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in the Russia-Ukraine
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Changing Security Equations
in the Context of China, South
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Pakistan's Strategic Autonomy Sensitivity

Under the leadership of Shahbaz Sharif, Pakistan is strengthening its strategic autonomy and becoming one of the important actors in the regional and global equation. Accordingly, unlike the Imran Khan era, the Islamabad administration avoids developing close relations with a single actor and acts within the framework of a multilateral and multidimensional diplomacy approach that takes into account

the balances between power centers. Islamabad believes that this foreign policy orientation strengthens Pakistan's sovereignty and independence. Thus, Islamabad is diversifying its economic cooperation, attracting investment and reaching its economic potential. In other words, Pakistan, like any other nation-state, has an understanding that allows it to maximize its own interests.



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In this context, Pakistan is a major stakeholder in the Belt and Road Initiative announced by Chinese President Xi Jinping during his visit to Kazakhstan in 2013. Islamabad is part of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), one of the six economic corridors of the initiative. As a matter of fact, it hosts major projects within the framework of CPEC, notably the Gwadar Port. Moreover, China is a critical economic partner of Pakistan, from which Pakistan receives loans and grants. Therefore, China is one of the facets of Islamabad's multilateral foreign policy approach.

On the other hand, Pakistan is an energy dependent country. Due to this dependence, Islamabad is in search of energy security and energy independence. As a reflection of this quest, Pakistan is trying to realize the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India Natural Gas Pipeline (TAPI) and has set one of the directions of its foreign policy as Central Asia, particularly Turkmenistan. Indeed, Islamabad's relations with the capitals of the region are improving day by day. In return, Pakistan offers Central Asian countries the opportunity to open up to the oceans and thus proposes a win-win relationship.

The Russian factor constitutes another dimension of Pakistan's energy security cooperation. In the current conjuncture where the international community has developed strategies to isolate the Moscow regime due to the Russia-Ukraine War and is trying to collapse the Russian economy by targeting Russia's energy sector, the European Union (EU) has imposed an oil price ceiling in order to limit the Kremlin's oil exports. In such an environment, Islamabad, on the other hand, prioritized its own interests and signed an agreement to procure oil from Moscow despite possible pressure from the EU and the United States (US). In fact, the first cargo ship carrying Russian oil to Pakistan docked at Karachi Port on June 11, 2023. Sharif openly expressed his satisfaction with this development and thanked everyone who contributed to the process.^[1]

On the other hand, in order to overcome its economic difficulties, Pakistan is also establishing relations with its traditional allies in the Gulf, trying to attract investment from the Gulf and signing various commercial agreements with these states.

In doing so, Islamabad, unlike the Khan era, has not neglected the West and has taken care to restore its relations with the West.^[2] In fact, this situation stems from Pakistan's aim to increase its strategic autonomy and is in line with the country's multilateral foreign policy. Security-based cooperation between Islamabad and Washington has deepened, especially following the increase in attacks by the terrorist organization Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and separatist Baloch groups in Pakistan. Indeed, many TTP terrorists have been neutralized in US unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) strikes. In return, Pakistan consents to the use of its airspace for US drone strikes in Afghanistan. The most concrete example of this is the drone operation that killed Ayman al-Zawahiri, the leader of the terrorist organization al-Qaeda.^[3] Moreover, Washington has pledged to support Pakistan's efforts to ensure border security.^[4]

As can be understood, there is a Pakistani reality that cooperates with different actors in many areas ranging from economy to energy, from investments to security, and displays a constructive stance with the win-win principle to achieve its own interests. Despite this, Islamabad's relations with actors such as China and Russia are criticized by some circles in the West. As a reflection of this, on May 18, 2023, 65 US senators wrote a letter to US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, making various allegations and demanding that Washington put pressure on Islamabad with all means at its disposal. ^[5] In fact, this demand implies that Pakistan is being asked to make a geopolitical choice.

On June 9, 2023, Blinken responded to the letter and emphasized that the United States has a consistent engagement with Pakistan and values these relations.^[6] Therefore, while some argue that Islamabad should be forced to choose, many actors, including the United States, recognize and respect Pakistan's sensitivity to strengthening its strategic autonomy.

It was precisely in this context that Islamabad felt the need to remind itself that it would not accept being forced to choose sides. In an interview with Politico on June 14, 2023, Pakistan's Deputy Foreign Minister Hina Rabbani Khar emphasized that Pakistan does not intend to take sides in the increasingly fierce global competition between the US and China.^[7] Of course, Khar's emphasis highlights Islamabad's sensitivity to preserving and strengthening its strategic autonomy.

In conclusion, Pakistan acts with a multifaceted and multidimensional foreign policy approach that takes into account the balances between the power centers under Sharif. In this framework, it establishes relations with every actor that it finds suitable for its interests in areas where there is an opportunity for cooperation. Strengthening its strategic autonomy through these relations, Pakistan does not accept being forced to choose, as can be understood from Khar's statements.

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[2] Doğacan Başaran, "Pakistan's Western Expansion: Restoration Period in Relations", ANKASAM, <https://www.ankasam.org/pakistan-western-expansion-restoration-period-in-relations/?lang=en>, (Date of Accession: 15.06.2023).

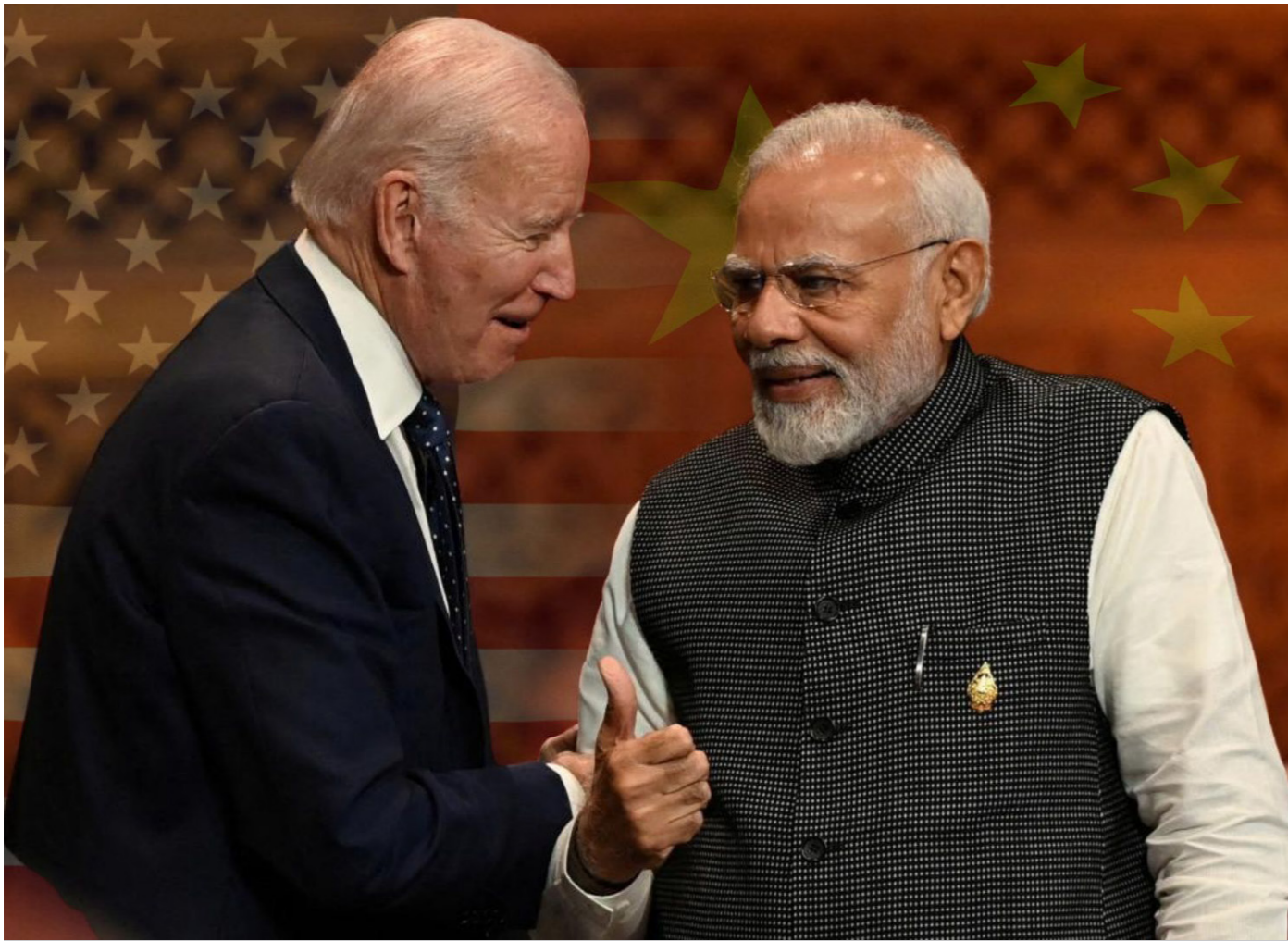
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[4] "Pakistan Has Right to Defend Itself from Terrorism", Ary News, <https://arynews.tv/pakistan-has-right-to-defend-itself-from-terrorism/>, (Date of Accession: 14.06.2023).

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[7] "Pakistan: Don't Ask Us to Choose between the US and China", Politico, <https://www.politico.eu/article/pakistan-choose-us-china-global-power-bloc-hina-rabbani-khar/>, (Date of Accession: 14.06.2023).



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Washington–New Delhi Rap- prochement in China–US Rivalry

The fact that China[1], the world's second largest economy after the United States, is located in the Asia-Pacific region and seeks to challenge the rules-based international order based on both the United States and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) makes this region increasingly important.

On the other hand, this competition also has a regional perspective. This creates a serious polarization in the region, forcing states and actors to choose sides in the competition between

the West and China. It can be argued that this has made the regional security environment fragile and heightened tensions.

Moreover, many actors in the region feel this compulsion to choose sides deeply and try to find a place for themselves in the emerging equations. This is because North Korea is closer to Beijing in its opposition to the US and NATO, while states such as Australia, New Zealand, the Philippines, Japan, South Korea, Vietnam, Vietnam and Indonesia have adopted a pro-Western stance. This is because it is



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known that the US and the West aim to contain China, especially through the Taiwan Question and the disputes over the South China Sea. At the same time, it can be argued that US cooperation with these actors will strengthen Washington's geopolitical, geostrategic and geoeconomic influence in the Asia-Pacific.

In this context, it is significant that US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin held a cooperation meeting with India on May 5, 2023. Austin and Indian Defense Minister Rajnath Singh are exploring ways to build resilient supply chains, the Indian Defense Ministry said in a statement. In the statement, it was decided to jointly develop new technologies, identify opportunities for joint production of existing and new systems, and increase cooperation between the defense ecosystems of the two countries.[2]

The statement also emphasized that regional security issues were discussed and it was agreed to strengthen operational cooperation across all military services to support India's leading role as a security provider in the Indo-Pacific.[3]

The US Department of Defense said in a statement that the initiative aims to change the paradigm of cooperation between Washington and New Delhi's defense sectors, including through a series of special offers that can provide India with access to the latest technologies and support New Delhi's defense modernization plans.[4]

At this point, it is worth noting that India is the fifth largest economy[5] in the world after the US, China, Japan and Germany. Moreover, New Delhi has balanced relations with Washington and NATO. At the same time, relations between India and China are also tense. Indeed, there are many border disputes between the two actors.[6] One of the most important of these is the Kashmir issue.[7]

In this context, it can be stated that New Delhi is implementing a proactive foreign policy. Therefore, India is aiming for a much faster foreign policy making process in geopolitical, geostrategic and geoeconomic terms. As a result of this situation, New Delhi's foreign policy in the short term may include many new collaborations and, as the US example shows, India will also strengthen its existing alliance relations.

On the other hand, India and the US are China's most important competitors. Both states may be aiming to take advantage of the anti-Chinese sentiment by establishing a cooperation. It can be predicted that this union will provoke China and accelerate the process of unification with Taiwan. As a result, China's growing

and rising power is leading to the consolidation of the anti-Beijing front. It is possible to read the rapprochement in India-US relations in this framework.

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[4] "US' Austin Eyeing Upgraded India Ties to Counter China", Taipei Times, <https://www.taipeitimes.com/News/front/archives/2023/06/06/2003801051>, (Date of Accession:06.06.2023).

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Energy Partnerships in the China-Middle East Axis

China's interest in the Middle East region has significantly increased in recent years. Beijing has developed its relations with the countries in the region, driven by its growing energy needs and the requirements of the Belt and Road Initiative. Iraq and Saudi Arabia, two important countries in the region, are China's main suppliers of oil. For the region's countries, China holds the status of a primary trading partner. Therefore, there is a positive approach towards Chinese investments.

In this context, the announcement on June 20, 2023, about Qatar and China being in preparations for a second major liquefied natural gas (LNG) supply agreement is significant. Beijing is one of the world's largest exporters of LNG as a high-energy consumer. Thus, Qatar's readiness to make a second major gas supply agreement with a Chinese state-controlled company within a year is important. It is on the agenda that China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) and QatarEnergy will sign a 27-year agreement for CNPC to purchase 4



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million tons of LNG annually from the Gulf country. As part of this, CNPC will also become a 5% partner in one of the LNG trains in Qatar's North Field, the world's largest natural gas reservoir, as part of its expansion project.[1]

Following Chinese State Councilor Xi Jinping's first visit to the Middle East in 2016, significant strides were made in bilateral relations and cooperation. Undoubtedly, energy has been one of the fundamental building blocks of this cooperation. Subsequently, Beijing shaped its policy towards the region with the first Arab policy document titled "China's Policy Paper on the Arab States" in 2016, the 2015 "Vision and Action Plan" that encompassed the Maritime Silk Road under the Belt and Road Initiative, and the "China-Arab States Cooperation Executive Program" in 2018. The framework of cooperation outlined in these documents focuses on trade, investment, energy, and infrastructure in the Middle East.[2]

Furthermore, platforms such as the Arab-China Business Conference and the China-Arab Summit, held on June 12, 2023, also hold key importance in the relations between the parties. Through these meetings, various agreements are signed in many areas, with energy being a fundamental sector.

China's regional security vision within the scope of the Middle East is progressing towards developing a Chinese initiative for global security, encompassing energy security and policies related to economic relations. While strengthening energy cooperation on one hand, mutual partnerships are being elevated to a strategic level on the other. As a result, Beijing has enhanced its ability to play a role in regional issues and has become a more influential player.

The developments over the years in the energy partnership, which forms the basis of bilateral cooperation, are laying the groundwork for new agreements. The recent Qatar-China Agreement serves as confirmation of this trend, as a second agreement on the same subject was reached between the two parties within a year. Various data and findings also indicate that the Beijing-Middle East energy partnership will continue to grow. According to the 2019 report of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, China imports approximately 8.4 million barrels of oil per day, with 3.9 million barrels of that being supplied by the Gulf Cooperation Council countries.[3]

Furthermore, China is Saudi Arabia's largest trading partner. Riyadh exports over 40% of its crude oil to Beijing. Additionally, Chinese officials signed agreements worth billions of dollars in December 2022 in Saudi Arabia, and the two parties have formulated a comprehensive cooperation plan encompassing 182 collaborative measures in 18 areas such as politics, economy, trade, and investment. Therefore, there is also a significant interest in China from the region.[4]

The United Arab Emirates (UAE), another country in the region, is also strengthening its energy partnership with China. In March 2023, the first natural gas export agreement in yuan currency was signed between Beijing and Abu Dhabi. This development, following Beijing's historic \$60 billion agreement to import LNG from Qatar in November 2022, holds strategic importance for the Middle East-China energy partnership. Additionally, the Beijing-based Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank opened its first overseas office in Abu Dhabi in April 2023, aiming to support the agenda of multilateral initiatives. The office is intended to be an "important and strategic hub." [5]

Lastly, on June 9, 2023, discussions were held between Iraq's state-owned Missan Oil Company (MOC) and the Chinese company Geo-Jade to develop the Huwaiza Block in Maysan Province. Beijing, within the framework of its relations with Baghdad, is engaged not only in energy imports but also in infrastructure projects. There are ongoing projects under construction as well. Therefore, the relationship between the parties is not solely based on commercial and economic ties. As a significant investor in the region, China places special emphasis on energy projects and investments.

In summary, more than half of China's oil imports are sourced from the Middle East, which has led Beijing to strengthen its ties with Gulf countries and other regional states. Particularly in recent years, as China has increased its investments in large-scale infrastructure projects, the relationship between the parties has gone beyond trade. As economic relations deepen, Beijing has also begun to pursue a strategy of playing a role in regional issues. In this regard, China's recent involvement in the reestablishment of relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran provides significant clues to a major shift in the region and China's strategic role there. It can be said that energy partnerships will continue to develop both in terms of investment and trade. As part of the Belt and Road Initiative, Beijing is expected to elevate its strong bond with the region to more strategic levels.

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[3] Aynı yer.

[4] "إلى-ة قاطال-م-نم-ن-صيا", Independent Arabia, <https://www.independentarabia.com/node/434296>, (Date of Accession: 20.06.2023).

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ANKASAM ANALYSIS

Increasing Tension in the Balkans: The Kosovo Crisis

Kosovo and Serbia have been engaging in various contacts through the mediation of the European Union (EU) and the United States (US) to resolve their longstanding disputes. In these contacts, the EU's "Western Balkans Enlargement" is particularly significant. The EU aims to establish a common approach among its member states regarding security policies. However, the problems between the two actors, both aspiring for membership, are not easily resolvable due to historical issues. In particular, the Serbs' perception of Kosovo as part

of "Greater Serbia" throughout the historical process triggers crises between the two actors. The main issue to be emphasized here is Serbia's relations with Russia. Despite Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić's attempt to pursue a balancing policy, the influence of pan-Slavism on the Serbian people, rather than adopting a joint approach with the West, plays a decisive role in the regional dynamics.

Although the contacts between Pristina and Belgrade along the line have occasionally



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been promising, they contradict the grand strategies of the two capitals. Indeed, the escalation of the crisis since April 2022 between the parties can be attributed to the recent protests by Serbs against the Kosovo Force (KFOR) of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

To further elaborate on the situation at hand, the arrest of Milun Milenković-Lune, the leader of the Civil Protection group, on suspicion of organizing the attack against KFOR on May 29, 2023, has led to Serb attacks on the Kosovo police.^[1] As a result, there has been an increase in Serbian protests. These protests primarily revolve around the demand for the release of the detainees.^[2]

Ultimately, the fragile nature of the Kosovo-Serbia relationship poses a risk of turning into chaos. The unstable structure of relations between the two countries has become prone to conflict after three Kosovo police officers were abducted and detained by the Serbian side. Kosovo Prime Minister Albin Kurti has described this situation as revenge for the arrest of a Serbian citizen, allegedly involved in organizing the events of May 29, 2023.^[3] This tension between Belgrade and Pristina administrations has been perceived as a danger by the international community. In order to prevent a potential conflict, there has been an increase in the presence of police in all municipalities in northern Kosovo.^[4]

At this point, efforts to alleviate tensions have gained momentum. It is well known that the EU and the US are displaying a united front in the region. In this context, Gabriel Escobar, the US Special Envoy for the Balkans, has called for the immediate release of the Kosovo police officers and the reduction of tension.^[5] This call can be understood as an effort by the Washington administration to ensure the security of the region. In fact, when looking at the US Balkans policy, it is evident that the US is taking proactive measures against Russia and perceives Moscow's influence in the region as a threat.

Undoubtedly, Serbia holds a significant position in Russia's pan-Slavism policy. With the influence of the conflict in Ukraine, Russia seeks to strengthen its hand against the West, and the Balkans are the region it turns to. Considering the EU's enlargement towards the region and the connection of Balkan states with Europe, the importance of the Serbian factor in Russia's Balkans policy becomes better understood.

As it is known, the states in the Balkans have a heterogeneous demographic structure. Therefore, any crisis in the region would affect the entire area and ultimately Europe. It would be incomplete to say that Russia is the sole actor formulating policies based on this demographic structure. It should be noted that the EU, on one hand, seeks to become a center of attraction for the parties in order to address concerns in the region, and on the other hand, puts pressure on Kosovo and Serbia on various issues to bring Pristina and Belgrade together on a common ground. The statement by Peter Stano, the European Commission spokesperson, expressing the expectation of a reasonable stance from countries aspiring to join the EU, confirms this.^[6]

In short, the EU's interest in the Balkans has increased in recent times. One of the noteworthy points is that Brussels aims to prevent potential turmoil in the region and implement an inclusive policy. In this regard, the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Josep Borrell, has invited Vucic and Kurti to a crisis meeting.^[7]

The tensions in question have a determining impact not only on Brussels and Washington but also on the foreign policies of the states in the region. In particular, the Albanian presence in northern Kosovo prevents the government in Tirana from remaining silent about the developments. Considering Albania's irredentist approach, this possibility is further weakened. Based on this, Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama has stated that serious problems will occur in bilateral relations with Serbia if the three Kosovo police officers are not released.^[8]

In conclusion, it can be said that the tension between Kosovo and Serbia affects the region, especially with the Serbs influenced by pan-Slavism being seen by the West as a political maneuvering tool for Russia. Therefore, it can be argued that the West is united in its approach to end the tensions in northern Kosovo. It is also expected that the parties will remain distant from the normalization process for some time. Another important issue to consider is that the US and the EU are likely to increase pressure on Pristina and Belgrade within the framework of shared interests. The cosmopolitan nature of the region invites tensions to escalate into a regional conflict. In this context, one of the important factors is the ideals of the states in the region. Therefore, it would not be surprising if Albania joins the Kosovo-Serbia tension in the future.

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Escalating Tensions between Beijing and Seoul as a Reflection of US–China Rivalry

The Asia-Pacific region is a region that has recently become more and more sensitive in terms of security due to the North Korean issue, the United States (US)–China rivalry intensifying over Taiwan, and Japan's armament efforts. With the involvement of extra-regional states in the internal dynamics of the region, this sensitivity causes the parties to act more belligerently. While North Korea's military activities negatively affect regional security, China's support for North Korea provides Pyongyang with room for maneuver and negatively affects South Korea–China relations.

North Korea's expanding range of action is pushing Seoul to improve its relations with Washington and Tokyo and to develop a concrete will to overcome its problems with Japan. For

example, South Korea's new strategic security document, published on June 7, 2023, expressed the desire to have closer ties with Washington in order to overcome the North Korean threat [1] Therefore, this statement bears the traces of China's increasing support for North Korea.

Some of the tension in relations stems from North Korea's military activities and China's failure to take the expected stance against North Korea; others stem from the statements made by both sides. For example, on April 23, 2023, South Korean leader Yoon Suk-yeol stated in an interview with Reuters News Agency that Taiwan is a global problem like North Korea. In response, the Chinese Foreign Ministry summoned the South Korean Ambassador to



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the ministry and stated that the statement was unacceptable.[2] In addition to all these, North Korea's spy satellite launch on June 1, 2023 ended in failure[3] and the rocket crashed into the Yellow Sea. South Korea and China then engaged in a rivalry over the remains of rockets in the region. Because China intensified its patrols in the Yellow Sea after the incident.[4]

Following the failed launch, Kim Yo-jong, the sister of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, hinted that more such tests would follow, showing that the Pyongyang regime had not given up on its spy satellite ambitions. After this incident, there were also discussions at the United Nations (UN). On June 2, 2023, the Western alliance, led by the United States, argued that Pyongyang's satellite launch should be condemned for violating several United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolutions, while Russia and China opposed this demand.[5]

The reaction from South Korea was seen on June 9, 2023, when South Korean Foreign Minister Park Jin gave an interview to Yonhap News Agency. Park stated that the UNSC was paralyzed in responding to North Korea's military actions and that Seoul urged Moscow and Beijing to play a constructive role on North Korea.[6]

Another issue that contributed to the current tension in relations was the remarks made by Chinese Ambassador Xing Haiming during a meeting with Lee Jae-myung, leader of the opposition Democratic Party of Korea (KDP), on June 8, 2023. During the meeting, Xing stated that South Korea was paying too much attention to the US side and damaging its relations with its largest trading partner.[7] Following the statements, the South Korean Foreign Ministry summoned Xing to the ministry and stated that his statements were irresponsible, meaningless and provocative.

In response to a question on the issue, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin pointed out that the problems between the Republic of Korea and China do not originate from Beijing, and that it is part of Xing's duty to maintain a high degree of engagement with the South Korean government and other parties.[8] Furthermore, on June 11, 2023, the Chinese Foreign Ministry announced that it had conveyed its dissatisfaction to the South Korean Ambassador to China.[9]

Considering the statements made, it is possible to say that Seoul has hardened its stance against Beijing due to its long silence against Pyongyang and standing in the way of action against North Korea at the UN. Moreover, considering that elections are less than a year away in South Korea, Chinese Ambassador Xing Haiming's meeting with KDP leader Lee Jae-myung, who is positioned against the Yoon government, and criticizing Seoul's foreign policy orientations would not be considered acceptable by the South

Korean government. Due to all these events, it can be said that the Yoon administration is trying to act more cautiously in its relations with Beijing.

In conclusion, the current state of Sino-South Korean relations suggests that they are beginning to fray. Although there are many factors contributing to this, the Seoul-Washington-Tokyo alliance is likely to solidify, especially as US-China competition intensifies in the Asia-Pacific.

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ANKASAM ANALYSIS

Africa's Mediation Diplomacy in the Russia-Ukraine War

Russia's intervention in Ukraine not only affects its immediate geographical vicinity but also relatively distant regions such as Africa. The cessation of grain and fertilizer trade due to the war has further complicated issues in Africa, where some countries are already struggling with famine. In other words, despite being perceived as a distant geography, the continent of Africa is deeply impacted by the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

Based on this impact and the influence of political objectives of African leaders, some leaders of African countries have engaged in diplomatic initiatives aimed at achieving peace be-

tween Russia and Ukraine. While it is not expected that these initiatives will be effective in the short term, the visits have generated significant international attention and once again highlighted the fact that the war affects not only the immediate region but also different geographies of the world. Another interesting point is that while the African delegation continues its engagements, Ukraine is being bombed. The delegation has had to take shelter in bunkers.

As evident, prominent leaders of the African continent, under the presidency of South African President Cyril Ramaphosa, have organized diplomatic visits to both Ukraine and



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Russia. The delegation includes President Ramaphosa himself, as well as Senegal's leader Macky Sall, Zambian President Hakainde Hichilema, and Comoros President Azali Assoumani. Participation from countries such as Uganda and Egypt has also been ensured. The delegation held meetings with Russian President Vladimir Putin and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky. The Russian and Ukrainian leaders conveyed the terms of their respective plans to their African counterparts. In addition, the United States and the United Kingdom have cautiously expressed support for the "Africa Peace Initiative." Ramaphosa shared with the public that United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has been informed about the initiative and the plan.

There are some points of criticism regarding the visit. For instance, Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi and Ugandan leader Yoweri Museveni were initially scheduled to participate in the discussions but withdrew their decisions at the last moment. Some argue that the withdrawal of these two leaders from the delegation has affected the credibility of the diplomatic mission.

During the visit, Ramaphosa highlighted the importance of the diplomatic mission, emphasizing that it was the first time African leaders undertook a peace mission outside the continent. He also emphasized that the delegation maintained a neutral stance. According to African leaders, this stance demonstrates the significance of the mission and the delegation's desire to gain the trust of both Russia and Ukraine. However, as mentioned earlier, it should be noted that the diplomatic mission faced various criticisms.

The peace plan proposed by African leaders consists of 10 articles. The draft includes provisions for the preservation of the territorial integrity of both Russia and Ukraine, as well as the continuation of grain imports. The plan calls for the reduction of violence in the conflict, the immediate commencement of negotiations between Russia and Ukraine, the release of war criminals, and increased humanitarian support.

When considering the needs of Africa, the reopening of grain movements in the Black Sea for the import of grain from Russia or Ukraine and diplomatic engagement have emerged as the most prominent topics. According to the African Development Bank, the war has created a shortfall of approximately 30 million tons in grain supply to Africa. The continent is also facing a shortage of fertilizers due to the conflict.

Despite these calls, Ukrainian President Zelensky has expressed that Ukraine will not participate in peace negotiations while its territories are under occupation. Ukraine reiterates the call for the Russian Army to withdraw from the occupied territories before any talks or plans.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov has announced that they accept the main outlines of the African plan. Putin, on the other hand, stated that Russia is always ready to negotiate with Ukraine and claimed that it is the Kiev government that rejects negotiations. He conveyed Russia's positions to the African leaders during their meetings. Putin reminded that the Minsk Agreement was signed between Russia and Ukraine, and according to him, it is Ukraine that has "abandoned" the peace table. He also emphasized that the Donetsk People's Republic and the Luhansk People's Republic in Ukrainian territories have been recognized by Russia after an 8-year process. According to Putin, the recognition of these entities by Russia is in accordance with international law and the UN Charter.

In this context, Putin emphasized that the UN Charter includes the right to self-determination and argued that the Luhansk and Donetsk administrations could declare their independence. After Kiev responded to this situation in Donbass with military force, Putin stated that Russia was exercising its legitimate right to self-defense as stated in Article 51 of the UN Charter.

There are also various topics being examined and evaluated regarding the visits of African leaders to Russia and Ukraine. These include Russia's and Ukraine's relations with African states. Furthermore, South Africa's central role in the diplomatic visits has led to a reevaluation of relations along the Moscow-Cape Town axis. However, due to the close relations between the parties, the purpose of the delegation has been questioned by Western circles.

Russia's relations with African states have developed in parallel with the onset and deepening of the Ukraine crisis. Following the annexation of Crimea by Russia, which led to its isolation in the international community, Russia has sought the support of African countries. Especially considering the votes condemning Russia's occupation in the United Nations General Assembly, it is understood why Moscow needed the support of Africa. While some African states did not accept these resolutions, there were also African countries like Kenya that either accepted or abstained from the decision.

Russia's increasing visibility in African countries such as Mali and the Central African Republic is seen as a way for Moscow to address its deteriorating relations with the West in Africa. Russia organizes summits with African countries to enhance relations and further cooperation. The first summit took place in Sochi in 2019. It has been announced that the second summit will be held in St. Petersburg in July 2023. In fact, the second summit was originally planned to take place earlier but was postponed due to the war in Ukraine.

Putin, especially from his second term as president, aimed to develop relations with African countries. It should be remembered that with the establishment of the Russian Federation, Moscow's focus shifted to its immediate neighborhood, and relations with the continent took a back seat on the agenda. This void was filled by Western countries. However, with Putin assuming the leadership position after Boris Yeltsin, interest in Africa increased. The memory of Soviet Union-Africa relations during the Cold War era has diminished the difference between Russia and other actors. Particularly, some countries still value the Soviet Union's support for national liberation movements, providing weapons, and training independent/national liberation leaders in the Soviet Union during the decolonization era. Therefore, the experience of the Cold War is among the factors that facilitate Putin's Africa policy. It is also evident that Russia is one of the leading actors in arms trade with the continent, which further demonstrates its engagement in Africa.

Wagner Group, which is considered as a paramilitary force/private military company by some sources, also plays a role in increasing Russia's visibility and hence its influence in Africa. Especially in countries like Mali, the Central African Republic, and Libya, Wagner fills the void left by France's withdrawal from certain countries. In Mali, for example, Wagner is involved in combating terrorists, while in other instances, it is involved in protecting regimes and securing mining operations.

Furthermore, there have been occasional protests in certain countries that are pro-Russia and anti-France, which are frequently covered in Western media. However, the uncertain future of Wagner, the group that enhances Russia's visibility in Africa, may raise questions about Moscow's influence. This is because on June 24, 2023, the Wagner group rebelled against the Putin regime and took control of the city of Rostov. They

even advanced towards Moscow. The uprising of Wagner against the Kremlin will also lead to discussions about the fate of their activities in the continent. Lavrov has already stated that the responsibility for the contracts signed with Wagner lies with the African countries themselves. For example, Wagner operates in the Central African Republic. Additionally, alongside the Wagner militants, Lavrov has emphasized that there are hundreds of Russian military advisors working in the country.

At this point, it is necessary to examine Ukraine's relations with Africa. Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba occasionally undertakes visits to African countries. For example, during his visit to Ethiopia, Kuleba called on African leaders to abandon their neutral/indifferent stance towards Russia's war against Ukraine. Some African countries, including Ethiopia, have remained neutral in the voting of the United Nations General Assembly resolutions that oppose Russia's policies.

Kuleba expressing Ukraine's discomfort with the stance exhibited by certain African states and calling on African countries to support Ukraine is significant. He states that the neutral stance of African leaders actually implies a violation of the principle of inviolability of borders in their own regions and remaining indifferent to major crimes that may occur in their own regions. In this context, in December 2022, the Ukrainian Foreign Minister called for support for the 10-point peace plan prepared by President Zelensky. Kuleba emphasizes that for any peace plan to be accepted by Kyiv, respect for Ukraine's territorial integrity is required, and the demand for an immediate ceasefire will not be accepted.

In addition to the demand for support in the war, Kuleba also aims to expand relations and cooperation in various fields. He emphasizes that maintaining trade relations in areas such as energy and technology will mutually benefit both parties.

As mentioned earlier, during his visits in May 2023, Kuleba also met with officials in Morocco and Rwanda. In October 2022, the Ukrainian Foreign Minister visited Senegal, Ivory Coast, Ghana, and Kenya. It is evident from these engagements that Ukraine, despite Russia's increased presence in Africa, is also taking an offensive approach to develop its relations with African countries. In this regard, the Ukrainian government has announced their goal of opening 10 new embassies in Africa, starting with

Rwanda and Mozambique. They have also expressed that agricultural imports to the continent will increase and military relations will develop. Kuleba frequently states that strong cooperation is aimed between African countries and Ukraine, which should be based on mutual respect and common interests. During his May 2023 visits, Kuleba also met with officials from the African Union and announced the goal of creating a new roadmap for relations.

One of the underlying reasons for Ukraine's goal of gaining support from different regions like Africa is the desire for the Russia-Ukraine War not to be perceived as a Western war. Kiev also occasionally expresses that it has not been able to secure the support of African countries against Russia. It should be noted that Zelensky addressed the African Union Summit in June 2023. With only 4 out of 55 heads of state attending the summit, it can be said that African leaders approached Zelensky with caution.

During the virtual meeting, Zelensky stated that they are aware of the importance of grain imports for Africa. He claimed that Russia is responsible for the increase in food prices on the continent and mentioned that food prices have risen worldwide, but African countries are the most affected. Zelensky expressed their desire for the development of relations with African countries and assessed these countries as hostages of Russia's war against Ukraine. He also mentioned that Ukraine will appoint a Special Representative for Africa who will start his duty soon. Additionally, he stated that the outreach to African countries will continue and called for a summit focusing on political and economic areas between African countries and Ukraine.

It is alleged that the initiative by African leaders aims to resume grain trade rather than providing a platform for peace negotiations between Russia and Ukraine. It is worth noting that South Africa plays a key role in this regard. In recent times, military exercises have taken place between Russia and South Africa. South Africa has drawn criticism from the Western world for its abstention in the United Nations General Assembly resolutions condemning Russia's occupation.

Furthermore, President Ramaphosa's invitation to Putin to visit South Africa during the BRICS Summit scheduled for August 2023 has also sparked various criticisms. However, it is not yet clear whether Putin will visit this country to attend the BRICS

Summit. The issue of Putin being handed over to the International Criminal Court (ICC) will come up, increasing pressure on the Cape Town government. It should be remembered that the ICC has issued an arrest warrant against the Russian leader on charges of international crimes committed in Ukraine. Additionally, it is known that some American officials have raised allegations of South Africa supplying weapons to Russia. Although Cape Town has stated that it did not take sides in the war, these allegations also bring about discussions on the neutrality of Africa's peace initiative.

Indeed, the desire to secure the import of grain and fertilizer has influenced Africa's peace initiative. The disruption of grain and fertilizer trade due to the Russia-Ukraine conflict has further complicated the existing challenges of food scarcity in some African countries. Ensuring a stable supply of these essential commodities has been a key concern for African leaders, as they recognize the impact of the conflict on their agricultural sector and food security. By advocating for peace and diplomatic efforts between Russia and Ukraine, African leaders aim to address not only the immediate crisis but also the long-term stability of agricultural trade and food availability in the region.



ANKASAM ANALYSIS

Key Sector of Russia-China Cooperation: Energy

Due to the Ukraine War, Russia has turned to the Asian market for the export of energy resources. The most prominent actor in this regard is China along with the Central Asian countries. In the pre-war period, the two sides were engaged in energy cooperation and partnerships. However, in the new period that started with the war, efforts are being made to deepen cooperation in this field.

On June 13, 2023, Russian President Vladimir Putin signed a law approving an intergovernmental agreement allowing the export of natural gas supplies from Russia to China via the Far East.[1] The

agreement marks a new phase in Beijing-Moscow energy cooperation. In January 2023, the parties signed an agreement defining the terms of cooperation for gas supply from Russia to China via the Far East route, including the cross-border section of the gas pipeline. This new development can be characterized as a continuation of this agreement.

The Far Eastern route plays an significant role in the energy partnership and trade between the two countries. According to a statement by Gazprom, the Far Eastern Route Project is expected to increase Russia's pipeline gas supplies to China by



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10 billion cubic meters per year once it reaches full capacity.[2] This is one of the indicators of the deepening ties between the two countries.

Meanwhile, Beijing and Moscow are negotiating the Siberian Power-2 Russia-China gas pipeline. At the same time, natural gas cooperation between the two countries is being diversified with alternative routes, including the supply of liquefied natural gas (LNG). Consequently, natural gas flows between the parties are also increasing. Russia aims to deliver more natural gas to China through Central Asia. This is because transfer to Europe is now difficult. Therefore, Moscow has also focused on the Asian geography.

The energy partnership between Russia and China has been affected by the atmosphere created by the Russian-Ukrainian war. However, even before the war, the parties took steps to increase their partnership. For instance, in February 2022, just before the war started, Russia signed a 30-year agreement to supply natural gas to China. It agreed that the Russian energy company Gazprom would supply China National Petroleum Corporation with an additional 10.0 billion cubic meters (bcm) of gas per year until 2026.[3] Another similar agreement between the parties was concluded in 2014.

The Russia-China Energy Business Forum between the two countries has also played a major role in advancing Beijing-Moscow relations on an energy basis. On the occasion of the forum held on November 29, 2022, Russian Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Novak stated that Moscow is seeking wide-ranging cooperation with Beijing in the energy sector. Novak made the following remarks on the subject:[4]

"China is one of the most important equipment manufacturers in the oil and gas sector. There is already close cooperation on the supply of oil and gas equipment for projects in Russia. We plan to jointly develop and produce equipment that can be used both in China and Russia."

Chinese President Xi Jinping has also described energy cooperation with Russia as a "cornerstone".[5] At the same time, Europe's move to halt imports from Russia has led China to take advantage of discounts on Russian oil. This paved the way for new developments in energy cooperation between the two countries. China also benefited from the restrictions imposed on Russia after 2014 and accelerated its investments in Russian energy projects. In this respect, it can be stated that the foundations of the current cooperation and closeness were laid during the aforementioned periods.

Russia is trying to develop its energy cooperation and trade with China through Central Asian countries. Russia's proposal to Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan for a trilateral gas union can also be seen in this context. This proposal aimed to increase Russia's exports to Central Asia and from there to China. Thus, Moscow wanted to open the door to an indirect Russia-China partnership through Central Asia.

Moreover, China's growing energy needs are also an important factor in strengthening the bilateral partnership. In parallel with Beijing's growing needs, it is possible to state that its partnership with Russia will also develop. The role of natural gas in China's energy consumption is projected to increase over the next decade. According to a document published by the National Development and Reform Commission, China plans to increase the share of natural gas in primary energy consumption to around 15% by 2030.[6] As neighboring countries and with developments in various sectors of cooperation between them, energy exports between Russia and China are likely to increase.

In sum, both China and Russia are in favor of raising the profile of energy cooperation between them. It is foreseeable that the bilateral energy partnership will be strengthened in terms of closer ties, efficient and profitable exchanges, and the development of green en-

ergy sources. Indeed, energy partnership is seen as one of the key and critical areas of Beijing-Moscow economic cooperation. In this direction, various cooperation mechanism efforts involving Central Asian countries can be expected to increase in the future. However, Beijing is also trying to take cautious steps to avoid being completely dependent on Moscow. In this regard, it attaches importance to the diversity of cooperation and pursues a multi-actor-multidimensional policy.

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ANKASAM ANALYSIS

Changing Security Equations in the Context of China, South Korea and the United States

The regional repercussions of the rivalry between the United States of America (USA) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and China have become increasingly apparent. This situation forces the states in the region to choose a side and declare their allegiance. In this context, Australia, New Zealand, the Philippines, Japan, South Korea, Vietnam and Indonesia are known to have adopted a pro-Western and pro-US stance.

At this point, it can be said that South Korea and Japan are among the most prominent states. This is because the US, South Korea and Japan cooperate in many exercises in the region.[1] This is driving a wedge between Seoul and Tokyo and Beijing. Dialogue and security relations between these actors are strained.



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On the other hand, Japan and South Korea also need the support of the West and the US due to their struggle with China and the North Korean threat. In this context, it can be argued that these relations are win-win for the US in terms of its economic and political influence in the region. Washington's allies in the region, particularly Tokyo and Seoul, are important for the US policy of containing China. At the same time, these states receive various economic benefits and security assurances from the US.

At this point, South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol's increased criticism of the Chinese ambassador on May 13, 2023, and the ambassador's statement that South Korea had made a very wrong decision by siding with the United States instead of China was disrespectful.[2]

On May 8, 2023, Chinese Ambassador to South Korea Xing Haiming said that Seoul had made a "wrong bet" and that it was a grave mistake to side with the United States. The South Korean Foreign Ministry summoned Xing on 9 May 2023 to condemn and criticize him for these remarks. The ministry described the remarks as "provocative".[3]

Yoon Suk Yeol made the following statements about the situation in question:[4]

"Looking at Ambassador Xing's demeanor, it is doubtful whether his behavior as a diplomat promotes mutual respect or friendship. Our people are disturbed by his inappropriate behavior."

It is known that South Korea has had important alliance relations with the US for many years. As a matter of fact, the country is home to approximately 28 thousand US soldiers.[5] When this situation is taken into account, the reason for Xing's statements in question becomes even clearer.

At this point, it can be argued that the North Korean threat plays an important role in South Korea's positive relations with the West, the US and NATO. Indeed, Pyongyang is a major nuclear power and in 2022 conducted a record-breaking test of an Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM).[6]

On the other hand, sanctions resolutions against North Korea face vetoes from Russia and China in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). As a matter of fact, Seoul is one of the actors that feels the threat from Pyongyang most closely. South Korea's geopolitical positioning plays an important role in this.

In this context, the security assurances that Seoul receives from Washington are critical and important for South Korea. Moreover, this creates a legitimate basis for US activities in the Asia-Pacific region. At this point, again, a win-win based relationship concept emerges.

As a result, it can be argued that the tensions in the region will not be resolved in the short term and the polarization and rivalry between the countries in the region will continue to increase. In this context, it can be said that South Korea will play a very important role.

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ANKASAM ANALYSIS

Is Taliban Mediation Possible on the Pakistan-TTP Line?

Pakistan is one of the countries suffering from terrorist organizations taking advantage of the power vacuum in the region, especially after the United States (US) withdrawal from Afghanistan. After the US withdrawal from Afghanistan, both the separatist Baloch groups and the terrorist organization Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) have increased their activities in Pakistan.

It is seen that these attacks mainly targeted investments and Chinese workers within the scope of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which is intended to be implemented within the scope of China's Belt and Road Initiative. This indi-

cates that the US, which opened space for terrorist organizations during the withdrawal process, is using these organizations as proxy actors to destabilize China, its main rival in the global power struggle, and Beijing's allies.

In this context, the Islamabad administration has been taking decisive steps to combat the separatist Baloch terrorist organizations on the one hand and conducting major operations against the terrorist organization TTP on the other. However, the terrorist organization TTP's withdrawal from the ceasefire agreement signed between Pakistan and the Taliban and its resort to armed



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attacks has caused much more discomfort in Islamabad. Moreover, these attacks are causing serious disagreements with the Taliban, with whom Pakistan has developed healthy relations for many years.

To explain the situation, first of all, the Islamabad administration adopted an attitude criticizing the Taliban for the TTP's withdrawal from the ceasefire. Because the Taliban was the mediator in the ceasefire process. Therefore, Pakistan, which wanted the Taliban to put pressure on the terrorist organization, experienced some problems in its relations with the Taliban when it did not witness the developments it expected in this regard.

One of the main problems is the allegation that TTP terrorists crossed into Afghanistan after their attacks in Pakistan. In this context, while the Islamabad administration wants to organize a cross-border operation against TTP elements in Afghanistan, the Taliban leadership is known to be uncomfortable with this initiative. Moreover, the Taliban state that this option would mean a violation of Afghanistan's sovereignty and independence.

As a matter of fact, the US use of Pakistani airspace during its unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) operations in Afghanistan against al-Qaeda and State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS) terrorist organizations also draws the Taliban's reaction. The most concrete example of this is the incident of the neutralization of Ayman al-Zawahiri, the leader of the al-Qaeda terrorist organization, as a result of the drone intervention organized by the US on August 1, 2022. The US use of Pakistani airspace in this operation drew the reaction of the Taliban.[1]

At this point, it should be noted that Pakistan, like any other state, prioritizes its own national interests. This is because many members of the terrorist organization TTP and a significant number of its senior leaders have been neutralized by the US drone strikes.[2] Pakistan is therefore not averse to cooperating with the US in the fight against the terrorist organization TTP.

On the other hand, it is also possible to argue that the increase in terrorist acts in the region serves the US strategy of destabilizing Asian powers, especially China. In this sense, it can be claimed that the most important prescription for regional security issues, especially the fight against the TTP, is the pursuit of regional cooperation. Regional cooperation will not only serve to eliminate security risks but also contribute to the welfare of the peoples of the region.

At this point, CPEC is one of the most important cooperation and investment initiatives in the region. Indeed, the meeting of Chinese Foreign Minister Qin Gang, Pakistani Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and Taliban Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaki in Islamabad on May 6, 2023 witnessed developments that will strengthen the search for regional cooperation and the parties agreed on the expansion of CPEC to include Afghanistan.[3] Therefore, in the context of regional cooperation, CPEC's security cannot be separated from Afghanistan's security and Pakistan's security.

In this context, the most important issue on the agenda seems to be the Taliban's use of its influence over the TTP for the security of Pakistan. Although there is no organic relationship between the Taliban and the TTP terrorist organization, it is seen that the TTP, ideologically inspired by the beginning of the second Taliban era in Afghanistan, has started to express its claim to establish a similar order in Pakistan in a much stronger way. In this context, Pakistan expects the Taliban to convince the TTP to lay down its arms. Therefore, Muttaki's call for a ceasefire between Pakistan and the TTP on May 8, 2023 is quite significant.[4] This statement can be interpreted as a harbinger of a ceasefire between the parties under the mediation of the Taliban. Undoubtedly, it would not be correct to read this development independently from the CPEC-oriented pursuit of regional cooperation that prioritizes regional security.

In conclusion, Pakistan is waging an important struggle against the terrorist organization TTP. Despite successful operations on the ground, Islamabad also wants to make progress in the negotiation and diplomacy dimension of counterterrorism methods. It seems that preparations are being made for a new ceasefire process mediated by the Taliban. Of course, in this situation, the prosperity promised to the region by the CPEC-centered regional cooperation pursuits, in which China is also involved, plays a decisive role.

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10 July 2023

ANKASAM International Relations Expert Dr. Doğan Başaran evaluated the NATO Leaders' Summit in the TV5 News Center program.

11 July 2023

Mustafa Cem Koyuncu, Asia-Pacific Specialist at the Ankara Center for Crisis and Policy Studies (ANKASAM), commented on the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Leaders Summit held on July 4, 2023 for Sputnik.

13 July 2023

Prof. Dr. Cem Karadeli, Chief Advisor of the Ankara Center for Crisis and Political Studies (ANKASAM), commented on the issues discussed at the NATO Leaders Summit on A Haber.

13 July 2023

ANKASAM was cited in an analysis by Nuray Alekberli-Museyibova in The Jamestown Foundation titled "Revitalization of the Lapis Lazuli Corridor: From Afghanistan to Europe".

13 July 2023

Prof. Dr. Mehmet Seyfettin Erol, President of the Ankara Center for Crisis and Political Studies (ANKASAM), evaluated the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Leaders Summit held on July 4, 2023 for Nuz.uz.

15 July 2023

Ankara Center for Crisis and Political Studies (ANKASAM) President Prof. Dr. Mehmet Seyfettin Erol's meeting with Eldor Tulyakov, Director of Development Strategy Center, one of the leading think tanks of Uzbekistan, was published in O'zbekiston Milliy Axborot Agentligi.

15 July 2023

The Jamestown Foundation published a study referencing the analysis of the Ankara Center for Crisis and Political Studies (ANKASAM) on Yahoo Finance.



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 VII, ISSUE I

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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