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## ANKASAM ANALYSIS

# Facebook Tensions on the USA-Taliban Line

After the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, a new state that is based on Western values was established in Afghanistan with the support and pressure of the United States of America (USA).

In this context, dozens of visual and written press organs have started to operate with the funding of the West. Apart from that, it is known that the social media platforms that offer services at the global level operate without the censorship by the Government of Afghanistan. As a matter of fact, former Afghan President Hamid Karzai has stated that the most tangible success of his 13-year government is the freedom of the press and expression and dozens of media organizations.

The Taliban, which was overthrown as a result of what the United States called "Operation Eternal

Freedom", did not admit defeat in the process, resorted to various tactics and strategies and continued its war against coalition forces and the Government of Afghanistan. One of the tactics the Taliban has developed in the last 20 years has been to utilize social media platforms by using the environment of freedom of the press and expression in Afghanistan.

The Taliban has announced its attacks on foreign forces and the Afghan Army of the time to the people of Afghanistan and the world through the press and has considered this situation as a show of force. In addition, the Taliban shared the actions of the coalition forces against the civilians and Taliban soldiers which violate the law of war with the public and the press, and gained support from some of the Afghan people against foreign powers. In other words, the Taliban has taken advantage of the



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freedom of the press to convince some regional states and a significant part of the Afghan people that the coalition forces are the invading element.

In the context of social media platforms, the Taliban has used Twitter the most. A Canadian research center CAIDAC has announced that Taliban utilized Twitter as a strategic tool while it gained control over Afghanistan and this played a role in the success of the aforementioned organization. It is also known that the Taliban has tried to recruit fighters through social media tools.[1] In this sense, the Taliban's good analysis of the freedom of expression environment and its professional use of social media is one of the important factors that caused it to dominate Afghanistan again.

As it is known, the Taliban regained control over Afghanistan in August 2021 after 20 years of war. Thus, the Taliban has also taken control of the media institutions of the ousted regime. It is known that the Taliban is trying to reach people by making shares through the social media accounts of official institutions of the state. Recently, the Taliban organized the Mullahs' Meeting and shared the statements of the mullahs who spoke in their favor through the social media accounts of the official institutions of the state.

Due to the fact that the Taliban has turned these accounts into a propaganda tool, Facebook/Meta has announced that it has closed the social media accounts of Afghanistan's national Radio and Television Channel and the official news agency Bahtar.[2]

Following Facebook's decision, Ahmadullah Vasik, the head of the Afghanistan Radio and Television Channel appointed by the Taliban after Facebook's decision, stated that "Facebook's decision is contrary to the principles of freedom of the press and the press institutions whose pages have been closed are the voice of the Afghan people.[3] At this point, it can be stated that closing the accounts of Taliban-controlled institutions will have significant effects.

First of all, since Facebook is a US-centered company, it reflects the approach of the Washington administration towards the Taliban. As is known, the United States, citing the Doha Treaty, demands the establishment of an inclusive government in Afghanistan in accordance with the wishes of the international community.

In this sense, the main goal of the Washington administration is to make the Taliban accept the wishes of the international

community and restore its prestige with the logic of "If it does, the United States will do again. However, despite the fact that 11 months have passed, the Taliban leadership has not taken the steps that the United States expects, and Washington is gradually trying to deconstruct this organization, thinking that nothing will change without putting pressure on the Taliban. As a matter of fact, the United States has previously imposed a travel ban on three Taliban officials through the United Nations Security Council. Facebook accounts that have been closed are the accounts with the most followers.

Taliban opponents in foreign countries state that they welcome Facebook's decision positively and that more sanctions should be imposed on the Taliban. In this sense, there are some who advocate the closure of the Twitter account. As a matter of fact, the opposition Afghans have also done a social media study titled "Shut down the Taliban (#BanTaliban)" on Twitter. [4] Because it is known that Twitter is the most used platform of Taliban leaders.

Taliban officials say that the closure of the pages of government agencies by Facebook is a double standard of the West, calling the process a violation of freedom of expression and suggesting that the West uses freedom of the press against others as a tool. If Facebook and the Taliban cannot reach an agreement in the oncoming period, there is a possibility that the Taliban administration will ban Facebook in all of Afghanistan. It is known that currently 4 million Afghan citizens have Facebook accounts in Afghanistan. In the past, the Taliban had previously announced that Voice of America and the BBC had suspended their broadcasts in Afghanistan.

As a result, the United States has revealed that it is closely monitoring Afghanistan-based developments and the actions of the Taliban with the decision of Facebook and will increase the pressure on the Taliban. This is because the Taliban does not want to create an inclusive government in accordance with the expectations of the international community, especially the United States; on the contrary, it argues that the current government is already inclusive. But it should be noted that when the social media platforms that the Taliban often use are closed, the Taliban will also have difficulty announcing their activities.

[1] "دنا هتفرگ راک «هبرج» ناوونع هب رتیوت زا نابالاط", Shafaqna, <https://af.shafaqna.com/FA/527383>, (Date of Accession: 22.07.2022).

[2] نویزیولت ویدار تاحفص 'کانرطخ یاه نامزاس یاه سیلاب' اساسا رب هک دیوگیتم اتیم", VOA, <https://www.darivova.com/amp/meta-closed-rta-account/6666608.html>, (Date of Accession: 22.07.2022).

[3] یربخ سن آژآ و یلم نویزیولت کوبسیف تاحفص ندش هتسب هب نابالاط شنکاو", Azadiradio, <https://da.azadiradio.com/a/31953039.html>, (Erişim Tarihi: 22.07.2022).

[4] "دوش هتسب نابالاط رتیوت تاحفص: یعامتجا یاه هکبش رد اغافا ناربراک رازراک", Afintl, <https://www.afintl.com/202207219856>, (Date of Accession: 22.07.2022).



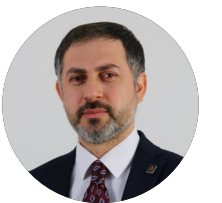
## ANKASAM ANALYSIS

# Russia's Negotiation for the Grain Deal

On July 22, 2022, the Grain Corridor Agreement was signed in Istanbul, which foresees the safe transportation of agricultural products from the ports of the Black Sea. United Nations (UN) Secretary General António Guterres, Ukraine Infrastructure Minister Oleksandr Kubrakov, Turkish Defense Minister Hulusi Akar and Russian Defense Minister Sergey Shoigu attended the signing ceremony. During the ceremony, two separate agreements were signed. In other words, Ukraine and Russia signed different documents.

On July 23, 2022, Russia launched a missile attack on Ukraine's Odessa Port. Although the Russian Ministry of Defense did not make any statement regarding the attack, the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated that the target of the attacks was not grain ships, but military vehicles. In the announcement made from Kiev, two of the four missiles called Kalibr launched by Russia were connected to the air defense systems; It was stated that the other two hit the Odessa Port.

The fact that Moscow sabotaged the agree-



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ment, which it had ratified and promised to abide by, in this way caused various discussions. Despite this, the Moscow administration has officially committed to abide by the agreement. In addition, the following statements were included in the post made by Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov:[1]

“Russia expects all necessary efforts to be made to fulfill the agreements on the transport of Ukrainian grain from the Black Sea ports and the promotion of Russian food and fertilizer exports. Given the significant share of Russian and Ukrainian agricultural products in the world markets, ensuring their uninterrupted export fulfills the urgent tasks of ensuring food security, especially for developing and underdeveloped countries. All this should help achieve the goals of sustainable development, including the eradication of hunger. Russia has given assurances that it will continue to abide by its obligations in this area.”

In addition, Lavrov described the use of the food situation as leverage by the United States (US) and its allies “for their geopolitical adventures” as an “unacceptable and inhumane” act.

The terms of the Grain Corridor Agreement are as follows:

Ukrainian grain will be exported from three ports, Odessa, Chernomorskiy and Yuzhny, via the Black Sea.

The validity period of the agreement is 120 days.

No side will clear the mines surrounding the ports, safe passages will be created and ships will pass through these passages. Ships carrying grain shall not be accompanied by military vehicles such as warships, airplanes or unmanned aerial vehicles.

It will be open to inspection whether there are weapons on the ships going to Ukraine.

In order to monitor the grain export process, a coordination center with representatives from Turkey, Russia and Ukraine will be established in Istanbul and this center will be responsible for resolving any problems.

One of the reasons for Russia’s involvement in the agreement is to solve the problems of developing countries, as Lavrov explained. In the Russian public, this attitude of the Kremlin has strengthened the perception of “the state trying to find solutions to the problems of the world”. In addition, this situation will bring about a positive perception towards Russia in the North African countries that will benefit from the agreement and meet their food needs. However, the negotiations in other areas also had an effect on Russia’s consent to this agreement.

In this sense, the first of the bargaining issues concerns the Kaliningrad region. There are allegations that the Lithuanian company LTG Cargo continues to operate in the Kaliningrad region since July 22, 2022. However, after the start of the war, transit sanctions were applied to the region by the member states of the European Union (EU). Thus, Moscow may have requested the lifting of the “embargo” on Kaliningrad in exchange for continuing grain exports from Odessa.

At this point, it should be noted that; These allegations in the Russian media caused serious reactions. Because this situation was perceived as the victory of the Kremlin. However, making the Odessa Port open to trade, preventing Russia from leaving Ukraine to the sea; that is, it also shows that it has abandoned its plan to transform it into a land state. Moreover, this indicates that Moscow’s claims regarding Transnistria have been abandoned.[2]

It is argued that the second of the negotiation issues is related to the arms supply to Ukraine. Accordingly, the USA stopped the transfer process of fourth generation F-15 and F-16 fighters, as well as ATACMS missiles with a range of up to 300 km. The USA is either shy or cautious about giving the weapons it wants to Ukraine. In both cases, only some of the weapons requested by Ukraine are provided.

The reason why the Washington administration took such an attitude can be interpreted as its desire not to attract Moscow’s reaction and to make the agreement sustainable. It is possible to say that arms shipments will deepen the crisis even more. In fact, Russia occasionally brings up the nuclear threat.

The third issue that is probably being negotiated is paving the way for Russian exports. Because with this agreement, not only Ukrainian grains; A memorandum was also signed, which stipulates that the grain and fertilizers exported by Russia will have unhindered and transparent access to the world markets for 3 years. This means the lifting of embargoes for some products of Russia.

Undoubtedly, Russia, which is exposed to the sanctions of Western countries, has to find new partners for itself. This situation forces Russia to turn more towards African and Asian countries. It is also related to this that Lavrov went on a five-day trip to African countries on July 24, 2022. Lavrov, who started his tour by visiting Egypt, the most populous country in the Arab World and the main buyer of Russian grain, is also expected to visit Ethiopia, Uganda and the Republic of Congo. In addition, the Russian Foreign Minister announced that during his Africa trip, the main parameters of the Second Russia-Africa Summit to be held in 2023 would be agreed upon.

As a result, the success of the grain agreement signed in Istanbul will be an incentive for the resumption of peace negotiations. It is important to keep the diplomatic channel open. In addition, the agreement serves the interests of all parties in terms of both preventing the global grain crisis, stopping the possible invasion move towards Odessa, and Russia gaining gains that will neutralize certain sanctions.

[1]“Лавров: РФ рассчитывает, что к реализации документов о зерне будут предприняты все Усилия”, Tass, <https://tass.ru/politika/15289325>, (Date of Accession: 23.07.2022).

[2]“Отказ Кремля от освобождения Причерноморья может привести к стратегическому поражению России”, Reportyor, [https://topcor.ru/27013-stambul-1-ili-minsk-3-otkaz-kremlja-ot-osvobozhdenija-prichernomorja-mozhet-privesti-k-strategicheskomu-porazheniju-rossii.html?utm\\_source=politobzor.net](https://topcor.ru/27013-stambul-1-ili-minsk-3-otkaz-kremlja-ot-osvobozhdenija-prichernomorja-mozhet-privesti-k-strategicheskomu-porazheniju-rossii.html?utm_source=politobzor.net), (Date of Accession: 23.07.2022).



## ANKASAM ANALYSIS

# Taiwan Crisis on the US-China Axis

The structure of international relations has been gradually changing and is evolving from unipolar to multipolar order. This period brings uncertainty and a chaotic order, which opens the door to unpredictable developments. The area where this instability process, which is more concrete in certain geographies, is experienced most intensely is the Indo-Pacific Region.

The export-based economic order that China has implemented since the 1980s has opened new corridors in the world and made existing corridors more active. The Indo-Pacific, which

was the main route for commercial ships departing from China, has also become the main route for oil tankers to China. The Indo-Pacific route hosts the most crowded merchant fleets in the world, is home to the strongest economies like the United States, China, Japan, and India, and is the location of the world's most powerful navies' exercises. All of these factors increase the region's vulnerability while adding to its geostrategic significance.

The Indo-Pacific stands out as the region where the rivalry between China and the USA is most intense in international relations, which has en-



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tered the "New Great Game" phase. It can be said that the actor who dominates the region and takes Indo-Pacific under its control will unlock the new world and open the door to a new type of hegemony. Because it is known that 70 percent of the Earth's surface is covered with seas and oceans, 80 percent of people live along coasts, and 90 percent of all world goods travel on the ocean. This truiness raises the importance of controlling the seas.[1]

This reality brings along different tension and conflict dynamics. In particular, the South China Sea, close to the coast of China, is home to today's hottest and most turbulent waters. The maritime jurisdiction debates in the region, the navies of the states in the Atlantic Alliance against China's increasing naval presence, especially the USA Navy, and the Taiwan Question, which has historical depth, are among the main developments that will cause frozen conflicts to turn into hot conflicts.

Perhaps the most current issue among these fragile structures and which can turn a regional conflict into a global war is related to the situation in Taiwan. The process, which started with the departure of nationalists from China in 1949 to Taiwan, constitutes the Achilles heel of China in international relations. Seeing all kinds of developments in Taiwan as its own internal matter, Beijing especially criticizes official visits to Taiwan.

The Taiwan Strait, which has been under controlled tension for a long time, has faced a serious crisis in recent days. The process, which started with the announcement that Nancy Pelosi, Speaker of the House of Representatives, who is in an official duty and also in a vital position in the USA, will visit the island, has also triggered the process of mutual tension. As it is known, Pelosi has stated that will visit Taiwan Island in the past; however, she canceled this visit on the grounds that she was infected with the Covid-19 disease. In addition, Pelosi went to Tiananmen Square in September 1991, when she was a Congressman and held a banner commemorating the Chinese students who died for democracy in Tiananmen, and her action resulted in the prison sentence of the head of the CNN office in Beijing.

Following Pelosi's statement, on June 25, 2022, Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Zhao Lijian, upon a question asked at his daily press conference in Beijing, said that the visit of the Speaker of the US House of Representatives to Taiwan would violate the One China principle and China's sovereignty and territorial integrity. In addition, Lijian stated that such a development would also harm China-US relations.[2]

The following statement by Pelosi on July 31, 2022, was interpreted as the United States taking a step back and decreasing the tension a bit, despite the heated language from Beijing and Washington escalating the tension:[3]

"Today, our Congressional delegation travels to the Indo-Pacific to reaffirm America's strong and unshakeable commitment to our allies and friends in the region. In Singapore, Malaysia, South Korea and Japan, our delegation will hold high-level meetings to discuss how we can further advance our shared interests and values, including peace and security, economic growth and trade, the COVID-19 pandemic, the climate crisis, human rights and democratic governance. Under the strong leadership of President Biden, America is firmly committed to smart, strategic engagement in the region, understanding that a free and flourishing Indo-Pacific is crucial to prosperity in our nation and around the globe."

The fact that Taiwan was not listed as one of the places to visit in the aforementioned statement was viewed as the USA withdrawing, and the first evaluations indicated that China had won this war of supremacy. However, the media reports on August 1, 2022 stated that Pelosi would go to Taiwan and this news was confirmed by the officials.[4]

To summarize briefly, the softening process that took place on July 31, 2022, once again turned into a risk of hot conflict on August 1, 2022. The US Navy sent the nuclear aircraft carrier USS Ronald Reagan and two amphibious attack ships USS Tripoli and USS America to the Taiwan region with F-35B Lightning II fighters.[5] In addition, on August 1, 2022, 4 Chinese J-16 fighter jets entered Taiwan's Air Defense Identification Zone and The Eastern Theater Command of the People's Liberation Army, posted a video titled "stand by in battle formation, be ready to fight upon command, bury all incoming enemies". In addition to this video, the Chinese Army has also released a video of 9 H-6 strategic bombers flying together. Another statement from Beijing announced that the Chinese Navy will start exercises in the South China Sea on August 2, 2022.

Amid escalating tensions and the possibility of a potential military confrontation, Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Zhao Lijian said:[6]

“We want to once again make it clear to the US side that the Chinese side is fully prepared for any eventuality and that the People’s Liberation Army of China will never sit idly by, and we will make resolute response and take strong countermeasures to uphold China’s sovereignty and territorial integrity, What the US should do is to abide by the one-China principle and the stipulations of the three Sino-US joint communiqués, fulfill President Biden’s commitment of not supporting “Taiwan independence” and not arrange for a visit by Speaker Pelosi to Taiwan.”

In addition to the military initiatives of China and the USA, Taiwan’s largest annual military exercise, the “Hanguang Exercise”, kicked off in the region. The exercise, which simulates how the Taiwanese Army will respond to the Chinese Army’s attack, is closely watched by Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen.

Understandably, the Taiwan Strait is witnessing military deployments and tensions like never before. Both the USA and China are on the same rope and want to bring each other down. The USA intends to pressure China through Taiwan, which it sees as China’s weak point, and even force Beijing to take military action. As a matter of fact, the date Pelosi chose for her visit to Taiwan is also very meaningful. Because August 1 is the anniversary of the founding of the People’s Liberation Army of China.

In the shadow of all these developments, Pelosi visited Taiwan on August 2, 2022. Despite the objections from Beijing that there would be a military response, this visit is extremely significant as it is a development that shows that the US has not taken a step back against China. With this move, the Washington administration has clearly demonstrated that it will increase the pressure on China, that it will continue to press the points it sees as Beijing’s Achilles heel, and that it is determined to its strategy of encircling China. Undoubtedly, this development will also be reflected in the relations of the USA with the actors with which it cooperates in the Indo-Pacific geography. It can be predicted that the actors, especially those who have some conflicts with China, will get closer to Washington. Because the inability to stop Pelosi’s travel harmed China’s ability to deter.

However, it is too early to say that Beijing will not take a step on the Taiwan issue. In this sense, the option of intervention against the island still maintains its place on China’s agenda. This op-

tion can have two different consequences. Considering the first possibility, Washington will use the sanctions card against China in the event of an operation being launched by Beijing and will try to make China lose strength by flowing its power into the Taiwan Strait. These steps could stop China’s rise which has been going on for years. Moreover, China does not have a serious war experience. Given the difficulty and experience requirement of an amphibious operation, there is no guarantee that Beijing will emerge victorious. Undoubtedly, a victory that cannot be achieved in a short time can have a devastating effect for China. The second possibility may appear as Beijing’s strong objection to American hegemony by demonstrating its determination on the “One China Principle” through an operation to Taiwan that will result in success. But this option is seen as not likely and logical.

[1] Prokhor Tebin, “How The Strategic Situation Changes in the World Ocean”, Global Affairs Russia, <https://eng.globalaffairs.ru/articles/naval-power-amid-political-turmoil/>, (Date of Accession: 01.08.2022).

[2] “Statement by China’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Pelosi’s visit to Taiwan”, Xinhua News, <https://english.news.cn/20220802/df586fce79c04a9282c05cd26e997bb3/c.html>, (Date of Accession: 01.08.2022).

[3] “Pelosi to Lead Congressional Delegation to Indo-Pacific Region”, Speaker of the House, <https://www.speaker.gov/newsroom/73122>, (Date of Accession: 01.08.2022).

[4] “Pelosi Expected to Visit Taiwan, Taiwanese and US Officials Say”, CNN, <https://www.cnn.com/2022/08/01/politics/nancy-pelosi-taiwan-visit/index.html>, (Date of Accession: 01.08.2022).

[5] Liu Zehen, “US Aircraft Carrier Group Heads Towards Taiwan as Tension Over Nancy Pelosi’s Possible Visit Continues to Grow”, SCMP, <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/military/article/3186803/us-aircraft-carrier-group-heads-towards-taiwan-tension-over>, (Date of Accession: 01.08.2022).

[6] “Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Zhao Lijian’s Regular Press Conference on August 1, 2022”, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the People’s Republic of China, [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa\\_eng/xwfw\\_665399/s2510\\_665401/202208/t20220801\\_10731629.html](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/xwfw_665399/s2510_665401/202208/t20220801_10731629.html), (Date of Accession: 01.08.2022).



## ANKASAM ANALYSIS

# The Expansion of Russian Geopolitics from Land to Sea: “the Russian Naval Doctrine”

States that have ancient traditions and global goals, and ambitious try to handle their long-term projections and strategies independently of cyclical issues. At this point, The Moscow administration is trying to shape its foreign policy strategy based on the claim of being the leading actor in the international system, especially after Vladimir Putin became the President of Russia. The latest example of this situation is

the “Naval Doctrine”, which was announced on July 31, 2022.

When Russia’s new naval doctrine is examined in outline, it is seen that the defense of the interests in the oceans has been decided through a naval concept in which the boundaries of national interests are determined and a line extending from the Arctic Region to the Kuril and



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Baltic straits to the Black Sea and Caspian, from the east of the Mediterranean to the coasts of Asia and Africa has been determined as a national security line.

In the document, where the areas of interests are clearly defined, the goals that military options will be used in these regions in question if necessary, increasing the military presence in the Caspian Sea, acquiring new bases in the Eastern Mediterranean are considered, and strengthening the geopolitical position of Russia in the regions where there are interests, especially in the Black Sea, are clearly stated.

The inclusion of the Arctic and Asia-Pacific regions in the new doctrine aimed at increasing the capability and capacity of the Russian Navy on a global scale, and the characterization of the activities of the United States of America (USA) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) as the main threat to Russia's national security, attract attention as an important issue that needs to be addressed.

In addition to Putin's speech during the visit of Russian sailors to the warships off the coast of St. Petersburg to celebrate the Navy Day saying that he approved this doctrine and his clear statements that the borders and interests set out in the document will be protected by all means, the fact that the USA and NATO are also considered as threats should be considered as an indication that the doctrine was not established solely for the purpose of protecting the interests of the state. In this context, the doctrine in question can be interpreted as a declaration that the global competition with the United States has been carried from land to sea in the military dimension.

Considering the analysis of geopoliticians, who have been working intensively on the conditions of being the leading actor in the struggle for global dominance and examining the relationship between foreign policy and geography, it is understood that the document in question has been theoretically prepared within the framework of the understanding of global competition.

According to the American naval officer and historian Alfred Thayer Mahan, the importance of dominating the seas rather than the land has increased in the center of the strategy in modern times. According to the famous geopolitician, the seas provide much better mobility and transportation opportunities than the land. In other words, Ma-

han draws attention that in conjunction with most of the world's reserves, the maritime power is as economically and politically important as the military forces.

In addition, the maritime power can dominate the world trade by controlling critical points such as Suez Canal, Gibraltar, Singapore, Babulmende Strait, the Turkish Straits, Ceylon Canal, Taiwan Canal, Korean Canal, Strait of Hormuz, the Florida Strait and the Yukaton Strait. In this sense, no state whose land borders are not secure can successfully fight for maritime supremacy with a relatively powerful island state. Consequently, as Mahan points out, a state that dominates the seas dominates the entire world.

Although Mahan is an American and the theory he developed is used by American decision-makers in the formulation and implementation of the state's foreign policy strategy, it also constitutes the theoretical plane of naval strategy in the context of security and foreign policy for Russia, which is among the global competitors of the United States today or is trying to take it. When Russia's new doctrine is examined, it is seen that the critical points that Mahan states in his theoretical studies coincide with the points emphasized in the doctrine.

Moreover, the fact that the USA has shifted its foreign policy priority to Asia-Pacific since the Barack Obama era can be read through Mahan's theory. Accordingly, Russia's opening of a special title to Asia-Pacific in the context of the limits of its national interests and regions is a development that should not be ignored. The fact that the USA and NATO are considered as threats in the document in question and that there are no significant references to medium or small-sized states reveals that the issue is considered in the dimension of global competition.

Consequently, in this period when the geopolitics of the Black Sea has gained importance, the Arctic Region has been stimulated by the NATO membership process of Sweden and Finland, the Caspian has evolved into a central position with the Belt and Road Initiative, and global politics has become heated due to the USA focusing on the Asia-Pacific, the Moscow administration, on the occasion of the declaration of the doctrine in question, has moved the issue from regional competition to global competition and rejected the position of regional actor and is in the direction of becoming the dominant power with the claim of global actor has demonstrated that it has put forward a strategic vision.



## ANKASAM ANALYSIS

# The Killing of Zawahiri: What Future Awaits US-Taliban Relations?

On August 1, 2022, the United States (USA) neutralized Ayman al-Zawahiri, the leader of the terrorist organization Al-Qaeda, as a result of an unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) attack in Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan.i Following this development, the Taliban announced that they condemned the attack and the Washington administration's violation of the Doha Agreement dated February 29, 2020; thus, the violation of the sovereignty of Afghanistan.ii

The statement made by the Taliban indicates that the tensions in the contacts with the United States will be further tightened. It is because the Taliban made a commitment in the Doha Agreement of February 29, 2020, that it will not allow terrorist organizations to operate in Afghanistan and will fight against terrorism. In this sense, the killing of Zawahiri on the territory of Afghanistan can be interpreted as an event that will weaken the hand of the Taliban. As a matter of fact, immediately after the incident,



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voices criticizing the Taliban began to rise from the USA. For example, US Senator Lindsay Graham said, "This development is proof that Afghanistan has once again become a safe haven for international terrorists,"<sup>iii</sup> as he revealed the situation.

It should be noted that; As Graham pointed out, the drone attack on Zawahiri is a development that confirms the existence of the al-Qaeda terrorist organization in Afghanistan. At this point, the most critical situation is that the attack in question was in the Sar-e Pol region of Kabul; that is, it is organized in the bureaucratic-diplomatic community where the Taliban rulers stay. Based on all this information, it can be predicted that the USA will increase the pressure on the Taliban over its alleged involvement with terrorism. Yet, the essence of the matter may be much different than it appears.

If the above-mentioned picture was valid at the time of Zawahiri's killing, the US may have wanted to punish the Taliban through this assassination and reveal the Taliban-Al-Qaeda relationship to the international community. However, considering the opposite possibilities, it is also possible to talk about four different scenarios.

The first one of these scenarios is that the Taliban may have cooperated at the institutional level during the killing of Zawahiri. As it is known, Taliban Defense Minister Mullah Mohammed Yaqoob visited Qatar on July 11-12, 2022, and it was announced that a comprehensive cooperation agreement would be signed between the parties, ranging from border security to the fight against terrorism, after the said visit.

Undoubtedly, Qatar is the Taliban's window to the West. It is because many Western actors, especially the USA, maintain their contacts with the Taliban through Doha. Therefore, the Taliban may have shared intelligence on Zawahiri's location as a sign of goodwill that it distances itself from the terrorist organization Al-Qaeda. As can be expected, if such a scenario reflects the reality, contrary to expectations, a positive atmosphere will be created in US-Taliban relations. This may open the door that will lead to the recognition of the Taliban.

The second scenario can be explained through the power struggle within the Taliban. It is because within the Taliban, there is a rivalry between the moderate-reformist wing led by the Deputy Prime Minister of the Taliban, Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, and the radicals, which is expressed as the Haqqani Network. In the context of this rivalry, the Baradar group may have prepared the ground for Zawahiri's murder by sharing intelligence with the United States. At the same time, this will mean that the Haqqani Network will be targeted by the Washington administration. This, in turn, will strengthen Baradar, and thus the moderates. However, if such a development has taken place, it is inevitable that the Haqqani Network will react sharply, and the intra-Taliban conflicts will gain momentum.

The third scenario that needs to be considered is related to the power struggle within the Taliban as well. Accordingly, the Haqqani Network, which has already been sanctioned by the United States for its links with the terrorist organization Al-Qaeda, may have reported the location of Zawahiri to the US officials, aiming to reduce the pressure of the sanctions on them. This may be the beginning of developments that will increase the weight of the Haqqani Network within the Taliban and lead to the dissolution of the reformists.

The fourth scenario is Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), which is known to have a significant influence in Afghanistan, sharing information with the United States. It is because in the current conjuncture, the Islamabad administration is trying to repair its relations with the West. In this context, Pakistan, which made an initiative with the West, may have chosen to cooperate in the killing of Zawahiri as a sign of goodwill.

In conclusion, the attack by the USA on Zawahiri via drones is a development that will be considered a milestone in terms of the future of both the Taliban and Afghanistan. If the killing of Zawahiri was the result of an institutional cooperation of the Taliban, it may lead to a positive momentum in the Taliban-US relations in the future despite the condemnation statements made in the current situation. However, if the attack is due to the separation of the forces within the Taliban, it can be said that the power struggle within the organization will increase, Afghanistan will become destabilized, and the actor cooperating with the Washington administration will become stronger. However, if it was Pakistan's ISI that shared the information with the USA, it means that the tension that has been rising in the Taliban-Pakistan line in the recent period will increase and the relations between the parties may go to the breaking point.

i "Zawahiri's Kabul Death Raises Questions About al Qaeda Presence in Afghanistan After US left it to the Taliban", Fox News, <https://www.foxnews.com/politics/zawahiri-death-raises-questions-over-al-qaeda-operations-in-taliban-controlled-afghanistan>, (Date of Accession: 02.08.2022).

ii "Statement of the Spokesperson of the Islamic Emirate Regarding the Drone Attack in Kabul City", Just Paste, <https://justpaste.it/8n3bw>, (Date of Accession: 02.08.2022).

iii "Zawahiri's Kabul Death...", a.g.m.

iv "Kabul, Doha to Sign Security Agreement: Acting Defense Minister", Tolo News, <https://tolonews.com/afghanistan-178885>, (Date of Accession: 18.07.2022).





## ANKASAM ANALYSIS

# Will the Crisis in Sri Lanka Cause the Tamil Tigers to Come Back?

Sri Lanka, an island country located in the Indo-Pacific, is a country that draws attention due to its historical past, strategic location, demographic characteristics, and neighbors. In addition to these features, the country has been the scene of conflicts for a long time. The Tamil Tigers, also known as the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), terrorized the country for separatist purposes from 1976 to 2009. The terrorist organization LTTE, which gained strength, especially thanks to its support from the Tamil diaspora and foreign states, has established an important sphere of influence in the northern parts of the country.

Sri Lankan administration could not annihilate LTTE for a long time due to its limited economic and military capacity, difficult geographical structure, and structural problems. In fact, LTTE, which increased its attack capacity by abusing the peace processes carried out in various periods, reached a significant power with its air and sea elements. According to the Sri Lankan government, the number of militants of the LTTE increased to 30,000 in 2008.<sup>i</sup> In this process, the Colombo administration neutralized the leaders of the organization with a comprehensive military operation against the LTTE and announced the end of the LTTE in May 2009.



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Because of its limited economic and military capacity, the Sri Lankan government sought support in international politics and achieved its goal in this regard. Because, along with various states, China has given military support to Sri Lanka, including fighter jets and ammunition. In this way, the Colombo administration, which increased its military capacity, ended the LTTE.

ii This support later strengthened the relations between the sides and Sri Lanka was included in the Belt and Road Initiative. However, despite the infrastructure investments made within the scope of the Belt and Road Initiative, the country could not make the progress it expected; On the contrary, it owed even more. As a matter of fact, the economic crisis in Sri Lanka has deepened, and accordingly, the steps of the process leading to the recent events have been taken. In addition, considering the efforts of the Western countries to destabilize the Belt-Road Initiative route, namely the corridors and therefore the countries involved in the initiative, the possibility of the LTTE being active again in Sri Lanka and the possibility of the emergence of similar terrorist organizations come to mind.

Although the LTTE was over, the structural violence and some problems in the country continued. However, various steps have been taken to listen to the demands of Tamils and to solve their problems. However, it is not possible to say that an important result was obtained from this. For this reason, negative peace was achieved with the end of terrorism in the country; However, positive peace could not be established. As a matter of fact, due to the economic problems experienced over time, civil disturbances have started in the country.

As the deteriorating economy affected life in all areas, these disturbances grew, and all ministers resigned on April 3, 2022. However, stability could not be achieved, and then Sri Lankan President Gotabaya Rajapaksa had to dismiss his brother, Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa. President Rajapaksa, who fled the country after this move did not ease the tension, announced that he left his post on July 13, 2022.

While increasing problems, economic crisis, and political instability in Sri Lanka cause uncertainty about the future of the country, one of the most critical issues in this process is whether the LTTE or LTTE-like organizations will re-emerge. Because of the Rajapaksa family's rule of the country, authoritarianism, corruption and bribery in the country, poor management of the economy and unnecessary borrowing brought along a significant break in Sri Lankan society.

Currently, one of the most important criticisms of Mahinda Ra-

japaksa is related to the nationalist wind that he blew after he graduated from LTTE. The fact that he ended the organization using military means made the position and decisions of the Rajapaksa family indisputable. Today's protests show that this perception has become useless. Looking at the latest developments in the country, it is seen that Ranil Wickremesinghe, who has served as prime minister at various times, is the President.

The crisis environment prevailing in Sri Lanka strengthens the possibility of disrupting the negative peace in the country. It is possible to say that especially terrorist organizations that want to achieve their political goals will benefit from such a crisis environment. The continuation of the structural problems in the country and the marginalization of some ethnic or religious groups will work up the atmosphere of violence. However, it can be said that Wickremesinghe's taking over the country has weakened this possibility to some extent because Wickremesinghe is one of the names who played a leading role in the peace processes carried out with the LTTE during his term as Prime Minister. Wickremesinghe was the Prime Minister during the 2002-2003 negotiations, which were the closest to an agreement. Although he was criticized on the grounds that he signed a ceasefire with a terrorist organization and violated the Constitution, it gave an official basis to the ongoing process by making a ceasefire with the LTTE on February 22, 2002. He even had a problem with the President, who was said to be unwilling to peace negotiate for this reason.

The country in question is facing an economic, social, and political crisis. It is difficult to say that it will get over it easily. Therefore, it can be argued that, despite the stabilization at the administrative level in Sri Lanka, the economic recovery will take at least five years despite foreign aid. In such an environment, it is possible for various violent events to break out. One of them is terrorism, triggered by economic problems combined with structural violence. However, it is assumed that the Wickremesinghe factor will be the most critical obstacle to this and will not allow organizations such as LTTE to emerge because past experiences indicate that Wickremesinghe can take steps to solve the structural problems in the country.

<sup>i</sup> "Humanitarian Operation Factual Analysis July 2006 – May 2009", Ministry of Defence Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, 2011, <https://slsembassya.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/08/Sri-Lanka-Humanitarian-Operation-Factual-Analysis.pdf> (Date of Accession: 24.07.2022), s. 14.

<sup>ii</sup> Neil Devotta, "The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam and the Lost Quest for Separatism in Sri Lanka", *Asian Survey*, 49(6), 2009, s. 1045.

# ANKASAM IN PRESS

## August 1, 2022

ANKASAM International Relations Specialist Dr. Dođacan Bařaran evaluated the Grain Corridor on TV5.

## August 1, 2022

ANKASAM International Relations Consultant Dr. Kadir Ertaç Çelik evaluated the Grain Corridor on Bengütürk TV.

## August 2, 2022

ANKASAM President Prof. Dr. Mehmet Seyfettin Erol evaluated the Erdogan-Putin meeting at CRI Türk FM.

## August 2, 2022

ANKASAM International Relations Specialist Dr. Dođacan Bařaran evaluated the Taiwan Issue on TVNET.

## August 3, 2022

ANKASAM International Relations Consultant Dr. Kadir Ertaç Çelik evaluated the Taiwan issue on TVNET.

## August 3, 2022

The infographic collection on the constitutional reforms in Uzbekistan, prepared by DSC, translated into Turkish and shared with the public by ANKASAM, was published in TRT Uzbek.

## August 3, 2022

ANKASAM President Prof. Dr. Mehmet Seyfettin Erol evaluated the USA-China Crisis and Taiwan in the TVNET program "After the Day".

## August 3, 2022

ANKASAM President Prof. Dr. Mehmet Seyfettin Erol's evaluations on the Taiwan Crisis were broadcast on CRI Türk FM.

## August 3, 2022

ANKASAM Asia-Pacific Research Specialist Mustafa Cem Koyuncu's evaluations on the Taiwan Crisis were shared on Sputnik.

# ANKASAM IN PRESS

## August 4, 2022

ANKASAM International Relations Consultant Dr. Kadir Ertac Celik's evaluations on the Taiwan Crisis were broadcast on TVNET.

## August 4, 2022

ANKASAM President Prof. Dr. Mehmet Seyfettin Erol's evaluations about the Grain Corridor were shared on TVNET.

## August 5, 2022

ANKASAM President Prof. Dr. Mehmet Seyfettin Erol evaluated the Sochi Meeting on TRT Haber.

## August 5, 2022

ANKASAM President Prof. Dr. Mehmet Seyfettin Erol evaluated the Sochi Meeting in A Haber.

## August 5, 2022

ANKASAM AF-PAK Specialist Dr. Dođacan Bařaran evaluated the killing of the Terrorist Organization Al-Qaeda Leader Eymen al-Zawahiri on TV5.

## August 6, 2022

ANKASAM President Prof. Dr. Mehmet Seyfettin Erol evaluated the Russia-Ukraine situation, Taiwan Crisis and Sochi Meeting on the Channel B Weekend program.

## August 6, 2022

Ankara Center for Crisis and Policy Studies (ANKASAM) President Prof. Dr. Mehmet Seyfettin Erol evaluated the process of Taiwan Crisis for IHA.



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

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# JOURNAL OF REGIONAL STUDIES

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

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