



# ANKASAM

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## Sabotage of European Energy Infrastructure

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Symbol of the Regional Search for Cooperation: TAPI

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From Partial Mobilization to Referendums: What is the Goal of Russia?

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## ANKASAM ANALYSIS

# Russia's Referendum Move: A Herald of a "Declaration of War?"

President of Russia Vladimir Putin announced on September 21, 2022 that a "partial mobilization" was declared in the country. This decision is of great importance as it shows that the war in Ukraine did not go as well as Moscow expected.[1] Because the Kremlin announced that it would send more soldiers to Ukraine with the decision; thus, had to admit, albeit implicitly, that it had a serious problem in recruiting soldiers.

On the other hand, another statement of Putin that should be considered as important as the decision of "partial mobilization" is that a referendum will be held in Luhansk and Donetsk in the east of Ukraine and in Zaporizhzhia and Kherson in the south of the country. Immediately after the announcement, the Moscow administration started the referendum process in the said regions without wasting any time. [2] Considering that these referendums are



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planned to be completed by September 27, 2022,[3] it can be argued that the Kremlin is preparing to make some fait accomplis in Ukraine policy and to take the war to a new stage.

To be remembered, Russia described the military intervention against Ukraine on February 24, 2022 as a "Special Operation" and took steps to destroy the military infrastructure of the country in question in the first period of the war. In addition, in this process, he made moves targeting the strategic points of Ukraine. Then, in April 2022, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov stated that the second phase of the war had passed.[4]

With the transition to the second phase, the Russian Army turned to the cities in the Eastern Ukraine and the war witnessed a process that was working towards the goal of transforming the country in question into a land state, mainly by preventing Ukraine's exit to the Black Sea. But over time, it was seen that the Ukrainian Army recovered itself.

Definitely, the effect of military and financial aid from the West in the increase of the resistance capacity of the Kyiv administration cannot be denied. It is also seen that Ukraine has been attacked in various places. Russian forces had to withdraw from some points. In fact, the "partial mobilization" decision is a move based on these developments. With this decision, Putin gave the message that he would escalate the war in Ukraine, and Defense Minister of Russia Sergey Shoigu stated that 300,000 people would be recruited.[5] When this development is considered together with the referendum step, it is very important in that it points to the "third phase" of the war. Because the referendums that are being held herald that Russia is preparing to officially "declare war" on Ukraine.

First of all, Russia has clearly demonstrated that it will implement the model of Crimea in 2014, on the occasion of the referendum decision. This means that, as in this process, various regions of the country will be annexed in violation of international law through referendums to be held in the shadow of the Russian military presence on Ukraine's territory. As a matter of fact, the first step of this is the referendums in Luhansk, Donetsk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson. It will not be surprising at all that the number of places where referendums will be held will increase in the future.

It is clear that the separatist structures in the relevant regions will decide to join Russia on the occasion of the referendums. It seems that; the Moscow administration will also quickly recognize the referendum decisions. This will allow Moscow to have something to present as a victory by showing its own people that it has "gained ground" at a time when things are going bad on the ground.

Definitely, it is obvious that this new status quo will be against international law at least as much as the status quo in Crimea. But it can be predicted that Russia can benefit this situation. At this point, it is necessary to remind the following statements that Putin used during his "partial mobilization" decision.[6]

"When the territorial integrity of our country is threatened, we will use absolutely all means in our power to protect Russia and our people. This is not a bluff."

The expressions used by the Russian leader indicate that Russia will characterize the relevant operations as an attack on Russian territory in the face of the operations to be carried out by the Ukrainian Army in the areas to be annexed in order to ensure the territorial integrity of the country. Thus, Russia will both make a preliminary move against Ukraine, which is preparing for a comprehensive offensive, and try to put its actions on a relatively legitimate basis. In this sense, it can be said that in terms of international law, it will be tried to fit the case.

On the other hand, it should be emphasized that Russia's attempt to annex the regions where the referendum was held will not be recognized by the international community. As a matter of fact, statements from the West are that Ukraine will be supported to continue its operations aimed at ensuring its own territorial integrity and that Russia's annexations will not be recognized. Therefore, this move will do nothing beyond widening the field of war. The enlargement of the area of the war can basically be interpreted as a threat posed by Russia to Europe. In this context, Serbian President Alexander Vucic's statement that there may be conflicts around the world can basically be evaluated as[7] Russia could spread conflicts and instability to the Balkans and Belgrade sees this risk.

Currently, European states demand the war to end as soon as possible, with the effect of the energy crisis. However, referendums create an environment that will hinder this expectation. Therefore, although Russia tries to increase the pressure on the West through the energy card and thus accelerate the separation in Europe, the perception of "Russian threat" will continue to strengthen the collective action reflex in Trans-Atlantic relations. In such a scenario, it is possible that even Hungary, which has been subjected to various criticisms since the beginning of the war, will leave aside the reservations it has put forward due to its national interests and turn into an actor that will contribute to the West's development of a monolithic stance.

Moreover, the referendums, as Russia expected, aside from deepening the crackling voices in Europe; could highlight conflicts in Moscow's relations with allies such as Beijing and New Delhi. Because, at the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Leaders' Summit held in Samarkand on 15-16 September 2022, SCO members, especially China and India, expressed their desire that the war to end as soon as possible. Putin, on the other hand, preferred to escalate the war rather than ending it. As a matter of fact, Beijing, which has not given as much support to Russia as expected since the beginning of the war, could keep its distance from Moscow considering its commercial relations with the Western states.

In addition, the referendums may force India, which acts together with the United States of America (USA) on platforms such as Quadrilateral Dialogue (QUAD), to make a choice. Although India tries to maintain its current foreign policy in line with the understanding of versatility in accordance with the tradition of "non-alignment" by taking part in organizations such as the SCO and BRICS, Putin's move will increase the pressure on New Delhi, and it is predictable that this situation will bring India closer to the USA.

On the other hand, it can be said that the Kremlin will describe the operations to be carried out by the Ukrainian Army in the places where the referendum was held as an attack on "Russian soil". In this context, Russia is likely to apply to the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). The warnings of the leaders of Kazakhstan and Belarus about the escalation of the war stem from this possibility. [8]Because Moscow may try to increase the pressure on the members of the organization, demanding the CSTO to involve in the war. However, this may result in the fact that Moscow, which is isolated by the West, cannot find what it is looking for in the eyes of its allies. In other words, if Russia takes such a step, it will not be able to find what it is looking for from the CSTO members. Because it is possible to foresee that the referendums will not be recognized by the member states.

As it can be understood, Moscow's call to the CSTO will be rejected by the member states by replying that the war "did not take place on Russian soil." This will create a situation in which Russia cannot even activate the security organization, of which Russia is the dominant actor.

As a result, Putin has shown that he will escalate the war by taking the decision of "partial mobilization" on September 21, 2022 and announcing that referendums will be held in four regions of Ukraine. With this move, Russia gave the message that the area of the war would expand and aimed to clarify the differences within the West. However, there may be a period in which Moscow will lose its allies, especially China, India and the CSTO members. In other words, referendums may bring about a process in which Russia becomes even more isolated.

[1] Putin Declares 'Partial' Mobilization Amid Ukraine Losses, Warns West of Nuclear Response, The Moscow Times, <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2022/09/21/putin-declares-partial-mobilization-amid-ukraine-losses-warns-west-of-nuclear-response-a78850>, (Date of Accession: 21.09.2022).

[2] "Ukrayna Savaşı: İlgali Altındaki Dört Bölge Rusya'ya Katılmak İçin Referandum Düzenleyecek", BBC Türkçe, <https://www.bbc.com/turkce/articles/cg318q3wrwvo>, (Date of Accession: 23.09.2022).

[3] Ibid.

[4] Elena Teslova, "2nd Phase of Ukraine 'Special Military Operation' Has Started: Russia", Anadolu Agency, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/russia-ukraine-war/2nd-phase-of-ukraine-special-military-operation-has-started-russia/2567594>, (Date of Accession: 23.09.2022).

[5] "Putin Declares...", op. cit.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Hüseyin Yeltin, "Will Russia Be the Loser of the War in Ukraine?", ANKASAM, <https://www.ankasam.org/will-russia-be-the-loser-of-the-war-in-ukraine/?lang=en>, (Date of Accession: 24.09.2022).

[8] Ibid.





## ANKASAM ANALYSIS

# From Strategic Uncertainty to Strategic Openness, Changing Taiwan Policy of the US

The Taiwan visit of the Speaker of the United States (US) House of Representatives, Nancy Pelosi, caused a serious crisis in the China-US-Taiwan triangle in particular and in the Asia-Pacific Region in general. After the visit, China started military exercises throughout the island; however, this has not had a deterrent effect for either Taiwan or the West. Because after the exercises, US politicians continued to visit the island. In addition, Western states, encouraged by the moves of the US and the inability of China to respond, started their visits to the island.

Moreover, these visits led to the implementation of some economic and military agreements between the US, Western states and Taiwan. For instance, on September 8, 2022, a delegation of US officials led by Florida's Democratic Senator Stephanie Murphy visited Taiwan. During this visit, Murphy said that the US Congress should advocate Taiwan's greater participation in international organizations,[1] and the American delegation met with Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen to establish closer commercial and economic relations.[2] Despite China's exercises and harsh statements, it has been observed that the US and its allies did not take a step back in their Taiwan policy.



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The exercises held by China have also been described by the international community as a rehearsal for a major invasion. However, the question that comes to the fore here is why so many US politicians visited Taiwan and why the US and the West do not step back in the Taiwan Issue and show their support for the island in a clear, direct and concrete way.

At this point, it can be said that the US policy on Taiwan has changed, evolving from "strategic uncertainty" to "strategic openness." In the process that started with Pelosi's visit to Taiwan, the US-China rivalry, the Russia-Ukraine War, the US domestic politics and the reactions of China were influential in the change in the Washington administration's policy towards the island.

### The US-China Rivalry

The US accepts China as its biggest global competitor. This is not just the perception of the US. Due to its economic power and its role in global supply chains, China is the only state that can compete with the US on a global scale and balance the power of US in the eyes of both the international public and its own politicians.

In order to increase this growth and its global competitiveness, China is trying to show its presence in many regions and to consolidate its power in the regions where it is already present. For this reason, Beijing is taking more and more ambitious actions in the Asia-Pacific region, especially in the East Asian region. As China increased its actions in this region, the US began to support Taiwan more militarily and economically, with which China has historically problematic relations and is considering forcibly connecting it to the mainland if necessary.[3]

At the same time, the US has tended to both surround China and increase its pressure on China by making the said support in a way that will attract the attention of the international public and by increasing its relations with the region.

The most important indicator of the mentioned pressure and containment policy, apart from the visits and trade agreements, is the tripartite security alliance (AUKUS), which was established in 2021 under the leadership of the US and with the participation of the United Kingdom (UK) and Australia in order to counter the growth of China in the Asia-Pacific region.

Beijing is also trying to give assertive answers to these actions taken by the US to compete with China in the international arena and strengthen its presence in the region. The fact that China held military exercises in areas close to the island after Pelosi's visit reveals that Beijing has begun to oppose the US and is capable of escalating the current competition to a hot conflict if necessary or sees itself at this level.

After the exercises ended, it was announced that the exercises of the Chinese Army would continue in the future.[4] Therefore, Beijing's increasingly assertive stance towards Taiwan indicates that many crises may occur through there.

On the other hand, although military tensions escalated with Pelosi's visit, China had accelerated its military activities around the island; for instance, after Tsai Ing-wen was elected President of Taiwan in 2016.

In this period, there was a "strategic uncertainty" due to the fact that the US did not give concrete guarantees to the Taipei Government that it would intervene if China attacked Taiwan. However, with the recent events, Washington's state of uncertainty is shifting towards "strategic openness." In short, the US realized that this situation further emboldened Beijing as it continued to be strategically uncertain in its policy on the region.

### Strategic Openness

The most obvious proof that the US has moved away from strategic uncertainty is that in August 2022, President of the US Joe Biden said that if China attacked Taiwan, Washington would intervene directly, and that the US military support commitment to the island was much stronger after the Ukraine War.[5] In his latest statement, Biden also stated that his policy towards Taiwan has not changed,



and that Washington wants Taiwan's status issue to be resolved peacefully in line with this policy; however, he stated that the US would defend Taiwan if China tried to occupy the autonomous island that it claimed as part of its own territory.[6]

Another proof of the Washington administration's shift from strategic uncertainty to strategic openness in the Taiwan Issue is the US approval of 1.1 billion dollars of arms sales to Taiwan.[7] Moreover, Biden has statements that the US recognizes the "One China Policy" yet there are also statements that this does not mean that Taiwan can be invaded or forcibly be joined the mainland. Within the framework of the "One China Policy", the US recognizes the Beijing administration as the "single" and "legal" government of China. However, this policy does not mean that Washington recognizes "China's sovereignty over Taiwan."

The signal given by Biden to Taiwan is very important for the White House in terms of both the US's "liberal democracy" narrative to find a response in the states in the region and the increase in pressure on China. Only regional developments have not been effective in the strategic change of direction by the USA in the Taiwan Issue. Global developments, and especially the Russia-Ukraine War, played a decisive role in the transition of the US from strategic uncertainty to the point of strategic openness in the Taiwan Issue.

### Russia-Ukraine War

The Russia-Ukraine War brought China's annexation of Taiwan and the threat of force on the island to the agenda of the international community and especially the West. With the start of the war, Taiwan increased its level of alert. There was also concern that Russia's intervention in Ukraine might inspire China regarding Taiwan.

In addition to all these, sanctions also have an effect on the process. Because the US and the West are considering using sanctions to further increase the pressure on China, to make Beijing an unstable actor in the region and to prevent the invasion of Taiwan.

At the same time, the Taipei Government is putting pressure on the EU and the US to impose sanctions on China.[8] However, the threats of sanctions against Russia before the start of the Ukrainian War were not enough to deter Moscow from starting the Ukraine War. The fact that sanctions threats do not have a deterrent effect on Russia is an issue that causes discussion here.

Moreover, Russia is an actor that the West can apply the sanctions in question more easily than China. Because the West, and especially the US, has very intricate economic relations with China. For this reason, sanctions targeting Beijing will have a very negative impact on the West. It is thought that Washington will not be able to go too far, since both the sanctions did not have a deterrent effect on the Moscow administration before the Russia-Ukraine War, and the Chinese sanctions will affect the West much more than the sanctions applied to Russia. Despite this, the US openly threatening sanctions against China is an indication that its strategy has shifted from uncertainty to openness.

### US Domestic Politics

As it is known, the US is heading towards midterm elections. One of the reasons for the US's shift towards strategic openness is the upcoming midterm elections. Because the US policy towards China has always been criticized by Republicans as being weak and soft. For this reason, Biden is trying to stay away from a policy understanding that Republicans would describe as "weakness against China" by making hard moves against China. In other words, it cares about not losing votes in the elections. Therefore, the US has found its new global enemy in order to consolidate its people in order to create legitimacy for both domestic and foreign policy moves in accordance with its own political traditions.

The reason why the situation in question is in accordance with the US political traditions is that the same strategy was used in the historical process that started with the Cold War. During the Cold War, the rival of the US was the Soviet Union. The US, which experienced an enemy vacuum in this sense after the end of the Cold War, determined its new global enemy as terrorism on the occasion of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001.

All of this has been implemented by "creating a perception of external threat" in order to legitimize both the cross-border operations carried out by the US kilometers away from its territory and its domestic policy actions, and to consolidate its Western allies and its own people. China, on the other hand, has been implementing a more proactive foreign policy since the 2010s. Undoubtedly, this situation has made the Beijing administration the new global enemy of the US and has enabled Washington to create a new threat perception.

By continuing to follow its historical policies and strategies, the US has succeeded in creating negative views towards China in its own people. To the American public, China is a threat and an enemy. For this reason, the harsh rhetoric and actions taken against China by the Washington administration find a positive response in domestic politics. The need for the "other" has a great role in the evolution of its strategy from uncertainty to openness and the hardening of its attitude towards China, in this process in which the US is heading towards the midterm elections.

### China's Responses

As Washington hardened its stance against Beijing and implemented its policy of suppressing and containing China through Taiwan, it saw that Beijing was unable to respond effectively. China cannot respond effectively to the actions of the US on the ground, and cannot raise the tense global and geopolitical competition to the level of hot conflict.

As the Washington administration realizes this, it increases its actions even more. Undoubtedly, China, which has not experienced such a large-scale global competition, is afraid of the US, an actor that has experienced the greatest global competition in history such as the Cold War, and moreover, left this competition with a victory. The Beijing administration, which does not have the political experience of Washington, cannot respond to the moves of the US with the same rigor.

The developments, on the other hand, force Beijing to take a decision that will be negative for both results. If China advances to the point of hot conflict; this situation will both make China an actor that threatens stability and security in the region, and will cause the US's narrative of liberal democracy and the threat of China perception find a much more effective response in the regional states and cause neutral states to turn to the West. However, even if China avoids an effective response, the developments will make China an unstable actor, reduce confidence

in itself, and cause the US pressure on Taiwan to gain other perspectives and be reflected in other problematic areas.

The fact that the US saw that China could not respond effectively is one of the reasons why it changed the situation of strategic uncertainty with the policy of strategic openness. As the US saw that it was able to suppress and intimidate China through Taiwan, it continued these actions and intensified its activities and rhetoric.

As a result, the Taiwan policy of the US has reached a much tougher level compared to the previous years due to the escalation of the competition on the Washington-Beijing line, the global effects of the Russia-Ukraine War, the developments in the US domestic politics and the responses that China gave or had difficulty in giving. Thus, the US has moved from strategic uncertainty to a policy that can be called strategic openness.

[1]"Amid the Tension, Another US Congressional Delegation Visited Taiwan", Apnews, <https://apnews.com/article/taiwan-china-nancy-pelosi-tsai-ing-wen-4a5fa7c1d01b8abc3e30ec13e8ec2de>, (Date of Accession: 09.09.2022).

[2]"Taiwan Confident It Can Sign 'High Standard' US Trade Deal", Channel News Asia, <https://www.channelnewsasia.com/asia/taiwan-confident-it-can-sign-high-standard-us-trade-deal-2926706>, (Date of Accession: 08.09.2022).

[3] "China Says Taiwan Military Drills Are Over After Pelosi Visit", BBC, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-62492350>, (Date of Accession: 12.08.2022).

[4] Ibid.

[5] "Biden: US Would Intervene with Military to Defend Taiwan", AP News, <https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-biden-taiwan-china-4fb0ad0567ed5bbe46c01dd758e6c62b>, (Date of Accession: 12.08.2022).

[6] "Biden: Us Would Defend Taiwan Against Chinese Invasion", Apnews, <https://apnews.com/article/taiwan-biden-china-nancy-pelosi-government-and-politics-abe8b7b0c6600e5fa869effae0d76ef2>, (Date of Accession: 19.09.2022).

[7] "US Approves Potential 1.1bn Dollar Weapons Sale to Taiwan", Aljazeera, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/9/2/us-approves-potential-1-1bn-weapons-sale-to-taiwan-pentagon>, (Date of Accession: 02.09.2022).

[8] "US Considers China Sanctions to Deter Taiwan Action", Aljazeera, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/9/14/us-considers-china-sanctions-to-deter-taiwan-action>, (Date of Accession: 14.09.2022).



## ANKASAM ANALYSIS

# The Future of National Veto in the EU

Countries that are members of the European Union (EU) have the right of veto due to the structure of the organization. All decisions by the EU are taken by consensus after discussions among member states. The consultation procedure is one of the special legislative procedures used in the EU. The procedure is used for politically sensitive issues, where member states assume responsibility for policy making and make decisions based on unanimity.[1]

Therefore, the issue of unanimity comes to the fore as one of the main features of the EU. However, this issue brings with it from time-to-time problems and challenges in the functioning of the EU's decision-making mechanism.

It is seen that there has been a growing discontent of Germany regarding the veto in the EU recently. In fact, the German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas called on the EU member states to



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abolish the veto power in foreign policy in 2021 and reacted to this situation with the words, "We can no longer be held hostage by those who paralyse European foreign policy with their vetoes."[2]

A similar policy appears to have continued under German Chancellor Olaf Scholz. In July 2022, Scholz said, "We can no longer afford national vetoes in foreign policy, if we want to continue to be heard in a world of competing great Powers."[3] In August 2022, the German Chancellor again expressed the need for unanimity on the EU's foreign policy and taxation issues.[4]

The fact that the statements were made by Germany, which stands out as the most economically and politically powerful member of the EU, is an issue that needs to be emphasized. Until the beginning of the 2000s, the fact that the alliance consisted of countries with a high level of prosperity in Western Europe was an element that accelerated the decision-making process. However, especially the inclusion of former Eastern Bloc member countries in the fifth and sixth enlargement of the EU and the increase in the number of members have brought about many challenges.

In particular, some EU member countries, which are economically and politically weaker, use their veto privileges to override the preferences of the major states in the Union. Although he did not name the country in his speeches, the Chancellor of Germany is displeased with the governments in Poland and Hungary. For example, the fact that Hungary is the only EU member that raises its voice against the sanctions imposed on Russia by taking into account its own national interests is considered by Berlin as a situation that prevents the organization from acting jointly in the decisions it takes on foreign policy. The EU considers that the veto power has been used by Prime Minister of Hungary Viktor Orban in a way that is contrary to the interests of the union.[5]

Debates on the functioning of the EU decision-making mechanism have started to come up more frequently due to the Russia-Ukraine War. Because Europe is challenged by the biggest crisis it has faced since the World War II. Therefore, Scholz's statements should be evaluated in this regard. On the other hand, the war in Ukraine has shown that the EU cannot take quick decisions in foreign policy due to the veto rights of the member states.

Currently, the EU has 27 members. In the near future, this number is expected to exceed 30. In other words, considering that the EU will expand further, it can be foreseen that the issue of national veto will continue to be on the agenda.

It is expected that the enlargement process will continue with the Western Balkan countries; Albania, North Macedonia, Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Montenegro. However, most of the countries mentioned are currently experiencing problems both among themselves and with some countries within the Union. For example, the accession process of North Macedonia to the EU has been delayed for a long time due to Bulgaria's veto. Bulgaria lifted this veto in June 2022. Because Sofia has demanded Skopje to solve some historical, linguistic and identical problems. For all these reasons, the membership process of Albania, which works together with North Macedonia, has indirectly prolonged its EU membership process. The situation has exposed the problem in the EU's decision-making mechanism and slowed down the enlargement process.

It is also a question mark how the Balkan countries will adapt to the Union if their membership is realized. Especially considering that the Balkans are a geography of crisis, this question becomes even more important. Because the Balkan states, whose membership will take place, will also have the right of veto. This could further slowdown the EU decision-making mechanism.

For all these reasons, it is possible that there will be a revision of the veto in the EU in the future. However, there is a point which this possibility is blocked. The EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borrell expressed that although he was in favor of ending the veto right, unanimity was also needed to achieve its abolition.[6] Therefore, making an amendment on the veto is not a decision that only a few states can take. It requires the approval of all 27 EU member states. This makes the process even more tangled.



In sum, it is observed that Germany, the most powerful state in the bloc, is dissatisfied with the veto in the EU. However, the fact that Germany is the most powerful member of the Union does not give it superiority in this regard. Because 27 countries are members of the EU and all of them have the right to veto. Therefore, all countries have an equal vote on the decisions taken. Even amending on the veto requires the approval of each member. However, the necessity of persuading each member individually complicates things even more. Therefore, it seems highly unlikely that Germany will get what it wants.

In the event of an amendment in the veto issue, the most likely scenario will be to incline to the choice of majority vote. However, when the veto issue is examined from the general framework, it can be argued that this conflict is in a sense between the countries that prioritize their national interests and the countries that take care of the interests of the union.

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[2] "Germany Calls for Abolition of 'Paralysing' EU Member States Foreign Policy Veto", Euronews, <https://www.euronews.com/my-europe/2021/06/08/germany-calls-for-abolition-of-paralysing-eu-member-states-foreign-policy-veto>, (Date of Accession: 19.09.2022).

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[4] "EU Needs Majority Voting in Foreign, Tax Policy-Scholz", Reuters, <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/eu-needs-majority-voting-foreign-tax-policy-scholz-2022-08-29/>, (Date of Accession: 19.09.2022).

[5] Cemal Ege Özkan, "Macaristan-Avrupa Birliği İlişkilerinde "Fon" Sorunu", ANKASAM, <https://www.ankasam.org/macaristan-avrupa-birligi-iliskilerinde-fon-sorunu/>, (Date of Accession: 19.09.2022).

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## ANKASAM ANALYSIS

# Quests for Versatility in Foreign Policy of Pakistan

As it will be recalled, on August 16, 2022, Prime Minister of Pakistan Shahbaz Sharif pointed out that it would be extremely dangerous for the global system to return to the understanding of politics based on polarization, by saying, "The world cannot afford a new Cold War period."<sup>[1]</sup> Although the statements of the Prime Minister of Pakistan seem to be a speech about the international system, it essentially makes it clear that the Islamabad administration will not accept being forced to make a choice in foreign policy in any way. Therefore, Sharif once again

reaffirmed that Pakistan is moving towards a multifaceted understanding of diplomacy that takes into account the balances between the power centers.

As it is known, Pakistan was subjected to some criticism due to its relations with the Taliban during the intervention of the United States (US) in Afghanistan after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, and as a result, it chose to get closer to China.



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The relations established on the Islamabad-Beijing line seemed to be a rational choice of Islamabad due to the influence of the exclusionary policy of the US towards Pakistan as of the conditions of the period. However, in the course of time, Islamabad has seen that it has not been able to achieve the economic gains it expected from the relations it has established with Beijing. Especially the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), one of the six economic corridors of the Belt-Road Project, was thought to make a significant contribution to the development of Pakistan through infrastructure investments realized through loans and grants, but in practice, a result has emerged that the country is facing significant difficulties economically.

Moreover, it has been seen that Pakistan has become unsafe due to the terrorist attacks aimed at destabilizing the Belt-Road Project. Because attacks targeting project investments are frequently reflected in the news. This has led the Islamabad administration to seek a multifaceted foreign policy based on balance.

In terms of the quest, it is possible to accept Sharif's becoming the Prime Minister of Pakistan as a milestone. At this point, it should be noted that it is an extremely normal development for Islamabad to make an effort to repair its relations with the West after the election of Sharif due to the anti-Western stance of former Prime Minister of Pakistan Imran Khan. However, it is also recalled that after Sharif's inauguration, claims were raised that Pakistan would choose to completely break away from China.

While Pakistan is starting a process that can be described as a "Western Opening", breaking its ties with Beijing is not a mistake that this country, which has a long-established state tradition, will make. For this reason, Sharif reveals that a foreign policy based on balance will be carried out from the first day of his rule. In fact, Sharif, in his first speech to the Pakistani Parliament as Prime Minister, clearly stated that he wants to strengthen relations with states such as the US and the UK, that is, with the Western actors.[2] Afterwards, Pakistani officials came to the fore with statements revealing the importance they attach to CPEC. This has shown Pakistan's quest of a multifaceted foreign policy based on balance. Finally, in a statement on July 25, 2022, Sharif stressed that China has invested in Pakistan and helped it overcome the crisis by building a power plant that generates thousands of megawatts of electricity thanks to its own capacity, resources, technology, machinery and expertise.[3]

Another example reflecting Pakistan's quest for balance has shown itself in the steps it has taken to overcome the economic crisis the country is in. Because the administration of Islamabad, on the one hand, has reached an agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for a loan of 4 billion dollars,[4] and on the other hand, it has announced that it has received a loan of 2 billion dollars from China. [5] This is quite important in terms of showing that Pakistan observes the balances even when borrowing economically and does not want to become dependent on a single actor. In short, Pakistan refrains from the formation of a unilateral dependency relationship.

Another example reflects Islamabad's policy of balance is that on August 3, 2022, following a Taiwan visit by the Speaker of the US House of Representatives, Nancy Pelosi, on August 2, 2022, Pakistan has announced its support for the "One China Policy"[6] and shortly after that it participated in the "Regional Cooperation- 2022" exercise held in Tajikistan along with the US and Central Asian countries. [7]

As can be understood, Pakistan is careful not to confront China by reiterating its support for traditional theses on the territorial integrity of its neighbor China in terms of regional security. However, in doing so, it sends a message that it can work closely with the US on regional security issues along the South Asia-Central Asia line.

Consequently, Pakistan acts in line with a multifaceted understanding of diplomacy in its foreign policy. Therefore, with the Sharif era it can be said that Islamabad has implemented a policy that takes into account the Washington-Beijing balance and takes care to avoid unilateral dependency relations. It seems that the foreign policy is skillfully processed and therefore leads to positive results. There is no doubt that the successful continuation of the policy will contribute to strengthening the economic situation, security, sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of the country. Because Sharif's statements opposing the polarization is an expression of the determination to maintain the strategy based on versatility.



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## ANKASAM ANALYSIS

# China Desires to Reach Afghanistan: Is it a Controversial Wakhan; or a Stable Central Asia?

China, which wants to reach various markets within the scope of the Belt-Road Project, is trying to create alternative corridors and routes. Today, there are very few countries where China cannot establish relations or establish corridors in the Asian continent. In this context, one of the most important goals of China, which has developed close relations with various

states within the framework of mutual respect and win-win approach, is to reach Afghanistan.

Afghanistan has been grappling with various social, economic, political and humanitarian crises since the US withdrawal. It is also known that some terrorist organizations have a presence in Afghanistan.



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This situation weakens the authority of the Taliban administration and makes it difficult to ensure its internal legitimacy. Despite this, China aims to increase its gains through the relations it has established by acting from a pragmatist framework with its policy of not interfering in the internal affairs of the countries. At this point Afghanistan is also one of China's toughest tests.

As it will be remembered, at the time when the US would withdraw from Afghanistan, it was discussed that China should include this country in the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) together with Pakistan.[1]

Later, one of the allegations made was that China wanted to reach Afghanistan via the Wakhan Corridor. However, the region in question does not seem to be a healthy choice due to the presence of various terrorist organizations in the region, the difficulty of the geographical structure and the potential for instability in South Asia to affect China and other regional countries.

In addition, recent political events in Pakistan strengthen the perceptions that importance of the Wakhan Corridor has decreased. On the other hand, attacks on Chinese workers in the region and the fact that regional tensions do not decrease also increase Beijing's concerns.[2] In addition to all these, it is seen that the pressure on Afghanistan for the establishment of a line between Pakistan and Tajikistan by crossing the Wakhan Corridor in the north-south direction has increased the tension in the region. This destabilizes the Wakhan Corridor.[3]

Due to all these developments, it can be said that China is heading towards a more stable and safer route. Because it is known that several agreements have been made and feasibility studies have been carried out for the completion of the missing part of the China-Uzbekistan-Kyrgyzstan line.[4]

Currently, Kyrgyzstan is the most important transport hub between Uzbekistan and China. However, lack of railway infrastructure in this country made it difficult to establish a strong bond. For this reason, three states have taken steps to eliminate the deficiency in Kyrgyzstan. The construction process of the railway in question also means the completion of the missing part of the Middle Line.

On the other hand, it is known that Uzbekistan has long wanted to open up to Pakistan via Afghanistan.[5] At this point, Beijing administration is trying to reach Afghanistan by being involved in projects that the regional actors want to develop on their own initiative and by using these transportation lines.

To summarize briefly, it can be said that China wants to reach Afghanistan without any problems. Moreover, with the elimination of the deficiency in Kyrgyzstan, China, not only to Uzbekistan; it can also reach Afghanistan. In this context, the first railway transportation was carried out on the China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan-Afghanistan line, although the Kyrgyzstan part was carried out by road.[6]

As it can be understood, after the Kyrgyzstan part of the aforementioned line is completed, China will be able to reach Afghanistan via Central Asia, which is a more stable, safer and less costly route compared to other regions. Thus, Central Asia will be one of the main hubs for China to reach both Europe and South Asia.

The route of the mentioned line is Kashgar/China-Osh/Kyrgyzstan-Tashkent/Uzbekistan-Mazar-i Sharif/Afghanistan. Efforts to extend the route towards the inner parts of Afghanistan will also increase the gains of this country. Because long routes built within a country mean a railway line that will pass through more cities. This will positively affect the trade in the relevant cities. While all these increase Afghanistan's gains; it will also facilitate access to the economic resources needed to get out of the social, economic, political and humanitarian crisis.



At this point, it can be stated that the policies of countries such as Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan towards Afghanistan are in line with China's policies. In particular, ensuring stability in Afghanistan and adopting a win-win approach within the framework of pragmatic policies; Tashkent is the common point of Bishkek and Beijing's Afghanistan policies. In this way, the Beijing administration will also eliminate the possibility of destabilizing regional projects and corridors by third actors.

As a result, there are various alternatives for China to reach Afghanistan. However, most of these corridors are quite risky. Because the events in Pakistan, which is known as one of the countries closest to China in Asia, have brought about the current situation and future of even CPEC. At this point, instead of creating alternative corridors in China's foreign policy; it can be said that an attitude towards reaching reliable, stable and less costly corridors has come forward. Because, in a period when both the Chinese economy and the world economy are negatively affected, the security of the goods sent and infrastructure investments and the sustainability of regional projects gain importance. For this reason, Central Asia and the Central Corridor stand out as the most risk-free and lowest cost route from China to Afghanistan. Therefore, instead of Beijing's controversial Wakhan Corridor; it can be said that it prefers stable Central Asia.

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## ANKASAM ANALYSIS

# Evaluation of India-China Border Disputes

As a result of the agreement on September 9, 2022, it was announced that Indian and Chinese soldiers would withdraw from some disputed areas on the border.[1] It is important to investigate all border disputes in order to understand what this withdrawal, which took place on only one part of the border, means. Because the parties avoid any armed conflict along the border known as the Line of Actual Control (LAC) within the scope of the previously reached agreement. The border tension, which has not resulted in any deaths for over forty years, deteriorated after the incident that took place in the Galwan Valley on 15 June 2020, and bilateral relations were strained diplomatically and militarily after the clashes in which twenty Indian soldiers were killed and forty soldiers were taken prisoner.

### Border Points of Dispute

The 3,488 km long India-China border can be divided into three sectors. These are Western Sector across Jammu and Kashmir State; Eastern Sector opposite Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh and Middle-Central Sector opposite Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand. In all three sectors, India has unresolved border disputes with China. Although disputes on the Eastern and Western borders are

The border dispute in the eastern sector concerns the non-recognition of the McMahon Line by China. The border line in question was drawn by the agreement of the British-controlled Indian Government with the Tibetan Government in 1914. The said



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agreement is not accepted by China. Because China claims that Tibet does not have the sovereignty to sign such an agreement. China considers the whole of Arunachal Pradesh, which is now under the control of India, as part of Southern Tibet and rejects the McMahon Line.[2]

The border dispute in the West concerns the regions of Ladakh, Aksai Chin and Demochek in the State of Jammu and Kashmir. In the war in 1962, China captured Aksai China and Demochek region. In addition, Pakistan ceded some of its border lands to China.

The middle sector refers to territory controlled by India and claimed by China. These areas are; Chumar, Kaurik, Shipki La, Nelang and Laptha are located in Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh. China claims that these areas are part of Tibet.

## 2020 Conflicts

The clashes on 15 June 2022 broke out over two Chinese bases and observation towers allegedly built on Indian side of Line of Control. According to New Delhi's claim, a week before this conflict, the parties had reached an agreement to de-escalate tensions; however, Chinese troops breached the line, quickly setting up temporary "structures" in the Galwan Valley.

Clashes broke out as the Indian patrol approached the hill to confirm claim that Chinese troops had withdrawn. A large group of Chinese soldiers came face to face with Indian troops, and this encounter soon turned into an armed conflict. Chinese troops killed twenty Indian soldiers and wounded and captured dozens of soldiers. It is stated that this conflict, which resulted in death for the first time since 1975, has two main causes. The most important reason is seen as India's repeal of Article 370, which provides autonomy to the State of Jammu and Kashmir in 2019. Thus, India gained full control in Ladakh, where it had a dispute with China. In addition, China is reacting to road construction and checkpoint construction in India's border areas. Because China sees the 255 km Darbuk-Shyok-Daulat Beg Oldie (DSDBO) road built by India along the line of control as a threat to its interests in the region.[3]

## Border Negotiations

The first serious negotiations on the India-China border began in 1960; but shortly after that, war broke out between the two countries in 1962. Similar border conflicts continued in 1967 as well. Bilateral relations remained frozen for years until diplomatic relations were re-established in 1979. As soon as diplomatic relations were re-established, both sides were engaged in border negotiations; however, without political will the ongoing negotiations have failed.

Although the format of the negotiations changed, the content remained the same and these negotiations continued until the conflict in 2020. In these meetings, names such as working groups, guiding principles, confidence-building measures, general frameworks, working mechanisms were used.[4]

There were 8 rounds of high-level meetings between 1981-1987, 14 joint working group meetings between 1988-2002, and 17 meetings between special representatives between 2003-2020. After the conflicts in 2020, the parties are not only trying to ease the current tension and resolve border disputes; they also significantly increased the number of bilateral negotiations in order to ensure the withdrawal of troops. From the 2020 conflict to July 2021, more negotiations were held between India and China than ever before. These can be listed as:

- 12 interviews at corps commander level
- 10 general-level conversations
- 55 meetings at brigadier general level
- 1450 phone calls to avoid conflict
- Recent Developments in Boundary Issue

In July 2022, India once again asked China to withdraw its troops from the point of friction.[5] In addition, New Delhi requested China to end its border patrols in critical areas. In this process, China continued to take provocative actions on the border with warplanes,

although it increased its troops and the frequency of patrols on the border. Thereupon, India's National Security Advisor Ajit Doval said that China will not tolerate any border violations.[6] Because the Beijing administration provoked India many times by flying warplanes around Ladakh, especially just before the 16th round of border talks.

After the border talks, the Indian Ministry of Defence announced that both sides agreed to maintain close contact and dialogue through military and diplomatic channels. In this process, both India and China continued to send troops to borders and deploy missile systems. On September 21, 2022, Indian senior commanders reiterated that China is facing a formidable challenge, both in the border region and at sea.[7]

India's main claim is that "China's unilaterally violation of the status quo." Beijing, on the other hand, argues that New Delhi misjudged the situation and violated the compromise. Border tensions continue as neither side could agree on where the border actually is. Since both armies have different opinions about the border, they can conduct border patrols within borders of the opposing state. This applies to both parties. Despite the controversial Kashmir Issue between India and Pakistan, similar crises do not occur as the temporary border is clearly defined. The armies of Pakistan and India know exactly how far they will patrol. However, this is not the case between India and China. Therefore, there is an expectation that the temporary border will be determined in order to prevent border conflicts between India and China. If this is achieved, the most extreme patrol points of both armies will be determined, so the possibility of any encounter and conflict will be eliminated.

India asked China to draw a mutual border in the border areas; but China has consistently denied this. For example, this request was conveyed to Chinese President Xi Jinping by 2015 Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi; but China was not interested. Instead, Beijing seeks the adoption of "codes of conduct" that mutually prevent both sides from building infrastructure in border areas. This is because China already has more roads and other infrastructure facilities at the border. India, on the other hand, neglected to develop its border regions after the 1962 war. For this reason, in recent years, it has focused on road construction and increased the frequency of its patrols. This causes China's discomfort.

China claims that the main reason for current tensions is India's infrastructure construction and military deployment. In re-

sponse, it seeks to develop the infrastructure on its side of the border to ensure rapid deployment of the army to the region. But it does not allow India to do the same.

The current conjuncture is not suitable for solving border problems between the parties. China's move beyond border control lines in Ladakh region leads to fierce Indian reaction and clashes. Despite the withdrawal of Indian and Chinese troops from two disputed areas in Ladakh after the 16th round of negotiations, the conflict in other sectors continues.

Under current circumstances, the parties may choose to sign a new border agreement by preserving the areas they control, namely the current status quo. But India historically rejects this idea. China is also interested in such a permanent solution. The best solution, where the parties come close to reconciliation, is to set a temporary border along the entire line to avoid border conflicts. Although India offers it, China refuses to accept it.

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## ANKASAM ANALYSIS

# The Problem of Irregular Migration on the Albania-UK Line

The nature of relations between Albania and the United Kingdom (UK), two North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) allies, has recently been shaped by the problem of irregular migration. In particular, the irregular migrant flow from Albania to the UK constitutes one of the main agendas of the British media.

According to the data of the UK Ministry of Defence, the number of migrants crossing the English Channel in August 2022 was recorded to be more than in the whole of 2020.[1] However, the number of immigrants coming to the UK from Albania is much higher compared to other countries. This situation causes a special attention to the issue of immigrants of Albanian



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origin in the UK.

According to the UK Government officials, Albanians currently make up about 60% of the people crossing the English Channel, 100 times last year's number.[2] According to reports reflected in the Albanian media, financial reasons and the pursuit of better living standards are the main reasons that Albanians to emigrate from the country.[3]

In line with these developments, the UK is taking measures to prevent Albanian irregular migrants who are trying to enter the country via the English Channel from entering the country in small boats. On August 25, 2022, London and Tirana agreed to work together, pledging that immigrants who enter the UK illegally will be deported rapidly.[4]

Within the framework of the developments, it has been reflected in the British media that according to the agreement reached between Priti Patel, who served as Home Secretary during Boris Johnson's duty in Prime Ministry, and the Albanian Government, Albanian police will be brought to Kent Coast to observe the arrival of migrants and share intelligence with the British government.[5] It was also noted that Patel met and held meetings with senior Albanian law enforcement officials in order to share the forensic and biometric details of all Albanians arriving in the UK via small boats.[6]

As it can be seen, it seems that the UK is in a full cooperation with the Albanian Government authorities in the face of this problem. Therefore, the cooperation prevents a crisis between the parties. Although the fruit of these policies was laid during the Boris Johnson era, it is likely that this attitude will continue under Liz Truss. Especially, one of the points highlighted in the news reflected in the British media about Albanians is the negative attitude towards the community.

As early as 2019, it is possible to see that articles have been written that the Albanian mafia taking control of the drug trade in the UK.[7] There have also been claims that prisons in the UK could house more Albanian offenders than prisons in Albania if action is not taken to tackle the migrant crisis.[8]

As it can be understood, it is emphasized in the British media that Albanians form criminal gangs in the UK and come to the fore with the drug trafficking. Therefore, it is possible that the UK Government will further toughen its stance on irregular migrants from Albania. However, despite this, it is not expected that there will be tension on the London-Tirana line. Because the parties are in cooperation on the management of the process. In this sense, it can be said that Tirana acts in harmony with London.

Prime Minister of Albania, Edi Rama told young Albanians on September 18, 2022, that instead of spending thousands of pounds paying people smugglers to get across the English Channel, they should invest the money in rural tourism businesses that would earn them more than they could earn in the UK.[9] Undoubtedly, the Prime Minister of Albania expressed the statements because he did not want a crisis with the UK due to this incident.

While the problem of irregular migrants between the UK and Albania continues, there is also the possibility that third actors may be involved in the process. According to the British press, as a result of the alleged cyber-attacks on Albania by Iran, the talks between London and Tirana on the issue were revealed.[10] However, weeks ago, the Albanian Parliament adopted a memorandum on the sharing of criminal and biometric data on Albanian migrants crossing the English Channel with UK law enforcement agencies.[11]

Consequently, irregular Albanian migration to the UK is a special issue in many respects. The fact that the two countries act in full harmony prevents the problem from turning into a crisis. In addition, the example of Albania could serve as a precedent for the policy that the London administration will implement in the future regarding irregular migration that could be headed from other countries. What may make this issue even more interesting is the possibility of Iran's involvement. This possibility may cause the process to evolve to a quite different point.



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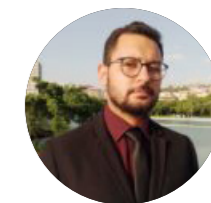


## ANKASAM ANALYSIS

# South Korea-Japan Rap-prochement: Washington-Seoul-Tokyo Alliance

The Second World War inflicted irreparable wounds in the history of all nations participating in the war. The biggest reason for this is the continuation of colonialism that started with geographical discoveries. The situation in question is actually an indication of the fact that mercantilist and realist views assumed a dominant role in the state administrations of the period after the failure of the League of

Nations. As a matter of fact, this process has also caused deep wounds in South Korea-Japan relations. These wounds play a key role in the relations between the parties, although it has been a long time. However, the South Korea-Japan duo, even though they have a bad history in terms of bilateral relations, started to develop their relations due to the reshaped geopolitical environment.



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As it is known, because of North Korea's nuclear activities and China's developing and deepening relations with Russia, waters are warming in the Pacific. North Korea has been conducting nuclear tests in the region for a long time and ignoring all the agreements it has ratified in the past. Ultimately, the Pyongyang administration declared herself a nuclear power on September 9, 2022. Moreover, with this law, North Korean President Kim Jong Un also granted his country the authority to preemptive strike by nuclear weapons. Of course, this situation seriously threatens the security and stability of the region.

On the other hand, while China is attentive to keep its relations with Russia which has been fighting in Ukraine since February 2022 at a certain level, she is taking steps that make the regional security environment fragile by increasing the exercises she carries out around Taiwan. The United States, first by the visit of the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Nancy Pelosi, then by the law that increased its support for Taiwan both economically and militarily, and finally by the US President Joe Biden's statement of "If there is an attack on Taiwan, we will defend Taiwan", leaved the principle of strategic uncertainty and openly defend Taiwan. This has accelerated the escalation of tensions.

#### Rapprochement of Japan and South Korea

As it is noted above, Japan and South Korea have long been two geographically close but mentally distant countries. However, thanks to some recent developments, the two countries are giving signals of convergence. For example, the parties decided to continue their negotiations on the labor compensation of the workers who were forced to work during the Second World War.[1] Prior to this, the Foreign Ministers of Japan and South Korea met on the sidelines of the United Nations (UN) General Assembly and discussed various issues.

During these talks, it was emphasized that historical issues should be resolved and both bilateral relations and trilateral relations with the US should be developed.[2] Considering that the changing geopolitical conditions were also emphasized in the meetings, it can be said that the rapprochement between South Korea and Japan did not occur only to end the problems between the societies.

In fact, the changing geopolitical environment is primarily related to North Korea and its nuclear activities. On the other hand, it can be stated that South Korea and Japan focus on China, which supports and protects North Korea, rather than North Korea. As a matter of fact, according to the news reflected in the press on September 21, 2022, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, in his reply to the letter sent by Chinese President Xi Jinping, stated that China-North Korea relations would be developed against enemy forces. In addition, considering that China does not satisfactorily oppose North Korea's nuclear law, it can be argued that although Beijing states that it opposes Pyongyang's reaching the nuclear power level, she is warmly welcomed to these developments which can ensure advantage in the region.

In addition, the analyzes of some Chinese experts supporting this view are also noteworthy.[3] As can be understood from all these events, although the rapprochement between Japan and South Korea in the region is seen only as a result of the societies' desire to get rid of the protracted problems, it can be said that the efforts of Seoul and Tokyo to strengthen their own positions against Beijing lie behind the rapprochement.

#### The US-South Korea-Japan Alliance

While the world agenda is busy with the Russia-Ukraine War, events that increase the tension in the Asia-Pacific region continue to occur. In the process following the escalation of the Taiwan Issue, North Korea announced that it would not give up nuclear power and by going further announced that she recognized the right of preemptive nuclear strike for herself. Of course, the fact that the regional agenda is so tense has caused the US-Japan-South Korea trio to be on the alert.

In this context, while Japan and South Korea are trying to solve their historical problems; Washington and Seoul are also discussing the exclusion of South Korean electric vehicle manufacturers from incentives under the new US anti-inflation law.[4]

While all these developments are taking place, the US is deploying THAAD Missile Defense Systems to South Korea. The first missile defense systems were deployed in 2017 when South Korea wanted to defend itself more effectively against North Korea-based nuclear threats. While South Korea added a new one to the ongoing deployments, China was disturbed by this situation. Therefore, on September 16, 2022, Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, Li Zhanshu, during his three-day visit to South Korea, emphasized that sensitive issues should be handled appropriately and that it is important to find a reasonable solution to the issue of THAAD Systems.[5]

In the light of the events, the developing relations of the US and South Korea are disturbing China. The continued deployment of THAAD Defense Systems to South Korea has created a security dilemma for the Beijing administration. Because although Seoul states that these systems are against Pyongyang-based threats, China thinks that these systems are targeting herself.

On the other hand, the US, Japan and South Korea trio have been holding talks for a long time against the increasing threat of North Korea. These talks have intensified with the impact of North Korea's increasing nuclear capability and its new nuclear law. In this context, although the talks seem to be only against Pyongyang at first glance, Beijing's being the main ally of this actor and continuing all kinds of support,[6] brought along discussions that the talks also targeted China.

As a result, South Korea-Japan-US cooperation is developing and deepening against the China-North Korea alliance in the region. The Washington administration is in the desire to limit North Korea and China by getting closer to Japan and South Korea. As a matter of fact, the visit of the nuclear aircraft carrier USS Ronald Reagan to South Korea [7] can be interpreted as a step in this direction. Moreover, the US's declaration that it will protect Taiwan against a possible Chinese attack and her want of strengthening regional military cooperations such as QUAD and AUKUS indicate that the containment policy against China is intended to be expanded.

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## ANKASAM ANALYSIS

# Is the Goal of the Russia-Ukraine War to By-Pass Ukraine from Energy Geopolitics?

The process that started with the Russia-Ukraine War shows that energy security will be the most fundamental issue that will guide the foreign policies of states in the coming periods. Especially after the Russia-Ukraine War, the support given by the Western states to Ukraine and the sanctions imposed on Russia in this context, brought the message that the Moscow administration, which predicted that it could face such a problem for many years and

was preparing for it, could use the energy card when necessary. This brought the importance of energy as a weapon to the agenda.

In fact, the conversion of energy into a weapon and the use of this weapon is not a new phenomenon. As a matter of fact, in the Energy Concept adopted by the Moscow administration in 2003, "Russia has significant reserves of energy resources and a powerful fuel and



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energy complex, which is the basis of the development of the economy and is a tool for implementing domestic and foreign policy." sentence is included. Thus, Russia, which has an active position in the global energy market, has declared to the whole world that the energy factor can be used as a hybrid tool or a foreign policy tool.

One of the practices of the Russian side of using energy as a hybrid vehicle was experienced in 2006, the tensest period of Georgian-Russian relations. Although Russia stated that it had solved the problems in a project involving Georgia in the period, the Tbilisi administration was making harsh statements towards Moscow. In return, the gas supply to the Georgian Embassy in Moscow was cut off by Russia. This event, which took place only in the embassy, has revealed that the Kremlin administration can use the energy factor as a tool of both political and economic pressure.

In fact, Russia has made similar moves against Ukraine in the past. For example, in 1993, the Moscow administration cut the gas supply to Ukraine by 25%. According to the official statement, although the reason for the interruption is unpaid bills, it cannot be interpreted as a coincidence that the interruption coincides with the bilateral meeting to be held just one week before the delivery of nuclear weapons and the ultimatum given to Russia about the Black Sea Fleet. In 1995, Moscow increased the gas export price to persuade Kiev to join the CIS Customs Union. In 2006, 2009 and 2015, gas cuts were made to Ukraine in the middle of winter due to the transportation fee, gas price and unpaid bills with Ukraine. This has also brought about power outages in the country.

On the other hand, the issue is not just about gas. As a matter of fact, in 2014, the Moscow administration targeted the coal mines while supporting the pro-Russian separatists in the Luhansk and Donetsk regions in eastern Ukraine, and this caused fractures in Ukraine's national energy system.

As of February 24, 2022, nuclear power plants have come to the fore among the places under the control of the Russian Army. The conflicts in and around the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant, which came to the agenda of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) on August 11, 2022, occupied the international public opinion. In other words, the Russia-Ukraine War is not only by the use of military methods; it also witnesses the moves made on the energy card.

Moreover, one of the reasons for the Russia-Ukraine War is energy, although it is not mentioned much. Because Ukraine's transit role in the process of transporting Russian gas to the EU, which enables it to establish close relations with the EU and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and the proximity of underground storages with a capacity of 32 bcm/year to the EU have become a disturbing issue for Moscow over time. Because, on the occasion of the war, Moscow is trying to bypass Ukraine from energy geopolitics.

Since the mid-1990s, Russia has been 90% dependent on gas sales to Europe at the level of 150-160 bcm per year, has a total carrying capacity of 132 billion m<sup>3</sup> (bcm) alone and reaches Europe via Ukraine-Slovakia. (Brotherhood), Soyuz (total capacity of 26 bcm) and Northern Lights (total capacity of 51 bcm), three transit pipeline systems with a gas carrying capacity of approximately 210 bcm per year are developing projects to bypass Ukraine, the critical transit country.

In fact, Russia, in the period of Viktor Chernomyrdin (1992-1998), initiated an operation with the team led by Rem Vyakhirev, the President of Gazprom at the time, primarily to liquidate the engineers/employees of Ukrainian origin within Gazprom. Then, approximately 70 bcm of gas to be produced from 11 trillion m<sup>3</sup> (tcm) reserves in the Yamal region is sent to Europe via a non-Ukrainian route (Belarus-Poland-Germany); more precisely, YAMAL-I and YAMAL-II pipelines, which will extend to Austria via Slovakia, have been developed for transport to Germany, the EU member, which is the largest Russian gas consumer. Yamal I and II are each designed to carry 33 bcm of gas per year.

YAMAL-I, with a length of 2000 km, was commissioned under the name YAMAL-Europe in 2002 and Russian gas began to be delivered to Germany. However, while Ukraine and Poland were in competition with the Baku-Tbilisi Ceyhan (oil) and Turkmen (gas) Pipeline projects, the two most important projects of the "East-West Energy Corridor" developed by Türkiye and the USA at that time; when Mos-



cow developed a new project that threatens Russia in the 35 million-ton Baltic-Black Sea oil market in order to transport Caucasian oil to the Baltic Sea via the Odessa-Brody-Gdansk Oil Pipeline, Moscow personally supported the Belarus-Poland route against the Poland-Germany route. It chose to undermine the project by not allowing the construction of the YAMAL-II Line, which will follow the Slovakia-Austria route.

In a sense, Russia, tired of Ukraine's moves, brought the YAMAL-II Line back to the agenda together with Poland in August 2013; however, it has completely removed the second line from its plans as there is no trust left in both countries. The Odessa-Brody Line, which was left to rot for years, was started to be used in reverse by the Russians, this time only as Brody-Odessa, about four years after its end, to deliver Kazakh and Russian oil to the world markets via the Black Sea. However, Russia's dependence on transit gas transportation to Ukraine has not ended. In this context, Moscow, which has set its mind to bypass Ukraine, has targeted the Kyiv administration with the desire to have a monopoly in meeting the European gas needs. Because in 2005-2006 and 2008-2009, Russia fought against Ukraine for natural gas and in this process internalized the idea that the country in question should be bypassed.

As a result, Russia, using energy as an important weapon, while holding this trump card, both wants to have a monopoly and seeks ways to eliminate its dependence on other states. Ukraine is at the forefront of the actors that Moscow wants to bypass in the energy context. Therefore, although the goal of bypassing Ukraine is not the only reason for the Russia-Ukraine War, it is one of the most important reasons.



## ANKASAM ANALYSIS

# The Dangerous Dimension in the Russia-Ukraine War: The Nuclear Threat

The "New Cold War" period, which started with the withdrawal of the United States of America (US) from the Missile Defense System (ABM) Convention in 2002, and the armament process, which reached a much more dangerous dimension compared to the Cold War period, continues rapidly. Both the US and Russia have entered a rapid and dangerous nuclear arms race involving hypersonic cruise missiles. As a matter of fact, the bells of a nuclear war that could result in the destruction of the entire world have been ringing more and more every day.

Nuclear weapons, which entered our lives through the bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945, are essentially identified with the Cold War. In this process, especially the developments until the Détente Period were shaped according to the principles of nuclear deterrence. In this period, names such as Bernard Brodie, Herman Kahn and Thomas Schelling in the US came to the fore as important scientists working on nuclear deterrence and nuclear strategy. The peaceful resolution of the Cuban Crisis has brought the world back from the brink of nuclear war.



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Nuclear weapons and the danger of nuclear war, which started to partly move away from the agenda of the international public opinion with the Détente Period, and which had almost no place on the agenda after the Cold War, became one of the most important agenda items with the Russia-Ukraine War. The fact that Russia resorted to the threat of using nuclear weapons in order to prevent the possibility that Western states such as the US and England would actually intervene in the war in favor of Ukraine, brought the concept of nuclear deterrence, which was one of the most popular concepts of the Cold War, back to the agenda.

The new era nuclear deterrence move of the Moscow administration was realized gradually within a certain program. One of the most important steps of this process is the introduction of the next generation strategic weapon systems, which was defined as invincible by Russian President Putin on March 1, 2018. It is noteworthy that Putin stated that these weapon systems were developed in response to the Washington administration's withdrawal from the 1972 ABM Convention and to the missile defense systems that the US established both in its own territory and in areas close to Russia's borders.[1] Thus, Putin laid the first foundations for the new era nuclear deterrence policy.

In the following process, the principles of Russia's nuclear weapons policies were set forth in the document called "Basic Principles of State Policy on Nuclear Deterrence of the Russian Federation", which was approved by Putin on 8 June 2020 and entered into force.[2] The document in question clearly emphasized that Russia's nuclear weapons are a deterrent factor.

The conditions under which Russia can resort to nuclear weapons, as stated in the document in question, are listed as follows:

Obtaining reliable information that a ballistic missile has been launched to attack the territory of Russia or its allies.

An attack on Russia or its allies by a hostile state with nuclear weapons or other weapons of mass destruction.

An attack by a hostile state on Russia's critical government or military facilities; elimination of the response capability of nuclear troops.

Attacking Russia with conventional weapons in a way that endanger the survival of the state.

The principles of this doctrine were expressed by Russian officials at all levels during the Ukrainian War. Officials have stated, either explicitly or implicitly, that Russia would use nuclear weapons if the West intervenes in the war. As a matter of fact, one of the first important moves came from Putin. In his speech on February 24, 2022, Putin stated that the activities of the US and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) now threaten the national existence and survival of Russia, implying that one of the conditions specified in the concept of using nuclear weapons is actually met.[3] Already at the very beginning of the war, on February 27, 2022, Putin gave the order to raise the alarm level of the state's nuclear weapons.[4] Even before the war was in its second month, Russia tested the SARMAT missile, which is considered to be the most powerful nuclear weapon of the new era.[5]

On the other hand, Kremlin Spokesperson Dmitri Peskov, in an interview with CNN reporter Christiane Amanpour on March 22, 2022, stated that if Russia's survival was threatened, it could resort to nuclear weapons and threatened the possibility of the West's military intervention in the Ukraine War. In a sense, Peskov referred to the document that entered into force in 2020 on the conditions under which nuclear weapons will be used.[6]

While the Moscow administration hardened its rhetoric over time; it openly threatened the states that support Ukraine. As a matter of fact, a Russian state television openly threatened England during the broadcast about SARMAT, claiming that the weapon in question could reach London in two minutes and wipe England off the map.[7] On the other hand, the Russian media implied that a SARMAT weapon could destroy an area as large as the state of Texas or the whole of France, thus intimidating the US and France.[8]

In the statements made by the Russian authorities regarding the claims of the Western states that Russia could use nuclear weapons in the Ukrainian War, it was noteworthy that the deterrent effect of nuclear weapons began to be emphasized. As a matter of fact, Alexander Trofimov, Head of the Disarmament and Arms Control Department of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, argued at the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference in New York that the allegation that Russia threatened to use nuclear weapons to win the Ukrainian War is not true. As stated in the Nuclear Weapons Doctrine, he stated that Russia could resort to these weapons only if it was exposed to any weapon of mass destruction or conventional weapon attack.[9]

Again, the Russian Defense Minister stated that there is no need to use nuclear weapons to win the war in Ukraine and that they can win the war with conventional troops; he underlined that nuclear weapons are a deterrent factor, saying that they will only resort to

nuclear weapons in self-defense.[10] Maria Zakharova, Spokesperson of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs right after, stated that nuclear weapons would only be used in emergencies and in response to any attack. The spokesperson added that it is not in Russia's interest for Russia to confront NATO and the US directly.[11]

Russia's Deputy Chairman of the National Security Council, Dmitry Medvedev, who is at the center of the discussions regarding the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Facility, warned that the disintegration of nuclear powers like Russia could result in doomsday, and openly implied that moves aimed at harming Russia's political integrity would lead to a nuclear war.[12]

Finally, while Putin announced a "partial mobilization" after the news that a referendum would be held in the Donbas region on the accession to Russia; he claimed that the West was blackmailing Russia to use nuclear weapons. In addition, the Russian leader stated that they would use all the weapons at their disposal, including nuclear weapons, to protect the territorial integrity of his country against the West, which aims to destroy Russia, and emphasized that this was not a bluff.[13]

On 1 August 2002; in other words, the sudden threat of nuclear war by Putin, who stated in a letter he sent to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference a short time ago that Russia does not want nuclear war and there will be no winner such a war, is an issue that can be evaluated from different perspectives. But the truth is that; nuclear weapons and nuclear war have become a clear threat.

As a result, Russia sees the moves of the West, especially the developments in Ukraine, as a threat to its national existence and survival, and states that it can use nuclear weapons to protect its survival, as stated in the document published in 2020. The issue of nuclear weapons, on which the international public has turned to cooperation rather than competition, has been on the rise again since the Détente Period. Perhaps since the Cuban Crisis, the threat of nuclear war has never been more clearly articulated by leaders. Therefore, the threat has now become much more serious and bigger. The Cold War, which ended with the contributions of Mikhail Gorbachev, the leader of the Soviet Union at the time, resurrected with the death of Gorbachev, and nuclear deterrence once again found its place on the agenda of the international public opinion.

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## ANKASAM ANALYSIS

# Peace Destroyer Actor in the Caucasus: The Karabakh Clan

From the perspective of peace and conflict studies, the two sides, which have been in conflict for a long time, start a normalization process as a result of one side adopting the will of the other side by using military force or as the conflict matures. However, there may be negative interventions by various political and military groups or third parties against the normalization process. These groups are defined in the literature as “peace-breakers” or “spoilers.” The tools most commonly used by peace-destroy-

ing actors are violence or conflicts of unknown origin and cause.

The problem of trust between the parties trying to normalize their relations due to violence and conflicts deepens. Thus, the confidence-building steps taken for the realization of normalization remain inconclusive and the reconciliation process can be abandoned. Developments in this direction are not in the interests of both sides who want normalization after a long conflict. However, peace-destroying actors take advantage of the situation in ques-



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tion and continue their gains. As a matter of fact, one of the main reasons for the conflicts between Azerbaijan and Armenia since the Second Karabakh War is peace-breaking actors like the Karabakh Clan.

Karabakh, which was occupied by Armenia in violation of international law for thirty years, was liberated thanks to the rightful victory of the Azerbaijan Army as a result of the Second Karabakh War. In fact, during the occupation period, various steps were taken to end the conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia through peaceful means and to resolve regional problems. But these have failed. However, Nikol Pashinyan, who came to power with the Velvet Revolution in Armenia in 2018, started to adopt a different attitude.

Being aware of the economic, social and political problems of Armenia, Pashinyan started to develop a policy that opposes the hate-based Armenian nationalist rhetoric that does not solve the problems in Armenia and deepens the regional crises in order to end the isolation of his country, to save Yerevan from the influence of different states and to open up to the West. The defeat of the Armenian Army in the Second Karabakh War forced Pashinyan to look for alternative ways at this point, and showed the Armenian community that regional problems cannot be solved by military means against the strengthening Azerbaijan. Thereupon, Pashinyan signed a ceasefire agreement with Azerbaijan on November 10, 2020.

In the face of increasing pressure in Yerevan, Pashinyan held early elections on 20 June 2021 and continued his duty as prime minister with a vote of around 54%. This situation was seen as proof that the Armenian community supported Pashinyan's policies, and the Prime Minister of Armenia continued his duty by reassuring him.

Despite various negotiations between the two countries, it is seen that the tension in Karabakh has increased in some periods. The main actors behind this are Armenian ethnic nationalists known as the Karabakh Clan and pro-Armenian separatist groups in Karabakh. Because Pashinyan's pro-normalization stance harms the interests of these actors and their influence in Armenian politics.

When we look at the names among the ethnic nationalists that make up the Karabakh Clan, Robert Kocharyan, who first served as the Prime Minister and President of Armenia, stands out. It is known that Kocharyan was a politician who adopted harsh policies in the region while he was in office. During his time in duty, Kocharyan openly opposed against Azerbaijan by acting on hate speech.

The second important name is Serzh Sargsyan. Sargsyan, like Kocharyan, held high-level positions both as Prime Minister and President. Especially, becoming President after Kocharyan, can be read as the continuation of hate speech in Armenian politics. However, the Velvet Revolution took place in 2018 and Sargsyan lost his power.

Pashinyan, on the other hand, signed a ceasefire agreement with Azerbaijan and continued to receive the support of the people. This situation can be described as an issue that upsets all the plans of the Karabakh Clan.

For all these reasons, the Karabakh Clan is trying to sabotage the normalization process on the Baku and Yerevan line in order to put Pashinyan in a difficult position, to “demonize” Azerbaijan and to abuse the nationalist sentiments in the Armenian community. In particular, the ceasefire violations committed by Armenia in various periods and the terrorist activities of various groups against Azerbaijan are used as a tool in this sense.

As a result, the Karabakh Clan, which uses ethnic nationalist discourses based on hatred in a way that does not match the historical facts, intensifies its peace-destroying activities in region thanks to its influence in the Armenian Army. Undoubtedly, this is one of the main reasons for the conflicts in Karabakh since September 2022. Because, when we pay attention, it is seen that as the normalization of Azerbaijan-Armenia gains speed, the intensity of the attacks that try to provoke the process increases. At this point, it should be emphasized that not signing a permanent peace treaty makes the ceasefire fragile. In other words, the process of not signing a permanent peace makes it open to provocations by various groups, especially the Karabakh Clan.





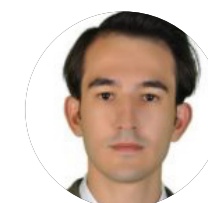
### ANKASAM ANALYSIS

# The Impact of the Russia-Ukraine War on the Visegrad Group

The Visegrad Group (V-4) was formed on February 15, 1991, by Hungary, Poland and Czechoslovakia with the desire to eliminate the remnants of the Eastern Bloc in Central Europe and to overcome the historical animosities between the countries of Central Europe.[1]

Following the dissolution of Czechoslovakia into Slovakia and the Czechia, V-4 continued to exist with four members. The process of integra-

tion of these four states, which were members of the former Eastern Bloc, with the West took place simultaneously. In 1999, Poland, Hungary and the Czechia became members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), followed by Slovakia's membership in 2004.[2] The V-4 countries also became members of the European Union (EU) in 2004.[3]



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ÖZKAN**



In addition to regional cooperation, the four member states have also acted together in international organizations such as the EU. However, this union was greatly damaged by the Moscow administration's declaration of war against Ukraine on February 24, 2022. The main reason for this situation is the division between Hungary and Poland.

Relations on the Budapest-Warsaw line progressed quite well until the start of the Russia-Ukraine War, the two countries developed close cooperation within the EU, especially on irregular migration. However, the war has damaged the close cooperation between the two countries. Because Hungary stands out as the only member of the union within the EU that opposes sanctions against Russia. Therefore, the different attitudes of Budapest and Warsaw towards Moscow led to the deterioration of relations between the two countries.

The reaction of Slovakia, another member of the group, to the Russia-Ukraine War has been in a lower tone than that of Poland and the Czechia. Slovakia has stated that it will be adversely affected by the EU sanctions on Russian oil and it expected solidarity from the bloc to mitigate this situation.[4]

The impact of the Russia-Ukraine War on the V-4 was not only limited to the deterioration of relations between Hungary and Poland, the Prague administration, which strongly condemned the Russian invasion, criticized Budapest for not participating on the energy sanctions against Moscow.[5] Moreover, the Czech Foreign Minister suggested that the V-4 cooperation was weakened due to Hungary's attitude towards the war in Ukraine.[6]

As can be seen, there is disagreement among the V-4 member states over attitudes and sanctions towards the war. Therefore, the different policies implemented by the members of the group regarding Russia have been reflected in the domestic policies of the countries in a different way. For example, during the protest demonstrations in the Czechia on September 3, 2022, which were attended by approximately 70,000 people, the policies implemented by the government in the face of rising energy prices were criticized.[7] However, it is also seen that similar protests have not taken place in Hungary, which oppose the imposition of sanctions on Russian energy. In this respect, it can be said that within the V-4, Hungary, compared to other members, has adopted an approach that pay regard energy security in relation to the Russia-Ukraine War and subsequent sanctions against Russia.

In addition to all these, it is also observed that social fragility is increasing in EU countries that criticize Hungary. Russia's playing the energy card has increased the unrest in some societies in Europe, as can be seen in the case of the Czechia.[8] In this context, it can be said that Hungary will be the state that will have the least problems on energy security among the V-4 members before the upcoming winter in Europe.

It can be said that within the scope of V-4, Poland and the Czechia pursue a more hawkish policy towards Russia, while Slovakia opposes the Russian invasion and avoids confrontation with the Moscow administration. Rather than characterizing stance of Hungary as pro-Russian policy, it is possible to interpret it through an approach that centers on energy security within the framework of its own national interests.

Although the Russia-Ukraine War led to the deterioration of relations between Hungary and Poland, it can be foreseen that the latest developments, especially in the EU centred, will lead the two countries to pursue a joint policy again. In this context, it is noteworthy that Poland has recently taken steps to improve relations with Hungary[9] and announced that it will oppose possible EU sanctions against Budapest.[10]

In summary, the more adversely the Russia-Ukraine War has affected the relations between the two countries, the more positive the EU-centered developments are likely to affect positively. Considering the recent developments, the meeting of the two states on a common ground can be considered as a necessity rather than a choice.

Consequently, it can be stated that the Russia-Ukraine War damaged the cooperation among the V-4 countries. Although the group does not have a common foreign policy, it is clear that until the Russia-Ukraine War, they had an attitude of acting together within the EU. The group, however, currently shows a fragmented structure. Moreover, it can be suggested that this will continue. In particular, Hungary's opposition to sanctions against Russia is the main reason for the fragmentation in the group. It seems difficult for the four countries to return to the cooperation they had before the Russia-Ukraine War. However, the possibility of a probable rapprochement between Hungary and Poland should not be ignored.

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## ANKASAM ANALYSIS

# Gulf Countries in the Multi-vectoral Foreign Policy of Central Asia

Central Asian states have given importance to develop cooperation with various actors in the world on political, economic and social issues since they gained their independence. In that sense, the states of the region have succeeded in developing cooperation with different countries in the world by adopting a multi-vectoral approach in their foreign policies. Thus, the states of the region have increased their gains with the relations they have established with-

in the framework of the win-win logic. Central Asian states, which actively pursue their policies currently, provide different routes to their multi-vectoral policies through new collaborations.

At this point, it is seen that the Gulf countries become prominent. Because, deeper relations with economic and social dimensions have been established between the Central Asian



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states and the Gulf countries in recent years. When the bilateral relations are examined in order to exemplify the situation, it is seen that in October 2020, an agreement of 6.1 billion dollars was signed between Kazakhstan and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) covering 21 projects in the fields of trade, transportation, logistics, agriculture, construction, petrochemistry, space and tourism.[1]

In 2021, a new agreement was signed between Astana and Abu Dhabi for investments of more than 6 billion dollars for the implementation of joint projects in the sectors of energy, agriculture, industry, transportation, logistics, pharmaceutical and finance. The most significant feature of this agreement is insurance the establishment of a long-term strategic partnership between the parties rather than investments.[2] In October 2022, the parties signed a new investment agreement worth 900 million dollars.[3]

Similarly, Saudi Arabia is strengthening its relations with Central Asia. For instance, in August 2022, the Saudi-Uzbek Business Council was held between Saudi Arabia and Uzbekistan. During the meetings, it was announced that 13 agreements worth 12 billion dollars were signed between the sides.[4] While the relations between the parties develop within the framework of mutual benefit; the number of Saudi Arabian-owned enterprises in Uzbekistan is increasing gradually. Investment of Saudi Arabia in Uzbekistan exceeded 1.5 billion dollars by the end of 2021, and strong relationships are being built in modernizing energy infrastructure, including green energy.[5]

In addition to bilateral relations between Central Asian states and the Gulf countries, contacts including interregional interaction are established and existing ties are strengthened. Therefore, on September 7, 2022, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)-Central Asia Strategic Dialogue meeting was held for the first time between the Central Asian states and the Gulf countries. The meeting was held at the level of foreign ministers in Riyadh under the chairmanship of Prince Faisal bin Farhan, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Saudi Arabia. Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, UAE, Bahrain and Oman attended the meeting.[6]

Speaking at the meeting, Faisal mentioned the development of cooperation between the two regions in the face of global challenges and stated that there is unlimited cooperation between the regions. For this purpose, Faisal emphasized the importance of initiatives that will support economic development and reduce tension against the crises.

During the meeting, mainly current issues were discussed. In addition, steps to be taken in the areas of regional security, trade, economy, investment and cultural cooperation were also discussed. In this context, issues such as supply chains, transportation links, food, energy and water security, development of green energy, environmental challenges, climate change and the development of trade and investment mechanisms were discussed. Therefore, the sides adopted the 2023-2027 Joint Action Plan, which covers areas such as politics, security, economy, transportation, water resources, energy, education, health, culture, youth and sports. In addition, to continue the interaction, it was decided to hold the second meeting in 2023 in Samarkand, which stands out with the ancient history of Uzbekistan, and to organize the first Economic Forum of the GCC and Central Asian countries in Kazakhstan in June 2023.

As a result, the Central Asian states desire to develop and deepen their relations with the Gulf countries. Because looking at the economic characteristics of the states in the two regions, it is observed that the actors have complementary qualities. Undoubtedly, the fact that both geographies are rich in energy resources is an important issue that contributes to the development of cooperation. On the other hand, strategic dialogue meetings held between regions seem to enable relations to gain a more structural and permanent dimension. At this point, it should be emphasized that; the developing relations with the Gulf countries serve to strengthen the multi-vectoral foreign policy understanding of the Central Asian states.

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## ANKASAM ANALYSIS

# Norms or Identity: Which One is the Problem within EU-Hungary Relations?

On September 15, 2022, the European Parliament took a decision that the Victor Orban Government in Hungary could not be accepted anymore as a democracy and that the European values in the country were under threat, and defined Hungary as an "elective autocracy."<sup>[1]</sup> On September 18, 2022, the European Commission proposed to suspend the funding of approximately 7.5 billion euros, which was committed within the scope of the harmonization policy, in order to protect the financial

interests of the European Union (EU) against violations of the rule of law on the grounds of corruption in Hungary.<sup>[2]</sup> The functioning of the electoral system in Hungary, the independence of the judiciary, corruption and conflicts of interest, protection of data privacy, freedom of expression, equal treatment including LGBT rights, rights of persons belonging to minorities, including Romanians and Jews, in making these decisions by the EU institutions It has been stated that the problems experienced in



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areas such as the fundamental rights of immigrants and asylum seekers are effective.[3]

The beginning of these problems in Hungary goes back to the Hungarian Constitution, which was ratified in 2011 and entered into force in 2012, although it is defined as an attack on democracy and human rights by the EU. With this constitution, the period of controversial constitutions began in bilateral relations.

In the fight against the migrant crisis caused by the Syrian Civil War, Hungary rejected the EU's immigration policy and created its own plan and enacted it. The Hungarian Parliament took anti-refugee measures with the constitutional amendment approved in 2018, prohibiting the resettlement of foreigners and the admission of asylum seekers in Hungary.[4] In addition, thanks to the wires built on the southern border of Hungary, the entry of refugees into the country was prevented. Thus, the issue of immigration has been one of the main reasons for the tension in bilateral relations.

Another issue is the LGBT rights, which the EU considers as individual rights within the framework of fundamental human rights and equality principles. In Hungary, in 2020, in addition to gender reassignment, same-sex marriage is prohibited; in 2021, content that promotes homosexuality and gender reassignment for people under the age of 18 is prohibited. Decisions are criticized by the EU as discrimination and racism. Although Hungary is frequently criticized for these and similar decisions that contradict the EU norms, it has equal rights with the other 26 members in the functioning of the EU decision mechanism. It was clearly seen in the Russia-Ukraine War that started on February 24, 2022 that this situation had serious consequences for the EU.

The Orban administration, which condemned the war and expressed its support for the territorial integrity of Ukraine, also argued that the EU should not be on the side of any side in this war. As a matter of fact, Hungary has adopted a different stance from the other members by rejecting the EU's initiatives on the armament of Ukraine and the sanctions against Russia. The EU, which needs a strong unity in the Russia-Ukraine War, caused many political and economic crises in Europe, with the two decisions taken in September 2022, helped Hungary to act according to the rule of law and to adopt the principles of democracy more, and to solve economic problems. It aimed at influencing the country's politics in favor of the EU by using the

carrot-stick strategy in Hungary. As a matter of fact, Orban announced that an anti-corruption commission would be established in this context.

So, will these decisions change the direction of the momentum in the Hungarian-EU relations? It is very difficult to answer "yes" to this question. As can be clearly understood from the developments in recent years, there are differences in the perspectives of the EU and Hungary. Are these differences just due to Orban's policies; or, is the main problem based on a reason beyond what is seen? It seems that the main issue may be an identity problem based on ethnicity.

As it is known, the ancestors of the Hungarians, whose origins go back to Asia, are considered to be the Huns. Today, in Hungary, which wants to preserve this identity, the Turkish-Hun Peoples' Congress is held every two years with the support of the governments of Hungary and the Turkish states in order to unite the Turkish ancestry.[5] With Hungary's Turkish World. In other words, another example showing its desire to strengthen its ties with Asia is the Organization of Turkish States. The influence of historical and cultural ties in Hungary's participation in the Organization of Turkic States with the status of an observer member is undeniable.

Another factor affecting the Hungarian identity is that Hungary was a communist state under the Soviet Union during the Cold War. Therefore, the influence of Turks, East/Asian identity and the communist regime in shaping the Hungarian identity is quite high. For this reason, there is a divergence in values between Hungary and the West. Hungarians see some of the West's policies as the beginning of an intervention or weakness towards their identity, values and sovereignty.

As it will be remembered, Orban defended his decisions regarding the migrant crisis as an attempt to prevent an interference with the Hungarian national identity.[6] Again, with the decision enacted in Hungary regarding LGBT individuals, other Western leaders argued that the EU is not only an economic union, but also a union of values and freedoms; LGBT rights have been defined as an ideology by Orban and his supporters. Orban describes this ideology as an attempt that is incompatible with Hungarian values and will disrupt the family structure of Hungary.

Hungarians, who have a strong sense of being a national society, showed that they adopted the same view as Orban by adopting the anti-LGBT law in the referendum. It is understood from the similar developments that; some EU values do not coincide with the values of Hungarian society in many areas that can be increased, such as social life, public sphere, the functioning of the government and the acceptability of norms.

For all these reasons, it is possible that Orban, who represents the Hungarian society, will be criticized by the EU in the future on the grounds that he does not comply with human rights, freedom of the press, the rule of law and democratic principles. Because, as mentioned, the Hungarian nation also contains elements of the Eastern identity. Eastern and Western identities were formed by going through completely different historical processes. For this reason, the EU values look like a dress that disturbs the Hungarian people, and Hungarian society often wants to take off this dress and wear an empowered dress embellished with the values they adopt. Describing himself as a freedom fighter against the Western worldview, Orban openly expressed his demands for change by stating that after winning the 2014 elections, they would build an illiberal democracy of its own.

As a result, in Hungary, where the EU opened its doors with the great enlargement in 2004, many reforms were made on the occasion of the EU membership process and Hungary's institutions were tried to be revised within the framework of EU values. However, being Westernized and living like a Westerner are not the same thing. As a matter of fact, today Hungary acts with a management approach that is within the EU but far from the EU. The policies of the Orban Government are effective in the criticism of Hungary by the EU, of which it is a member, on the grounds that it violates basic EU norms such as the rule of law, democracy and equality. However, beyond these policies, it can be said that there is an identity problem based on ethnicity between Hungary and the EU, and therefore, an identity and values conflict have an impact on the current developments.

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## ANKASAM ANALYSIS

# Symbol of the Regional Search for Cooperation: TAPI

On September 25th, 2022, the Chief of the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India Project on the Gas Pipeline (TAPI) Mohammad Murad Amanov has had met with the Vice President of Taliban, Mollah Abdul Ghani Baradar, and discussed about the issues related to the implementation of the TAPI. While Baradar had stated that Taliban rule is ready to contribute to TAPI, while Amanov announced that a meeting of TAPI states will be organized in Ashgabat.[1]

TAPI, fundamentally predicts the transaction of Turkmen gas to energy dependent Pakistan,

and India. The planned length of TAPI is approximately 1814 km. Its yearly capacity is designed to provide 33 cubic meters of gas from the world's second biggest gas area Galkynysh to Fazilka which is in Pakistan border in North India. [2]

Actually, the discussed projects dates back to 1990's. Even though the gas export to Afghanistan and Pakistan had been discussed around those times, TAPI gained its momentum in 2003 with the help of the Asian Development Bank (ADB). India included in the project in 2008.



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First of all, it is possible to point out that Turkmenistan has taken a constructive approach through the TAPI that highlights regional co-operation processes. Because while the project fronts a solution to the Afghan Problem; it is also exclusively valuable on bringing Pakistan and India together which are conflicting about Kashmir Discussion.

In this point, it can be seen that President of Turkmenistan, Mr. Serdar Berdimuhamedov's understanding of "Cooperation is the guarantee of peace." aims to continue the peaceful politics of the former president of Turkmenistan Mr. Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov "Dialogue is the is the guarantee of peace." [3] This matter is important for Turkmenistan to demonstrate continuity, consistency, and stability in its foreign policy. Without a doubt, this makes TAPI an important attempt that represents regional cooperation, peace, security, and wellbeing.

As it is understood, the TAPI reflects Turkmenistan's idea of a preventive diplomacy and constructive cooperation towards crisis. Through TAPI, Ashgabat foresees that mutual dependency established by trade relations will contribute to regional wellbeing. At the same time, Turkmenistan can reach to Indian Ocean via India and attain new markets to export gas. This conceives TAPI an extremely important project for Ashgabat.

Looking at the size of Afghanistan, it is first necessary to remember the announcement of Taliban spokesperson Suheyl Shahin on August 18, 2021. In the statement, Shahin stated that the Taliban supports the project and that the project is a priority initiative, despite its long-term fading.[4]

It is important to highlight that, Taliban looks positive for the project since the tolls will contribute to Afghan economy. Inasmuch as the existing state, Afghanistan has serious lacks on facilities that can use gas, and distribution networks. However, the tolls will provide an important income to Afghan economy. Hereby, TAPI can be helpful to Afghanistan on economic crisis and financial problems that causes deeper employment issues every passing day.

More importantly, regional energy projects can mediate Afghanistan's transformation into a key state. In other words, geopolitically Afghanistan, at the heart of the world, can also increase its geoeconomic impact thanks by TAPI. In addition, the TAPI's contribution to Afghanistan's international co-operation could benefit to the solution of the Afghan Problem.

It should be stated that; firstly Turkmenistan, the most fundamental concern about Afghanistan of Central Asian states is that the instability in the state can be carried over to region. Therefore, TAPI is an initiative that will serve to the stability of Afghanistan in private, and to the security and stability of the whole region in general.

Furthermore, Pakistan thinks that they can benefit from new investments as well. Thusly, in July 2022, Pakistani Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari described his country's relations with Turkmenistan as the interaction of the two sibling nations and said that TAPI must be completed.[5] The TAPI will help Pakistan meet its increasing demand for energy, which will improve the energy security of the state in question.

Similarly, Indian officials makes statements confirming the loyalty of New Delhi to the TAPI frequently. Considered that India is one of the world's largest gas importers, Turkmen gas can be expressed as a terrific opportunity for India. Thus, the President of India of the term Shri Ram Nath Kovind visited Ashgabat in April 2022. The purpose of Kovind's visit had been explained as an expedite of TAPI-related work. [6] Moreover, TAPI is important about the strategy that India follows on improving its relations with Central Asian states.

In addition, TAPI will increase the interaction between New Delhi and Islamabad in line with Turkmenistan's role in building regional and global peace. This could also open the door to normalization based on dialog in the Kashmir issue. Because of TAPI, communication channels between the parties will remain open.



Consequently, President of TAPI Amanov's announcement of a meeting about TAPI in Ashgabat, has shown how Ashgabat gives importance to co-operation processes that prioritize the interests of all states and are mutually shaped by the concept of win-win. It also shows the reality that Ashgabat has developed projects based on co-operation in the face of crises. Therefore, TAPI confirms Ashgabat's constructive role in building regional peace.

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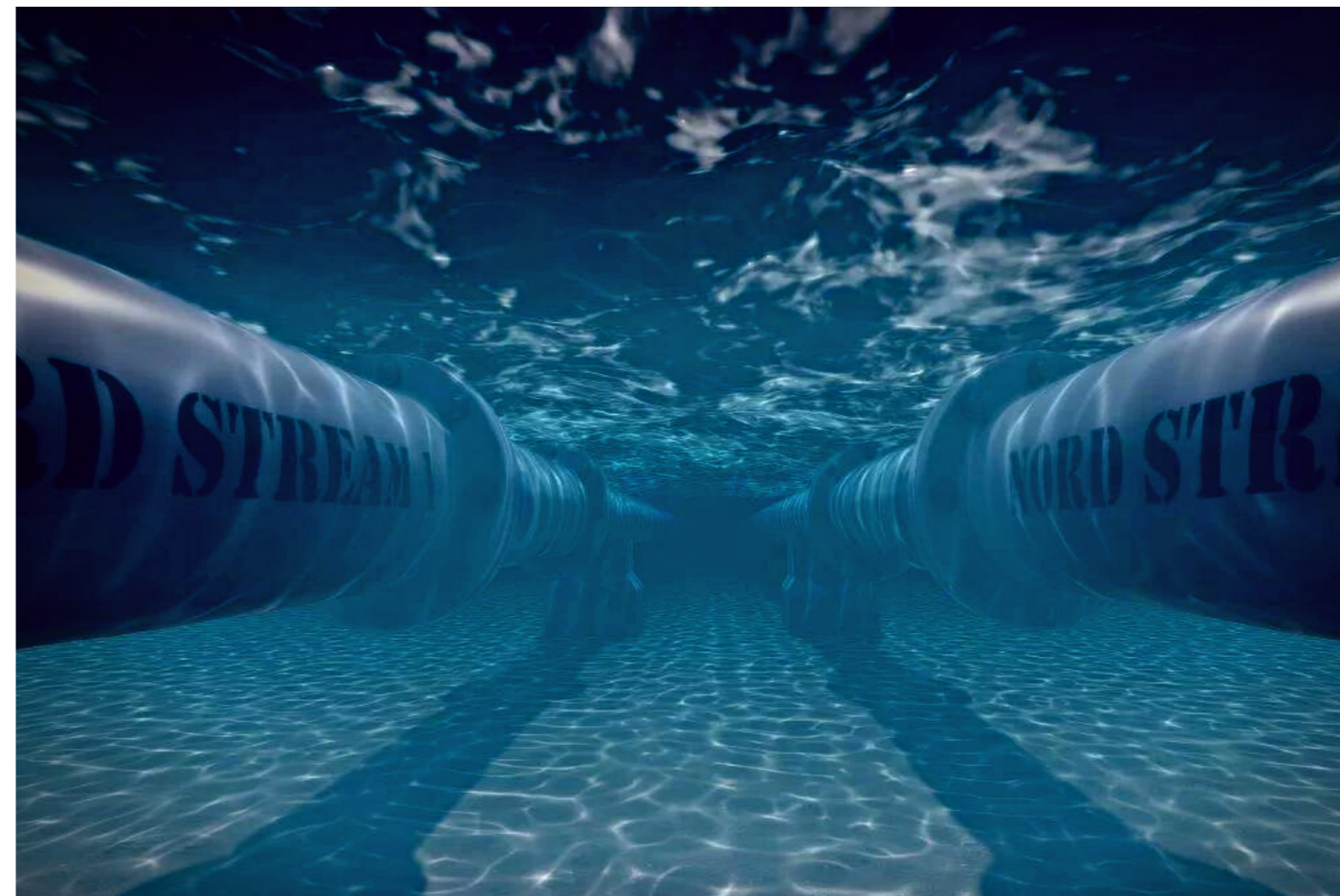
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## ANKASAM ANALYSIS

# Sabotage of European Energy Infrastructure

On September 26, 2022, the Danish Energy Agency announced that a leak had occurred in the Nord Stream-II Gas Pipeline in the south-east of Dueodde and a zone banning any movement had been established around the pipeline. The agency explained that the Danish authorities have been informed that there has been a significant pressure drop in the Nord Stream-II Gas Pipeline.[1]

In a statement on the matter, Nord Stream Operator (Nord Stream AG) said that while it is impossible to predict when the pipeline operation would be restored, repairs may take several years. A large part of the pipelines may need to be replaced because they are now filled with seawater. However, it is stated that the repair of the Nord Stream-I and Nord Stream-II Gas Pipelines is not welcomed. Due to the current circumstances, the functionality of the Nord



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Stream-I Gas Pipeline has come to a standstill. While Russia is reducing its gas exports, Europeans are beginning to think that this pipeline should no longer be used. The Nord Stream-II Gas Pipeline, on the other hand, has been banned before it has even begun operating.

The European owners of the pipeline asserted that they were unaware of what caused the mishaps and the pressure drop in the pipelines and that the investigation is still underway. According to Foreign Minister of Sweden Ann Linde's statement on September 28, 2022, the explosions that led to the gas leak in the pipes were presumably the result of a sabotage.[2]

Former Polish Foreign Minister Radoslaw Sikorski thanked the United States of America (US) for damaging the pipeline. Additionally, according to Marcin Przydacz, the Deputy Foreign Minister for Poland, Warsaw does not completely rule out the possibility of a sabotage but would reserve judgment until Denmark provides the necessary details. Dmitry Peskov, the Spokesman for the Kremlin, stated that the causes of the situation should be investigated without decrying any factors.[3]

The person responsible for organizing the sabotage of the gas pipeline is unknown; however, they can be assumed. According to assertions made by the Russian government, it is difficult for nations with exclusive economic zones to miss the arrival of a number of submarines and tens of tonnes of explosives.

On the other hand, it is stated that since March 2022, flights by foreign warplanes over pipe-laying ships and the activities of warships have increased in the region.[4] This indicates that a sabotage was a predictable development.

Immediately after the Nord Stream Pipelines were blown up, a symbolic ceremony was held in Poland for the launch of the Baltic Pipeline. At the opening, President of Poland Andrzej Duda, Prime Minister of Poland Mateusz Morawiecki and Prime Minister of Denmark Mette Frederiksen turned the valve together. At the ceremony, Duda stated that "This gas will be able to go wherever it is needed from here." Meanwhile, Morawiecki claimed that "The era of Russian dominance in the gas industry is coming to an end." [5]

The Baltic Pipe is a nearly 900 km long pipeline system in the North Sea that connects Norwegian energy supplies to Poland through Denmark. The actual gas transmission through this new pipeline will start on October 1, 2022. At first, the pipeline will operate at a capacity of 30-38%. As of 2023, it is claimed that the production capacity will be 10 billion cubic meters per year.

Another assertion about the attacks is that the US may be responsible. As a matter of fact, Sikorski also expressed gratitude to the US. Even the claim that American ships were found on September 23, 2022, in the Baltic Sea has been raised.[6] But, like the previous claim, this view was expressed mainly by Russia.

Certain nations have been harmed and some states' interests have been benefited by the fact that the gas pipelines in question are no longer operational. First of all, it can be said that there has been a positive development for Poland and the Baltic countries, which oppose these projects as they do not want Germany to further cooperate with Russia because Warsaw has a long history of opposing German-Russian reconciliation. In the past, the cooperation of these two strong neighbors of the weak Poland led either to the division or the occupation of the country. This, in turn, preserves its place in the memory of the Poles.

The decommissioning of the intervening states, such as Poland and the Baltic nations, was one of the objectives of cooperation on gas. As a matter of fact, the agreement for the construction of the Nord Stream Gas Pipeline was called the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact by Poland.[7] The name refers to the Non-Aggression Pact of 23 August 1939, which stipulated the partitioning of Poland between Germany and the Soviet Union.

It is clear that the country which will benefit the most from the deactivation of the Nord Stream Gas Pipelines will be the US. As a matter of fact, the Washington administration has been opposing the construction of the Nord Stream-II Gas Pipeline for a long time. There are three reasons for this. First of all, Washington is concerned that Germany will increase its reliance on Russian gas. The second reason

is that it thinks that the Nord Stream-II Gas Pipeline may terminate the activities of the pipeline running through Ukraine. Thirdly, the US wants to increase its share of liquefied natural gas in the European energy consumption market.

It can be said that the European Union (EU) and Russia are at the forefront of the parties that will suffer from the incident since the pipelines in question are projects whose construction process has been going on for decades and billions of dollars have been invested. These projects were providing Russia with a significant source of income while supplying Europe's energy needs. However, against the sanctions imposed on Russia in the Ukrainian War, the Moscow administration has also begun to use energy as a means of punishing Europe.

As expected, the non-functioning of the gas pipelines in question means that Russia will be deprived of the means to punish and apply political pressure on Europe. Currently, Russia can export gas to Europe only through pipelines passing Ukraine. As a result, both the security of Europe's energy supply and Russia's energy relationship with Europe are at stake.

Thus, although it is not known which forces are behind these sabotages, it is possible to predict the actors who will be pleased with the developments and who will be the states that will suffer losses. The explosions also indicate that ties between Russia and the West will continue to deteriorate.

[1] "В Дании произошла утечка на "Северном потоке-2", Ria Novosti, <https://ria.ru/20220926/utechka-1819653252.html>, (Date of Accession: 28.09.2022).

[2] "Глава МИД Швеции заявила, что утечка газа на "Северных потоках" произошла из-за взрывов", Tass, <https://tass.ru/ekonomika/15888707>, (Date of Accession: 28.09.2022).

[3] "Песков: нельзя исключать ни одну из версий причин разгерметизации нескольких ниток "Северного потока", Interfax, <https://www.interfax-russia.ru/rossiya-i-mir/peskov-nelzya-isklyuchat-ni-odnu-iz-versiy-prichin-razgermetizacii-neskolkih-nitok-severnogo-potoka>, (Date of Accession: 28.09.2022).

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[6] "Диверсия против «Северного потока» указывает на американцев", Vzglyad, <https://vz.ru/world/2022/9/28/1179688.html>, (Date of Accession: 28.09.2022).

[7] "В МИД Польши сравнили "Северный поток" с пактом Молотова-Риббентропа", Ria Novosti, <https://ria.ru/20190827/1557952488.html>, (Date of Accession: 28.09.2022).





## ANKASAM ANALYSIS

# From Partial Mobilization to Referendums: What is the Goal of Russia?

Russia, which is the successor of the Soviet Union, is a state with both imperial and super-power ideals in mind. In Russia, the public is also expected to have the same mindset. However, many things have changed for the Russian people since the end of the Cold War. The most important proof of this is people leaving the country in order to not be recruited following Russian President Vladimir Putin's statement on

"partial mobilization." It is seen that thousands of people move to various parts of the world, especially to nearby geographies.

This situation reveals that Putin's decisions create discomfort for the Russian people. The fact that the population raised in the country moves out of the border and does not join the army indicates that Russians do not approve of



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the decisions taken, causing a manpower shortage needed by Russia to continue the war.

As it will be remembered, Russia held a controversial referendum in Crimea on 16 March 2014, which was not recognized by the vast majority of the world. Similarly, controversial referendums were held in Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson recently. These referendums, which have not been accepted by the international community, were held in an environment where demography is disrupted and the referendum process was not controlled adequately. In the statement made on 27 September 2022, it was claimed that the results of the ballot box showed that all four regions wanted to join Russia.

In the regions corresponding to approximately 15% of the territory of Ukraine, through referendums, Russia tries to declare that the territory in question belongs to itself rather than legitimizing the status quo of the places occupied to reassure its international credibility. In short, as it happened in Crimea, Russia aims to conduct the same "fait accompli policy" in the regions it has annexed in violation of international law. Moscow is aware that it will not get to make the international community accept its demands with controversial referendums. Putin's goal is rather to convince the Russian people about the war.

The Kremlin's rhetoric that Russians have been assimilated in other parts of the world is also caused by the reasons before. In this case, referendums are presented as the request of the Russians in the regions to join Russia. Thus, the hypothesis that the annexed places constitute the historical lands of Russia is being spread. In other words, the Kremlin spreads the argument that the Russian people are being recruited to defend their own homeland, not against the occupied lands. As a matter of fact, Russia is trying to establish the idea of self-defence over the historically Russian territory that would be re-joined to the homeland through referendums. In other words, Moscow wants to ensure the internal legitimacy of the war through referendums. Therefore, it can be said that the Kremlin uses referendums as a tool.

On the other hand, Russia stated before that it was conducting a "special operation" in Ukraine, claiming that its purpose in the early days of the war was a regime change in Kyiv. Since this goal could not be achieved to this day, Moscow declared that it has connected these regions to itself with controversial referendums. In addition, threats related to the use of nuclear weapons have also come to the fore.

Starting from the beginning of the Russia-Ukraine War, the Moscow administration has stated that it would use nuclear weapons in the event of an attack on its own territory. In this context, Moscow tries to make the annexation accepted with the threat of nuclear weapons, and to prevent any foreign power from intervening in the region, based on the discourse that the referendum regions are joined to Russia.

It can be argued that Russia uses referendums as a strong argument for the threat of nuclear weapons rather than persuading the international community or giving legal ground to its annexation decisions. Indeed, the Ukrainian War is not going as planned for Russia. Thus, the progress of the Ukrainian Army in various regions has led Moscow to set a new policy. In this sense, Russia, which cannot tolerate a defeat in Ukraine, says that it can resort to nuclear weapons when necessary to protect the regions it claims to be Russia's property, and aims to deter Kyiv and its Western allies from attacking.

To conclude, it is known that from the beginning of the Ukrainian War, part of the Russian people has opposed the war. Both the sanctions and the partial mobilization declaration have further increased opposition to war in Russian society. In addition, the fact that the Russian Armed Forces, which was considered as one of the most powerful armies in the world until 2022 has failed in Ukraine, gives Russian people another "Afghanistan Syndrome." As one may recall, the Soviet Union had not achieved any success despite nearly a decade of occupation in Afghanistan. This was instrumental in the Dissolution of the Soviet Union. Likewise, in the Ukrainian War, the Russian Army cannot achieve any concrete success. For this reason, the Moscow administration tries to become permanent in the regions it controls by organizing referendums and to convince its people in this regard. In this respect, it can be argued that Putin focuses on preventing the occurrence of a second "Afghanistan Syndrome" and reducing the pressure of the internal public opinion. Statements on the use of nuclear weapons are then made to show Moscow's determination.



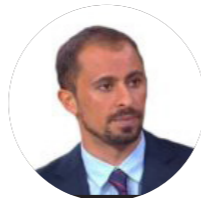
## ANKASAM ANALYSIS

# Towards the Bulgarian Elections: Can the Political Divide Be Bridged?

General elections will be held in Bulgaria on October 2, 2022. The nation will hold elections for the fourth time in two years after failing to win the confidence vote in June 2022 as a result of the dissolution of the coalition government led by Kiril Petkov. The most significant variables affecting the voting pattern in the elections in Bulgaria, which joined the European Union (EU) in 2007, has been the country's high degree of corruption and its inability to attain the desired level of income and prosperity.

Kiril Petkov's political party We Continue the Change garnered the most votes in the November 2021 election with 25.7% of the vote and joined forces with other parties to create a coalition government in which Petkov was appointed Prime Minister. The elections were impacted by Petkov's pledges to eradicate corruption, which were crucial to his victory.

At the same time, the fact that he has a master's degree in business administration from



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Harvard University has been seen as an element that highlights Petkov's charismatic personality. Prior to the elections, the party We Continue the Change and the fact that it had well-educated members made the news regularly. The favorable perception that the media has also helped to establish has created the impression that with the top-notch education of their members, the party can be the best alternative to finding solutions to the problems in Bulgaria.

In December 2021, We Continue the Change came together with the political party There Is Such a People and the Bulgarian Socialist Party and formed a government. This government was able to stay in office until June 2022. Therefore, significant disagreements of opinion within the coalition parties led to a loss of confidence, and the government was fell as a result.

In the elections of November 2021, the Movement for Rights and Freedoms (MRF), the majority of whose members are Turks, became the third party, surpassing the Bulgarian Socialist Party with 13% of the votes it received in the elections. Some Bulgarian nationalists were upset that the Bulgarian Socialist Party, one of the key players in Bulgarian politics, dropped to fourth place with fewer votes than the MRF.

The fact that Petkov is an unconditional supporter of NATO in the field of foreign policy has caused a reaction from the Bulgarian Socialist Party, which has a traditionally pro-Russian stance. In particular, during the Ukrainian Crisis, Bulgaria's refusal to pay for Russian gas in rubles caused Moscow to cut off gas shipments to the country. Even though some countries such as Germany has pled an "exceptional circumstance" to purchase a certain amount of Russian natural gas as an exemption from European Union (EU) sanctions and agreed to pay for natural gas in rubles, it is still not clear why Bulgaria, which is 90% dependent on Russia, made this decision.

Since joining the EU, Bulgaria has been attempting to join the Schengen area, however during the Petkov administration, this goal was also unfulfilled. The extent to which the actions of the government, which remained in office for a period of six months, were successful can be discussed considering the brevity of the period.

In the forecasts for the elections on October 2, 2022, there are predictions that the We Continue the Change Alliance may lose serious votes and that GERB, the party of former Prime Minister Boyko Borisov, may emerge from the election as the leading party once again. In addition, there are analyses that these elections will not resolve the political division in the country. In other words, it is claimed that a party that can govern alone will not come out of these elections either.

With 166 centers, Turkey will open the most voting places out of the 755 that will be established abroad for the elections. It is stated that Turks who are citizens of Bulgaria can cast their votes via electronic or classic ballots.

As in every election, the aim of the Turks in these elections is the continuation of the representation of the MRF in the Bulgarian Parliament. Participation in elections will serve to build a stronger democracy and representation.

Securing minorities' rights in Bulgaria, which is a member of the EU, and creating a minority policy that complies with European norms will surely help the nation's democracy grow and lead to the creation of a more stable political system.





## ANKASAM ANALYSIS

# Free Zone Developed in the Shadow of the Russia-Ukraine War: Economies of GUAM

At the 77th Session of the United Nations (UN) General Assembly held in New York on September 20, 2022, the Foreign Ministers of the Organization for Democracy and Economic Development (GUAM) members came together on the sidelines and held the 39th Cabinet meeting of GUAM.[1] After the meeting, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Moldova signed a protocol on the deter-

mination of the country of origin of the goods. In addition, it was announced by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine that a free trade zone was established between the GUAM countries.

In the statements made, it was stated that the members would take steps to improve cooperation within the framework of GUAM and focus on infrastructure works, especially trade, trans-



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portation and energy. Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmitri Kuleba; called on Georgia, Azerbaijan and Moldova to assist in the rebuilding of war-affected Ukrainian regions.[2]

Although Moscow's hand was seen as strong in the Russia-Ukraine War due to the energy card, the war lasted longer than the Kremlin expected, faced a strong counter-attack, attempts to annex the regions that could not be obtained with military force through referendums, and finally, the partial mobilization of many Russians. It has caused its citizens to organize protests and attempt to flee the country. This is considered a sign of weakness.

The regional states make good use of the advantages and disadvantages of the war. Because the search for an alternative route and resource to Russia has increased in order to prevent the energy and food crisis. In this context, the Middle Corridor, which has been on the agenda frequently in recent months, has come to the fore as an important route for the global supply chain to continue without interruption.

The Trans-Caspian International Transport Route (THTR), known as the Middle Corridor, has a nature that centers the relations between Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan and represents transportation from Asia to Europe. Azerbaijan stands out as a country that takes an active role in both the Middle Corridor and GUAM and turns the effects and damages of war into an advantage.

Azerbaijan is positioned neutrally with Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine in the Eurasian geography and develops an approach based on common interests. As a matter of fact, GUAM, consisting of post-Soviet countries, determines its place in the changing regional geopolitical order after the war with both the Middle Corridor and its free economic zone. At this point, it is necessary to examine GUAM in more detail in order to make sense of the ground on which the GUAM Free Trade Zone was established and tried to be developed.

GUAM was established during the Second European Council Summit held in Strasbourg in 1997, under the name of "GUAM Consultation Form". It was raised to the status of an association with the Yalta Charter signed by the member states in 2001, and it became an "organization" with the signing of the organization charter in 2006. The main objectives of GUAM can be listed as follows:[3]

Strengthening democratic values

Ensuring the rule of law and respect for human rights

Ensuring sustainable development

Strengthening international and regional security and stability

Deepening European integration to create a common security space and broaden economic and humanitarian cooperation.

Development of potential in socio-economic, transportation, energy, scientific, technical and humanitarian fields

Promoting political interaction and practical cooperation in areas of mutual interest.

From 1999 to 2005, Uzbekistan also took part in the organization, and with the participation of Uzbekistan, the organization began to be called "GUUAM".[4] Türkiye also participated in GUAM as an observer.[5] In addition, an agreement on the establishment of a free trade area between the countries was signed in 2002.[6]

In 2005, Uzbekistan announced that it would leave the organization and claimed that the group was not an effective mechanism to strengthen relations or promote integration among member states.[7] However, today, Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Moldova continue their goal of constructing the Europe-Caucasus-Asia Transport Corridor and turn into a remarkable platform.

Considering the date when Uzbekistan left its membership, it should be remembered that Central Asia witnessed a process of color revolutions supported by the United States of America (USA). Therefore, the Tashkent administration wanted to prevent the color revolutions from spreading to itself by leaving the aforementioned group, which had a pro-Western attitude, especially the USA attitude. As a matter of fact, Russia also intervened harshly in all developments outside its control in member states, which are post-Soviet countries. For example, as a result of Tbilisi's pro-Western policies, the Five-Day War took place in 2008. Similarly, Ukraine's turning to the West resulted in Russia's military intervention in this country in 2014 and 2022. Moldova, on the other hand, faced economic sanctions when it acted against Russia's wishes.

For all these reasons, it can be said that Russia's influence is behind the inability of GUAM to make sufficient progress in the process that has continued since its establishment. However, the newly signed free trade protocol reveals that GUAM member states are chasing alternative opportunities against Russia by prioritizing their own interests.

It is clear that the protocol on free trade is an opportunity to

rebuild Ukraine after the war. In this sense, member states are likely to help the country in question. Because the threat perception based in Russia is a risk factor for all members. For this reason, states are of the opinion that it is necessary to act together in order to get out of this process with the least damage.

In addition, the statements of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan, Jeyhun Bayramov, support this view. Bayramov emphasized that the situation in Ukraine is a source of serious concern and that it is important to resolve the problem through diplomacy and on the basis of international law, in accordance with the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity, especially within the internationally recognized borders of states. Noting that Azerbaijan is one of the first countries to deliver humanitarian aid to Ukraine, Bayramov stated that Baku has provided 15 million Euros of aid to Ukraine since the beginning of the war.[8]

Azerbaijan and Moldova, the two member states of GUAM, are negotiating for natural gas supply. One of the main issues of Moldovan Prime Minister Natalia Gavrilitsa's visit to Azerbaijan in October 2022 is to import natural gas from Azerbaijan as an alternative to Russia.[9] As an alternative to the Nord Stream-1 Pipeline, Azerbaijan is bringing forward different plans to meet Europe's natural gas demand. The Azerbaijan, Georgia, Romania Pipeline (AGRI) is one of these projects.

Another remarkable point in this geo-strategic axis, which is expected to strengthen in the axis of Azerbaijan and Ukraine, is that Azerbaijan has taken back many occupied territories during the GUAM Presidency.[10] In the new term, Ukraine will serve as the Term President of GUAM. In this sense, it is among the wishes of the member states that Ukraine regains its occupied lands and achieves results depending on the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity. As a result, GUAM's free trade area protocol can be evaluated as a new stance and a search for unity developed against Russia in post-Soviet countries.

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[10] Taras Kuzio, "Türkiye Forges a New Geo-Strategic Axis from Azerbaijan to Ukraine", Rusi.org, <https://rusi.org/explore-our-research/publications/commentary/Türkiye-forges-new-geo-strategic-axis-azerbaijan-ukraine>, (Date of Accession:22.09.2022).

# ANKASAM IN PRESS

## 26 September 2022

ANKASAM Eurasia Specialist Dr. Sabir Askeroğlu's evaluations of İhlas News Agency (İHA) regarding the partial mobilization announcement of Russian President Vladimir Putin were shared on Yeni Akit, Türkiye Newspaper, and Haberler.com.

## 26 September 2022

ANKASAM Eurasia Specialist Dr. Sabir Askeroğlu evaluated the current situation in the Russia-Ukraine War on TV5 Günden Yansıyanlar.

## 27 September 2022

Ankara Center for Crisis and Policy Studies (ANKASAM) Security and Foreign Policy Advisor Dr. Emre Ozan made evaluations to Yeni Şafak regarding the arming of the islands by Greece.

## 27 September 2022

Ankara Center for Crisis and Policy Studies (ANKASAM) Security and Foreign Policy Advisor Dr. Emre Ozan's evaluations of Yeni Şafak regarding Greece's arming of the islands were shared in Dünya Bulletin and EHA Media.

## 28 September 2022

ANKASAM Eurasia Specialist Dr. Sabir Askeroğlu evaluated the issue of Russia-Ukraine and the nuclear threat on TRT Türkiye'nin Sesi Radio.

## 30 September 2022

ANKASAM Eurasia Specialist Dr. Sabir Askeroğlu evaluated the latest developments in the Russia-Ukraine War on TV 5.

## 30 September 2022

ANKASAM International Relations Consultant Dr. Kadir Ertaç Çelik evaluated the latest developments in foreign policy in the National Channel, Ulusal Özel program.

## 1 October 2022

ANKASAM Eurasia Specialist Sibel Mazrek evaluated the Italian elections in the Channel B Hafta Sonu program.





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

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# JOURNAL OF REGIONAL STUDIES

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