] Especially after the Washington administration announced that international organizations and non-governmental organizations would not impose sanctions on humanitarian aid to Afghanistan, many organizations started to send aid to Afghanistan, again. In recent days, the international community sends an average of 40 million dollars a week to Afghanistan. This ensures that the country's currency maintains its value.

Another reason is that the Taliban avoid or cannot print money. As a matter of fact, it is known that the Central Bank of Afghanistan has not printed money in the last year. Because when unbacked money is printed, the value of the dollar will increase. The Taliban enforces the use of Afghan money in the market. In other words, there is a shortage of Afghani in the Afghan market and the Taliban approves the use of old coins. In addition, the increase in prices in the country due to the decrease in Afghanistan's foreign trade is another factor that causes the Afghan currency to maintain its value. The price of food products has doubled since the Taliban

dominated Afghanistan. For example, before August 15, 2021, the price of 50 kg of flour was 1200 Afghani; currently it is 2500 Afghani. However, the country does not need the dollar much as the other states reduce the trade volume with Afghanistan.[5]

Contrary to the Taliban's limitation of public spending and the overthrown regime; The fact that taxes and revenues are transferred directly to the treasury also causes the value of Afghan money to remain constant. In addition, the Taliban warns employees at the Shahzade Market, known as the Afghanistan Stock Exchange, to keep the dollar's price stable.

The main reason for the appreciation of the Afghan currency against the dollar in recent days is the negotiations between the USA and the Taliban. In the past, the US Treasury Department announced that it would transfer \$3.5 billion of the country's national reserves to an Afghan Fund established in Switzerland to ensure economic stability in Afghanistan. Another remarkable development is the meeting of the US and Taliban delegations in Doha after the murder of Al-Qaeda leader Ayman Al-Zawahiri. In this sense, the American media claimed that David Cohen, Deputy Head of US Intelligence, and Abdul Hak Vasik, the Head of Intelligence of the Taliban, met in the capital of Qatar. [6] Neither side denied the news. Therefore, it is considered that the meeting took place. These contacts have added value to Afghanistan's economy.

The establishment of the Afghan Fund and the meeting between the US and the Taliban created an impression that the parties could approach each other more realistically and take concrete steps towards the solution of the Afghan Problem. According to the Washington administration, although the Taliban dominate the entire country, they cannot solve the problems in Afghanistan alone. For the Taliban, the US is the world's superpower and the problem of recognition cannot be overcome without reconciliation with Washington. The fact that these two perspectives pushed the parties to negotiations had a positive effect on the Afghan market and led to the appreciation of the Afghan currency.

As a result, against the other currencies, there are many reasons why the Afghan currency has been protecting its value. Humanitarian aid from the international society, including the US, is primary reason of this. Because, the West is protecting shortage of dollars in the market thanks to the aids. This causes Afghan Money to stabilize.



ANKASAM ANALYSIS

Kerch Bridge: Sign of Putin's Defeat?

A part of the Kerch Bridge, constructed in 2018 by Russia, was damaged by explosions on October 8, 2022. Although no one has claimed responsibility for the explosions, Advisor to the Ukrainian Presidential Office Mykhailo Podolyak tweeted the following statement immediately after the incident: "Crimea, the bridge, the beginning. Everything illegal must be destroyed, everything stolen must be returned to Ukraine, everything occupied by Russia must be expelled." [1] Therefore, there is a very real possibility that the explosion was carried out by Ukrainian special forces. In fact, that is what the Ukrainian authorities' responses to the incident suggest. Drawing a parallel with the aforementioned possibility, on October 9, 2022, President of Russia Vladimir Putin described the incident as a "terrorist act" organized by Ukraine. [2]

Crimea was annexed by Russia in 2014, violating international law. The bridge, built in 2018, was hailed by the Russian media as the "construction of the century." [3] It held significant meaning for the Russians as the bridge served as a symbol of Russia's authority over Crimea.

Ukraine aims to reclaim the peninsula. In fact, a few months ago, Oleksi Danilov, Secretary of Ukraine's National Security and Defense Council, declared that the Ukrainian Armed Forces would attack the Kerch Bridge, which connects the Russian-occupied Crimean Peninsula to Russia, if the opportunity presented itself. [4] Podolyak had also stated that the bridge "is an illegal construction and the main gateway to supply the Russian army in Crimea. Such objects should be destroyed." [5]



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Throughout the war, the bridge served as a vital supply route for Russian troops stationed in the south of Ukraine. Since the bridge is Russia's only supply route to Crimea, the Russian authorities have claimed that the bridge is well-protected against threats from air, land, or water. [6]

The long-awaited strike by Ukraine against Russia finally succeeded on October 8, 2022. However, the success of the attack raises two particularly important questions. First of all, does the attack on the Kerch Bridge suggest that Russia has now genuinely lost the war? Secondly, has the weariness of the Russian soldiers caused them to become weaker and more vulnerable? Russian authorities have asserted that the bridge was subjected to strict surveillance; therefore, the attack on the bridge inflicted considerable damage to Putin's reputation.

Following the event, Sergey Aksyonov, the Russian-appointed governor of Crimea, informed the media, "The situation is manageable. It is unpleasant, but not fatal." [7] Although not "fatal," the situation is depressing from Moscow's perspective. The attack demoralized the Russian soldiers and dealt a devastating psychological blow to the military of the country. Because now, it will be harder to provide Russia's fighting components with the logistical assistance they need.

The effective neutralization of the intensely monitored bridge raises the possibility that Russia is no longer able to defend regions that are crucial to the war.

It should also be mentioned that in August 2022, President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelenskyy stated that the war in Ukraine began with Crimea in 2014 and must end with its liberation. [8] Thus, Kyiv could have wished to convey its intention to retake Crimea through the Kerch Bridge. On October 10, 2022, strikes occurred throughout Ukraine, including in Kyiv. With its retaliations, Moscow attempted to demonstrate that it had received the message, but that it had no intention to accept defeat.

Thus, Moscow has shown that it will not hesitate to escalate the war. As demonstrated by the Ukrainian Army's attack on the Kerch Bridge, Kyiv shares the same resolve. It seems that the collapse of the bridge has motivated Russia to compete for global supremacy in a bid to compensate for the reputational damage it suffered. Currently, the war in Ukraine is referred as a "special operation," yet, since the Moscow government has already demonstrated that it will not accept defeat, the Kremlin may formally declare war on Kyiv. This is also due to the fact that, with this war, Russia believes it is battling not just Ukraine but also the entire West.

In conclusion, the attack on Kerch Bridge has demonstrated that Ukraine aspires to reestablish its territorial integrity by liberating all the territories that Russia has annexed since 2014, including Crimea, in addition to the areas that were seized during the conflict that started in February 2022. The incident has established that the connection between Russia and Crimea is not that stable. It has also demonstrated that Moscow is unable to safeguard its supply lines. Therefore, the attack not only caused damage to the Kerch Bridge but also to Russia's reputation. The Kremlin, on the other hand, has ramped up its attacks in an apparent attempt to signal that it will not hold back from escalating the conflict further, indicating that it does not take kindly to any outcome other than victory. It will not be surprising if Russia declares an official war in the coming days.

[1] "Crimea Bridge Partially Reopens after Huge Blast, Russia Says", BBC, <https://www.bbc.com/news/live/world-63183783>, (Date of Accession: 10.10.2022).

[2] "Russian Divers to Inspect damage to Vital Crimea Bridge Link", Taken Jazeera, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/10/9/russian-divers-to-inspect-damage-to-vital-crimea-bridge-link>, (Date of Accession: 10.10.2022).

[3] "Destruction of Putin's Bridge to Crimea-Here's What We Know So Far", The Debrief, <https://thedebrief.org/destruction-of-putins-bridge-to-crimea-heres-what-we-know-so-far/>, (Date of Accession: 10.10.2022).

[4] "Kremlin Reacts to Ukrainian Official Saying Russia's Bridge to Crimea Might be Attacked", The New Voice of Ukraine, <https://english.nv.ua/amp/kremlin-reacts-to-ukrainian-official-saying-russia-s-bridge-to-crimea-might-be-attacked-50235767.html>, (Date of Accession: 10.10.2022).

[5] "Ukraine Aiming to Create Chaos within Russian Forces, Zelenskiy Adviser Says", The Guardian, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/aug/16/creating-chaos-zelenskys-adviser-outlines-ukraines-military-strategy>, (Date of Accession: 10.10.2022).

[6] "Kiev Wants to Destroy Putin's Bridge in Crimea", Asia News, <https://www.asianews.it/news-en/Kiev-wants-to-destroy-Putin%27s-bridge-in-Crimea-56080.html>, (Date of Accession: 10.10.2022).

[7] "Russian Divers to Inspect damage to Vital Crimea Bridge Link", Al Jazeera, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/10/9/russian-divers-to-inspect-damage-to-vital-crimea-bridge-link>, (Date of Accession: 10.10.2022).



ANKASAM ANALYSIS

European Energy Union: Is It Still Possible?

The 27 member states of the European Union (EU) have demonstrated their inability to agree on an energy policy in the wake of the Russian-Ukrainian War. Because nations that influence decision-making processes, such as Serbia and Bulgaria, who are the members of the Union, cooperate with Russia in specific sectors. In addition to these countries, Hungary and the

Czech Republic stated that they are in favor of continuing cooperation with Russia, although they do not oppose the EU's decisions. For this reason, it is believed that it is challenging for the 27 EU member states to come to a consensus because it is not known whether any of the members will undermine the decisions, especially regarding the sanctions that will be



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imposed on Russia. Due to this, Germany and France came together and asserted that the EU's negotiations with producer nations and import sources on the basis of individual nations diminished the Union's bargaining leverage and that the Union should instead deal with these actors "as a single entity."

As it can be recalled, on February 25, 2015, the EU Commission released a document in Brussels outlining a vision for the creation of the "European Energy Union." When the situation brought on by Europe's energy dependence on Russia is considered, it becomes clear why the members did not insist on the European Energy Union and were unable to implement it.

The EU has outlined the energy transitions of the member states of the Union and defined three key areas under its energy vision in the document. The first section examines ways to lower high energy prices so that the EU might become more competitive with other G7 nations including the United States (US), Japan, and China. In this context, the negative effects of electricity wholesale prices being 30% higher and natural gas prices being twice as high compared to US prices on the competitiveness of the EU were examined.

The significance of reducing external dependency on energy supply and diversifying supplier nations was underlined in the second section. In terms of foreign dependency, it was mentioned that the energy dependence of especially Germany, Slovakia, Czech Republic and Hungary on Russia reduced the bargaining power of the Union and negatively affected the economies.

Thirdly, the development of a unified energy market and network inside the EU was evaluated. The most important element here is the goal of guaranteeing the energy security of EU. It may be argued that the situation at Nord Stream 1 and 2 would not have reached this point and there would not be any EU countries reliant on Russia if the EU had begun to act in line with the methods and vision it sought in 2015. Therefore, the EU would not have been caught unprepared for the energy crisis.

The fact that the document from 2015 refers to a "energy union" built on a partnership, solidarity and shared confidence in energy security demonstrates how predictable the current situation actually was. The document's emphasis on the value of solidarity in instances such as the cessation of the gas pipeline to the EU is the first and most crucial indication of this. In such a scenario, the EU envisaged to supply natural gas through the Central Asian countries by the Southern Gas Corridor.

The second indicator is the plan to position a liquefied natural gas (LNG) facility for Central and Eastern Europe in the Mediterranean region, like the one in northern Europe. Within this framework, the document had intended to establish a Floating LNG Storage and Gasification Unit (FSRU) in every nation with a coast and access to the Mediterranean, including France and Italy, as well as in countries with coasts on the Adriatic. In addition, the document had also considered the preparation of the funding system through a number of actions taken at the EU level. Therefore, a new vision was presented for both natural gas and the diversification of nuclear fuel imports.

The rapid removal of all obstacles to LNG imports from the US and other countries and the increase in LNG diversification show that the Union anticipated the current developments. In one article, it was emphasized that the effective use of resources within the borders of the Union and, in particular, the importance of renewable energy sources and shale gas.

Also highlighted are the establishment and secure management of oil and natural gas storage facilities. In this framework, the document mentioned that the supply gap would be addressed. Energy would flow between both the EU nations and the neighboring nations through one-way and two-way networks, especially during disruptions and crisis periods.

At the same time, the document guaranteed to standardize all kinds of energy contracts that the EU will sign with third parties and ensure the implementation of the EU legislation. On the one hand, this would be a process that would prevent member states from negotiating on their behalf, but on the other hand, it would ensure that the EU would be "united" thanks to compliance with standard contracts.

However, one of the most important goals contained in the document is that, just as Germany and France have raised the issue, it is planned that EU member states will make joint purchases using the demand consolidation method in times of crisis. This means that supply sources and sellers would be confronted with a single demand. The distribution of the resources could then be made within the EU. For example, a 150-billion-barrel oil contract would replace one for 5 million barrels, and the money would then be collected from the nations in accordance with the requests of the member countries. It is possible to interpret the European Energy Union document as EU's confession. In particular, it was aimed to ensure the energy supply security of the EU, which is approximately 90% foreign-dependent in the field of energy, and to transfer the process to the European Energy Union and to end the negotiations between European countries one by one.

The document was also a document for the European energy union, especially for the development of cooperation with alternative producers and alternative transit countries. Looking at the document, it is seen that the names of the four countries are listed bottom to bottom within the framework of the strategic partnership. These include Algeria, Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan, and Türkiye as a reliable transit country for the transportation of Central Asian natural gas. Apart from these four countries, Africa and the Middle East were also included in the document as a secondary region.

Within the framework of the Trans-Anatolian Natural Gas Pipeline (TANAP) and Trans-Adriatic Pipeline (TAP) system, there is a reliable and low-cost route from Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan to Europe, called the "Middle Corridor".

As can be understood, if the Southern Gas Corridor was given due importance in the context of the European Energy Union, it would even be possible for the Russia-Ukraine War to never break out. Because one of the reasons for the publication of the document in 2015 is Russia's annexation of Crimea. After the annexation, the EU had predicted that Russia would create a conflict in Ukraine.

If the energy union in question had been established, Russia probably would not have been able to afford a war with Ukraine. Because the EU's dependence on Russia would have decreased from 40% to 15%. A Europe dependent on Russian natural gas by 15% would not have been all that affected by the war, and Russian President Vladimir Putin would not have dared undertake such a war either.

It is not too late for the EU's effective use of the Southern Gas Corridor, taking other alternative West African and Middle Eastern resources, especially Algeria, Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan, and in this context, the European Energy Union being brought to the agenda again, quickly approved, and the sole authority being turned over to it. From the perspective of the EU, the process makes this inevitable. On the other hand, the possibility of political schemes should not be disregarded. At the time the document was put forward, the European Commission Energy Officer stated that a more active role should be taken in order to bring Turkmen natural gas to the EU. But this plan has somehow been destroyed. In the same way, if the EU follows the rhetoric of the Greek Cypriot Administration (GCA) and Greece, the goals of the union may be wasted with dreams of the Eastern Mediterranean natural gas, which will never come and will not meet the expectations of the EU, even if it does, and a pipeline that will not exist. Whoever blocks this community will be truly responsible for the economic recession Europe has fallen into.

In the light of the information, it can be stated that it is important to bring the relevant document back to the agenda. In this context, the establishment of the European Energy Union as soon as possible and the participation of states that stand out as supporters or observers of this union, especially Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan, as natural partners of this union, can be considered as a solution to the EU's energy crisis.



ANKASAM ANALYSIS

CICA Summit and Peaceful Vision of Kazakhstan

The 6th Summit of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA) was held on 12-13 October 2022 in Astana, the capital of Kazakhstan. President of Kazakhstan, Mr. Kassym-Jomart Tokayev hosted the summit held at the Independence Palace, in addition, the heads of state of Türkiye, Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Russia, Iran, Iraq, Qatar, Palestine, and Pakistan, as well

as the vice presidents of countries such as China and Vietnam have joined. In addition, Turkmenistan was represented at the level of the foreign affairs presidency. In addition, United Nations (UN) Secretary-General Antonio Guterres addressed the participants via video.

The ever-widening supply chain gaps, sustainable development, ecology, and food safety is-



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sues were discussed at the summit. The CICA Summit has been recognized as one of the most important developments in foreign policy in Kazakhstan in particular and in Asia in general after the Covid-19 pandemic. Speaking at the summit, the leaders expressed their support for Kazakhstan's peaceful role, regional projects, the mission adopted by CICA, and regional cooperation projects.[1]

The summit is quite important in terms of decisions that are taken, in addition to the participants. First of all, in the explanation of "Astana Declaration on Transformation of CICA", it was decided to transform CICA into a full-fledged international organization operating regionally.[2] Therefore, it is aimed to strengthen the institutional identity of CICA. On the other hand, the establishment has revealed that it aims to contribute to the dynamic, fair, comprehensive, and balanced economic growth, social and cultural development, and integration of its member states. In addition to all these, it was emphasized that efforts will be continued to seek solutions to common problems for a safe and prosperous region and to ensure that disputes are resolved peacefully by the UN Charter.

Undoubtedly, these decisions are going to serve Asia to be remembered as a center for peace and stability. CICA, which can be described as the Asian version of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), aims to transform Asia as a center for peace based on its values, instead of an understanding of peace solely based on the West.

The OSCE includes all of the Western states and only some of the Asian states. For this reason, it can be said that there is a need for the institutionalization of peace and stability in Asia. The biggest shortcoming of Asia is the absence of an Asia-centered structure where various problems can be solved. The transformation of CICA into a regional international organization is one of the developments that will fill this deficiency. In addition to this, the acceptance of Kuwait's full membership and Turkmenistan's being an observer member show that CICA aims to expand and make peace prevail throughout Asia.

It is obvious that CICA, which Kazakhstan pioneered, will transform into an international organization and make important contributions to peace in a period of increasing violence in the world, after nearly thirty years. In addition, although he has been the CICA President for two years, it has been agreed that this duty will continue until 2024. Undoubtedly, this development can be evaluated as a reflection of the trust that Asian states have in Kazakhstan and Mr. Tokayev.

Considering the other decisions taken at the summit; CICA Fund Regulations, Statement by CICA Leaders on Cooperation in the Security and Use of Information and Communication Technologies, and CICA Action Plan on the Implementation of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy are seen to be accepted.[3] It can be said that with these decisions, CICA intended to gain a more institutional character, that CICA took into account the concept of peace from many aspects, including cyber security, and determined a concept in line with international law.

In addition, bilateral meetings were held between the leaders during the summit. For example, Mr. Tokayev met with the Presidents of Türkiye, Pakistan, and Qatar as well as the Vice President of China. During the interviews, it was aimed to deepen the relations. For example, Kazakhstan and Pakistan; agreed to cooperate in the transport, transit, logistics, and energy sectors. Of course, not only

the summit, but also these contacts showed that Kazakhstan is a center for diplomacy, and it strengthened the constructive-peaceful place in international politics.

Consequently, through CICA Summit held in Kazakhstan, Astana showed to the whole world, that it is a significant factor in transforming the peace in Asia into a constructive and institutional form. In the heart of Asia, Kazakhstan, once again prove its role of historical mission and peace-building role, by promoting CICA to transform into an international organization. Because, Kazakhstan, the founding country of CICA, is taking steps to make up for the deficiency in the sustainability of the peaceful environment in Asia. Moreover, this constructive role of Astana is also recognized by other states, as can be seen from the extension of the CICA Presidency.

[1] Aibarshyn Akhmetkali, "CICA Leaders Support Kazakhstan's Extended Chairpersonship as Sixth Summit Concludes", The Astana Times, <https://astanatimes.com/2022/10/cica-leaders-support-kazakhstans-extended-chairpersonship-as-sixth-summit-concludes/>, (Date of Accession: 14.10.2022).

[2] "Draft Astana Statement on CICA Transformation", CICA, <https://www.s-cica.org/docs/373585564634806cd9e5b6.pdf>, (Date of Accession: 14.10.2022).

[3] "Adopted documents", CICA, <https://www.s-cica.org/index.php?view=page&t=sixth-cica-summit-adopted-documents>, (Date of Accession: 14.10.2022).



ANKASAM ANALYSIS

Belarus Amid Russia's Pressure and the Western Threat

On 10 October 2022, the President of Belarus, Aleksander Lukashenko held a meeting with representatives of the country's security units. At the meeting, Lukashenko announced that a joint military unit would be established with Russia in the face of possible threats of attack

and that he had ordered Russian soldiers to be deployed on the western borders of Belarus. Lukashenko stated that this decision was taken due to the deteriorating situation on the western borders of the country.[1] In this context, Lukashenko opened the meeting with the



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following message:

"We have been warned by unofficial channels that there will be an attack on Belarus from the territory of Ukraine. We were told that it would be the Crimean Bridge-2 case."^[2]

Following his statement, Lukashenko stated that he had previously agreed with President of Russia Vladimir Putin on the formation of a regional joint military group. As a matter of fact, following the informal Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) Summit, the President of Belarus said that he had met with Putin in St. Petersburg and that this decision was taken during the meeting. In addition, Lukashenko said that Russia is not ready for such a conflict, and stated: "You know that they have enough problems. Therefore, do not rely on the fact that the Russian Army has a large number of soldiers."^[3]

Lukashenko also expressed to the country's security forces his concern that the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and various European states were working on options for attacking Belarus. In this context, Lukashenko said, "There should be no war on the territory of Belarus. And we will do everything to prevent it."^[4]

Lukashenko's statements also struck the European Union's (EU) attention. EU Commission's Lead Spokesperson for Foreign Affairs Peter Stano declared: "We have heard a statement that Belarus and Russia have started to operate through a joint military group. If this is actualized, there will be a new climb in conflicts and the EU will not remain silent." With this statement, ^[5] he explains that the accusations made by Lukashenko against Kyiv are unfounded, that Ukraine is in the position of a victim country, not an aggressor, and that Minsk should not allow the territory of Belarus to be used for air attacks on Kyiv.^[6]

Lukashenko tries to implement his traditional strategy and makes statements showing that he supports the policies of the Kremlin to receive concessions from Russia on certain issues. As is known, Belarus chose its side by allowing Russia to use its territory during Russia's attack on Ukraine. Later, it tried to return to the status of neutrality again and wanted to play a mediating role, not allowing operations to be carried out through Belarus. However, Russian soldiers remained in the territory of Belarus after this decision, although these troops are not officially declared.

Minsk's neutrality forms the basis of Ukraine's Belarus policy. The most reasonable option for Ukraine is the complete withdrawal of Russian troops from Belarus. However, knowing that this will not be easy, Kyiv expects that Minsk at least has an impartial stand and does not fulfill all of Putin's orders, since this will eliminate Ukraine's burden of fighting on two fronts and enable Kyiv to concentrate on the eastern and southern regions.

Lukashenko's claim that Ukraine and NATO would attack Belarus and Belarus' initiation of a new joint military group with Russia might be related to the decision taken at the Lukashenko-Putin meeting in St. Petersburg. It can be said that the Moscow administration aims at shifting the Ukrainian Army from the eastern and southern regions to the north, taking advantage of the threat Belarus poses by

positioning on the northern side of Ukraine. Indeed, Kyiv's transfer of some of its military forces to the Belarusian border could facilitate Russia's military efforts.

On the other hand, Lukashenko indicates that he does not want any war on their land. The joint involvement of Belarus and Russia in the Ukrainian War will make it inevitable for the conflicts to spread to the territory of Belarus. This concern leads Lukashenko to be cautious and step away from fulfilling Russia's orders.

The second factor is the attitude of the West. Belarus' steps against Ukraine may force some Eastern European countries, especially Poland, to take action. In other words, the situation in the northern borders of Ukraine may result in the intervention of the actors supporting Kyiv. In this sense, Western threats cause Minsk to avoid making radical decisions.

As a result, Lukashenko is forced to establish a joint military group by Moscow on the Ukrainian borders; and on the other side, NATO countries force Belarus to step back by threatening the country. Faced with such a dilemma, it can be predicted that Minsk will choose to act rationally taking into account the national interests of the country, rather than fulfilling the orders of Russia.

[1] "Россия и Белоруссия начали развертывать совместную группировку войск", Lenta.Ru, <https://lenta.ru/news/2022/10/10/grbvnu/>, (Date of Accession: 11.10.2022).

[2] "Лукашенко пригрозил Украине ответом в случае нападения на Белоруссию", Lenta.Ru, <https://lenta.ru/news/2022/10/10/64535/>, (Date of Accession: 11.10.2022).

[3] "Лукашенко и Путин договорились о развертывании совместной региональной группировки войск", Balta, <https://www.belta.by/president/view/lukashenko-i-putin-dogovorilis-o-razvertyvanii-sovmestnoj-regionalnoj-gruppirovki-vojsk-5286-2022/>, (Date of Accession: 11.10.2022).

[4] "Лукашенко: НАТО и ряд стран Европы рассматривают варианты «агрессии» против Белоруссии", Gazeta.Ru, <https://www.gazeta.ru/politics/news/2022/10/10/18760771.shtml?updated>, (Date of Accession: 11.10.2022).

[5] "ЕС призвал Белоруссии воздержаться от агрессивных действий", Tass, <https://tass.ru/mezhdunarodnaya-panorama/16005937>, (Date of Accession: 11.10.2022).

[6] Ibid.



ANKASAM ANALYSIS

China and Japan's Role in Germany's Indo-Pacific Initiative

To determine its policies towards the Indo-Pacific region, Germany published a vision document titled "Germany-Europe-Asia: Shaping the 21st Century Together" in September 2020. In this directive, it is emphasized that the development of the Indo-Pacific directly or indirectly affects the welfare and security of Germany. The growing interest of the great powers in the economic, political, and security developments in the Indo-Pacific over the last two or three years has been instrumental in Germany's opening up to the region.

With the global power competition shifting to the Indo-Pacific geography, Germany started to direct its economic, military, and political attention to the region in order not to be left behind by other actors. The clearest indication of this interest was that in August 2021, Germany sent its warship to the region for the first time in twenty years. The Bayern frigate of the German Navy, which first anchored in the port of Japan, then started to perform a six-month

mission in the region.

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, who took office in December 2021, made his first overseas visit in Asia to Japan in April 2022. In the Indo-Pacific opening, it has been much discussed that Japan should be preferred rather than China. Therefore, Germany's approach to China has begun to be wondered. Another remarkable development took place in this process. "Politico Magazine" announced that German Chancellor Scholz plans to travel to China on 3-4 November 2022.[1] This step can be interpreted as an effort to give a new direction to Germany's Indo-Pacific policies. This step can be interpreted as Germany's effort to give a new direction to its Indo-Pacific policies.

Trying to establish a balance between China and Japan, Germany tries to carry out its Indo-Pacific policies on a fine line. Taking into account regional and global geopolitics, Germany tries to pursue a



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policy that considers the following economic (commercial), political, and military (security) factors.

Economic (Commercial) Factors

Since China has been its largest trading partner of Germany for the last seven years, it has a different position from Japan in Berlin's foreign policy. Japan is Germany's second-largest trading partner in Asia. Despite this, the Berlin administration is trying to shift its weight in foreign trade from China to Japan, especially due to the geopolitical risks originating from Taiwan. In this respect, Scholz's visit to Beijing on 3-4 November 2022 has particular importance. While the German Chancellor is trying to keep Germany's positive relations with China by considering commercial interests; on the other hand, he aims to put pressure on Beijing on issues such as the Russia-Ukraine War and the Taiwan Crisis.

The economic dependence of European states on China facilitates the establishment of political influence over Beijing. For example, European states are discussing the imposition of economic sanctions on China in case the Taiwan crisis grows. This threat of economic sanctions causes China to think twice before taking a step toward Taiwan.

On the other hand, such threats carry the possibility of provoking China more. Therefore, unlike the United States of America (US), European countries, especially Germany, avoid making statements that directly target China. Because the Berlin administration may have realized that it would be more costly to exclude China by giving weight to Japan in economic relations. In other words, the danger of losing China while trying to win Japan may have caused Scholz to make a sudden visit to Beijing. But its ability to maintain its trade relations with China depends, first of all, on Germany's political attitude.

Political Factors

Berlin is positioned opposite Russia and China in global politics. It criticizes Beijing on many issues, from human rights violations to China's military activities in the southern seas. To be more general, Germany is one of the Western states that thinks China is challenging the rules-based international order. At the same time, it is one of the actors who are uncomfortable with and criticize China's support of Moscow in the Russia-Ukraine War.

The fact that Germany sided with the US in Taiwan-related matters is something Beijing is uncomfortable with. After the Speaker of the US House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taiwan, Germany announced that "it would not allow a big neighbor

to attack a small neighboring state" and warned Beijing that it would defend Taiwan.[2] In other words, Germany made a statement of support for Taiwan at the expense of disrupting its economic relations with China. In other words, Berlin tried to deter China by implying that it could support the US if necessary. As the risk of war decreased, Germany called for de-escalation in the Taiwan Strait and emphasized that it was committed to the "One China Policy." [3]

In this process, the G7 countries, including Germany and Japan, issued a joint statement criticizing China's military drills around Taiwan. Although Beijing rejected this statement of the G7, it kept away from bringing any diplomatic or economic measures to the European states. One of Beijing's biggest concerns is the deterioration of its economic relations with Europe due to the Taiwan Crisis.

Military (Security) Factors

Germany, which aims to counter China's military activities in the region to build a free and open Indo-Pacific, is one of the Western allies of the US in the region. After deploying the first naval ship to the region in late 2021, Germany participated in a multilateral air military drill called "Pitch Black 2022" held in Australia in August 2021.[4] Germany sent 6 Eurofighter fighter jets to the region after a total flight of 22 thousand kilometers,[5] and it was the clearest indicator of Berlin's determination to increase its presence in the Indo-Pacific.[6] A month later, the first joint air drill between Japan and Germany was held.

In general, Germany has been trying to increase its military presence in the Indo-Pacific, especially in the last two years, and one of its biggest allies in the region is Japan. The Berlin administration says that it may send more ships and planes to the region in the future due to the increasing Chinese threat.[7] On the other hand, it takes care not to enter into a possible trade war with China. However, Berlin's increasing military presence in the region may draw the reaction of Beijing. Therefore, Berlin started to focus on trade with Japan as an alternative to China.

As a result, Germany, as a Western power, became more and more involved in the political, economic, and military competition in the Indo-Pacific. Taking into account the risks and threats posed by the possible crisis that may erupt in Taiwan in particular, at the regional and global level, the Berlin administration tries to follow a politically balanced line between Beijing and Tokyo. Focusing on developing cooperation with Japan in the field of security, Germany is trying to ensure a transition from China to Japan in trade relations.



ANKASAM ANALYSIS

Toughening Stance of Greece Towards Irregular Migrants

A tragedy that occurred on the territory of Greece in August 2022 led to a toughening of Athens' policy towards irregular migrants. The Athens administration found the migrants stranded on an islet in Evros after a long time, claiming that they were not on Greek soil. The announcement of this development, especially by international news agencies,[1] has been a worrying development for the Greek Government.

Although activists contacted the Greek police, the European Union (EU) Coast Guard Agency (Frontex), and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Greece to rescue the migrant group, the calls were dismissed as fake news and ignored.[2]

The Greek authorities found refugees stranded on the islet in Meriç only after the international community addressed this issue. However, the prolongation of the process has led to the death of a five-year-old girl on Greek soil.

Greece's response to the tragedy was to extend the barrier in Meriç to the entire Turkish border. The Athens administration has avoided taking responsibility from the beginning of the incident and has thrown the ball to third parties. Thus, Athens aims to reduce migrant crossings across the border to a minimum. Considering Greece's current policy towards refugees, this development should not be considered a surprise.



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It can be said that Greece's policy towards migrants has two pillars. These are the land and the sea. Greece is trying to send back refugees who have crossed its land border to its country by starving them and pushing them towards the Turkish land border. At sea, regardless of whether it is international waters or Greek territorial waters, it pursues a policy that risks the lives of migrants by sinking migrant boats and forcing them to go toward Turkish territorial waters.

The support Greece has received from the EU institutions in its tough policy against irregular migrants should not be denied. Because at the end of April 2022, Fabrice Leggeri, the President of Frontex at the time, was forced to resign for turning a blind eye to the pushback of migrants. Leggeri supported the Greek Coast Guard's policy of "pushback" migrants and helped cover them up.[3]

As can be seen, Greece, with the support it received from the EU institutions, attacked the boats of migrants and forced them to stay stranded at sea by moving them away from its territorial waters. In other words, the EU has supported Greece's policy towards migrants. The reason why Brussels supports this policy of Greece is that Athens claims that the EU's maritime and land borders start with Greece.

Moreover, the disclosure that Nikos Androulakis, the leader of the Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK), who is in opposition in Greece, was secretly wiretapped by the Greek Intelligence Agency (EYP) in August 2022 revealed another fact. It has been understood that in addition to the PASOK leader, many journalists were also wiretapped by the EYP in the scandal.

Greek journalist Stavros Malihoudis, who was revealed to have been secretly wiretapped by the EYP, stated that this was due to his reporting on "migrants and illegal pushbacks implemented by the Athens administration." [4] As can be understood from Malihoudis' words, the fact that he raised the issue of irregular migration, in particular, has made him a target of the EYP. However, it should not be forgotten that the Greek Government is the one who creates and maintains the policy.

Considering the scandal regarding the wiretapping of the opposition leader in Greece, the situation may provide clues as to whether the wiretaps were carried out only on the initiative of the EYP or on the directive of the Mitsotakis Government. Es-

pecially, it is noteworthy that the EU top management has remained silent about Greece's tough stance towards irregular migrants. While the EU harshly criticizes countries such as Hungary and Poland in the face of these policies, it does not react to Greece in any way. The most important reason for this is that the Greek Prime Minister's party, New Democracy (ND), is affiliated with the European People's Party (EPP), of which EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen is a member. Therefore, the fact that Mitsotakis has close relations with the EU top management prevents the harsh policy of the Athens administration towards irregular migrants from coming to the EU agenda.

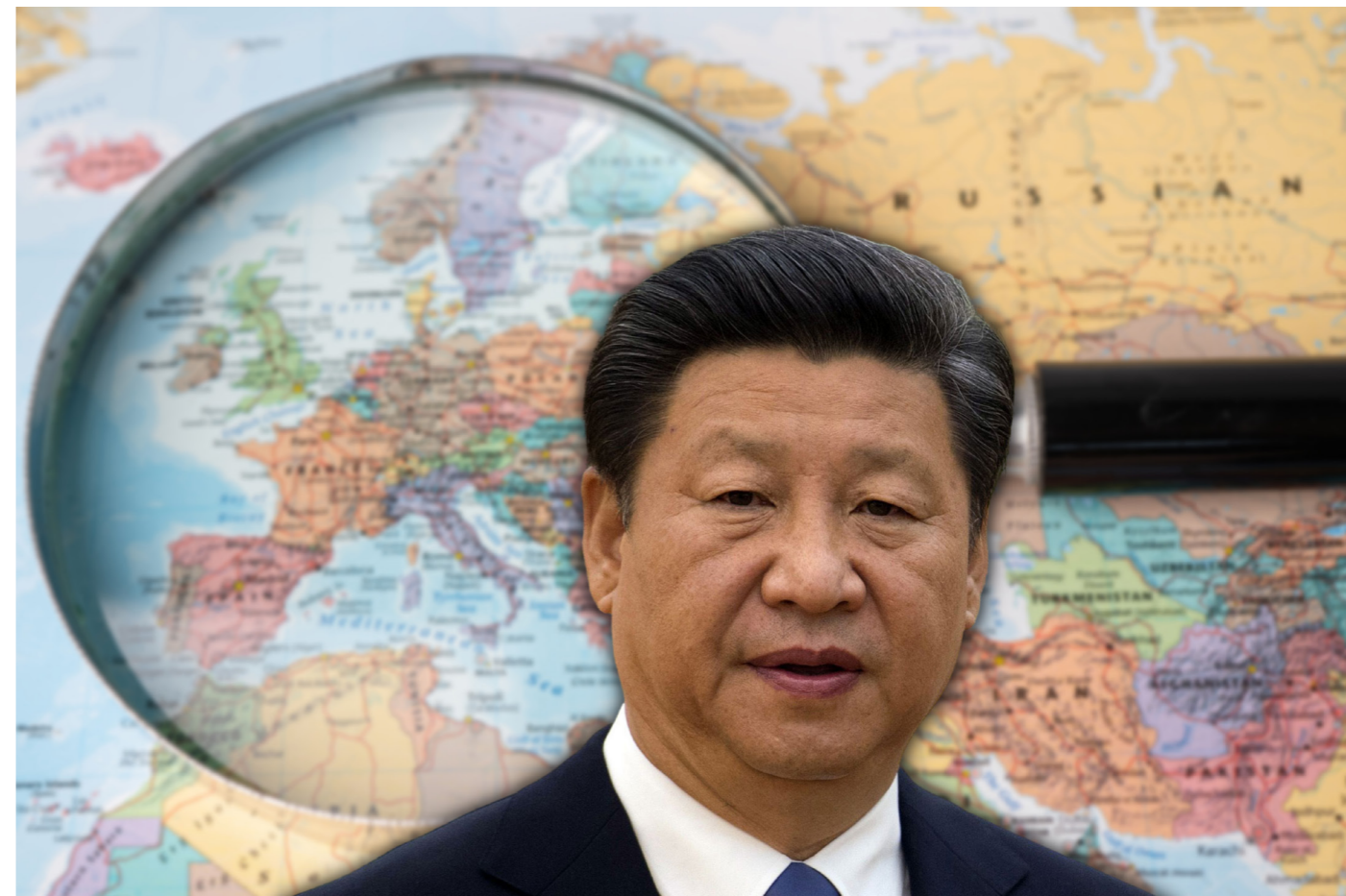
Consequently, as can be seen from the tragedy, Greece has taken steps to increase border security to avoid being in a difficult situation in front of international public opinion again. It should be noted that Greece is not acting alone in implementing this policy. As can be seen from the example of Frontex, the EU authorities support Greece's harsh policies towards irregular migrants.

[1] "Greece Says It Will Try to Retrieve Migrant Girl's Body From River Islet", Reuters, <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/greece-says-it-will-try-retrieve-migrant-girls-body-river-islet-2022-08-16/>, (Date of Accession:09.10.2022).

[2] Karolína Augustová, "Who is Responsible For The Deaths of Children at EU Borders?", Al Jazeera, <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2022/9/27/children-die-at-eus-borders-and-the-eu-is-to-blame>, (Date of Accession:09.10.2022).

[3] Alice Tidey, "Frontex Chief Resigns Over Misconduct and Human Rights Violations Probe", Euronews, <https://www.euronews.com/2022/04/29/frontex-chief-resigns-over-misconduct-and-human-rights-violations-probe>, (Date of Accession: 10.10.2022).

[4] Ahmet Gençtürk, "Greek Journalists Reiterate Government Fully Responsible For Illegal Surveillance", Anadolu Agency, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/europe/greek-journalists-reiterate-government-fully-responsible-for-illegal-surveillance-/2680129>, (Date of Accession:10.10.2022).



ANKASAM ANALYSIS

New Enemy of the UK and Continental Europe Could Be China?

On October 2022, British media corporation Reuters claimed that the Truss Government, who came to the Office in September 2022, will qualify China as a "threat" by a radical change in foreign policy.[1] With this change, China's position in British Foreign Policy will be to the same degree as Russia's. As a matter of fact, in the Boris Johnson period, China was categorized as a "systemic opponent." However, the new Prime Minister, Liz Truss, has decided to take it one step further and raise it to the level of "threat."

Describing China as a threat was one of Truss' most notable promises. Therefore, it was not surprising that such a decision was taken. The question being asked here is whether Conti-

ental Europe will follow the United Kingdom (UK) and make China a target. In the new Strategic Concept adopted at the Madrid Summit of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in June 2022, China was mentioned as a "strategic opponent" as well as Russia. However, this decision does not represent a change that would require NATO members to take a stand against Beijing. Rather, it is aimed to be prepared for potential threats that may arise from Russia as well as China.

The United States of America (US) and Britain act in unison so that NATO can fight Russia and China simultaneously. With this step, the Truss Government creates an infrastructure for European countries to fight against China. Former



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US President Donald Trump has made such descriptions for Iran, has imposed economic sanctions against the Tehran administration, and the parties have come back from the brink of war many times. The UK's official categorization of China as an enemy can also be seen as a strategy of preparation for war in Taiwan.

London argues that it is too late to support Ukraine and that's why Taiwan should be helped. To prepare for this, the UK firstly categorized China as a threat. This means, as, in the Ukraine example, London desires the Western powers to interlock around Taiwan and have a common front against China.

Now the UK demand NATO countries establish a similar ally against China as they were against Russia. The threat of China was mentioned at the last NATO Summit in Spain. However, NATO countries have quite different approaches towards China than Russia. In brief, even if NATO achieves unity against Russia, it would not be possible against China. However, it is not impossible though. Because, considering the example of Russia, Europe, despite being heavily dependent on Moscow in the field of energy, could equally risk being hostile to China if it was able to turn it into an enemy and dared to fight it.

At that point, it is needed to be considered that, how much the NATO countries are dependent on Russia and China, in terms of energy, economics, and trade. The belt-Road Project of China and trade relations with Europe and investments towards these countries are bigger than Russia's activities here. For instance, China is the biggest trading partner of Europe. Europe, which imports 472 billion Euros worth of goods from China, exports 223 billion Euros to this country.[2] Russia is Europe's fifth largest partner. Europe, which imports 162 billion Euros from Russia, exports 89 billion Euros to this country.[3]

In addition to all these, China's investments in Greece and Italy ports within the scope of the Belt-Road Project and its shipments to Belgium, Germany, and the Netherlands ports are seen as the most important contributions of China to the European economy. However, Europe is dependent on Russia for energy as much as it is dependent on China for trade. Therefore, starting from the economic criteria, Russia's in the eyes of Europe; it is quite difficult to determine whether China is more indispensable.

It would be easier to look at this issue from the point of view of geopolitical risks. Russia is next to Europe, and when it comes to the nuclear threat, action by NATO members seems inevitable.

On the other hand, a war between China and Taiwan poses a threat to the economic security of Europe. In other words, it

indirectly affects the security of Europe. Therefore, Europe, and more generally NATO members, may not see China as a vital threat to their territory. For this reason, the UK may find it difficult to find more supporters than Continental Europe at the point of accepting China as a threat.

The US, the UK, and the Anglo-Saxon states in a broader sense have become a pole against Russia and China. At this point, the distinction between NATO and Europe emerges. Continental Europe may start to think that this fight is useless due to the energy crisis, even though it is at war with Russia. Again, since they are highly dependent on China economically, they will not easily position Beijing as an enemy. The US, which is the leader of NATO, and the UK, which follows it, want entire Continental Europe to fight both Russia and China simultaneously.

The US, leading the campaign for Europe to support Kyiv in the Russia-Ukraine War, wants Continental Europe to be vigilant in case of the danger of China attacking Taiwan shortly. The UK now wishes to implement the same policy that NATO pursues in Ukraine on the Taiwan issue. However, this is a risky strategy.

Because it may cause Taiwan to gain more courage and move away from China, ultimately resulting in an attack by China. It should not be forgotten that; some of the guarantees NATO offered to Ukraine encouraged Kyiv and Ukraine began to move away from Russia. When war broke out between the two countries, NATO remained silent and did not rush to Kyiv's support. The same may be true for Taiwan. The Anglo-Saxon alliance, led by the US and England, encourages Taiwan by saying that NATO will support it. When war broke out between the two countries, NATO remained silent and did not rush to Kyiv's support. The same may be true for Taiwan. The Anglo-Saxon alliance, led by the US and England, encourages Taiwan by saying that NATO will support it. Therefore, the Anglo-Saxons' giving some assurances to Taiwan is quite dangerous in terms of regional security. Because there is no guarantee that the Western powers will support Taiwan in a possible war.

As a result, the US and UK may be misleading them by making Continental Europe hostile to China. After Ukraine, there is still a strong possibility that Europe will make a mistake in the Taiwan issue. Therefore, the US and NATO members except the UK will be more cautious in struggling against the "Chinese threat." Europe, which discusses the sustainability of the war in Ukraine due to the energy crisis and looks at Britain's pro-war attitude from a different perspective, can also differ from the Anglo-Saxons on the issue of China. In short, after describing China as a threat, Britain may become even more isolated in Europe.



ANKASAM ANALYSIS

The Address of the Sino-Australian Rivalry: Solomon Islands

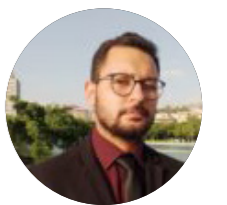
Due to its location and inability to carry out its fundamental duties, the Solomon Islands, which is viewed as a failed state in scholarly circles, is a particularly suitable target for battles for control over them. As a matter of fact, since 2019, China and Australia have been competing for influence over the Solomon Islands. The struggle started after the Solomon Islands cut off diplomatic ties with Taiwan's government and formally reestablished diplomatic ties with China on September 16, 2019.[1]

A security agreement between the Solomon Islands and Australia has been in effect since 2018. This agreement includes the Solomon Islands Government sending law enforcement officers to the islands if necessary. For instance, on November 25, 2021, while protests were taking place in

the capital, Australian law enforcement officials stepped in to help the Solomon Islands. Despite this, China and the Solomon Islands concluded a security agreement in April 2022.

The agreement's draft was leaked in March 2022, even though its contents have not been made public. The Beijing government will be permitted, by this draft, to send law enforcement organizations to the Solomon Islands for training and conduct port visits. It has also come to light that China could establish a naval base in the Solomon Islands.[2] This situation has made Washington and Canberra uncomfortable and put them on alert.

When questions about the agreements were addressed to the Minister of Foreign Affairs Wang Yi on June 3, 2022, China stated that the Solomon Is-



Elcan TOKMAK

lands is a sovereign state and has the right to sign agreements with other countries, just like any sovereign state. Wang also emphasized that it was disrespectful to the Solomon Islands' sovereignty to dictate anything to them.[3]

In this context, the tension in the region is constantly increasing due to the intelligence actions carried out by China near the Australian military facilities[4] and the agreement concluded with the Solomon Islands. From a broader perspective, there is a possibility that China will also conclude agreements with other Pacific islands, such as the Solomon Islands. While this possibility alarms the United States and Australia, it also makes it difficult to restrain China.

Pacific Islands Forum

The Pacific Islands Forum, which took place between 11-14 July 2022, provided the appropriate environment for the softening of the Canberra-Honiara relations, which were tense due to the security agreement concluded by the Solomon Islands with China. During the summit, Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and Solomon Islands President Manasseh Sogavare held bilateral talks. During the talks, Albanese expressed his desire for Australia to remain a security partner for the Pacific islands, not China.[5]

In a statement he made in April 2022 in response to the United States (US) and Australia's criticisms of the signed security agreement, Sogavare dismissed the possibility of establishing a Chinese naval base in the Solomon Islands and claimed that his nation did not consult any Pacific states before signing the AUKUS Agreement. He also stressed that the Pacific states respected Australia's decision and that Australia should show the same respect.[6] On the other hand, during the summit, Sogavare wanted to hug Albanese and said, "We are family, there are issues [but] that makes a family strong." [7] This shows that the Solomon Islands' attitude towards Australia has softened.

As can be seen, the Solomon Islands intended to balance Canberra despite having a security pact with Australia by entering a second security agreement with China, but it also did not want to completely oppose Australia and the US. It is possible to assess the Solomon Islands establishing diplomatic ties with China within the framework of balancing policy.

Unstable Relations with Australia

In August 2022, a bill was introduced to the Parliament of the Solomon Islands providing for the postponement of national elections scheduled for 2023. Although the opposition to this

measure was fairly vocal, the government postponed the bill due to the Pacific Games, which were scheduled to take place in Honiara, the nation's capital, between November 19 and December 2, 2023. It went on to say that the Solomon Islands lacked the resources necessary to simultaneously fund both events. [8]

In addition, the Australian Government has offered financial support to the Solomon Islands so that elections can be held on time. However, Honiara called this proposal "interference in its internal affairs" and sternly rejected it.[9] Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong responded by saying that her nation consistently gives similar help to the Pacific islands and mentioned that they offered the same aid during the Solomon Islands' past national elections.[10]

In an atmosphere where the opposition made harsh attacks on the administration because "they do not want to leave power," the Australian government's offer of financial help to prevent the delay of the elections made the government very uncomfortable. Concerns have also been expressed about possible intervention in the nation's internal affairs. In response, on October 6, 2022, Sogavare visited Australia. Following the talks, it was revealed that they had come to common ground on a wide range of subjects, including awarding student scholarships and formulating shared security and climate change strategies.[11] Furthermore, Sogavare asserted that he had promised the Canberra administration that he would not permit a Chinese military presence in the Solomon Islands.[12]

In conclusion, Australia-China relations have been tense for a while now. The Solomon Islands developed its ties with both nations in a way that put the security problem at the center because it intended to create a balance between the two nations rather than taking a side between the two great powers. Both China and Australia have made efforts to become the main security partner of the Solomon Islands. On one hand, the situation creates problems for the Solomon Islands, but on the other, it has also expanded the action area of Honiara.

[1] Ben Westcott "Second Pacific nation in a week ditches Taiwan for Beijing", CNN, edition.cnn.com/2019/09/20/asia/taiwan-china-kiribati-intl-hnk/index.html, (Date of Accession 10.10.2022).

[2] John Ruwitch, "Leaked Draft of an Agreement between China and the Solomon Islands Has U.S. Concerned", NPR, www.npr.org/2022/04/28/1095365212/leaked-draft-of-an-agreement-between-china-and-the-solomon-islands-has-u-s-conce



ANKASAM ANALYSIS

Possible Effects of the Energy Crisis on the Open Balkan Initiative

The power vacuum in the Balkans due to the disintegration of Yugoslavia caused many ethnic and religious tensions and an unstable structure emerged in this environment. In this environment, many regional and global actors, especially Russia and the European Union (EU) countries, have attempted to be effective in the region. With the outbreak of the Ukraine Crisis, the Western Balkans Geography has become an area where global powers compete.

It can be said that a dynamic agenda awaits the countries of the region, which deeply feel the Energy Crisis and the accompanying economic problems.

It is expected that there will be an increase in the interventions of regional and global actors due to the uncertainties in the EU processes of the countries in the region and their energy dependence on Russia. It is also possible that



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these interventions will deepen the problems in the region. Moreover, these interventions may bring to light the tradition of the Cold War that has prevailed over the countries of the region for years. At this point, it is a matter of curiosity how the Open Balkan Initiative, which prioritizes the social and economic integration of the regional states, will be affected.

Open Balkan Initiative

Located in the Western Balkans and continuing the EU membership process; the leaders of Serbia, North Macedonia, and Albania laid the foundation of the initiative as a result of the meeting they held in Novi Sad, Serbia in October 2019. As a result of the negotiations, the countries of the region made significant progress and with the declaration announced to the public in Skopje, the capital of North Macedonia, on July 29, 2021, they stated that they plan to establish a common customs system between the member states as of January 1, 2023. With this plan, the leaders, in a way, shaped the basic mission of the initiative in question.[1]

The Open Balkan Initiative aims to activate the labor market by reducing bureaucratic procedures among the Western Balkan countries aiming for EU membership. It is aimed that this economic integration will lead to a sociological integration over time and that passport-free circulation between the party countries will be implemented. With the epidemic process and the Ukraine War that followed, the interest of the countries in the region, which needs more regional cooperation, in the Open Balkan Initiative is increasing.

As a result of this interest, Prime Minister of Montenegro Dritan Abazovic and Prime Minister of Bosnia and Herzegovina Zoran Tegetlija attended the Open Balkan Initiative Summit held in Ohrid, North Macedonia on 7-8 June 2022, for the first time as observers. As a result of this participation, the expectations for those countries to be included in the initiative have increased. At the summit, working groups were formed to address the deepening food and energy crisis due to the Ukraine War, and many cooperation agreements were signed.[2]

Reflection of the Energy Crisis on Open Balkan Member States

Open Balkan Initiative member countries are dependent on Russia in terms of energy, especially natural gas. At the forefront of these countries is Serbia, which is the leading actor in the initiative. Minister of Energy of Serbia Zorana Mihajlovic told Reuters that they allocated 3 billion euros for electricity, natural gas, and fuel oil imports between October and March to meet the increasing energy needs. This figure corresponds to approximately

4.5% of the country's gross domestic product (GDP).[3]

Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic, on the other hand, stated that the Belgrade Administration continues to pay for the gas transit and called on Bulgaria not to stop the flow of Russian natural gas from the TurkStream. As it will be remembered, the Sofia administration declared that it would not renew the contracts with Moscow after the Ukraine Crisis.[4] Serbia, which is increasingly dependent on Russia for energy, signed a new 3-year gas agreement at a time when many countries stopped natural gas imports from Russia.[5]

Albania, is another important stakeholder of the Open Balkan Initiative, unlike Serbia; takes steps to transition to renewable energy by reducing its dependence on Russia and follows a path in line with the spirit of the Western alliance. In this context, the Albanian Ministry of Infrastructure and Energy announced that they are preparing to decide to exempt machinery and other equipment imported for green energy production from value-added tax.[6]

Not content with this, Tirana has initiated the first phase of its solar subsidy scheme to reduce energy costs for low-income families. This project is planned to expand the use of solar panels in water heating. On the other hand, the energy consumed for heating water accounts for 20% of household energy use.[7] The Ministry also announced that six of the 17 companies that want to establish a wind power plant have entered the second phase.[8]

The strategy followed by Albania on energy has brought the country closer to the West. For this reason, upon the call of the Albanian Energy Corporation KESH, "United States (US)-Italian consortium Excelerate Energy-Renco" announced that it would lease a thermal power plant with a capacity of up to 130 MW in the country. In Albania, which has declared an energy emergency, studies are continuing to make power plants functional.[9] Albania's attitude towards energy will also set an example for Kosovo and North Macedonia.

The position of North Macedonia, which is in the third step of the Open Balkan Initiative, is more fragile than the other two countries. The Skopje administration, which is dependent on Russia for natural gas, is one of the leading actors that Moscow will face in the region in terms of its attitude. Aware of this, the Government of North Macedonia seeks cooperation with Greece. At the meeting of the leaders of the two countries in Athens, a consensus was reached on continuing cooperation in the field of energy and initiating joint investments. Prime Minister of North Macedonia, Dimitar Kovačevski, stated that negotiations are being held on the construction of a natural gas interconnection in the

Evzoni region of Greece, and announced that Mytilineos, of Greek origin, will establish a 200 MW natural gas plant in the capital city of Skopje. Thus, Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis gave the message that he could contribute to the energy supply of North Macedonia by using the infrastructure developed by his country. [10]

Against the policies implemented by North Macedonia, Russia's move was not delayed. Because the Russian-backed opposition to North Macedonia, citing transparency concerns, prevented some laws related to the Open Balkan Initiative from being passed by the parliament. The opposition party, VMRO-DPMNE, in the committees of the Assembly of North Macedonia agreements on free access to the labor market, cooperation in the field of veterinary and safety, as well as communications and electronic identification were canceled.[11]

Kosovo Issue

The countries of the Open Balkan Initiative, consisting of Serbia, North Macedonia, Albania, Montenegro, and Bosnia and Herzegovina attended its last meeting with observer status, are facing the Kosovo Question. It is wondered how far the initiative can go without solving the Kosovo Question and how much integration can be achieved. The issue in question is a useful instrument for various states, especially Russia, who want to make a move against the Open Balkan Initiative.

Prime Minister of Kosovo Albin Kurti blamed the Belgrade administration, stating that the Serb-dominated regions in the north of the country became more aggressive after Russia invaded Ukraine. [12] Emphasizing that there is a risk of a hot conflict with Serbia in the upcoming period, Kurti drew attention to the close relationship of the Belgrade administration with Moscow.[13] In addition to Kurti, Prime Minister of Albania Edi Rama pointed out that Putin wanted to destabilize the Balkans and pointed to the possibility of making a move on Kosovo.[14]

Kosovo, one of the countries most affected by the energy crisis, has banned cryptocurrency mining in this context. The people most affected by this situation are the Serbs living in the north of the country. Therefore, if the energy crisis deepens, Kosovo will become more open to Russian intervention. In addition, on October 6, 2022, the Kosovo customs point was opened in Albanian Port.[15] This move does not coincide with the Open Balkan Initiative, which aims to create a common customs union and market. Therefore, if the energy crisis deepens, there is a possibility that the differences within the Open Balkan Initiative will become more evident in Kosovo.

To summarize, the states established after the collapse of Yugoslavia came together within the framework of the Open Balkan Initiative. The stakeholders of the Open Balkan Initiative have a rather problematic historical background, as the said disintegration is quite painful. For this reason, third countries are needed to ensure integration and solve the problems between partner countries.

While it is known that the US openly supports this initiative, the energy crisis brings Serbia and Russia closer, creating a serious dilemma. Therefore, the strategy that Serbia will develop in the energy crisis may bring along the necessity of choosing between the US and Russia in its foreign policy. Serbia's choice will also have some consequences within the Open Balkan Initiative.

A similar situation applies to Serbia's relations with the EU. Member states that want to follow a common energy policy against Russia want to include the Western Balkan countries in this policy. But the attitude of Belgrade is eagerly awaited. The fact that Serbia, a member of the Open Balkan Initiative, stands by Russia in the energy crisis by storing natural gas, while another important stakeholder of the initiative, Albania, receives serious grants from the US on renewable energy constitutes a situation contrary to the starting point of the Open Balkan Initiative. After all, the most important motivation of the Open Balkan Initiative is to create a common market and customs union. It is a matter of curiosity how the member states of the initiative will achieve this goal without establishing a common energy policy.

[1] "As EU Membership Stalls, Balkan Countries Make Controversial Move to Create Their Own Mini-Schengen", Euro News, <https://www.euronews.com/my-europe/2021/08/31/as-eu-membership-stalls-balkan-countries-make-controversial-move-to-create-their-own-mini-> (Date of Accession: 08.10.2022).

[2] "Ključne Poruke Sa Samita 'Otvoreni Balkan", Al Jazeera Balkans, <https://balkans.aljazeera.net/videos/2022/9/2/kljucne-poruke-sa-samita-otvoreni-balkan>, (Date of Accession: 08.10.2022).

[3] "Serbia Readies 3 Bln Euros For Energy Imports In Winter", Reuters, <https://www.reuters.com/business/energy/serbia-readies-3-bln-euros-energy-imports-winter-2022-09-15/>, (Date of Accession: 10.10.2022).

[4] "Serbia Urges EU State not to Block Russian Gas Transit", Russia Today, <https://www.rt.com/news/552399-serbia-bulgaria-russian-gas/>, (Date of Accession: 10.10.2022)

[5] "Serbia's President Says Agrees to New 3-Year Gas Deal with Russia", S&P Global, <https://www.spglobal.com/commodityinsights/en/market-insights/latest-news/natural-gas/052922-serbias-president-says-agrees-to-new-3-year-gas-deal-with-russia>, (Date of Accession: 10.10.2022).



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Is Serbia the New Target of EU Sanctions?

Following the annexation of Kherson, Zaporizhzhia, Donetsk, and Luhansk regions of Ukraine by Russia in violation of international law, European Union (EU) member states have reached an agreement on the 8th sanctions package targeting the Moscow administration, which includes setting a ceiling price on oil sales.[1] However, the sanctions have also begun to reflect on countries that do not impose sanctions on Russia. Serbia, which is stuck between the EU and Russia due to the war and forced to choose, is one of the actors most adversely affected by this process.

The Belgrade administration, which insists on not imposing sanctions on Russia, but also seems willing to join the EU, is experiencing a difficult process due to its foreign policy based on "balance." Therefore, the EU has begun to adopt a tougher stance in the face of Serbia's attitude. So much so that, at the European Political Community Summit which was held in Prague, the capital of the Czechia, on October 6, 2022, Serbia was added to the part on the restriction of Russian oil at the initiative of Croatian Prime Minister Andrej Plenkovic in the negotiations on the new sanctions package



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against Russia. Thus, the EU stopped exempting Serbia from sanctions against Russia.

According to the decision, Serbia is prohibited from buying Russian oil from the Trans-Adriatic Pipeline, that is, through Croatia, starting from November 1, 2022.[2] However, the President of Serbia Aleksandar Vucic announced that the decision has been postponed until December 1, 2022.[3] The relations of the Belgrade administration with Moscow have been decisive in the fact that the EU, which previously announced that the Western Balkan countries would be exempt from the ban on Russian oil, made such a decision change.

On the other hand, the ban on Serbia from buying Russian oil through the EU has led to tensions between Belgrade and Zagreb. After the EU included Serbia in the latest sanctions package to restrict Russian oil, Prime Minister of Serbia Ana Brnabic stated that this step was a clear "act of hostility" against them.

Describing the decision as a sanction and suggesting that it will lead to serious consequences for the country's economy, Brnabic evaluated the decision taken on the initiative of Croatia and said: "An unfriendly attitude was displayed towards us. They have shown that they are ready to use whatever happens against Serbia. This includes the energy crisis." [4]

Vucic, on the other hand, said that Croatia has returned to the policies it followed in 1941 and that the Belgrade administration can overcome the current problems. Moreover, the Serbian President asked the question, "If we start tripping over each other because of bilateral problems, how will we stay afloat in Europe?" [5]

On the other hand, some media outlets in Serbia used the headline "Croatia declares war against Serbia." about these developments. Conversely, Prime Minister of Croatia Andrej Plenkovic, who argued that the decision was the policy of the EU, not Croatia, said that the Serbian leader's statement made no sense.[6] Plenkovic also referred to the European Political Community Meeting in Prague and declared, "Every country must respect the policy of sanctions against Russia and show solidarity with Ukraine." [7]

However, it cannot be said that Zagreb has shown the same attitude toward some countries that are members of the EU and oppose sanctions. Therefore, it is thought-provoking that Croatia has such an approach toward Serbia. Indeed, Croatia had banned Vucic from entering the country in July 2022, when he planned to visit Jasenovac, the largest concentration camp in the country

during World War II.[8] Therefore, Croatia's latest move could put diplomatic relations between Zagreb and Belgrade in a deadlock. There have already been ups and downs between the two countries' relations since 1941. Therefore, the bilateral relations hang on by a thread.

The move from Hungary to Save Serbia.

After Belgrade's shipments through Croatia were included in the scope of sanctions on the initiative of Zagreb, Hungary made a decision that almost "came to the rescue" of Serbia and proposed a pipeline project to transport Russian oil to the country. The Budapest administration has stated that the new pipeline will provide cheap Russian oil supplies to Serbia and that this step will be part of Hungary's policy to diversify the region's energy infrastructure.[9]

In this context, the two countries announced that they had agreed on a new route for the supply of Russian oil on October 10, 2022. Hungarian Government Spokesman Zoltan Kovacs, who made a statement on the issue, indicated that Budapest and Belgrade will build a new pipeline to supply crude oil to Serbia through the Druzhba energy system.[10]

It can be said that Hungary is trying to assume a role in the region in terms of energy by turning such problems into opportunities, and is making several initiatives aimed at developing the country's economy. However, it is an indisputable fact that this step of Hungary, which opposes the sanctions against Russia because the country's economy will be badly affected, will be met with a great reaction from the EU.

Consequently, it is seen that Serbia's position on not imposing sanctions on Russia has attracted the reaction of the EU. Therefore, the prohibition of the country from supplying Russian oil through Croatia under the 8th sanctions package against Russia shows that the EU has begun to "punish" Belgrade. This situation will cause Serbia to experience an economically difficult process. Therefore, due to its foreign policy towards Moscow, Belgrade has turned to various alternatives to prevent the negative consequences of this process. The fact that the country has reached an agreement with Hungary on a new route for the supply of Russian oil also shows signs of this.

[1] "AB'den Rusya'ya Yeni Yaptırım Paketi", Bloomberg HT, <https://www.bloomberght.com/ab-den-rusya-ya-yeni-yaptirim-paketi-2316563>, (Date of Accession: 12.10.2022)



ANKASAM ANALYSIS

Dispute between Athens-Tirana on Maritime Border

There are some unsolved problems within Greece and Albania from the past. One of them is the dispute on the maritime border, which was coming up recently. This dispute, which caused diplomatic tension within between Athens-Tirana, was discussed once again in the sideline meetings between Prime Minister

of Greece Kyriakos Mitsotakis and Prime Minister of Albania Edi Rama, in the European Political Community in Prague on October 6, 2022. However, it is seen that there is no progress in solving that issue. As a matter of fact, after the meeting with Mitsotakis, Rama has expressed that this issue will not be solved with bilateral



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dialogues, therefore it will be taken to the International Court of Justice (ICJ).[1]

This issue caused the demand for Greece to enlarge its territorial waters up to 12 nautical miles (nm). However, Tirana rejects this demand of Athens, by claiming that there are specific conditions in the region. The current maritime borders between Greece and Albania were decided with the agreements signed during the First World War years. However, the special situations of the Greek islands such as Lazaretto, Ereikoussa, and Othonoi, caused this issue to remain unsolved.

Within the sides, firstly in 1912-1913, and later in 1926, agreements were signed on maritime borders. However, after the United Nations Convention of Law of Sea (UNCLOS) was signed by Greece in 1995 and by Albania in 2003, the Athens administration's demands and theses were changed.[2] Because, according to Article 3 of the Second Part of the UNCLOS, every state has the right to establish the breadth of its territorial sea up to a limit not exceeding 12 nm, measured from baselines determined by this Convention.[3]

Even though the UNCLOS gives this right to the states, the application of 12 nm is not obligatory. In addition, in the Convention, it is clarified that specific seas could have special status, in such conditions, the riparian states could determine their borders by bilateral agreements. Therefore, there is no legal vengeance for Tirana's rejection of Athens' demand to expand the territorial waters up to 12 nm.

The demand of 12 nm of Greece is applicable for both the Ionian Sea, the Mediterranean Sea, and the Aegean Sea. Therefore, to understand the dispute with Albania, it is needed to understand Albania's justification and anti-thesis, and the historical facts of the issue should be analyzed.

During the communist regime in Albania, a maritime borders agreement was signed; however, when the regime changed, the dispute between the two countries appeared again. Thus, in 2009, Prime Ministers, Kostas Karamanlis, and Sali Berisha signed "Delimitation of Counterparties' Continental Shelf and Other Maritime Zones by International Law." [4] Yet, later this agreement caused different arguments and negatively affected the bilateral relations.

After a year of 2009 agreement, Rama, the opposition leader of the time, has taken the issue to the Albanian Constitutional Court. The court also annulled the agreement because it ceded all jurisdiction in the seas to Greece and the status of islands, islets, and reefs very close to the Albanian mainland, on which there is no economic activity.[5]

Signing the agreement in 2009, and canceling it after a year, was not only based on the ideology of the Berisha Government. During the negotiations on maritime borders with Greece, the Tirana administration was completing the latest steps to be a North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) member, and aiming to apply for EU membership. That's why, Athens being both an EU and NATO member, made it possible that any problems within Greece and Albania would negatively affect the relations with the organizations. Therefore, the most important factor that forced the country to sign the 2009 Agreement, was the aim of the EU and NATO of Tirana.[6]

In 2013, when Albania Socialist Party came to the government under Rama's leadership, they declared that they demand to solve the problems with the Athens Administration based on the decision of the Albanian Constitutional Court. Therefore, in 2008, Rama and Alexis Tsipras, the PM of the time, negotiated.

During these negotiations, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Albania of time Ditmir Bushati met with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Greece of time Nicos Kotzias several times. After the meetings, Bushati said that "We fully believe that, respecting international law and the decision of the Constitutional Court, Albania will reach a much more favorable and fairer agreement than in 2009." [7] However, on January 30, 2018, Kotzias declared that "Albania agrees to extend Greek waters by 12 nautical miles from the coast, the maximum limit allowed by UNCLOS." [8] This caused Albania's reaction. Because Bushati has rejected the claims of agreement with Greece.[9]

After Kotzias' declaration, it is understood that there will not be a concrete result from the negotiations. In 2019, when New Democracy Party came into power, Albanian officials were sure that this issue will not be solved. As a matter of fact, in 2020, after he visits Tirana, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Greece, Nikos Dendias, declared that this issue will be taken to the ICJ.[10]

Although all of these disputes, Greece continues its demand of 12 miles both in the Aegean Sea, the Ionian Sea, and the Mediterranean Sea. This insistence of the Athens administration has officially applied in 2021, and the Mitsotakis Government submitted a bill on the expansion of territorial waters after the agreements with Italy and Egypt.[11]

Of course, this issue caused the reaction in Albania. This development showed Tirana that there is not any way to take the issue to the ICJ. However, it is observed that Athens does not have reservations about that. Because Greece and Albanian Ministers of Foreign Affairs came together in May 2022, and have agreed on the acceleration of this issue on the ICJ.

As a result, Athens is trying to increase its territorial waters to 12 nautical miles in the Aegean Sea, the Ionian Sea, and the Mediterranean Sea, based on UNCLOS; however, this attitude of Greece disturbs the neighboring countries. As a matter of fact, according to UNCLOS, such a decision can only be taken on the condition that it does not violate the rights of other riparian countries. For this reason, Albania, even though it felt obliged to accept Greece's request in 2009 when the membership process to NATO was discussed, terminated the agreement in question. Therefore, the authorities, who came together from time to time to resolve the ongoing conflict, realized that a consensus could not be reached when they looked at the results of the negotiations. As a matter of fact, upon Albania's request, it was decided to take the matter to the ICJ.

Last but not least, the leaders of the two countries, have confirmed that decision in European Political Community Meeting in Prague. However, although the issue will be brought to the ICJ, it can be predicted that Athens will not give up on its 12-mile policy, given the discourse of the current government in Greece. Because if Greece abandons this policy, it is not just on a border; will have to apply to all sea waters. It is estimated that Albania will not follow a policy as clear as Greece. Because while Albania was negotiating for NATO membership in 2009; it continues negotiations for EU membership and has come a long way. The fact that Greece is also a member of the EU may cause Albania to take a step back in some problems in bilateral relations. Therefore, the Tirana administration may not adopt a position that is too insistent on the delimitation of maritime jurisdiction areas. Otherwise, Albania's EU membership could be swept away by Greece's veto.

[1] "Arnavutluk ve Yunanistan Anlaşamadı", Balkannews, <https://www.balkannews.com.tr/balkanlar/arnavutluk-ve-yunanistan-anlasmadi-h4585.html>, (Date of Accession: 11.10.2022).

[2] Fatjon Cuka, "Albania, Greece Taking Issue of Maritime Jurisdiction Zones to the Hague", Anadolu Ajansı, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/analysis/analysis-albania-greece-taking-issue-of-maritime-jurisdiction-zones-to-the-hague/2142647>, (Date of Accession: 11.10.2022).

[3] "Part II, Territorial Sea and Contiguous Zone", UN, https://www.un.org/depts/los/convention_agreements/texts/unclos/part2.htm, (Date of Accession: 11.10.2022).

[4] Akri Cipa, "Albania, Greece Must Reflect on Past Mistakes to Settle Maritime Borders Issue", Balkan Insight, <https://balkaninsight.com/2020/10/06/albania-greece-must-reflect-on-past-mistakes-to-settle-maritime-borders-issue/>, (Date of Accession: 11.10.2022).

[5] Alice Taylor, "Greece, Albania Fail to Agree on Maritime Border Issue in Prague", Euractiv, https://www.euractiv.com/section/all/short_news/greece-albania-fail-to-agree-on-maritime-border-issue-in-prague/, (Date of Accession: 12.10.2022).

[6] Ibid.

[7] Ibid.

[8] "Qeveria greke njofton se marrëveshja me Shqipërinë është arritur", Exit News, <https://exit.al/kotzias-marreveshja-eshte-arritur-gre-qia-do-te-marre-12-milje-det-nga-shqiperia/>, (Date of Accession: 12.10.2022).

[9] Ivi Bejtja, "Comment: Albania Risks Losing Territorial Waters to Greece at the ICJ", exit news, <https://exit.al/en/2021/04/07/comment-albania-risks-losing-territorial-waters-to-greece-at-the-icj/>, (Date of Accession: 12.10.2022).

[10] "Albania and Greece Take Maritime Dispute to International Court in The Hague", Euronews, <https://www.euronews.com/2020/10/20/albania-and-greece-take-maritime-dispute-to-international-court-in-the-hague>, (Date of Accession: 12.10.2022).

[11] "Greece Submits Bill on Western Territorial Waters Extension", Reuters, <https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-greece-diplomacy-idUKKB-N29E0F0>, (Date of Accession: 12.10.2022).



ANKASAM ANALYSIS

A Political Perspective on the Increasing Cyber Attacks in the Balkan Countries

With Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the rapprochement and integration efforts of Eastern European and Balkan nations towards the European Union (EU) and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) have accelerated. Moldova and Georgia have also made formal bids for membership in the EU, in addition to Ukraine.[1] Currently, Moldova, Albania, Montenegro, and Serbia are EU candidates.[2] Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, and Georgia are still in the midst of EU harmonization discussions.

Georgia, Sweden, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Ukraine are attempting to join NATO. On the other hand, following the invasion of Ukraine, Sweden and Finland also submitted applications to join NATO. Estonia is home to NATO's cybersecurity center, the NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence (CCDCOE).

Due to the historical process experienced after the Cold War Period, it has been noted that the Balkan states often pursue the policy of "draw-



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ing away from the East and growing closer to the West.” In light of the geopolitical process they are currently experiencing, the Balkan nations have begun to position themselves in opposition to the strategies adopted by the “Eastern” countries.

Following the Ukrainian War, many cyberattacks were launched against Albania, Montenegro, Kosovo, and North Macedonia. This study examines the political motivations behind the cyberattacks, as well as the sources from which they were launched.

Cyber Attacks in the Balkan Countries in 2022

1. Albania

Edi Rama, the Prime Minister of Albania, said in July 2022 that the Ministry of Education, Sports, and Youth's computer systems had been targeted by four organizations with ties to Iran. As a matter of fact, on September 7, 2022, Albania officially severed diplomatic relations with Iran.[3] Iranian diplomats had to leave Albania within 24 hours. According to Prime Minister Rama, attempts were made to access the state's registration information as well as damage the electronic systems network and disrupt public services. The United States (US) has provided technical support, openly stating that it was supporting Albania in the face of the attacks. In response to the cyber-attack, the US National Security Council said that it will retaliate against Iran on the basis that “the security of a US ally is jeopardized.” According to Microsoft Security Threat Intelligence, Iran sponsored the cyberattack against Albania.[4]

2. Montenegro

Ransomware and denial of service attack on Montenegro began in August 2022 and was conducted by a “hacker” group known as “Ransomware Cuba.”[5] Due to the country's justice institutions being unable to access the Internet, several court proceedings had to be delayed. Minister of Public Administration Maras Dukaj stated that about 150 operating units and 10 government agencies were affected by the attacks. The “hacker” group claimed responsibility for the attack and disclosed that it had acquired several financial records from the Parliament of Montenegro, including bank transfer papers, balance sheet data, and tax documents. According to Montenegro's National Security Agency, Russia was behind the hack that temporarily shut down the governmental websites. According to government officials, the attacks were carried out as a Russian-backed retaliation against Montenegro's participation in the EU's financial sanctions against Russia and the expulsion of Russian diplomats by Podgorica. The Ministry of Defense of Montenegro reports that 50 “phishing” assaults and 7,600 other malware-related threats have been thwarted in the last two years.

3. Kosovo

On February 26, 2022, the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Kosovo announced that it was under a large-scale “phishing” attack.[6] The authorities' intervention prevented the attack. However, a cyberattack launched from abroad in September 2022 temporarily shut down Internet access for the nation's governmental institutions.[7] The attack was prevented by taking the necessary precautions, according to the government of Kosovo's Spokesperson Perparim Kryeziu, who also claimed that there was no leak from the state's infrastructure or computer network. The attack was directed at the internet protocols that the government uses to access websites. Immediately after the attack, the Kosovo government drafted a bill for the establishment of a public institution in charge of cybersecurity. The draft was approved. Another attack in the country was carried out against Kosovo Telecom. This attack, which was stopped quickly, blocked the access of mobile and fixed devices to the Internet for a short time.

4. North Macedonia

The website of the Ministry of Education and Science of North Macedonia was temporarily taken out of service due to a cyber-attack in September 2022. Following a joint cyber assessment with other governmental bodies, ministry officials declared that the citizen data were secure. After the incident, all government institutions' online security procedures were inspected by the country's relevant institution, which is in charge of cyber security. Many institutions and official websites of the country have recently been “hacked” by the “Powerful Greek Army”.[8]

söylenbilir. Örneğin Almanya Ekonomi Bakanı Robert Habeck, 5 Ekim 2022 tarihinde ABD'nin ve diğer dost doğalgaz tedarikçisi ülkelerin Ukrayna Savaşı'ndan kâr elde ettiklerini öne sürerek, arza astronomik fiyatlar uygulandığını öne sürmüştür.[8]

Kısaca özetlemek gerekirse, Rusya- Ukrayna Savaşıyla başlayan süreç ele alındığında, bazı Avrupa ülkelerinin LNG'ye yönelmelerinin bir tercihten ziyade; zorunluluk olduğu görülmektedir. Bunun en belirgin örneğinin de Almanya olduğu söylenebilir. Sıvılaştırma ve ulaştırma maliyetlerinin yüksek olması nedeniyle boru hatlarına göre daha pahalı bir alternatif olan LNG'nin Balkan ülkelerinden ziyade; Batı Avrupa devletleri için daha geçerli bir seçenek olacağı öne sürülebilir. Sonuç olarak LNG'nin Avrupa'nın enerji kırılganlığı yaşadığı bir süreçte, birçok ülke için uzun vadede enerji güvenliğinin çeşitlendirilmesi konusunda önemli bir alternatif olacağı; fakat mevcut krizin aşılmasında yetersiz kalacağı söylenebilir.

[1] “LNG Process”, Saint John LNG, <https://www.saintjohnlng.com/lng-process#:~:text=After%20the%20unloading%20arms%20are,takes%20approximately%2024%2D36%20hours>, (Erişim Tarihi:05.10.2022).

[2] “Sıvılaştırılmış Doğalgaz (LNG)”, Shell, <https://www.shell.com.tr/kurumsal-musteriler/shell-lng/liquefied-natural-gas-lng.html>, (Erişim Tarihi:05.10.2022).

[3] “Number of Operational and Planned Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) Import Terminals in Europe as of April 2022, by country”, Statista, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/326008/lng-import-terminals-by-country-europe/>, (Erişim Tarihi: 08.10.2022).

[4] Harry Aposporis, “Launch of Works on Alexandroupolis LNG Terminal in Greece”, Balkan Green Energy News, <https://balkangreenergynews.com/launch-of-works-on-alexandroupolis-lng-terminal-in-greece-heralds-reduced-dependence-on-russian-gas-for-the-balkans/>, (Erişim Tarihi: 05.10.2022).

[5] “Number of Operational and Planned Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) Import Terminals in Europe as of April 2022, by country”, Statista, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/326008/lng-import-terminals-by-country-europe/>, (Erişim Tarihi: 08.10.2022).

[6] “Germany Builds New Gas Terminals to Succeed Russian Pipelines”, France 24, <https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20221002-germany-builds-new-gas-terminals-to-succeed-russian-pipelines>, (Erişim Tarihi: 08.10.2022).

[7] “Secretary Antony J. Blinken And Canadian Foreign Minister Mélanie Joly At a Joint Press Availability”, U.S. Department of State, <https://www.state.gov/secretary-antony-j-blinken-and-canadian-foreign-minister-melanie-joly-at-a-joint-press-availability/>, (Erişim Tarihi: 08.10.2022).

[8] “German Minister Criticizes U.S. Over ‘Astronomical’ Natural Gas Prices”, CNBC, <https://www.cnbc.com/2022/10/05/german-minister-criticizes-us-over-astronomical-natural-gas-prices.html>, (Erişim Tarihi: 08.10.2022).



ANKASAM ANALYSIS

Energy Dance of Russia and the Gulf Countries: US' Reactions

The sanctions imposed by Western states on Russia due to the Ukrainian War put Moscow at risk of being isolated from the international system. However, with the influence of some regional powers and actors Moscow has gained a manoeuvring room where it can move freely despite the sanctions. When we look at the states that provide this opportunity to the Kremlin administration, China, India, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) come to the fore.

The energy needs of China and India, and the energy policies of Saudi Arabia and the UAE,

ensure that Russia maintains its active role in the energy market against embargoes. Among these actors, especially Saudi Arabia and the UAE, are considered the "weak points" in the policies of the Western World, which wants to push Russia into a corner. Indeed, if these countries produced more oil, it would lead to a decrease in energy prices, which lately have reached record levels. Thus, it was thought that decreasing energy prices would accelerate the collapse of the Russian economy. However, the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and the OPEC+ group, which includes some producer countries apart from



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OPEC, decided to reduce daily oil production by 2 million barrels on 5 October 2022.[1]

The decision taken by OPEC and the OPEC+ group was met with a reaction from the United States of America (US). Before the decision, the US officials established various contacts with the Gulf countries and demanded an increase in production. In this context, it was known that the aim of the US was to alleviate the economic problems in the country with increased oil production and to push Russia into a corner. However, despite the US, Saudi Arabia extended the OPEC+ cooperation agreement until the end of 2023 and announced that the supply restrictions would continue until this period.[2]

It is obvious that this decision will harm the economy of Western states as well as low and middle-income countries. Currently, Russia produces below the determined amount due to the sanctions. For this reason, it is thought that the 2-million-barrel cut will address the production of the Gulf countries. In its statement regarding this decision, Saudi Arabia declared that the decision aimed at protecting the country's interests and did not have political aims.[3]

Following these developments, some members of the Democratic Party in the US House of Representatives presented a draft plan for the withdrawal of the soldiers in Saudi Arabia and the UAE. If the bill becomes law, it would require the withdrawal of American troops, of which 2,700 are positioned in Saudi Arabia and 2,000 in the UAE, as well as air defence systems such as the Patriot within ninety days.

The names presenting the bill stated that the security of Saudi Arabia and the UAE was provided by the US, therefore, it could not be accepted that these countries were working against the US. Washington sought alternatives to the oil produced by OPEC in this process, and once again opened to discussion the introduction of strategic oil reserves to the market and increasing oil production. In addition, the White House began to harden its rhetoric towards the Gulf countries after this decision. In the statements of the US officials, "untrustworthy state" and "dictator" remarks draw attention.[4]

On October 10, 2022, the Chairman of the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Bob Menendez, made a written statement on OPEC's production restriction decision. Menendez, who took the criticism of the US against Saudi Arabia one step further, argued that Riyadh made a choice between the US and Russia and that all relations with Saudi Arabia, including arms sales and security, should be frozen. Menendez also emphasized that

unless Saudi Arabia reconsiders its position regarding the war in Ukraine, relations should not be re-established.[5]

It is known that Riyadh-Washington relations are strained lately. As a matter of fact, a tense atmosphere was observed during the visit of US President Joe Biden to Saudi Arabia. Moreover, the decision to reduce oil production not only led to a further deterioration in relations between the two countries but also gave Russia more power.

As it is known, while Western states are discussing the price cap for Russian oil; they aim at limiting Moscow's revenues and depriving it of the financial resources to wage the war in Ukraine. However, the decision to reduce production within OPEC and OPEC+ has led to an increase in oil prices in the world. This will result in favouring Russia's energy resources, at least for a while. Moreover, it will lead the West to import energy at a higher price.

To summarize briefly, it is seen that the relations between Russia and the Gulf countries have deepened. In fact, news has been published indicating that Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and President of Russia Vladimir Putin have many common aspects.[6] In addition, Moscow-Riyadh relations in the field of energy have gained momentum. For example, while the two states adopt a common stance on energy prices; Saudi Arabia is turning into an active actor in the Arctic Region through Russia. In this context, a memorandum of understanding was signed between Saudi Aramco and Novatek in January 2018; Riyadh has begun to play an important role in the Arctic in natural gas production and in the field of liquefied natural gas (LNG).[7]

It is obvious that all these developments were met with tensions in the US. The Washington administration does not only think that the relations established between the two countries have relieved Russia; it also believes that Moscow, improving its relations with the Gulf countries, has reached the potential to influence energy and world politics. Moreover, considering that rising energy prices negatively affect the US economy, a situation that will weaken Biden's hand in the next presidential elections is emerging. As a result, Washington, which has established good relations with the Gulf countries for many years, is losing another region.

[1] Salma El Wardany-Grant Smith-Fiona MacDonald- Golnar Motevallli, "OPEC+ Rebuked by US After Cutting Output to Keep Prices High", Bloomberg, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-10-05/opec-panel-recommends-2-million-barrel-cut-to-output-limits>, (Date of Accession: 13.10.2022).



ANKASAM ANALYSIS

The Kerch Bridge Explosion and the Extensive Attacks on Ukraine: What is the Future in the Russia-Ukraine War?

On October 8, 2022, a huge explosion occurred on the Kerch Bridge which connects Russia with Crimea and is the main route of logistical support to the Russian elements in the south of Ukraine after this incident, the bridge became unusable.[1] This event was a great source of motivation for Ukraine. Thus, after the attack, which is thought to have been carried out by the National Security Service of Ukraine, Mykhaylo Podolyak Advisor to the President of

Ukraine Volodymyr Zelensky, stated that all the lands captured by Russia will be taken back.[2]

Kerch Bridge is the main connection point between the Sea of Azov and the Black Sea. After Russia annexed Crimea in violation of international law in 2014, the 19 kilometers long bridge built by the Moscow government to connect Crimea and the Russian mainland was inaugurated in 2018 by Russian President Vladimir



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Putin. The attack on the bridge which has a symbolic meaning in terms of the importance given by the Moscow administration to Crimea revealed the security weakness of the Russian Army.

Undoubtedly; this event caused a harsh reaction from Russia and as of October 10, 2022, the Russian army started bombing various regions of Ukraine including Kyiv.[3] This shows that the war will turn into a comprehensive invasion scenario. In other words, Russia spread the war to all Ukrainian lands again by taking actions similar to February 2022.

When these events are considered together with the partial mobilization decision of Russia and the annexation of Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson, and Zaporizhzhia in violation of international law, it can be said that Moscow has a tendency to escalate the war. However, this tendency also seems to exist on the Ukrainian side, due to the attack on the Kerch Bridge.

In fact, this move of the Kyiv administration is extremely important as it shows that Ukraine wants to liberate all Russian-occupied lands including Crimea. Because the bridge, which symbolizes Russia's power in Ukraine was heavily damaged, Russia lost its prestige, the supply line used by the Moscow administration was damaged and Russia's security weakness in the Crimea point was seen once again.

More importantly, it has been understood that Moscow's threat to use nuclear weapons doesn't have any deterrent effect. Because the Kyiv administration is taking very determined actions to ensure its territorial integrity. It announced to the whole world that it wouldn't compromise on this issue through the Kerch Bridge. Therefore, the threats that considered Moscow's annexed areas as Russian territory[4] and referred to the nuclear doctrine weren't enough to make Kyiv take a step back.

However, Russia does not think of any alternative other than victory in Ukraine although it cannot afford it. This is why Putin threatens to use nuclear weapons and uses the energy trump card. The Kremlin is giving the message that the war, in which Moscow will be defeated will lead to a process in which the whole world will lose. Therefore, the Moscow administration does not intend to withdraw without achieving a result that it will describe as a victory in Ukraine. Partial mobilization decisions and referendums are also related to this. Therefore, the Kyiv administration knew that the attack on the Kerch Bridge would not go unanswered. Thus, the Moscow administration responded to this attack by bombing many cities in Ukraine,

especially Kyiv.

At this point, it's necessary to make predictions about the course of the war. Currently, Russia is aware that Ukraine is showing serious resistance in the eastern and southern regions. For this reason, it may want to defocus the Ukrainian Army by making an invasion from the north, namely Belarus. In other words, the Kremlin may try to create a suitable basis for a comprehensive invasion of Ukraine by putting pressure on the Minsk administration and making Belarus a front country.[5] However, how Belarus will look at this issue is debatable.

On the other hand, it can be said that Russia believes that in order to win the war, the support of Western countries to Ukraine should be stopped. Because the Ukrainian Army showed more serious resistance than expected thanks to the support of the West and at this point, it attacked many regions. In this context, it wouldn't be surprising if Putin concentrated on the threat of nuclear weapons and energy blackmail. However, it's obvious that the West and especially the United States (US)-the United Kingdom (UK) duo, namely the Anglo-Saxon alliance want to bring Russia to its knees in Ukraine.

In this context, the US-England duo wants the Moscow administration to experience the trauma that the Soviet Union experienced in Afghanistan during the current war. The reason why there is no significant progress in the negotiation processes that will result in a ceasefire is that Kyiv knows that it's not alone and on the other hand, Moscow sees stepping back as a heavy defeat not only against Ukraine but also against the West. Therefore, the Kerch Bridge attack and Russia's response indicate that the war will continue until one side imposes its military superiority on the other.

Consequently, the attack on the Kerch Bridge which is supposed to be carried out by the Ukrainian Security Service made the security weakness of Russia visible to the whole world and the Kyiv administration gave the message that it wouldn't negotiate the issue of establishing the territorial integrity of the country including Crimea. On the other hand, Russia interpreting the defeat in the war as undermining its claim to be a great power increased the dose of its attacks on Ukraine. These events have shown that the war will intensify even more. Because neither side thinks of any other option but to win.



ANKASAM ANALYSIS

Strained Relations on the Bishkek–Moscow Line

In the post-independence period, Kyrgyzstan distinguished itself as the most democratic nation in Central Asia and the one with the best ties to the West. These characteristics also had a direct impact on Bishkek's foreign policy. In this context, Kyrgyzstan was acting relatively freely, whilst Russia was attempting to maintain its influence in the post-Soviet geography. Due to this, Kyrgyzstan, which is being fought over by both the West and Russia, has gone through several social movements and changes in power.

Sadyr Japarov, the President of Kyrgyzstan, who took office following the demonstrations in Oc-

tober 2020, has begun to carry out a multifaceted foreign policy that takes into consideration the power dynamics between the centers of power. In this context, the President has been successful in achieving balance in his country's ties with both the West and Russia. Mr. Japarov has also enhanced ties with several nations, ranging from India to the Gulf states.

Despite having a peaceful foreign policy, operating with a win-win approach, and acting in line with principles of respect, equality, and cooperation between all parties, Kyrgyzstan occasionally engages in conflict with Tajikistan. Despite their conflicts, the two nations' leaders



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act with common sense and share a commitment to maintaining peace. Only 420 km of the total 970 km that make up the border between the two states are in question, and discussions are taking place at various levels to establish these lines.[1] It is also stated that a consensus has been reached on a significant part of the 420 km during the negotiations.

One of the policies proposed by Bishkek to prevent these conflicts is the establishment of a mechanism within the framework of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), of which both countries are members.[2] However, Kyrgyzstan is unable to get a favorable answer from the organization. In its remarks on the conflicts, the CSTO stated that the situation is being observed, violence should be avoided, and it is imperative to return to diplomatic methods based on dialogue.[3]

Mr. Japarov's first move after Kyrgyzstan's requests was ignored was to abstain from the informal Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) summit on October 7, 2022, which was held in St. Petersburg, Russia. Development at this conference also elicited a response from Bishkek.

At the CIS summit, President of Russia Vladimir Putin awarded President of Tajikistan Emomali Rahmon with the Order of Merit for the Fatherland of the third degree for his contribution to strengthening the strategic partnership in bilateral relations and ensuring regional stability and security.[4] The Kyrgyz now believe that Russia is backing Tajikistan as a result of this development. This is why Mr. Japarov continued responding in kind by taking further actions against Russia and the CSTO.

These developments have affected the Bishkek administration's approach to Russia and the CSTO. It is known that Yerevan is asking similar questions regarding CSTO in the recent period.

Currently, the Bishkek administration continues to pursue its multidimensional foreign policy. Kyrgyzstan maintains its constructive relations, with China, India, and Gulf countries including the Western actors. However, owing to the policies it has put in place, Kyrgyzstan has decided to distance itself from Russia. In essence, Bishkek is attempting to send Moscow a last message through its blooming relationships with other actors.

On the other hand, due to the passive stance of Russia and the CSTO, Kyrgyzstan brings the resolution of the conflict and the issue to the attention of international public opinion. This is demonstrated by the fact that Mr. Japarov brought up the border disputes with Tajikistan during his statement to the 77th United Nations (UN) General Assembly on September 20, 2022. It can be said that Kyrgyzstan is taking this action to put in place the framework for a solution within the UN as it was not formed within the CSTO.

In conclusion, tensions between the two nations are a result of Russia's passive stance when it comes to solving problems and establishing peace. With its actions, the Bishkek government is pressuring Moscow to act more balanced. At this point, Russia's approach will also directly affect Kyrgyzstan's foreign policy. Because Bishkek will either endeavor to balance this country through bilateral contacts it will develop with actors other than Russia, functioning within the framework of a multidimensional foreign policy, or re-normalize relations by observing Russia's actions.

[1] Nazir Aliyev Tayfur, "Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan have been having a border dispute for 31 years", Anadolu Ajansı, <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/dunya/kirgizistan-ve-tacikistan-31-yildir-sinir-anlasmazligi-yasiyor/2687648>, (Date of Accession: 12.10.2022).

[2] "Kyrgyzstan won't cede a centimeter of its land to anyone – President Japarov tells UN GA about Tajikistan's military aggression", AKI Press, <https://akipress.com/news:680082>, (Date of Accession: 12.10.2022).

[3] "The CSTO Secretariat Commentary on the situation on the Kyrgyz–Tajik Border", Collective Security Treaty Organization, https://en.odkb-csto.org/news/news_odkb/kommentariy-sekretariata-odkb-po-situatsii-na-kyrgyzsko-tadzhikskoy-granitse/#loaded, (Date of Accession: 12.10.2022).

[4] "Rahmon congratulates Putin on his birthday", Asia-Plus, <https://www.asiaplustj.info/en/news/tajikistan/power/20221007/rahmon-congratulates-putin-on-his-birthday>, (Date of Accession: 12.10.2022).



ANKASAM ANALYSIS

Is the Russia-Ukraine War Entering a New Phase?

The war carried out by Russia in Ukraine has been continuing for more than seven months. On the first day of the war, President of Russia Vladimir Putin described the war in question as a "special military operation." Getting results by a swift attack that aims to fall the government of Ukraine which was allegedly under the influence of Neo-Nazi groups and securing

peopling of Donetsk and Luhansk which have declared their independence was planned. Nonetheless, Ukraine showed a resistance that nobody expects and repels the Russian army from the capital Kyiv.

The war shifted to the east of Ukraine with the gradual withdrawal of the Russian Army. With



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the annexation of Donetsk and Luhansk as well as Zaporizhzhia and Kherson regions, the Russian Army has started to act with a narrower aim to gain control of these regions and to secure the connection between Crimea, which was annexed in 2014, and the Russian mainland.

As Russia failed to achieve its goals in Ukraine, it in a way reduced its targets, but while doing so, it ignited a tougher conflict. Because the Kremlin administration now defines these regions as its territory and keeps all options on the agenda, including the use of nuclear weapons, for the defense of the "homeland."

The attack on the Crimean Bridge, a short time ago, showed that Russia cannot control fully the areas it annexed. Moscow's response to this move was air strikes against Kyiv. Thus, the war again entered the escalation phase. This shows that Russia faces difficult choices and dilemmas.

First of all, Russia's annexation of Ukraine's territories has not been recognized by almost any state in the international arena. On the other hand, by annexing Ukrainian territories, Russia revived the tradition of gaining land through conquest, which was thought to have been placed on the dusty shelves of history. This challenge to the United Nations (UN) order by a UN Security Council Permanent Member has shaken the foundations of the international system.

Even non-Western actors, who think that Russia has justified reasons in this war, especially China, do not openly support the invasion of Ukraine, it is getting harder to sustain their support to Moscow indirectly or silently. However, due to Russia's aggressive approach to the basic norms of the international system, the legitimacy of Russia's claim to be one of the dominant actors of the multipolar world order is weakening.

Another international norm that the Moscow administration has not yet violated, but has raised concerns about by making threats, is the principle of not resorting to nuclear weapons. At the beginning of 2022, in other words just before the war, Russia made a joint statement with the four nuclear-armed countries (US, China, France, and the UK). Using this statement, Russia expressed that a nuclear war can never be won and should never be fought.

At this point, after annexing the Ukrainian lands the Moscow administration says that it is now fighting on its "homeland" and is ready to respond to attacks on these lands with nuclear

weapons by its nuclear doctrine. Of course, launching a nuclear weapon is not an easy act. But the Kremlin is using the uncertainty about to resort nuclear weapons as a tool for its advantage. Thus, it undermines nuclear strategic stability.

Another dilemma Russia faces is related to domestic policy. When the war started, the Putin administration did not need strong public support and considered the silent approval of the people sufficient. However, the inability to achieve the desired results in the field requires the Russian people to make more sacrifices. So, sanctions imposed on Russia have led to a diminution in living standards in the country.

Finally, it should be noted that the declaration of partial mobilization is a development that could change the Russian people's approach to the war. The leaving Russia of many Russian youths was a reflection of the growing backlash against the war at a time when the government needed peopling more. They are not just the people who want to stay away from war also Russian nationalists who supported the war were probably not happy with the failures of the war. Although this picture does not show that anti-war resistance has emerged, it does reveal that something does not prosper.

In this respect, Russia's annexation of a part of Ukraine's territory and the subsequent escalation of tension can be interpreted as steps that aim to appeal to public opinion. The steps can also be read as moves that try to hide failures on the battlefield. It is very difficult to predict how long this tension will last and where it will lead.

Moscow cannot reach its goals in Ukraine. However, to maintain its credibility in its claims both in domestic politics and the international arena, it feels obliged to leave the war with big or small gains that can be presented as a victory. The difficulty of obtaining this makes the future steps of Russia and the direction of the war in Ukraine unpredictable.



ANKASAM ANALYSIS

What Kind of Afghanistan Policy Does the US National Security Strategy Document Indicate?

On October 12, 2022, the Washington administration published the new national security strategy document with the signature of United States (US) President Joe Biden.[1] One of the most wondered issues regarding the document is what kind of strategy will be carried out regarding the future of the Afghanistan policy

of the US. Because Afghanistan is a country located in the heart of the world geopolitically.

This situation has caused the actors, who have claimed to be a global power throughout history, to be closely interested in Afghanistan. Afghanistan, which was the battleground of the



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"Great Game" that took place between the Great British Empire and the Russian Tsardom in the 19th century, nowadays stands out as the field where the "New Great Game" is staged. Because the country is one of the most strategic places in the world, as it provides Central Asia-South Asia-Middle East connectivity.

The US, on the other hand, withdrew from Afghanistan by ending the twenty-year occupation, which was called "Operation Enduring Freedom", as of August 31, 2021. However, it continues its air operations in the country within the framework of the claim of fighting terrorism. For this reason, there are question marks about the future of the Biden administration's Afghanistan policy. At the point of answering these questions, it is expected that the document will form an opinion.

First of all, it should be stated that the main focus of the document is not Afghanistan. The text which is drawing attention to the importance of global challenges mainly focuses on China, which the US defines as the "biggest threat" to maintain its hegemony, and Russia, which it considers in the context of "traditional threats". On the other hand, Afghanistan is discussed in two different parts of the document.

The first of these is under the title of "Modernization and Strengthening of Our Army." In this section, the Biden administration states that the US maintains its goal of combating terrorism and states that they have won the long-lasting war in Afghanistan. In this framework, the Washington administration emphasizes that it attaches importance to military modernization to maintain its capacity in the fight against terrorism.[2] On the other hand, the White House also gives the message that it will continue its influence in Afghanistan by expressing the need for American leadership all over the world.[3]

The second part which focuses on Afghanistan is the part of the document titled terrorism. The text, which asserts that terrorism stems from two reasons: geography and ideology, claims that the effectiveness of terrorist organizations Al-Qaeda and DAESH continues in wide geography stretching from Iraq to Afghanistan (Middle East-South Asia line) and the text attributes an important duty to the US in the fight against these terrorist organizations.

However, it is stated that the Washington administration is aware of its global responsibilities; it is also noteworthy to underline the cooperation with the allies.[4] Therefore, the Biden administration also considers the financial burden of cross-border operations, just like Donald Trump. This is the main reason for the

US withdrawal from Afghanistan. Because the economic costs have made the war unsustainable. Therefore, it is possible to say that the Washington administration, which wants to maintain its global leadership, wants to share tasks with its allies and will try to maintain its influence at the lowest cost.

Reminding that the goal of neutralizing the leader of the terrorist organization Al-Qaeda, Osama Bin Laden, and critical organization leaders were achieved a long time ago, and as well as the document expressed the US confidence in its counter-terrorism capabilities, document also talks about the murder of the last leader of the terrorist organization Al-Qaeda, Ayman al-Zawahiri. On this occasion, the Washington administration expresses that they care about making Afghanistan a safe country. The point that draws attention here is the sentence that the Taliban will be ensured to stick to their commitments in the Doha Treaty.[5] In addition, the absence of a critical approach to the Taliban in the document is another detail that should not be overlooked.

To look at the issue from a more terminological perspective, the processes defined as the "war on terror" under George W. Bush,[6] "counterterrorism" under Barack Obama,[7] and "war against jihadist terrorists" under Trump[8] and in this document described as "fight against terrorism." In addition, the effort to identify "Islam and terrorism" observed during the Bush era was abandoned together with Obama; however, when it is remembered that Trump's emphasis on "Jihadist radicals", it can be said that Biden also displayed an approach close to Obama. Naturally, in this case, Bush and Trump are Republicans; the effect of Obama and Biden being Democrats is undeniable. However, in the new period, it is possible to say that the US is not going to bring Afghanistan to the forefront in the context of the arguments that trigger Islamophobia.

At this point, it is necessary to return to the fact that the US did not use a criticizing statement regarding the Taliban. It is known that on October 8, 2022, the US delegation met with the Taliban officials in Doha. This meeting, in addition to being the first face-to-face contact after the killing of Zawahiri, took place in the shadow of the US demand to expand travel restrictions on Taliban leaders and the Afghan Fund discussions.[9] This indicates that the US is aware of the need to sit at the negotiating table despite everything, and therefore can accept see the Taliban as a reality of Afghanistan. The first sign of this was given on September 29, 2022, by the US Special Representative for Afghanistan Tom West's statement that he supported talks with the Taliban.[10] Therefore, both the document and the latest de-

velopments in the US-Taliban line in the region reveal that the Washington administration, which focuses on China, the main other in the global power struggle, and its traditional rival, Russia, will remove the Afghan Problem from its primary agenda.

As a result, the US's National Security Strategy Document dated 12 October 2022 states that the Washington administration wants to maintain its operational capacity against Al-Qaeda and DEASH terrorist organizations within the framework of the alleged fight against terrorism in Afghanistan; however, it reveals that it has not closed the doors of dialogue to the Taliban. In this context, it is possible to foresee that the US will try to improve its military relations with the regional states within the scope of counter-terrorism operations. Regarding the Taliban, the Washington administration gave the message that it would focus on fulfilling the commitments in the Doha Treaty.

[1] "National Security Strategy", White House, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Biden-Harris-Administrations-National-Security-Strategy-10.2022.pdf>, (Date of Accession: 14.10.2022).

[2] "National Security Strategy", op. cit., p. 20.

[3] Ibid

[4] "National Security Strategy", op. cit., p. 30.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Sales of the President of the United States, The National Security Strategy of the United States of America, September 2002, p. 3

[7] Sales of the President of the United States, National Security Strategy, May 2010, p. 4

[8] National Security Strategy of the United States of America December 2017, p. 10

[9] "First on CNN: Top US officials hold first in-person meeting with the Taliban since the US killed al Qaeda's leader in July", CNN, <https://edition.cnn.com/2022/10/08/politics/us-taliban-talks-wasiq-qatar/index.html>, (Date of Accession: 14.10.2022).

[10] H. Andrew Schwartz, "A Conversation with Thomas West in the Context of Afghanistan One Year Later", CSIS, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/conversation-thomas-west-context-afghanistan-one-year-later>, (Date of Accession: 14.10.2022).



ANKASAM ANALYSIS

Enlargement Package of the EU towards the Western Balkans

On October 12, 2022, the European Commission published the 2022 Enlargement Package, which evaluates reforms in the Western Balkans.[1] In the report, the Commission has expressed that they detailedly analyzed the progress of candidate member countries to the EU. While a devastating war continues in Eastern Europe, EU membership is quite important for the Western Balkan countries, for providing a specific economic and political security frame. Therefore, the evaluation of the commission is a decisive step in the membership process.

The enlargement process of the EU is quite slow, and this feature of the Union is frequently criticized by other international actors. Similarly, the membership process of the Western Balkan countries is progressing slowly. Even though the Western Balkans is important for the EU, it is observed that it is not primary geography. Because, in the report, it is seen that there is not a concrete development for the states of the region to be a member.

When the 2022 and 2021 Enlargement Packages are compared, it is understood that there is



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not a significant difference.[2] In the report, Montenegro, Serbia, Albania, North Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), and Kosovo were handled. Generally, the Commission highlighted the need for the application of similar necessities for these countries both in 2021 and 2022. These are; rule of law and democracy, anti-corruption, dependence on strategy and reforms of the EU, and convenience to the EU foreign and security policies.

In addition to the Enlargement Packages, when the EU's policy is evaluated, these necessities are paid regard to the candidate member states, as well as the member states to the Union. However, the general deficiency seen in the enlargement packages that the lack of recommendations to the candidate countries on how to apply these reforms. It can be expressed that the Union cares about the Western Balkan countries, which established their democratic structure more recently than other EU countries, to apply these recommendations more.

Naturally, in the process of membership to the EU, candidates or candidate-for-nomination countries must apply the conditions served by the Union. The obligations such as bringing any discord to an inclusive resolution and applying democratic activities belong to the governments. However, considering the extraordinary situation continuing in Eastern Europe due to the Russian-Ukrainian War, the EU may draw a strategic map for the Western Balkan Countries. Because, repeating the same concepts and expectations for years, prevents emerging of this consciousness within the societies of the candidate member countries, and aggravates the process for the Western Balkan administrations, who apply democracy for the last 30 years.

In the evaluations of the Commission, even though there is not a significant change compared to the 2021 Enlargement Report for Montenegro, Serbia, Albania, and North Macedonia, for BiH, there is a different situation. Because, in the report, it is expressed Montenegro, Serbia, and North Macedonia, that "they need to concentrate on democracy, public administration, rule of law and anti-corruption." On the contrary, compared to the other countries, the most favourable message was given to the BiH. Already, the European Council has expressed in June 2022, that they are ready for giving candidate membership status to BiH.[3] Also in the Enlargement Report, it is highlighted that "Despite the general elections on October 2, 2022, the leaders of the political parties represented in the Parliamentary Assembly of BiH adhere to the principles of creating a functional country on the European path."

In addition to all of this, the Commission welcomed the start of the negotiations between Albania and North Macedonia, yet it did not include the issue of North Macedonia's negotiations with Bulgaria on membership and their agreement on some issues. In addition, the tension between Serbia and Kosovo due to identity documents and car plates was handled casually in the report, and it was emphasized that Kosovo and Serbia should continue the dialogue.

As a result, the enlargement packages that include the progress of the candidate countries, show that the Western Balkan countries do not have serious progress since 2003, and this means that the region is not the priority for the EU. However, due to the war in Ukraine, it can be foreseen that a change will be in soon.

[1] "2022 Enlargement Package: European Commission Assesses Reforms in the Western Balkans and Türkiye and Recommends Candidate Status for Bosnia and Herzegovina", European Commission, https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_22_6082, (Date of Accession: 13.10.2022).

[2] "2021 Enlargement Package: European Commission Assesses and Sets out Reform Priorities for the Western Balkans and Turkey", European Commission, https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/news/2021-enlargement-package-european-commission-assesses-and-sets-out-reform-priorities-western-balkans-2021-10-19_en, (Date of Accession: 13.10.2022).

[3] "Political Agreement on Principles for Ensuring a Functional Bosnia and Herzegovina That Advances on the European Path", European Council, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2022/06/12/political-agreement-on-principles-for-ensuring-a-functional-bosnia-and-herzegovina-that-advances-on-the-european-path/>, (Date of Accession: 13.10.2022).



ANKASAM ANALYSIS

Norway-EU Energy Solidarity

Even though the Russian-Ukrainian War has been going on for seven months, Europe is still looking at all of its possibilities to strengthen its support for Kyiv and curb Moscow's influence and financial gains. As a result of the current situation, energy policy is now among the European Union's (EU) most pressing concerns.

The majority of Western nations started imposing unprecedented sanctions on the Moscow government in reaction to the conflict, and the EU decided to implement a partial oil embargo to cut off the flow of oil and petroleum products from Russia unanimously. As a response,

Kremlin resorted to using energy as a trump card, shutting off the EU's access to natural gas, for which it will be harder to find substitutes. These actions, which resulted in the EU being caught unawares, have led Brussels to accelerate its efforts to increase and diversify natural gas supplies.

Europe is negatively affected by self-imposed sanctions since it depends on Russian oil and natural gas. The energy crisis and rising costs due to all these reasons have shifted Europe's focus to Norway, the world's 11th-largest oil and 9th-largest natural gas producer.[1] Since the



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North Sea began to produce oil and natural gas in 1971, Oslo has been the most dependable supplier for the world and Europe.

On the other hand, the EU and Norway cooperate on various issues as the two actors share common values. Therefore, Oslo is quite advantageous compared to other alternatives that the EU is considering to reduce its dependence on Russian oil and gas.

The shortage of energy due to the disruption of Russia's supply has led the EU cooperation to increase its cooperation with its close neighbor, with which it has reliable relations and an energy partnership. As a matter of fact, after the Ukrainian War, Norway replaced Russia as the EU's largest natural gas supplier.

First, to offset rising energy prices, the EU and Norway resolved to work together to provide additional short and long-term natural gas supplies. In addition, within the scope of long-term cooperation, the parties agreed on overseas renewable energy, hydrogen, carbon capture, storage, and energy R&D.[2] Norway's Petroleum & Energy Minister Terje Lien Aasland emphasized that his country is willing to increase its role in the EU energy market by stating, "Norway claims it can replace more Russian gas if Europe commits to buying." [3] The Union then announced that it would support Norway's efforts to bring oil and natural gas to the European market.

Reflecting Brussels' quest for both effective and politically viable measures to deal with the energy crisis and the threat of recession, on 6 October 2022 Norway and the EU agreed to "develop joint instruments" aiming to reduce high gas prices.[4] The fast-growing energy cooperation with Norway, however, also has certain drawbacks.

The shock wave that Russia's invasion of Ukraine caused has made it clear that Western countries require close cooperation to fend against ripples in all sectors, notably energy. However, the high prices created by the supply shortage have begun to afflict the EU-Norway solidarity. Because the Oslo administration insists on providing discounted natural gas to the EU and gains significant income by taking advantage of the market conditions.

The country's oil revenue is expected to reach a record 933 billion Norwegian kroner (93.7 billion euros) by mid-2022. Norway's state-controlled energy company Equinor's net profit increased 2.5 times in the second quarter of 2022, reaching \$6.8 billion. It was also noted that Oslo's state wealth fund value reached

\$1.1 trillion after the war.[5] Before the Ukraine War, Norway met only 20% of the EU's natural gas demand. This year, with its increased production capacity, Norway is expected to supply 90 billion cubic meters of natural gas to the EU. This means that it will meet about 25% of the total demand.[6]

To increase the dose of sanctions against Russia and to invalidate the "natural gas trump card" the Kremlin often refers to, Brussels has put on the agenda the introduction of a price cap on natural gas prices, just like oil. Oslo, however, opposed the price cap, and Norwegian Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Støre said he was skeptical about how well the energy problem would be addressed as a result of Norway's natural gas price cap.[7] It is also interesting that Norway avoids the idea of supplying natural gas supply with a discount.

Mateusz Morawiecki, the Prime Minister of Poland, accused Oslo of "looting" the Russian-Ukrainian War and offered to share the revenues from oil and natural gas exports to Norway with Ukraine.[8] Although the authorities deny these accusations, it appears that Norway's long-standing image in the world arena of advocating peace and delivering aid has developed into that of a "war profiteer." Because despite the huge profits it has made and the calls for help, there has been no major change in Oslo's support for the Kyiv administration.

As a result, Norway is seen as a staunch EU ally and stands out in its pursuit of alternatives to Russian natural gas. However, it is also understood that this issue is not very profitable for the EU as the Oslo administration does not meet the expectations of the Union in terms of price. As a result, the image that emerges following the introduction of the oil and natural gas embargoes will demonstrate if the EU-Norway solidarity, which has been put to the test due to economic hardships, can pass this test.

[1] "About Energy Norway", Energi Norge, <https://www.energinorge.no/om-oss/in-english/>, (Date of Accession: 12.10.2022).

[2] "Norway to Increase Gas Supply to EU as Russia Deepens Cuts", Offshore Technology, <https://www.offshore-technology.com/news/norway-gas-eu-russia/>, (Date of Accession: 12.10.2022).

[3] "Norway Claims It Can Replace More Russian Gas if Europe Commits to Buying" Upstream, <https://www.upstreamonline.com/politics/norway-claims-it-can-replace-more-russian-gas-if-europe-commits-to-buying/2-1-1225254>, (Date of Accession: 12.10.2022).



ANKASAM ANALYSIS

New Strategic Approach of the USA: Transition from Territorial Containment to Naval Blockade

International relations are witnessing a period and power transitions that will be the beginning of a new power struggle in future political history books. Although the full definition and measurement of power in international politics have not been made, it is obvious that it does not have a stable structure and is always in flux. In this context, geopolitics and geostrategic,

which are affected by different parameters of power, are constantly transforming and taking new forms.

In the new order that emerged after the First and Second World Wars, which directly affected and shaped the struggle for global dominance, the United States of America (USA) took



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the place of Continental Europe and was seen as a leading state both economically, culturally, and militarily. The USA, which was also the winner of the Cold War that started after the Second World War, became the leading actor on the global plane and established unipolar world order. During this period, the USA implemented the strategy of controlling the wide Eurasian geography to control the actors it defeated and to ensure the continuation of the unipolar system.

It would not be wrong to say that the strategic engagement and implementation process of the Washington administration in the period until the establishment of the unipolar world has been successful. However, it cannot be said that the siege project initiated for the continuation of the established system achieved the same success. It can be argued that Washington, which intervened militarily in Afghanistan, the heart of Eurasia, and aimed to control all the intersections of Eurasia, has failed in the current situation.

The USA has failed in Afghanistan, where it went with the objectives of controlling Central Asia, controlling China's trade routes, preventing Russia from taking the pipelines to every corner of Eurasia, and suppressing South Asia, and this situation has failed in terms of economic, military, sociological and had to bear the psychological cost. The US intervention in Afghanistan, which took place in 2001, lasted for twenty years. The war cost Washington \$2.2 trillion.[1] Moreover, many soldiers died in Afghanistan and the psychological repercussions of this in the USA were devastating. The images recorded during the withdrawal process from Afghanistan also shook the image of the USA.

The failure of the conventional and special military operations carried out by the Washington administration in Iraq and other regions, especially in Afghanistan, in the big picture, increases the criticism towards the USA and gives rise to comments that this country is no longer a hegemonic power. Although the criticisms in question have some justification, approaches claiming that the global leadership of the Washington administration is over are open to discussion. Because the US withdrawal from Afghanistan is not an absolute defeat; it heralds the transition to new geopolitics.

Despite the air and naval power that brought the US to victory in the Second World War and had a devastating effect on its rivals, Washington resorted to ground forces to maintain its dominance. Contrary to sea and air battles where techno-

logical development is more decisive; victory in land battles is determined by demographics, leadership, logistics, geography, and time. Moreover, all of the wars that the USA started after the Second World War were overseas operations. This is also a big disadvantage.

In this environment, the USA decided to end its long-lasting disadvantaged situation by withdrawing from Afghanistan in 2021 and making a radical change. Throwing the terrestrial burdens on it, Washington has focused on a containment strategy over the seas, where it is strongest. The Indo-Pacific discourse and the "Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy", which have been increasingly emphasized during the Donald Trump era, point to a paradigm shift. As a matter of fact, in the Indo-Pacific Strategy documents announced by Trump and later Biden; the "Arctic Region National Strategy"[2] and the "Pacific Partnership Strategy"[3] announced for the first time were added.[4] The "National Security Strategy Document", which was published on October 12, 2022, and includes Washington's policies for the future, shows the importance that the Washington administration attaches to maritime corridors.

As it is known, China's recent interest in the Pacific Islands is one of the main agendas of the region. The security agreement signed between China and Solomon Islands on April 19, 2022, followed by Minister of Foreign Affairs of China Wang Yi's visit between May 26 and June 4, 2022, included the Solomon Islands, Kiribati, Samoa, Fiji, Tonga, Vanuatu, Papua New Guinea, and East Timor.[5] This visit was considered the clearest evidence of China's increasing influence in the Pacific Ocean, which was once referred to as the "US Lake."[6]

China's growing power in the region and the fact that the current status quo is changing have caused alarm bells to ring in Washington. For this reason, the USA has put forward an important strategic approach in the Pacific report it announced for the first time. In addition, at the US-Pacific Island Countries Summit held in Washington on September 28-29, 2022, Biden said, "In the next ten years, the history of our world will be written in the Indo-Pacific geography and the Pacific Islands will be in a critical position in shaping the future." It is also important to say. Because this statement heralds the role that small island countries will play an important role in the global power struggle.[7]

Another pillar of the USA's turn to the seas is Arctic geopolitics; that is, over the North Pole. The Arctic, which is more on the agenda with the increasing effect of global warming; is be-

coming one of the main geographies of geopolitical competition with its energy potential and the short-distance advantage it offers in commercial terms. In particular, the Northern Sea Route, which causes the development of relations between Russia and China, poses a threat to the global interests of the USA. Therefore, the Washington administration updated the Arctic Strategy announced in 2013, and 2022; that is, it published a new document at a time when it returned to the seas.

After the Russia-Ukraine War that started on February 24, 2022, the countries neighboring the Arctic and, on this line, increased their dependence on the USA in the field of security; therefore, the developments have created an important opportunity for Washington. Finland and Sweden's application to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), as well as the USA's gradual settlement in the region through exercises, cooperation agreements, and military bases, using the Russian threat, constitutes a pillar of the containment strategy it initiated in the seas. Undoubtedly, NATO's Arctic Expansion is of great importance in this regard.

The main objective of this strategy is; it is to prevent the economic, diplomatic, scientific, and military activities of China, which defines itself as a "Near Arctic Country" in 2018 and refers to the Arctic shipping routes in the region as the "Polar Silk Road." [8]

The USA has been trying to control the south with the wide siege project it has initiated in the Indo-Pacific geography for a long time. At the same time, the USA is also trying to control the east with the Pacific Islands strategy, which will provide a significant geographical and logistical advantage to the country, which is the dominant actor. In addition, the USA is trying to control the geography extending to Western Europe via the Arctic route and even the north and northwest with the new security umbrella to be established. The main targets of this siege are China and Russia. This issue has been clearly emphasized in the new National Security Strategy document on the occasion of the following statements: [9]

"While blocking dangerous Russia; We will compete effectively with China, the only competitor with the intent and ability to reshape the international order."

As a result, as international relations enter a new era, the elements and geographies of geopolitical competition are changing, and hot conflict points are spreading over large ar-

reas, the last hegemon power of history, the USA, is transitioning to a new strategy. Washington administration, which tried to encircle the vast Eurasian continent from the center and land in the past, now shows that it will carry out a policy through the southern, eastern, and northern sea routes in the marginal belt. Therefore, while the conflict areas in the world spread to the border geographies; The importance, stability, and decisiveness of the central region are also increasing.

[1] "US Costs to Date for the War in Afghanistan", Watson Institute, <https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/figures/2021/human-and-budgetary-costs-date-us-war-afghanistan-2001-2021>, (Date of Accession: 16.10.2022).

[2] "National Strategy for the Arctic Region", The White House, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/National-Strategy-for-the-Arctic-Region.pdf>, (Date of Accession: 16.10.2022).

[3] "Fact Sheet: President Biden Unveils First-Ever Pacific Partnership Strategy", The White House, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/09/29/fact-sheet-president-biden-unveils-first-ever-pacific-partnership-strategy/>, (Date of Accession: 16.10.2022).

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[5] "State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi to Visit South Pacific Island Countries and Timor-Leste and Host the Second China-Pacific Island Countries Foreign Ministers' Meeting", Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the People's Republic of China, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/202205/t20220524_10692076.html, (Date of Accession: 16.10.2022).

[6] Eleanor Lattimore, "Pacific Ocean or American Lake?", *Far Eastern Survey*, (14)22, 1945, p. 313.

[7] "A Great Deal of World's History Will be Written in Indo-Pacific: Biden", *Business-Standard*, https://www.business-standard.com/article/international/a-great-deal-of-world-s-history-will-be-written-in-indo-pacific-biden-122093000087_1.html, (Date of Accession: 16.10.2022).

[8] "China's Arctic Policy", The State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China, http://english.www.gov.cn/archive/white_paper/2018/01/26/content_281476026660336.htm, (Date of Accession: 16.10.2022).

[9] National Security Strategy 2022, p.23.

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