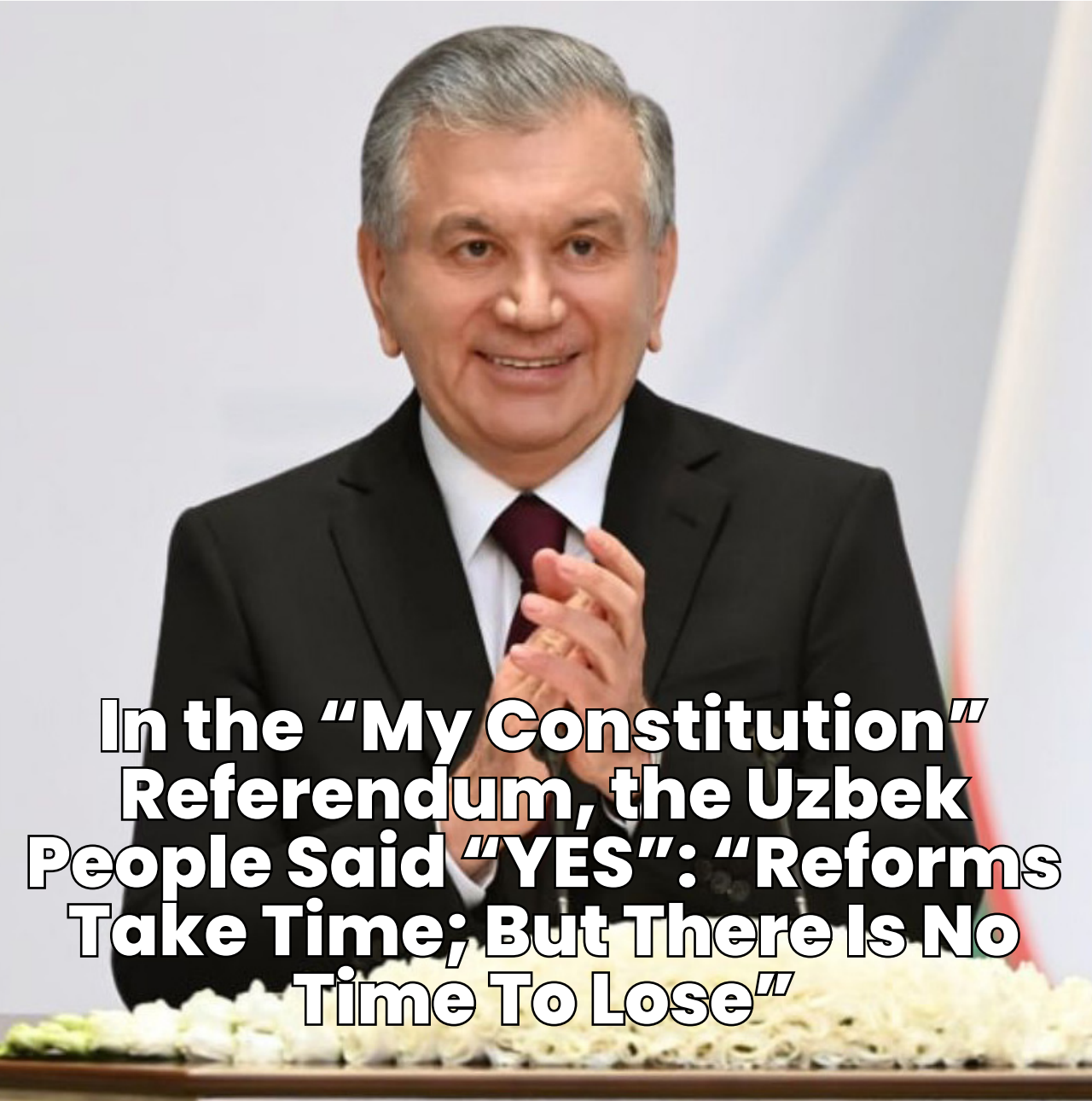




# ANKASAM

## bulletin

7 May 2023  
ISSUE: 2023/18



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## ANKASAM OUTLOOK

# In the “My Constitution” Referendum, the Uzbek People Said “YES”: “Reforms Take Time; But There Is No Time To Lose”

The referendum, which provided for the updating of 65 percent of the Constitution in Uzbekistan on April 30, 2023, was adopted with 90.21 percent as a result of the vote in which 84.54 percent of the people participated. Thus, the emphasis on the “secular and social state” has

been included in the Constitution of Uzbekistan, the infrastructure of the free market order has been strengthened to promise the Uzbek people a prosperous future, the democratization process has been accelerated through the transfer of the powers of the President to the



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Parliament, and important rights from intellectual property to inclusive education have been guaranteed. With this Constitutional referendum, the “Social Contract” has been renewed and further strengthened. Therefore, the country, which is experiencing the “Third Renaissance” period under the leadership of President Shevket Mirziyoyev, has crossed an important threshold in the process of building a “New Uzbekistan”.

The country’s Central Election Commission announced that the New Constitution entered into force on May 1, 2023 with the finalization of the referendum results. From now on, the New Uzbekistan, in accordance with its New Constitution, will come to the fore with the following characteristics.

Strong social protection and populist reforms will become an important focus of public policy.

Uzbekistan is defined as a state governed by the rule of law, and human rights and freedoms are constitutionally guaranteed.

Uzbekistan has been described as a social state.

The right and opportunity to receive education have been expanded, teachers have been granted constitutional status, and the right of citizens to study with scholarships at higher education institutions has been constitutionally guaranteed.

The creation of social, economic, legal and other conditions for the full development of the family by the state is constitutionally strengthened.

Everyone is guaranteed the right to receive a fair wage for their work, without any discrimination and not less than the minimum wage. The death penalty is prohibited at the constitutional level, and it has been emphasized that even the state does not have the right to deprive a person of his life.

The right of everyone legally located on the territory of Uzbekistan to move freely within the country, to stay and to freely choose their place of residence has been strengthened.

It is guaranteed that the state will create the necessary conditions for citizens to use the Internet network.

The protection of youth rights and the promotion of active participation of young people in society and state life are guaranteed.

The protection of competitive national economy, private entrepreneurship and property rights is guaranteed by the constitution.

Strengthening of an effective, holistic and human-friendly state administration and parliamentarism will be ensured for the people to live in prosperity and the stable development of the state. In this context, the powers of the Legislative Assembly and the Senate have been significantly expanded.

The guarantees regarding the activities of lawyers have been strengthened, and a separate section has been included in the Constitution on the guarantees regarding the institution of lawyers and the activities of lawyers.

A great constitutional opportunity and strong protection have been provided for the media and journalists to be more active.

For the first time, a separate section on non-governmental organizations has been established in the Constitution, and guarantees regarding the activities of NGOs have been established.

Considering the public interest in the referendum, it can be stated that the reforms implemented by Mr. Mirziyoyev within the framework of the “New Uzbekistan” vision after he became President in 2016 and the goals set out in the “2022–2026 Development Strategy”, which constitute the first stage in this context, have been accepted by the Uzbek people. With its interest in the referendum, the people of Uzbekistan have shown that they have internalized the slogan “My Constitution–My State” with a strong democratic consciousness, trust the system and the ballot box, prefer a stable development, and therefore their choice is in favor of political stability and a strong future. With this referendum, the Uzbek people said “yes” to the Constitutional revision, which forms the basis of the “New Uzbekistan Vision” and strengthens the unity of the nation-state.

As it is known, Uzbekistan has built the referendum process on the discourse of the “People’s Constitution” and in this context, the draft Constitution has been prepared taking into account the views of the people. The fact that the public has made 222,715 suggestions to the website established on the subject is also an important indicator of the success in this process and the participation of the public in political processes. As a matter of fact, in accordance with the above-mentioned proposals, a draft was created that increased the Constitutional articles from 128 to 155 and the norms from 275 to 434, and this draft was submitted for public approval.

The strong approval given by the people of Uzbekistan to the process of building a “New Uzbekistan” through a referendum is actually a concrete result of the most democratic operation of this process in such a way as to strengthen state–nation unity. The state has managed to get down to the people with this step, which can be described as a first at the point of democratization. As a matter of fact, for the first time in the history of the country, a Constitutional amendment has been submitted for public approval. Of course, this situation can be interpreted as the success of Mr. Mirziyoyev, the leader of the “Third Renaissance” and the “New Uzbekistan Movement”, which centered on man.

As it can be understood, on the occasion of the referendum dated April 30, 2023, Uzbekistan has set a good example in terms of the expression “a state that integrates with the people on the way to democratization”. For this reason, it can be argued that the referendum was a turning point in terms of strengthening the “center–periphery” relations.

Undoubtedly, the democratization process is also of critical importance in terms of opening up and integrating the Uzbek people and Uzbekistan to the world. In this sense, the referendum is a harbinger of Uzbekistan’s position as a strong and respected state in the process of building a new world order. Accordingly, it can be predicted that Uzbekistan will come to the fore as an example of a strong democracy and, in this context, it will turn into a strong economic model in which the free market order functions in a healthy way. This will bring about the transformation of Uzbekistan, which has become a stable and reliable country in the eyes of investors, into a center of attraction.

Therefore, the spirit of the 2017–2022 Action Strategy and the 2022–2026 Development Strategy, which constitute the initial steps of the “New Uzbekistan” vision in many areas from agriculture to industry, textiles to tourism, and the goal of building a prosperous society and a strong state, have been launched with the approval of the people. Now there is a new process in question. It is of great importance that the reforms are implemented decisively and successfully. Expectations and attention on a national and international basis will undoubtedly be at this point. Therefore, a new process has been entered into in which the reform steps will be implemented carefully, decisively and successfully.

As a result, Mr. Mirziyoyev said, “Reforms take time, but there is no time to lose.” in line with his motto, it can be foreseen that it will continue to act with an approach that considers human capital as the most important resource and therefore puts people at the center. At this point, it can be argued that the construction of a social state and the democratization environment supported by a strong parliament will strengthen state–nation unity and put center–periphery relations on a healthy footing. This is very important because it indicates that the Uzbek people will move forward with confident steps towards their lofty goals.



## ANKASAM ANALYSIS

# The Importance of Central Asia in South Korea's Foreign Policy

South Korea is one of the major economic powers in the Asia-Pacific region and has the capacity to influence regional equations. The Seoul administration, which has become a global actor through the policies it has pursued in its development and growth process, is de-

veloping its relations with various regions and countries in different ways. In this context, one of the geographies that Seoul has turned to is Central Asia

As a matter of fact, the 15th meeting of the



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South Korea-Central Asia Cooperation Forum, which was initiated in 2007 and held with the participation of foreign ministers, was held in Busan on October 25, 2022. Among the issues discussed at the meeting are cooperation in the energy, digital technology, economic security, tourism and health sectors. In this sense, the meeting summarizes South Korea's approach to Central Asia.[1] In addition, there are six main goals that South Korea has adopted for Central Asia. Goals that include medium and long-term plans include:[2]

Transportation and Logistics: Creation of logistic transportation centers and complex terminals

Energy: Rational use and creation of renewable energy sources

Industry: Modernization and diversification of the industrial system, and thus the creation of special economic zones and privatization of public enterprises in this process

Climate Change: Taking ecology-based steps, forestry against desertification and creation of ecological raw material complex

Health and Medicine: Improving infrastructure and doctor replacement

Education-Culture: Establishment of a network of modern managers and increasing cultural contacts

In this context, South Korea has shown that it attaches importance to developing a multifaceted relationship with Central Asia. In fact, when some topics are examined, the importance of Central Asia in South Korea's foreign policy will be understood more clearly.

South Korea is a state that does not have underground resources in terms of energy. For example, it imports about 98% of its fossil fuel needs. It also does not have any oil or gas pipelines. For this reason, it meets its needs by sea with tankers. While a significant part of the energy produced in the country is based on renewable energy sources; This amount is insufficient and dependent on the outside for fossil resources.[3] For this reason, one of the countries recently targeted by South Korea, which wants to be included in energy projects in Central Asia, is Turkmenistan.[4]

According to 2021 data, South Korea, which has a population of approximately 51.7 million, has a gross domestic product (GDP) of 1.81 trillion dollars.[5] In this respect, it can be said that South Korea is an economically developed country. It is also known that South Korea's various internationally operating companies have a significant trade volume.

Predictably, Seoul wants to develop its relations with the capitals of Central Asia with an industrial dimension. This is due to the desire to build a more integrated economy. In addition, the various underground riches and raw materials in the region are also important for the stability of the South Korean economy. Because it can be said that the Seoul administration is trying to take measures against the increasing tensions in world politics by expanding and deepening its commercial and industrial relations within the framework of economic security.

Climate change and increasing ecological problems are directly and indirectly threatening various regions of the world. While Central Asia is facing the problems of drought and desertification, South Korea is struggling with issues such as air pollution, nuclear waste, and deterioration in water quality. In this context, South Korea aims to become one of the important countries in topics such as green policy, renewable energy, greenhouse gas emissions, waste management, and technology to reduce climate change.[6]

These characteristics and the problems it suffer serve to strengthen the "green" bond between Seoul and Central Asia. It can be said that South Korea wants to create an influence in the region in this regard.

One of the sources of the importance South Korea attaches to Central Asia is security and geopolitical competition. Today, the Seoul administration takes a fundamentally peaceful stance in its foreign policy. However, South Korea received support from the United States of America (USA) during the Korean War between 1950 and 1953; the Soviet Union and China also supported North Korea. Therefore, while South Korea has close relations with the West; It also establishes relations with China within a pragmatist framework. This situation causes distrust between states and brings about various question marks about security and geopolitical competition. Central Asia is also a geography that Seoul attaches importance to because it is both in the west of China and a region where various actors are trying to establish influence.

As a result, Central Asia holds critical importance in South Korea's foreign policy for various reasons and objectives. Energy, economy, industry, and geopolitical competition are particularly prominent topics. The various riches of Central Asia are significant for Seoul while its proximity means reduced costs in acquiring underground resources. In addition, South Korea closely monitors the liberalization process in Central Asia for economic security amidst increasing global tension. It can be said that Central Asian states are attracted to Seoul's high economic and technological capacity. In this context, it can be expressed that the relationship between the parties will further strengthen, and the importance of Central Asia in South Korea's foreign policy will increase.

[1] Yi Wonju, "S. Korea, 5 Central Asian Nations Discuss Cooperation on 30th Anniversary of Diplomatic Relations", Yonhap News Agency, <https://en.yna.co.kr/view/AEN20221025004000325>, (Date of Accession: 25.04.2023).

[2] Ainura Akmatallieva, "Central Asia and South Korea: Seeking Opportunities for Increased Cooperation", CABAR, <https://cabar.asia/en/central-asia-and-south-korea-seeking-opportunities-for-increased-cooperation>, (Date of Accession: 25.04.2023).

[3] "South Korea", U.S. Energy Information Administration, <https://www.eia.gov/international/overview/country/KOR>, (Date of Accession: 25.04.2023).

[4] "South Korean Companies Eye in Gas Projects in Turkmenistan", Azarnews, [https://www.azernews.az/oil\\_and\\_gas/209015.html](https://www.azernews.az/oil_and_gas/209015.html), (Date of Accession: 25.04.2023).

[5] "Korea, Rep.", The World Bank, <https://data.worldbank.org/country/korea-rep?view=chart>, (Date of Accession: 25.04.2023).

[6] Brett Smith, "South Korea: Environmental Issues, Policies and Clean Technology", AZO Cleantech, <https://www.azocleantech.com/article.aspx?ArticleID=552>, (Erişim Tarihi: 25.04.2023); "25 Years of Ambitious Environmental Reform", OECD, <https://www.oecd.org/country/korea/thematic-focus/25-years-of-ambitious-environmental-reform-16cde12d/>, (Date of Accession: 25.04.2023).



## ANKASAM ANALYSIS

# South Korea's Proactive Foreign Policy in the Context of Dangers in the Asia-Pacific Region

The Asia-Pacific Region is one of the regions where global security is most fragile and therefore attracts the attention of world public opinion. As a matter of fact, there are many problematic issues in the region, such as Taiwan, South China Sea, Kuril Islands, Dokdo and Take-shima Islands, Comfort women, compensation cases against the Japanese occupation, and instability in the Korean Peninsula. Among them, North Korea's nuclear and ballistic missile tests are of great concern, especially in terms of the globality of the threat it poses.

On March 16, 2023, the South Korean Government called the National Security Council for an urgent meeting after North Korea launched a new missile. South Korean President Yoon Suk-Yeol has strongly condemned North Korea's nuclear and ballistic missile tests. Yoon said that Pyongyang would pay for its provocations and that the trials created severe security concerns regionally and globally.[1] At the same time, it was reported that Yoon ordered the South Korean army to conduct joint exercises with the United States of America (USA) to continue



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its preparations against North Korea. It was also reported that Yoon wanted Japan, the United States, and South Korea to promote their security cooperation.[2]

South Korea cannot get results from the denuclearization efforts on the Korean Peninsula and calls for dialogue and negotiation with North Korea. Pyongyang hardens both its rhetoric and actions and continues to make threatening statements. For this reason, Seoul is in search of a new method. It can be stated that the main reason for all this is to ensure the national and regional security of South Korea. It can be argued that the United States has an essential place in the different methods that Seoul is seeking and that South Korea has hardened its rhetoric against North Korea for this reason.

On the other hand, this development can also be read in this context. As a matter of fact, rather than a solution, Seoul's hardening of its rhetoric; likely to fuel conflict. Because the alliance relations, exercises, and discourses on the Asia-Pacific Region, and especially on the basis of the USA, are provoking North Korea even more.

At the same time, Yoon Suk Yeol's visit to Japan can be evaluated in this context because Yoon wants to achieve complete consolidation between the two countries and create a clear front against Pyongyang. As a matter of fact, South Korean President Yoon, in his statement on March 15, 2023, said that cooperation with Japan is vital in order to counter the increasing threats of North Korea and protect global supply chains and urged both countries not to disrupt relations in domestic politics.[3] It is also significant that it came after the announcement that compensation would be paid to victims of forced labor during the Japanese occupation period of 1910-1945.[4]

Currently, South Korea and Japan are positioned as the strongest allies of the United States and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in the Asia-Pacific Region. It can be

argued that the common threat perception of the said states plays a decisive role in this regard

because both actors are countries that have historically serious problems. However, it is seen that common security concerns bring the parties together.

It can be said that the situation in question is beneficial for both the USA and NATO because unity is essential in terms of the influence these actors have in the region. In addition to all these, the West's allies and alliances in the area are of great importance in the policy of encircling China and deterring North Korea from nuclear tests.

It could also be argued that the union in question constitutes a security guarantee for Tokyo and Seoul. Yoon's call for unity can also be read in this way. For this reason, it is possible to argue that the relations built are shaped by the logic of mutual win-win. As a matter of fact, it is evident that the actors that are most harmful from this process are states such as North Korea and China.

As a result, the increase in threats in the Asia-Pacific, both quantitatively and qualitatively, has made the foreign policy of South Korea, an essential ally of the West in the region, more proactive than in the past. Therefore, it can be predicted that this attitude will continue as long as Seoul's threat perceptions do not change.

[1] "Pyongyang Will Pay for Provocations, South Korean President Says", NHK World-Japan, [https://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/en/news/20230316\\_14/](https://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/en/news/20230316_14/), (Date of Accession: 11.04.2023).

[2] "North Korea Launches ICBM Before South Korea-Japan Summit", Associated Press News, <https://apnews.com/article/north-korea-missile-launch-us-military-drills-fbbe3be09a9bd812ba541ea9b84832e>, (Date of Accession: 11.04.2023).

[3] "South Korea's Yoon Says Cooperation With Japan Vital Amid Concerns on North Korea, Supply Chains", Reuters, <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/south-koreas-yoon-says-cooperation-with-japan-vital-amid-concerns-north-korea-2023-03-15/>, (Date of Accession: 11.04.2023).



## ANKASAM ANALYSIS

# Increase in Military Expenditure Across the European Continent

Research by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) shows that in 2022, worldwide military expenditures reached 2.24 trillion dollars. In the same vein, according to data published by the same institute, worldwide military expenditures have reached levels not seen since the Cold War. In fact, in 2022, it exceeded the sum of all military expenditure in 1989, in real terms. Meanwhile, it should be noted that the sharp rise in military expenditures in

2022 was driven by the prevailing regional conflicts and geopolitical challenges in the global conjuncture. For instance, the Russo-Ukrainian War played a decisive role therein.

According to the data, the United States of America (USA), which has been the leader in terms of military expenditure for many years, maintained its position as the country with the highest military expenditure worldwide in 2022. In 2022, the US incurred a military



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expenditure of 877 billion dollars, increasing its military expenditures in 2021 by 0.7%. The US military expenditure included \$19.9 billion in aid to the Kiev administration amid the Russo-Ukrainian War.

The US was followed by China. China ranked second on the list with a military expenditure of 292 billion dollars in 2022. As tensions rise in South Asia, China increased its military expenditure by 4.2% compared to 2021.

The Russian Federation ranked third in the list. Russia has allocated approximately 86 billion dollars for military expenditures in 2022. For Russia, this figure represents a 9.2% increase over the previous year's military expenditure. Russia has exceeded and continues to exceed its military expenditures as a result of the war in Ukraine.

While military expenditures are increasing rapidly across the globe, Europe has been the main region that has fueled such trend. The Russo-Ukrainian War, which is taking place in Europe's immediate vicinity, deeply affected Europe in terms of security and defense policies. In the face of perceived threats, Europe quickly began to increase its investments in the defense industry. These investments were accompanied by military aid provided to Ukraine amid the war. Accordingly, Europe's military expenditures amounted to 345 billion dollars in 2022. For comparison, Europe allocated 225 billion dollars for military expenditures in 2021. Here, the impact of the war in a single year is evident.

While there has been a general increase in military expenditures within Europe, some countries' overall spending has reached record levels in a short period of time. One of the sides involved in the war, Ukraine, spent 44 billion dollars in military expenditures through 2022. For Ukraine, the figure represents a 640% increase compared to 2021. As of now, military expenditures account for 34% of Ukraine's gross domestic product (GDP).

Some countries located in the vicinity of the Russian geography have also substantially increased their military expenditures compared to 2021. For instance, Finland, Lithuania, Sweden, and Poland have increased their military expenditures by 36%, 27%, 12%, and 11%, respectively.

Military expenditures in Europe have been steadily increasing as a result of the war. However, long before the war, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) had started to encourage European countries to increase their defense spending to complement the West's growing rivalry with Russia. In fact, NATO acted on the perceived threat shortly after Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014. NATO set a target for member states to allocate 2% of their gross domestic product to military expenditures, a target to be reached by 2024. Subsequently, NATO's target was strongly supported by the United States. In this regard, pressure on NATO members began during Barack Obama's term as president, and the same policy continued during Donald Trump's mandate. In fact, Trump threatened to withdraw the US from NATO if other NATO members did not adopt the set goal. More recently, during Joe Biden's term in office, the 2% military spending threshold came to the agenda with the outbreak of the Russo-Ukrainian War, with Biden giving his full support to the 2% threshold. However, by the end of 2022, only 10 of the 30 NATO member states had reached the 2% threshold.

The 2% threshold set by NATO has been a matter of controversy among member states. Countries such as the US, Poland, Lithuania, Estonia, Greece and Poland, which exceed the threshold with ease, support NATO's resolution, while countries such as Belgium, the Netherlands and Spain, which do not want to suddenly devote high budgets to military expenditures, oppose it. They argue that the military spending figures do not reflect the full picture, drawing attention to their contributions to NATO missions.

Moreover, these countries emphasize that some NATO countries, which have high military expenditures, devote a large part of their expenditures to military personnel and pensions, whereas they themselves are fulfilling another NATO goal adopted in 2014, which is to

allocate 20% of NATO member states' defense expenditures to new equipment, a goal that is expected to be achieved by 2024. Thus, rather than spending more, they advocate for high-quality spending.

The rhetoric of a higher quality of spending corroborates the statement that it is unrealistic for these countries, which spend about 1% of their gross domestic product on defense, to increase this ratio to 2% within two years.

Despite disagreements within NATO and some opposition to the US, a new threshold is expected to be established in the near future. For, at the NATO Vilnius Summit to be held on July 11-12, 2023, a resolution is expected to be adopted proposing that each NATO member country use 2.5% of its GDP for military expenditures.

In conclusion, the rising military expenditures in Europe can be interpreted in several ways. First of all, it is claimed that the increase in military expenditures can deter Russia and prevent the existing environment of instability. However, there are also those who interpret the rise in military expenditures in Europe as a sign that Europe is becoming a major instrument in the US foreign policy. After all, the US is the world's leading arms manufacturer. In other words, through the pressures, Europe is becoming a market for the US in this industry. The Russo-Ukrainian war has also reinforced such a policy of the Washington administration. Last but not least, the increasing defense expenditures show that Europe, which has been seeking to assert its own defense and security policy since the 1990s, has never been able to shed the yoke of NATO and the US.[1]

[1] "Trends in World Military Expenditure, 2022", SIPRI, [https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2023-04/2304\\_fs\\_milex\\_2022.pdf](https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2023-04/2304_fs_milex_2022.pdf), (Date of Accession: 25.04.2023).



## ANKASAM ANALYSIS

# Results of Afghanistan's Neighboring Countries Meeting for China

On 12-13 April 2023, Uzbekistan hosted the 4th Meeting of Neighboring Countries of Afghanistan. The meeting, attended by seven different countries, was held in Samarkand.[1] Foreign ministers and deputies of Pakistan, Iran, China, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan shared their views on evaluating the current situation in Afghanistan and ensuring regional development. It is known that the main focus of

the meeting is the fight against terrorism and drugs.

The meeting was chaired by Bakhtiyor Saidov, Interim Foreign Minister of Uzbekistan; The Chinese delegation was led by Foreign Minister Qin Gang, and the Pakistani delegation was led by Deputy Foreign Minister Hina Rabbani Khar. Iran was represented by Foreign Minister Huseyin



**Şeyma KIZILAY**



Emir Abdullahiyan, Russia was represented by Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, Tajikistan was represented by Foreign Minister Siraceddin Muhridin, Turkmenistan was represented by First Deputy Foreign Minister Vepa Hacıyev.

The “Neighboring Countries of Afghanistan” mechanism was established in 2021 at the initiative of Pakistan in order to develop a regional approach to the situation in the country in question. The first meeting of this mechanism at the level of Foreign Ministers was held in Pakistan on 8 September 2021. While Tehran hosted the second meeting in November 2021; The third meeting on March 31, 2022 was held in Tonshi, China.[2]

The meeting focused on the current situation and future of Afghanistan, and in this context, the fight against terrorism and drugs; It is of great importance for China to strengthen its links with both Afghanistan and Central Asia. Drawing attention with its active diplomacy in recent times, Beijing has also taken different initiatives on Afghanistan. It can be said that Beijing will continue such Afghanistan-based initiatives.

As a matter of fact, at the meeting in Samarkand, Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Wang Wenbin said that China should coordinate and cooperate with Afghanistan’s neighbors and the international community to help Afghanistan enter the stable development path at an early date and jointly achieve lasting security, prosperity and progress in the region. expressed its readiness to increase cooperation.[3] In this framework, Beijing aims to be an active actor in its projects to be realized at the regional level.

Chinese Foreign Minister Qin also stated that his country will continue to provide support within its capacity for the reconstruction of Afghanistan. In addition, the Chinese Foreign Minister emphasized that they are willing to work together with neighboring countries to adhere to the principles of friendship, sincerity, mutual benefit and inclusiveness, to get along with neighbors and act as their partners. [4]However, at the meeting, China made a four-point proposal on Afghanistan. Thus, the Beijing administration has added a new circle to its recent understanding of peaceful diplomacy.

The first item of Qin’s proposal; To eliminate the elements of terrorism in Afghanistan, to eliminate terrorism at its source and to prevent Afghanistan from becoming a shelter again. In addition, Qin also emphasized acting jointly on terrorism and used the following expressions:[5]

“We need to deepen regional cooperation on counter-terrorism, drug control and refugees, strengthen border control, and jointly help Afghanistan develop its counter-terrorism capabilities to effectively curb cross-border terrorist activity and instability.”

Secondly; It was underlined that the United States of America (USA) should fulfill its responsibilities. Thus, the USA was described as the main actor that led to the emergence of the Afghan Problem and it was underlined that the actions of the Washington administration harmed the Afghan people. It is known that Beijing wants the US to end the unilateral sanctions imposed on Afghanistan. China has included this request in the scope of the proposal. It was also emphasized that the US should return Afghanistan’s overseas funds.[6]

In the third article, the Taliban is called to establish an inclusive administration. Neighboring countries also advise the Taliban to take other Muslim countries as an example on the basis of respect for Afghanistan’s independence, sovereignty and national self-confidence.[7]

Finally, in Qin’s proposal, attention is drawn to the importance of continuing practical cooperation in Afghanistan. This is a proposal that will serve the purpose of continuing to develop ties with Afghanistan and ensuring stability in the country and the region through joint ventures. It is also seen that China aims to accelerate the Tonshi Initiative, which was brought to the agenda at the previous meeting.

The Tonshi Initiative calls on all parties and relevant regional and international financial institutions to provide financial support for Afghanistan’s reconstruction and development. In this context, the parties promised to support Afghanistan’s reconstruction in areas such as humanitarian aid, connectivity, economy and trade, agriculture, energy and capacity building.[8] As it can be understood, Qin

is trying to develop the Tonshi Initiative, strengthen the coordination between the countries of the region and deepen the cooperation within the framework of his suggestions.

Qin’s statements and suggestions are important in terms of showing China’s intention to pursue a common policy on Afghanistan. Because it is known that the countries of the region have common anxiety and threat perceptions. At the same time, commercial and economic goals are in parallel with China’s initiatives. The issue of combating terrorism and drugs is also important for the safety and continuity of the Belt and Road Initiative. Therefore, in line with its regional policy and interests, it can be said that Beijing considers the meeting in question as an important opportunity. It is also seen that the participation of Qin provides an opportunity for China to strengthen its Central Asian alliances. As a matter of fact, Samarkand hosted many diplomatic representatives for two days, allowing various meetings to be held.

Another advantage of the meeting is that it gives Beijing the opportunity to continue the dialogue with Moscow. As a matter of fact, meeting with his Russian counterpart Sergey Lavrov, Qin called for strengthening trade, deepening strategic coordination and political trust between the parties.[9]

As a result, the meeting in question was extremely productive for China in terms of Afghanistan policy, initiatives towards Central Asia, bilateral relations and relations with Russia. Beijing attaches importance to the stability of Afghanistan and therefore the region in order to develop regional connections, protect investments and ensure the continuity of projects. In this sense, it can be said that the Samarkand Meeting is a development that serves the mediation diplomacy for China, especially because of Qin’s four-point proposal.

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[2] “Minister of State for Foreign Affairs to Represent Pakistan at 4th Meeting of Neighbouring Countries of Afghanistan in Samarkand, Uzbekistan-13 April 2023”, MoFA Pakistan, <https://mofa.gov.pk/curtain-raiser-minister-of-state-for-foreign-affairs-to-represent-pakistan-at-4th-meeting-of-neighbouring-countries-of-afghanistan-in-samarkand-uzbekistan-13-april-2023/>, (Date of Accession: 14.04.2023).

[3] “Meeting of Afghanistan’s Neighbors Begins in Samarkand”, Tolo News, <https://tolonews.com/index.php/node/182950>, (Date of Accession: 14.04.2023).

[4] “Afghanistan, Meeting of Neighboring Countries in Samarkand: China Aims to Strengthen its Influence”, Agenzianova, <https://www.agenzianova.com/en/news/afghanistan-in-samarkand-meeting-of-neighboring-countries-china-aims-to-strengthen-its-influence/>, (Date of Accession: 14.04.2023).

[5] “Chinese FM Attends 4th Foreign Ministers’ Meeting of Afghanistan’s Neighboring Countries”, English News, <https://english.news.cn/20230414/6bc39a34f8254d14ba0b311d476d6605/c.html>, (Date of Accession: 14.04.2023).

[6] Ibid.

[7] “Chinese FM Attends 4th Foreign Ministers’ Meeting of Afghanistan’s Neighboring Countries”, China.org, [http://www.china.org.cn/world/Off\\_the\\_Wire/2023-04/14/content\\_85228716.htm](http://www.china.org.cn/world/Off_the_Wire/2023-04/14/content_85228716.htm), (Date of Accession: 14.04.2023).

[8] “The Tunxi Initiative of the Neighboring Countries of Afghanistan Supporting Economic Reconstruction in and Practical Cooperation with Afghanistan”, FMPRC, [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa\\_eng/wjdt\\_665385/2649\\_665393/202204/t20220401\\_10662024.html](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjdt_665385/2649_665393/202204/t20220401_10662024.html), (Date of Accession: 14.04.2023).

[9] “Afghanistan, Meeting of Neighboring..”, op.cit.



## ANKASAM ANALYSIS

# Digital Conflict Area in USA and China Competition: Tik Tok

The tension between China and the United States of America (USA), one of the leading actors in global politics, continues unabated, and the parties are pushing each other's red lines more and more each day. While this situation makes itself felt especially in the Asia-Pacific Region; Possible conflict scenarios along political fault lines are becoming the usual agenda items of the media. In addition, economic competition and the commercial problems it brings produce a different dimension to the struggle between the parties.

These problems, especially arising from companies and their activities, are interpreted by some experts as traces of the USA's efforts to restrict Chinese companies and strengthen the

hand of US companies in the field of trade. On the other hand, some academics and experts draw attention to the fact that the companies that are mentioned can be a threat to data. The most obvious example of this situation is the social media platform called "Tik Tok", which has been on the agenda for a while with allegations of espionage. In fact, the targeting of Tik Tok by the Washington administration is not a new development; The historical background of this issue goes back to the period of the previous US President Donald Trump.

It is clear that the US-China rivalry, which officially started in 2018, has had its effects not only in the military and political field; in many areas, including technology. After the Chinese-origin



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technology company named Huawei was sanctioned by the USA and Tik Tok, also of Chinese origin, was also the target of bans. The Washington administration stated that the reason for the bans are Tik Tok handing over the information of US citizens to Beijing.[1]

As a matter of fact, recently, government employees have been banned from downloading Tik Tok to their work phones by Britain, Australia and the European Commission. It seen that national security concerns are justified in these bans. [2]As mentioned before, some experts argue that the underlying reason for the national security discourse is the global success of Tik Tok. In this context, it has been stated that the success of Tik Tok raises concerns in the USA economically, and the purchase of some shares of Tik Tok by US companies has been brought to the agenda by Washington as a solution since 2018. Otherwise, the USA says that Tik Tok will be completely banned in the country.

The statements from Tik Tok management stated that the company responded transparently to the security concerns; it is underlined that data activities are subject to third-party verification and monitoring processes.[3] In addition, Theo Bertram, one of the company's top executives, stated that 60% of Tik Tok's parent company, ByteDance, belongs to global investors, 20% to employees, and the remaining 20% to the founders of the company, stating that the company is not a Chinese company.[4]

Since the area of conflict in question is a company that is a trade tool, it is crucial to examine the download rates and commercial values of the company in the USA in order to better understand the subject and add a different perspective. The company has been downloaded 165 million times in the USA alone during the 2020, for Tik Tok[5] Looking at the global data, it was downloaded 850 million times during 2020[6]. Instagram, the popular US-based social media platform, was downloaded 503 million times worldwide in 2020[7]. In addition, in 2020 and 2021, Tik Tok has managed to become the most downloaded application in the world[8].

Reaching \$11.6 billion in revenue in 2022 in terms of commercial revenues, the company nearly tripled its revenue of \$3.9 billion in the previous year[9]. In contrast, Instagram generated \$43.2 billion in revenue in the same year; in 2021, it generated \$42.1 billion in revenue[10]. Therefore, it can be said that although Tik Tok was founded in 2016, it quickly attracted attention, and this interest turned into income. This situation may have affected the view of Tik Tok by fueling the economic concerns of the USA, which has had a trade deficit due to the rise of China since the beginning of the 21st century.

Shou Zi Chew, CEO of the company, currently worth \$65.7 billion[11], answered the questions of US lawmakers on March 23, 2023. Shou

answered the questions that are focused on data security by stating that Tik Tok's parent company, ByteDance, is not an agent of China or any other government. In addition, Shou added that the data is stored on servers belonging to the American company Oracle[12].

Also, on the same date China reacted directly to the forced sale of Tik Tok's shares for the first time. It is an event which cannot be ignored that this reaction came while Shou was testifying in front of US lawmakers. In his statement on the subject, Chinese Ministry of Commerce Spokesperson Shu Jueting emphasized that any sales transaction must go through the legal processes of China, and underlined that the approval of the Beijing administration will be needed in a possible agreement[13].

As a result, the USA-China rivalry, which started in 2018, makes its impact felt in the digital world as well as in many areas. In particular, it can be foreseen that the complete ban of Tik Tok in the USA and the possibility of forced sales will increase the tension between the two countries, which are already experiencing serious problems.

[1] Kerry Brown, "How "TikTok Got Caught in the Crosshairs of US-China Politics", King's College London, [www.kcl.ac.uk/how-tiktok-got-caught-in-the-crosshairs-of-us-china-politics](http://www.kcl.ac.uk/how-tiktok-got-caught-in-the-crosshairs-of-us-china-politics), (Date of Accession: 05.04.2023).

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[4] Ibid.

[5] Brown, op.cit.

[6] Mansoor Iqbal, "TikTok Revenue and Usage Statistics (2023)", Business of Apps, [www.businessofapps.com/data/tik-tok-statistics/#:-:text=TikTok%20was%20the%20most%20downloaded,quarterly%20downloads%20outside%20of%20China](http://www.businessofapps.com/data/tik-tok-statistics/#:-:text=TikTok%20was%20the%20most%20downloaded,quarterly%20downloads%20outside%20of%20China), (Date of Accession: 09.04.2023).

[7] Ana Gajić, "How Many People Use Instagram", 99Firms, [99firms.com/blog/how-many-people-use-instagram/#gref](http://99firms.com/blog/how-many-people-use-instagram/#gref), (Date of Accession: 09.04.2023).

[8] Iqbal, op.cit.



## ANKASAM ANALYSIS

# Is EU Membership of the Ukraine–Georgia–Moldova Trio Possible?

On 31 March 2023, the Ambassador of the European Union (EU) to Tbilisi, Pawel Herczynski, expressed his wish for Georgia to join the Union as soon as possible, along with other candidate countries, notably Ukraine and Moldova.[1] This situation brings into question whether the membership of the three countries is possible or not.

As a matter of fact, it is known that the mentioned countries have a significant demand for membership. In this case, the actors' geopolit-

ical desire to position themselves as a part of the West is crucial. Therefore, Ukraine, Georgia, and Moldova are turning towards the West in parallel with the threat they perceive from Russia and are making various attempts to join the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) on the one hand and the EU on the other.

Even though both NATO and the EU have given positive signals to the three countries, it can be said that membership is unlikely to be possible. This is rooted in the fact that Russia considers



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the expansion of NATO and the EU in the post-Soviet space as part of its encirclement plan. Likewise, the Moscow authorities have demonstrated their determination in this regard by intervening militarily in Georgia in 2008 and in Ukraine in 2014 and 2022.

Essentially, this situation can be interpreted as the Kremlin's geopolitical importance of having neutral buffer zones in its relations with the West. Thus, the elimination of buffer zones may bring about Russia's intervention.

At the same time, as they are targets of Russia, the mentioned states also attach importance to improving their relations with Western allies and seek alliances with international organizations such as the EU and NATO. It is therefore possible to mention a paradoxical situation.

Particularly after Russia's intervention in Ukraine, the issue of the Kyiv administration's EU membership has started to be discussed in an intense manner. In this environment, Moldova, which thought that it might be the next address of Russian intervention due to the Transnistria Conflict, also accelerated its orientation towards the West. Georgia, on the other hand, with the impact of the memories left by the war in 2008, is trying to turn the European solidarity against Russia due to the war in Ukraine into an opportunity and is making some attempts to be accepted by the Union.

At this point, it can be claimed that the EU's approach to the membership of the actors has gained importance. Therefore, it is essential to evaluate how the Union views the membership of these countries. Firstly, it should be noted that the EU makes positive statements about the membership of the mentioned states. Yet, in practice, it is also not possible to talk about a willing EU on membership. For, the relevant states have serious deficiencies in terms of EU criteria.

To elaborate on the situation, it is evident that the Kyiv administration presents the Russian-Ukrainian War from the perspective of the defense of continental Europe and states that it has become a target for defending Western values through the narrative of the "battle between democracies and autocracies". In this context, Ukraine has an expectation

for the finalization of the EU membership process.[2] Indeed, due to the war, Ukraine

expresses that the EU should take a certain stance and clearly expresses its expectation for the acceleration of the accession process. However, on 3 February 2023, EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, stated clearly that it was not possible to accelerate the process.[3]

With the effect of the crisis in Ukraine, Georgia is also demanding the EU membership process to progress. Indeed, on 8 March 2023, Georgian Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili stated that his government and the Georgian people are "doing their best" to become full members of the EU.[4] Nevertheless, it is known that Tbilisi's policy of balancing Russia and the West, as Tbilisi does not want to confront Russia over aid to Ukraine and thus face the feeling of isolation it experienced in 2008, has been criticized by EU member actors. Particularly, the EU's criticism of Tbilisi has become harsher after the recent attempt to introduce a law on foreign funds, which has led to protests in Georgia. Although the current draft law has been withdrawn, it can be said that there are some negative attitudes toward the EU's approach towards Georgia.

On the other hand, Moldova applied for EU membership on 3 March 2022, one week after Russia's intervention in Ukraine. As a matter of fact, during the application process, Romanian President Maia Sandu said "We want to live in peace, we want to live in prosperity, we want to be a part of the free world", which revealed the geopolitical preference of the Chisinau administration. However, given the fact that Moldova is the poorest country in Europe, it seems quite unlikely that the country will be able to meet the standards of the Union.

Apparently, all three actors would like to be part of the EU. However, it is not easy to actualize these memberships in a short period of time. Because the actors have serious problems in terms of EU standards. For instance, one of the main expansion criteria of the EU is that there should be no risk of conflict on the borders of the countries and there should be no problem with territorial integrity. However,

Ukraine's territorial integrity has been violated by Russia and the country is actively in a state of war. Georgia, on the other hand, has been struggling with its territorial integrity since 2008 due to the situation in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Similarly, Moldova is also confronted with a separatist structure in Transnistria. Moreover, Russian peacekeepers are on duty in the region and it is speculated that the war in Ukraine may spread to Transnistria.[5] In such an environment, it would be a miracle if the EU membership of the states of interest is approved by the Union states.

Moreover, it is unclear whether the EU would be willing to extend its neighborhood with Russia. As buffer zones are a safeguard not only for Russia but also for the EU.

In addition, within the framework of the Copenhagen Criteria, the EU expects the future member state to fulfill certain requirements in terms of economy, corruption, fight against poverty, and democratic standards. Although Ukraine has made some reforms and taken steps to fight corruption, it is not expected to make progress to fulfill these criteria under war conditions.

As mentioned above, Georgia, on the other hand, conducts a policy of balance. The decisions taken or attempted to be taken as a reflection of this policy point to a situation far from the EU criteria.

Moldova, as mentioned above, is one of the poorest countries in Europe. Therefore, it has a long way to go. All these issues indicate the difficulty for all three countries to become a member.

At this point, all three countries, Ukraine in particular, are focusing on the "exceptional membership" formula due to Russia-centred threat perceptions and wish to be permitted to realize membership despite the shortcomings. However, this may be perceived as disrespectful to the efforts of the candidate states in the current situation. Moreover, the EU will not want this door to be opened as well.

On the other hand, it is still unclear how the EU will be positioned in the new geopolitical conditions that will emerge in the aftermath of the Russia-Ukraine war. One scenario is that the EU will rebuild its energy relations with Moscow after the war and Russia will be included in the European security structure. In this scenario, the EU is considered to be one of the power centers, that is, one of the poles, in a multipolar world. In such a scenario, it is not expected that the EU would embrace these countries in a way that would attract the reaction of Russia.

On the other hand, even if the EU keeps its current positioning and acts within the framework of the sense of solidarity in Trans-Atlantic relations, it may block the membership of states with favorable relations with Russia. For instance, considering Hungary's difficulties with the EU's sanctions targeting Moscow, notably in the field of energy, it is possible that the Budapest administration will also put obstacles in the way of Kyiv, Tbilisi, and Chisinau. In conclusion, despite Herczynski's statements on 31 March 2023, Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova are not expected to become EU members in the foreseeable future. The reason for this is because there are many issues to be addressed, from territorial integrity to democratic and economic standards. Under the current circumstances, it is not easy to achieve such progress. Therefore, it can be predicted that the EU journey of the three states will take a long time. It is even possible that the prolonged process may lead to frustration with the EU in these countries.

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[2] Raf Casert-Samuel Petrequin, "Ukraine's Zelenskyy Makes Emotional Appeal for EU Membership", AP News, <https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-zelenskyy-politics-france-government-european-union-9ea8e33ad7520cac6fcb1d8a420d429>, (Date of Accession: 01.04.2023).

[3] Doğan Başaran, "Ukraine's EU Journey", ANKASAM, <https://www.ankasam.org/ukraines-eu-journey/?lang=en>, (Date of Accession: 01.04.2023).



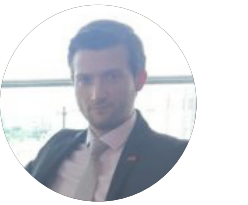
## ANKASAM ANALYSIS

# Lavrov's Visit to Latin America: Seeking Support on Ukraine

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov started his Latin America tour with his visit to Brazil on April 17, 2023. As part of the tour that started with Brazil, Lavrov; He visits Venezuela, Nicaragua and Cuba. In the message released by the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the subject, it is stated that Lavrov will hold official meetings with the leaders and foreign ministries of the relevant states, as well as with high-level representatives. Therefore, it was emphasized that a busy schedule awaits Lavrov. In a similar statement, it was stated that Lavrov flew to the region with a concrete agenda aimed at strengthening mutually beneficial cooperation in political, commercial, economic, educational, humanitarian, cultural and other fields. Finally, in the statement, it was pointed out that the countries to be interviewed plan to strengthen the international legal institutions of the modern world, which is the

structure on which the United Nations (UN) Charter is based.[1] In this context, Venezuela, Nicaragua and Cuba, which are among Lavrov's stops, are countries known for their long-standing opposition to the West and close relations with Russia. On the other hand, the countries to be visited are those that did not sided with Ukraine within the scope of the Russia-Ukraine War and did not participate in the sanctions imposed by the West against the Moscow administration, including Brazil.

Among the mentioned countries, it can be argued that Brazil has the most normal relations with the West. Therefore, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, who won the Brazilian general elections in the last quarter of 2022, was expected to develop good relations with the West. As a matter of fact, in the coup attempt organized against him in the first quarter of 2023,



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Western states gave messages of support to Lula. But Lula takes a neutral stance in the Russo-Ukrainian War. So that; Lavrov's visit to Brazil comes shortly after Lula's meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping. As will be remembered, after meeting with Xi, Lula stated that the only solution to the crisis between the parties is negotiation and dialogue. In addition, Lula, unlike Western actors, refrained from offering any conditions for negotiations to the Moscow administration.[2] Therefore, it can be argued that Brazil's policies began to conflict with the West and the West did not find the support it hoped for from Lula. In this context, Brazil aims to maintain its relations with both the Russia-China axis and the West at a normal level.

On the other hand, Russia has clearly stated that it has long opposed the Western-centered conduct of international relations. Therefore, it has determined one of its main goals in the international arena as breaking the Western hegemony in this field. Accordingly, it can be said that strengthening the international legal institutions, which is expressed as one of the objectives of the negotiations to be held, refers to Russia's aim to remove these institutions from the Western axis. As it can be understood, the ties to be developed with the anti-Western Latin American countries for the Moscow administration and the relations to be developed with the countries that carry out a policy of balance between the West and the Russia-China axis, such as Brazil, are very important for the Kremlin, which is seeking support for the war in Ukraine.

For Russia, Latin America is a geography that offers opportunities to create spheres of influence dictated by powers like Russia. With this, Moscow is also in the desire to develop bilateral cooperation with the regional capitals. The importance of Lavrov's visit to Venezuela is due to the fact that both countries are exposed to Western sanctions. As it is known, Russia and Venezuela, which are energy producers, are experiencing some difficulties in energy exports due to the sanctions imposed on them by the West. The two countries, which define each other as strategic partners, are in an effort to strengthen and deepen their cooperation with the motive of seeking new markets where they can export their energy resources.

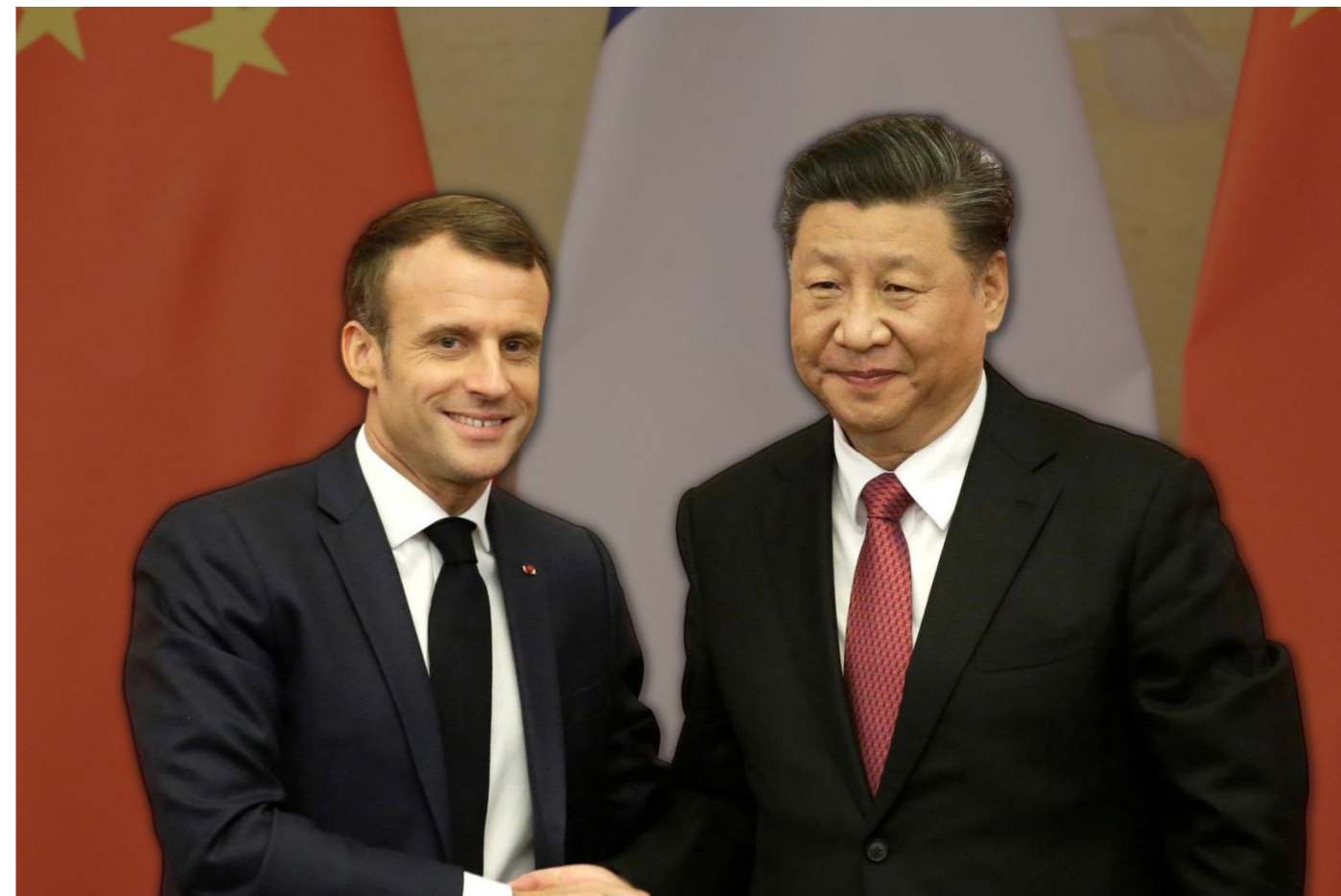
Lavrov's other stop is Cuba, which is among Russia's strategic partners. Here is a remarkable anecdote. Because the visit of the Russian Foreign Minister to Cuba coincides with the date of the Cuban presidential elections. Current Cuban President Miguel Diaz-Canel, whose country is in the worst economic crisis of the last 30 years, hopes to be elected president for the second time. Therefore, on the way to overcome the economic crisis, Diaz-Canel visited Russia in the last quarter of 2022 and signed various oil supply agreements. While Cuba has been embar-

ged by the United States of America (USA) since 1962; Russia is also seeking to develop its strategic partnership with this country. Nicaragua, another stop of the Russian Foreign Minister's visit to the region, is one of the most important geopolitical centers in Latin America for the Kremlin administration. For the USA, Nicaragua is a transit country for land transportation to the South American continent. For this reason, the visit made by Lavrov to Nicaragua is a response to the visit made by US President Joe Biden to Kiev. Also, for all these reasons, Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega is recognized as one of the Kremlin's most critical allies.

As a matter of fact, Russia is one of the few countries that recognizes Ortega's administration, considering the result of the Nicaraguan general elections held in 2021 as legitimate. Similarly, Ortega is one of the rare leaders who supported the Russian invasion of Ukraine.[3] This attitude of Ortega causes Nicaragua to become increasingly isolated in the international arena and to seek new allies, and this brings about the deepening of Nicaragua's relations with Russia.

On the other hand, in terms of Russia, Brazil is in a different position from other countries. Because Brazil, which is among the BRICS countries, is one of the emerging economies of the world. Due to this position, Brazil is among the countries that challenge the Western-centered world order, in which the USA is the hegemonic power. It fulfills this challenge through the relations it has developed with China and Russia. In this context, one of the important issues between the two countries is to trade in a currency other than the dollar. Russia and Brazil, the USA's ability to maintain its hegemony in the international system and, as a result, to impose sanctions on regimes that do not match their own values; connects it to the dollarization of the economy and therefore tends to the search for dedollarization. On the other hand, Russia wants Brazil, whose interests overlap in the long run, not to take any action that would harm the common interests in the Russia-Ukraine War. The fact that Brazil maintains its neutral stance and does not cooperate with the West is one of the issues that Russia attaches importance to.

As a result, Russia wanted to be isolated from the world with the effect of the war in Ukraine; It tries to convey the message that it is not alone through its allies in Latin America. In this context, Brazil under the leadership of Lula, who is already in the BRICS, traditional allies Cuba and Venezuela, and Nicaragua, where relations are deepening day by day with the policies implemented by Ortega, can be described as the main partners of the Moscow administration in the region. Lavrov's visit is also very important in terms of revealing this.



## ANKASAM ANALYSIS

# A New Impetus for Europe's Quest for Strategic Autonomy: Macron's Visit to China

French President Emmanuel Macron visited China between 5-7 April 2023. Ursula Von der Leyen, President of the European Commission, accompanied Macron. During the visit, China-European Union (EU) relations and the search for a solution to the Russia-Ukraine War were discussed. In addition, it was decided to develop political, economic, cultural, and security-based cooperation in the relations on the Paris-Beijing line.

Macron's visit to China and the interview he gave after the visit brought up the issue of ensuring Europe's strategic autonomy. As it is known, with the Second World War, European countries were included in the Atlantic Alliance. During the Cold War, this bond was riveted. With the end of the Cold War, there have been

regional and global developments that have increased doubts about the credibility of the United States.

Moreover, a group of European countries led by France have developed a strategic autonomy approach that aims to develop an independent understanding of politics with third countries in economic, diplomacy, intelligence, conflict management, security and foreign policy decisions of Europe and to reduce its dependence on the USA. In this way, it is thought that the EU can be positioned as a power center in the international arena.

Undoubtedly, gaining strategic autonomy for the 27-member EU, especially in security and defense issues, is not an easy matter to over-



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come. Because, despite the use of the phrase “The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) has been brain dead”, with the Russia-Ukraine War that started on February 24, 2022, the view of European countries towards the USA and NATO has softened and NATO has become functional again by expanding its borders. In other words, while the Russian threat strengthens the Euro-US bond; on the other hand, it has caused the voices about the strategic autonomy of Europe to weaken. However, the prolongation of the war, the energy, economic and migration crisis in the European continent caused an increase in social reactions.

While it is seen that the war, which has a global dimension, is reflected in Europe as a crisis; The USA, which is effective in the course of the war, keeps the EU on its side and limits Russia, so it can focus more on the fight against its global rival, China. On the one hand, while the problems increase; the credibility of the USA has started to be questioned again by some European countries, especially France, since the other side has made moves towards its goals. As a matter of fact, in the interview he gave on his return from his visit to China, Macron used the following statements:[1]

“The great risk” Europe faces is that it “gets caught up in crises that are not ours, which prevents it from building its strategic autonomy... The paradox would be that, overcome with panic, we believe we are just America’s followers. The question Europeans need to answer ... is it in our interest to accelerate [a crisis] on Taiwan? No.”

At the same time, Macron reminded the importance of strategic autonomy that will allow Europe to act in its direction, expressing that Europe’s dependence on the USA for weapons and energy has increased, the dependence on the dollar should be reduced and Europe should focus on developing its defense industries.

In the shadow of the Russia-Ukraine War, the positive effect of the Macron-Shi meeting has had an impact on these statements aimed at reducing Europe’s dependence on the US and ensuring its strategic autonomy. The two leaders signed a declaration that they think will add a new dimension to the Franco-Chinese relations. In the statement, it was stated that there was an agreement on issues such as strengthening political dialogue, promoting mutual trust, and acting together in ensuring world security and stability and in global challenges.[2]

It is understood that the agreement is shaped by the importance of political dialogue and strengthening mutual trust. Ensuring mutual political trust also facilitates the development of commercial and economic relations.

Given the World Bank’s warning that if policymakers do not take the initiative, global economic growth will drop to a three-year low of 2.2% per year by 2030, which will start a lost decade for the world economy[3], and given the current global economic crisis France wants to develop economic relations with China, the most important trade partner of the EU.

In fact, Macron participated in his visit to China with a large business delegation and signed numerous economic agreements involving large companies in sectors such as transportation, energy, agriculture, culture, and science. For example, EDF a French state corporation, and a Chinese corporation CGN, renewed their ongoing partnerships in nuclear power production; EDF and China Energy Investment Corporation signed agreements in the field of offshore wind energy. French aircraft manufacturer Airbus has announced that it will double the production capacity of the company’s A320 models by building a new assembly line at its factory in Tianjin, China.[4]

While the aforementioned situation weakens the power of the US in the trade war launched against China; it can be considered as a contribution to the strategic autonomy of Europe. Another issue that should be mentioned at this point is Macron’s emphasis on the need to reduce the dependence on the dollar. Because Macron also has some initiatives in this direction. Shortly before Macron visited China, French Total Energy agreed to purchase LNG with the Chinese state-owned company CNOOC. It was decided to use the yuan, the national currency of China, as a payment method in this transaction.[5] France’s agreement to pay through the yuan can

be interpreted as a step towards reducing the use of the dollar in Europe. On the other hand, the agreement in question is an important development in terms of the recognition of the yuan in international trade and undermining the dominance of the dollar, which has long dominated the energy market.

An important issue in Macron’s visit to China was the development of military cooperation. China and France agreed to deepen the dialogue between the Southern Front of the Chinese People’s Liberation Army and the Asia-Pacific Command of the French Army and to exchange views on international and regional security issues.

As can be seen, shortly after the announcement of the implementation phase of the AUKUS partnership aimed at limiting China in the Indo-Pacific by the USA, Australia, and Britain, the development of military cooperation between China and France came to the fore. This can be read as Paris’ effort to maintain its influence in the Asia-Pacific. As it is known, Australia terminated the submarine agreement between France and Australia because of AUKUS. If this agreement had not been terminated, France, one of the leading actors of Europe, would have increased its power in the region and had the opportunity to lead Europe’s Asia-Pacific strategy. Contrary to this scenario, the UK is increasing its influence in the region by acting together with the USA among European countries.

In summary, Macron’s visit to China has rekindled the independent European discussions. Supporting policies that prioritize the interests of the USA in regional and global developments limits the EU and European countries to act in accordance with their national interests; in Macron’s words, it makes Europe a slave to the USA. In order to achieve strategic autonomy, it is desired to act in accordance with realpolitik, independent of the influence of the USA in relations with third countries, including France-China and EU-China relations. Rather than the break with the agreements and commitments made during Macron’s visit to China, the US expects in relations with China; this is also evident from the effort to develop a mutual win-win relationship.

As a result, the convergence on the Paris-Beijing line may provide an advantage to Europe in its strategic autonomy journey; but not enough for success. Because ensuring the strategic autonomy of Europe requires the EU to be more integrated in the field of defense. Although there are searches in this direction, some member states are reluctant to deepen integration. Moreover, as seen in the example of the Russia-Ukraine War, the USA is an indispensable actor for most states in ensuring European security. Therefore, there are still serious obstacles in front of Europe to reach its strategic autonomy goal in today’s world where global problems are increasing and geopolitical transformations are experienced.

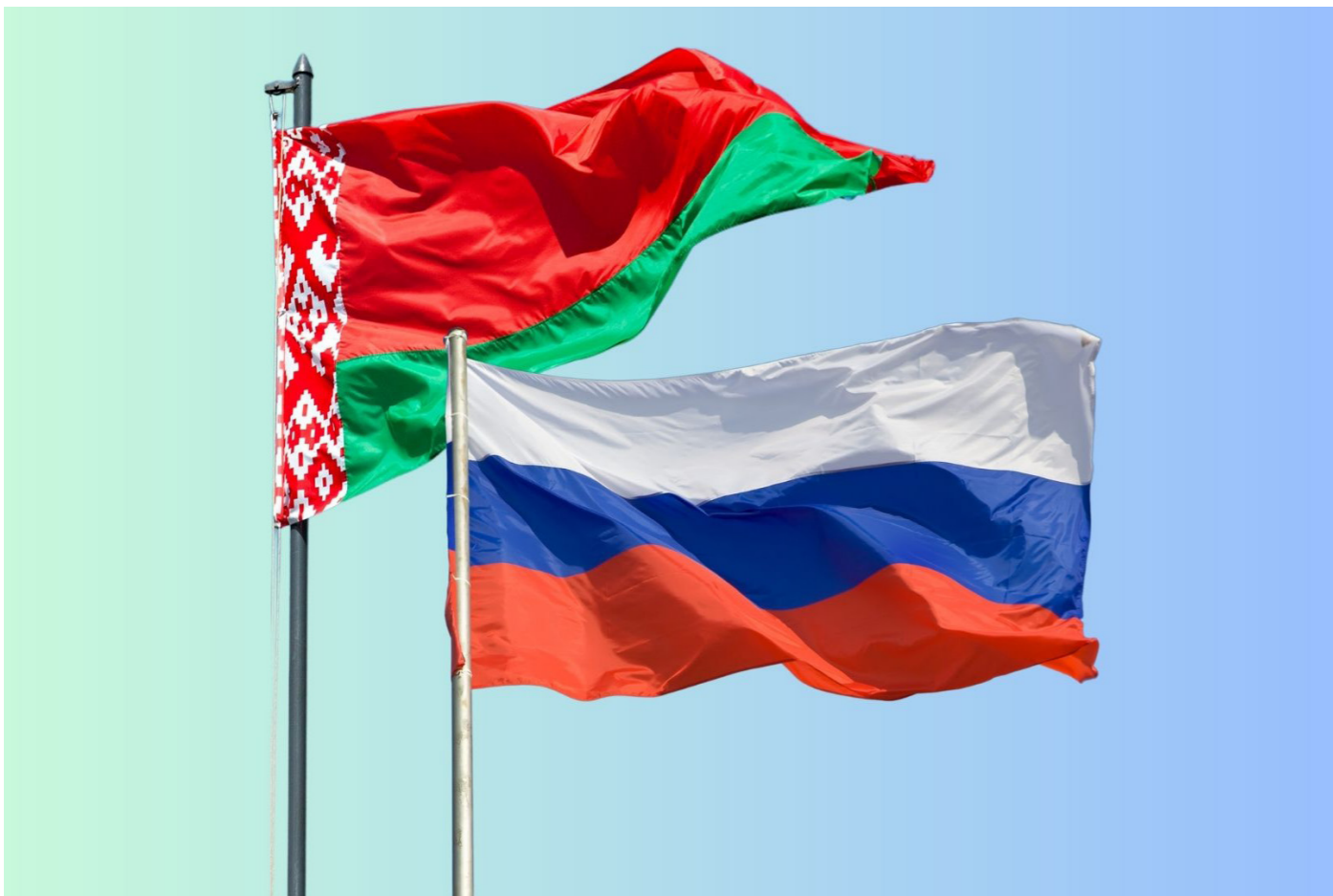
[1] “Europe Must Resist Pressure to Become ‘America’s Followers,’ Says Macron”, Politico, <https://www.politico.eu/article/emmanuel-macron-china-america-pressure-interview/>, (Date of Accession:10.04.2022).

[2] Liu Lirong, “Sino-French Joint Statement: Candid Dialogue and Pragmatic Cooperation”, CGTN, <https://news.cgtn.com/news/2023-04-09/Sino-French-joint-statement-Candid-dialogue-and-pragmatic-cooperation-iiRp3vEvSpO/index.html>, (Date of Accession:10.04.2022).

[3] “World Bank Warns of ‘Lost Decade’ in Global Growth Without Bold Policy Shifts”, World Economic Forum, <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2023/04/world-bank-warns-of-lost-decade-in-global-growth-without-bold-policy-shifts/#:~:text=Average%20potential%20global%20economic%20growth,investment%2C%20the%20World%20Bank%20warned>, (Date of Accession:10.04.2022).

[4] “France-China Relations: Trade, Investment, and Recent Developments”, China Briefing, <https://www.china-briefing.com/news/france-china-relations-trade-investment-and-recent-developments/>, (Date of Accession:13.10.2022).

[5] “China Completes First LNG Cross-Border Yuan Settlement Transaction”, Global Times, <https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202303/1288160.shtml>, (Date of Accession:10.04.2022).



## ANKASAM ANALYSIS

# Why Does Belarus Request a Security Guarantee from Russia?

After the Russia-Ukraine War, which started on February 24, 2022, the Minsk administration is at the forefront of the actors that drew the reaction of the West due to its closeness to the Moscow administration. As a matter of fact, Russia targeted Kiev over Belarus in the first days of the war; however, Minsk has developed an approach that avoids being a direct party to the war after being subjected to various sanctions. In this process, Minsk even tried to mediate between Moscow and Kiev. However, a fruitful result could not be obtained from the process carried out due to the inability to meet the impartiality, which is the main criterion expected from the mediating actor.

It can be stated that the fragility of the Belarusian economy played a decisive role in the change in question. Because Minsk thought that Russia,

which was dealing with the war in Ukraine and under heavy sanction, could not provide the necessary economic support. Thus, although Belarus supports Russia, it has developed a certain sensitivity about not getting involved in hot conflicts.

In fact, Minsk's proximity to Moscow is closely related to the protests that broke out in the country in 2020. Because although Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko has tried to position Belarus as a "buffer zone" between Russia and the West by trying to conduct a neutral policy for many years, it has been seen that Belarus has moved away from the West after the protests in question and has moved towards acting in accordance with the spirit of the "Treaty on the Union State" signed with Russia in 1997.[1] In other words, Belarus has rapidly moved away from being a "buffer zone"



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in recent years. In this sense, it can be stated that the document signed by Russian President Vladimir Putin and Lukashenko on social and economic integration at the Meeting of the Supreme Council of the Union State on November 4, 2021 developed and deepened the dependence relationship on the Minsk-Moscow line.

On the other hand, after Russia's failure to achieve the desired results on the field, especially in the war in Ukraine, allegations that it could turn Belarus into a frontline country began to be discussed. [2] This is because the war in Ukraine is concentrated in the east and south of the country. In the current situation, the Kiev administration has achieved a balance in the defense of the country. Western aid also increases Ukraine's resilience and motivation. In short, things are not going as the Kremlin wanted.

Therefore, it is not surprising that the Moscow administration aims to turn Belarus into a frontline country and to ensure that the Ukrainian Army takes a defensive position in the north of the country. In other words, Russia is carrying out a strategy to distract Kiev's attention and focus, and therefore it is trying to draw Minsk into the war. Moreover, the involvement of Belarus in the war may bring about Russia's re-targeting Kiev through air operations. This may serve the goal of overthrowing the President of Ukraine, Vladimir Zelensky, in line with the argument of "De-Nazification of Ukraine" voiced by Moscow.

In addition, the transformation of Belarus into a front country will also put pressure on Poland and the Baltic states. In this way, Moscow can get the opportunity to send the message to the West that the field of war can expand and conflicts can spread to its own territory.

On the other hand, Minsk is looking for a way out. It is known that Belarus does not want to be a party to the war. Moreover, a decision to be taken in this direction may cause protests that will put the Lukashenko administration in trouble, as it did in 2020. Because the Belarusian people do not want to be involved in the war. Moreover, the protests in question clearly demonstrated that the pro-Western segments in the country have a substantial capacity to lead the streets. Therefore, the Lukashenko administration is showing a resistance to Moscow's demands. However, it is highly debatable how long Minsk can maintain this stance.

As a matter of fact, some developments in April 2023 create the impression that Belarus can act in accordance with Russia's demands. For example, in his statement on April 9, 2023, Kremlin Spokesperson Dmitry Peskov stated that the talks between Putin

and Lukashenko will give a new impetus to the development of cooperation between the two countries.[3] At this point, considering the frequency of the meetings between the leaders, it can be said that Peskov's message is that the integration between the parties will deepen in accordance with the spirit of the "Union State" understanding. At the same time, this message is the message of Minsk, "Moscow's war is my war." it also includes a strong expectation that they will internalize such an approach.

On the other hand, Lukashenko, in his statement dated April 10, 2023, said that they expect to receive assurances from Moscow that in case of any attack, Russia will defend Belarus as its own territory.[4] As can be understood, Lukashenko's words indicate that Belarus can accept to become a frontline country and expects some security guarantees for this.

As a result, Russia is in an effort to open a new front in the war in Ukraine from the north. Thus, the Ukrainian Army will also have to focus on the north of the country, Poland and the Baltic Countries will feel more intense pressure. For this, Moscow is trying to persuade Belarus. The available data can be interpreted as Minsk's acceptance of this request. Even though Belarus tried to stay away from the war, especially after the protests in 2020, the integration within the context of the "Union State" concept gained momentum and an asymmetrical dependency relationship was formed between the parties. This means that Belarus' resistance to stay out of the war may be broken.

[1] "About Union State", Information Analysis Portal of the Union State, <https://soyuz.by/en/about-union-state>, (Date of Accession: 11.04.2023).

[2] Doğacan Başaran, "Zelensky's Visit to the US: What is the Future of the Russian-Ukrainian War?", ANKASAM, <https://www.ankasam.org/zelenskys-visit-to-the-us-what-is-the-future-of-the-russian-ukrainian-war/?lang=en>, (Date of Accession: 11.04.2023).

[3] "Putin-Lukashenko Talks to Give Fresh Impetus to Russian-Belarusian Cooperation-Kremlin", TASS, <https://tass.com/politics/1601781>, (Date of Accession: 11.04.2023).

[4] "Минск хочет получить гарантии защиты со стороны России, заявил Лукашенко", News Mail, <https://news.mail.ru/politics/55767691/>, (Date of Accession: 11.04.2023).



## ANKASAM ANALYSIS

# Russia's Plan to Deploy Tactical Nuclear Weapons in Belarus and the European Security Architecture

Russian President Vladimir Putin announced on March 26, 2023 that he plans to deploy tactical nuclear weapons in Belarus,<sup>[1]</sup> declaring that an important phase has begun in the renewed nuclear competition between the United States/North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and Russia. Thus, the "New Cold War" that began with the United States' withdrawal from the Missile Defense System Agreement in 2002 continues quietly and deeply every day, but in a much more dangerous dimension than

the Cold War era and has become much more dangerous. Putin's decision demonstrates that an important phase has been reached in this dangerous process. In this sense, it is predicted<sup>[2]</sup> that both states will begin to deploy tactical nuclear weapons in Europe and the Asia-Pacific region in the near future, following the expiration of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF) in 1987, starting with Belarus; and it has now become inevitable for this process to continue.



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In the post-Cold War period, Europe's and hence the world's security architecture has undergone a rapid change. In other words, the new security environment that began with the end of the Cold War did not last as long as expected. The close cooperation between the United States and Russia to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction in the early days of the Cold War, regulations regarding tactical nuclear weapons that were not subject to a legal process until then, and ultimately the signing of treaties on strategic nuclear weapons, increased hope for a more peaceful world and even laid the groundwork for President Barack Obama's vision of a nuclear-free world at the 2009 Prague Summit. However, this relative peace has also witnessed dangerous initiatives, although they have not attracted much attention.

As a matter of fact, after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the unilateral withdrawal of the United States from the 1972 ABM Convention in 2002 and the subsequent emphasis on the National Missile Defense Project to protect U.S. territory from nuclear attacks formed the foundations of the dangerous process taking place in the current situation.

The United States, which has focused on the development of missile defense systems, has also made significant progress in hypersonic missile studies such as the "Global Sudden Strike". On the other hand, by citing Iran's threat to develop nuclear weapons and missiles, it has also established a comprehensive missile defense architecture within the framework of NATO in Europe.

The Moscow administration, which perceives these developments as a significant threat, alongside the expansion of NATO, has launched important projects regarding both missile defense systems and nuclear attack weapons systems. However, during this period, nuclear competition has been overshadowed by other issues. In particular, during periods when NATO-Russia relations were at their peak, both the public and officials in Germany, the Netherlands, and Belgium, which hosted the tactical nuclear weapons of the United States in Europe, demanded their withdrawal from their countries, considering these weapons as remnants of the Cold War. However, these developments have not received the attention they deserve in the international public opinion.

During the period in question, the role and importance of tactical nuclear weapons began to be questioned and it was stated that they had no military significance. While the US and Russia are deeply armed; The hope of a world without nuclear weapons has been discussed.

Despite all expectations, this atmosphere of peace did not last long. Russia, which has long perceived NATO's expansion as a threat to its national security and has defined Ukraine and Geor-

gia's NATO membership as a "red line" annexed Crimea in 2013 following the events in Ukraine, which changed Europe's security concerns. The 2014 NATO Wales Summit and subsequent decisions accelerated the alliance's reshaping, and thus the nuclear competition began to come to the forefront.

Indeed, former US President Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew from the 1987 INF Treaty on October 20, 2018, citing Russia's violations, and the treaty became null and void. Thus, there is no longer any obstacle to the deployment of intermediate-range nuclear weapons (with a range of 500-5500 km) by both countries, particularly in Europe and around the world.

Nearly 10 years after we talked about European states demanding the withdrawal of American tactical nuclear weapons from Europe, a completely different security architecture has emerged in Europe. The dangerous process that began with Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 has brought to light the nuclear danger, which has been silent and deeply advancing for far too long. Russia, which introduced its new strategic nuclear weapons to the world three years before the war, threatened to use nuclear weapons against Western states if they intervened in the Ukrainian conflict. It suspended the New Start Treaty, the last remaining treaty with the United States, at the beginning of 2023, eliminating the last obstacle to the nuclear arms race.

As can be understood, Russia's decision to deploy tactical nuclear weapons, including Iskander missiles, to Belarus is a continuation of this process. These developments, which coincide with Finland's NATO membership and the expansion of the NATO-Russia border, are reshaping Europe's security architecture and leading to a more dangerous nuclear build up than the Cold War. The deployment of strategic non-nuclear weapons, or tactical nuclear weapons, to many points in Europe, which is symbolically important to many people, will not make Europe safer. In this process, it will not be surprising for NATO to deploy tactical nuclear weapons to Finland, and in response, Russia will be likely to deploy more weapon systems. Similar developments are also possible in the Asia-Pacific region. In the end, the danger is increasing every day and there is no significant effort to reduce it.

[1] David Ljunggren, "Putin Says Moscow to Place Nuclear Weapons in Belarus, US Reacts Cautiously", Reuters, <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/putin-says-moscow-has-deal-with-belarus-station-nuclear-weapons-there-tass-2023-03-25/>, (Date of Accession: 11.04.2023).

[2] Mehmet Seyfettin Erol-Şafak Oğuz, "End of the INF Treaty: Are We Entering a New Cold War Era?", Gazi Akademik Bakış, 14(28), 2021, s. 1-20.





## ANKASAM ANALYSIS

# A Convergence Against Daesh on the US–Taliban Line?

The Taliban, which took control of Kabul on August 15, 2021, has been the absolute sovereign power of Afghanistan as of August 31, 2021, when the United States (US) and its allies withdrew. However, the problem of recognition of the Taliban administration remains, which makes it difficult for the Taliban to attract investment in the country. Accordingly, the economic problems in the country deepen and the employment problem facilitates the recruitment of terrorist organizations.

At this point, it is known that the main terrorist organization operating in Afghanistan is the so-called Emirate of Khorasan (ISKP) of the State of Iraq and Sham (DEAS). Because many radical groups operating in Central Asia and South Asia declared their allegiance to DAESH in parallel with the organization's claim to global caliphate during the period when DEASH dominated Syria and Iraq. Afghanistan, which had a power vacuum due to the withdrawal of the USA after the defeat of DAESH in Syria and Iraq, became a country that the organization tried to turn into a living space.



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Although the Taliban administration, which is aware of the security risks posed by the situation in question, has taken a determined stance in the fight against DAESH, the Western World, especially the USA, are expressing their concerns that Afghanistan may become a safe haven for terrorist organizations again. Despite this, the Taliban are trying to break the influence of the terrorist organization in question by organizing point-and-shoot operations against DAESH elements, both in an effort to show that it distances itself from terrorism and in order to overcome the recognition problem. As a matter of fact, in the news dated April 25, 2023, it was announced that the Taliban attacked the Kabul Airport in August 2021 and neutralized the terrorists targeting the American elements.[1]

In such an environment, the US's return to Afghanistan in the context of the alleged fight against DAESH, as in the case of Iraq, was opened to discussion. As a matter of fact, the statement of US Secretary of State Antony Blinken in March 2023 that they expect a new authorization law focused on the needs of the USA and with a suitable purpose in case the 2001 Military Force Authorization Act is repealed has been interpreted as a harbinger of this.[2] Undoubtedly, the US's recourse to the option of total intervention in Afghanistan will be evaluated by the Taliban as a violation of the country's sovereignty and independence. Therefore, this will mean a war in which the Taliban will be overthrown by returning to 2001 conditions beyond the fight against DAESH. However, the goals of the USA and the point Blinken points out are very different.

First of all, it should be noted that; When the USA returned to Iraq with the claim of fighting DAESH, there was a government in Baghdad that it recognized and cooperated with in the fight against terrorism. Therefore, there is no significant similarity between the two countries. The Taliban is not recognized by the United States, and a scenario where the Taliban's consent is not obtained for such operations could lead to war. But the United States does not want war in Afghanistan. Because the White House administration focuses on besieging China, its main rival in the global power struggle. In other words, there is a USA that has focused on the transition from land domination to maritime dominance. Therefore, rather than the heart; it is possible to talk about a Washington administration that focuses on the border zone and in this context, Asia-Pacific.

Just at this stage, it is necessary to return to the expression of a need-oriented and appropriate-purpose new draft law in the new authority draft that Blinken voiced in the context of Afghanistan. Because, in the subtext of this statement, there is an expectation that the necessary legal basis will be created for a fight in which the USA will continue its air operations in the fight against DAESH,

and especially unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) attacks. On the other hand, it is known that the U.S. drone operations using Pakistani airspace are also considered by the Taliban as a violation of Afghanistan's sovereignty and therefore the Doha Agreement dated February 29, 2020. For this reason, the USA needs to create an environment similar to the Iraq example in the fight against DAESH in Afghanistan. In other words, the USA has to cooperate with the Taliban against DAESH, even though it does not recognize it. Otherwise, it may become a party to a war that it will have to wage directly through the fight against DAESH. However, the Taliban already takes a determined stance in the fight against DAESH.

At a time when these options were being discussed, it is noteworthy that in the secret documents leaked from the Pentagon, the claim that the USA was trying to take advantage of the Taliban to fight against DAESH came to the fore. As a matter of fact, a senior US official speaking to the Washington Post newspaper stated that the terrorist organization DAESH is the natural enemy of the USA and that's why the Washington administration decided to cooperate with the Taliban.[3] The claim in question is noteworthy because it is the most rational option for the United States to protect regional interests while trying to achieve its global goals. However, this situation seems to confront the USA with a new dilemma.

Undoubtedly, Washington's most important paradox will emerge at the point of recognition of the Taliban. Because the US wants the Taliban to form a government that will include all identity groups in Afghanistan. The Taliban, on the other hand, argues that the government they established already has an inclusive structure. Although the US has expressed the demand for inclusive government as a prerequisite for the recognition of the Taliban, the partnership in the fight against terrorism will push the Taliban to higher expectations in terms of recognition on the grounds that they act in accordance with the Doha Treaty. This will accelerate the recognition debate. As a matter of fact, although it is just the beginning of the process, claims that the issue of recognizing the Taliban will be discussed at the United Nations meeting on 1-2 May 2023 has come to the fore. These allegations were denied by the US[4] however, it is obvious that the Taliban have an expectation in this regard. Therefore, despite the cooperation to be carried out in the fight against the terrorist organization DAESH, the non-recognition of the Taliban is likely to turn into a serious test for the United States over time.

[1] رب یراجت نا هلمج رکفتم زعم نابلاط :یایکیرما تاماوم" "دنتشک ار لباک رد یایکیرما یاهوری", AFINTL, <https://www.afintl.com/202304259794>, (Date of Accession: 26.04.2023).



## ANKASAM ANALYSIS

# Can BRICS Become an Effective Actor?

Today's capitalist economic order was founded after the Second World War and took its final form with the end of the Cold War. The capitalist system in which the United States of America (USA) in particular and the West in general was at the center meant the construction of a unipolar world system. However, in the relatively free environment created in the post-Cold War period, various regional powers emerged as new centers in world politics and economy. These forces, on the one hand, pursue policies on a national basis; on the other hand, they

came together in a multilateral way to create an alternative to the Western-centered system.

In order to build an international structure, a structure known as BRICS was created in 2010, based on the first letters of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. One of the most important features of BRICS was that it was seen as an alternative to the existing international system. BRICS was also an option against the World Bank (WB). The New Development Bank was established within the BRICS in 2014 with a



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capital of 50 billion dollars against the WB and the International Monetary Fund (IMF).[1] Along with the war in Ukraine, which reshaped the global conjuncture, the sanctions against Russia also affected various states. The states in question have started to adopt the strategic autonomy approach against the West. Because the USA's prioritizing and imposing its own interests and values in global politics and bilateral relations has created discomfort in other states, especially Western actors. At this point, it has been understood that the state of being dependent on the West creates an important vulnerability in a process where interests conflict. In particular, the fact that Russia mainly sells its energy resources to the West, conducts trade in dollars, and uses the West's SWIFT system was seen as an important weakness.

In this context, it is clear that the states opposed to the Western-centered system have adopted a common approach at the point of coming together. It is understood that countries are trying to bring dynamism to existing structures instead of going to new organizations. It is obvious that especially Russia, which is subject to sanctions, and the states that try to protect themselves against Western pressure are the driving forces in this process. It can be stated that BRICS is one of the prominent organizations at this stage. In addition, it is seen that international organizations such as Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) have intensified their policies and activities.

In the process of reshaping international balances and dynamics, it is obvious that states trying to gain strategic autonomy act in two basic frameworks. These are safety and economy. For this reason, the SCO gave Egypt the Dialogue Partnership Status by going out of Asia during the fight against terrorism and radicalization. It is possible that Cairo, like Riyadh, will become a full member in the future.

On the other hand, BRICS comes to the forefront as the economic trivet. In this context, it is known that new states want to join the BRICS. Among them, Algeria, Argentina and Iran are mostly mentioned. However, it is known that states such as Saudi Arabia and Egypt will also apply for membership.[2] Moreover, its acquisition of shares in the New Development Bank makes Egypt the first new member of the expanded BRICS+, along with Bangladesh and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).[3] In his statement, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov stated that about 20 countries are interested in joining the BRICS. In addition, it is thought that the realization of these memberships will increase the financial cooperation between the BRICS countries and accelerate the economic recovery.[4]

BRICS will significantly increase its geographical, demographic and economic capacity with new members. Although the sanctions imposed by the West on Russia negatively affected the capacity of BRICS at some point, the concern created by these developments on other states increased the interest in alternative sources.

As it can be understood, even though Russia is going through a troubled period, BRICS has the opportunity to continue its existence by increasing its capacity. In addition, the economic and political rise of China, India, Brazil and South Africa causes the BRICS to still be seen as a valuable structure despite Russia. On the other hand, it is possible that Russia's test against sanctions will be seen as a test given by BRICS at some point.

As a result, it is possible to say that BRICS has entered the stage of transforming into an important economic structure with the Russia-Ukraine War. Today, it has been announced that BRICS countries have surpassed the 30% G7 with a share of 31.5% in the world's gross domestic product. Also, if Mexico, which is included in the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA/CUSMA), considers joining the BRICS, it will be a great loss for the West in general and the USA in particular.[5] In this context, it is obvious that BRICS will gain significant power and prestige. Especially against the interventionist attitudes of the IMF and the USA when providing economic, political and military assistance, the BRICS' adoption of a different attitude makes this organization a stronger alternative. At this point, it can be said that BRICS has an important potential in global politics and economy.

[1] "BRICS Nations Offer a New World Order as Alternative to the West", Front Line, <https://frontline.thehindu.com/news/brics-nations-offer-a-new-world-order-as-alternative-to-the-west/article66667657.ece>, (Date of Accession: 19.04.2023).

[2] "Algeria is One of Most Plausible Candidates to Join BRICS-Lavrov", TASS, <https://tass.com/politics/1570171>, (Date of Accession: 19.04.2023).

[3] "Egypt Becomes A Member Of The BRICS New Development Bank", Silk Road Briefing, <https://www.silkroadbriefing.com/news/2023/03/23/egypt-becomes-a-member-of-the-brics-new-development-bank/>, (Date of Accession: 19.04.2023).

[4] "There are 20 Countries Wishing to Become Part of BRICS and the SCO", TV BRICS, <https://tvbrics.com/en/news/there-are-20-countries-wishing-to-become-part-of-brics-and-the-sco/>, (Date of Accession: 19.04.2023).



## ANKASAM ANALYSIS

# A New Phase in China's Mediation Efforts in the Russia-Ukraine War: Shi-Zelensky Meeting

After the Russia-Ukraine War that started on February 24, 2022, direct contact was established between Chinese President Xi Jinping and Ukrainian President Vladimir Zelensky for the first time, and the leaders held a phone conversation that lasted for about an hour on April 26, 2023.[1] It is obvious that the aforementioned meeting has increased the expectations that China can mediate in the Russia-Ukraine War in order to reach a ceasefire.

As a matter of fact, it can be stated that the contact between the parties was positive. For this reason, Zelensky, who made a statement on the subject from his official account on the

social media site Twitter, used the following statements:[2]

"I had a long and meaningful phone call with President Xi Jinping. I believe that this call and the appointment of Ukraine's Ambassador to China will give a strong impetus to the development of our bilateral relations."

The above words of the President of Ukraine are very important in that they indicate that diplomatic contacts on the Beijing-Kiev line will increase. Because, although China has expressed on various platforms that it wants the war to end as soon as possible, it is accused of



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preparing to provide military ammunition support to Russia by some actors, especially the United States of America (USA) and England, who want the war to prolong.[3]

Despite the aforementioned allegations, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China has clearly expressed its stance on two issues in the twelve-point statement published on February 24, 2023, on the occasion of the first anniversary of the war, and in which Beijing revealed its approach to the Russia-Ukraine War. The first of these is the support given to the territorial integrities and sovereignties of the states, which is emphasized in the first article of the declaration. It can be argued that this clause was disappointing in Moscow and meant that Kiev was justified by Chinese decision makers. The second issue is the criticisms directed at unilateral sanctions within the articles in the declaration. This can be considered as a criticism of the sanctions that aim to isolate Russia from the international community.[4]

As can be expected, the aforementioned declaration increased the expectations that the Beijing administration could act as a mediator between Moscow and Kiev. As a matter of fact, on March 20-22, 2023, Xi visited Moscow with Russian President Vladimir Putin to discuss the relations between the two countries and the situation of the war in Ukraine. This has enabled China to cross an important threshold in terms of diplomacy carried out with the aim of achieving a ceasefire between Moscow and Kiev. In the ongoing process, Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez, who is the next term president of the European Union (EU), visited Beijing on March 30, 2023, and during the visit, the outcome of the war in Ukraine as well as EU-China relations were discussed. On 5-7 April 2023, the President of the EU Commission Ursula von der Leyen and the President of France Emmanuel Macron visited China and similar issues were also discussed.

All these developments have revealed that the expectation of the European actors who want the war to end is for Xi to use his influence over Putin. There may even be a task sharing between China and Europe at the point of mediation. In other words, while Xi was trying to persuade Moscow, Macron and other European leaders may also force Kiev to a ceasefire. However, it is thought that Russia is the party that should be discouraged from its goals in order to end the war. For this reason, China is the main actor that comes to the forefront in the mediation discussions regarding the Russia-Ukraine War.

It is not a coincidence that Zelensky invited Xi to Kiev during the diplomatic traffic carried out due to Beijing being perceived as the main center in the search for a ceasefire. Zelensky, in his statement on March 29, 2023, said, "We are ready to see Xi here.

I want to talk to him." he said.[5] Therefore, the phone call between the two leaders and the announcement by the President of Ukraine that an Ambassador will be appointed to Beijing in this context can be interpreted as a harbinger of critical developments both in mediation diplomacy and in the dimension of bilateral relations on the Beijing-Kiev line.

Of course, at this stage, it can be foreseen that Xi will pay a visit to Kiev in the near future. Perhaps in the future, Xi may take his shuttle diplomacy to a new level and propose a trilateral summit or a more comprehensive summit of leaders with the participation of leaders such as Macron, for example, in order to find a middle ground between Putin and Zelensky.

At this point, it should be stated that there are serious differences in the expectations and goals of Moscow and Kiev regarding the war. This means that it would be too optimistic to expect a ceasefire in the near future. However, the process has revealed that it is unlikely that Washington and London will succeed in their efforts to cut off China from Europe and isolate it from the world like Russia. Because, as of the point reached, Beijing is becoming an important center in the search for overcoming the crises. In this sense, it is possible to state that China's orientations and the expectations of the EU largely coincide.

[1] "Ukraine's Zelensky Holds First War Phone Call with China's Xi", BBC, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-65396613>, (Date of Accession: 27.04.2023).

[2] @ZelenskyyUa, "I had a long and meaningful phone call with President Xi Jinping. I believe that this call, as well as the appointment of Ukraine's ambassador to China, will give a powerful impetus to the development of our bilateral relations.", Twitter, <https://twitter.com/ZelenskyyUa/status/1651184756623802368>, (Date of Accession: 27.04.2023).

[3] "Russia Wants Military Aid from China-Here's Why This Deal Could Help China, Too", The Conversation, <https://theconversation.com/russia-wants-military-aid-from-china-heres-why-this-deal-could-help-china-too-201284>, (Date of Accession: 27.04.2023).

[4] "China's Position on the Political Settlement of the Ukraine Crisis", FMPRC, [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa\\_eng/zxxx\\_662805/202302/t20230224\\_11030713.html](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/202302/t20230224_11030713.html), (Date of Accession: 27.04.2023).

[5] "Zelenskyy to Xi Jinping: Come to Ukraine", Politico, <https://www.politico.eu/article/volodymyr-zelenskyy-xi-jinping-ukraine-russia-war/>, (Date of Accession: 27.04.2023).



## ANKASAM ANALYSIS

# Increasing Polarization in the Asia-Pacific under AUKUS

The political context in the Asia-Pacific region is primarily manifested through alliances and poles, and these alliances and allied relationships determine the political structure of the region. Indeed, it can be argued that the competition between countries such as Australia, Japan, South Korea, Vietnam, and New Zealand, which act together with Western actors under the United States of America (USA) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) framework, and countries such as China and North Korea, which aim to compete with the international order based on Western rules, has turned into a competition field.

In this context, General Ryan, Commander of the 25th Infantry Division of the US Army stationed in Hawaii, stating that the American forces and their allies in Asia are ready for war after years of joint combat exercises, and noting that Russia's failure to achieve the desired results in Ukraine should serve as a warning to potential competitors such as China, is noteworthy. Ryan's statement that allies of the US such as the Philippines, Japan, and Australia will act together and will not continue to tolerate countries in the region that have decided to change the world order is quite important.[1]



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In this context, it can be stated that the US has formed a bloc in the Asia-Pacific region by establishing an alliance with states such as South Korea, Australia, and Japan, and has consolidated this bloc through opposition to China. However, it is clear that the key to the US and NATO's ability to unite states in the region is to provide them with security guarantees.

Indeed, these statements can be read in this context. The USA believes that it cannot keep the states in the region together without providing security guarantees. In this regard, it is important for the USA to always say that it is on the side of these actors. It is also possible to argue that the mentioned discourse aims to deter China. However, it is also possible that these statements may result in these countries being provoked.

On the other hand, it can be said that the strongest alliance established in the region with US backing is the AUKUS Pact signed in partnership with the USA, UK, and Australia. Indeed, due to both its establishment and its impact since its establishment, this pact has a critical function both globally and regionally. This is because the said pact was announced by USA President Joe Biden on September 15, 2021. This announcement was made through a press conference at the White House.[2] The press conference was attended by the then UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson and the then Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison.[3] The pact envisages Washington and London providing nuclear-powered submarines to Canberra.[4] Furthermore, it is believed that this pact serves both to encircle China and to increase the US military influence in the region.

After the opposition in Australia criticized the pact due to its cost, complexity, and potential sovereignty issues, it is noteworthy that Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese defended [5] his country's plan to purchase nuclear submarines worth 244 billion dollars in his speech on March 16, 2023. Indeed, due to Canberra's participation in the AUKUS Pact, the influence of the US and NATO in the Asia-Pacific region will increase.

However, this situation has caused significant tension between Beijing and Canberra. One reason why Australia needs the support of the West is its foreign policy, which is based on opposition to China. But Beijing is also uncomfortable with the alliances in the region and believes that these alliances will limit its influence in the seas. Therefore, China is highly critical of the West's presence in the region. As a result, it is evident that these developments increase regional tensions and make security equations more fragile.

As long as the tension between the US and China continues, it can be stated that the polarization process of the West in the region will accelerate and this will lead to fractures in the security equation in the Asia-Pacific.

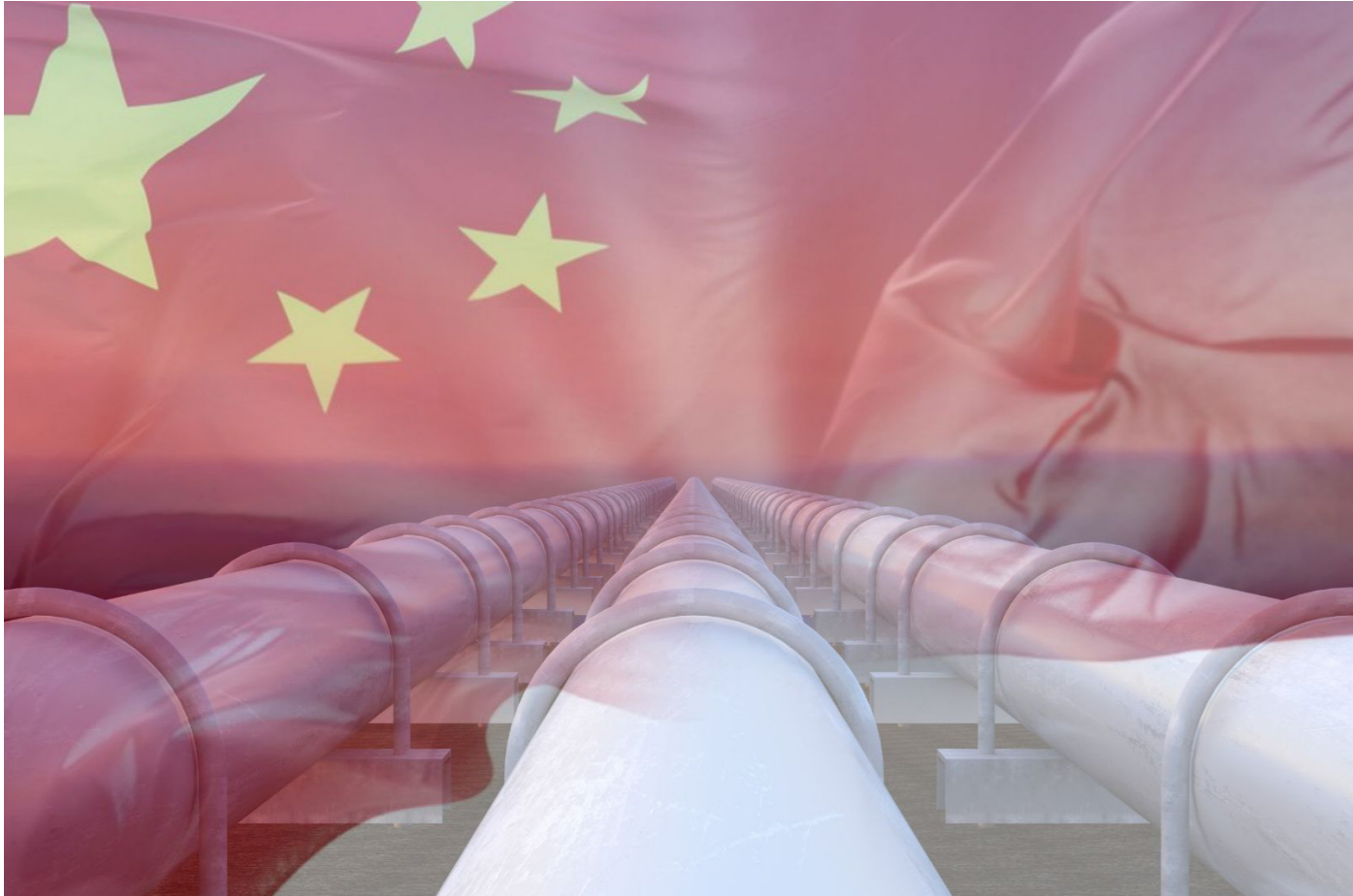
[1] "US General to Aggressors: Allies Are Battle-Ready in Asia", Associated Press News, <https://apnews.com/article/politics-physical-fitness-philippines-china-fb9f434faea84d8f96a37717f1bb4a16>, (Date of Accession: 14.04.2023).

[2] "Joint Leaders Statement on AUKUS", The White House, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/09/15/joint-leaders-statement-on-aucus/>, (Date of Accession: 14.04.2023).

[3] Aukus Partnership Will Complement and Not Sideline Quad, The Phnom Penh Post, <https://www.phnompenhpost.com/opinion/aucus-partnership-will-complement-and-not-sideline-quad>, (Date of Accession: 14.04.2023).

[4] "Aukus Deal: US, UK and Australia Agree on Nuclear Submarine Project", British Broadcasting Company, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-australia-64945819>, (Date of Accession: 14.04.2023).

[5] "Australia PM Defends AUKUS Submarine Deal Against Critics", Reuters, <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/australia-pm-defends-aucus-submarine-deal-against-critics-2023-03-16/>, (Date of Accession: 14.04.2023).



## ANKASAM ANALYSIS

# Formula for Strong Cooperation on the Astana-Moscow Line: Transporting Russian Natural Gas to China

On April 12, 2023, Kazakhstan Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Murat Nurtleu visited Moscow and the messages given during the visit once again and it revealed that the relations on the Astana-Moscow line are in a trend of expansion and deepening. This has turned the attention of researchers following the regional agenda and even of the international public, in terms of energy-related messages, to Kazakhstan-Russia relations.

To explain the importance of Nurtleu's visit to Moscow, first of all, it is necessary to address the issues discussed in the meeting. At the meeting, where the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan met with his Russian counterpart Sergey Lavrov, the economic, political and cultural relations between the two countries were discussed. In this context, Nurtleu said, "Russia has been Kazakhstan's strategic and important economic partner. Both countries have long-term close and strong relations based on friendship and good neighborliness." found in the statement



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[1]. Therefore, it can be stated that some of the conflicts observed after the Russia-Ukraine War are left behind in the relations between the parties. As an indicator of this, Nurtleu announced that Russian President Vladimir Putin is preparing to visit the city of Kostanay in the north of Kazakhstan in the autumn of 2023[2]. Therefore, it is possible to state that Kazakhstan-Russia relations tend to expand and deepen.

It should not be forgotten that; the basic principle in Kazakhstan's foreign policy is to act with a multi-vector and multi-dimensional foreign policy understanding that considers the balances between power centers within the framework of mutual respect and interest. As a matter of fact, the Astana administration is involved in important infrastructure projects, especially the Middle Corridor, within the framework of China's Belt and Road Initiative; on the other hand, it liberalizes especially in parallel with the reform processes it implements and in this context, it turns to the West. While doing all this, it is possible to talk about a Kazakhstan administration that does not ignore the Russian factor.

On the other hand, Russia wants to maintain its influence on the countries in the post-Soviet space within the framework of the "Near Environment Doctrine", also known as the Primakov Doctrine. As might be expected, Central Asia is not independent of this goal either. Therefore, while Astana attaches importance to relations with Russia due to its multi-vector foreign policy understanding; Moscow sees developing constructive relations with Central Asia, which it sees as its close circle, as an important part of its security policies, and considers Kazakhstan as an important partner for this purpose.

As can be seen, the development of relations between the parties is in line with the basic expectations of both countries. In this context, Kazakhstan made an important offer to Russia on the occasion of Nurtleu's visit, in accordance with its multi-vector foreign policy understanding. The proposal in question includes the construction of a new international natural gas pipeline, which will pass through the territory of Kazakhstan and connect to China[3]. Because the capacity of the existing line is quite low.

Moreover, the aforementioned proposal will also serve to deliver natural gas to the eastern regions of Kazakhstan[4]. In other words, if this offer is accepted by the parties, it will be easier for Russia to reach the Asian market, which it has turned to after the war in Ukraine, and in this context, China, which is Asia's main energy importer; in Kazakhstan, it will both increase its geopolitical and geoeconomic importance in the context of energy corridors, and will also provide for the elimination of a deficiency within the

country. In this sense, it can be stated that a win-win based energy cooperation project has come to the fore. Moreover, Beijing is the world's most important natural gas importer. For this reason, it can be argued that China will approach the aforementioned project warmly, both for the industrial sector, which is the driving force of its growing economic capacity, and in order to meet the main needs of its 1.4 billion population[5].

This natural gas pipeline proposal, which came to the agenda with Nurtleu's visit to Moscow and will connect Russia and China, may open the door to a profitable process for all parties. Of course, this situation will reduce conflicts as it will increase mutual dependencies and will open the door to the establishment of a relationship style centered on win-win cooperation.

In addition, there is another dimension of Astana's offer to Moscow that should not be ignored. As it will be remembered, Russia allowed Kazakhstan to export natural gas to Germany via the Druzhba Pipeline, despite the sanctions imposed on it by the European Union (EU)[6]. Therefore, Kazakhstan's proposal can be read as a reflection of the process carried out within the framework of the Druzhba Pipeline. In short, Kazakh gas goes to EU countries; through a move that will direct Russian gas to China, a formula suitable for the benefit of all parties may have been found in a way to find a solution to the global energy crisis, or at least a search for this could be mentioned.

Within the framework of the developments experienced, it can be stated that after the start of the war in Ukraine, some problems in Kazakhstan-Russia relations were overcome and the parties focused on developing their cooperation within the framework of the principle of good neighborliness and mutual benefit. The announcement that Putin will visit Kazakhstan in the autumn of 2023 confirms this. On the other hand, Kazakhstan's proposal for the construction of a pipeline that will carry Russian natural gas to China reveals that energy will continue to be the driving force in the relations between the parties.

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[2] "President Putin to Visit Kazakhstan in Autumn 2023", AKI Press, [https://akipress.com/news/701673:President\\_Putin\\_to\\_visit\\_Kazakhstan\\_in\\_autumn\\_2023/](https://akipress.com/news/701673:President_Putin_to_visit_Kazakhstan_in_autumn_2023/), (Date of Accession: 14.04.2023).

# ANKASAM IN PRESS

## 3 May 2023

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

## 4 May 2023

Ankara Center for Crisis and Political Studies (ANKASAM) President Prof. Dr. Mehmet Seyfettin Erol's article on the referendum held in Uzbekistan on April 30, 2023 was published in Türkiye Newspaper.

## 6 May 2023

ANKASAM International Relations Expert Dr. Doğan Başaran evaluated the current developments in Russia-Ukraine War in Kanal B TV Hafta Sonu program.



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

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CRISIS AND POLITICAL STUDIES VOLUME VI, ISSUE II

# 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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