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ANKASAM OUTLOOK Construction of “New, Fair and Prosperous Kazakhstan” under Tokayev and “Oligarchic Capitalism”

In the 21st century, the world, and consequently international system has been facing a new transformation process. In this process, construction of the states emerged as a necessity. This also shows that the process of construction is continuing and is going to be continue in different various issues, such as politics, economics, society and security. To be a successful state, the construction process on do-

mestic and foreign politics should be based on healthy and strong basis. Therefore, states, which are in a harmony and adaptation with their society, countries of the region and with the world, can be created. Thus, the states who lag behind the international system in the 21st century, and failed in the process of construction, started to take their seats on the table of the failed states.



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In that sense, Kazakhstan strengthens its place and influence in the heart of Eurasia with constructive and balanced policies, based on cooperation in the 31st year of independency. Especially, after Mr. Kassym-Jomart Tokayev became the President, the construction, advancement and development processes are escalated. One of the most basic reasons of this is the accumulation of knowledge, intellectual level and the experience gained through the significant duties that he took in past. In this context, Kazakh leader is playing and has played a pioneering role in the formation of domestic and foreign policy of his country.

Thusly, Mr. Tokayev has served as a Minister of Foreign Affairs between 1994-1999 and 2002-2007. In that process, the main strategy that he implemented was the multi-lateral/vectoral and multi-dimensional foreign policy. Subsequently, he was the Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations (UN), and later he served as a Prime Minister and a President. Especially in the Presidency, Kazakh leader implemented the model of "The State Who Hears Its Nation" and consequently, he focused on strengthening the unison of the state and the nation; in other words, center-periphery relations.

Due to all of the reasons, Mr. Tokayev has stood out as a strong leader, who knows both his country, his nation and the world very well. Besides, when the policies, the declarations and the speeches addressing to the nation of the Mr. President of Kazakhstan are analyzed, it is observed that in domestic politics, Mr. Tokayev aims to create a strong state and a prosperous society; also in foreign affairs, he tries to make Kazakhstan a reputable state, with the mediation diplomacy, which is held as a reflection of the understanding of proactive diplomacy especially against the crises. It is definite that, Mr. Tokayev's peaceful diplomacy aims to strengthen the independency, sovereignty, unitary form and territorial integrity of the country.

In fact, it can be said that Mr. Tokayev is incandescent in these aims. Naturally, the Mr. President of Kazakhstan, who is aware of dynamic structure of societies and politics, is strengthening his current success, as a part of his visionary leadership understanding, with the reforms in the context of construction of the "New Kazakhstan." Consequently, Mr. Tokayev's main reason is to make Kazakhstan as a world state in foreign policy; and to make "people's state" in domestic affairs.

The latest example of this situation is the explanation of the Kazakh leader on the end of oligarchic capitalism. In his speech in Karaganda on October 5, 2022 Mr. Tokayev indicated that the state is in a bigger social responsibility for his people, and said that "Oligarchic capitalism ends."ⁱ Kazakh leader's speech tak-

ing place in Karaganda. Because Karaganda is significant for central geopolitical location and rich underground resources. Therefore, Mr. Tokayev recognized that there is a unpeaceableness against oligarchy from the public, which is periphery, and in that sense hears the voice of the public.

On the other hand, it was seen that Mr. Tokayev emphasized the expansion of production areas, protection of the environment and regulation of tax payments in his speech. It can be said that the issues mentioned by Mr. Tokayev, who has an important experience in state administration, will play a critical role in determining the direction of Kazakhstan, giving a message to the world and strengthening the relationship between the ruler and the ruled. In other words, Mr. Tokayev's statements also reveal the economic-financial pillars of the "New Kazakhstan" construction process.

At that point, it can be expressed that Kazakhstan plans to incline towards different sectors to increase the production capacity and stable continuation of the development of Kazakhstan, who has various underground resources such as energy and minerals. That's why, Mr. Tokayev highlighted the potential of Karaganda on industrialization. In addition, the emphasis on widening the production areas includes various sectors such as agricultural production, agricultural industry, technology and digitalization. Therefore, Kazakhstan aims to transfer into independent and production-based economy. Certainly, the reflection of this will be creation of a prosperous society.

As it is known, after the 2022 Tragical December Events, the policies prioritizing the security of the county is realized. The Astana administration forms the new security of the country through various reforms. Moreover, these policies not only focus on local ones, but the global issues. In that sense, one of the most important issues of the world is the global warming. Kazakhstan is also concerned about new threats from global to local. Thus, threat of water problem of Kazakhstan stands out. In that context, Mr. Tokayev aims to decrease the negative effects of increasing the industrialization and capacity of production to minimum. That's why, in the context of new security politics aiming healthy and safe production, "Clean Kazakhstan-Green Economy" model is implemented.

Last but not least, the regulation of tax payments should be mentioned. This regulation could directly affect economy of Kazakhstan and Kazakh people. A balanced tax system will prevent the concentration of the stocks to a certain group of people, and abolish the possibility of oligarchic capitalism to be active again. This will also promote the wealth to be dissent from the center to periphery. Therefore, the aim of creating a prosperous society

will be achieved. This will also strengthen the connection between the state and the society. In other words, "States Hearing the Public's Voice" model will be active. It is definite that, the actions on this issue are applicable for the Kazakh proverb of "Keep together the mind, power of will and heart."

It can be said that those policies are close to each other. In that sense, inclusion of the public to the system is facilitated. Therefore, through the reforms, the sources of income and stocks of the country are included to the interest of the state and society more effectively. Certainly, that kind of developments will enhance the bureaucracy. Because bureaucracy will be placed as a structure, which is not a block against the public; but solving the problems of them by reaching them. This situation means that relations of the state of Kazakhstan, which has the spirit and experience of Ulu Bozkr, with the Kazakh people will be stronger.

Mr. Tokayev, who knows the realities of the world and Kazakhstan well, makes his country the rising star of Eurasia with the policies he follows on political, socioeconomic and security issues. At this point, it can be argued that democratization reforms, which envisage increasing the political participation of the people after the Tragic January Events, have a great importance.ⁱⁱ As a matter of fact, the new constitution adopted in the referendum held in June 2022 and the early presidential and parliamentary elections constitute the political pillars of the "New Kazakhstan" construction process.ⁱⁱⁱ

In addition to all these, in his speech on October 5, 2022, Mr. Tokayev added a new dimension to the socio-economic construction process in the country. Because the Kazakh leader clearly stated that protecting the interest of the state and the society is more important than prosperity of an individual based on oligarchic capitalism. In fact, it has been explained by Mr. Tokayev before, that oligarchic capitalism makes state institutions and companies cumbersome. Therefore, the end of oligarchic capitalism basically means the elimination of the structures that make the state unwieldy. That's why, in his address to the nation on September 2, 2019, the Kazakh leader, referring to titles such as "Fast-Developing Inclusive Economy" and "New Era of Social Modernization", resolutely maintains the principle of creating a "Modern Effective State."^{iv}

Undoubtedly, countries and governments that cannot build the state-nation unity on solid foundations cannot survive for a long time, as stated above. In order not to be a failed state, it is essential to ensure fundamental rights and freedoms and to use capital for the benefit of the state and the people. Since the day he became the President of Kazakhstan, Mr. Tokayev has been carrying out a consistent and determined policy on this issue.

This is the main reason for the trust in the President and the "New Kazakhstan." As can be understood, Mr. Tokayev tries not build a Kazakhstan, which is not only new; but also, just and prosperous.

As can be expected, the awareness of citizenship will be strengthened among the Kazakh people, whose wealth level rises. This will increase the value and influence of the national power elements of the country. Because the human factor comes first among the elements of national power. For this reason, the Kazakh people, who have a national consciousness, trust and protect their state, will be the country's most important source of wealth and development. Mr. Tokayev, basically, implements policies aimed at reaching this potential of his nation. In fact, those policies are the reflection of the words of great Kazakh Abay Kumanbay: "Effort, mind and heart three of them talked about their abilities and discussed. Finally, they applied to the arbitration of science. Gayret said: 'O knowledge, you yourself know that; nothing in the world happens without me.'" Mr. Tokayev is making an effort to create a strong state and a qualified and prosperous society in accordance with the scientific realities of the modern world.

As a result, after Mr. Tokayev became President in 2019, a new era has begun for Kazakhstan. Thus, from discourse to action was taken to strengthen the bond between the center and the periphery and to create a prosperous society. One of the most important stages of this action is the liquidation of oligarchic capitalism. For this reason, it is very important that Mr. Tokayev draws attention to the end of the era of oligarchic capitalism. In this context, the steps taken to improve political participation, improve security policies and ensure a balanced distribution of capital have formed the socio-economic dimension of the construction process of the "New Kazakhstan." Moreover, increasing the production capacity also serves to create the economic resources required for this construction process. Thanks to this, the principle of "strong state-prosperous society" is successfully implemented. This is what is in line with the historical background and experience of the Kazakh society and leadership. Therefore, Mr. Tokayev exhibits a very successful example of visionary leadership in accordance with the responsibility that history has assigned to him.

ⁱ "Oligarchic Capitalism Era in Kazakhstan is Ending, Says President Tokayev During His Visit to Karagandy Region", The Astana Times, <https://astanatimes.com/2022/10/oligarchic-capitalism-era-in-kazakhstan-is-ending-says-president-tokayev-during-his-visit-to-karagandy-region/>, (Date of Accession: 07.10.2022).

ⁱⁱ Emrah Kaya, "Yeni Kazakistan'ın İnşa Süreci", ANKASAM, <https://www.ankasam.org/yeni-kazakistanin-insa-sureci/>, (Date of Accession: 07.10.2022).

ⁱⁱⁱ Doğacan Başaran, "Kazakistan'da Güçlü Reformların Yeni Aşaması: Erken Cumhurbaşkanlığı Seçimi", ANKASAM, <https://www.ankasam.org/kazakistan-da-guclu-reformlar-in-yeni-asamasi-erken-cumhurbaşkanligi-seçimi/>, (Date of Accession: 07.10.2022).

^{iv} Mehmet Seyfettin Erol, "Tokayev'in Ulusa Sesleniş Konuşması: Kazakistan'ın İkinci Atılımı", ANKASAM, <https://www.ankasam.org/tokayevin-ulusa-seslenis-konusmasi-kazakistanin-ikinci-atilimi/>, (Date of Accession: 07.10.2022).



ANKASAM ANALYSIS

China's Naval Fusion Strategy: Civilian Ships

The People's Republic of China, which declared its independence after the civil war that lasted from 1927 to 1949, has always attached importance to its military power. In this context, while China is developing economically, He also took care to improve his military capacity. The country has made serious economic breakthroughs, especially with the acceleration of Deng Xiaoping's policy of opening up in the 1980s. Of course, it has been seen that China, like every other state, needs a strong army to protect and guarantee these breakthroughs. For this reason, China has taken various steps

to develop its army and especially its navy. The first example of this situation is the aircraft carrier Liaoning, which was delivered to the People's Liberation Army on September 25, 2012.[1] Later, this aircraft carrier was followed by the aircraft carriers Shandong and Fujian which is currently under production.[2]

The fact that China is so eager to raise its navy to a level where it can compete with the great powers cannot be explained solely by economic reasons. It is a fact that China has been struggling with regional problems since



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the past. The most prominent of these is the Taiwan -Issue. Beijing sees the Taiwan Issue as its own internal issue and does not want any outside power to intervene in the issue. Therefore, Taiwan-based tensions are experienced between the United States (US) and China. As a matter of fact, the tension between the parties increased even more when the Speaker of the US House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi visited the island and later the US House of Representatives passed a law on the island. In addition, the occurrence of such developments during China's exercises around Taiwan once again reminded the Beijing administration of the importance of having a strong navy.

Another example that emphasizes the importance of a strong navy is the problem that China faces because of the disputed islands in the South China Sea. Due to the rich natural resources in the region, China is in conflict with Taiwan, Singapore, Vietnam, Indonesia, Brunei, Malaysia and the Philippines. It is estimated that there are approximately 190 thousand cubic feet of gas in the region.[3] In addition, the fish and other seafood and rich natural resources of the islands such as the Spratly Islands make the region a center of attraction. In this context, according to the Beijing administration, it is important for China to have the military superiority to solve the issues in its favor and to reach the capacity to prevent foreign interventions.

Research Ships and Ferries

For the reasons mentioned above, China was not content with just developing its navy. It also uses civilian ferries, research ships and small boats in its navy. First of all, the reason why China uses its research ships in this way is to both prevent tensions that may occur with other states by making use of the ships in its navy, and to collect the information it wants at less cost.

China uses civilian research vessels to gather information in areas where tensions may escalate.[4] As a matter of fact, it is known that the unmanned research ship named Zhu Hai Yun has the ability to launch drones and this allows the ship to collect information about the topography of the seabed.[5]

In August 2022, just when India was about to conduct a missile test, China's Yuan Wang-5 research ship, capable of tracking missiles and satellites, anchored at Hambantota Port [6] which was also built by China. This caused serious tension between China and India. It can be said that with this move, China wants to reach information about India's missile test.

Ferries are another example of civil naval vessels used for Chinese

military purposes. China wants to increase its landing capacity by using civilian-looking ferries and reach the capacity to launch surprise attacks. As a matter of fact, it has been stated in some analyzes that the ferries mentioned have the capacity to organize military operations.[7] According to these analyzes, it has become possible to use amphibious vehicles in military landings via ferries during the operation. Moreover, images of military elements boarding civilian ferries were reflected in the news of China's official media agencies.[8]

As can be understood, while China strengthens the naval vessels by increasing the quantity and quality, on the other hand, it uses civilian ships that can help to throw off the responsibilities when necessary to serve its military and strategic purposes. The usage of research ships with military examination capabilities and civilian ferries with landing capabilities are the most concrete examples of this situation.

Fishing Ships

It is seen that China uses civilian-looking ferries and research vessels to strengthen its navy, as well as making use of fishing vessels for strategic purposes. For example, according to a report published by AP News on September 24, 2022, China has developed this strategy, which has been applied for a long time, by increasing the number of fishing boats.[9] Because the Beijing administration uses these ships to deter other nations' fishing vessels in regions which have abundant seafood and natural resources, such as the Sparty Islands in the disputed South China Sea. Undoubtedly, this situation reveals how China uses its fishing vessels in disputed areas.

China does not carry out such activities only in order to hold the upper hand in troubled areas. It also carries out fishing activities near the exclusive economic zones (EEZ) of other countries. For example, the Galápagos Islands are part of Ecuador, and this country's EEZ continues in the region where these islands are located. Although China's fishing boats do not violate the EEZ borders of the states, the fishing activities of Chinese fishing boats in the region continue to increase.[10]

Other countries exposed to this situation are Argentina and Peru. China's hunting activities do not only harm the countries of the region economically, it also causes damage to endangered species. As a matter of fact, this situation is clearly expressed in some published analyzes.[11]

As a result, China, while incorporating new warships to improve

its military capacity at sea; on the other hand, it uses civilian-looking ships for espionage and information gathering activities. Moreover, the Beijing administration monitors the military movements of other nations with its research ships and conducts information gathering activities in disputed areas. It also prepares civilian-looking ferries for possible operations by providing them with landing capabilities. China not only reinforces its presence in these regions by using its fishing vessels in controversial areas, but also engages in hunting activities very close to other countries' EEZs in a way that harms these states and the environment.

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[7] Mike Yeo, "China Reportedly Converted Civilian Ferries For Amphibious Assault Operations", Defence News, www.defensenews.com/naval/2021/08/04/china-reportedly-converted-civilian-ferries-for-amphibious-assault-operations/, (Date of Accession: 27.09.2022)

[8] "China Is Using Civilian Ships To Enhance Navy Capability and Reach", CNBC, www.cnbc.com/2022/09/26/china-is-using-civilian-ships-to-enhance-navy-capability-and-reach.html, (Date of Accession: 27.09.2022)

[9] David Rising, "China Using Civilian Ships To Enhance Navy Capability Reach", AP News, apnews.com/article/space-launches-taiwan-science-technology-asia-e8b45f49d3d29851210983d0a399ccba, (Date of Accession: 28.09.2022)

[10] Steven Lee Myers, vd, "How China Targets the Global Fish Supply", The New York Times, www.nytimes.com/interactive/2022/09/26/world/asia/china-fishing-south-america.html, (Date of Accession: 28.09.2022).

[11] Ibid.

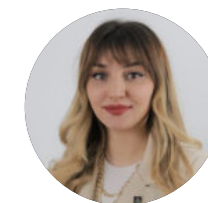


ANKASAM ANALYSIS

Energy Sanctions: Is the West Undermining Its Own Economy?

After the Russian-Ukrainian War, Western nations responded to the conflict harshly by imposing sanctions on energy exports, the main source of revenue for the Moscow government. However, European nations are more dependent on Russian gas than the Kremlin is on its consumers when it comes to energy. Therefore, European states are at risk of entering a recession due to sanctions targeting Russia.

The main objective of Western nations was to restrict Russia's imports of gas and oil. In this context, since February 2022, the European Union (EU) has decided to impose various sanctions on the Russian energy industry. Due to the impact of sanctions, European states, which imported 25% of their oil supply and 40% of their natural gas supply from Russia in 2021, are making an effort to reduce their energy purchases from Russia and turn to alternate sources.



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There are claims that the sanctions, whose primary objective is Moscow's exclusion from global markets and, indirectly, making it unable to bear the cost of the conflict in Ukraine, have failed because the fighting has continued into its seventh month. Also being debated is the fact that the sanctions are causing more damage to the economies of the EU countries.

On the other hand, despite the war and sanctions, Russia's oil and gas export revenues continue to grow. Although the embargo, which prevents the import of 90% of Russian oil to Europe, will not go into effect until December 5, 2022, markets throughout the world are aware that Russia will divert the oil it cannot ship to Europe to Asian consumers, namely India and China.[1]

Moscow is trying to bypass the impact of the sanctions by encouraging import substitution. Due to China's and India's rising energy needs as well as their inclination against the unipolar world order by supporting Russia, it is easier for the Moscow administration to locate alternative markets.

Moreover, despite the sanctions, Europe is still the largest buyer of Russian oil because, before the oil embargo takes full effect and oil prices sharply rise, the Union's member nations want to stock up inexpensive Russian oil in their depots.

Due to the high rate of oil production and the market's limited supply, prices are rising. Therefore, Russia's oil income has increased. Moreover, only a small increase in oil output has occurred under OPEC+, despite efforts by the West, particularly the United States (US), to pressure the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), led by Saudi Arabia, to increase production. As a result, Russia, the world's second-largest oil producer behind Saudi Arabia, has failed in its attempt to lower oil revenues.

It is well known that locating alternative suppliers for natural gas is more challenging than for oil. The Kremlin's use of the "gas" card, which is a sore point for the EU, as a result of the oil sanctions has exacerbated the situation in the energy markets. As justification for blocking the flow of natural gas from the Nord Stream-1 Pipeline, Russian President Vladimir Putin cited the G7 and EU's intentions to impose a price cap on Russian oil and gas goods. He reacted as follows:[2]

"The price cap is another nonsense that will lead to further price increases in world markets, including Europe. A stupid move. We will not send any oil, natural gas, or coal if doing so would go against our contracts and best interests. The West is not in a position to impose terms to us. They should think rationally"

The Russian president's remarks led to gas price manipulation and increased pressure on Europe's energy infrastructure after the war. As we head into the colder months, rising energy costs have placed an additional pressure on the industrial sectors and households of the nations. In addition to the aforementioned situation, inflation also rose as a result of the war's financial aid to Ukraine. Due to rising food and energy prices, inflation in the eurozone reached a record high of 9.1% at the end of August 2022.[3]

According to estimates, Germany, the EU's largest economy and a country that depends on Russian gas to the rate of 55%, will see its GDP fall by 3% as a result of ceasing to import Russian natural gas.[4] Moreover, the weakening economy and growing inflation have strained internal policies among Union members and raised questions about support for Ukraine among the general public. For instance, 51% of Germans think sanctions harm Germany more than they do Russia.[5] People are organizing protests in the Czech Republic as well to call for the lifting of sanctions against Russia owing to increased energy bills.[6]

Given that Europe is currently experiencing the highest rates of inflation in the last forty years, the EU's present policies have become paradoxical. The sanctions failed to reduce Russian revenues and resulted in Russia mobilizing more troops for Ukraine, threatening nuclear retaliation, and taking steps to annex Russian-occupied territories[7]. In other words, it had no effect on the course of the war.

To summarize briefly, it can be claimed that Western nations did not observe the impact they anticipated from sanctions; rather, Russia undermined its own economy as a result of its energy monopoly and Europe's reliance on energy, particularly gas. At this point, it should also be clear that sanctions require time before they produce any results.

Since the beginning of the war against Ukraine, Russia has drastically restricted economic transparency and ceased publishing

figures and data. Therefore, it has become difficult to assess the exact impact of the Western sanctions. In fact, it is asserted that the sanctions' impact on the Russian economy is not insignificant since Moscow has taken to hide the impact by withholding international trade statistics.

It should be noted that, despite the sanctions put in place by European governments, the fact that the Russian economy remains stable, even if its transparency is called into question, undermines public support for the sanctions in Europe, which makes it challenging for the region to act collectively.

As a result, it can be argued that the policies the West put in place to address Russia's attacks on Ukraine were unsuccessful. Additionally, opposing voices were heard from within the EU were heard even when the decision to impose sanctions was made. Furthermore, the specifics of the application of the price cap on oil have not yet been determined, and the member states' objections prevented the implementation of a price cap on natural gas. This suggests that the EU's ability to act in unison will get harder and harder every day.

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[5] Ibid.

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ANKASAM ANALYSIS

Seeking De-Dollarization in the SCO

On February 24, 2022, Russian President Vladimir Putin announced that he had launched a "special military operation" against Ukraine. Then, the West began to impose sanctions that affected many sectors, especially the financial system, by targeting the Moscow administration. These sanctions have also affected Russia's relationship with its main trading partners.

In this context, the establishment of mechanisms to trade without dollars in organizations of which Russia is a member has begun to be discussed. One of the international organizations where these debates take place is the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). As a matter of fact, this mechanism came to the fore as one of the most important issues dis-



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cussed at the SCO Leaders' Summit held in Samarkand, the ancient city of Uzbekistan, on September 15-16, 2022. In other words, one of the important decisions taken at the summit was the expansion of trade with the use of national currencies of the member states.

The creation of a roadmap for the use of national currencies in trade and the development of alternative payment and settlement systems are issues that the SCO has been working on in recent years. As a matter of fact, the draft roadmap for increasing the share of national currencies in mutual agreements was announced at the SCO Summit held in Qingdao city in June 2018 with the initiative of Kazakhstan.[1] At the meeting of the SCO Leaders Council held via videoconference on 10 November 2020, the use of national currencies was discussed, and it was decided to form a special expert group for this purpose.[2] At the Samarkand Summit, the leaders of the member states approved the proposed roadmap to increase trade using national currencies.[3]

At the summit, Russian President Vladimir Putin emphasized that the share of national currencies in the organization has increased.[4] As a matter of fact, there has been an increase in payments made in national currencies among SCO member countries in recent years, without using dollars. For example, in the first period of 2022, the share of trade between Russia and China using national currencies reached 27.5% of the total trade volume.[5]

As mentioned above, the use of national currencies in trade relations between SCO members was proposed by Kazakhstan in 2009.[6] Even the development of a common currency was added to this proposal. However, at that time, Russia stated that it was too early to create a single supranational currency within the framework of the SCO. In addition, Russian officials emphasized that the economies of the SCO countries are different from each other.[7] Therefore, calls have been made in the past to adopt a common currency from Astana; however, the Moscow administration approached this proposal with a distance. The Kremlin's current pursuit of common currency development and at least advocating for trade in national currencies is an effort to reduce the impact of sanctions.

On the other hand, the Beijing administration, which has serious problems in its relations with Washington due to the visit of the Speaker of the United States (US) House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi to Taiwan, advocates giving up the dollar in the SCO. Similarly, it is known that Iran, which has been subjected to the pressure of sanctions by the US, is also willing to seek what can be described as de-dollarization. It is seen that India, on the other hand, decided to use national currencies in trade with Russia, despite its cooperation with the US and England in 2022. Considering that the trade volume between the two countries reached 11.5 billion dollars in the first half, the said development is not only for Moscow,[8] it can be stated that it is also of great importance for New Delhi.

President of China Xi Jinping, on the other hand, avoids making clear statements about the dependence on the dollar. However, it should be emphasized that the Beijing administration has taken various steps to create a regional currency. Because, although Beijing does not try to make the yuan an international currency, it is taking steps to transform the yuan into a strong regional currency through the organizations it is a member of. As a matter of fact, the People's Bank of China signed a cooperation agreement with the National Bank of Kazakhstan to establish yuan-denominated clearing mechanisms in Kazakhstan.[9]

Experts argue that smaller Chinese financial institutions, which are less dependent on the dollar, will play a critical role in de-dollarization processes. Indeed, such banks are not much affected by the sanctions imposed by the West. For example, in May 2022, Harbin Bank announced the "One Hundred Measures" document aimed at developing more financial relations with Russia. [10] Russian experts suggest that Chinese banks can help Moscow by providing cash yuan to Russia. In other words, with the help of payments made in yuan, Moscow can avoid the negative consequences of embargoes to some extent. However, it is also possible that this situation will lead Western states to take tough sanctions against China.

As a result, the sanctions adversely affected Russia's relations with its trading partners. Therefore, the establishment of mechanisms for the development of commercial relations without dollars has come to the fore in organizations of which Russia is a member. In this regard, it is possible to state that Moscow received support from New Delhi, Beijing and Tehran. However, it should be noted that the process will not progress as fast as the Kremlin expected.

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ANKASAM ANALYSIS

Is Montenegro Going to the Snap Elections?

Prime Minister of Montenegro Dritan Abazovic's announcement that he will sign the "Basic Agreement" on the Serbian Orthodox Church (SPC) in June 2022 has led to the footsteps of the country's political crisis. Apparently, the Abazovic administration, signed an agreement on 3 August 2022, which won an official status for the SPC, in this process which began with discussions in the coalition government and

had different ideological views. The political crisis, which began to deepen immediately after that, caused the Abazovic government to fall by not receiving a vote of confidence on 20 August 2022.

Signing the "Basic Agreement" with the SPC has led to protests in the country. Therefore, the conflicts between the SPC and the Montene-



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grin Orthodox Church have resulted in the government's fall. Abazovic, who has adopted a pro-European stance here, has noted that he insists on the agreement. In fact, Abazovic's desire to improve relations with Serbia and to join the Open Balkan Initiative played a critical role in taking that step.

After that incident, parties have been given thirty days to present the candidate for Prime Minister in order to establish the new government. The pro-Serbian parties demanded that the government be given to Miodrag Lekic, who had lost a small margin to Filip Vujanovic, hours before the end of that period, and handed it to President Milo Djukanovic. Lekic served as Foreign Minister of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia-Montenegro) between 1 August 1992-17 May 1995 and was nominated for the Democratic Party of Socialists (DPS) in the 2013 Presidential Elections. However, pro-Serbian parties^[1] have not been able to deliver all the signatures of the Members of Parliament (MPs) that support Lekic's candidacy, which was said to have defended Montenegro's failure to leave Serbia at the time. Djukanovic then turned down the offer, saying it was in accordance with the constitution, and suggested that the election be held on 23 October 2022.

Djukanovic said Montenegro faces a "devastated" system, and said, "We need to reach responsible management and government in the country". he made an assessment.^[2] Following Djukanovic's statements, there were discussions about the coup attempt.^[3] Djukanovic's failure to hand over his mandate to form a government to pro-Serbian Lekic has angered Lekic's supporters. In this context, the pro-Serbian MPs, who argued Djukanovic violated the constitution because Lekic rejected his candidacy have signed for Djukanovic's declining 41 deputies and submitted it to Speaker of Parliament Danijela Durovic. ^[4]

Another issue that stands out is that the United Reform movement (URA), led by Abazovic, an Albanian-based and has a pro-European stance, has not signed Lekic's candidacy, but has spoken verbally.^[5] However, URA lawmakers have not signed for Djukanovic's determination. Therefore, it can be stated that the URA, led by Abazovic, supports pro-Serbian Lekic, is related to URA's desire to be in every government.

In some of the news, URA's "verbal" support for Lekic may resulted from some disagreement between Djukanovic and Abazovic. Because, Abazovic accused Djukanovic of protecting criminal networks within the country on 21 September 2022. In this context, Abazovic said that Djukanovic provoked religious and ethnic divisions, which led to his government's fall in August 2022.^[6]

Minister of Foreign Affairs of Montenegro Ranko Krivokapic, who has been interpreting these developments as "coup attempt" in the country, noted a crisis that could grow in Montenegro after Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina, which would affect regional stability and all of these developments are a reflection of the war in Ukraine.^[7] Referring to Russia's influence in the Balkans, Krikokapic implied that Moscow had an impact on recent developments in the country.^[8]

"Montenegro has a bit of political confusion, but I don't think there's a solution that leaves us out of the government," Abazovic said.^[9] He expressed that the solution could either be provided by early elections or by a new coalition agreement; however, in both cases, URA and its allies have indicated that they will be part of the new government. ^[10]

With all of these developments, it can be claimed that Pro-Serbian parties in Montenegro are trying to come to power, which is supported by Russia. In fact, on September 14, 2022, the United States (US) claimed that Russia secretly funded political parties in many Balkan countries, including Montenegro.^[11] In the countries concerned, it is likely that this is the right situation. Because Moscow can use the fragility in the Balkans to promote especially Serb separatists, and attempt to destabilize the situation in the region. It is no coincidence that President of Russia Vladimir Putin hosted President of Bosnia and Herzegovina Milorad Dodik in Moscow on 20 September 2022 before the 2 October 2022 election.^[12] Therefore, it is necessary to assess the developments in Montenegro and particularly the

discussions of the coup attempt.

As a result, Pro-Serbian parties in Montenegro, which are thought to be supported by Russia, are curious about what they will do after the decision at the Assembly meeting on 30 September 2022. Therefore, "does the Pro-Serb Democratic Front (DP) come to power in Montenegro; or do you go to early elections?" the answer to questions such as remains unclear: Brussels is not expected to welcome a pro-Serbian government in the country.

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ANKASAM ANALYSIS

China's Relations with India and Japan Based on its Foreign Policy Principles

In its foreign policy, the People's Republic of China has made it a principle of not interfering with the internal affairs of other states, and showing respect to their territorial integrity and sovereignty, not forming alliances and in this sense staying away from zero-sum games. China claims to be a peaceful state who does not challenge the current international system and the liberal economic order, and emphasize-

es that in its history, it has never occupied other states, pursued provocation, or encouraged polarization by establishing military alliances and has been following a principled foreign policy. These principles are expected to have a positive effect in the disputes and/or crises experienced by China in its bilateral and multilateral relations with the neighbouring states.



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From the perspective of India and Japan, China follows an "aggressive" and "expansionist" regional policy, increases its power in the west through Afghanistan, Tajikistan and Kashmir, focuses on joint naval exercises with Russia in the Sea of Japan and the Pacific Ocean in the east, and expands its military presence in the Indo-Pacific, especially in the South China Sea. All these factors cause New Delhi and Tokyo to perceive a common threat from Beijing.

When it comes to India, it is seen that New Delhi still has the hope to improve relations with China. Minister of Foreign Affairs of India Subrahmanyam Jaishankar said on August 18, 2022 that relations with China are "at an extremely difficult stage" and that there are "many reasons" for the two countries to work jointly.[1] In response, the Government of China expressed that, "We hope India decides to work in the same direction as us to put relations back on track 'at an early date'." [2]

In recent months, new progress has been made in the meetings held between the two countries to resolve border issues, and the parties have agreed to withdraw troops from some areas of the dispute. Ultimately, thanks to the joint efforts of the two countries, the tension at the border has calmed down to some extent. This is resulted from the negative effects caused by Russia's war in Ukraine, especially for the Indian and Chinese economies. In the midst of geopolitical risks and the energy crisis, neither India nor China are able to cope with a new tension or conflict in the region. The two countries seem to favour a more cautious, attentive and cool-headed policy concerning the Western sanctions against Moscow. From the perspective of global geopolitics, India and China are on the same front with their "multipolar" world goal. These two countries call on Russia to stop the conflicts and resolve the problems through peaceful negotiations. For this reason, if Russia's war in Ukraine ends, India's and China's temporary partnership may also come to an end.

In general, India is more reactive or distant towards cooperation with China. On the other hand, it is seen that China is more willing to improve its relations with India. For example, in its report on September 26, 2022, the Chinese state media Global Times tried to send warm messages by saying that India should partner with China for the "Asian Century". [3] In this context, Beijing acts as if there is "absolutely no problem" in bilateral relations. However, the tension and the risk of conflict in many regions of the border still remain. Nevertheless, Beijing tries to be consistent with its foreign policy principles by adopting a "peaceful" attitude in its relations with New Delhi. However, it is seen that China's political stance in border issues is more uptight, and that it will not give up on its claims of historical rights over the territory. In this respect, it can be said that China has started to move away from its traditional foreign policy principles and that it has been more interventionist regarding India's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

In the example of Japan, their relations indicate a conjuncture in which smoothing and straining can be observed simultaneously. For example, Minister of Foreign Affairs of China Wang Yi calls for the development of bilateral relations on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations with Japan. In this regard, Wang Yi has put forward a five-item proposal for the improvement of China-Japan relations.[4] In these articles, China calls on Japan to avoid provocations, not to fall for the incitements of third countries and to regulate its bilateral relations with China peacefully. In other words, Beijing demands from Tokyo to act on the basis of a win-win and multilateralism approach instead of dwelling in the zero-sum game. Therefore, according to Beijing, Japan is the party that causes problems in bilateral relations, interferes with the Taiwan Issue and does not comply with the political agreements between the two states. In other words, Beijing thinks that Tokyo is the side that should correct itself.

However, there are some tensions in relations with Japan that China also has a part to play. For example, the day before the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations, three Chinese coast guard ships were sighted around the Senkaku Islands, where they had historic disputes with Japan. According to Tokyo's allegations, they violated Japan's territorial waters.[5] Japan claims that while it aimed at smoothing bilateral relations on the anniversary of diplomatic relations, China deliberately made provocations in the Senkaku Islands.

Through this process, China gives the message that it may pose a threat to the security of Japan by conducting joint exercises with the Russian Navy around the Sea of Japan and the Kuril Islands. Thus, China's actions do not seem consistent. Beijing acts conflictual,



reactive or provocative in the field while holding a peaceful attitude towards Japan in its foreign policy. For this reason, Japan questions China's intentions, and this leads to distrust between the two states. In short, it is clear that a peaceful atmosphere is lacking in bilateral relations in contrast to the 50th anniversary of China-Japan ties celebrations. China has as much responsibility as Japan in the emergence of this situation.

China's foreign policy principles are in line with the general principles states are obliged to comply with, defined in the Section 4 of the Article 2 of the UN Charter. These principles indicate refraining from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state. Despite this, China has pressured many states in its immediate vicinity to support the "One China Principle", especially with the growth of the Taiwan Crisis. Chinese diplomats in Nepal, Sri Lanka, Laos, Cambodia, Thailand, India, Vietnam and many other regional states have made statements remarking their expectations and faith in other states' support to this principle. As a result of such pressures, the regional states had to declare their compliance to the fundamental principles of China. Therefore, it can be said that while India and Japan argue that China has become aggressive in its foreign policy and express their concerns about this, they are not wrong in their views. The most concrete outcomes of the deterioration in China's foreign policy principles can be observed in its relations with India and Japan.

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ANKASAM ANALYSIS

A New Hope in the War of the Corridors: Middle Corridor or Rail Shield

The 22nd Meeting of Heads of State of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), hosted by the President of Uzbekistan, Mr. Shavkat Mirziyoyev, went down in history as a meeting that many actors watched carefully due to the increasing polarization trend in international relations.

The geopolitical rivalry, or in other words, the "new power struggle", which started as a result of the withdrawal of the United States (US) from Afghanistan in 2021, entered a new phase with the Russia's intervention in Ukraine on February 24, 2022 and Speaker of the US House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi's Taiwan. Moreover, it created a break in the increasingly tense geopolitical rivalry.

After these developments, discussions about the global order focused on geopolitical and geostrategic concepts, and the transition from unipolarity to multipolarity formed the core of the discussions. The main expectation for the SCO Samarkand Summit, which took place in such an environment, was that multipolarity should come to the fore and harsh messages should be sent against the West. However, aside from building new blocks, the most important development that came to the fore was the emphasis on the importance of Central Asia and the "Central Corridor", which has been increasing in importance recently, has come to the fore in global trade. In this sense, the SCO is not new blocks; focused on building bridges of cooperation.



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Even in the current crisis environment, the fact that the multi-vector and multi-dimensional policies of the Central Asian states came to the fore at the SCO Summit should be evaluated as a reflection of the task of "Bridge between the East and West" that geography imposes on Central Asian countries. This task, easily understood by anyone looking at the world map, is already at the center of many global strategies.

The opening policy, which was initiated by China in the 1980s and enabled it to move to the export-based economy model, was built on trade and energy security. Since the combination of China's new economic policy with the advantage of cheap labor, global companies have shifted their production lines to China, taking into account the cost and feasibility. This situation caused the logistics and transportation chain to spread over a wider geography and created an important economic interaction between the East and the West. Considering the mentioned parameters, China has made infrastructure investments to create commercial routes on the route extending from the lands in the west, north and south to Europe.

These trade corridors, which started with the Belt-Road Project announced by President of China Xi Jinping during his visit to Kazakhstan in 2013, maintained their functionality for a long time and created an important trade volume between the West and the East. However, trade routes also change depending on the changing conjuncture, just like the importance/loss of importance of geopolitical centers. The Northern Corridor, which was closed due to the developments in Ukraine, and the Southern Corridor, which became insecure due to the developments in Afghanistan and the economic crises in the region, brought new lines to the agenda.

The fact that the war of the corridors has gradually turned into a geopolitical element to destabilize and disrupt the stability of the opposing front has made it essential for the security and stability parameter to come to the fore in the newly established routes. The initiation of the consolidation process between the East and West poles has increased the importance of the countries that keep an equal distance to the policies of the two sides and focus on social and economic development.

Undoubtedly, the emphasis on the importance of the "Middle Corridor" both in the last period and at the SCO Samarkand Summit is not seen as a coincidence and sheds light on the steps to be taken for the future. The Middle Corridor, which is not monopolized by any global actor, turns into a corridor of hope

for the countries in the region, especially for China, which is dragged into a difficult commercial situation, and for the West, which is in a deadlock in terms of energy.

Recently, iconic and actual messages from both the West and China confirm the success of the Central Asian states' policy based on "active neutrality" and "multidimensionality." For example, Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Union (EU) Commission, who went to Azerbaijan to make diplomatic contacts on July 18, 2022, made the following statements that contain a very important clue about the future:[1]

"The EU wants to work with Azerbaijan to establish links with Central Asia and beyond. That is why we follow with great interest the discussions and ideas on Trans-Caspian connections. We will deepen these discussions."

On the one hand, Central Asia, which attracts the attention of the West; on the other hand, it is on the radar of China, the strongest actor of the opposing pole. As a matter of fact, the fact that Xi, who has not been out of the country for a long time, made his first trip abroad to Kazakhstan, where the Belt-Road Project was announced, and then went to Uzbekistan for the SCO Leaders' Summit is a strong message. On the occasion of this message, Xi gave the message that the Belt-Road Project, which has been the focus of criticism recently, will be implemented in a Middle Corridor-centered manner.

Knowing well that China's security comes from the security of its neighbors, another message sent through Kazakhstan was to the capitals, which have had problems with Astana recently. Because Kazakhstan is both the key to the Middle Corridor for China and stands out as an indispensable partner of energy security. The following statement made by Xi during his visit clearly revealed the importance Beijing attaches to Astana:[2]

"No matter how the international conjuncture changes; we will continue to resolutely support Kazakhstan in preserving its independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity. We will firmly support your reforms carried out for the purpose of stability and development, and we will categorically oppose the intervention of any power in the internal affairs of your country."

Xi's visit to Kazakhstan and the contacts he made at the SCO Leaders' Summit, proves Central Asia is not only the geopolitical aspect of the world; it also proves that it is a new attraction center in terms of economy. As a matter of fact, the Ky-



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Election Results in Italy and the Future of the EU

The far-right political party "Brothers of Italy (FDI)" and the right-wing alliance it leads have won the early elections in Italy on 25 September 2022. Thus, in Italy, where a far-right party came out first in the elections for the first time since the Second World War, a historical process is taking place. In the elections, while FDI led by Giorgia Meloni came out first by gaining 26% of the votes; coalition partners Matteo Salvini's far-right League Party, which has anti-immigrant policies, and former prime minister Silvio Berlusconi's conservative Forza Italia (FI) Party gained 8.9% and 8% of the votes, respectively.

The election resulted in the victory of the right-wing parties led by Meloni, Salvini and Berlusconi, against the left-leaning Democratic Party and the Five Star Movement. Therefore, a coalition government will be formed in Italy consist-

ing of the three parties. At the same time, the participation rate in the elections in the country, where 50.8 million voters have the right to vote, was 63.9%.[1] This rate, compared to other European countries, has been recorded as the lowest participation rate in the history of Italy, where participation in politics is generally high. [2]

It is expected that Meloni, who increased her vote share from 4% to 26% with the elections and thus declared great victory, is going to be the first female prime minister of the country. Meloni, who is described as a "national conservative", "extreme right-wing" or "post-fascist" in the country, is expected to form the most right-wing government in Italy since the Second World War. Hence, the country will be ruled by a far-right leader for the first time after Ben-



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ito Mussolini. In fact, the origins of the Meloni-led FDI, trace back to the neo-fascist Italian Social Movement which is the continuation of the Republican Fascist Party formed by Mussolini in 1943. Meloni, on the other hand, began to acquire far-right authority for the first time when she served as the Minister of Youth between 2009 and 2011.[3]

It is suggested that Meloni, who adopts an extreme right-wing policy is not pro-European Union (EU); on the contrary, she opposes the EU norms. It is seen that Meloni, who defends "traditional values", has quite harsh statements especially about "LGBT." Therefore, Meloni's coming into power causes a number of concerns within the EU.

The situation gives rise to the question of "Would Meloni embrace a policy close to Russia?" However, it is known that although she was in the opposition wing at the beginning of the war, Meloni supported the government led by the former Prime Minister Mario Draghi on the issue of defense assistance to Ukraine and harshly opposed the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Therefore, it not expected that Meloni will adopt a completely anti-European attitude upon coming to power. However, it is possible that there will be some issues on which she will contradict with the EU. It can be stated that Meloni, who is seen to have adopted a policy close to Hungarian Prime Minister Orban, will act in this direction. It is known that Orban, who has confronted the EU several times, shows an attitude that defends the renewal of the EU. Actually, this can be considered as a natural situation. As a matter of fact, these statements of Meloni supports the argument that Meloni stands close to Orban on the EU issue.[4]

"We are definitely not against Europe. We are in support of a Europe that is more efficient and knows how to be a real added value for its citizens. When it comes to Italy, I want to give back the role it deserves in the international context and better defend its national interests in EU institutions. Just as the Germans and the French do very well."

In accordance with this approach, Meloni reacted against the decision on Hungary adopted by the European Parliament on 15 September 2022, saying that Orban came to office by winning the elections; therefore, is a democratic leader.[5] Based on this, it can be predicted that Meloni's rise to power will help Italy-Hungary relations gain a positive momentum.

What Does the Elections in Italy Mean For the EU?

The general elections in Italy have been followed closely by Brussels due to worries that the axis of Italy, a founding mem-

ber of the EU and the third largest economy in the eurozone, will shift and change the balances within the union. Besides, Meloni emphasized before the elections that she is not against Europe and that they will continue to cooperate with the EU.[6] However, it is seen that Brussels is cautious about the assurances on this issue given by far-right politicians who will come to power in Italy. The fact that President of the EU Commission Ursula Von der Leyen said the day before the elections that "if things go in a difficult direction, they can resort to various means against Italy, as in the case of Hungary and Poland" supports the issue.[7]

The statements mentioned above show that the EU has entered a difficult process regarding Italy. For this reason, the eyes were turned towards Brussels after the elections results were announced. Elisabeth Borne, the Prime Minister of France, said with regard to the election results: "The EU will carefully monitor human rights and the issue on access to abortion." Thereby, she implicitly reacted against the victory of Meloni.[8]

To conclude, it can be said that the far-right in Europe continues to rise and this situation is certainly a serious threat for the EU. Moreover, it is believed that the rise of the far-right will increase Islamophobia, especially the Continental Europe will witness a new process and these developments will negatively impact the mechanism of the EU institutions. In addition, it can be stated that there will be some problems in EU-Italy relations. On the other hand, it can be suggested that the EU, which is working on a new sanctions package against Russia, will face a difficult process accepting the sanctions in question. It is questioned that what will be the approach of Meloni, who has developed a political discourse close to Orban, towards decision of the EU to apply additional sanctions on Russia. Hence, the EU, in response to Russia's declaration of partial mobilization, may experience a process more difficult than ever in obtaining approval from all member states for the 8th sanctions package which is planned to be accepted on October 2022.

[1] "İtalya Seçimini Aşırı Sağdan Yana Kullandı: Sağ Blok Yüzde 44 Oy Oranını Geçti", Euronews, <https://tr.euronews.com/2022/09/26/italya-secimini-asiri-sagdan-yana-kullandi-sag-blok-yuzde-44-oy-oranina-yaklasti>, (Date of Accession: 30.09.2022).

[2] "Aşırı Sağ, Seçmen Katılımı Ve Berlusconi: Beş Başlıkta İtalya'daki Seçim Sonuçları", Euronews, <https://tr.euronews.com/2022/09/26/asiri-sag-secmen-katilimi-ve-berlusconi-bes-baslikta-italyadaki-secim-sonuclari>, (Date of Accession: 30.09.2022).

[3] Ibid.

[4] "Meloni: 'My Party Does not Have an Anti-European Wing'", Euractiv, <https://www.euractiv.com/section/all/interview/meloni-my-party-does-not-have-an-anti-european-wing/>, (Date of Accession: 30.09.2022).



ANKASAM ANALYSIS

The Center of the Middle Corridor in Europe: Hungary

Hungary is a Central European country that is important due to its geopolitical position. In this sense, it can be said that Hungary, which is located between Ukraine and Romania to the east and Austria to the west, plays the role of a bridge between the two regions. In addition, the country is one of the important routes that play a role in the Middle Corridor to reach the West. Because the Middle Corridor runs on the route Türkiye-Bulgaria-Serbia-Hungary. This is a factor that increases the geopolitical importance of Hungary.

In this context, the Ministers of Transport of Türkiye, Hungary, Bulgaria and Serbia held their first meeting under the name of the Bulgaria-Hungary-Serbia-Türkiye Quadrilateral Ministerial Coordination Council on July 5, 2022. In the statement made in the meeting, it was announced that it is planned to increase the amount of freight transported by rail from 38 million tons to 440 million tons annually by 2053. [1]

In addition, the Energy Ministers of Türkiye, Azer-



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baijan, Kazakhstan, and Hungary will hold the 2nd Energy Conference organized by the Organization of Turkic States on September 28, 2022. They met at the Energy Ministers' Meeting. During the meeting held in Almaty, Kazakhstan, cooperation, and opportunities in the field of energy were discussed.[2]

Looking at the meeting held in Almaty, it is seen that Hungary will be one of the main hubs for Central Asia, the Caucasus and Organization of Turkic States to reach Europe, not only in terms of trade and transportation but also in terms of energy. In short, Budapest is becoming the gateway of Asia to Europe in terms of energy and trade routes.

It is obvious that the transformation of Hungary into a center in the Middle Corridor will create significant gains for many actors. Firstly, the implementation of the Zangezur Corridor at the point where the Middle Corridor reaches Europe will increase the importance of the Organization of Turkic States. This will serve to make Hungary a center in the Middle Corridor and turn the organization into an effective actor in European geopolitics. Because it is known that Europe has increased its interest in the Caucasus and Central Asia, especially since the start of the Russian-Ukrainian War. One of the important dimensions of the relations to be established between Europe and the regions in question is the energy issue. Among the countries of the region, the states that are rich in energy resources are Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. As a matter of fact, three of these four states are members and one contributes to the activities within the organization with the status of observer member.

The fact that Hungary is a center that would naturally bring significant economic, political and strategic gains to this country. First of all, in a process where Europe needs energy and safe routes, Hungary will be able to turn its geopolitical position into an element of influence. Secondly, Hungary will also be one of the centers of Europe in terms of trade and transportation and thus will receive an important income. Thirdly, it is known that Hungary is experiencing some problems in its relations with the European Union (EU). However, it is certain that Hungary, who benefits from the gains of the Middle Corridor will turn into a key actor that is indispensable for the Europe.

Other actors that will gain are the states of Central Asia and the Caucasus. These countries will be completed the European dimension of the stable route they are trying decisively to build between China and Europe. Nevertheless, Hungary is a partner that the states of the region can count on. This means ensuring the security of the European part of the Middle Corridor.

Undoubtedly, Europe and China will be the most important winners of this process. Because, the trade between the parties is carried out in the shortest possible time is quite important for using the safest route. Therefore, Hungary becoming a hub in the Middle Corridor will create an opportunity to ensure uninterrupted transportation on the route extending from China to Europe.

Finally, the Middle Corridor will also benefit Bulgaria and Serbia. First of all, these states will increase their geopolitical and geo-economic importance. Also, both countries will not face any obstacles at the point of reaching the Caucasus, Central Asia and China.

As a result, Hungary is turning into a crucial center in the Middle Corridor. The fact that the country in question is a safe haven in Europe also increases the value of the Middle Corridor. Therefore, it can be said that the mission that the Budapest administration will undertake in this regard will serve the interests of many actors, not only itself.

[1] Hatice Şenses Kurukız, "Bakan Karaismailoğlu: Orta Koridor'da Ticaretin Geliştirilmesi İçin Üzerimize Ciddi Sorumluluklar Düşmekte", Anadolu Ajansı, <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/gundem/bakan-karaismailoglu-orta-koridorda-ticaretin-gelistirilmesi-icin-uzerimize-ciddi-sorumluluklar-dusmekte/2630480>, (Date of Accession: 01.10.2022).

[2] Ayya Imahamad, "Azerbaijan Discuss Energy Cooperation with Kazakhstan, Türkiye, Hungary", Azernews, <https://www.azernews.az/business/200086.html>, (Date of Accession: 01.10.2022).



ANKASAM ANALYSIS

Lukashenko's Visit to Abkhazia

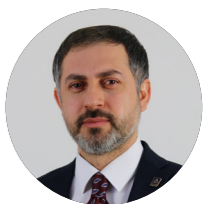
The visit of President of Belarus Alexander Lukashenko to Abkhazia on September 29, 2022 may lead to the rupture of diplomatic relations between Tbilisi and Minsk. Because Georgia claims that this visit of Lukashenko violates international norms and Georgian state borders. In addition, it is seen that the visit was met with a reaction in the Georgian society. As a matter of fact, Georgians gathered near the Embassy of Belarus in Tbilisi, saying, "Abkhazia is Georgia." They burned the posters of Lukashenko and President of Russia Vladimir Putin, shouting the slogan.

The visit of the President of Belarus took place in a semi-secret atmosphere. Extensive security measures were taken for the visit, and residents learned later who had arrived. In addition, the content of Lukashenko's meeting with Abkhaz

leader Aslan Bzhaniya was not disclosed. However, some statements of the President of Belarus were reflected in the press. According to media reports, Lukashenko expressed that:[1]

"We have a normal situation. We do not have a geopolitical problem. We are a peaceful, kind, hardworking nation like you and we want to live in harmony. Trade and economic ties should be the basis of our relations. It is not just a bridge of friendship; We want to establish a very serious relationship."

Lukashenko stated that he discussed the problems of Abkhazia with Putin before going to Abkhazia, that they believed that the region should not be left to its fate and that they would provide necessary assistance to Abkhazia. Undoubtedly,



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Lukashenko's visit to Abkhazia caused indignation in Georgia. For example, both opposition and state leaders, from Tbilisi Mayor Kakha Kaladze to President Salome Zurbishvili, have characterized the visit of the President of Belarus as a hostile act. Belarus' Ambassador to Tbilisi Anatoly Lis was also summoned to the Georgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and warned. In addition, in the statement made by the ministry it was stated that "Georgia expressed its protest in the strongest way and demanded an explanation" and it was emphasized that such actions would negatively affect bilateral relations.[2] In this context, Zurbishvili said that Lukashenko violated the "Law on the Occupied Territories of Georgia" and the basic principles of international law.[3] Essentially, the resulting backlash arose from concerns that Belarus might recognize Abkhazia's independence. However, for many years after the Russia-Georgia War in 2008, Lukashenko did not take such an action despite Moscow's pressure to recognize the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. In fact, during his visit to Tbilisi in 2015, Lukashenko stated that he supports the territorial integrity of Georgia. However, in recent years, Lukashenko has expressed that he can recognize the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia in his speeches, emphasizing "if it is needed".[4]

Before 2019, Lukashenko had a distant attitude towards the recognition act because he was afraid of the Minsk administration was being subjected to heavy sanctions and thought that Russia would not be able to provide the financial support that Belarus expected. Moreover, although Belarus has close relations with Russia in organizations such as the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and the Eurasian Economic Union, and even though it is in a special "Union State" with Russia, it focused on creating an image of a neutral state. This enabled Minsk to maintain its dialogue with the West. However, as of 2019, Belarus' balance policy has come to an end. In particular, the Russia-Ukraine War caused the Minsk administration to become the target of sanctions together with Moscow.

In fact, Belarus has been acting with an approach that defends the territorial integrity of the former Soviet Union countries for many years. However, in recent years, the Minsk administration has begun to imply that Belarus could recognize Crimea which is annexed by Russia in violation of international law and that it can recognize Georgia's separatist regions. Despite this, Belarus has not yet recognized the regions under Russian control.

Considering the reasons for Lukashenko's visit to Abkhazia, it can be said that the main reason may be the discomfort felt by Russia's policy towards Ukraine, although it is not talked about much. Lukashenko, instead of visiting the Crimea or eastern Ukraine; to give a close image with Moscow by visiting Abkhazia;

but it may have wanted to resist Russia's demands. Thus, it can be said that Lukashenko both did not take a step-in line with Russia's expectations regarding Ukraine and chose to show that it has a good relation with Putin. Because although Lukashenko implies that he can recognize the separatist regions, he does not implement this action and maybe he is exposed to pressure from Russia. On the other hand, the visit in question can also be interpreted as the desire of Belarus to show that it is closer to Russia compared to Kazakhstan and Armenia.

It should be noted that; recognition of Abkhazia by Belarus will cause the end of diplomatic relations with Georgia. This decision is not only of Georgia; it will also draw the reaction of other post-Soviet countries. This will lead to even more isolation in Minsk. Of course, Lukashenko is also aware of this. Therefore, it wants to eliminate the pressure of Russia without taking an act of recognition. Especially because of the war in Ukraine, Lukashenko is under pressure and disturbed by Russia's actions. Because Moscow demands that all critical decisions to be supported by Minsk.

To summarize briefly, Belarus is trying to position itself at a point close to Russia; however, while doing this, it cares about not following every word that Moscow says. In other words, Lukashenko refrains from taking steps that would cast a shadow on his country's sovereignty and strives to strike a delicate balance. Therefore, Lukashenko's visit to eliminate the pressure on him can be described as a demoralizing development for Russia. Because the visit is not of the nature to produce the results expected by Moscow. However, when the visit is considered within the framework of annexations in Ukraine, Western actors, in particular, may think that Putin is sending a "target enlargement" message through Lukashenko's visit. For this reason, European Union Foreign Relations and Security Policy Spokesperson Peter Stano expressed that he condemned Lukashenko's visit to Abkhazia and saw it as a violation of international law[5]. Because the visit of the President of Belarus contains the message that Russia may also annex Abkhazia if the pressure of sanctions against Russia increases due to the Ukraine War.

In addition to all these, the visit can also be seen as a positive tactical move for Russia. Because Lukashenko's visit to Abkhazia can be interpreted as a pressure on Western countries. Lukashenko's visit to the region may have an impact on Western politicians, as it shows that Russia can "play big."

As a result, geopolitical changes are taking place in the post-Soviet geography. In this context, Lukashenko's visit to Abkhazia is a harbinger of the emergence of new crisis areas in the medium and long term, although it will not cause a serious crisis in the near future.



ANKASAM ANALYSIS

CSTO Drills in Kazakhstan

Within the framework of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), special military drills titled Search (Search/Poisk)-2022, Phase (Echelon-2022) and Interaction-2022, covering the dates of September 26-October 8, 2022, are being held in Kazakhstan. In addition to 6500 military personnel, 850 military vehicles consisting of warplanes, unmanned aerial vehicles and helicopters participate in the drills held in the borders of Cambyl and Almaty provinces

against emergencies.[1] These drills are important in many respects.

Conducting joint drills within the scope of CSTO in a period of regional conflicts such as Azerbaijan-Armenia, Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan and Russia-Ukraine[2] contains important messages. First of all, in addition to Russia and Kazakhstan, Belarus, Armenia, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan are among the member states of the CSTO. How-



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ever, Armenia has decided not to participate in the drills. Because, during the Azerbaijan-Armenia conflicts that started on September 13, 2022, Armenia called for help to the CSTO; however, the security organization has declared that they do not plan to send peacekeepers to Armenia.

On the other hand, it is known that Kazakhstan did not favor sending CSTO Peace Forces to Armenia during the Azerbaijan-Armenia conflicts. The Astana administration displays such an approach within the framework of the respect and care it shows to the territorial integrity, independence and sovereignty of the countries.

As it will be remembered, the Astana administration stated that the conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia should be resolved through peaceful means in the meetings held within the CSTO.[3] So that; it can be said that this is the reason why Armenia did not participate in the drills in Kazakhstan.[4] However, Yerevan declared that it did not participate in the drills in Kazakhstan due to the ongoing conflicts with Azerbaijan. In the statements of the CSTO regarding the conflicts between the two countries, the emphasis on the ceasefire came to the fore. For example, the CSTO stated that they are concerned about the conflicts that took place on 14-16 September 2022, which led to the death of civilians, that they welcome the ceasefire and negotiations, and that political and diplomatic means should be used to solve the problems.[5] However, after all these developments, it was suggested that Armenia would leave the CSTO.[6]

On the other hand, in October 2022, the CSTO troops will hold the Endurable Brotherhood-2022 drills in Kyrgyzstan and the Frontier-2022 drills in Tajikistan.[7] At this point, it can be said that the drills to be carried out within the CSTO can strengthen the military cooperation between the parties. At the same time, these drills can also be interpreted as that the relevant countries care about the CSTO in terms of their security.

Finally, on the basis of member states, it is necessary to mention Russia. Russia, which is currently at war with Ukraine, is trying to send a message to the Western World that it is strong and still has allies through drills. Especially Moscow, while the war continues; tries to show that everything is going as planned by participating in and/or organizing military drills. In this context, it can be said that Moscow aims to prove that the war in Ukraine does not prevent it and to increase its prestige.

The drill held in Kazakhstan is important for the CSTO as well. Because it is known that the Russian Army went through a difficult process in the Russia-Ukraine War. This situation directly affects organizations such as CSTO. Because, in the recent period when China-Taiwan tensions have escalated, the effectiveness of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) has also been opened to discussion. Both the SCO and the CSTO wanted to show that they are strong with the summits and drills held thereafter.

As a result, the military drills organized within the CSTO coincided with an important period. Because some of the countries that are members of the organization are already engaged in various conflicts. While Russia is trying to regain its lost reputation in Ukraine; in fact, the conflicts also appear to be the future of the CSTO. In particular, Armenia's inability to get what it wants from the CSTO despite being in a controversial position and the organization's choice to remain a spectator in various conflicts affect the commitment of the member states to the organization. On the other hand, assigning a mission more than its capacity to the organization brings with it various problems and reactions. Because the CSTO will continue to exist as long as it is effective in solving the problems between its

members. Otherwise, the continuation of the conflicts and the increase in conflicts will accelerate the loss of prestige of the organization and this will make its existence controversial.

[1] "Three CSTO Exercises Begin in Kazakhstan", Belta, <https://eng.belta.by/society/view/three-csto-exercises-begin-in-kazakhstan-153401-2022/>, (Date of Accession: 30.09.2022).

[2] "Kazakhstan to Host Russian-Led Bloc's Military Drills", Reuters, <https://www.reuters.com/world/kazakhstan-host-russian-led-blocs-military-drills-2022-09-22/>, (Date of Accession: 30.09.2022).

[3] Assel Satubaldina, "Kazakh President Urges Swift Resolution to Armenia-Azerbaijan Border Conflict at CSTO Extraordinary Session", The Astana Times, <https://astanatimes.com/2022/09/kazakh-president-urges-swift-resolution-to-armenia-azerbaijan-border-conflict-at-csto-extraordinary-session/>, (Date of Accession: 30.09.2022).

[4] "Armenia Skips CSTO Drills in Kazakhstan", RFE/RL, <https://www.azatutyun.am/a/32053026.html>, (Date of Accession: 30.09.2022).

[5] "The CSTO Secretariat Commentary on the situation on the Kyrgyz-Tajik Border", CSTO, https://en.odkb-csto.org/news/news_odkb/kommentariy-sekretariata-odkb-po-situatsii-na-kyrgyzsko-tadzhikskoy-granitse/#loaded, (Date of Accession: 30.09.2022).

[6] "ОДКБ отказала Пашиняну в военной помощи: росСМИ анонсируют выход Армении из организации Путина", https://www.dialog.ua/russia/258618_1663087308, (Date of Accession: 30.09.2022).

[7] "Russian-Led CSTO to Hold Military Maneuvers in Central Asia in October", RFE/RL, <https://www.rferl.org/a/russia-csto-military-drills-central-asia/31827266.html>, (Date of Accession: 30.09.2022).



ANKASAM ANALYSIS

Russian-Western Struggle for Influence in Armenia

The escalating Russian-Western struggle in Armenia has become more evident than ever due to the developments following the clashes on the Armenian-Azerbaijani border on September 13, 2022. As a result of the conflicts, the Yerevan Government requested that the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), in which Armenia is a member, to intervene. This request, however, was denied since the bor-

ders were not clearly defined, and there was no attack on Armenian territory. In light of this development, Armenia has adopted a stance that criticizes the CSTO in general and Russia in particular.[1]

The Speaker of the United States (US) House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi visited Armenia around this time. She made public remarks in-



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dicating that the US administration supports Yerevan.[2] This has been perceived as an effort by the US to reclaim the power it lost as a result of the loss of influence of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group in the South Caucasus after the Second Karabakh War. In fact, pro-Western politician and Prime Minister of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan stated that the Minsk Group should be activated. In other words, it promotes Russia's involvement in the area as well as that of the US and France. This may enable the Armenian diasporas to be effective in the negotiation processes, and therefore, Yerevan may increase pressure through Washington and Paris.

Pashinyan's strategy is founded on the idea that since the day his nation attained independence, the Armenian people have only experienced poverty as a result of their isolation from the rest of the world caused by the occupation in Karabakh. Moreover, it is obvious that pro-occupation policies have made Armenia dependent on Russia and Iran. In this sense, the Prime Minister of Armenia aims to become more open to the West and is looking for ways to balance bilateral ties between Iran and Russia by working with the US and France. As a matter of fact, this conclusion is confirmed by Armen Grigoryan, the President of the Armenian National Security Council, who was going to visit Washington on September 26, 2022, immediately after Pelosi.[3] Similar to this, on September 26, 2022, Pashinyan visited Paris and met with French President Emmanuel Macron. The two leaders spoke about the developments in Karabakh.[4]

Considering everything that has been said, there are two conceivable interpretations for Yerevan's communications with Paris and Washington. First, considering the situation from the standpoint of Armenia, the following could be said: the Pashinyan administration attempted to send a message to the pro-Russian opposition in domestic politics by demonstrating that it received support from the West; it tried to balance out Russia, which was not that interested in the developments in Karabakh as a result of the Ukrainian War; the administration is looking for a solution to sign an agreement regarding the war it lost on the battlefield with the least amount of loss possible and upped the stakes against the Baku government during the negotiations with Azerbaijan to sign a sustainable peace.

The approaches used by the US and France must be mentioned in relation to the second dimension of these interactions. Pelosi's trip to Armenia in particular has made it very evident that Washington and Paris are working together to boost Western influence in the South Caucasus. Because of the conflict in Ukraine, the West observes that Russia is not very engaged in the Karabakh Conflict. For instance, Moscow made no real effort to achieve a ceasefire during the clashes that started on September 13, 2022 and lasted for several years. Western nations now believe that Moscow lacks the energy to handle fresh crisis situations. The US also wants to turn this situation into an opportunity. In actuality, the goal of the collective West, notably the US, is to expand Western influence in the post-Soviet zone. In this regard, the US and France are attempting to get engaged in the Karabakh war negotiations because they saw the Pashinyan administration's desire to reduce their nation's reliance on Russia as an opportunity for their own end. In other words, through discussions with the Pashinyan administration, Washington and Paris are making preparations for the OSCE Minsk Group's return.

In reality, Macron's call to Ilham Aliyev, President of Azerbaijan, after his conversations with Pashinyan, informing him of the meeting, serves as the most significant evidence of this plan.[5] The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of France announced that France's Special Envoy for the South Caucasus Brice Roquefeuil, will also visit Baku and Yerevan, adding that it "will continue to facilitate the search for solutions to all difficulties through discussions." [6]

On the other hand, it can be said that the US has a similar approach despite Pelosi's provocative messages in Yerevan. Because head of Foreign Policy Affairs Department of the Presidential Administration Hikmet Hajiyev's visit to Washington took place at the same time as Grigoryan's. During his visit, Hajiyev had crucial interactions with the US think tanks. Additionally, Mr. Hajiyev and Grigoryan met through the efforts of Jake Sullivan, the US National Security Advisor. After the meeting, Mr. Hajiyev said, "We thank the US for arranging the meeting and efforts to ensure sustainable regional peace." [7] In other words, the US-France duo is taking advantage of Pashinyan's pro-Western stance by acting as a mediator in the negotiations over the Baku-Yerevan line and limiting Russian influence in the South Caucasus.

While these developments are taking place Russia is sending the message that it will not accept losing its influence in its near neighborhood or sharing it with Western entities notwithstanding the conflict in Ukraine. Given this situation, it is possible that Moscow will act

through the Karabakh Clan, a group of politicians that support the occupation and have kept Armenia cut off from the West for a long time. "We need to persuade Russia and finish our security system in collaboration with Iran"[8], Robert Kocharyan expressed, known as one of the most powerful leaders of the Karabakh Clan. One should not disregard what he said because Kocharyan's statements make it plain that the Moscow government may exert pressure through the Karabakh Clan on the Pashinyan government, which looks to the West. Occasionally occurring anti-Pashinyan protests in Armenia are another indication of this.

On the other hand, it is also important that Kocharyan mentioned Iran, one of Russia's most important regional allies regarding its anti-Western stance. During the conflicts that began on September 13, 2022, the Tehran government has made it clear that it will not agree to any border adjustments, as it states in nearly every conflict.[9] Although it does not say it outright, Tehran implies that it opposes the opening of the Zangezur Corridor in this statement. This indicates that Moscow can pursue diverse actions through Iran in the South Caucasus at a time when it is focused on Ukraine, demonstrating its ability to share tasks with its primary partner in the region.

In conclusion, the Pashinyan administration turned to the US and France in accordance with its long-standing conception of foreign policy after it was unable to obtain the backing it sought from Moscow in the boundary disputes between Azerbaijan and Armenia. It is evident that the presence of sizable Armenian diasporas in the relevant nations has a bearing on this approach. Accordingly, it can be concluded that Pelosi's trip to Yerevan significantly benefited Pashinyan by bolstering domestic public support. On the other hand, it could be claimed that Pelosi intended to increase support from the Armenian diaspora while she runs for the by-elections. But at the heart of the problem are efforts made by both Paris and Washington to assume a mediating role in the Karabakh conflict. Rather, the goal of the duo is to encircle Russia through the South Caucasus as well. Moscow, on the other hand, demonstrates its ability to influence events by working with its ally Iran and the Karabakh Clan. On the other hand, all of these developments indicate that the struggle for Russian-Western influence in Armenian politics in particular and in the South Caucasus in general will intensify even further.

[1] Sabir Askeroğlu, "Could Armenia Suspend the CSTO Membership?", ANKASAM, <https://www.ankasam.org/could-armenia-suspend-the-csto-membership/?lang=en>, (Date of Accession: 30.09.2022).

[2] "Pelosi's Visit Fires Debate in Armenia over Alliance with Russia", Politico, <https://www.politico.eu/article/nancy-pelosi-visit-armenia-debate-alliance-russia/>, (Date of Accession: 30.09.2022).

[3] "Armenia's National Security Council Secretary meets with U.S. National Security Advisor in Washington D.C.", Armen Press, <https://armenpress.am/eng/news/1070890/>, (Date of Accession: 30.09.2022).

[4] "Macron Receives Armenian Prime Minister", APA, <https://apa.az/en/europe/pashinyan-to-meet-with-macron-in-paris-385639>, (Date of Accession: 30.09.2022).

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ANKASAM ANALYSIS

The Increasing Greece–Egypt Rapprochement in the Shadow of the Energy Crisis

The Foreign Ministers of Greece and Egypt met on the sidelines of the 77th United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) on September 20, 2022. In recent years, relations between Athens and Cairo have improved considerably in the energy context. In addition, the two countries act together in the Eastern Mediterranean and

conduct joint exercises. The meeting is quite important in terms of confirming the partnership between the two countries.

Minister of Foreign Affairs of Greece Nikos Den-dias stated that they had a very interesting meeting with his Egyptian counterpart Sameh



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Shoukry, and then held a trilateral meeting with the participation of the representative of the Greek Cypriot Administration of South Cyprus (GCA). In the context of the meeting, it was stated that the parties discussed all the problems in the region and shared the same views on various issues.[1]

Moreover, the energy issue, Greece's interconnection with Egypt and Egypt's role in the European Union's (EU) energy security were also mentioned in the meeting. It was emphasized that the government of Kyriakos Mitsotakis wants to turn Greece into an energy center through its interconnection with Egypt and is preparing to present an ambitious project to the European market in order to meet the energy balance crisis caused by Russia's invasion of Ukraine.[2]

One of the most important details that stand out in the meeting is that the energy issue comes to the forefront. The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Egypt drew attention to the three-way cooperation in the fields of energy and natural gas discoveries in the Mediterranean and the importance of the electrical interconnection that will facilitate export of electricity from Egypt to the EU countries.[3]

The increasing political ties between Athens and Cairo are leading the parties to implement long-term projects. Because with the undersea cable project, which is thought to be implemented between Athens and Cairo, transport of electricity planned from Egypt to Greece.[4] The most important detail of this project is that it will unite the European and African continents on the transport of energy through Egypt and Greece. Through this undersea cable, electricity can be exported from Africa to Europe. Most of the electricity from Egypt will be used by Greece, and some of it will be exported to other European countries.[5]

The project is quite important for most EU countries, which are trying to reduce their dependence on Moscow for energy due to the Russia-Ukraine War. Therefore, through the project, it can be said that Greece and Egypt can increase their importance in European geopolitics in the context of energy security.

Greece has been trying to distinguish itself as a transit point on energy through the process, which started with the Russia-Ukraine War. Dendias' statement that Greece will become an energy center with the contributions of Egypt should be read as a reflection of this policy.

Moreover, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Greece draws attention to role of Egypt in the EU's energy security and in a way lobbies on behalf of Egypt within the EU. In this sense, it can be argued that the relations between Egypt and Greece have an EU dimension, and this issue increases the importance of Greece for Egypt. It has been revealed that Greek diplomats are carrying out activities aimed at preventing criticism of Egypt within the EU.[6] This shows why Greece is a very important partner for Egypt.

Another point that should be noted is that the United States (US) supports and encourages cooperation between Greece and Egypt. Former US Secretary of State John Kerry, in an interview with the Greek newspaper Kathimerini, said that the Athens administration is doing a terrific job, adding that the electricity connection coming from Egypt and possibly Saudi Arabia could be a game changer for Europe.[7]

Greece is trying to realize a similar project with Saudi Arabia that it aims to realize with Egypt. Athens and Riyadh have agreed on the implementation of an undersea data cable that will connect Europe and Asia in July 2022.[8] As can be seen, the examples of Egypt and Saudi Arabia are important in Greece's policy of turning the country in an energy hub. Greece underlines the fact that Europe and Africa will be united via Egypt, and Asia and Europe will be united through Saudi Arabia.

Additionally, it is seen that the relations improving between Greece and Egypt, especially in the context of energy, have begun to reflect on the fields of culture and sports. In this respect, it is noteworthy that Athens, Cairo and Riyadh's efforts to jointly host the FIFA World Cup to be held in 2030.[9] Therefore, it can be said that Greece and Egypt are trying to implement sports diplomacy in bilateral relations.

Consequently, there is a multifaceted relationship between Athens and Cairo in the political, economic and cultural fields, particularly in energy. During the meeting, it is seen that the Foreign Ministers of the two countries confirmed the strategic cooperation between Athens and Cairo. It is understood that Greece continues its policy of including the GCA as a third party in its bilateral relations with Egypt. In addition to all these, energy-oriented negotiations have revealed the conclusion that the cooperation between the parties will increase even more.

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ANKASAM ANALYSIS

The Effects of the Covid-19 Pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine War on Northern and Middle Corridor

The Covid-19 pandemic has led to an increase in freight rates in maritime trade from China to Europe, delays in trade operations, and significant increases in rail transport, which became a logical alternative after the restrictions. For example, in 2021, goods worth 79 billion euros were transported from east to west through railway. This amount is 50% higher than in 2020, and 10 times more than that in 2016.[1] Similarly, there was a 25% increase in rail freight from

Türkiye to Europe in 2020 compared to the year 2019.[2] This increase continued in 2021 as well.

The importance of the Middle Corridor starting from Türkiye and extending to Georgia, Azerbaijan and China through Kazakhstan following the Caspian transition with feeder ships, has increased significantly with the launch of the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars (BTK) Railway in 2017. Initially, the railway was projected to carry 1 million passen-



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gers and 6.5 million tons of cargo annually, and this annual capacity would reach 3 million passengers and 17 million tons of cargo by 2034.[3] While 267 thousand tons of freight was carried over the BTK line in 2020 with 309 trains, this number reached 480 thousand tons with 735 trains in 2021. Again, increase rate of the railway's freight transport capacity in 2021 is 80% more compared to 2020.[4]

In 2021, 29 thousand TEUs (20 feet container equivalent unit) of freight was transported through the Middle Corridor while 1.5 million TEUs was handled in the northern routes.[5] Although its capacity remains lower than the Northern Corridor, the amount of freight transported from the Middle Corridor has been increasing every year since the launch of the BTK in 2017. For example, compared to 2020, the number of containers transported in 2021 increased by 52%.[6] and by 30% in the first four months of 2022 compared to the same period of 2021.[7]

Considering the effect of the Russia-Ukraine War on the corridors, the war had severe consequences in global geopolitics: the safety of the railways was questioned, and the sanctions imposed on Moscow negatively affected some of Russia's neighbors including Kazakhstan as well as various European countries such as Poland, leading them to seek alternatives. For instance, due to the war, the project aiming the distribution of freight from the Northern Corridor mainly to Europe, and turning Poland into China's "gateway to Europe" was failed.[8] It is observed that Kazakhstan has inclined towards the Middle Corridor.[9] New Ro-Ro (transporting logistics vehicles by ships) lines have been opened or are planned to be opened in the Black Sea due to the formation of new lines by-passing Ukraine.[10]

From the point of Türkiye, it is necessary to address the Ro-Ro lines. In the first eight months of 2021, a total of 83,848 vehicles were handled by Ro-Ro ships in the Black Sea. This figure decreased to 64,235 in the same period of 2022.[11] In addition, following the beginning of the war, exports decreased by 40% to Russia, and by 80% to Ukraine.[12] The reason for the decrease is not the decrease in demand, but rather the risk emerging in the ports where regular Ro-Ro flights take place in the Black Sea.

Due to the closure of the Ukrainian route in Europe-Russia trade, Türkiye's favored position for shipping cargoes from Europe to Russia and Central Asia is replaced by the alternative Georgian route. The insufficient capacity of the border gates on the route caused the accumulation of freights. Some Ro-Ro shipping companies and associations working in the Black Sea have made requests for the opening of alternative routes (such as the Istanbul-Novorossiysk line) in order to prevent accumulation. Efforts on this subject still continue. In addition, the number of operations of some routes has been increased.[13]

As a result, the Northern Corridor line, which is responsible from the 4% of the 10 million containers annually shipped from China to Europe, remaining from the %96 transported by the sea, has reached[14] full capacity, and the importance of the Middle Corridor has increased accordingly. However, in order to increase export revenues, it is necessary to come up with railway-port integration plans for ports without railway infrastructure and to open additional Ro-Ro lines.

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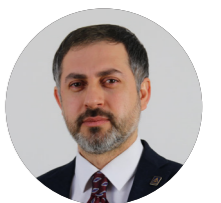
ANKASAM ANALYSIS

Armenia's Efforts to Create a Space for the US and France in The Caucasus

Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan paid an official visit to France on September 26, 2022. As it may be recalled, on September 13, 2022, the French President informed İlham Aliyev of Azerbaijan that he was willing to help resolve the problem between the two countries. In reality, before the visit in question, the French president has held a phone call with Pashinyan.

On September 29, 2022, Pashinyan accused that the allies of Yerevan had failed to deliver the weapons that Armenia had purchased. Pa-

shinyan, who did not name the country, stated that this is the painful truth and the situation should be analyzed.[1] One may claim that Pashinyan is looking for a Western ally given the statement of the Armenian leader and his visit to France. During his visit to Paris, Pashinyan met with President of France Emmanuel Macron. France is one of the nations with a sizable Armenian diaspora, as is well known. In order to win the support of the French Armenians, Macron also places a high value on his ties with Armenia. Macron called Aliyev on September



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27, 2022, and told him about the meeting that had taken place on September 26, 2022.

At the same time, Hikmet Hajiyev, Foreign Policy Adviser of Presidency of Azerbaijan, and Armen Grigoryan, the secretary of the Armenian Security Council, were brought together in Washington by Jake Sullivan, the National Security Advisor of the United States of America (USA). Grigoryan said the following in his statement about the meeting:[2]

“We have discussed the long-term peaceful settlement process of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, as well as the necessity of establishing peace in the region. We attached importance to the elimination of the consequences of the latest aggression.”

Hajiyev claimed that his encounter with Grigoryan was held in a productive atmosphere. The summit was organized with the intention of advancing the peace agenda, which includes developing a peace agreement, determining the border between the two nations, opening transportation routes and removing landmines, and searching for people who have gone missing during the Karabakh War. Sullivan’s evaluation of the interview was as follows:[3]

“Today, I hosted Hajiyev and Grigoryan for direct and constructive talks. We discussed the importance of avoiding further violence and pursuing time-bound and focused negotiations. We also identified concrete steps forward in support of a stable and lasting peace.”

Suren Papikyan, the defense minister for Armenia, traveled to France to meet with his French counterpart Sebastien Lecornu after the meeting in Washington, which is a noteworthy occurrence. “We talked about the circumstances required for the fighting to end and for the Azerbaijani forces to return to their original positions” said Papikyan.[4] Lecornu also declared that France would dispatch a military delegation to the Armenia-Azerbaijan border to assess the regional situation.[5]

During the Second Karabakh War, France actually stayed out of the developments in the South Caucasus. Despite positioning itself as the political ally of Yerevan, Paris has not participated in the conflict and hasn’t been able to exert its influence over it. On the other hand, it should be recalled that in 2020, Azerbaijan withdrew from the negotiations on the grounds that the Minsk Group, including France, was ineffective.

However, Russia made the decision to serve as a mediator in the Second Karabakh War and helped to sign the armistice. As a result, Moscow obtained the right to send peacekeepers to Karabakh with the permission of Baku and actively participated in the formation of the committee that would determine the border between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Armenia, on the other hand, sees Russia as responsible for its defeat in the war. As a matter of fact, after the war in 2020, it did not receive the support it expected from Russia in any of the border conflicts with Azerbaijan.

It is clear that Yerevan has increased its contacts with Western nations as a result of both its desire to leave Russia’s sphere of influence and the fact that it did not receive the support it had hoped for from that country. In this sense, Armenia is trying to position itself as the gateway of Washington and Paris to the South Caucasus.

Although Armenia is a member of the Collective Security Organization (CSTO), it has lost faith and trust in the alliance because the country did not receive any support from the alliance in the conflict back in 2020. Then, CSTO said that it would not get involved in the border conflict that broke out on September 13, 2022. For example, Kazakhstan has declared that although it is a member of the organization, it values relations with Azerbaijan and has fraternal ties with the Azerbaijani people.

On the other hand, Armenia has decided not to participate in the CSTO Exercise held in Kazakhstan in September 2022. Despite this, Armenia’s membership in the CSTO continues due to the fact that it has not yet fully established the desired relationship with the Western countries and due to the reaction of the opposition within the country.

As a result, geopolitical changes are taking place in the South Caucasus. Due to the current situation, Armenia is seeking a Western actor in this situation to provide security guarantees. It creates a suitable ground for the return of the West to the South Caucasus. Within this framework, Armenia’s main goal is to gain the support of the United States and France by creating a space in the region for them. The presence of strong Armenian diasporas in the relevant countries also gives hope to Yerevan. In other words, the growing concern in Yerevan that Russia is providing more support to Azerbaijan is pushing Armenia to get closer to the United States and France. Thanks to Armenia, Washington and Paris are also eager to participate in mediation efforts. This indicates that the influence of the West in the region may increase.

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ANKASAM ANALYSIS

Serbia's Efforts to Continue Multilateralism

Serbia, who tries to follow "neutral" and "balanced" policy in the Russian-Ukrainian War, has been in a dilemma within the European Union (EU) and Russia in that process. Currently, the Belgrade administration condemned Russia's invasion to Ukraine while persistently rejecting the sanctions of the EU towards Moscow, and aiming full membership to the Union. Aleksandar Vucic, the President of Serbia, who challenged to protect the relations with Russia, and the EU after the Ukrainian War, struggles to have a balanced foreign policy.

In 2007, Serbia declared itself as a neutral country,[1] and not lean towards to be a member to the military alliances such as North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). In addition, Serbia follows a foreign policy that aims to develop good relations with the EU, the United States (US), Russia and China. However, Russian-Ukrainian War caused significant fragility for the foreign policy of the country. Thus, the relationship with the EU and Russia, which is a strategic element for Belgrade, is negatively affected from this process.



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After the beginning of the Ukrainian War, Vucic has indicated that the sanctions against Russia is contradicting with the interest of the countries; however, he expressed that they are defending the territorial integrity of Ukraine.[2] Besides, both pro-Ukrainian and pro-Russian[3] protests in Serbia[4] showed the division within the society. Therefore, Serbia's determination of not applying sanctions to Russia continues. One of the basic reasons of rejecting this is that the historical connection between the two countries. Thus, Serbia and Russia have religious, cultural and ethnic similarities.

On the other hand, another reason why Serbia does not apply sanctions is dependency on Russia in terms of gas. Because, even though there is a pressure on Vucic, he indicated that they were going to purchase gas from Russia in an acceptable price on May 29, 2022, and they are going to sign a three-year gas agreement with Moscow.[5]

The biggest reaction for the agreement was from the EU. In the explanation of High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Josep Borrell on May 16, 2022, it is expressed that there is a demand for Serbia to join the sanctions against Russia and harmonize their foreign policy with the EU.[6] In such a process, it can be said that Belgrade took a reef for preventing the membership process to the EU and soften the reactions coming from the union. Thus, in his speech in the oath-taking ceremony on May 31, 2022 Vucic said that his country will be on the path of the membership to the EU and referred to join to the sanctions in the following periods.[7]

Right after this explanation, it is indicated that on June 6-7, 2022 the Minister of Foreign Affairs Russia Sergey Lavrov is going to visit Belgrade. In fact, the visit, of which Vucic is pleased, was cancelled due to the decision of Bulgaria, Montenegro, and North Macedonia not allowing the passage of the Lavrov's plane, and this led Vucic to be freed of reactions may come from the West.[8]

After the UN Generally Assembly Meeting in New York on September 23, 2022, Serbia signed an agreement with Russia on bilateral negotiations on foreign policy was the final straw for the EU. Brussels strongly condemned the "Negotiation Plan" signed by Foreign Ministers of the two countries. On September 26, 2022, the Speaker of the European Commission Peter Stano expressed that Serbia could not strengthen its ties with Russia, as a country negotiating with the EU for membership. Moreover, he expressed that the agreement causes some concerns.[9]

On the other hand, in the news in European media, it is expressed that European Parliament will ask for suspension of the negotiations for membership with Serbia in the meetings in October 2022.[10] Therefore, it can be said that the latest agreement between Serbia and Russia caused pressure on Belgrade from the EU.

As a result, Belgrade does not want to lose the support of Russia in the United Nations Security Council by applying sanctions on Russia. Therefore, it is observed that Serbia is decided to maintain its relations with Russia even there are pressures from the West. However, the Belgrade administration, who does not choose to turn to the West faces a serious dilemma. Because Belgrade does not want to lose both Moscow and Brussels, and in that sense tries to follow a multilateral and multidimensional diplomacy, and forced to make a choice.

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ANKASAM ANALYSIS

Does the US Want a Civil War in Afghanistan?

On September 29, 2022, the United States (US) Special Envoy to Afghanistan Tom West suggested that there is a possibility of a resumption of the civil war in Afghanistan.[1] This statement once again brought up the debates that the US wanted to drag Afghanistan into civil war. Because, although the US withdrew from

Afghanistan in August 2021, it continues its steps to prevent stability in the country.

At this point, the Taliban administration, which has been ruling Afghanistan for more than a year, has not been recognized by any state or international organization. In this case, it is ef-



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fective that the US is a prime player of the international system and that the international community is largely looking at the Washington administration's attitude toward relations with the Taliban.

The US, aside from taking steps to pave the way for recognition; continues to make moves that will deepen chaotic situation in the country in question. It can be claimed that the US was preparing to say "We have withdrawn from your country, but you have failed to manage it," to the Taliban, to whom the US has failed to destroy during the twenty-year period of military intervention and ultimately had to negotiate in Qatar's capital, Doha.

As a matter of fact, the US, despite its withdrawal from Afghanistan, first blocked national reserves of the country in question and then transferred them to a Swiss-based bank under the name of "Afghan Fund." The Fund is envisaged to fulfill the function of the Central Bank of Afghanistan.[2] In this sense, absence of Taliban in the fund creates a Taliban reality that is excluded from Afghanistan's monetary policies. In a sense, there is a situation where the Taliban, who is in power in Afghanistan, is prevented from being the government by the US. This brings along inadequacy of the Taliban in eliminating employment problems and resulting poverty in the country. At this point, it can be argued that the game the US wants to establish aims to make Afghan people, who are impoverished every day, rebel against Taliban administration.

In fact, countries in the region are aware of this plan of the US. As a matter of fact, statements made by representatives of Russia, China and Pakistan at the United Nations (UN) meeting on Afghanistan on September 28, 2022 are very important in terms of revealing this awareness. For example, in her assessment of Afghan Fund, Anna Vestinian, Russia's Permanent Representative to the UN, said, "Reportedly, this money will not be accessible by Afghan authorities and will be spent on some temporary socio-economic and humanitarian projects. We call on the stolen assets to be returned to the Afghan people immediately." [3] Again, within the framework of same awareness, Moscow administration approved grain and oil exports to Afghanistan in order to prevent the deepening of economic problems in Afghanistan.[4]

Similarly, on September 28, 2022, Spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China Wang Wenbin made statements about the Afghan Problem and called on international community to

act objectively on Afghanistan. In this context, Wenbin stated that social order in the country in question was gradually restored and drew attention to negative consequences of steps to isolate Afghanistan from international community.[5]

It can be stated that Pakistan has the same perspective. The statements made by Pakistani Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari on September 28, 2022 are extremely important in terms of showing the perspective of the Islamabad administration, which thinks that the solution of Afghanistan-centered problems can be overcome with an approach based on cooperation. Zardari said that the international community should improve its relations with the Taliban instead of isolating Afghanistan. In addition, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Pakistan stated that national reserves of Afghanistan belong to the Afghan people. According to Zardari, he argued that the isolation of Afghanistan would benefit radical terrorist organizations.[6]

It should be emphasized that Zardari's stance is shared by other regional states. As a matter of fact, states such as Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and India, instead of humanitarian aid activities, project-based cooperation and isolating the Taliban from the international community; express at every opportunity that they are ready to contribute to Afghanistan's stability, security, peace and prosperity thanks to their attitudes that develop de-facto cooperation and carries out a proactive diplomacy. At this point, the reality that the isolation of Afghanistan, which Zardari draws attention to, will benefit radical terrorist organizations, should be opened to discussion along with the West's claims that a civil war may break out in Afghanistan.

It seems that the US wants to drag Afghanistan into a civil war by isolating Afghanistan from international community, by making moves that will deepen poverty in the country, and by taking steps to make it difficult for the Taliban to overcome the recognition problem. For example, the United States wishes to abolish visa liberalization and expand sanctions on Taliban rulers.[7] In this regard, the Washington administration is vetoed by Russia and China, permanent members of the UN Security Council.

Another issue that deepens recognition problem of Taliban is the air operations carried out by the US in Afghanistan within the framework of the alleged fight against the terrorist organization Al Qaeda. In particular, killing of the leader of Al-Qaeda terrorist organization, Ayman Al-Zawahiri, in an attack in Kabul

brought along discussions that Taliban violated the Doha Agreement and increased pressure of the international community on Taliban administration.

Moreover, it is possible to suggest that the US also encourages radicalization in Afghanistan. For the images showing that the terrorists who are members of terrorist organization State al-Iraq and al-Sham (DEASH) in Syria and Iraq were transported to Afghanistan under the American escort, have preserved their place in memories. As a matter of fact, main actor who took advantage of the power gap after US withdrew from the country in question was the DEASH terrorist organization. That's why, the US can use this terrorist organization as a means of increasing ethnic and sectarian violence. Because there is a claim that one of the targets of Washington administration in process of withdrawal from Afghanistan is the increase of radicalization in country, this radicalization causes regional chaos, on one hand, through Wakhan Corridor to China; on the other hand, its spread to Muslims of Russia through Central Asia. Frankly, Beijing administration is the key actor who defies the global hegemony of the United States, and Moscow is the historical "other" that provides the consensual element of American leadership, which increases the accuracy of such claims. The common-sense approaches of the regional states that are taking care to bring Afghanistan to the ground of co-operation are closely related to the risk they see.

As a result, it can be considered that West's words that there may be civil war in Afghanistan are a confession to the plans of the US, or a sign in the least of all terms. The Washington administration may want to drag the region into chaos, and therefore, as a geopolitical significance, it may aim to bring Afghanistan, which is the heart of Eurasia, back into a civil war. But the constructive position of regional states to attract Afghanistan to an environment of international cooperation through projects makes it difficult for Washington to do so.

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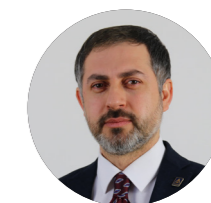
ANKASAM ANALYSIS

NATO Membership Issue of Ukraine

On September 30, 2022, Russia has annexed Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia, and Kherson by referendums, which are obsolete in terms of international law. After these developments, the members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) indicated that there will be new steps taken against Russia. In that context, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, the President of Ukraine, has declared that the country has signed application to be a member of NATO.

This document was signed by Ruslan Stefanuchuk, Chairman of the Verkhovna Rada, a.k.a. President of the Parliament of Ukraine, and by Denys Shmyhal, Prime Minister of Ukraine. Zelenskyy has said in the following, in his statement regarding the topic:[1]

"De facto, we have already completed our path to NATO. De facto, we have already proven interoperability with the Alliance's standards,



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they are real for Ukraine – real on the battlefield and in all aspects of our interaction... Today, Ukraine is applying to make it de jure. Under a procedure consistent with our significance for the protection of our entire community. Under an accelerated procedure.”

In addition, Zelenskyy added that, before NATO members build consensus on membership of the Ukraine, Kiev's getting security guarantees is needed.[2] Jens Stoltenberg, the Secretary General of NATO, has reminded in a press conference that the Alliance is not a part of the conflict in Ukraine, and they do not recognize the attempts of Russia to integrate the regions by holding referendum; moreover, he expressed that Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson are still accepted as Ukraine's territory.[3] In that context, Stoltenberg has made a statement that, “The annexation of the territories does not show strength, it shows weakness.”[4] At the same time, he warned Russia that the country will face “serious consequences” if it uses nuclear weapons.

On the other hand, Stoltenberg has answered question on whether the Alliance supports Ukraine's application to the Alliance. In that sense, Stoltenberg has expressed the following words, which show that in the current conjuncture, membership is not taken kindly:[5]

“Every democracy in Europe has the right to apply for NATO membership, and NATO Allies respect that right. And we have stated again and again that NATO's door remains open. And we have demonstrated that over the last years. NATO Allies, when they met at the NATO Summit in Madrid, stated also very clearly, that we support Ukraine's right to choose its own path, to decide what kind of security arrangements it wants to be part of. Then, a decision on membership, of course has to be taken by all 30 Allies and we take these decisions by consensus.”

A similar declaration was received from the White House as well. On September 30, 2022, the United States (US) National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan evaluated the Ukraine's application for membership to the NATO:[6]

“The US has been clear for decades that we support an open-door policy for NATO. Any decision on NATO membership is between the 30 allies and the countries aspiring to join. Right now, our view is that the best way for us to support Ukraine is through practical, on-the-ground support in Ukraine and that the process in Brussels should be taken up at a different time”

The US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken also indicated that the policy of the Washington Administration did not change, in a press conference on September 30, 2022, and answering a question on a possible decision to accept Ukraine to NATO, he said that they are supporting the NATO's “Open-door policy”, yet there is a process that the countries must follow in that sense. [7] At that point, the sincerity of the US and the NATO's policy towards Ukraine can be discussed. This situation arises from the issue that if Ukraine legally becomes a member of the NATO, Russia and the NATO will directly envisage. Because, that kind of development could evolve into a process, where the conflicts would take place not only in the east and the south of the Ukraine, but also in all the fronts of Europe to Russia, and in Arctics. In fact, this scenario is to Kiev's benefit. That's why, Ukraine desires to be a member of the NATO as soon as possible. However, even the US and the NATO provide military aid to Ukraine, they avoid to directly contravene with Russia. At that point, using Ukraine as a proxy actor seems more acceptable for them.

On the other hand, Ukraine's accelerated application to be a member of the NATO means that the Kiev administration renounced the decision of being out of the bloc, which was signed in the Istanbul Agreement. Therefore, if the war ends, the membership process of the country could be escalated. As it is known, the main reason of Russia is to block the NATO membership of Ukraine. In fact, it is one of the reasons of the war. That's why, Kiev shows that they are determinant to be a member with the application, against Russia.

As a result, Russia's referendum in Ukraine has increased the interest of Kiev on NATO, and resulted in full-membership application. However, the NATO has responded the application positively; however, they do not lean towards the membership in the current conjuncture at least in the current situation.

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Western Balkan Countries' Intelligence Capabilities Under the Looming Shadow of Increasing Cyberattacks

The intelligence agencies and their activities play a crucial role in maintaining national security and foreseeing potential dangers and threats. Intelligence, in its most basic definition, is the gathering of information, news, and data, as well as their classification, processing, and output generation. In this sense, intelligence is characterized as the presentation of the ob-

tained outputs to decision-makers. Therefore, intelligence plays a role in policy making. Many sources are used when performing intelligence operations. There are various classifications available, such as intelligence obtained from human-based sources, intelligence based on geographical data, and intelligence obtained from open sources. In this context, intelligence



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activities carried out through cyberspace are also referred to as “cyber intelligence.” Cyberspace, or the “cyber realm,” is now a part of modern society, government, and state affairs. Most institutions’ infrastructure now functions by being connected to the world wide web. Many operations at the state level are carried out in the virtual world, and therefore a large amount of data is located in the virtual world. This brings with it a number of risks and threats.

In this context, many situations, ranging from data theft to destruction and damage to systems by unauthorized access to these infrastructures to harm states and their institutions, are characterized as cyber threats or “attacks.” While the sources of cyber-attacks are sometimes various groups and organizations, states often carry out cyber-attacks against other states. As a matter of fact, the number and extent of cyber-attacks against Western Balkan countries such as Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Albania, Kosovo and Serbia have recently increased.[1]

In addition to threaten national security, cyber-attacks also expose intelligence vulnerabilities in the relevant countries. The area has become a test site for cyberattacks due to its inability to detect attacks, respond in a timely fashion, and take the appropriate precautions.

When cyber-attacks against the countries of the region are examined, it is understood that attacks are carried out through ransomware. A cyber group targeted the Serbian city of Novi Sad in 2020 and used ransomware to encrypt its administration systems. It demanded payment to end the attack. Later, with the intervention of a company based in Serbia, the attack was brought under control.[2]

Another example of an attack was seen in North Macedonia in July 2020. Attacks were made on election commissions’ websites on election day, which sparked a lot of speculations.[3] Even though the election was held in a democratic context, the fact that the cyberattack happened right after the polls were closed, has cast a shadow over the trust in the results. Moreover, the fact that this attack could not be detected in advance has revealed North Macedonia’s lack of cybersecurity.

The fact that this incident occurred just a few months after Macedonia joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in March 2020 is also significant. However, other NATO allies in the region are also the target of cyberattacks. For example, Montenegro, which has been a NATO member since 2017, was

subjected to an intensive cyber-attack in August 2022. As a result of attacks on the servers of state-owned sites, the internet pages of many public institutions crashed and the infrastructures of these sites were damaged. In the first statements made after the incident, authorities of Montenegro suggested that a Russia-based group may be behind the attacks.[4]

It should be mentioned that, despite the fact that the Russian-Ukrainian War is still ongoing, it is still possible that Moscow was taken up such an attack. It might be said that the Kremlin views Montenegro, which has been unfriendly towards Russia since 2017, as an adversary or a threat. However, as a result of the investigations carried out, it was revealed that a criminal organization called “Cuba Ransomware” was taken up the attacks.[5]

On the other hand, according to the statement of the Government of Kosovo on February 26, 2022, the nation had been the target of “phishing”, meaning that it was an e-fraud attempt. [6] Furthermore, during the attack that occurred in September 2022, access to the internet for Kosovo’s official institutions was blocked, and the situation was brought under control thanks to the authorities’ intervention.

Bosnia and Herzegovina, which is contending with rising nationalist and separatist rhetoric, is one of the nations that claimed to be a target of cyberattacks. In a statement made by the Intelligence-Security Organization of Bosnia and Herzegovina (OSA BiH), it was stated that a “hybrid war” was being waged against public institutions and that attacks on OSA BiH had increased recently. It has been emphasized that the goal of these attacks is to destabilize the nation.[7] Albania, on the other hand, has faced various cyber-attacks since July 2022. While these cyberattacks have prevented access to the official internet pages of public institutions, there have also been issues with the customs control system. The analyses revealed that these attacks were highly organized and sophisticated. The justification for these attacks was Albania’s status as a NATO ally and its ongoing European integration process. The attacks were carried out by Iran, according to Microsoft, which worked with the Albanian government on the matter. As a result, Tirana has severed diplomatic ties with Tehran and labeled Iranian diplomats stationed there as “persona non grata.”[8]

When these developments are taken into consideration, it can be argued that the majority of the Western Balkan countries anticipated cyberattacks but lacked the resources to defend against them. The intelligence services’ limited capabilities in

the relevant nations are arguably the main cause of this. Because these governments, which entered a period of transition when Yugoslavia collapsed, have yet to be able to establish some of its institutions on a firm foundation. Institutions like these include intelligence agencies.

The region has not yet achieved sustainable stability and has not advanced economically enough, which is the fundamental cause of the condition. For example, OSA BiH, one of the intelligence agencies of Bosnia and Herzegovina, is still making headlines with alleged corruption. Additionally, this undermines public confidence in the organization. Furthermore, one of the things that undermines trust is the detention of OSA BiH Director Osman Mehmedagic for prior abuse of his office.[9] Additionally, Bosnia and Herzegovina’s political system’s complicated decision-making processes and its cumbersome bureaucracy hinder institutional performance. In addition to all of these issues, intelligence agencies’ active activity is hampered by the lack of communication among institutions in the region’s nations. This prevents these institutions from fulfilling their duties in situations that require rapid response, such as cyber-attacks. In short, cyber-attacks pose a serious threat to the security of the region and the sustainability of stability. In fact, these assaults on governmental institutions have the potential to revive long-standing issues in the area.

The region has recently seen an increase in cyberattacks, which has prompted the countries to seek international collaboration because the lack of capacity in the region made it necessary. In this context, the Western Balkan Digital Security Forum, which was held in Estonia in June 2022, is very important in terms of seeking cooperation.[10] While placing a strong emphasis on collaboration, it was also stressed that money spent on cyber security should be viewed as an investment.

In addition, it was stated that the relevant legislation should be reformed in the Western Balkan countries in terms of building capacity for cybersecurity and intelligence. The Western Balkan nations, on the other hand, have started to work on building “resilience” against cyberattacks in the region, according to a statement from the European Union (EU) Cybernet.[11] In this perspective, strengthening the cyber security competence and resilience of the Union is intimately tied to the significance the EU accords to cyber security. It is also noteworthy that the United States Cyber Command (USCYBERCOM) and Montenegro are carrying out a joint work in the field of cyber security towards the end of 2019. This shows the importance that the US attaches to cyber security in the region.

As a result, while the reflections of the Russia-Ukraine War, which continues with increasing violence, are observed in various dimensions in the Western Balkans. By utilizing the weaknesses of the states as an advantage, actors with interests in the region, like Russia, take action to exacerbate instability. As it was already mentioned, although recent efforts have been made to improve capacity in the field of cyber security, the region still needs time to develop its intelligence agencies and protection against cyberattacks.

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3 October 2022

Ankara Center for Crisis and Policy Studies (ANKASAM) President Prof. Dr. Mehmet Seyfettin Erol's article titled "Türkmenistan İnsani Diplomasi ve Barışın Kalpgâhi" was published in Aydınlık Newspaper.

4 October 2022

Ankara Center for Crisis and Policy Studies (ANKASAM) International Relations Advisor Dr. Kadir Ertaç Çelik evaluated Ukraine's NATO membership application to Haber Global.

4 October 2022

Ankara Center for Crisis and Policy Studies (ANKASAM) Chief Energy Advisor Dr. Cenk Pala evaluated the energy crisis in Europe in the Gündüz Kuşağı program on TVNet.

5 October 2022

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

5 October 2022

Ankara Center for Crisis and Policy Studies (ANKASAM) Eurasia Expert Sibel Mazrek evaluated the election results in Bosnia and Herzegovina for Haber Global.

5 October 2022

Ankara Center for Crisis and Policy Studies (ANKASAM) International Relations Advisor Dr. Kadir Ertaç Çelik evaluated the tension on the Turkey-Greece line to the Ulusal Kanal.

5 October 2022

Ankara Center for Crisis and Policy Studies (ANKASAM) Eurasia Expert Dr. Sabir Askeroğlu evaluated the "partial mobilization" decision of Russian President Vladimir Putin to Yeni Akit.

5 October 2022

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

5 October 2022

Ankara Center for Crisis and Policy Studies (ANKASAM) Chief Advisor Prof. Dr. Cem Karadeli evaluated Greece's attitude towards NATO to TRT News.

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5 October 2022

ANKASAM Chief Advisor to the President, Retired Ambassador Aydın Nurhan, evaluated the current developments in foreign policy on CNN Türk.

6 October 2022

Ankara Center for Crisis and Policy Studies (ANKASAM) Eurasia Expert Dr. Sabir Askeroğlu evaluated the latest developments in the Azerbaijan-Armenia line to TVNet.

6 October 2022

Ankara Center for Crisis and Policy Studies (ANKASAM) Eurasia Specialist Sibel Mazrek evaluated the rise of the far right in Europe to Kanal B.

8 October 2022

Ankara Center for Crisis and Policy Studies (ANKASAM) International Relations Advisor Dr. Kadir Ertaç Çelik evaluated the developments in the Eastern Mediterranean for On 4 Television.



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

The latest issue of the Journal of Regional Studies, an international peer-reviewed journal operating within the Ankara Crisis and Political Research Center (ANKASAM), has been published. Our journal is scanned by Academic Keys, ASOS Index, CEEOL, Cite Factor, DRJI, Index Copernicus, Ideal Online, Research Bible, Index and TUBITAK DERGIPARK databases. You can reach our journal via the link below.

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