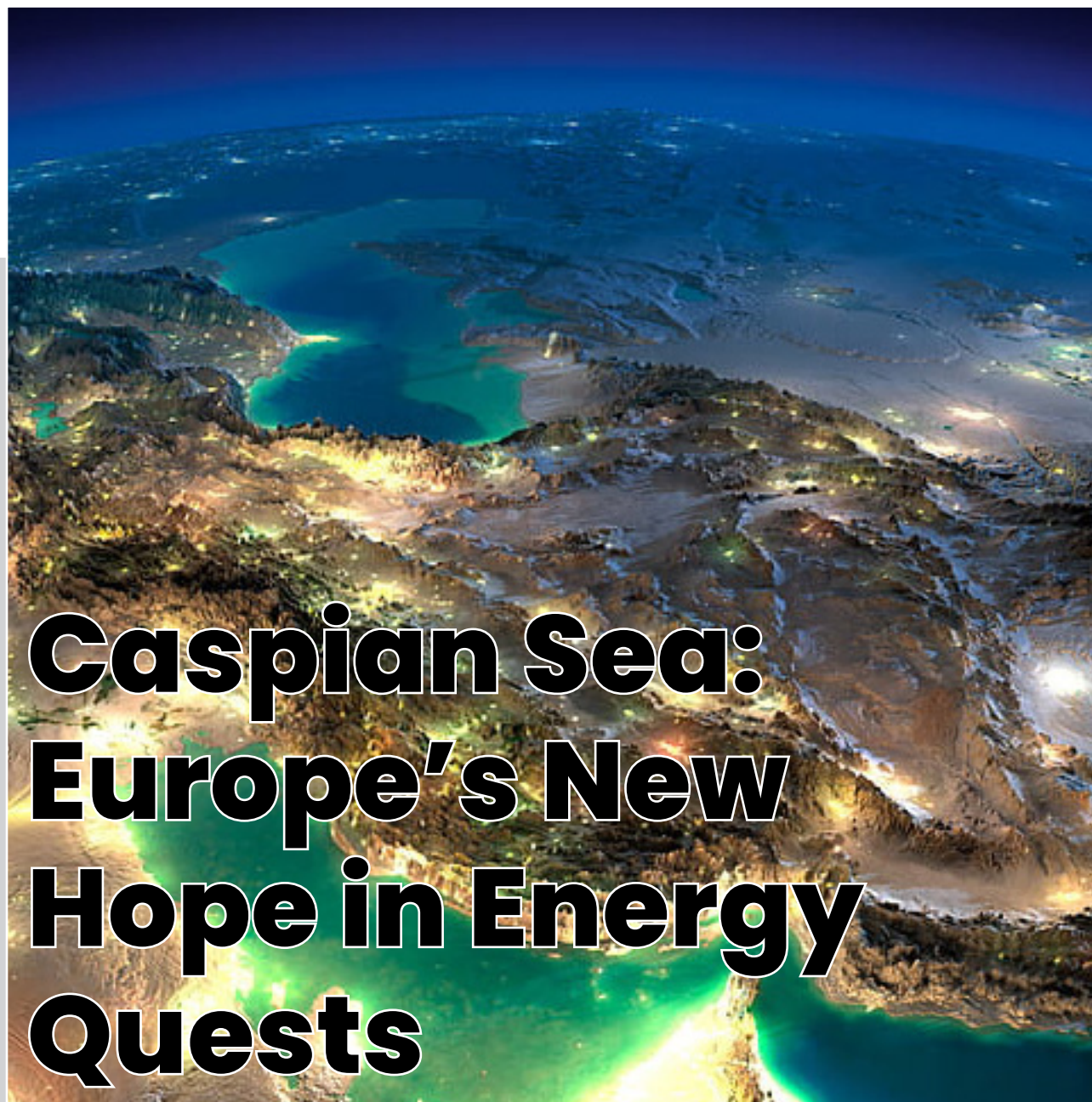




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ISSUE: 2022/30



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## ANKASAM ANALYSIS

# The “I2U2” Alliance in West Asia: A New “QUAD”?

While the balance of power in the world is shifting towards Europe at the point of “struggling with Russia” and towards the Pacific in order to “stop the rise of China”, a new alliance is emerging in Western Asia that will disrupt these balances. The leaders of the United States (USA), Israel, United Arab Emirates (UAE) and India announced in a joint statement on 14 July 2022[1] that they will cooperate in many areas from economy to security, from transportation to space cooperation, from clean energy to health and food security. “I2U2”, which is the abbreviation of the English names of the four countries mentioned, is also called “West Asian QUAD” or “QUAD 2.0” because it was established as a result of the initiatives of the USA and India is also included in it.

The I2U2 Alliance is mainly aimed at “promoting joint investments” in six mutually determined areas such as water, energy, transport, space, health and food security.[2] Apart from this, the basis of the alliance is based on the normalization agreement signed between Israel and the UAE in 2020. This agreement was described as the “Abraham Agreement” by the then US President Donald Trump, as it represented the “Israeli-Arab peace”. With the also inclusion of India in this axis, it began to be called the “Indo-Abraham Alliance”.[3] Because in the declaration, it was stated that support was given to the Abraham Agreements with Israel and other peace and normalization arrangements. A call was made to explore economic opportunities, including the development of economic coop-



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eration in West and South Asia, and the promotion of sustainable investment, in particular among I2U2 partners.

The most important step of this union is the trade and economy corridors. After Israel normalized relations with the Gulf Countries with the support of Trump, the construction of a new economic corridor stretching from Europe to India came to the fore. India, Israel and UAE formed the main pillar of this corridor. This project, also known as the “Arab-Med Corridor” or the “Indo-Arabic-Mediterranean Corridor”[4], has opened the door to cooperation between the four countries in various fields from clean energy to food security.

In this meeting, I2U2 leaders announced that they agreed on two main areas: food security and clean energy. First, it has been agreed that the UAE will invest \$2 billion to develop a series of integrated food parks across India that will include state-of-the-art climate control. The US and Israeli private sectors were also invited to contribute to this project. These investments are intended to help maximize crop yields and in turn help overcome food insecurity in West and South Asia. Second, the I2U2 group has decided to develop a hybrid renewable energy project with a capacity of 300 megawatt (MW) in the Indian state of Gujarat. It is stated that the USA has started a feasibility study for the 330 million dollar project and UAE-based companies are ready to serve as investment partners. Through such projects, it is aimed to make India an alternative global center in the renewable energy sector.

Finally, it was emphasized in the statement that these decisions taken to encourage mutual investments are only the first steps of a long-term strategic partnership between I2U2 countries. Analysts consider this alliance as part of US efforts to contain China’s influence in West and South Asia.[5] In this way, it is estimated that Washington can expand its allies in the region and create a new axis in Western Asia against China. The initiative is considered a QUAD-like or supporting project established in response to the “growing Chinese influence” in the Pacific. According to Regional Researcher Kevjn Lim, the USA is trying to integrate two strategic regions, namely Indo-Pacific and West Asia, with the formation of “I2U2”.[6]

India considers this alliance rather as an economic-commercial gain. The USA, on the other hand, considers this formation as a strategic platform that can serve to surround China in terms of politics and security in its immediate vicinity.

Reading the I2U2 Alliance from a Global Perspective

It is seen that a new “Cold War” and therefore polarization process is taking place between Euro-Atlantic powers (West) and Eurasian-Pacific (Eastern) powers in the world. In such a process, it is estimated that the global balance of power will change with the emergence of a new alliance in West Asia. It is interpreted that the I2U2 Alliance, led by the USA, can change the balance in favor of the West. Israel’s entry into the normalization process with the Gulf Countries will not cause any damage to the Eastern axis, which is mainly headed by Russia, India and China. On the contrary, the relations of the eastern front with Israel have always been warm-moderate. Israel is getting closer to the Eurasian-Pacific axis, especially through relations with Russia and India.

India, which wants to reach Europe by improving its economic and political relations with Israel, wishes to use Tel Aviv as a bridge in this context. The fact that New Delhi has developed ties with both Tel Aviv and Moscow means that, if we think about it geopolitically, the Indo-Pacific builds a bridge between the West and the East. To put it more clearly, while establishing relations with the USA and Israel, India changes the balance of power in favor of the West, it can strengthen the Eastern axis by getting closer to Russia and China.

In the last year, the USA has been trying to change the balance of power in favor of the West, especially with the platforms and partnerships it has established or pioneered in the Indo-Pacific. This is seen as a challenge to the Eastern axis rising over the Eurasian-Pacific led by Russia and China. Acting with a vision of multipolarity, India takes part in formations such as “QUAD” and “I2U2” under the leadership of the USA, as well as constitutes the basic pillar of platforms such as BRICS and SCO, led by Russia and China. Therefore, the fact that India is taking part in the “I2U2” Alliance does not indicate a radical change in the global balance of power. However, the regional repercussions of this may be very different.

Regional Impacts of the I2U2 Alliance

India’s rapprochement with the US and Israel may also jeopardize its relations with actors in West and South Asia. This sensitive geopolitical rivalry may lead to ruptures in a geography starting from Iran to Pakistan and the Gulf Countries. First of all, India’s participation in the I2U2 Alliance may damage its relations with Iran. Because, in order to balance Pakistan, India turned to cooperation with its neighbor Iran. Iran, on the other hand, was warmly looking at rapprochement with India as a

counterbalance element due to Pakistan’s deep-rooted relations with the UAE and Saudi Arabia.

Even if India was included in the US-led QUAD in 2017, this formation in the Indo-Pacific would not be considered a clear threat to Iran. However, with China’s emphasis on Iran in the context of the Belt-Road Project and the development of Beijing-Tehran relations in recent years, India has started to turn to alternative collaborations in the geopolitics of the region. As a result of the Iran-China rapprochement, India started to develop its relations with the Gulf Countries, especially the UAE, and Israel. As a result of this, India has also started to work on the Gulf-Israel-Mediterranean route as an alternative to the Iran-Russia route in the corridors extending to the West.

The point that draws attention here is that while Pakistan develops warm relations with the Gulf States, these countries do not participate in the normalization process with Israel. In addition, due to its tense relations with India, Pakistan is positioned against the I2U2 Alliance. Therefore, the fact that India sided with Israel in Western Asia may pave the way for the rapprochement of Iran and Pakistan, which are outside of this alliance. The impact of these geopolitical ruptures can extend to Afghanistan and Central Asia in the long run. If we characterize the “I2U2” Alliance as a new QUAD, India can play an “equation breaker” or “balance provider” role in this alliance as well.

[1] “Joint Statement of the Leaders of India, Israel, United Arab Emirates, and the United States (I2U2)”, White House, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/07/14/joint-statement-of-the-leaders-of-india-israel-united-arab-emirates-and-the-united-states-i2u2/>, (Date of Accession: 16.07.2022).

[2] “With the world in ‘turmoil’, a new ‘Quad’ comes into place”, Aljazeera, <https://www.aljazeera.com/economy/2022/7/14/with-the-world-in-turmoil-a-new-quad-comes-into-place>, (Date of Accession: 16.07.2022).

[3] “An Indo-Abrahamic alliance on the rise: How India, Israel, and the UAE are creating a new transregional order”, MEI, <https://www.mei.edu/publications/indo-abrahamic-alliance-rise-how-india-israel-and-uae-are-creating-new-transregional>, (Date of Accession: 16.07.2022).

[4] “An India-Europe Trade Corridor? The geoeconomics dimension of an emerging West Asia Quad”, Orfonline, <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/an-india-europe-trade-corridor/>, (Date of Accession: 16.07.2022).

[5] “What is the I2U2?”, NY Times, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/14/world/middleeast/i2u2-india-israel-uae-us.html>, (Date of Accession: 16.07.2022).

[6] Ibid.



## ANKASAM ANALYSIS

# A Period of Strong Cooperation on the Ashgabat-Tashkent Line: Berdimuhamedov's Visit to Uzbekistan

The visit of the President of Turkmenistan, Mr. Serdar Berdimukhamedov, to Uzbekistan, held on July 14-15, 2022, has taken its place on the agenda of the international community as an extremely important visit due to its contribution to the regional cooperation, peace and prosperity environment in Central Asia and to the integration processes of the Turkish World. In addition, it is possible to say that the visit includes developments that contribute to regional cooperation pro-

cesses based on South Asia-Central Asia and the South Asia-Central Asia-Caspian Sea-Caucasus-Turkey-Europe route, that is, the Middle Corridor.

It includes the signing of 19 agreements between Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan on the occasion of Mr. Berdimukhamedov's visit, confirming the commitment to the development and deepening of multifaceted co-operation and strategic partnership relations between the two



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countries.[1]

One of the most important agreements reflecting the commitment to this issue is the fact that the two countries have reached a historic agreement on the use of the Amu Darya River. The fact that the President of Uzbekistan, Mr. Shavkat Mirziyoyev, interpreted the agreement as "a development that will ensure the rational use of water and energy resources in the region" clearly demonstrated the importance the parties attach to co-operation.[2]

Recalling the Organization of Turkic States' decision to boost bilateral relations among member states for the sake of accelerated integration processes in the Turkish World during the Istanbul Summit of 12 November 2021, the contacts on the Ashgabat-Tashkent line and the signed agreements are key steps in terms of the Turkic World integration processes. The agreement between the two countries amounts to \$451 million.[3]

On the other hand, it is obvious that the meeting between Mr. Mirziyoyev and Mr. Berdimukhamedov in Goksaray in Tashkent will also have implications in the context of the Middle Corridor, a joint project of the Turkic World. Because Uzbekistan wants to open up to the West via the Turkmenistan-Caspian Sea connection, while Turkmenistan wants to increase its natural gas exports to Western countries by using the same corridor.

In addition, Mr. Berdimukhamedov's visit to Tashkent should be noted as an event that will serve stability based in Central Asia-South Asia. Because both Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan are borders with Afghanistan. This state of borders clearly also risks destabilizing Central Asia over security issues based in Afghanistan. But both countries run a principled public diplomacy that prioritizes human life in response to the Afghanistan problem and are constructive in their efforts to assist the country in preventing the deepening of the crisis in Afghanistan. For this reason, it is predictable that the Turkmenistan-Uzbekistan rapprochement will increase efforts towards achieving permanent peace in Afghanistan. Indeed, Mr. Mirziyoyev invited Mr. Berdimukhamedov to be the guest of honor at the summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in Samarkand, Uzbekistan, where regional governments are meeting to help build regional security. This heralds that Turkmenistan will continue to develop its contacts with international organizations, especially the SCO, so as not to cast a shadow over its status as a permanent neutrality.

Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, understandably, are contributing constructively to the Turkic World integration processes and see this as an opportunity to expand to the West via the Middle Corridor. On the other hand, it serves to enhance regional co-operation through international organizations such as SCO, such as Russia and China.

In short, the common position that Ashgabat and Tashkent internalize in the context of foreign policy involves a multi-vector diplomacy that looks at the balance between power centers. This is why the expansion and deepening of the relations between the two countries means that the multi-vector foreign policy approach of Ashgabat and Tashkent, and the Central Asian capitals in general, will be maintained.

The mentioned foreign policy approach also brings about reform processes in the domestic policies of the actors. As it is known, Uzbekistan is carrying out extremely important reforms under the leadership of Shavkat Mirziyoyev as part of the Third Renaissance period. These reforms include Uzbekistan's opening up to the world and achieving breakthroughs in liberalization and democratization, and are reflected in domestic policy in the form of increasing social well-being in the economic sense.

Turkmenistan received the recognition of Turkmen as the "Leader of the Nation" and brought a new dynamic to the state administration with the election of Mr. Serdar Berdimukhamedov, the President of the Turkmen people who gave the title of "Son of the Nation" when Mr. Gurbanguly Berdimukhamedov withdrew from office in a bid to rejuvenate politics while he was alive and healthy. Thus, the visit of President of Turkmenistan Mr. Berdimukhamedov to Tashkent indicates that similar reform processes and development moves in Uzbekistan can be achieved in Turkmenistan.

In this context, following a meeting between Mr. Berdimukhamedov and Mr. Mirziyoyev, the statement made by the two leaders in a joint statement is quite remarkable:[4]

"The Presidents of Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan reiterated their commitment to strengthening the role of women who play a key role in ensuring gender equality and peace and harmony in society and in full utilization of human potential in accordance with their sustainable development objectives."



Through the statement, the two leaders discussed the development of women's rights within the framework of gender equality and associated it with both increasing social peace and harmony and the efficient use of their country's human potential. So it can be said that both countries will carry out significant reforms at the point of women's rights, and that these reforms will move in parallel with the liberalization steps, as part of the democratization process.

At the same time, the reforms reflect the will of both states to achieve their economic goals, as the countries aim to ensure the full capacity of manpower. More importantly, this approach clearly demonstrates the commitment both countries are taking to make and take steps towards Westernization.

As a result, Mr. Berdymukhamedov's visit to Uzbekistan is a concrete statement of will for a period of strong cooperation, especially in Turkmenistan-Uzbekistan relations, and in general, regional cooperation is a development that serves stability and prosperity. Moreover, the cooperation between the two countries also reflects the Decisiveness of the Central Asian states in their liberalization breakthroughs. At the same time, the two countries have once again confirmed that they will continue this process with a multi-vector foreign policy understanding, which is their most important strategy that serves to protect their independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity.

[1] "Президент Туркменистана встретился с председателем Сената Олий Мажлиса", Central Asia, <https://centralasia.news/16219-prezident-turkmenistan-vstretilsja-s-predsdatelem-senata-olij-mazhlisa.html>, (Date of Accession: 16.07.2022).

[2] "Ўзбекистан и Туркменистан подписали "историческое соглашение по Амударье"", Podrobn, <https://podrobno.uz/cat/politic/uzbekistan-i-turkmenistan-podpisali-istoricheskoe-soglasenie-po-amudare/>, (Date of Accession: 16.07.2022).

[3] "Завершился государственный визит Сердара Бердымухамедова в Узбекистан", Turkmen Portal, <https://turkmenportal.com/blog/49503/zavershil-sya-gosudarstvennyi-vizit-serdara-berdymuhamedova-v-uzbekistan>, (Date of Accession: 16.07.2022).

[4] "Мирзиёев и Бердымухамедов договорились продвигать гендерное равенство и расширять права женщин", Central Asia, <https://centralasia.media/news:1793131>, (Date of Accession: 16.07.2022).



## ANKASAM ANALYSIS

# What Does China Want to Do in the Russia-Ukraine War?

On the morning of February 24, 2022, Russian President Vladimir Putin's military intervention in Ukraine changed the regional balances and caused a tremendous global reaction, especially in European states. As a result of this reaction, Germany, the "locomotive country" of Europe, moved away from the appearance of an "economic giant" and gradually began to turn into a "military power." The United States of America (USA) and European countries, on the one hand, seized the goods of Russia, on the

other hand, started an embargo. Despite this harsh and sudden reaction, Russia's withdrawal from Ukraine could not be achieved. In addition, the position of China, one of Russia's essential partners, has been the subject of criticism.

An Overview of China-Ukraine Relations

Although bilateral relations went back to establishing an independent Ukraine at the end of the First World War, diplomatic contacts took



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place in the form of the Soviet Union – the People’s Republic of China, since Moscow controlled the country in this period. The basis of today’s relations emerged with the end of the Cold War and the establishment of Ukraine as an independent state. China recognized Ukraine, which declared its independence on August 24, 1991, 3 days later, and established diplomatic relations on January 4, 1992. The critical point in bilateral relations in the 1990s was the nuclear capacity of the Soviet era in Ukraine and the independence of the country. In this regard, China has given Ukraine security guarantees, including nuclear issues.[1]

In the 2000s, relations between the two countries intensified, leading Ukraine to accept the “One China” understanding of China.[2] China has seriously benefited from these relations, which have progressed smoothly in many respects. It also used the technical and administrative structure of the Soviet Union efficiently. In addition, it has employed and gained the advantage of many influential people in the country; benefited from Ukraine in matters such as aircraft carriers, engine purchase, and construction. While relations are going well in many respects, as a result of Russia being the rising power of the region, Ukraine’s more pro-Western policies, and Moscow’s efforts to curb this, China has become a country that demands/trying to request a multipolar world order by putting its weight on Russia’s side over time.

#### Fundamentals of Chinese Foreign Policy

Contemporary Chinese Foreign Policy derives its sources from the worldview of the Communist Party led by Mao Zedong , which foreseen that the century called the “Century of Shame” would never happen again. Foreign policy principles are included in the preamble of the Constitution. According to this: “China consistently carries out an independent foreign policy and adheres to mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual nonaggression, non-interference in each other’s internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence, the path of peaceful development, and the reciprocal opening up strategy in developing diplomatic relations and economic and cultural exchanges with other countries. China consistently opposes imperialism, hegemonism, and colonialism works to strengthen unity with the people of other countries, supports the oppressed nations and the developing countries in their just struggle to win and preserve national independence and develop their national economies, and strives to safeguard world peace and promote the cause of human progress.”[3] The Constitution emphasizes Zhou Enlai’s Principle of Peaceful Coexistence with these statements.

#### Russia’s Attack on Ukraine and China’s Attitude

Russia’s attack has been a significant development for both the world and China. This war has made it very difficult for China to achieve three main goals that cannot be balanced with each other. The first is to protect the strategic partnership with Russia, the second is to adhere to the principle of territorial integrity and non-interference in internal affairs, which are among the basic principles of the Constitution and foreign policy, and the third is to minimize the sanctions and other pressures from the European Union (EU) and the USA.[4] Changing its discourse according to time and place to achieve these three incompatible goals, the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs eventually put its weight in favor of Russia. In this context, China, prioritizing strengthening its strategic partnership, described Russia’s attack on Ukraine as a “crisis,” “conflict,” or “Ukrainian Problem,” not as “aggression of an independent country on the territory of another country.”

Explaining his country’s position for the first time two days after the war, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi stated that the Cold War had already ended and that the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) needed to rethink its position and responsibilities. “China believes that the Cold War mentality based on group confrontation should be completely abandoned. In addition, the Chinese side supports the resumption of dialogue between NATO, the EU and Russia. In addition, it seeks to build a balanced, effective and sustainable European security mechanism to achieve long-term peace and stability on the European continent.”[5]

China also abstained from the resolution drafted in the United Nations Security Council on February 26, 2022, condemning the Russian attacks on Ukraine. With this move, it wanted to protect itself, not alienate Russia from itself, and not contradict its foreign policy principles. It maintained its abstention position in the bill condemning Russia’s attack on Ukraine, which went to the General Assembly

and was accepted by the votes of 141 countries after the Security Council did not have a positive result. This diplomatic abstention, the aggravation of the economic sanctions against Russia from the West, its transformation into a global campaign, and most importantly, the pressures from the USA have brought China closer to Russia. The former US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo’s statement in a speech in Taiwan that Taiwan should be recognized as an independent and sovereign country caused a reaction from China.[6] Replying to this statement of Pompeo, Wang Yi said that Ukraine should not be based on one side, “but should be the bridge that connects the East and the West, and should not be the playground of the great states”.[7]

Working to minimize the pressures of the EU and the USA, China is trying to develop economic relations with European countries in particular and is trying to create a crack between the USA and Europe in general. It has been stated that sanctions are an important problem for the world, significantly. At the same time, the signs of inflationary waves and recession increase the problems for Europe, a social welfare region. On the subject, Wang Yi said, “All countries in the world are an inseparable community. Given the sluggish global economic recovery, unrestricted sanctions will undermine the stability of the international industrial chain and supply chain, aggravate the food and energy crisis. This will hurt the people’s livelihood of all countries.”[8] used expressions. As of April, China’s anti-US position has become more pronounced. In this process, the Chinese Foreign Minister said, “The United States will seriously harm the hard-won peace and development in the region by putting forward the Indo-Pacific Strategy and trying to create regional tensions. It also seeks to provoke conflicts that will seriously erode the ASEAN-based regional cooperation structure.”[9] found in the assessment. Although it is close to Russia, it is constantly stated that China is not a party to this crisis.

#### What Is China Trying To Do?

China’s integration into the international economic system is one of the most important reasons why China follows a two-way policy that does not oppress Russia on the one hand and calls for easing the crisis/conflict. China still attracts serious investments from international capital, mainly from Europe and the USA, and thus emerges as a significant export giant. As a result of the open support to be given directly to Russia, the Yuan may suffer the same fate as the Ruble. In addition, China, which has not yet overcome the epidemic’s effects, has not been able to solve its supply chain problems and, more importantly, has not been able to get rid of the Trump effect. This situation has also been reflected in energy prices. The costs of China, the world’s largest petrochemical consumer, have increased even more.

Another reason is China’s foreign policy understanding of independence, territorial integrity, and refusal to interfere in internal affairs. Russia’s punitive activities against another country create serious problems regarding China’s basic principles. Because the countries with which China has the most intense political relations are the Third World Countries and Latin American and African countries, which were also members of the Non-Aligned Movement in the past. Against this attitude of Russia, China’s statements of support may put itself in a difficult situation. Instead, it may try to take advantage of the public opinion of these countries against the American/Western case by viewing the war as “the mixing of sensitive places by US-led Western forces” rather than Russian aggression. However, the main reason behind China’s attitude is the strategic culture it has created.

#### Strategic Culture

Although Russia is a “disruptive power” that uses violence disproportionately, and China is described as a “recovering and founding power”[10] the situation is much different than what is said. The political culture of these two states demands “self-centered hegemony” as in the past empires; it is not to refrain from using violence or to be a founder-destroyer but to create a strategic framework suitable for time and place. This strategic framework is a consensus on which method (hard or soft power) will deliver long-term returns internally and externally. This return for Russia has recently come to the fore as hard power. Because, on the one hand, the country has a long-term population problem, and on the other hand, its wealth is indispensable to the world.

China wants to be the power that balances the environment that will occur at the war’s end. For this reason, it is not the one who prefers one of the two parties, but it wants a result that both parties want it to choose, and in the end, it wins. This result is the beginning of a



history in which everyone lost in Ukraine that one of the areas of conflict between East and West, the northern line of the Belt-Road Project, has been secured, with the protracted war between Europe and the USA, strategic differences began to occur, and Russia lost even more power with the war in the long run. Because China is "too big to ignore, too old to belittle, too weak to appease, too ambitious to underestimate."<sup>[11]</sup>

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[9] " ", FMPCR, [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/wjdt\\_674879/gjldrhd\\_674881/202204/t20220414\\_10668069.shtml](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/wjdt_674879/gjldrhd_674881/202204/t20220414_10668069.shtml), (Date of Accession: 19.06.2022).

[10] Mustafa Cem Koyuncu, "Çin Ukrayna Krizi'nin Neresinde?", ANKASAM, <https://www.ankasam.org/cin-ukrayna-krizinin-neresinde/>, (Date of Accession: 19.06.2022).

[11] Zbigniew Brzezinski, The Geostategic Triad: Living with China, Europe, and Russia, CSIS, 2001, s. 2.



## ANKASAM ANALYSIS

# The Agenda of the Security Agreement on the Taliban-Qatar Line

Qatar, the address of the Taliban's negotiations with both the United States of America (USA) and the ousted Afghan Government, still maintains its role in the context of mediation diplomacy in the Afghan Problem, albeit in different ways. As a matter of fact, many actors, especially the United States, are in contact with the Taliban through Doha instead of directly communicating with them. This is the main

reason why essential relations had developed between Qatar and the Taliban since 2013, when the Taliban's political office in Doha was opened.

Since August 2021, when the second Taliban era began in Afghanistan, the Doha administration has focused on humanitarian aid activities and taken a constructive stance rather than focus-



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ing on geopolitical competition conducted over the country. In other words, Qatar has taken initiatives that prioritize ensuring stability in the country rather than taking steps that will isolate Afghanistan from the international community and radicalize the Taliban. At the same time, Qatar has been the Taliban's gateway to the West regarding its role. Of course, this situation has led to the fact that the Taliban has developed trust-based cooperation with Doha.

On July 11-12, 2022, Taliban Defense Minister Mullah Mohammad Yaqoup Mujahid visited the Qatari capital Doha and met with several Qatari dignitaries, especially the Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Sani. Mūcahit. On July 12, 2022, when Mujahid returned to Kabul, he said, "The Doha administration is interested in an agreement to be signed between the Ministries of Defense of Qatar and the Taliban. There will be a security agreement in which the two countries will cooperate."<sup>[1]</sup> he made a statement announcing that a security-based agreement would be signed between the parties. The Taliban Defense Minister, who also provided information on the content of the possible agreement, said:<sup>[2]</sup>

"We call on them to cooperate in providing salaries to the military. Because Qatar is an Islamic country and has helped Afghanistan in the past, we also expect that borders will help us ensure security and supply uniforms to our military forces."

As may be seen from the above statements, the main expectations of the Taliban from Qatar are to help military personnel pay salaries and facilitate the supply of uniforms and equipment. However, it is foreseeable that the Taliban may turn to Qatar to supply new weapons and equipment, and the possible agreement will not be limited. This is the modernization of the army with the support of Qatar in Afghanistan, and, more accurately, the army is constituted in the form of a modern national army. Therefore, the agreement that the parties are working on is a harbinger of the evolution of Qatar's Afghanistan policy, which began with mediation diplomacy and continues with humanitarian assistance to a new stage.

It is also possible to argue that the fight against the terrorist organization State of Iraq and Sham (DAESH) will take place at a new stage. Considering that the Doha administration is the actor that establishes the connection between the Taliban and the West, one may said that the most important expectation of Western states from the Taliban is engaged in combating terrorism and preventing the use of the territory of Afghanistan against other states. Moreover, the Taliban has also committed to this issue in the Doha Treaty of February 29, 2020. However, recently, the activities of DAESH in Afghanistan have increased, and even allegations that the terrorist organization in question has carried out missile attacks on countries such as Uzbekistan and Tajikistan from the territory of Afghanistan have been reflected in the international press. In addition, local sources claim that al-Qaeda has recently started to use Afghanistan more frequently for recruitment purposes. In this context, the cooperation to be made in the fight against terrorism may be the basis of Qatar's signing of an agreement with the Taliban, covering the areas of security and defence.

In the event of such a development, Qatar will also ensure that the Taliban takes a line in line with the expectations of the international community in the fight against terrorism since Qatar is one of the strategic partners of the United States. In this sense, it should also be emphasized that the role assumed by Doha is not only related to security policies. As noted by political analyst Torek Farhadi, Qatar may have offered a consultative agreement with Western countries to encourage the Taliban to introduce reforms that the international community wants.<sup>[3]</sup> Therefore, the agenda of the security agreement on the Qatar-Taliban line may also evolve into security-based cooperation. Moreover, if the process proceeds in a healthy way, this agreement may also open the doors to international recognition for the Taliban administration, which any state has not officially recognized. Time will tell the fate of these possibilities.

At this point, discussing another issue focusing on security-based cooperation between the parties is necessary: the facilities' safety. Therefore, one of the topics that may be included in the possible agreement may be the security of various facilities, especially airports in Afghanistan, since there have been various discussions on this issue for a long time.

On the other hand, it can be said that the Taliban's benevolent view of signing a security agreement with Qatar has some geopolitical

messages. In the context of global power balances, the Taliban's preference for Qatar shows that it also wants to consider the Western balance while maintaining its contacts with actors such as China and Russia. At the regional level, the fact that the Taliban prefer to sign a security agreement with Qatar instead of Pakistan indicates that there are some inconveniences with the Taliban regarding Pakistan's Afghanistan policy. Although the Taliban is an organization in which Pakistan has influence, the presence of a Pashtun nationalist character in this structure causes various disagreements due to the Durand Line Issue. In addition, the Islamabad administration linking the terrorist attacks in Pakistan to Afghanistan may deepen these disputes, although they remain at the current level of cyclical tension. In this sense, the Taliban may have interpreted Doha as an actor that would also balance Islamabad. As a matter of fact, it remains in the memory that Pakistan does not take kindly to the proposal of Turkey and Qatar at the point of operation of Kabul Airport. This confirms the difference in the expectations of Islamabad and Doha regarding Afghanistan.

As a result, the Taliban has developed important relations with the Doha administration since it opened its political office in 2013, and Qatar has been positioned as the Taliban's gateway to the West. The security agreement, which is being considered to be signed at this point, can be interpreted as the first of the steps the West expects the Taliban to take, especially in the fight against terrorism. In the coming period, the Taliban will likely develop comprehensive cooperation with Qatar, ranging from the creation of the modern Afghan Army to the fight against terrorism and border security. However, it should be noted that the possible agreement does not mean that Qatar will officially recognize the Taliban. But it can be considered as the beginning of the process leading to recognition. Moreover, the course of the process may also serve to put the Taliban's relations with the West on a proper footing.

[1] "Qatar 'Interested' in Security Agreement in Afghanistan: Taliban Official", Doha News, <https://dohanews.co/qatar-interested-in-security-agreement-in-afghanistan-taliban-official/>, (Date of Accession: 18.07.2022).

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

[3] Ibid.





## ANKASAM ANALYSIS

# The Importance of Uzbekistan and Tajikistan in the Context of Russia's Policy towards Afghanistan

Russia's Central Asian policy and its interests in Afghanistan complement each other. In Central Asia, there are three countries neighboring Afghanistan. These are Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan. The point that creates a dilemma or difficulty for Russia is that Uzbekistan and Tajikistan have different views on the Afghanistan-Taliban issue. While Uzbekistan is trying to prevent radical groups originating from Afghanistan from infiltrating its country and Central Asia by maintaining its relations with

the Taliban; it is considered that Tajikistan is in a front struggling against the Taliban. Russia, in general, is concerned that instability in Afghanistan could spread to Central Asia and undermine economic-political and security relations with the regional states. The following can be mentioned in the first stage if you need to talk about the strategic importance of Uzbekistan and then Tajikistan for Russia.

Uzbekistan



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Russia's approach to Uzbekistan can be discussed primarily from a geostrategic perspective. The relevant country aims to provide safe transit to the Indo-Pacific region through Afghanistan. Therefore, Tashkent tries to keep its relations with the Taliban positive. Providing humanitarian aid to Afghanistan, Uzbekistan wishes to ensure regional security in return. Uzbekistan's Afghanistan policy can also affect Russia's interests in the region.

Considering Afghanistan in particular, Russia's interest in Uzbekistan among the Central Asian countries is increasing. The main reason for this, unlike Tajikistan, Russia does not have a military base in Uzbekistan. This situation increases the security concerns in Russia. To put it more clearly, Russia is concerned that religious groups in Afghanistan pose a threat to both Central Asia and its borders through Uzbekistan. Hence, Russia, together with Uzbekistan, wishes to expand its military cooperation against fundamentalist organizations. However, Tashkent's continuous postponement of being a member of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) is seen as an important obstacle for Russia to increase its military influence in the region. However, it can be said that Russia plans to increase the military activities of the CSTO to balance the increasing Chinese influence in the region. Accordingly, it can be predicted that Moscow will increase its military cooperation with Uzbekistan and focus on the security of the border region to prevent threats originating from Afghanistan and to balance China. In this context, it can be predicted that Russia will increase the pressure on Uzbekistan to become a member of the CSTO again. Because China is increasing its military-security moves in Uzbekistan and its framework, which assumed the SCO term presidency. It can be said that Russia will try to attract Uzbekistan to itself in this strategic competition and will try to establish the security of the region through this country. In addition to the CSTO and security issues, it can be predicted that Russia will increase its political pressure on Uzbekistan. Thanks to the branding established through diplomatic channels, it can be said that Moscow will try to prevent Tashkent from developing political and economic cooperation with regional and global actors other than itself.

For instance, Uzbekistan's increasing contacts with the Taliban may cause Russia to worry about its Central Asian policies. In addition, the fact that Tashkent is not yet a member of the CSTO poses a challenge in shaping Russia's Afghanistan policy. The fact that Tashkent is a member of the CSTO will also great-

ly affect its foreign policy toward Afghanistan. So, the Taliban considers the membership of Uzbekistan in the CSTO as a worrying development. As a result, it can be foreseen that tensions may arise between both sides. While trying to establish regional security through military cooperation with Russia, Uzbekistan, on the other hand, aims to resolve security issues with the Taliban diplomatically.

Tajikistan

It is frequently stated that Tajikistan supports the anti-Taliban axis in Afghanistan. Due to Dushenbe's relations with the anti-Taliban front, the political tension between the Tajik Government and the Taliban continues. While threats arising from fundamentalist groups in Afghanistan disturb Tajikistan on the one hand, they also create an opportunity for Russia to intervene in the region. In other words, it can be claimed that Russia is trying to increase its military and political influence in both Uzbekistan and Tajikistan by citing the instability in Afghanistan.

As in the case of Uzbekistan, Russia's military activities toward Tajikistan in the context of Central Asia are getting stronger. This military cooperation leads Dushanbe to become more attached to Moscow. Russia's increase in military activities in Tajikistan within the framework of its policy towards Afghanistan is not only limited to this country but also affects Central Asian countries. That is to say, Moscow may want to carry out its Central Asian policy strongly through Tajikistan. In addition, there is still a risk that China will increase its military presence in both Tajikistan and Central Asia in the future. Russia claims that it has taken security measures against the rise of the Taliban. However, the main reason for this existence may be to limit the growing Chinese influence. Russia is trying to prevent its regional rivals, especially China, and other global powers from penetrating other parts of Central Asia through Tajikistan.

Tajikistan pays attention to developing multilateral cooperation to ensure the political balance between regional powers and at the same time focuses on military activities to ensure the security of the border region with Afghanistan. Moscow is increasing its activities in the field of education as well as military activities in Tajikistan. While Moscow strengthens its military influence, on the other hand, it tries to instill the Russian language and culture in the younger generations in Tajikistan. In this context, it is desired to revive this culture by establishing Russian schools and Russian language classes in Tajikistan with the funding of Moscow.



Increasing Tajikistan-Taliban tension in the context of Afghanistan affects the competition of global and regional powers, especially Russia and China. Using the fight against the Taliban as an excuse, Russia may try to direct its Afghanistan policy through Tajikistan and expand its military activities in this country as well as in Uzbekistan. It is a question mark how much the thousands of soldiers trained by Russia in Tajikistan within the scope of CSTO exercises and military training support will contribute to regional stability.

The fact that Russian President Vladimir Putin made his first foreign visit to Tajikistan after the Russia-Ukraine War that started on February 24 reveals the importance of Dushanbe in the eyes of Moscow. It raises concerns that after Ukraine, Russia will shift its focus to Central Asia and Afghanistan in the context of Tajikistan. This situation may indicate that the rivalry between Russia and China will gain momentum this time on the Tajikistan-Afghanistan axis.

In conclusion, given the geopolitics of Afghanistan, Russia needs to interact with Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, primarily in terms of security and then economics. It is also possible to evaluate this in terms of geopolitical competition with China. It is frequently mentioned that the New Great Game has begun in the context of Afghanistan. One of these actors is China. The actor, which has established activities in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, will be able to control the problems of Afghanistan and Central Asia. Uzbekistan, assuming the SCO Term Presidency, also leads the way in solving security problems originating from Afghanistan. In this crisis, Tajikistan is a critical actor that needs to be won in terms of its relations with the anti-Taliban front. In this sense, the actor who won Tajikistan will largely shape the future of Afghanistan. The fact that Russia is excluded from the said geopolitical competition is not only for China; It will cause India and other regional actors to gain power. At a time when Beijing and New Delhi are enhancing their interest in Afghanistan, the presence of Russia in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan is considered by Russian policymakers as a balancing factor against these powers.

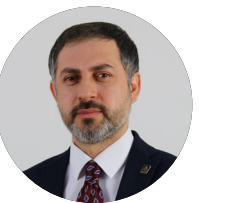


## ANKASAM ANALYSIS

# An Alternative to Russian Natural Gas: EU-Azerbaijan Natural Gas Agreement

European leaders continue to hold some negotiations with natural gas exporting countries to reduce dependence on Russia's energy resources. For this purpose, Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission, visited Baku on 18 July 2022.

European Union (EU) leaders see Azerbaijan as one of the alternative suppliers along with Algeria, Egypt and Qatar. For this reason, it is ready to develop relations with the country in question. The situation has also been confirmed by the visit of the President of the European Commission.



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During the meeting between President of Azerbaijan İlham Aliyev and von der Leyen, an agreement was signed, which stipulates that Baku will increase the gas supply to Europe to 20 billion cubic meters per year within five years, that is, until 2027. In 2021, Azerbaijan exported 8 billion cubic meters. This year, this figure can be increased by 50% to 12 billion cubic meters.[1]

The Memorandum also declares the EU's commitment to climate targets. In addition, the parties agreed to make Azerbaijan's natural gas supply efficient and to make this country "environmentally friendly". The document also envisages the expansion of the Southern Gas Corridor for the supply of Azerbaijani gas to the EU and the Western Balkans. Von der Leyen made the following statement on the subject:[2]

"Today, through the new agreement, we are turning a new page in our energy cooperation with Azerbaijan, a key partner in our efforts to move away from Russian fossil fuels. We also intend to strengthen our existing partnership, which guarantees a stable and reliable gas supply to the EU through the Southern Gas Corridor. As we pursue the goals of the Paris Agreement, we are laying the foundations for a long-term partnership on energy efficiency and clean energy. However, energy is just one of the areas where we can expand our cooperation with Azerbaijan and I look forward to using the full potential of our relationship."

It was previously stated that the construction of the Greece-Bulgaria Pipeline connection (IGB) has been completed and the trial period has begun. The inter-energy line connects the Greek gas network through the IGB national gas network "Bulgarian-transgaz". The 140 km long natural gas pipeline on Bulgarian territory is designed to carry 3 billion cubic meters of natural gas per year, and is planned to be expanded to 5.5 billion cubic meters in the future. It is stated that the cost of this pipeline project is 145 million Euros.

The said line allows the import of Azerbaijani natural gas to Bulgaria and also from there to other parts of Europe. The IGB will run from the Trans-Adriatic Pipeline (TAP) to the Greek national gas system and then through the regasification plant to Alexandroupolis Port. However, it is envisaged that natural gas will be transported from Greece to Bulgaria and also from there to Serbia, North Macedonia, Romania, Hungary and Ukraine in the future.[3]

Concerns about further cuts to Russia's gas supply have increased after the start of pre-planned repairs on the Nord

Stream-1 Natural Gas Pipeline, which supplies natural gas to Germany. Because Russia and Europe are on the brink of an energy war. The Moscow administration suspended the natural gas supply through the Nord Stream-1 Natural Gas Pipeline, which is the largest, if not the only, pipeline that provides natural gas supply to the EU, on the grounds that maintenance will be carried out from 11 July 2022 until 21 July 2022. European officials, on the other hand, stated that they are not sure that Russia will continue to export after this date.[4] Although the flow of natural gas has resumed, there is no guarantee that the Kremlin will not cause new cuts by applying for an energy card.

As it can be understood, although the threat on energy is not directly mentioned, the tension is increasing. Economists warn that Russia has all the means to cut off supply. Time will tell how Europe will cope with resource scarcity. However, von der Leyen's visit to Azerbaijan and the subsequent agreement between the parties is an extremely important victory for Brussels' efforts to diversify its gas suppliers.

Mr. Aliyev had stated long before von der Leyen's visit that Azerbaijan would take a positive step towards European expectations. As a matter of fact, the negotiations on increasing the gas supply from Azerbaijan to the EU had started long before the Russian-Ukrainian War broke out. This step taken by Mr. Aliyev is an indication that Baku will not make any concessions in the aforementioned area. On the other hand, it is regarded as certain that Azerbaijan will gain the friendship of the EU.

It can be said that the EU has achieved a significant success in its energy struggle with Russia thanks to the agreement with Azerbaijan. However, Azerbaijani resources will be insufficient in eliminating dependence on Russia. According to the International Energy Agency, the EU imported 155 billion cubic meters of natural gas from Russia in 2021. This figure is almost 20 times more than the energy to be supplied from Azerbaijan and accounts for 45% of Europe's import volume. It also accounts for 40% of total consumption in the EU.

As can be understood from the above information, Azerbaijan is not the only supplier candidate. For this reason, the EU is also holding some negotiations with other energy exporting countries. However, with the aforementioned agreement, it has been clearly seen that Azerbaijan's energy resources are needed. In this sense, Azerbaijan's increasing its share in the European market and becoming one of the prominent suppliers is an important diplomatic achievement for Baku.

Although Azerbaijan will not be able to replace Russia, the decrease in the share of Russian natural gas in the European market is an extremely negative result for the Moscow administration. As a matter of fact, in the period from the beginning of 2022 to July, Russia's natural gas production decreased by 10% and also its exports to Europe decreased by 33%.[5] Therefore, Russia is suffering greatly economically due to the sanctions imposed. Therefore, by making a counter move, it puts pressure on Europe over the natural gas it holds. However, the Kremlin's policy of repression is hurting itself as much as it does Europe. But despite everything, Russia sees energy as a political tool.

The decrease in Russia's natural gas share in the European market also means a decrease in its revenues from energy sources. To compensate for this loss, Moscow is holding talks with China, which is in the position of the second largest consumer. After the agreement signed between the EU and Azerbaijan, allegations have been raised that negotiations have been held between Russia and China. In this sense, Moscow is considering selling the natural gas going to Europe to China via Mongolia. In this context, the natural gas pipeline, which is planned to start its construction in 2024, is aimed to be completed in two years.[6]

As can be seen, the importance of the Caucasus for the EU is increasing day by day. Azerbaijan's deepening of its relations with the Union has been an important gesture for Europe. Undoubtedly, the support of Baku to the EU, which wants to eliminate the problems it has experienced in the energy sector due to the Russia-Ukraine War, increases the importance of Azerbaijan in the eyes of European countries.

Time will tell how Russia-Azerbaijan relations will develop. However, it can be foreseen that the rapprochement on the Baku-Brussels line will not be positively received by Moscow. Although Azerbaijan did not show a serious reaction to Russia's attitude before the Ukrainian intervention and even preferred to remain neutral, it is uncomfortable with the policy based on the lack of resolution pursued by Moscow in Karabakh. Because Azerbaijan is planning to crown the Karabakh issue with an agreement that will ensure lasting peace as soon as possible. For this, it needs external support. Therefore, EU support to Azerbaijan is very important for Baku. As a result, it is inevitable that the positive atmosphere created by the aforementioned agreement will also affect the EU's approach to the peace negotiations on the solution of the Karabakh Conflict.

[1] "Поставки газа в страны Евросоюза из Азербайджана вырастут вдвое", Golos Ameriki, <https://www.golosameriki.com/a/eu-azerbaijan-gas-ursula-von-der-leyen/6663516.html>, (Date of Accession: 19.07.2022).

[2] "EU agrees deal with Azerbaijan to double gas exports by 2027", Euronews, <https://www.euronews.com/my-europe/2022/07/18/von-der-leyen-heads-to-azerbaijan-to-secure-new-gas-import-deal>, (Date of Accession: 19.07.2022).

[3] "Началась зачкака первого азербайджанского газа в интерконнектор Греция-Болгария", Azer Tac, [https://azertag.az/ru/xeber/Nachalas\\_zachka\\_pervogo\\_azerbaidzhanskogo\\_gaza\\_v\\_interkonnektor\\_Greciya\\_Bolgariya-2184575](https://azertag.az/ru/xeber/Nachalas_zachka_pervogo_azerbaidzhanskogo_gaza_v_interkonnektor_Greciya_Bolgariya-2184575), (Date of Accession: 19.07.2022).

[4] "Песков прокомментировал ситуацию вокруг "Северного потока", Ria Novosti, <https://ria.ru/20220623/energetika-1797546829.html>, (Date of Accession: 19.07.2022).

[5] "Газпром по итогам 6,5 месяцев 2022 г. снизил добычу газа на 10,4%, поставки в дальнее зарубежье – на 33,1%", Neftegaz.Ru, <https://neftegaz.ru/news/companies/743829-gazprom-po-itogam-6-5-mesyatsev-2022-g-snizil-dobychu-gaza-na-10-4-postavki-v-dalnee-zarubezhe-na-33/>, (Date of Accession: 19.07.2022).

[6] "Монголия заявила, что газопровод Россия-Китай будет запущен в 2024 году", Central Asia, <https://centralasia.media/news:1793605>, (Date of Accession: 19.07.2022).



## ANKASAM ANALYSIS

# Relations between Hungary and Ukraine in the Light of the “Language Law Problem”

Diplomatic relations between Hungary and Ukraine were established after Ukraine gained independence from the Soviet Union in 1991. Until recently, bilateral relations have been progressing in a positive atmosphere. However, with the amendment made to the Education Law in the Ukrainian Parliament on September 5, 2017, relations have come to a standstill. With this new regulation, Hungarians in the country were prevented from receiving education in their mother tongue at secondary education institutions and universities.

Hungary claimed that with this new regulation made in the Education Law, the rights of the approximately 150-thousand Hungarian minority living in the southeast of the country (Transcarpathia) were violated. Hungarian Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade Peter Szijjarto said, “Ukraine stabbed Hungary in the back with the amendment it made to the Education Law.”[1] Hungary-Ukraine tensions tensely deteriorated after this form of response.



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Budapest gave considerable support to Ukraine's integration into the European Union (EU) before September 5, 2017. However, after this date, it started to take an anti-Ukrainian stance on international platforms, especially in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)-Ukraine relations. Due to the political crisis, Hungarian Foreign Minister Szijjarto announced that they would veto all the steps that would allow Ukraine to advance in the European integration process. Therefore, Hungary vetoed the NATO-Ukraine Commission Summit in the same year by putting its reaction into action. Furthermore, the government put forward the condition that Ukraine withdraw the new education law in order to restore its cooperation with NATO.[2] The Kyiv administration, which did not want to undermine its cooperation with NATO in the face of the Russian threat, made concessions in line with the reactions of Budapest and decided to extend the transition period until 2023 to add the aforementioned language article to the Education Law.

The political crisis between the two countries increased in 2018. In March, Ukraine took a step that increased the tension with Hungary and announced that it would restore an old military base in the town of Beregovo, 10 km from the Transcarpathian border, where the Hungarian minority lives. Szijjarto described the placement of the military base in the region where the Hungarian minority lives as “a disgusting decision”[3] and reiterated that they will continue to block Ukraine's attempts towards the EU and NATO. The Ukrainian side, on the other hand, stated that the military base in the Transcarpathian region was wanted to be put into operation due to the provocations in the region and the increasing security concerns, and emphasized that Russia could also have an impact on Hungary's reaction.[4]

In September 2018, some images were shared at the Beregove Consulate of Hungary, showing some Ukrainian citizens being given the oath of allegiance to Hungary and Hungarian citizenship being given. These images, which were “viral” on social media, were met with a reaction in Ukraine. For this reason, the crisis between the two countries escalated. Ukraine, taking action against the situation in question, did not allow dual citizenship and expelled the Hungarian consul. The Hungarian government argued that the diplomat did not do anything illegal also decided to expel the consul of Ukraine on the same day as part of the “proportionate response” in the Budapest Embassy. [5] Consequently, the political crisis between the two countries deepened as a result of mutual reactions.

Before the Ukrainian Presidential Elections on March 31, 2019, Hungary announced that if the new administration changes its attitude towards the Hungarian minority living in the country, relations between the two countries will improve, but there has been no development towards the resolution of the crisis. On the contrary, the Kyiv government argued that Budapest violated the Vienna Convention by claiming that Hungary interfered in the Parliamentary Elections held in July 2019. This situation has caused the tense atmosphere between the two countries to continue.[6]

Despite Hungary's demand that Kiev abandon its language policy in education, Ukraine enacted the Language Law on July 16, 2019, which stipulates the mandatory use of Ukrainian as a state language in authorized bodies and other public areas. With the law, employees of educational, health, and scientific organizations at high levels and other officials were obliged to use Ukrainian in the workplace.[7] Although the Budapest administration, which accuses the previous President of Ukraine, Petro Poroshenko, of following anti-Hungarian politics, sees the political change in Ukraine and the new President, Volodymyr Zelenski, as an opportunity for the improvement of relations between the two countries, despite all the crises, the situation of the bilateral relations remained the same.

In the ongoing tense bilateral relations, Ukraine's signing of a 15-year natural gas contract with the Russian energy company Gazprom on September 27, 2021 by Hungary angered Ukraine. [8] Within the scope of the signed contract, the fact that natural gas will be supplied through Serbia and Austria in a way that will bypass Ukraine has drawn the reaction of the Kyiv administration. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine declared that the gas agreement with Russia is in the interest of the Kremlin and harms Ukraine's national interests and political and economic relations with Hungary.[9] In the face of this Hungarian man, the Kyiv government suspended the Ukraine-Hungary Joint Intergovernmental Economic Cooperation Commission and called for an investigation by the European Commission into the compliance of the relevant agreement with the European Energy Law.[10]

Another development that caused tension in the Hungarian-Ukrainian relations was the Russia-Ukraine War. A high-ranking official in Kiev claimed that Budapest was aware of the impending war. In addition, in the news in the Ukrainian press, it was claimed that Hungary wanted to annex the Transcarpathian region. These allegations were denied by the Hungarian au-



thorities. Hungarian Minister of State for Public Diplomacy and Relations, Zoltan Kovacs, said the allegations were in retaliation for Hungary's refusal to supply arms to Ukraine.[11] Despite its close relations with Russia, Hungary condemned the invasion of Ukraine and joined all existing EU sanctions against Russia, except for sanctions on energy imports. In addition, the Hungarian government announced that it hosted a large number of refugees fleeing the war in Ukraine.

As a result, the challenges that began with the Language Law Problem on the Budapest-Kyiv line have gotten much more problematic as a result of the Russia-Ukraine War at this moment. Budapest's ambition to provide inexpensive energy and its multifaceted diplomatic strategy, which is centered on building positive ties with Russia by taking into account the east-west balance in its foreign policy, elicit a response from Ukraine in particular and Western governments generally. As a result of the process, Hungary is now Russia's closest ally in the EU. Kiev's response was specifically in response to Hungary's opposition to the proposed sanctions against Russia related to the energy sector. As a result, it is possible that the tension between the two countries will persist.

[1] "Hungary's FM: Ukraine "Stabbed Hungary in the Back" over Law That Violates the Rights of Hungarian Minority", About Hungary, <https://abouthungary.hu/news-in-brief/hungarys-fm-ukraine-stabbed-hungary-in-the-back-over-law-that-violates-the-rights-of-hungarian-minority>, (Date of Accession: 04.06.2022).

[2] "Hungary blocks Ukraine-NATO Commission meeting in December due to education law", Unian Info, <https://www.unian.info/politics/2212494-hungary-blocks-ukraine-nato-commission-meeting-in-december-due-to-education-law.html>, (Date of Accession: 04.06.2022).

[3] "Hungary's FM: Ukraine...", op cit.

[4] "Ukraine Restoring Military Base Near Hungarian Border", The Jamestown Foundation, <https://jamestown.org/program/ukraine-restoring-military-base-near-hungarian-border/>, (Date of Accession: 04.06.2022).

[5] "Diplomats thrown out in Ukraine-Hungary passport row", BBC News, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-45753886>, (Date of Accession: 04.06.2022).

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## ANKASAM ANALYSIS

# The Missing Ring of the Middle Line and the Belt-Road is Kyrgyzstan

The Middle Line is the corridor that runs along the Caucasus-Caspian Sea-Central Asia route starting from Turkey, which is the gateway of Europe to Asia, and ending in China. This corridor is divided into two sections, which can be defined as South and North in the Caspian Sea. The "Northern Section" starts from the Port of Aktau in Kazakhstan and again reaches China through Kazakh territory. The "Southern Section" starts from the Turkmenbashi Port of Turkmenistan and extends to the Chinese border through Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. Also included in the South Arm is the Lapis Lazuli Corridor. The corridor in question extends from Turkmenistan to Afghanistan. In the following periods, it has the potential to cover Pakistan and India.

China, on the other hand, wants to reach Europe through the Belt-Road Project, which was announced to the world in 2013. The project is based on six main routes, but China is either building a variety of alternative routes or effectively taking advantage of existing routes. One of the most prominent routes at this point is the Middle Line.

As is known, Central Asia is one of the main routes for China to reach the West. The Beijing administration was planning to build a new line through Tajikistan, including this country in the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), if stability is achieved in Afghanistan. However, both the difficult structure of geography and the continuing instability and secu-



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rity threats in the region push China to prioritize different options. In this context, the Middle Line, which is relatively more stable and more cost-free, has gained importance and is gaining importance. However, it is impossible to mention the railway route in Kyrgyzstan on this route. Already Kyrgyzstan does not have any infrastructure in this regard, and the construction of a railway line in the north of the country has just begun. This, in turn, attracts attention as an important shortcoming in ensuring China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan connectivity.

The line was originally intended to be built on the route prior to the Belt-Road Project. The line, intended to be built between the three countries, was incomplete and unimplemented due to social events in Kyrgyzstan. In 2012, Kyrgyzstan moved to build the line. In 2016, Uzbekistan provided financial resources from China to complete the Angren Pab Railway Tunnel. The 4,380 km long line will connect Tashkent and Lanzhou cities via the railway from the shortest route after an estimated 260 km of traffic in Kyrgyzstan is completed.[1]

Currently, the above-mentioned line is being used. Goods brought from China to the border with Kyrgyzstan are loaded onto trains that will go to Uzbekistan after being transported to the city of Osh by trucks. This leads to a loss of time and increased costs. In the event that the railway track is built, the Southern Section of the Middle Line will operate more actively. For this reason, the parties see the line as a valuable project shaped by win-win logic, hence giving priority to mutual interests. Completion of this project will allow China to reach Europe in less time; Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan will also become a strategic hub for international shipping.[2]

Considering the mentioned achievements, it can be suggested that the opening of Kyrgyzstan, which stands out as the missing link of the Middle Line, to the world and, accordingly, strengthening regional integration, will serve regional development. Because the shortest distance between Europe and China is the Middle Line. No doubt the active use of this line will encourage Bishkek's economic development. Thus, it can be said that Kyrgyzstan, which is developing economically, can ensure its internal and external security. At the same time, this will contribute to the creation of a much more stable Central Asia. On the other hand, the project will contribute to the improvement of infrastructure in Kyrgyzstan and become a transportation and transfer center of the country on the occasion of new projects.

Once Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and China are connected, the South Branch of the Middle Line will become an important route in tOnce Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and China are connected, the South Branch of the Middle Line will become an important route in the south-

north transportation process. As it is known, Uzbekistan wants to implement the Trans Afghan Transport Corridor along the Tirmiz-Mazar-e-Sharif-Kabul-Peshawar route so that it can reach Pakistani ports. Should the corridor take effect, Central Asian countries as well as countries such as China, which are also part of the Central Line, will be able to access Pakistani ports on an alternate route. Completion of this line would thus make Uzbekistan a hub for transportation and transfer. Also, the construction of a railway in Kyrgyzstan means strengthening transportation between Uzbekistan and China, China sending goods to Europe in seven to eight days less, and reaching the Middle East. Because the completion of the line in Kyrgyzstan would shorten the distance between China and Europe by 900 kilometers.

It is also possible to mention that there are various obstacles to the completion of the track in Kyrgyzstan. Social events in the country and the frequent change of administrations pose an obstacle to the incomplete completion of the missing part, the implementation of new projects and the transformation of Kyrgyzstan into an effective actor. However, the stability achieved today and the railway construction started in some regions of Kyrgyzstan strengthen the possibility of completing the missing part. The most important difficulties that stand out at this point are the availability of material resources, the difficult geographical structure of Kyrgyzstan and the size of the rails used.

However, there is also a difference between the parties regarding the railway route. Decision-makers in Bishkek want the railway to pass through some cities, thereby making their gains to the maximum. The Beijing administration, however, opposes Kyrgyzstan's demands for shorter distances and faster transfer.[3]

Despite all the disagreements, according to a recent statement in Kyrgyzstan, a feasibility study will be started in 2023 with the participation of China and Uzbekistan. It is noted that the Tashkent administration also confirmed this decision. In this context, it is aimed to build a railway route to Kyrgyzstan. Of course, this means that the most important shortcoming in the Middle Line will be eliminated. Completion of this line would also allow Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and China to make significant gains. Other Central Line countries will also be able to retain their current favorable position through the established connection. In the case of the opening of the Zengezur Corridor in the South Caucasus, it can be argued that the Central Line would become a much more stable and efficient route. Thus the fundamental shortcomings in Eurasian geography will be addressed, integration among the states of the region will be strengthened, and fragilities between the countries through economic gains will be reduced.



## ANKASAM ANALYSIS

# Caspian Sea: Europe's New Hope in Energy Quests

The argument presented by Robert Kaplan, who designated "Every international order in early modern and modern history is based on an energy resource" in a 2014 article,[1] provides a crucial viewpoint to describe the conflicts in the current international relations. The process, which got under way after Russia invaded Ukraine on February 24, 2022, resulted in a wide range of developments, particularly in the energy field. Vladimir Putin, who came to power in 2000, has made energy the focal point of his foreign policy and built pipelines that extended far into Europe, making the Europe continent dependent on Russian energy. Putin masked

his actual intentions towards Europe while implementing this plan. In this regard, Gerhard Schröder's appointment to the Russian energy company Gazprom and use of his influence was one of the cleverest steps are recorded in political history as a substantial soft power gain for Russia.

Europe, which failed to understand Putin's strategy properly and fell into the trap, has realized the mistake it made with Russian intervention in Ukraine and started to face the negative consequences of this circumstance. Europe has long been regarded as one of the centers of



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global production and one of the fundamental geographies of growth since it emerged from the ashes of the Second World War and has shown huge economic development. In particular, the completion of the industrialization process of European countries such as England, France, Germany and Italy labeled them to be referred to as the main locomotives of the European train.

Europe, which has built trade, welfare and development security on strong pillars, has not been able to show the same approach when it comes to energy security. As is known, there are three stages of energy security. It would be a correct approach to call these stages security of demand, security of supply and route safeness. While the security of demand concerns the selling countries, the security of supply concerns the receiver countries. As to route security, the same interests are shared by both sides.

Europe relied entirely on Russia for its natural gas supply for many years since it was unable to or did not choose to engage with almost any other suppliers while Putin's mastery of using the energy card and Russia's proximity to Europe are two of the major factors contributing to this predicament, one of the other factors is Europe's incapacity to follow a cohesive policy and not able to turn to alternative routes.

The recent developments and the energy crisis that Europe has experienced within itself have triggered the Europe countries to new searches. At the beginning of the war, Europe attempted to deal with this issue with energy provided by US-origin LNG companies but was unsuccessful. Because the internal dynamics of the LNG market prohibited a continuous energy flow and because vast distance increased the cost of energy.

The EastMed Pipeline was another project that Europe considered as an alternative. Theoretically, this project, which aims to transport natural gas from the Eastern Mediterranean to Europe under the sea, has been on the public agenda for quite a long time. The plan, which gained attention after the parties' 2020 agreement, was criticized in many ways and called an "impossible" task. The major criticism has centered on the project's high cost and its trajectory, which would exacerbate the conflict in the Eastern Mediterranean. The European Union (EU), however, trusted on EastMed and anticipated that the project may materialize. But, time has revealed that the people who argue that EastMed is impracticable are right and that the EU is placing its hopes on the wrong project. Due to reasons such

as cost, ecological concern and tension in the region, both the parties and the countries closely following the project announced that the project could not be implemented. EastMed sank into the waters of the Mediterranean after the USA announced that the project was not viable.[2]

The EU has not yet been able to develop a substitute for Russian natural gas, despite its intentions, which include looking into using LNG and the EastMed Project to meet its energy needs. However, Caspian natural gas came to the rescue of the EU, which quickly moved to new searches and attempted to diversify its energy supply. The EU, which has taken the theoretical projects on its agenda for a long time, has turned to projects that have a ready and functioning infrastructure due to the urgency of the situation. The Caspian Sea was the dominant region in this sense.

Given its rich natural resources, the Caspian Sea, one of the oldest oil-producing areas in the world, is regarded as a significant source of global energy production. EIA estimates that there were 48 billion barrels of oil and 292 trillion cubic feet (Tcf) of natural gas in proved and probable reserves within the basins that make up the Caspian Sea and surrounding area.[3]

On July 18, 2022, Ursula von der Leyen, President of the EU Commission, traveled to Azerbaijan to enhance diplomatic relations and met with Mr. İlham Aliyev. Following the meeting, "A new Memorandum of Understanding on a Strategic Partnership in the Field of Energy" was signed between Azerbaijan and the EU in the field of energy. Stating that the EU is turning to more reliable energy suppliers, Leyen made the following statement:[4]

"The European Union has therefore decided to diversify away from Russia and to turn towards more reliable, trustworthy partners. And I am glad to count Azerbaijan among them. You are indeed a crucial energy partner for us and you have always been reliable. You were a crucial partner not only for our security of supply, but also in our efforts to become climate neutral. The Memorandum of Understanding that we have just signed makes our energy partnership even stronger."

According to the agreement reached, it is expected to increase the 8 billion cubic meters of natural gas going to Europe to 12 billion cubic meters next year and to 20 billion cubic meters in a few years. One day after Leyen's visit, The High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borrell and Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Ceyhun Bayramov came to-

gether and made similar statements. In the written statement made by the European Council after the meeting, the following points were emphasized:[5]

"Azerbaijan is an important partner for the European Union and our cooperation is intensifying. I am very glad to welcome the signature of the EU and Azerbaijan Memorandum of Understanding on a Strategic Partnership in the Field of Energy. This Memorandum will allow to double the delivery of gas from Azerbaijan to the European Union by 2027. It paves the way to our future energy partnership, including in renewable energy and energy efficiency."

It can be said that the EU's orientation towards the Caspian will also contribute positively to the normalization efforts that have already begun in the South Caucasus. Route security, as an element of energy security, is regarded essential parameter for the EU, which seems to have learned lessons from the past. In this context, the EU's interest in the region and its goal of providing a stable energy flow will act as a shield against the power centers that seek to sabotage the peace process and will create an encouraging effect for the elements supporting the peace process.

Additionally, Turkmenistan, one of the most prominent Caspian partners, will benefit from the plan for Caspian natural gas to reach Europe. As a matter of fact, after years of disagreement, Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan came to an agreement at 2021 to perform the exploration, operation, and energy consumption in the "Friendship" oil field in the Caspian Sea jointly.[6]

It is obvious that, in addition to Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan's interest in the Caspian Sea has deepened in the last period. Kazakhstan sought an alternative route due to the interruption of its oil exports through Russia due to the Ukraine War, and Kazakhstan President Kasım Cömert Tokayev's directive to the government to prioritize the Trans-Caspian Corridor for oil shipments will help the Caspian Sea to turn into transit energy corridor. This situation is seen as a corridor that the EU will also support. Because, during his visit to Azerbaijan, Leyen also said the following words that were not on the public agenda, but that contains a very vital clue about the coming period:[7]

"The European Union wants to work with Azerbaijan to build connections with Central Asia and beyond. So, we follow with great interest the discussions and the ideas about trans-Cas-

pian connections. We will deepen these discussions."

Several geopolitical fault lines were broken as a result of the process that began with Russia's intervention in Ukraine, and varied effects were experienced on a worldwide scale. One of these fault lines, energy, has come first among the priorities of the EU. Heading towards new searches, the union gravity to the Caspian Sea, which is the most suitable for itself both geographically and in terms of security, and took a strategic step. The efforts of the Union and the objectives of the Caspian countries to diversify their energy supplies reveal that the Caspian Sea will come to the fore in the coming period.

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[5] "Azerbaijan: Remarks by High Representative Josep Borrell after the Cooperation Council", European Union, [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/azerbaijan-remarks-high-representative-josep-borrell-after-cooperation-council\\_en?s=217](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/azerbaijan-remarks-high-representative-josep-borrell-after-cooperation-council_en?s=217), (Date of Accession: 20.07.2022).

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[7] "Statement by President von der Leyen with Azerbaijani President Aliyev" European Commission, [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/STATEMENT\\_22\\_4583](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/STATEMENT_22_4583), (Date of Accession: 20.07.2022).



## ANKASAM ANALYSIS

# Iran and Russia in China's Energy Security

Oil sanctions imposed on Iran by the United States (USA) during the Donald Trump era have led China to turn to Russian crude oil. During the mentioned period, Iran's oil shipments to China fell by up to 350 thousand barrels per day. During the Joe Biden era, the reduction of sanctions pressure on Iran and the large cessation of activities such as monitoring and capturing oil tankers in this sense have allowed this shipment to reach over 900 thousand barrels per day. China's oil imports from Russia have also increased simultaneously. In 2021, China became the country that exports the most crude

oil and condensate per day from Russia.[1] In other words, China has imported about a third of Russia's crude oil and condensate exports (1.4 million barrels per day).

At the moment, Iran is very uncomfortable with the fact that the countries of the world prefer to buy oil cheaper than Russia. Because Iran's oil exports to China fell from an average of 900 thousand barrels per day to 640 thousand barrels in April 2022.[2] As a result, an average of 37 million barrels of Iranian oil are stored in tankers in Singapore and off China.[3] That's why Iran's



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80 million barrels of oil stock are growing further. Therefore, it is crucial that the Beijing administration decide to import more oil from Russia and reduce its purchases from Iran. This would increase pressure on the Iranian economy. "Russian can relocate almost half of its exports to Southeast Asia, and especially to China ... This is a major threat for Iran's crude oil exports." Hamid Hosseini, Executive Board Member of the Iranian Association of Petrochemical, Gas and Petrochemical Products Exporters, told Reuters.[4]

As it is known, on 25 May 2022, the United States imposed new sanctions on individuals and organizations involved in an international oil smuggling and money laundering network that allowed Iran to surpass oil sanctions.[5] These sanctions include the Hong Kong-based energy company China Haokun Energy, a subsidiary of Beijing-based "Haokun Energy Group", as well as "Fujie Petrochemical Zhoushan". The Iranian-Chinese joint venture "PetroChina Pars" was also sanctioned. Because of the sanctions, China's oil refineries may avoid taking oil from Iran, at least in the near term, to avoid risk. On the other hand, it is attractive to Beijing to pay for discounted Russian oil and road-cost insurance. The fact that Iran has fallen behind in oil exports could be interpreted as an advantage for Moscow.

European Union (EU) leaders agreed on a new round of sanctions aimed at reducing Russian oil imports by 90% by the end of the year. This decision has led to a rapid increase in oil prices and is seen as an opportunity for the world's oil producer countries. But countries like Iran and Venezuela, which continue to be subject to US or EU sanctions, will not be able to take advantage of the opportunity. Thus, China, as one of the largest oil importers, may turn to the Gulf states and other oil-producing actors instead of these countries. China has been the only country in recent years to continue to receive crude oil from Iran and Venezuela, ignoring the threat of US secondary sanctions.

Most of the oil China imports from Iran is shipped via the United Arab Emirates (UAE) or Malaysia.[6] The Tehran administration exports more than 1 million barrels of crude oil to China per day. However, a new EU embargo on Russian oil will increase competition between Moscow and Tehran on Chinese energy imports. Currently, Russian oil suppliers offer a 30 % discount. That is far more than the rate Iran has offered China in recent years. That's why some Chinese refineries prefer Russian oil. China has been reducing its crude oil imports from Iran since February 2022 due to rising prices, tighter import quotas and increased sanctions pressure. It is said that at least 6 Iranian oil tankers

carrying a total of 8 million barrels have been waiting for more than three months for evacuation in the waters off the ports of Shandong and Zhejiang.[7]

According to Refinitiv data, China's marine-derived crude oil imports from Russia increased by 16% from the previous month in April 2022 to nearly 860,000 barrels per day. This is the highest level reached since December 2021.[8] A review of the customs data for April of that year shows that Russia could replace Iran. While logistical problems may prevent an immediate jump in Chinese oil purchases from Russia, these purchases have been steadily increasing. All Russian oil currently going to China is subject to a variety of discounts. This would require Iran to drive down its own prices to compete with Russia. Otherwise, there is a risk that Tehran will lose its market share.

In the medium term, Moscow has the opportunity to put pressure on Tehran because of its lower production costs and the discounted prices it offers. On the other hand, Iran's oil sector, already weakened by a decade of sanctions, lacks the ability to withstand low prices. In short, Russia has significant leverage that could put Iran in a difficult position. In addition, Chinese oil refineries would prefer Russian crude, where the risk of sanctions is lower, given that Russian oil will not be subject to US secondary sanctions like Iran's in the short and medium term.

It can be said that Iran has several options here: First, it can negotiate with Russia by trying to make a deal. Iran may even play an intermediary role in Russia's energy exports to China by importing refined products from the Caspian and as part of a swap agreement. However, such cooperation is unlikely due to the track record of Russia-Iran relations and the fact that Russia considers Iran to be a "junior partner".

Russia may ask Iran for help in learning mechanisms to avoid sanctions. Already, Moscow and Tehran are working to develop economic relations and establish joint companies and banks. Russia even plays an indirect mediator role between the U.S. and P3+1 countries and Iran. Moscow has asked Washington for guarantees that no sanctions will be imposed on its economic relations with Tehran after the possible nuclear deal.

The second option is for Iran to try to break its deadlock by taking decisive steps to re-establish the nuclear agreement. At the very least, the United States could lift secondary sanctions against Iranian oil. Thus, Europe can have a new oil supplier.



As it is known, the oil-exporting countries have moved to substitute Russian oil. Iran says it has 80 million barrels of oil stockpiles and is ready to increase its crude oil production.

Although sanctions for Iran's oil sales have not been lifted, nuclear talks with the West have resumed, and the stated sales have reduced pressure on Tehran. This resulted in a relative increase in Iranian oil production and exports in the first months of the year. The freedom seen here in monitoring and preventing Iranian tankers allowed Tehran to increase its oil sales. Indeed, between December 2021 and January 2022, China imported an average of 1.9 million barrels of oil per day from Iran.[9]

Iran thinks it can sign a new nuclear agreement with the West as oil sanctions come to Russia. The Russo-Ukrainian War, however, is a major pressure on the West in nuclear negotiations with Iran. Now European forces can push Washington to agree with Tehran so that the energy market is not affected further. Iran therefore believes that its hand in nuclear talks is stronger than in the past. Because putting Iran's oil sales back to the pre-sanctions level would ease the pressure on the world energy market. Iran also sees this as an opportunity and intends to exploit the Ukraine Crisis.

Moscow's major concern is the secondary sanction of Russian oil sales, just as it was done to Iran. There, Russia tries to learn from the sanctions imposed on Iran earlier. The real disturbance of Moscow is Iran's increasing sales of oil to the world market, and especially to China. However, in the current context, Russian oil seems more attractive to the Beijing administration. China's interest in oil in Russia led Iran to seek new customers. All these developments indicate that Russia and Iran will face each other more often due to the imminent energy issue.

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[4] Ibid.

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[8] Ibid.

[9] Ibid.



## ANKASAM ANALYSIS

# Increasing Western Interest in the Azerbaijan–Armenia Normalization Process: The Return of the Minsk Trio?

Despite the diplomacy carried out after the Second Karabakh War ceasefire agreement signed by Azerbaijan and Armenia in Moscow on November 10, 2020, a lasting peace treaty has not yet been signed. Nevertheless, the peace agreement that the two nations will sign will guarantee the creation of an environment of regional cooperation, stability, and peace that was highlighted in the Six-Party Cooperation Platform proposal made by Turkey and Azerbaijan, and it will make it possible for the Caucasus geopolitics, particularly the Middle Corridor, to become the primary route of international trade routes. This will mean that the

geopolitical and geo-economic importance of all regional states will increase and as a result they will benefit economically. In other words, the normalization processes in the region promise a prosperous future to the peoples of the region.

Although some negotiations are currently underway for the signing of a permanent peace agreement between Baku and Yerevan, it is also apparent that some incidents have the potential to thwart this effort. On the one hand, while there were warm contacts on the border of the two countries through the violation of



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the ceasefire; On the other hand, it is observed that the pro-war groups in Armenian politics increase the pressure on the political authority. This complicates the diplomatic processes carried out. For instance, Armenia occasionally witnesses demonstrations against Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan. But Yerevan has more to gain than anyone else from the establishment of peace. Armenia will be able to overcome its isolation from the rest of the world in this way, allowing it to open up to the West. And this will act as a bridge for the Armenian people to a prosperous future. Sometimes, it is not disregarded that third parties that would rather the conflict in the area stay a frozen conflict zone take steps to disrupt the process.

Both Azerbaijan and Armenia make an effort in this situation to avoid letting one actor take the initiative in the diplomatic efforts made to bring about peace. In this regard, Baku and Yerevan increased their contacts with Western actors in an effort to reduce the influence of Russia, the regional hegemon in the Caucasus, on diplomatic processes. This is why recent officials' visits to Azerbaijan and Armenia have drawn attention. Likewise, the statements made from Baku and Yerevan are at a level that cannot be ignored.

The aforementioned visits and statements indicate that the USA and France are returning to the conflict in Karabakh. In other words, the peace process, in which Russia attempted to play the mediator alone, provided the conditions for the OSCE Minsk Trio to reunite, with the possibility that Washington and Paris would join Moscow.

In this context, first of all, to look at the Azerbaijan-based contacts and statements, it should be mentioned that Baku hosted the delegation of the European Parliament Foreign Relations Committee between 17-22 July 2022. It may be argued that the European Union (EU) has assumed a more prominent position in the peace process given that Pashinyan and President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev previously held negotiations there, moderated by Charles Michel, President of the European Council. However, given that Michel is a Frenchman, it might be asserted that Paris made an effort to exert more influence over developments in the Caucasus. Due to this, it is important to take note of the fact that Mr. Aliyev greeted Emmanuel Macron on the anniversary of the French Revolution and stated that Baku intended to start a new chapter in terms of regional cooperation after the Karabakh War.[1]

In the Armenian side of the issue, the intensity of visits and statements is not to be underestimated. On July 15, 2022, the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) Director William Burns visited Yerevan. Undoubtedly, the visit in question is a concrete reflection of the effort of the USA to increase its influence on Armenia and to be

included in the normalization processes in the region. On the other hand, Armenian Deputy Prime Minister Mher Grigoryan, speaking at an event held at the French Embassy in Armenia on the occasion of the anniversary of the French Revolution on 14 July 2022, stated that Yerevan gives importance to the participation of France in the solution process regarding Karabakh.[2]

As is clear, France and the United States are exerting more influence in diplomatic negotiations aimed at finding a long-term solution based in Karabakh. This position carries some risks even though it is motivated by the desire of both Baku and Yerevan to protect the initiative of peace processes from Russia. With the participation in the peace processes of the nations where the Armenian diaspora is strong, Armenia may be able to lessen the harm caused by the war it lost on the battlefield.

Contrary to popular belief, the role of France and the USA, two nations with large Armenian diasporas, may make it more difficult to achieve peace. In actuality, the participation of these two nations in the process with Russia; or, to put it another way, the return of the Minsk Trio signifies an effort to reach a solution from the parties who were unable to do so during the thirty-year occupation. It would not be surprising if this situation leads to a result that sees the deadlock as a solution. Moreover, the number of actors that will complicate the mediation processes will increase from one to three.

As a result, although the diplomatic process initiated after the Second Karabakh War at the point of the final solution of the Karabakh conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia developed under the initiative of Russia, it is understood that the USA and France also want to be included in the negotiations at the current stage. However, both the fact that these countries are actors with large Armenian diasporas and the past failure of the Minsk Trio, which consists of the USA-France-Russia trio, poses the risk that the outcome of the process will evolve into a negative course. "So, what to do?" When the question is asked, the rational answer is that Baku and Yerevan should conduct the process at the same table without the need for a mediator. [3] and "We have already been informed that the Minsk Group will no longer operate. There is no need for the Minsk Group anymore[4] He gave the message of this with his statement. The parties' ability to show this maturity will prevent the peace process from being sabotaged by tertiary actors.

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[4] "President Aliyev: After Azerbaijan Settled Karabakh Conflict, There is No Need for Minsk Group"



## ANKASAM ANALYSIS

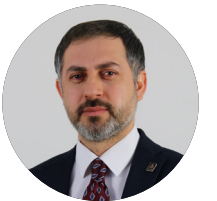
# Obstacle to Tajikistan-Kyrgyzstan Relations: The Border Question

### Introduction

Border dispute issue is prominent issue determining Tajikistan-Kyrgyzstan relations. This issue has been going on since the collapse of the Soviet Union. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, these countries faced not only border problems among themselves, but also economic, social and political problems. These internal problems are also reflected in the relations between neighbors. The solution of the border dispute has either been impossible or

postponed. The continuation of these problems has at times led to border tensions and armed conflict between the border security forces of the two countries. Border conflict have also adversely affected relations between countries. Only half of the 987 km common border between the two neighbours could be agreed upon. Discussions continue in the border areas close to 70%.

Crisis Zones and Search for Solutions



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Conflicts arise at certain points. Conflicts are taking place in the Ak-Sai, Kok-Taş, Samarkand, Tajik Corku and Surh regions of the Kyrgyz villages, moreover around the Voruh enclave, which is connected to the territory of Tajikistan with a single connection. The mutual claims of the Kyrgyz and Tajiks living in the border region hinder the reconciliation process. Controversies over a growing population, poor cultivable land, scarcity of water resources and local transport infrastructure create problems. Also, uncertainty about who belongs to the region is one of the main problems. Intercalarly, criminal groups, who is emerging in the border areas, are trying to take control over the borderlines into their own hands. This situation makes the solution of the existing confusion more crucial. Tensions on the border between the two countries often lead to conflicts that result in loss of life.

Dushanbe and Bishkek have been trying to solve the border problem for many years. The parties have established an intergovernmental commission on the determination of state borders and negotiations have been made on this issue since the beginning of the 2000s. Meetings are held three or four times a year with the participation of experts from the relevant departments of both countries. At the meetings, representatives of both neighboring countries, as a rule, refer to various documents and maps of the Soviet era.

In July 2019, President of Tajikistan, Imamali Rahman, and President of Kyrgyzstan, Sooronbay Jeenbekov, met for the first time directly in disputed areas. It was agreed that the “simple to complex” issues would be addressed and that local residents should abide by this consensus process. Despite the agreement between the parties on some issues, tensions at the border can turn into armed conflicts. The conflicts in recent years have become more violent and have caused more loss of life.

On 12-13 April 2020, the Kyrgyz Border Servise said that clashes broke out as a result of Tajik soldiers opening fire in the Selkan area of the Leilek district of the Batken region. A year later, in April 2021, approximately 20 people from both sides lost their lives in the armed conflict that broke out in border regions such as Ak-Say, Ak-Tatir and Samarkand. About 150 people were injured. Tajikistan has seized a region as a result of attacking Kyrgyzstan by sending heavy weapons to the border. He attacked the military quarters on the border and rendered it unusable. The conflicts of 2021, one of the most violent conflicts of the recent period, have brought both countries to the brink of war. After the direct negotiations between the parties, the tension decreased and the problems were temporarily frozen.

On January 27, 2022, a new development took place on the Kyrgyz-Tajik border. After the Tort-Kocho settlement of the Batken district on the Tajik side decided to close the Batken-Isfana highway, an armed conflict between the Kyrgyz Border Security Forces who tried to prevent this. Kyrgyzstan interpreted these events as a pre-planned initiative by Tajikistan. Following mutual accusations, Kyrgyz and Tajik officials held a meeting on January 28, 2022 in the Surh settlement of the city of Isfar. After negotiations between the parties, a cemse-fire could be achieved. A numen of issues have been agreed upon:

A complete cease-fire should be achieved;  
Withdrawal of weapons to the barracks;  
Opening of traffic on the Batken-Isfana road;  
Joint patrols of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan Law Enforcement Forces in border areas to prevent conflicts.  
The parties also agreed on the establishment of a joint commission to detect conflicts in the border regions.<sup>1</sup>

Both the Kyrgyz and Tajik sides continued to come together with the idea that the interim negotiations would prevent possible larger conflicts. On March 12, 2022, a meeting was held at the Guliston-Avtodorozhny Checkpoint in Tajikistan. Following talks with the participation of the representatives of the two countries responsible for border security, the parties announced that they had reached an agreement on a number of issues:

The Parties agreed to take strict measures to implement intergovernmental agreements and protocols on the coordination of efforts to prevent incidents in the border areas of the two countries.  
The border representatives of the two countries agree to do explanatory work between military personnel, the non-submission of military personnel to provocations, and to act more constructively against personalities who exacerbate the situation on the border.  
The border representatives of the parties shall be in constant communication with each other regarding developments. Military per-

sonnel of the two countries are prohibited from using weapons, except as required by the legal regulations of both sides.  
All military personnel are obliged to strictly comply with the requirements of the line of conduct of border guards on the Kyrgyz-Tajik border.  
Following the meeting between the delegations, the representatives of the Batken and Sughd regions held a separate meeting and discussed the issues related to the economic activities of the people living in the border regions of the two countries. Additionally, Kyrgyzstan's Special Representative in Batken announced that the issue of “prohibition of the use of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) in border areas” was also raised during the talks.

On April 16, 2022, President of Kyrgyzstan, Sadr Japarov, announced that an agreement was reached on 664 km of the 972 km border between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Japarov stated that the 308 km remains unresolved and the approval process is proceeding slowly. Imamali Rahman, in a meeting with residents of the border town of Isfara on April 17, 2022, said that he favors an early settlement of the problems on the Kyrgyz-Tajik border through negotiations.<sup>2</sup>

#### Political Will and Insolvency

70 settlements on the border of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan are still controversial. Apart from the efforts of the parties to maintain the cease-fire and prevent further escalation of the incidents, there has been no progress in the negotiations on the demarcation of the borders.

The issue of land has a special sensitivity for Kyrgyzstan. Considering the relationship between the Kyrgyz administration and the people, the existence of the power is put at risk if any concessions are made to the Tajik side. In the previous years, the idea prevailed that the rights of the Kyrgyz side in resolving the territorial problems of Kyrgyzstan in China, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan were violated and that Kyrgyzstan was the party that made concessions. In the eyes of the Kyrgyz society, the image of Kyrgyzstan as a permanent loser leads to serious pressures on the Kyrgyz government. For this reason, the current Kyrgyz administration wants to solve the border problems and has concerns that it will do so. For this reason, it is necessary to be much more cautious in the negotiations with Tajikistan. The fact that Kyrgyzstan's form of government is different from Tajikistan's and that it listens to the sensitivities of its people inevitably leads to its hesitation in solving the territorial problem and no limit its political will.

In this context, the government of Tajikistan is more advantageous than its neighbor. The Government of Tajikistan depends on the will of the government rather than the demands of the people of Tajikistan on the resolution of the borders. Although it is easier for the Government of Tajikistan to reach any agreement on the territory than for Kyrgyzstan, it is reluctant to do so. In addition, Tajikistan acts with the principle that “no one will be given an inch of land”.<sup>3</sup>

The fact that both states have equal military and economic power seems positive in terms of ensuring the balance of power on the border and in the region and preventing one side from establishing superiority over the other. But this also leads to the postponement of the solution. One of the parties has neither the ability power to exert pressure on the other nor the opportunity to offer opportunities. Both have weak economies. In addition, there is no interdependence between these countries. For example, although there are border problems between Uzbekistan and Tajikistan or between Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, the decision to be taken by Uzbekistan has the opportunity to seriously affect the process.

But in terms of Tajik-Kyrgyz relations, each country expects the other side to make concessions or prefers that the problem remains frozen. As always, frozen issues are also potential crisis issues. This always runs the risk of turning into a conflict and then turning into a war.

The Tajik-Kyrgyz border issue continues to adversely affect relations between the two countries and continues to damage economic relations. It is known that it would be in the interest of both countries to develop their economic relations due to the fact that both countries have weak economies. Therefore, due to both economic reasons and security risks, Kyrgyzstan is seen as the side that wants to solve the problem without losing “neither territory nor image”.

It can be said that the solution of the problem will also be in the interest of Tajikistan. One of the main reasons for this is the quality of Tajikistan's security attacks from the South. Threats emanating from Afghanistan cause Tajikistan to concentrate its military capacity mainly on its southern borders. Because of his problems and concerns with the Taliban, it seems less costly for Dushanbe to defend a single front.

The threats emanating from Afghanistan have been an advantage for Tajikistan in its relations with Kyrgyzstan. Due to the

Taliban threat, many states, especially Russia, have provided significant military support to Tajikistan. This caused Dushanbe to act boldly towards Bishkek. It has led to a further departure from compromise.

On the grounds of threats from the Taliban, Russia has provided significant military support to Tajikistan. It has both trained and strengthened the Tajikistan Army and dispatched some of the troops stationed at its military base in Kyrgyzstan to Tajikistan. Located in Tajikistan, "201. Russian Military Base" is the largest military base abroad. It has nearly 8,000 soldiers. In this context, in this context, Tajikistan is much more integrated with Russia militarily than Kyrgyzstan and receives more support. This leads to the belief that Tajikistan has more advantages over Kyrgyzstan.

The fact that Tajikistan has gained significant external support on the threat emanating from Afghanistan has pushed Kyrgyzstan to seek external support to ensure the security of its southern borders and not to fall behind its neighbor. The factor that prevents the positive development and border wars for Kyrgyzstan is that Tajikistan has concentrated its military weight on its southern borders.

The relative balance of power in the region, in other words, the equal power of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan is one of the factors that prevent a comprehensive war. This means that without serious external support, they will not have the means to wage a long war.

The fact that both states are members of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) led by Russia is a factor that prevents or affects the prevention of war between these two countries. The fact that they are included in a single security system in both states causes them to be seen as an "internal problem". Between times, both countries ask Russia to give it more support and ask for the arms it needs for its military. But Russian mediation is not desirable. Russia has suggested that it can mediate in resolving border issues. In particular, Tajikistan did not accept this proposal by expressing that there was no need for such a thing.<sup>4</sup> It made a similar proposal to the CSTO, of which both states are members, but there was no positive response from the parties.<sup>5</sup>

Moreover, the CSTO has not previously developed a mechanism to solve similar problems. It is known that after the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the end of border conflicts in some countries, peacekeepers were sent to the border regions under the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) for peace-

keeping purposes. But it does not have any authority to solve existing problems. Both the CIS and the CSTO function as an international organization within the framework of the decisions taken by the states.

For this reason, each country tries to defend its own borders or the lands it claims with external support or its own means. Tajikistan enjoys significant support from Russia and, more recently, from Iran. It seems that Kyrgyzstan is seeking a similar way to balance this power of Tajikistan.

Border issues are the most important factor determining Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan relations. Territorial claims, problems in water sharing, smuggling and the activities of criminal organizations at the border are the reasons that trigger these tensions. There have been hundreds of border clashes in the last two years. These conflicts have been extensive and advanced at times. Although it has been stopped as a result of the interventions of the heads of state, the border problems will continue to adversely affect the Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan relations without being completely resolved. The risks posed by the Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan border conflicts also pose a threat to regional security. It can be said that without resolving the Tajik-Kyrgyz border problems, it is unlikely that friendly relations will be established by taking into account the military and economic capacities of both countries. Although Kazakhstan does not have a border with Tajikistan, the bilateral trade relationship reached 1.1 billion dollars in 2021.<sup>7</sup> In the last 6 years, trade has increased 37 times to over 1 billion dollars. According to 2022 figures, Tajik-Kyrgyz trade relations have declined to 25 million dollars, seeing the highest level in history. Until the border problems are solved, the development of economic and trade relations remains limited. It even increases the risk of war by causing security problems.

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2 Эмомали Рахмон выступил за скорейшее решение приграничных вопросов путем переговоров

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6 "Товарооборот между Казахстаном и Таджикистаном достиг \$1,1 млрд", Central Asia Media, <https://centralasiamedia.com/news/1787509>, (Date of Accession: 17.06.2022).



## ANKASAM ANALYSIS

# Why is Imran Khan's "Conspiracy Theory" Supported?

In April 2022, the Pakistani Government led by Imran Khan was overthrown due to a vote of confidence in the parliament. Khan claimed that the United States (US) conspired to overthrow the Government.<sup>[1]</sup> Although Washington denies these allegations, most Pakistani people believe in this "conspiracy theory."

In recent days, it has been proven in many ways that Pakistanis endorse Khan's claims against the United States. Many citizens supporting Khan organized anti-government pro-

tests in the capital city of Islamabad. During the protests, Khan's supporters raised their voices against the current government of the United States and Pakistan. Khan brought up the allegations of US conspiracy again during the protests. In addition, conspiracy theories came to the fore in Islamabad, and all rallies were held throughout Pakistan after Khan was overthrown on April 10, 2022.<sup>[2]</sup>

Khan's political entry as a famous cricketer has mobilized Pakistan's younger generation. Be-



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cause the people of the country have been taking an anti-American stance for a long time. During the change of government, commodity prices increased due to the economic tension in Pakistan, which triggered various dynamics. Maliha Lodhi, Pakistan’s former Ambassador to the United States, said, “Khan was trying to use anti-US sentiment to gain public support for him.” made the statement. [3] Although Khan did not provide any evidence for the conspiracy theory, the public believed these theories.

Donald Lu, Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs, is at the base of Khan’s allegations. Khan claims that Lu met with Pakistan’s Ambassador to Washington in March 2022, and in this meeting, the US official stated that Khan should be removed from the post of Prime Minister by a vote of no confidence. In a recent interview with CNN, Khan renewed his claims and stated that Donald Lu had threatened the Pakistani Ambassador, saying that if the government were not overthrown, Pakistan would have to suffer the consequences.[4] However, these accusations were denied by the Washington administration. Khan explained that the Pakistani Ambassador sent a message to the cabinet in March 2022.

Although Khan made a statement at a meeting of the Pakistan National Security Council (NSC), the government in the country changed, and Shahbaz Sharif, the leader of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), took over as the Prime Minister. Following the change of Prime Minister, the Council rejected Khan’s allegations and said, “No evidence of conspiracy was found in the message.” made the statement.

As it is known, on February 24, 2022, Russia launched an attack on Ukraine, and on the same day, Khan visited Moscow.[5] Khan believes that the US authorities reacted to him for this reason. In addition, Khan claims that the Pakistan army and Sharif are also involved in the American conspiracy.

Analysts argue that it is necessary to examine the country’s ten-year history to understand why the people of Pakistan believe this conspiracy theory. In the last decade, distrust between Pakistan and the USA has increased therefore, what has happened is a result of this insecurity.

Afghanistan is the leading cause of distrust in the United States among Pakistanis. The US army has been in Afghanistan for over 20 years, and Pakistan has been attacked many times by Afghan-linked terrorists during this period. This is why many Pakistanis believe the American presence in Afghanistan destabilized their country. When US President George W. Bush launched the “anti-terrorism” campaign against Afghanistan in 2001, Pakistan sided with the US as an ally. But as time passed, the distance between the two countries’ governments widened.

Islamabad believes that US drone attacks have killed thousands of people on Pakistani soil. In 2011, American forces killed Osama bin Laden, the leader of the terrorist organization Al-Qaeda, in an operation, they carried out in Abbottabad, Pakistan, but did not inform Islamabad about the process. On the other hand, the Pakistani Government of the time considered this move of the USA as an insult. Moreover, in this process, a fake vaccination program was organized by the American Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), and DNA data were collected to confirm the existence of Laden in Abbottabad under the name of the vaccination program. Although the program was seen as a successful work by the USA, it caused outrage among the people of Pakistan.

Moreover, in 2011, CIA officer Raymond Davis killed two Pakistanis in Lahore and said that these people tried to catch him at gunpoint, so he had to shoot.[6] However, the Pakistani Government described the incident as a murder, and Davis was arrested on charges of murder and illegally possessing weapons. The incident caused tension between the USA and Pakistan. In the explanation made by Washington, it was stated that if Davis were not released, USA’s aid that hundreds of millions of dollars to Pakistan would be cut. As a result, Davis was released in exchange for more than \$2 million in compensation to the families of the killed Pakistani citizens.

All these developments have caused irreparable damage to the sense of trust between the parties. Pakistanis now believe that there

are conspiracies against their country. For this reason, Khan’s claim is accepted as accurate. Some analysts state why Khan made anti-US moves related to the historical past of relations between the two countries. Indeed, according to Madiha Afzal, a researcher at the Brookings Institution, a US-based think tank, Khan’s allegations against the US are part of the long history of conspiracy theories in Pakistan. In his words, “Khan claims that Pakistan’s problems are rooted in the corruption of democratic governments that have served at different times.” Afzal reveals the world of thought of the former Prime Minister of Pakistan.[7]

As a result, Khan has enjoyed sympathy from most Pakistanis since he was ousted as Prime Minister. Because Khan’s supporters consider him an alternative to Pakistan’s traditional political leaders. Moreover, the power struggle of the political parties complicates the situation in Pakistan day by day. Because the policies implemented resulted in inflation in the long run. The rupee is depreciating against the dollar, and the government is increasing the tax amount to compensate for this deficit. The burden of all this is on the shoulders of Pakistani citizens. Because of this, many experts believe that Pakistan has benefited from the current crisis. Because thanks to the support he received from the public, his popularity of Khan reached an unprecedented level.

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[4] “Imran Khan Demands US Assistant Secretary of State Be Sacked, NDTV, <https://www.ndtv.com/world-news/former-pak-pm-imran-khan-demands-us-assistant-secretary-of-state-be-sacked-report-3003503>, (Date of Accession: 24.05.2022)

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## ANKASAM ANALYSIS

# A New Era in the EU Membership Processes of Albania and North Macedonia

The crisis in the European Union (EU) membership process due to the language-history conflict between North Macedonia and Bulgaria began to be resolved with the proposal proposed by France in June 2022. The proposal was approved by the Bulgarian Parliament on 24 June 2022. However, the Skopje administration requested the proposal to be updated in line with the following:[1]

Historical issues should not be presented as a criterion in negotiations.

Macedonian history and language need to be respected and preserved clearly and unequivocally.

It is necessary to ensure that Bulgaria will not have any further demands.

Any decision regarding EU negotiations must be consulted with the North Macedonian institutions.



**Sibel MAZREK**  
ANKASAM Medya  
Koordinatörü

Despite the mentioned issues, proposals from the Paris administration started to be discussed in the North Macedonian Parliament. This proposal divided politics in the country, and protest demonstrations were held under the leadership of the most prominent Macedonian opposition party, the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization-Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity (VMRO-DPMNE). Prime Minister of North Macedonia, Dimitar Kovachevski, responded to the claims that Macedonians will be assimilated and Bulgarianisation the proposal mentioned above from the opposition with the words "We have identified positions for the clear acceptance of the Macedonian language. The Macedonian language included in the proposal is strictly equivalent to other EU languages. We got what we've been fighting for years. No one will be able to assimilate the Macedonian people, which is a fact." [2]

Despite the harsh reactions of the opposition, the North Macedonian Assembly accepted the proposal on 16 July 2022, which would allow the country to start accession negotiations with the EU and remove Bulgaria's veto. There were no rejection or abstention votes, and deputies from the opposition party VMRO-DPMNE left the assembly at the time of the vote. Kovachevski, on the other hand, stated that supporting France's proposal was a sign of patriotism.[3] However, the fact that VMRO-DPMNE President Hristijan Mickoski said that they are planning to take the process to a referendum by collecting 150,000 signatures within two weeks indicates the tension in the country will continue.[4] Therefore, there is a possibility that Macedonian nationalists will take more drastic actions in the coming days. Although removing the Bulgarian obstacle to the EU membership of North Macedonia increases the potential of the country's joining the Union, it can be predicted that the tension in domestic politics will continue for a long time.

Following the approval of the French proposal by the Government of North Macedonia, the "bilateral protocol," which is one of the key documents for starting negotiations with the EU, was signed between the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of North Macedonia and Bulgaria in Sofia, the capital of Bulgaria.[5] That protocol includes the joint commemoration of historical figures and events by North Macedonia and Bulgaria, changes in history and geography books, and avoiding territorial claims and hate speech in both countries. However, according to the signed protocol, North Macedonia, which has been a candidate for the EU for 17 years, will not be able to open a chapter with the EU without including the Bulgarians in the constitution. A two-thirds majority of the 120-seat parliament for the realization of this situation requires a constitutional amendment; that is, 80 deputies are needed. In the current case, it can be said that the coalition government does not have this support. In addition, the division in domestic politics raises some questions about the practical applicability of the bilateral protocol. Bulgaria declared that it would continue to see the Macedonian language as a dialect of Bulgarian. The resigning Bulgarian Foreign Minister Teodora Genchovska revealed how difficult it is to put the signed protocol into practice by saying, "Bulgaria does not back down from its position on the official language of the Republic of North Macedonia." [6]

The North Macedonian Assembly passed France's proposal to facilitate EU membership benefited Albania the most. Because the EU membership process of Albania, which has had a candidate status since 2014, is progressing together with North Macedonia. Therefore, the country cannot start accession negotiations with the EU due to Bulgaria's veto over North Macedonia. Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama frequently expresses his discomfort with the situation.

In the light of all these developments, the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, announced that the EU had officially started membership negotiations with North Macedonia and Albania as of 19 July 2022 and described the development in question as a "historic moment." In this context, the first intergovernmental conference was held in Brussels on 19 July 2022 with the participation of the two countries' prime ministers. EU Commission President Leyen, EU Term the President Czech Republic Prime Minister Petr Fiala, Albanian Prime Minister Rama, and North Macedonia Prime Minister Kovachevski made a joint press statement regarding the start of accession negotiations. In her opinion, Leyen emphasized that the two countries took essential steps in the rule of law, fight against corruption, freedom of the press, civil society, and economic reforms. Rama also said that the negotiations could take a long time. Kovachevski said: "It is a great source of satisfaction that we are finally officially starting negotiations after 17 years." he has commented.[7]

As a result, although a historic step has been taken for the membership of Albania and North Macedonia to the EU, the accession of the two countries to the Union depends on the outcome of the negotiation process, which will continue for many years. In summary, it



may take time for the parties to implement all the laws, rules, and regulations of the 27-member Union. In addition, it can be said that the process will be more difficult for North Macedonia. As stated above, North Macedonia will not be able to start negotiations without including Bulgarians in the constitution within the framework of the signed bilateral protocol. It does not seem possible to make a constitutional amendment in the country due to the harsh reaction of the opposition. Although steps that can be described as a turning point have been taken within a week, difficult days await Skopje on the way to the EU. On the other hand, Albania's job will be easier compared to North Macedonia. However, bilateral relations and internal problems will play an essential role in the EU membership process. In this context, Albania is expected to implement many reforms, especially in the fight against corruption and the rule of law.

[1] "Kovacevski turns down Macron proposal: Bulgaria is returning in the past", Euronews, <https://euronews.al/en/balkans/2022/06/23/kovacevski-turns-down-macron-proposal-bulgaria-is-returning-to-the-past/>, (Date of Accession: 19.07.2022).

[2] "Kovaçevski: Yeni Avrupa Teklifi, Meclis'teki Kararla Tam Uyum İçinde", Time Balkan, <https://timebalkan.com/kovacevski-yeni-avrupa-teklifi-meclis-teki-kararla-tam-uyum-icinde/>, (Date of Accession: 19.07.2022).

[3] "K. Makedonya Meclisi, Fransa'nın önerisini kabul etti", Balkan News, <https://www.balkannews.com.tr/kuzey-makedonya/k-makedonya-meclisi-fransa-nin-onerisini-kabul-etti-h3771.html>, (Date of Accession: 19.07.2022).

[4] "Mickoski: We Will Collect 150 Thousand Signatures for A Referendum to Overthrow Bulgarianization and Assimilation, I Call for Unification", Republika, <https://english.republika.mk/news/macedonia/mickoski-we-will-collect-150-thousand-signatures-for-a-referendum-to-overthrow-bulgarianization-and-assimilation-i-call-for-unification/>, (Date of Accession: 19.07.2022).

[5] "Protocol Signed between North Macedonia and Bulgaria", Euronews, <https://euronews.al/en/north-macedonia/2022/07/17/protocol-signed-between-north-macedonia-and-bulgaria/>, (Date of Accession: 19.07.2022).

[6] "Bulgaria to express its position on the Macedonian language", BNR, <https://bnr.bg/en/post/101677707/bulgaria-to-express-its-position-on-the-macedonian-language>, (Date of Accession: 19.07.2022).

[7] "EU Starts Membership Talks with Albania, North Macedonia", The Telegraph, <https://www.thetelegraph.com/news/article/EU-starts-membership-talks-with-Albania-North-17313819.php>, (Date of Accession: 19.07.2022).



## ANKASAM ANALYSIS

# The Impact of the Ukrainian War on Syria: Would the Rules of the Game Change?

While discussing the possible effects of the war in Ukraine, questions are being raised about whether Syria, another conflict area, will also be affected by this process or what kind of situation will arise if it is affected. Firstly, the situation in Ukraine is likely to obscure the situation in Syria. Although this uncertainty is especially prominent in the economic sense, it also makes itself

felt at the point of security. In this framework, one can say that there has been an interaction between the progress of the war in Ukraine and the behavior of the actors in Syria.

First, looking at economic reflections, it is known that even before the end of the Ukrainian War, the vast majority of Syrians lived in poverty, de-



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pendent on humanitarian aid, and moreover, a life without food security. Under these circumstances, the war in Ukraine is expected to lead to a reduction in inputs towards agriculture and industrial activities. This would affect Syria's climate created by the war and would thus further undermine the conditions of the Syrian people.

Syria will be adversely affected by the ongoing conflict, as the environment disrupts shipments through the Black Sea, reduces ships' mobility, and increases in insurance costs. In addition, the presence of war will increase the prices of agricultural and industrial products and will further expand the humanitarian needs that exist throughout Syria. In the event of such a potential humanitarian crisis, though governments strive to find alternative ways of doing so, extreme poverty and massive unemployment continue to plague, and the region's destabilization may ultimately become inevitable.

The prolonged war in Ukraine also affects markets. Therefore, high commodity and energy prices, disruptions of supply chains, difficulty in finding reliable alternative sources, and triggering inflationary waves are expected on a global scale. Thus, the long-term duration of the war and its impact on the markets has brought into question the possibility of providing less financial assistance to crisis regions such as Syria.

After the unanimous adoption of United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 2585 in July, the use of the Bab al-Hawa air checkpoint between Turkey and Syria was agreed for 6 months. This indicates that fewer financial assistance is currently out of the question. It is also expected that the level of funding provided to the region in Syria will be affected over time, as problems continue to exist, including loss of supply, rising prices and an increase in the number of people in need. Indeed, even now, the levels of committed funds are not enough to meet current needs, given the breadth of the humanitarian needs in Syria. In this framework, the impact of the war in Ukraine coupled with the growth of the deficit and Syria's failure to provide a favorable environment for investment indicates that an economic recovery is unlikely.

On the other hand, the most important ally of the Syrian government, Russia, has been subject to economic sanctions, which have further intensified in the future, further strengthening expectations of a negative impact on the Russian economy. A negative view of Russia's economic capability has raised the issue of declining economic support for Syria. This could further slow down Syria's economic development, including the reconstruction process. Thus, the war with Ukraine increases the likelihood that both Russia will directly influence its existing capability to Syria and the humanitarian crisis will deepen in Syria.

Secondly, it is unlikely that the war in Ukraine will affect Russia's military presence in Syria in the short term. To put it more clearly, this is not the case in the near future, where Moscow is expected to reduce its military presence in Syria and/or shift its attention and resources from that region to the Ukrainian front. However, since 23 April Turkey's closure of airspace to all military and civilian aircraft carrying troops to Syria has slowed Russia's supply to Syria, but has not stopped supplying altogether. Ultimately, Russia's air and naval bases in the region remain important in a strategic context, in other words, they form the basis of its military presence in the region.

Russia's approach to military assets in Syria comes mainly within the framework of the rotation of Syrian troops, militia forces, private military companies, and Russian troops. Taken from this perspective, Russia could instead allow the deployment of groups of Syrian soldiers, paramilitary forces and private military companies in Ukraine, which it describes as "volunteers" rather than withdrawing its military might from the region. While there is no concrete evidence of such deployment yet, it is not surprising that such a possibility would be raised if the war prolonged.

On the other hand, as the war in Ukraine continues over the medium and long term, it is possible to experience what could be called a kind of military rotation between Russian troops in Syria and troops in Ukraine. However, such a rotation is also likely to cause a distraction among Russian troops. It is a fact that such a distraction would create a vacuum in Syria and that there would be a good

chance that the country would benefit from it, especially from terrorist organizations such as ISIS. Moreover, any such power vacuum would make possible a revival of ISIS, as the already existing humanitarian crisis in the region could then deepen due to the market influence generated by the Ukraine War, thus triggering instability in the region.

In this context, it appears that the war of the Moscow Administration with Ukraine was of existential importance and that Syria was behind the agenda in comparison to the Ukrainian War. It should not come out of that, however, that Russia is neglecting its policy towards Syria. It is a fact that Russia, in the end, cannot afford to fail on its Syrian policy. Although the Kremlin has weighed in on the war in Ukraine, it will continue to maintain regulations protecting its interests in Syria. In the short term, the situation here concerns Russia's refrain from activities that could trigger armed conflicts in Syria and/or escalate tensions with other actors in the region, particularly Turkey and the United States. It is also possible that Russia may attempt to normalize relations between regional actors and the Syrian leadership, thereby strengthening the position of Syrian President Assad.

Russia could also change its policy in Syria in perception of a possible threat to the security of its regime. For example, various coercive actions can be taken in areas under its control in Syria, with the aim of forcing both NATO member states to make concessions and/or diverting attention from Ukraine to elsewhere.

On the other hand, it is possible that a Russian-caused gap in Syria will also allow Iran to expand its influence in the region. Not only in the context of a military rotation, but also the fact that Russia is sending most or all of its troops in Syria to Ukraine poses a risk to ensuring the security of its strategic points in the region. Such an environment allows Iran to expand its security and economic activities in Syria. Indeed, it is noteworthy in this sense that since the beginning of the war in Ukraine, there has been a significant increase in the activities of Iranian and Iranian-influenced groups in the region. Although Iran is Russia's closest ally in the region, Russia's prioritization of Ukraine raises the issue of Iran's efforts to adapt its presence in Syria to changing circumstances. More specifically, Russia's dominant presence in Syria is a situation that limits Iran's activities in the region. In this sense, Moscow's focus on Ukraine is possible to trigger an Iranian effort to increase its influence, especially in eastern and southern Syria. As a result, Iran which aims to neutralize US presence in the region and to exercise influence at the Israeli border, is thus more likely than ever to have expansive activities in the region.

It is also important to note that Iran's position in the region may also be closely linked to the situation of nuclear negotiations. As it is known, Iran also weighed in on uranium enrichment, with the withdrawal of the United States and the reinstatement of sanctions against Iran in 2018 from the Joint Comprehensive Action Plan (JCAP), which includes the limitation of Iranian nuclear activities, while Russia and China continued to support Iran's nuclear activities.

Following the election of Joe Biden as President of the United States, the United States has made a number of statements suggesting a renewal of negotiations with Iran. After the European Union's (EU) High Representative for Foreign Relations and Security Policy, Josep Borrell, traveled to Iran to discuss the issue, it was agreed that nuclear talks would resume in Doha, but the US State Department said that negotiations would not take place due to demands by the Tehran Administration.

Although the course of the nuclear negotiations remains unclear for the time being, it is likely that possible developments in this regard will affect Iran's activities in Syria. Accordingly, the return to the nuclear agreement with Iran and the suspension of sanctions against Iran may reduce the activities of the Tehran Administration and groups supported by this administration, especially those aimed at breaking US influence in Syria. In other words, it is possible that the nuclear negotiations will be successful and the restoration of the agreement will have an inhibitory effect on the escalation of tensions in Syria. In turn, the failure of nuclear negotiations with Iran allows maintaining tension, and moreover, Iran's influence in the region is gradually expanding as Russia weighs the war in Ukraine.



On 27 February, Assad's security adviser, Ali Memluk, met with senior officials in Tehran and on 23 March Iranian Foreign Minister Emir-Abdollahian's visit to Syria was notable. Thus, while the interests of global and regional actors such as Russia and Iran remain in Syria, it is possible that their priorities, approaches and capabilities from the Ukraine War will be affected. But the scope of the impact here is also closely related to the duration and development of the war.

It can be said that the interests and capacity of the Washington Administration have not changed for the time being, especially in Syria. In other words, the war in Ukraine does not yet have the effect of changing the priorities of the United States in Syria. A gust of change in the current US policy is likely only if the war in Ukraine is prolonged or spreads with a domino effect. For example, the destabilization of international financing assistance to Syria due to the Ukrainian War, the boycott by Russia of assistance to areas outside the control of the Syrian Government in accordance with UNSC resolution 2285, or the possible revival of ISIS in a vacuum that may occur, will cause a change in the current US approach.

As a result, the intersection of the war in Ukraine with Syria raises the possibility of adversely affecting a number of situations, from development programs to military ones. The fact that the Ukrainian War is limited and does not last long is clearly not going to contribute to the negative progress of the situation in Syria. As it's known, the satisfying outcome of cost-benefit analysis for any actor to challenge the status quo is an important factor. Actors such as Russia and the United States seek to maintain the status quo in Syria and, furthermore, avoid costly activities. However, the course of the war could be seen as "frozen facades in various areas after a prolonged conflict, with a subsequent surge of violence and low-level fighting".

While sanctions against Russia are likely to continue, they could further increase. At this stage, it is possible that setbacks in support for Syria provided by Russia will arise, but it will not allow reduction of influence in the region. Russia's attention to the Ukraine War has put Syria at the back of its agenda, prompting Iran to expand its sphere of influence in the region. Because this would particularly unsettle the United States and Israel, some allied regional countries, such as the United Arab Emirates and Jordan, could improve relations with the Syrian government in order to balance Iran. Despite these odds, there is one major case that is the fact that the most significant reflection of the Ukrainian War on Syria in the near future will be of a humanitarian crisis.



## ANKASAM ANALYSIS

# Pakistan's Western Expansion: Restoration Period in Relations

Pakistan is one of the states that the United States of America (USA) criticized for its relations with the Taliban during the military intervention in Afghanistan after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. In that period, the approach of the USA made India the leading partner of the West in South Asia; The process has also directed the Islamabad administration, which is enmity with this country over the Kashmir Issue, to improve its relations with Beijing.

It is possible to state that China-Pakistan relations have become strategic over time. In particular, after Beijing focused on implementing

the Belt-Road Project, one of the six economic corridors envisaged within this project's framework was the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which contributed significantly to the development, deepening, and institutionalization of relations between the two countries.

There is no doubt that; The corridor mentioned above led to an increase in the expectations of the Islamabad administration regarding relations with China. Because Pakistan thought that it would acquire significant economic gains through the corridor in question. As a matter of fact, it was seen that Pakistan received low-in-



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terest and long-term loans from China in order to implement CPEC, and many Chinese investors entered the country. This, in turn, has brought buoyancy to the Pakistani economy in the short term. However, over time, it has come to light that the project will not fully meet the economic expectations of the Islamabad administration. Because the country had to grapple with serious economic difficulties. As a result, objections and reactions to the emergence of a one-way dependency relationship between Pakistan and China began to come to the fore.

In addition, the destabilization of the Belt-Road Project route by the actors targeting China in the global power struggle through terrorism and proxy wars has made Pakistan a country where terrorist acts have increased. In other words, relations with China seem to have resulted in the country's insecurity and instability and not meeting Pakistan's expectations economically. It can be said that this has made it necessary to make some changes in Pakistan's foreign policy.

One of the factors that led to the overthrow of Former Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan as a result of a vote of no confidence in the parliament was Pakistan's need to turn to a multi-faceted understanding of diplomacy that observes the balances between power centers. This need stemmed from Khan, who took care to stand on an anti-Western line while defending close relations with China and could not carry out a balanced policy based on versatility. In other words, during the Khan period, Pakistan became an actor that lost its ability to carry out a balanced policy. Therefore, a change began in the country's foreign policy after Shahbaz Sharif became the Prime Minister of Pakistan.

The change in question can be summarized in the simplest terms as Pakistan's orientation towards the West. The first speech he made in the Pakistani Parliament after Sharif's election was the beginning of Pakistan's direction to the West during the Sharif era. Because in the speech mentioned above, Sharif made it clear that he aimed to strengthen relations with countries the USA and England. [1] However, Islamabad does not want a one-way dependency situation in its relations with the West, as it does with China.

In fact, this concern is the most important experience that Pakistan has gained from the relations it has developed with China. Therefore, a multi-faceted diplomacy approach, in which relations with China will be maintained, but the balance of the West will be taken into account, has come to the fore as the most appropriate and rational choice for Pakistan's interests. Since Sharif became Prime Minister, the Islamabad administration has succeeded in developing a foreign policy approach that does not entirely abandon the Chinese option. Still, it takes care to maintain a balanced relationship with Beijing. As a reflection of this, Islamabad, on the one hand, states that it stands behind all the commitments made in the past regarding CPEC; on the other hand, it focuses on improving its relations with Western actors, especially the USA.

It should be noted that these efforts of Islamabad have a very positive response in the eyes of Western states. For example, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken used the words "We look forward to continuing our long-term cooperation with the Government of Pakistan." in a statement he made shortly after Sharif took office.[2]

At this point, Pakistan, to overcome its economic problems, did not come knocking at China's door as in the past; on the contrary, it preferred to make contacts with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in a way that would reveal its Western orientation. On July 13, 2022, the IMF announced that an agreement was reached on an aid package of 6 billion dollars for the Pakistani economy.[3]

The situation mentioned above revealed that Pakistan is careful to balance its dependence on China while trying to overcome its current economic problems. At the same time, the Islamabad administration's agreement with the IMF indicates that the country is turning to the West regarding values, especially the functioning of the free market economy. In the explanation made by the IMF, it was stated that Pakistan agreed to continue the reforms in the energy sector, establish a proactive monetary policy to fight inflation, strengthen the management system by making various reforms, and give priority to the fight against corruption.[4]

Based on all this information, it can be argued that Pakistan focuses on restoring its relations with the West. Moreover, it is possible to state that Sharif and Pakistani President Arif Alvi stand on the same point on this issue. For example, in his speech on July 17, 2022, the President of Pakistan emphasized that the government was trying to repair relations with the United States. He appealed to Pakistanis living in the United States and demanded that this effort be supported.[5]

Alvi agrees with the Sharif Government on the normalization of relations with the US in particular and the Western World in general, even though he implemented the Dissolution of the Parliament decision, which was later returned from the Supreme Court during the overthrow of Khan, who is known for his closeness to China. This leads to the assessment that all organs of the state act jointly in Pakistan regarding the "Western Initiative." In addition, as can be understood from the words of the President of Pakistan, Islamabad also expects that Pakistanis abroad, namely the Pakistani Diaspora, will contribute constructively to restoring relations with the West.

As a result, Pakistan's foreign policy entered into a critical transformation process with the coming power of Sharif. This new foreign policy approach, which focuses on a multi-faceted diplomacy understanding that observes the balance between power centers, both attaches importance to maintaining relations with China and evaluates the West as an element that should not be ignored as a balancing factor. For this reason, it can be said that the Islamabad administration has taken steps called the "Western Initiative" and tended to restore its relations with the West.

[1] Doğan Başaran, "Pakistan'daki Değişim Hindistan Dış Politikasını Nasıl Etkiler?", ANKASAM, <https://www.ankasam.org/pakistandaki-degisim-hindistan-dis-politikasini-nasil-etkiler/>, (Date of Accession: 18.07.2022).

[2] "ABD Yeni Pakistan Başbakanı Şerif'i Tebrik Etti", TRT Haber, <https://www.trthaber.com/haber/dunya/abd-yeni-pakistan-basbakani-serifi-tebrik-etti-672477.html>, (Date of Accession: 18.07.2022).

[3] "درک قفاوت ناسکاپ داصتقا هب کمک یرلاد درایلیم ۶ هتسب تخادرپ دروم رد فامی آ", Azadi Radio, [shorturl.at/aFKNQ](https://shorturl.at/aFKNQ), (Date of Accession: 18.07.2022).

[4] Ibid.

[5] "Alvi Wants Expats to Back Fence-Mending with US", DAWN, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1700019/alvi-wants-expats-to-back-fence-mending-with-us>, (Date of Accession: 18.07.2022).





## ANKASAM ANALYSIS

# The Effect of the Russian-Ukrainian War on the Belarusian Economy

Five months have passed since the war between Russia and Ukraine began. In addition to the loss of life and property in the process, it can be said that the economies of both countries were adversely affected by the process. In addition, Belarus, which draws attention with its closeness to Russia and has been trying to consolidate its integration with this country, profoundly feels the negative consequences of the war. Belarus' support of the policy that does not allow pro-Western formations in Rus-

sia's immediate surroundings and its side with the Moscow administration in the ongoing war in Ukraine has caused the country's already problematic image in the West to worsen.

As it will be remembered, Belarusian President Aleksandr Lukashenko won the Presidential Elections held in 2020 in a "questionable manner," as the Western states put it, and the West showed a great reaction to this situation. Thereupon, Lukashenko preferred to accelerate



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the integration with Russia. As part of the integration process, joint military exercises and economic agreements were made between the two countries. After Russia entered the war with Ukraine, Belarus did not display an anti-Moscow attitude. Moreover, the Minsk administration allowed the deployment of Russian military elements on its territory from the first days of the war. Due to this situation, the image of Belarus in the West has worsened, and therefore the country has been exposed to economic sanctions like Russia.

Before the war between Russia and Ukraine began, the economic conditions of Belarus were improving by gaining an upward momentum; After the war, the situation in question started to work in reverse for Belarus. The international sanctions imposed by the West and the United States of America (USA) for their support of Russia have caused the country's economy to be shaken. As of March 2022, a decrease was observed in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of Belarus. Similarly, a significant contraction was observed in industrial production in February-March of the same year. Inflation, added to this negative picture, reached the highest level in the last seven years in March 2022 and reduced the purchasing power of consumers. In the second quarter, the GDP continued to decline, and the Western sanctions negatively affected the Belarusian economy.[1]

In May 2022, Deputy Prime Minister of Belarus Nikolai Snopkov stated that their country's exports fell by 30% in 2022 and expected their export income to decline to 14 billion dollars due to the sanctions. In addition, Snopkov said that the sanctions directly affected 20% of the economy and caused a 2.3% decrease in GDP in the first quarter. Moreover, the Deputy Prime Minister of Belarus argued that the West's ultimate plan is to deteriorate the living standards of the Belarusian people, weaken critical sectors of the economy and thus cause social movements. Snopkov formulated the way out of this bottleneck by increasing exports with Russia by 40%.[2] Belarusian Prime Minister Roman Golovshenko stated that the sanctions imposed on the country as of May 2022 prevented exports of 16-18 billion dollars to the West.[3]

After the start of the Russia-Ukraine War, economic experts sharply lowered their growth forecasts for Belarus. Belarus' GDP is expected to contract further due to Western sanctions and war. It is thought that this situation will lead to a broad-based slowdown in the country's economy.[4] In fact, the statement of the Belarusian National Statistics Committee that GDP fell by 4.2% between January and June 2022 confirms this assumption.[5]

Minsk is making several moves to prevent this negative economic picture that dominates the country from deepening and turning into a major crisis. In this framework, Belarus is trying to develop its economic relations with Central Asian and Caucasian countries, especially Russia and China. Belarus' application for full membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) can be cited as an example of these efforts.

Belarusian economy, which has started to contract, wants to open to the Eurasian market by providing full membership to the SCO. In addition, it aims to save its country from the economic bottleneck with the power it will gain from the market.[6] Moreover, the Minsk administration maintains tight relations with the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU). As a matter of fact, on the draft agenda of the Eurasian Intergovernmental Council Meeting to be held in Cholpan-Ata, Kyrgyzstan on 25-26 August 2022; priority integration infrastructure projects in transportation, financing of industrial cooperation, establishment of Eurasia Reinsurance Company and preparation of an international agreement envisaging the creation of a common gas market.[7] Belarusian authorities plan to make economic gains from this meeting.

As an example of Belarus' alternative orientations, Director of the National Center for Marketing and Price Studies Nikolai Borisevic, Georgia's Ambassador to Belarus Valeri with Kvaratskhelia the meeting to discuss cooperation between Belarusian and Georgian companies can be shown. The parties agreed that the marketing agencies of the two countries could facilitate collaboration between businesses. In addition, the conditions for allowing[8] Belarusian companies to participate in tenders on Georgian territory were also discussed at the meeting.

As a result, the prolonged war between Russia and Ukraine and the imposition of sanctions on Belarus deeply affected the economy of the country in question. On the other hand, the Minsk administration is trying to increase its relations with the Eurasian states, especially



Russia and China, in the face of this economic crisis it started to cause. If the Minsk administration can get the support, it seeks from Moscow and Beijing; it is possible that Eurasia will emerge as an economic bloc. If these relations do not give the expected result, a chaotic process in which social and political problems will increase in parallel with the financial crisis in the country seems inevitable. And this may bring the belief in Eurasian-centered cooperation quests to be opened to discussion.

[1] "Gross Domestic Product in Half-year 1 2022", National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Belarus, <https://www.belstat.gov.by/en/o-belstate/news-and-events/news/gross-domestic-product-in-half-year-1-2022/>, (Date of Accession: 19.07.2022).

[2] "Belarus to Lose 30% of Exports to Western Sanctions in 2022", Zawya, <https://www.zawya.com/en/world/russia/belarus-to-lose-30-of-exports-to-western-sanctions-in-2022-c5llqsm7>, (Date of Accession: 19.07.2022).

[3] "Western Sanctions Block \$16-\$18 Billion Worth of Belarusian Exports to EU, U.S., Prime Minister Says", Reuters, <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/western-sanctions-block-16-18-bln-worth-belarusian-exports-eu-us-pm-2022-05-16/>, (Date of Accession: 19.07.2022).

[4] "Belarus Economic Outlook", Focus Economics, <https://www.focus-economics.com/countries/belarus#:~:text=FocusEconomics%20panelists%20project%20the%20economy,expected%20to%20fall%20D0.4%25>, (Date of Accession: 19.07.2022).

[5] "Gross Domestic Product in Half-year 1 2022", National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Belarus, <https://www.belstat.gov.by/en/o-belstate/news-and-events/news/gross-domestic-product-in-half-year-1-2022/>, (Date of Accession: 19.07.2022).

[6] Perizat Rysbekkizi, "Belarusian Request to Become a Full Member of the SCO", ANKASAM, <https://www.ankasam.org/belarusun-sioye-tam-uye-olma-istegi/>, (Date of Accession: 19.07.2022).

[7] "Draft Agenda of Eurasian Intergovernmental Council Meeting Approved", Belta, <https://eng.belta.by/economics/view/draft-agenda-of-eurasian-intergovernmental-council-meeting-approved-151806-2022/>, (Date of Accession: 19.07.2022).

[8] "Belarus -Georgia Business Contacts Discussed in Minsk", Belta, <https://eng.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-georgia-business-contacts-discussed-in-minsk-151895-2022/>, (Date of Accession: 20.07.2022).



## ANKASAM ANALYSIS

# Results of the 4th Consultation Meeting of the Heads of State of Central Asia

The 4th Central Asian Heads of State Consultation Meeting held in Cholpan-Ata, Kyrgyzstan on 20-21 July 2022 can be interpreted as a development of historical importance. Because, due to the changes in the geopolitics of the region, increasing the coordination and multi-lateral cooperation for the Central Asian countries is becoming more and more important every day. States are taking some measures for

this purpose. This can be understood from the issues discussed and the agreements signed by the heads of state. As a matter of fact, the meeting on 20-21 July 2022 resulted in the signing of important documents in terms of the development and institutionalization of multi-faceted cooperation. The documents signed at the Çolpon-Ata Summit are listed below:[1]



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Treaty of Friendship, Good Neighborhood and Cooperation for the Development of Central Asia in the 21st Century  
The Concept of Interaction of Central Asian States in Multilateral Formats  
Central Asia Regional Green Agenda Program  
Roadmap for the Development of Regional Cooperation (2022-2024)

At that meeting, the leaders focused on current issues such as ensuring sustainable development at the regional level, improving trade relations and deepening cooperation in the fields of energy, transport and communication. The Friendship and Good Neighborhood Agreement signed in this context envisages intensification of military, commercial, economic, logistical and cultural cooperation between the parties. As a matter of fact, the following statements regarding the aforementioned agreement were included in the final declaration published after the meeting:[2]

“Under the agreement, the parties reaffirmed their obligations in this regard by agreeing to refrain from the use or threat of force against each other, to interact to strengthen peace and security on a global and regional scale, and to act in coordination to combat modern challenges and threats.”

As it is known, the geopolitical developments in connection with the Russia-Ukraine War force the international system to change, security risks come to the fore more frequently, and this requires the development of political ties in interstate relations within the framework of mutual trust.

At this point, it can be said that regional risks have increased even more, considering that the Central Asian countries wanted to be dragged into conflicts in line with the interests of their power centers during their thirty-year independence period. In particular, the increasing competition between the United States of America (USA), the European Union (EU), Russia and China cause concerns that Central Asia may be dragged into instability as a result of this power struggle. In fact, the “Tragic January Events” in Kazakhstan in the first days of 2022, the conflicts that broke out from time to time on the Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan border, the events in Tajikistan’s Mountainous Badakhshan Autonomous Region and the events in Uzbekistan’s Karakalpakstan Region, it shows the rightness of the concerns about the spread of regional instability. Therefore, it is important for all Central Asian states to regional peace against instability, co-operation and develop a cooperation that envisages prosperity.

In line with this understanding, the President of Kazakhstan, Mr. Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, suggested the establishment of an expert platform in order to resolve the border disputes between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Undoubtedly, this offer is also in line with the expectations regarding the Friendship and Good Neighborhood Agreement signed between the parties. At this point, it can be said that the Friendship and Good Neighborhood Agreement constitutes a strong basis for ensuring regional security and developing cooperation based on mutual interests among the states of the region.

Meetings that increase the interaction of Central Asian states, such as the Çolpon-Ata Summit, also contribute to the integration processes. The Roadmap for the Development of Regional Cooperation for 2022-2024, signed in this context, is extremely important. However, integration processes should not be expected to reach concrete results in a single meeting. This is a process. However, it is obvious that the document in question reveals the determination regarding the integration processes.

Another important agreement signed within the scope of the 4th Consultation Meeting of the Central Asian Heads of State is the Central Asian Regional Green Agenda Program. As it is known, with the transition to resource-saving technologies due to climate change

and the situation in the international energy market, the interest in the use of renewable energy sources has increased worldwide. This trend is also valid for Central Asia.

The growth of population and industry and the common challenges faced by the region in the field of energy security make the expansion and modernization of energy systems of Central Asian states essential. In particular, energy is a very important source of income for the states of the region. In this context, states are doing their best to align their energy policies with climate change. For example, Tajikistan attaches importance to the construction of the Rogun Hydroelectric Power Plant, which is expected to double the capacity of energy production in the country. Rogun Hydroelectric Power Plant, which was once a source of regional conflict, has now become an issue that contributes to the development of relations on the Dushanbe-Tashkent line. As a matter of fact, an agreement was reached between the parties on the issue in June 2022. According to this, in the summer Rogun, on the occasion of its HEPP, Tajikistan will export electricity to Uzbekistan.[3]

Recent developments indicate that cooperation in energy trade and the construction of power plants has come to the fore. The Central Asian Regional Green Agenda Program also heralds the further progress of cooperation processes in this dimension.

As a result, the 4th Consultation Meeting of the Heads of Central Asian Heads of State showed that the integration processes between the states of the region, which have a common historical background and culture, are progressing in a healthy way. The efficient functioning of the Heads of State Consultation Meetings mechanism is decisive in this regard. Because, through these summits, it has been understood that many difficulties faced by the region can be overcome through dialogue.

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[3]“Узбекистан намерен закупать энергию с Рогунской ГЭС в летний период”, Gazeta UZ, <https://www.gazeta.uz/ru/2022/06/02/rogun/>, (Date of Accession: 21.07.2022).



## ANKASAM ANALYSIS

# How Will Britain's Foreign Policy Be Shaped After Johnson?

Following the resignation of British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, a five-round vote to determine the leader of the Conservative Party and the country's new prime minister left two candidates, former Finance Minister Rishi Sunak and former Foreign Minister Liz Truss. The winner of the election race, which will last until September 5, 2022, will lead the party and become the prime minister of the country.

Sunak, who was at the top of every round of the election race, was seen as the closest person to the party leadership and the prime ministership.[1] However, in the latest polls, it is stated that Truss has taken the lead. Both were in Johnson's cabinet before resigning. For this reason, it is thought that the new prime minister will not depart from the basic lines that John-



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son has drawn before in foreign policy, but the tone of the messages given and the severity of the policies may change. It is claimed that neither candidate will be as successful as Johnson in terms of their relations with world leaders.[2]

The most curious issue is what kind of policy the new prime minister will follow against Russia and China. Differences in toning in the approach to these countries can make a big difference, even if they may seem like a subtle nuance. For example, the most striking aspect of Sunak is that it approaches relations with China more moderately. Truss, on the other hand, adopts a very hard-confrontational stance in relations with China. In order to win votes, the candidates for the prime minister are expected to develop concrete arguments in foreign policy, especially in terms of relations with Russia and China.

### Relations with Russia

Although both the Sunak and Truss openly take a stand against the Kremlin, as does the British public, Truss's attitude is more aggressive. For example, Sunak appealed to British companies due to the occupation of Ukraine and urged them to stop investing in Russia, but it was claimed that he profited from companies that continued to do business in Russia.[3] It has even been suggested that the company in which his wife is a partner does business in Russia. Rejecting the allegation, Sunak said, "I don't really think that's the case. We have imposed significant sanctions on all the companies we are responsible for. In this way, we are sending very strong messages against the aggression of Russian President Vladimir Putin... I have nothing to do with that company." [4]

Truss, on the other hand, is taking a more hawkish stance toward Russia. Truss, who advocated for the government to confiscate frozen Russian assets in the country and redistribute them to the victims of the war in Ukraine, also said that they would take more steps to remove Russia from all Ukrainian territory.[5]

### Relations with China

Sunak's approach to China will likely be a continuation of the policies he pursued under the Johnson Government. In this context, it will focus on ever-growing economic ties.[6] Sunak, who advocated "cautious and balanced" relations with Beijing, said that previous discussions that economic relations with China did not bring benefits were unfounded. In other words, he defended the steps of the London administration to start the "Golden Age" by developing economic relations with China. Sunak, who has been criticized for taking a conciliatory stance against China, has vowed to "act tougher" on the issue, calling Beijing "the number one threat to global security." [7]

Sunak is thought to have made the statement because he was lagging behind Truss in the electoral race. Truss is known for his harsh policies against China. He allegedly told his deputies that if he became Prime Minister, he would use the term "genocide" in relation to the Xinjiang-Uyghur issue.[8]

In addition, Truss, who made a statement during the G7 Summit, stated that lessons should be learned from Ukraine and suggested that Britain send weapons to help Taiwan, which is under threat of Chinese invasion.[9] In this context, Truss is an advocate for NATO to protect Taiwan.

### Relations with EU

One of the debates among the candidates revolves around relations with the European Union (EU) in the context of Brexit security and the removal of EU laws from legislation. Sunak said that if elected Prime Minister, they would review all EU rules within British law. Truss has announced that it will remove the current laws from legislation by 2023.

Truss, however, supported Britain's stay in the EU in the 2016 referendum; however, when the Brexit decision came out, he developed different discourses. For this reason, "If we are going to keep the promise of Brexit, then we will need someone who really understands Brexit, believes in Brexit and votes for Brexit... I am the only candidate who can keep Brexit safe." said Sunak. [10]



What Sunak wants to do here is shoot Truss from the point where he thinks he is weak. So he’s trying to remind that Truss has opposed Brexit before. To close this gap, Truss is now trying to appear to be a staunch Brexit advocate. Accordingly, it promises to abolish EU laws completely. In other words, similar to Sunak’s harsh remarks on the China issue, Truss is doing it on Brexit.

On the other hand, there is a point where Truss’s hand is strong. That is foreign policy. Truss accuses Sunak of lacking the experience needed to defend British interests on the world stage.[11] In other words, Truss criticizes Sunak for not being able to protect the country’s global interests if he becomes prime minister. However, it can be said that Sunak has a stronger hand on Brexit. On the other hand, it is obvious that Truss is at the forefront of the point of relations with Russia and China.

Transatlantic Relations

Britain’s relations with the United States in the post-Johnson era will be shaped by the attitude of the prime ministerial candidates, Sunak and Truss, in foreign policy, and especially in relations with Russia and China. Above all, Truss is a staunch supporter of the United States. So much so, during Truss’s tenure as Foreign Secretary, London began to closely follow Washington’s interests in world politics, provided it adhered to the ideal of “Global Britain.”

As a reminder, Truss said that NATO should defend Taiwan. In other words, he advocated support for the US-led anti-China axis and for Britain to be more interested in the Asia-Pacific. This suggests that if Truss becomes prime minister, Britain will strengthen its transatlantic ties.

Sunak, on the other hand, is very pragmatic about China. At a time when the Western World is raising its voice against Russia and China, Sunak’s approach weakens his hand. More specifically, Sunak’s premiership could deal a major blow to the Anglo-Saxon front and transatlantic relations. In his previous statements on China, Sunak said, “Instead of being emotional, we should approach more humanely.”[12] At a time when the Western World is taking a more confrontational stance towards China, Sunak’s cautious-optimistic attitude leads Truss, who adopts a more hawkish attitude, to take the lead as the favorite in the race for prime minister.

As a result, the foreign policy to be implemented during the Altar or Truss period will be like the continuation of the Johnson era with minor nuances. Because the messages used by both candidates against Russia and China are similar in nature. But their tonings are different from each other. But soft or harsh discourses, while may seem like a subtle nuance difference; can make a big difference when viewed from a broad perspective. Remaining soft on China, for example, would weaken its transatlantic relations. This will also have a negative impact on European-Chinese relations. The US’s struggle with China in the Asia-Pacific, which does not receive enough support from the UK, will also suffer. On the other hand, adopting a more confrontational attitude towards China will mean the strengthening of the US-UK unity in the international system and the subsequent increase in the polarization between the West and East axis.

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## July 25, 2022

ANKASAM International Relations Adviser Dr. Kadir Ertaç Çelik evaluated the current developments in foreign policy on the Ulusal Kanal.

## July 26, 2022

The analysis titled "Path to Peace on the Moscow-Kiev Line: The Grain Corridor", written by Ankara Center for Crisis and Political Studies (ANKASAM) International Relations Specialist Dr. Doğan Başaran, was shared in the Kırmızılar news portal.

## July 26, 2022

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

## July 26, 2022

Ankara Center for Crisis and Political Studies (ANKASAM) President Prof. Dr. Mehmet Seyfettin Erol evaluated the lobbying activities of Greece in the United States to TRT News.

## July 26, 2022

The analysis titled "Path to Peace on the Moscow-Kiev Line: The Grain Corridor", written by Ankara Center for Crisis and Political Studies (ANKASAM) International Relations Specialist Dr. Doğan Başaran, was shared at the International News Agency (UHA).

## July 26, 2022

Ankara Center for Crisis and Political Studies (ANKASAM) International Relations Adviser Dr. Kadir Ertac Çelik has been a guest of Başkent Kültürü, moderated by Yakup Aslan at the Ulusal Kanal.

## July 27, 2022

ANKARA International Relations Specialist Dr. Doğan Başaran evaluated the grain corridor on TVNET.

## July 27, 2022

Ankara Crisis and Politics Research Center (ANKASAM) President Prof. Dr. Mehmet Seyfettin Erol evaluated the process related to the Grain Corridor on Ulusal Kanal.

## July 27, 2022

ANKASAM International Relations Adviser Dr. Kadir Ertaç Çelik evaluated the grain corridor in TRT Arabi.

# ANKASAM IN PRESS

## July 29, 2022

ANKASAM International Relations Advisor Dr. Kadir Ertaç Çelik evaluated the latest developments in foreign policy in Bengütürk TV week's Report program.





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

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