



# **ANKASAM** **bulletin**

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## ANKASAM OUTLOOK

# Outcomes of Eurasian Intergovernmental Council's Meeting in Cholpon-Ata

Following Russia's launch of a "special military operation" against Ukraine on February 24, 2022, large-scale sanctions were imposed on Russia and Belarus, two members of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU). In this context, Russia and Belarus began reconsidering the organizations to which they are parties, such as the EAEU, in a different geopolitical and geo-economic context. The agreements signed after the Eurasian

Intergovernmental Council Meeting, which took place at the official residence on the shore of "Issyk-Kul" on 25-26 August, are remarkable in this sense. The decisions signed during the meeting held by the EAEU Intergovernmental Council are as follows: [1]

- Disposition "On financing industrial cooperation in the Eurasian Economic Union".
- Statement within the framework of the issue



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“On the draft Agreement on the incorporation of the Eurasian Re-insurance Company”.

– Disposition “On the list of priority integration infrastructure projects in the field of transport of the Member States of the Eurasian Economic Union”.

– Disposition “On further work to expand the use of national currencies of the Member States of the Eurasian Economic Union in the framework of mutual trade”.

– Disposition “On the time and venue of holding the meeting of the Eurasian Intergovernmental Council”.

– Disposition “On submitting the candidacy of a member of the Eurasian Economic Commission’s Council to the Supreme Eurasian Economic Council”.

– Disposition “On submitting the candidacy of a member of the Eurasian Economic Commission’s Board to the Supreme Eurasian Economic Council”.

As a result of the summit in Cholpon-Ata, the heads of government of the EAEU member states approved the statement on the establishment of the Eurasian Reinsurance Company. According to the statement made by the Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin at the meeting, the company will provide bilateral insurance support to foreign trade, encourage the development of investment cooperation, provide export credits, and interact with credit agencies and insurance agents.[2]

In this context, Mishustin’s emphasis on the upcoming company being open to work with new international partners is worth noting. As a result of the sanctions caused by the war, it is seen that Russia is trying to make new economical alliances or to strengthen its ties with the old ones. In addition to developing trade with the EAEU countries, Russia is also striving to strengthen cooperation with China, Egypt, India and Iran.

It is stated that the authorized capital of Eurasian Reinsurance Company will be formed with the contributions of the member states and equate to 15 billion Russian rubles. In addition, it was announced that the company’s potential insurance capacity (without the possible expansion) would reach up to 2 billion US dollars.[3] Many experts claim that the emergence of Eurasian Reinsurance Company’s additional insurance capacity may lead to an increase of over 6 billion dollars in bilateral trade volume within the EAEU.

They also claim that it poses risks that will be quite difficult to reinsure, as in the maritime transport sector. This is because the international reinsurance market is highly dependent on large holdings in Europe and the United States and is controlled by Western companies. However, sanctions are mainly imposed on Russian-designed businesses and cannot be imposed against international organizations. Therefore, as an international organ-

ization, the EAEU is unlikely to face sanctions. In this regard, it is understood that Russia aims to use the EAEU platform against Western sanctions.

The leaders of the EAEU member states have also discussed the issue of expanding the use of the EAEU countries’ national currencies when making settlements in mutual trade. The draft agreement on increasing the use of EAEU member states’ currencies for bilateral trade instances was submitted by Russia.

The share of mutual settlements in national currencies constitutes %74 of EAEU trade volume as of 2022. Russian rouble has the biggest share among these currencies: According to the Eurasian Economic Commission, 71.5% of the transactions in 2021 were made in Russian roubles, 26.2% in dollars and euros, 1.4% in tenge and 0.2% in Belarusian roubles.[4] Considering the role played by Russia within the EAEU, the increase in the use of national currencies in mutual agreements actually means that the importance of the rouble has grown. The West, in its confrontation with Russia, has sealed up Russian gold and foreign exchange reserves stored in dollars, indicating a dangerous precedent for other countries. China could be the next target if tensions with the US on the issue of Taiwan escalate. In this context, it is possible to say that the issue of expanding the use of national currencies will be one of the main topics of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Samarkand summit as well, to which Russia and China are parties.

EAEU’s critical geostrategic position makes it a transit hub with key potential that connects Europe and Asia. EAEU ranks second in the world in terms of length of its railway line and fifth in terms of total length of its road. Today, “North-South”, “East-West” and “Europe-West China” routes constitute the main transportation corridors passing through the EAEU territory. In this context, one of the main issues discussed at the EAEU Intergovernmental Council Meeting is the joint work of the EAEU countries in the field of transportation and logistics.

Consequently, following the negotiations, the Prime Ministers approved a list of priority infrastructure transport projects in the EAEU countries. The list includes the projects of the countries within the EAEU, such as the “North-South” road corridor program from Armenia, the reconstruction of the M-1/E 30 highway (Brest (Kozlovichi)- Minsk – border of the Russian Federation (Redki)) from Belarus, the reconstruction of Kazakhstani sections of the M-32 highway linked to the “Europe-West-China” international transportation route from Kazakhstan, and lastly the electrification of the “Lugovaya-Balykchy” railway section from Kyrgyzstan. The construction and modernization of Russian sections of roads related to the “Europe-West-China” international transportation

route, and the constitution of the Russian part of the “Meridian” private highway are mentioned in the document from the Russian Federation.[5]

In total, the list includes 7 projects of the EAEU countries at various stages of implementation. At the same time, the projects are aimed at developing the Eurasian transportation corridors and routes which are located at international transport corridors within the framework of the “East-West” and “North-South” lines, and improving the transit potential and transport infrastructure. The proposal for the development of the transportation corridors was made by the Prime Minister of Kazakhstan, Alikhan Smailov, during the meeting:[6]

“We need to ensure freedom of transit of goods for the development of exports of the EAEU countries. An important practical step in this direction could be the modernization of infrastructure of Eurasian transport corridors in the East-West and North-South directions.”

In addition, the interaction of these projects with the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative was highlighted. There are many areas of interaction between EAEU and the Belt and Road Initiative. First, one of the main objectives of both projects is the creation of a modern infrastructure. This will lead to an increase in revenue from transit charges and improve transport links between the countries. Second, the EAEU and the Belt and Road Initiative act to simplify customs procedures and remove constraints on the development of bilateral trade. Third, due to the possible US naval blockade against China, China needs to respond to the growing shortage of energy supplies from the Middle East and Africa and diversify its related imports. EAEU countries focus on this issue, so the new infrastructure established will also help to solve this problem.

Fourth, the collaboration between the EAEU and the Belt and Road Initiative is also carried out in the field of large water and environmental projects, which give rise to hopes of creating a number of mechanisms for scientific and technical cooperation and bringing innovative developments to production. Fifth, the EAEU and the Belt and Road Initiative interact on projects related to ensuring food safety. The sixth is the geo-political factor. In other words, due to Russia’s deteriorating relations with the US and the West following the war in Ukraine, Russia has turned to Asia, especially China.

The most effective way for the EAEU to enter the global energy sector is to create a stable and free common gas market within the EAEU, primarily through the volunteerism and cooperation of national gas markets. As a matter of fact, EAEU has recently made

attempts to create a common gas market. Today, frequent negotiations are held between member countries to agree on the “single window” principle for services in the common gas market, control over gas use and payment terms based on the market price of gas. In general, it can be said that the formation of the gas market serves as a new window of opportunity for the EAEU countries, including benefits such as maximizing the stability of the energy markets and ensuring the energy security of each country.

On the other hand, Belarus and Armenia are interested in purchasing gas through pricing in Russia’s domestic market instead of this opportunity in the union. In contrast, Russia insists that member states should establish a deeper integration within the EAEU. At the summit in Cholpon-Ata, EAEU members addressed issues related to the formation of the common gas market as well. However, the talks did not reach a clear conclusion. In this sense, it was decided to take a closer look at the developments in the world gas market and to plan how to approach these new factors in the upcoming agreement on the EAEU common gas market.

As a result, the decisions taken following the Eurasian Intergovernmental Council that took place in Cholpon-Ata between 25-26 August in terms of recent worldwide events are noteworthy. These decisions are a sign that Moscow is relying heavily on its partners in the face of Western sanctions. However, it should be noted that Moscow wants to benefit from its partners as well. It is obvious that Russia will use the EAEU platform against Western sanctions. Consecutively, the Kremlin administration argues that under the current circumstances, the EAEU countries are in the need of a deeper integration.

[1]“Итоги заседания Евразийского межправительственного совета в Улitsаолпон – Ате”, Министерство экономики и коммерции Кыргызской Республики, <https://mineconom.gov.kg/ru/post/8319>, (Date of Accession: 29.08.2022).

[2]“EA veC создаст Евразийску перестраховочну компани для поддержки бизнеса” , Pravo.ru, <https://pravo.ru/news/242611/?ysclid=l7hnhps7dn943511609>, (Date of Accession:30.08.2022)

[3]“Россия предлагает план расширения расчетов в нацвалютах на территории ЕАЭС”, 24.kg, [https://24.kg/ekonomika/243212\\_rossiya\\_predlagaet\\_plan\\_rasshireniya\\_raschetov\\_vnatsvalyutah\\_na-territorii\\_eaes/](https://24.kg/ekonomika/243212_rossiya_predlagaet_plan_rasshireniya_raschetov_vnatsvalyutah_na-territorii_eaes/), (Date of Accession: 16.09.2022).

[4]“Доля взаиморасчетов в национальных вал минтрах внутри ЕА УlitsaC достигла в 2021 г. 74%”, Financial One ,<https://fomag.ru/news-streem/dolya-vzaimoraschetov-v-natsionalnykh-valyutakh-vnutri-eaes-dostigla-v-2021-g-74/?ysclid=l7hnu82529183136>, (Date of Accession: 31.08.2022)

[5]“Ин [раструктурные проекты в с [транспорта согласовали и одобрили страны littleC]”, Kazhastanskayapravda , <https://kazpravda.kz/n/infrastrukturnye-proekty-v-sfere-transporta-soglasovali-odobrili-strany-eaes/>, (Date of Accession: 30.08.2022).

[6]“Смаилов озвучил ряд мер по налаживани торговли и улучшени укономих показателей в странах ЕА little C”, Kazakhstan Today, [https://www.kt.kz/rus/economy/\\_1377938710.html](https://www.kt.kz/rus/economy/_1377938710.html), (Date of Accession: 30.08.2022).





## ANKASAM OUTLOOK

# What Does the United States Hope to Achieve with UAVs in Afghanistan?

When the United States of America (USA) realized that warfare would not be sufficient to defeat the Taliban, it initiated the Doha Talks, signed the Doha Agreement with the Taliban on February 29, 2020, and announced its intention to withdraw from Afghanistan. While the Doha Treaty allowed the US to exit, it also offered the Taliban the opportunity to reclaim control of Afghanistan after a twenty-year hiatus. The Taliban is no longer a "terrorist organi-

zation" as a result of the accord. It has become a state intermediary, particularly with the United States, and has increased its hand against Afghanistan's overthrown regime by releasing its 5000 soldiers in accordance with the deal.

Moreover, the USA has put into effect the withdrawal process without waiting for a compromise between the Taliban and the Afghan government of the time. This accelerated the



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progress of the Taliban on the ground. Thus, this allowed the Taliban to come to power by first controlling the districts, then the provinces, and finally Kabul.

On the other hand, the USA, despite its withdrawal from Afghanistan, has applied various sanctions to the Taliban, arguing that the way the Taliban dominates the country is contrary to the Doha Treaty. In this context, it blocked Afghanistan's national reserves and did not recognize the Taliban government. In addition, the Washington administration prevented other states and international organizations from recognizing the Taliban administration. As a matter of fact, Taliban officials state that the main reason why their government is not recognized by any state in the world is due to US pressure.

The US not only puts pressure on the Taliban government and prevents it from being recognized by other states; at the same time, it carries out surveillance activities in Afghanistan's airspace through unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV). In this context, the USA bases its UAV activities in Afghanistan's airspace on the argument of counter-terrorism. For example, US President Joe Biden said on the anniversary of the deaths of 13 American soldiers who died in the attack on Kabul Airport, "Even if we don't have soldiers in Afghanistan, we will destroy terrorists who will pose a threat to our country!" he said.[1] US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin stated that the anti-terrorism policy continues in Afghanistan and that no one should be worried about the security of US citizens.[2] These statements indicate that the USA will continue its surveillance activities in Afghanistan airspace.

The Taliban first tried to hide the flights carried out by the USA in Afghanistan airspace using UAVs and then tried to persuade the White House through diplomatic means. However, the killing of Ayman Al-Zawahiri, the leader of the terrorist organization Al-Qaeda, in the U.S. drone attack in Kabul, caused the Taliban's reaction. In this context, Taliban Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaki stated that the flight of US drones over Afghanistan is against the Doha Agreement and the principles of international law. In addition, Muttaki claimed that the USA violated the airspace of Afghanistan and stated that the international community should put pressure on it to end this action.[3]

The main reason why the Taliban openly criticizes the USA is that the operations with drones undermine the Taliban's claim that "we have defeated the USA." In other words, when talking about the Taliban defeating the USA, it cannot prevent actions that violate Afghanistan's sovereignty and territorial integrity. In short, the Taliban loses prestige in the eyes of the Afghan people as they cannot maintain the sovereignty of the country.

Another reason is the possibility of drones targeting Taliban leaders and soldiers. As it is known, most of the leaders of the Taliban are still on the sanctions list, and the US may target the leaders of the Taliban on the grounds of affiliation with terrorist organizations. As a matter of fact, it is claimed that some Taliban leaders left Kabul after Zawahiri was killed.

Finally, the presence of drones in Afghan airspace worries the Taliban that they may face a new military operation such as "Operation Enduring Freedom." because the problem of recognition and therefore legitimacy of the Taliban administration still continues.

Both parties criticize each other by referring to the Doha Treaty and international law rules regarding the violation of airspace. According to the Taliban, the use of Afghan territory in operations can only take place with the approval of the Taliban government. According to the USA, the presence of any terrorist organization in Afghanistan, especially al-Qaeda, is sufficient to legitimize the operations to be carried out by the Washington administration in Afghanistan. Therefore, the White House considers the US's presence of drones in Afghanistan's airspace a situation in line with international law and the Doha Treaty. As a matter of fact, the US accused the Taliban of violating the Doha Agreement by hosting Zawahiri after Zawahiri was killed.[4]

According to the agreement, the United States and its allies will not threaten the territorial integrity and independence of Afghanistan, use force, and will not interfere in the country's internal affairs. In return, the Taliban will prevent all individuals and groups that pose a threat to the United States and its allies, especially the terrorist organization Al-Qaeda, from being in Afghanistan.[5] In fact, both the US flying drones in Afghanistan's airspace and the presence of any al-Qaeda element in Afghanistan are against the Doha Treaty. However, instead of finding a solution, since both sides interpreted the treaty in their own interests, they tried to justify their actions.



Although the USA cites the terrorist organization's activities in Afghanistan as the reason for keeping drones in Afghan airspace, it can be said that the Washington administration is pursuing some strategic goals. First of all, the USA uses drones as a means of pressure to impose the conditions of the international community on the Taliban. Through drones, Washington is forcing the Taliban to make concessions. It can be said that the second goal of the White House is the control of the weapons left in Afghanistan. According to US-based sources, during the withdrawal process, the Americans left about 9 billion dollars worth of weapons in Afghanistan, and they are worried that these weapons will fall into the hands of their enemies. As a matter of fact, it is stated that the USA is trying to destroy the weapons depots by organizing drone attacks in some regions.

Another goal of the United States is to prevent Afghanistan from falling under the influence of its global and regional rivals. Because China, Russia, and Iran have increased their activities in Afghanistan. Therefore, by flying its UAVs over the skies of Afghanistan, the USA sends a message to its rivals that it can return to Afghanistan and that it has not left the country completely.

Based on the aforementioned information, it can be said that the USA will not change its current policy in the short term. Therefore, the Taliban will either stop the US interventions by taking serious steps in line with the wishes of the international community and ensuring its legitimacy, or it will take defense systems from other countries and take control of the airspace and interfere with the UAVs.

[1] "تساهتسیرورت بیقعت رد نم تلود: لب اک رد هدش هتشک یی اگی رما ۱۳ زا دوبدای رد ندیاب وچ", Afintl, <https://www.afintl.com/202208267514>, (Date of Accession: 19.09.2022).

[2] "تسا هدشن متخ ناتسن اغفا رد مزی رورت اب هزاربم دیوگی م اکی رما عافد ریزو", Afintl, <https://www.afintl.com/202208306632>, (Date of Accession: 19.09.2022).

[3] "تسا روشک یی اوه میرح ضقن و همنقفاوت فالخ اهامیپاوه ینزت شگ: یقتم", Tolo News, <https://tolonews.com/index.php/fa/afghanistan-179742>, (Date of Accession: 19.09.2022).

[4] "دناهدرک ضقن از هجود همنقفاوت ناب لاط: کنیل ب", Parstoday, <https://parstoday.com/dari/news/afghanistan-i183090>, (Date of Accession: 19.09.2022).

[5] "نابل لاط و اکی رما نایم حلص همنقفاوت لم اک نتم", Khaama, <https://www.khaama.com/persian/archives/69871>, (Date of Accession: 09.09.2022).



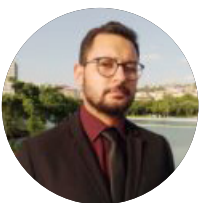
## ANKASAM OUTLOOK

# Economic Dimension of Russian-Chinese Cooperation in Global Competition: De-dollarization

On September 7, 2022, the Russian state company Gazprom announced that it had agreed with China and announced that the gas supplied to China would be paid in yuan instead of dollars. This situation has led to the strengthening of a discourse emphasized by Russia and China for a long time. Both actors want a greater floor and a more active position in

international issues, and advocate the reconstruction of the world order and the transition to a multipolar world order.[1]

Russia also used the aforementioned discourse in the 7th Eastern Economic Forum and stated that the old world order has been destroyed, a new world order has been established and Asia



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has begun to play a leading role in economy and technology. In order to better understand the reasons for the de-dollarization attempt and why Moscow and Beijing need this initiative, it is necessary to recall the history of Russia and China's relations with the West.

From the beginning to the end of the Cold War period, the United States of America (USA) and its allies entered into a long struggle with the Eastern Bloc, especially the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), and they won this struggle. During this ideological war, the USA and its allies had tense relations with the USSR and experienced tensions with China from time to time. At the end of the Cold War, Russia was no longer a threat for USA and its allies since there was no USSR any more.

The relations with China, which were positive until 1989, continued tense until 2003 with the effect of the Tianenmen Incidents. As a result of China's policies of opening up with Deng Xiaoping, China has become a global power in the 21st century and has a greater floor in the system. In this context, US-China relations have become increasingly complex.[2]

#### Secession From the Dollar

Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 resulted in a series of sanctions by the USA and the European Union (EU). In this period, Russia preferred this way in order to get rid of the US sanctions and to protect itself from future sanctions. In 2014, China and Russia signed a three-year "currency swap" agreement worth approximately \$24.5 billion worth 150 billion yuan. With this agreement, the two states were able to access each other's currencies without the need for dollars. This agreement was extended for three years in 2017.

Although China has been experiencing tensions in its relations with the USA on issues such as Iran, Taiwan and Tibet and has witnessed the sanctions that Russia has been subjected to since 2014, it did not play as active a role as Russia in the de-dollarization project until it faced the USA in the trade war in 2018. As a matter of fact, when faced with some punitive commercial benchmarks in 2018, it started to act more actively for the de-dollarization project.

By 2019, Beijing quickly integrated into the de-dollarization initiative and signed an agreement with Russia. Thus, the yuan and ruble began to be used instead of the dollar in international transactions between the two states. The agreement also gave Russia great freedom of action against the dollar.

In 2013, Russia realized 80% of its total exports in dollars; by 2022, it realized a little more than half of its total trade in dollars.[3] Much of this decline was driven by trade with China. Apart from this, Russia has turned to the euro besides the yuan in order to suppress the dollar and save its trade from the domination of the dollar.

With the agreement, the Russia-China duo also agreed to establish a new system to replace the SWIFT system. In January 2019, before the agreement was signed, Russia announced that it had reduced its dollar holdings by \$110 billion. In addition, Russia increased its yuan reserves from 5% to 15% by investing in the yuan. As a result of the agreement, Russia had a quarter of the world's yuan reserves.[4]

Although the Sino-Russian union is beneficial for both sides, it is not equal. By 2020, the dollar was used in the vast majority of Sino-Russian trade. For example, while 27% of Russia's exports to China are realized in dollars; 60% of China's exports to Russia were realized in dollars.[5]

It should be noted that; recently it has become clear that the attempt to de-dollarization could not protect Russia. Due to the substitution of the euro for the dollar, Russia has become open to EU sanctions. The Moscow administration has already been subject to approximately 11,000 sanctions. Apparently; The attempt to de-dollarization did not protect Russia from sanctions, and did not spread the use of the yuan and ruble by other states. According to the data of December 2021, while the percentage of use of the yuan in the world is 2.7%, the ruble is 0.21%, the dollar is 40.5% and the euro is 36.7%.[6]

#### What Will the Russia-China Agreement Bring?

When the situation of the international system is examined, it is seen that Russia has been fighting in Ukraine since February 2022 and Ukraine has resisted with great acumen. The war is getting

longer and longer and it increases Russia's casualties. While casualties cause high costs, it seriously shakes the Russian economy. In this context, while Russia exhibits revisionist behaviors, at the same time, it tries to get rid of the effects of the sanctions imposed on both the state and individuals by the USA and the EU. For this reason, the Kremlin reiterates its call for the use of national currencies in commercial and economic transactions, which has been continuing since 2014, by the agreement it has made with China.

On the Chinese side, developments in Taiwan are decisive. The official visits, which began to be continuous after the visit of the Speaker of the US House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi to Taiwan, cause Beijing to conduct extensive military exercises around the island, and the exercises cause concern for most of the states in the Pacific region.

In the light of these developments, China and Russia dream of a new world order with a freer nature where trade and economy are not dependent on the dollar. For this, the integration of the Russian Financial Messaging System (SPFS) and the Chinese International Payment System (CIPS) units can be provided in the future and the parties can continue their trade from there. As a matter of fact, after Russia was removed from the SWIFT system, she directed many countries to SPFS and CIPS, the Chinese equivalent of SWIFT. Although this is a situation that arise from necessity, it will be declared that Chinese and Russian systems are integrated in the coming years.

On the other hand, although Russia and China seem like good friends, they are trying to gain influence in each other's spheres of influence and both countries do not trust each other very much. While Russia is trying to consolidate its worn-out influence in the former Soviet geography, on the other hand, it tries to gain influence over the states in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) region, including North Korea and South Korea.

On the one hand, China maintains its influence in the regions; at the same time, it is trying to gain influence in the Turkestan region through the Belt-Road Project and its investments. Even if China and Russia seem to be close friends in the current situation, they may abandon the economic and financial steps in question after the disagreements between the West and Russia are resolved or because of the change in common threat perceptions. In fact, issues such as Chinese immigration to Siberia have the potential to cause serious problems in the future.

In short, the cooperation between China and Russia brings many opportunities for the two countries as well as various problems. As long as Russia's Ukraine problem and China's Taiwan issue holds, these two countries will have problems that cause reaction and isolation in the international system. Thus, the partnership seems to continue. However, due to the mentioned possibilities, time will tell what the financial and economic partnership will evolve.

[1] "Russia's Gazprom, CNPC Agree to Use Rouble, Yuan for Gas Payments-Gazprom", Reuters, [www.reuters.com/business/energy/petrochina-signs-gas-agreement-with-russias-gazprom-2022-09-07/](http://www.reuters.com/business/energy/petrochina-signs-gas-agreement-with-russias-gazprom-2022-09-07/), (Date of Accession: 07.09.2022).

[2] Cemre Pekcan, Çin Dış Politikası ve ABD ile İlişkiler, Dora Yayınevi, Bursa 2019, p. 77.

[3] Mrugank Bhusari-Maia Nikoladze, Russia and China: Partners in Dedollarization, Atlantic Council, [www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/econographics/russia-and-china-partners-in-dedollarization/](http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/econographics/russia-and-china-partners-in-dedollarization/), (Date of Accession: 06.09.2022).

[4] "China and Russia Ditch Dollar in Move Toward Financial Alliance", Nikkei Asia, [asia.nikkei.com/Politics/International-relations/China-and-Russia-ditch-dollar-in-move-toward-financial-alliance](https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/International-relations/China-and-Russia-ditch-dollar-in-move-toward-financial-alliance), (Date of Accession: 06.09.2022).

[5] Mrugank Bhusari-Maia Nikoladze, Russia and China: Partners in Dedollarization, Atlantic Council, [www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/econographics/russia-and-china-partners-in-dedollarization/](http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/econographics/russia-and-china-partners-in-dedollarization/), (Date of Accession: 06.09.2022).

[6] Ibid.





## ANKASAM OUTLOOK

# Can Russia Overcome Sanctions by Legalizing Crypto Assets?

With the law signed by Russian President Vladimir Putin on July 15, 2022, severe restrictions and prohibitions on making payments with crypto assets were introduced in Russia. [1] Russian State Duma approved the relevant law on July 8, 2022. Thus, using digital securities, including crypto assets, as a means of payment while purchasing goods and services is prohibited.

Essentially, the Central Bank of Russia favors a complete ban on the use of crypto assets. Because in its current form, buying crypto assets in Russia is not a crime. Purchasing other goods and services with the related crypto asset is illegal. Therefore, on January 20, 2022, the Central Bank of Russia proposed on banning the mining and use of crypto assets within Russia's



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borders. The rationale for doing this is the possibility that crypto assets use and mining could pose a potential threat to Russia's financial system, harm citizens, increase the energy consumption of crypto-mining and violate Russia's monetary sovereignty.

As far as it is known, in countries with solid centralist tendencies, such as Russia and China, the use, mining, and even purchase of crypto assets recorded by distributed data-keeping ledgers, which are difficult for the state to control, may be prohibited in order not to compromise monetary sovereignty and capital controls.

After Russia's military intervention in Ukraine, the country's economic and financial isolation led to many attempts to overcome the sanctions. At this point, many manipulations have been made about what Russia's attitude towards crypto assets will be. On March 24, 2022, State Duma Deputy Pavel Zavalny declared that Russia could sell gas to Western countries in exchange for Russian rubles or gold and pay in national currencies or bitcoins to "friendly" countries such as China and Türkiye.[2] There were fluctuations in the price of Bitcoin immediately after this statement. From this, it can be deduced that in cases where Russia cannot trade with the US dollar and the euro, it attributes a reserve value to gold and the ruble, and then to bitcoin, respectively. Nevertheless, bitcoin is an asset that will be used, when necessary, among these alternatives for Russia.

In September 2022, the Russian Ministry of Finance and Undersecretary of the Central Bank Alexey Moiseev stated that crypto assets must be legally adopted for international payments.[3] Emphasizing that the current attitude of the Moscow administration towards crypto assets is very harsh on the Russia-24 TV channel, Moiseev stated that it would be possible to make international money transfers with crypto assets. Still, crypto assets must be placed in a legal framework.

Stating that the Central Bank of Russia will review its attitude towards crypto assets due to the new financial isolation of Russia, Moiseev said that the first step to be taken is the legalization of crypto assets in the country where it is currently prohibited to used and pay many types of crypto assets. Thus, it may become possible for crypto assets to be used when making international value transfers in Russia. Moiseev also stated that anti-money laundering regulations should be kept strictly in the legalization process.

Based on Moiseev's statement, it can be argued that Russia may turn to the use of crypto assets with the thought that it will facilitate international payments. To understand the reason for this, it is necessary to examine the technology of crypto assets. They are electronic assets that can be carried or transferred in digital networks created using distributed data retention technologies.

Most crypto assets operate on a distributed data holding technology called a "blockchain." Blockchain consists of three elements: (1) A distributed ledger, (2) encryption or cryptography prevents the manipulation of the data recorded in the ledgers, (3) smart contracts or smart computer codes automate the entire system's operation.

Providing data processing to the blockchain, the element that acts as "blood" in the system is "crypto assets." If a blockchain requires an official authority or company to provide the registry to access the ledger, or if an official authority or company needs approval to become one of the transaction validators on that blockchain, that is the blockchain that "must go through the approval process." However, suppose the registry in that blockchain can be accessed directly over the relevant network, and every computer on the blockchain can be a validator. In that case, that is a "public", "global" or "free" blockchain.

Here, Bitcoin and Ethereum blockchains are "permissionless" blockchains. In other words, even if the intervention of a state can reduce the value of crypto assets in blockchains, that blockchain or crypto asset transfer cannot be prevented entirely because a network node in El Salvador or Nigeria can automatically approve a transaction request sent from Russian territory.

Likewise, the transaction of bitcoins sent to an "anonymous" bitcoin wallet that Russia will open can reach Russia's wallet with confirma-

tion from any geographic region outside the domain of the states imposing sanctions on Russia. Therefore, it is complicated to censor transactions in a seriously decentralized blockchain network. Similar to physical gold delivery, it is doubtful to be blocked. Therefore, Moiseev wants Russia to soften its prohibitive stance on crypto assets.

In addition, besides taking advantage of the assets on blockchains and the existing liquidity of those crypto assets, states can use a private blockchain network among themselves. However, the liquidity provided by institutions and individuals in Western countries will not be included in such a blockchain network. This will enable Russia to make more efficient and error-free transactions in financial transactions with other states.

Crypto asset transfers may be censored if they are made through traditional financial intermediaries. The prevention of money laundering is done precisely in this way. Because only authorized intermediary institutions can perform value transfers. These intermediary institutions also prevent transactions that the state envisages to be stopped to avoid legal sanctions. However, crypto-asset transfers are complicated to censor when they occur directly through unauthorized and decentralized protocols in the distributed data holding network, not through the wallets of traditional financial intermediaries.

If Russia uses crypto assets to circumvent sanctions, it aims to use uncensored protocols and, therefore, decentralized and permissionless. Using crypto asset transfers over these protocols is like a double-edged sword. Because if an individual or institution in the country converts a value or asset into a crypto asset and can deliver it to an uncensored crypto asset wallet, that asset will be sent to any point in the world with elementary digital coding. This situation is like a plane passenger carrying that asset out of the country by carrying cash and gold up to the specified limit. However, there is a difference here. Assets worth millions or even billions of US dollars can be issued with a simple transaction, as there is no physical space for crypto assets. However, making such large capital transfers abroad through crypto assets is impossible. However, the financial and political benefits of using crypto money for international payments to Russia may be reversed because the same technology may cause capital outflow from the country.

As a result, Russia is against using crypto assets as a means of payment in the trade of goods and services, as it follows a centralized monetary policy that does not compromise economic sovereignty. Because centralized states cannot control cryptocurrencies with a high level of decentralization and anonymity. However, due to the sanctions, there have been fluctuations in Moscow's attitude towards crypto assets. Exposed to severe financial and economic isolation, Russia announced that it would accept payments in gold, rubles, and then bitcoin in order of importance in return for its energy exports to other countries. Almost 6 months after this stance, with the law that entered into force with Putin's signature, the use of digital assets, including crypto assets, as a means of payment in the trade of goods and services was prohibited. However, buying crypto assets is not forbidden in the country. Based on the latest developments, it can be said that the Kremlin may use crypto assets to solve the problem of international financing and payments, which has become more difficult due to sanctions.

[1] "Yasama No: 138674-8", Duma, [https://sozd.duma.gov.ru/bill/138674-8#bh\\_histras](https://sozd.duma.gov.ru/bill/138674-8#bh_histras), (Date of Accession: 08.09.2022).

[2] Stephen Alper, "Russian Lawmaker Suggests Nation Could Accept Bitcoin for Oil Payments", Coindesk, <https://yhoo.it/3DilbXc>, (Date of Accession: 08.09.2022).

[3] Petr Kovalev, "Минфин заявил о возможной скорой легализации трансграничных расчетов в криптовалютах", TASS, [https://tass.ru/ekonomika/15646955?utm\\_source=cointelegraph.com&utm\\_medium=referral&utm\\_campaign=cointelegraph.com&utm\\_referrer=cointelegraph.com](https://tass.ru/ekonomika/15646955?utm_source=cointelegraph.com&utm_medium=referral&utm_campaign=cointelegraph.com&utm_referrer=cointelegraph.com), (Date of Accession: 08.09.2022).



## ANKASAM OUTLOOK

# Combating Terrorism in the US's Afghanistan Policy: An Evaluation of Biden's 9/11 Messages

The President of the United States (USA) Joe Biden attended the ceremony held on September 11, 2022 to commemorate the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. The speech of the President of the United States at this ceremony is very important as it is the first seri-

ous assessment made after the withdrawal of American soldiers from Afghanistan one year later. Because the messages Biden gave at the ceremony contain important clues about the future of the Washington administration's Afghanistan policy.



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Biden, who stated at the beginning of his speech that the terrorist organization Al Qaeda would never reach his dreams<sup>[1]</sup>, stated that the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 changed the fate of the USA.<sup>[2]</sup> Although it is seen that this emphasis on destiny contains emotional messages towards domestic politics, it can be said that American foreign policy has changed since that date.

In fact, the attacks of the terrorist organization Al Qaeda targeting the US Department of Defense (Pentagon) and the World Trade Organization Center (Twin Towers) can be considered a milestone in terms of American foreign policy. Because after these terrorist acts, the USA found the “other” it was looking for after the collapse of the Soviet Union and focused on legitimizing American interventionism through the “radical jihadist” counter-terrorism argument.

Biden's speech indicates that the US President approves the invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq after the aforementioned attacks. Because Biden declared the soldiers serving in Afghanistan and Iraq as heroes using the following expressions<sup>[3]</sup>:

“Millions of young men and women across the country have defended our Constitution and joined the largest fighting force in world history, responding with courage and determination to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. In the years since 9/11, hundreds of thousands of American soldiers; He served in Afghanistan, Iraq and many other parts of the world to prevent these geographies from becoming a safe haven for terrorists and to protect the American people.”

Biden's statements point out that the operations carried out by the USA in various geographies of the world over the alleged fight against terrorism may continue. At this point, it can be claimed that despite the withdrawal of the USA from Afghanistan, the operations carried out in this country via unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) will continue. The situation in question is also understood from the following sentences of the US President<sup>[4]</sup>

“Despite everything that has changed in the last 21 years, the resolve of the American people to defend ourselves against those who want to harm us and to deliver justice to those responsible for attacks on our people has not once been faltered. It took ten years to find and kill Osama bin Laden, but we succeeded. And this summer, I authorized a successful attack on Ayman al-Zawahiri, Laden's deputy on September 11, 2001, and leader of the terrorist organization Al-Qaeda. Because we will not rest. We will never forget. We will never give up. And now Zawahiri can no longer threaten the American people. Even after the end of the 20-year operation in Afghanistan, we remain committed to preventing another attack on the United States.”

To reiterate, Biden's statements above reveal that the United States will continue to conduct counter-terrorism operations despite its withdrawal from Afghanistan. As a matter of fact, the neutralization of Zawahiri as a result of the UAV operation is a development experienced in the process after the withdrawal. At this point, it is necessary to focus on the future scenarios of the US's anti-terrorism policy in Afghanistan.

First of all, it should be underlined that there is a serious tension between Washington and the Taliban administration due to the U.S. drone operations in Afghanistan airspace. The Taliban administration describes the presence of American UAVs in the skies of Afghanistan as a violation of Afghanistan's sovereignty rights and argues that the White House does not act in accordance with the Doha Agreement. On the other hand, the USA states that terrorist organizations continue their activities in Afghanistan, based on the killing of Zawahiri, and reminds that the Taliban made a commitment in the Doha Treaty that terrorist organizations would not operate in Afghanistan's territory. Therefore, Biden's messages herald that the US will continue its operations using Afghanistan's airspace. This means that the tension in US-Taliban relations will increase even more.

The killing of Zawahiri reveals that the main target of the US air operations in Afghanistan is the terrorist organization Al Qaeda. In this context, it is possible to say that the US's Afghanistan policy will be shaped by the goal of combating the terrorist organization Al-Qaeda. It is also stated that the USA used Pakistani airspace during the operations in Afghanistan.<sup>[5]</sup> This situation can be interpreted as the

USA will improve its cooperation with Pakistan in its Afghanistan policy. In fact, the USA may request a military base from Pakistan for the operations it will organize in Afghanistan. Claims have been made in this direction in the past.<sup>[6]</sup> Of course, such a scenario indicates that the tension in the Taliban-Pakistan line may escalate.

On the other hand, it can be stated that in the future scenarios of the USA's Afghanistan policy, the Washington administration may also resort to the argument of fighting the terrorist organization State of Iraq and al-Sham (DEAS). As it will be remembered, on 26 August 2021; in other words, just five days before the US completed its withdrawal from Afghanistan, the terrorist organization DEAS launched an attack on Kabul Airport and 13 American soldiers were killed in this attack. In his statement after the attack, US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin stated that his country would continue its operations in Afghanistan in the fight against terrorism.<sup>[7]</sup> However, despite this attack, the USA completed the withdrawal process. This has brought to mind the question of what kind of method will be adopted in the fight against terrorism.

At this point, it is seen that the USA carries out its anti-terrorism policy in Afghanistan through intelligence power and UAV operations. In this context, it can be said that the USA may organize the operations against the terrorist organization DEAS, similar to the operations carried out against the terrorist organization Al Qaeda.

As a result, the USA focused on the activities of two terrorist organizations in Afghanistan. Although the Washington administration has focused its lens on the terrorist organization Al-Qaeda in the current situation, the messages given by Austin after the Kabul Airport attack on August 26, 2021 show that DEAS may also be the target of American UAVs. It is understood that the new method adopted by the USA in the fight against terrorism in Afghanistan is air operations and the role of UAVs in this context comes to the fore. However, one of the reasons why the USA does not focus its attention on DEAS, at least in the current situation, is that the actions of this terrorist organization serve regional chaos plans by escalating ethnic and sectarian violence. Therefore, the Washington administration may think that DEAS will destabilize actors such as Russia and China, and will serve to relieve the US in the global power struggle. This can be associated with the concentration of operations on the terrorist organization Al Qaeda. In fact, by weakening the terrorist organization Al Qaeda and increasing the pressure on the Taliban through the fight against Al Qaeda, the White House may also want to make room for the terrorist organization DEAS.

[1] “Remarks by President Biden at 9/11 Memorial Ceremony”, White House, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2022/09/11/remarks-by-president-biden-at-9-11-memorial-ceremony/>, (Date of Accession: 12.09.2022).

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid.

[5] “Taliban, ABD Dronlarına Hava Sahasını Açtığı Gerekçesiyle Pakistan'ı Suçladı”, Euronews, <https://tr.euronews.com/2022/08/28/taliban-abd-dronlarina-hava-sahasini-actigi-gerekcesiyle-pakistani-sucladi>, (Date of Accession: 12.09.2022).

[6] “Negotiations on US Military Base in Pakistan Have Reached an Impasse”, New York Times, <https://www.southasianmonitor.org/pakistan/negotiations-us-military-base-pakistan-have-reached-impasse-new-york-times>, (Date of Accession: 12.09.2022).

[7] “تساهتسی رورت بی قعت رد نم تلود :لباک رد هدش هتشک یدیاک یرم۱۳ زا دوبدای رد ندیاب وج”, Afintl, <https://www.afintl.com/202208267514>, (Date of Accession: 09.09.2022).



## ANKASAM OUTLOOK

# Finland and Sweden's NATO Membership and Stance of Russia

As it will be recalled, on May 18, 2022, Finland and Sweden decided to formally apply to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). The day before, the Finnish Parliament approved the idea of joining NATO. While 188 deputies voted in favor, only 8 deputies voted against it. Afterwards, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Sweden Ann Linde signed the NATO application, which will be submitted on May 18, 2022, along with Finland's application. In the following process,

many states took positive decisions in their parliaments regarding the membership processes of the countries concerned. Currently, it is seen that Finland and Sweden's NATO membership process is continuing.

However, Sweden has announced that it will not deploy nuclear missiles and foreign military bases in the country by placing reservations to the applications to join the alliance. Russian



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Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said that the accession of two new countries to NATO will not fundamentally change the situation in the region, because the alliance has already been expanding militarily to the east for many years and in this sense operates on the territory of Finland and Sweden.[1]

Russian President Vladimir Putin also expressed that the decision taken by the Helsinki and Stockholm administrations does not threaten Russia alone, since Moscow do not have any problems with these states, nevertheless, the expansion of military bases in this region will certainly be retaliated against and the extent of this reaction will determine according to the threat. According to Putin, the expansion of NATO is a problem, and this issue is being deliberately manufactured by the US.[2]

According to Spokeswoman of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Maria Zakharova, NATO is dragging European countries into its orbit in a manner contrary to the national interests of these states, and is doing so through pressure and intimidation against the states concerned. Moreover, according to Zaharova, the principles of neutrality established by Finland and Sweden are being destroyed by the alliance.[3] Zakharova also suggested that if Finland and Sweden join the alliance, good neighborly relations between the Nordic countries and Russia will deteriorate and the Baltic region will turn into an area of conflict.[4]

As is known, for many years, both Sweden and Finland have firmly adhered to the idea of non-alignment. In fact, neutrality has become an element of the national identity of these countries. At this point, it is necessary to establish a historical framework.

Up to 200 years ago, Sweden was one of the great European powers. Afterwards, it turned from a great power into a state focused on creating a comfortable life for its citizens. This process lasted more than two hundred years, and the country first entered the First and Second World Wars, then it witnessed a harsh Cold War period.

Finland's neutrality, on the other hand, has developed in a very different way. The country, which was connected to the Tsarist Russia in the past, gained its independence in 1917. It has sought balance with its powerful neighbors, especially Russia/the Soviet Union. It was only after World War II that it chose to develop "special relations" with the world. In the West, this has been called "Finlandization." This situation includes the case of "protection of sovereignty in exchange for self-restraint." However, it should be noted that, in the middle and second half of the 20th century, this policy gave Finland a special reputation.

However, after the end of the Cold War, the idea that the issue of neutrality has lost its importance has begun to prevail. Finland and Sweden began to cooperate effectively with NATO in observer status in 1994 under the "Partnership for Peace Programme." These countries also participate in the non-military part of the alliance's maneuvers in the Baltic Sea.

The accession of both countries to the EU has also institutionalized Western society, which sets the course for enlargement both in Europe and across the Atlantic. In this period, the spread of Western institutions was accepted as the only possible way to improve the security system and the understanding of "NATO equals security" began to dominate. Although the countries have entered into a close relationship with the Western alliance, it has not been on the agenda for them to officially join the alliance.

To return to the present, Russia's initiation of negotiations in December 2021 by requesting security guarantees from the US and NATO and the withdrawal of NATO elements from Eastern Europe prompted Finland and Sweden to take action. Despite this, however, the two Northern European countries remained undecided on the point of applying for NATO membership.

After February 24, 2022, that is, following Russia's intervention in Ukraine, discussions about the possibility of abandoning the neutrality policy came to the fore in both Helsinki and Stockholm. Thus, Sweden and Finland have turned to seeking their security not in the "status of neutrality", but under the security umbrella of a concrete alliance. In fact, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, who explained



that Ukraine is unlikely to be admitted to NATO in the near future, stated that the alliance is open to Scandinavian countries and that these countries may join the organization in the near future. This statement, on the other hand, has given a new dimension to both the balance of power and the security environment in Northern Europe. Because the accession process of the relevant states is also progressing much faster than expected. The situation has brought about various discussions in Russia regarding the security of the country.

Considering the relationship that the two Scandinavian countries have developed with NATO for many years, according to Russia, the membership of Sweden and Finland in NATO alone will not significantly change the military-political situation in Europe.

The reaction of Russia to the membership of Sweden and Finland in NATO also depends on the conditionality of the membership of these countries. Unlike Poland and the Baltic countries, Sweden's refusal to allow the establishment of a NATO base by being content with membership alone will give Moscow some comfort. However, once becoming a member, this policy can always change, which is something that Russian decision-makers take into account. In fact, The Russia-NATO- Founding Act signed in 1997 also stipulated that military bases should not be established in the newly admitted Eastern European member countries of the alliance. However, the tension in relations over time led to the suspension of this agreement, and it was decided to deploy military bases in Eastern European countries.

One of the factors determining the reaction of Russia to the accession of Sweden and Finland to NATO is the situation in Ukraine. Russia's concentration of its military forces in Ukraine leads to the inability of the Scandinavian countries to prevent its accession. The Kremlin expresses that it is uncomfortable with the membership of these countries, but is aware that it cannot prevent it. It seems that Russia will further arm the Finnish borders, the Kaliningrad region and the Baltic Sea in order to prevent this development or to respond to the new balance of power that will occur in the region. Russia has already delivered this message by deploying aircraft capable of carrying hypersonic missiles and conducting exercises around Kaliningrad, where nuclear war simulation is used. Therefore, Moscow is not strong enough to prevent the membership of both countries. However, developments indicate that military militarization in the Baltic Sea will increase and that the new playing field of the Russia-NATO struggle will be the Baltics.

[1] "Лавров: НАТО уже учитывает территорию Финляндии и Швеции при военном планировании", Vzglyad, <https://vz.ru/news/2022/5/17/1158844.html>, (Date of Accession: 18.05.2022).

[2] Леонид Цветаев, "«Проблема создается на голом месте». Путин заявил об ответной реакции на расширение НАТО", Gazeta.Ru, <https://www.gazeta.ru/politics/2022/05/16/14862242.shtml>, (Date of Accession: 18.05.2022).

[3] "Захарова: НАТО затягивает европейские страны в альянс вопреки их интересам", BelRos, <https://belros.tv/news/politika/zakharova-nato-zatyagi-vayet-evropeyskie-strany-v-alyans-vopreki-ikh-interesam/>, (Date of Accession: 18.05.2022).

[4] "Захарова: Вступив в НАТО, Финляндия и Швеция станут пространством борьбы альянса и России", Rossiyskaya Gazeta, <https://rg.ru/2022/05/04/zaharova-geopoliticheskaia-konfrontaciia-s-rossiej-sut-sushchestvovaniia-nato.html>, (Date of Accession: 18.05.2022).



## ANKASAM OUTLOOK

# Development of the Middle Corridor towards India

The Middle Corridor is one of the critical transportation and transit lines that stands out as the shortest, most stable and least costly line connecting Asia and Europe. Although there are points to be developed in various regions, the Middle Corridor stands out as one of the main routes reaching Europe from China. Due to the developments experienced since the beginning of 2022, the importance of the Eurasian geography has increased even more. With the completion of the missing piece in Kyrgyzstan, the increase in the capacities of Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan ports in the Caspian Sea, and the realization of the Zangezur Corridor, it is obvious that the full potential of the Middle Corridor will be realized and various steps are being taken in this regard.

The Middle Corridor stretches from China to Europe; especially in Central Asia, it is divided into two main lines. Their routes are China-Kazakhstan-Caspian Sea-Azerbaijan, which can be defined as the Northern Line, and China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan-Turkmenistan-Caspian Sea-Azerbaijan, which is the Southern Line. In addition to this, there is another extension of the Middle Corridor. It is the Lapis Lazuli Corridor, known as the Türkiye-Georgia-Azerbaijan-Turkmenistan-Afghanistan Transit Transport Corridor. The route in question has great potential for Afghanistan to open up to the world and reach the seas.

Lapis Lazuli starting from Türkiye, covers the Georgia-Azerbaijan-Caspian Sea-Turkmenistan-Af-



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ghanistan route today. It is known that the route ending from the city of Herat in Afghanistan actually carries with it an important potential. Because the main purpose of the routes created in various parts of the world today is to connect the production sites and the markets. It is obvious that land transportation has gained greater importance in parallel with the increasing tension in the seas in the world. It is seen that the change in the geopolitical and geoeconomic characteristics of Asian countries creates a need for new lines.

Today, it is known that global dynamics are changing. Because the Western capital is looking for new ports by leaving China. At this point, India rise to the prominence in terms of cheap labor and qualified personnel. Especially in the recent period, the economic development of India has been making a big impact. As a recent example, India surpassed the UK in the last three months of 2021 to become the world's fifth largest economy. While European economies, including the UK, face the risk of high inflation and recession; India is expected to grow by 7% in 2022. In the light of this data, the nominal Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of both countries is 3.2 trillion dollars today and it is stated that in the near future, India will secure its place at the point of being the fifth economy.[1]

India's economic development, the world's geopolitical, geostrategic and geoeconomic power from West to East; in other words, it is an indication that it has shifted to Asia. This means that new transportation and carriage lines will be built in Asia. Because India, which has turned into one of the production centers of the world, needs safe and low-cost corridors to export the goods it produces. Considering the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC), which the country in question wants to develop to reach Russia and Europe, combining INSTC and Lapis Lazuli will provide significant advantages. Because for Lapis Lazuli to reach India, it has to pass through Afghanistan and Pakistan.

With the completion of this part, Islamabad and New Delhi, whose relations are tense, will be able to establish healthier relations based on common interests with a win-win approach. Decreasing tension in the region will not only weaken the security dilemma but also serve to prevent radicalization. On the other hand, New Delhi and Islamabad will gain the opportunity to reach Europe and Russia via Central Asia. At this point, it can be said that Uzbekistan will have alternative routes to reach the Russian and European markets, as it will have a complementary nature with the Trans-Afghan Transport Corridor (TATC) that it is trying to build together with Pakistan.

On the other hand, Afghanistan is the most important source of threat for both Central Asia, South Asia and Eurasia. The economic and humanitarian crisis in the country brings radicalization with it. The said threat carries significant risks, especially for Pakistan and India. It can be stated that the inclusion of Afghanistan in regional cooperation is the healthiest way to end the humanitarian crisis and possible threats in the country. Because with this method, countries will not only gain economic gain; but also, important threats to security will be eliminated.

As a result, the world is shaped through new corridors, new markets, and new production centers. The most important issue in the process of transporting the goods obtained in the production centers to the markets is the safety of the routes. Because any country loses its feature of being a reliable port for foreign capital as long as it is located in geographies that are mentioned with instability. It is essential to create various alternatives, both for sustainable development within the country, and strengthening regional peace, and stable corridors. At this point, it is possible to talk about the existence of the Lapis Lazuli route, which reaches Afghanistan from Türkiye, which is the gateway of Asia to Europe. The extension of this route to India via Pakistan will bring various gains in terms of economy and security. In today's world, where the importance of the Middle Corridor is increasing, the inclusion of the growing powers of Asia such as India will increase the potential of the corridor. In this way, India will be able to reach Russia via Central Asia, and Europe via the Caspian Sea and the Caucasus at the least cost, in the shortest time, and via the most stable line.

[1] Philip Aldrick-David Goodman, "UK Slips Behind India to Become World's Sixth Biggest Economy", Bloomberg, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-09-02/uk-slips-behind-india-to-become-world-s-sixth-biggest-economy?leadSource=uverify%20wall>, (Date of Accession: 10.09.2022).



## ANKASAM OUTLOOK

# Australia's Position in the US-China Competition

Australia has the potential to depolarize power balances in the Asia-Pacific region all by itself. Therefore, the country can even determine the fate of the competition between the United States (United States) and China. It should be remembered that Australia is a member of the United Kingdom. Therefore, the monarchy of the United Kingdom is represented by a governor in Australia. But as it is known, it is only a symbolic function.[1] Hence, it would not be utopic to say that Australia is fed upon the Western political system and the social community structure. In this context, it can be said that it is difficult to put the Australian people under the same category as "Eastern Society".

Australia is a critical ally and business investment partner of the US. At a time when geopolitical uncertainty increased in the Indian-Pacific, the United States and Australia strengthened

their partnership in; trade, investment, politics, culture, security intelligence and defense. In the official texts of the United States, relations with Australia are described as follows:[2]

"Australia is a vital ally, partner, and friend of the United States. Our two countries maintain a robust relationship underpinned by shared democratic values, common interests, and cultural affinities. Economic, academic, and people-to-people ties are vibrant and strong. Our partnership promotes peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific region and around the world. The United States and Australia marked the 80th anniversary of diplomatic relations in 2020."

Australia's largest political maneuver in the China-US dilemma is the signing of the AUKUS Pact.[3] The pact, including Britain among the



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member states, envisions a number of joint military moves with the other two allies Australia has agreed on. Under the agreement, it is possible to open up the assurance of military technology transfers, joint exercises and resource shortcomings. In the light of these facts, AUKUS is one of the most obvious indicators that Australia will co-operate with the United States against China.

In addition to the UKUSA Agreement, there are also some other alliances that were originally signed between the United States and the United Kingdom, and then expanded with the inclusion of Australia and New Zealand.[4] The UKUSA is noting as an agreement based on the co-operation of the electronic intelligence structures of the countries mentioned.

Another significant agreement is the Quad Security dialog (QUAD). It is a basically signed security agreement between Japan, India, the United States and Australia.[5] Built to take joint action against security concerns in the Asia-Pacific region, QUAD's main mission is to weaken China's hand in the region.

China wanted to raise its hand against these powerful alliances and turn its face to other options. The Belt and Road Initiative, which targets many countries from the continents of Asia, Europe and Africa, is a strong example of retaliation that China has given to the four alliances at this point. Consequently, allied blocks in the Asia-Pacific region were formed through these agreements. In today's conjunctions, Australia has chosen to take part with the US against China.

China-Australia relations came to a complete breakout in 2020, with a number of economic sanctions. For example, Australian Treasury Minister Jim Chalmers called on China to remove trade barriers.[6] Such commercial inhibitions mean the Beijing administration stopped importing beef, wine, lobster, barley and timber from Australia in 2020. However, the party that started this trade sanctions silo was not China. For Australia has banned Chinese telecommunications company Huawei from building 5G network infrastructures, taking measures against some Chinese investments by law to prevent foreign influence in domestic policy.

It is no coincidence that Australia makes such pro-Western and sharp moves in foreign policy. As mentioned above, the Australian people, which are difficult to describe as an eastern society, come from the Western modernism echole.

On the other hand, the political structure of China is one of the issues that Canberra is concerned about against Beijing.

To give an example of this contrasting situation, Scott Morrison, who is on the liberal side in Australia, was defeated against Labor Party Chairman Anthony Albanese in the last elections. The biggest reason for the change in power was Albanese's interest in the issue of "climate change".[7] On the other hand, China is governed by Xi Jinping, who will remain in power lifelong with the latest constitutional amendment, and the Chinese people have no share in the change of power. This issue is summarized in an article published on an official Australian government site:[8]

"China is rapidly integrating into the world economy; however, the state structures that enable integration fall short of reforming and adapting to the new Chinese society created by economic change. The Chinese Government understandably expects the country's emerging status as a leading world economy to be duly recognized in global institutions and relations. But a significant part of the international community still feels that China does not fully comply with established norms of international relations. The Chinese Government is aware of the fear and suspicion in some US circles. That is why they tend to interpret any pressure to reform their institutions and politics as a new form of anti-Chinese restraint."

As a result, Australia is an Asian Western state due to its political and social dynamics. In this respect, China is not suitable to ally with Australia. In the light of these implications, political and economic contractions will continue to be seen in Australia-China relations.

[1] Yan Zhuang, "Why is Australia Still Part of the British Monarchy?", The New York Times, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/12/03/world/australia/why-is-australia-still-part-of-the-british-monarchy.html>, (Date of Accession: 13.09.2022).

[2] "U.S. Relations With Australia", U.S. Department of State, <https://www.state.gov/u-s-relations-with-australia/>, (Date of Accession: 13.09.2022).

[3] "Aukus: UK, US and Australia Launch Pact to Counter China", BBC, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-58564837>, (Date of Accession: 13.09.2022).

[4] "UKUSA Agreement Release", National Security Agency/Central Security Service, <https://www.nsa.gov/Helpful-Links/NSA-FOIA/Declassification-Transparency-Initiatives/Historical-Releases/UKUSA/>, (Date of Accession: 13.09.2022).

[5] Vikas Pandey, "Quad: The China Factor at the Heart of the Summit", BBC, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-61547082>, (Date of Accession: 13.09.2022).

[6] Sarah Swain, "Treasurer Calls on China to End Bans on Aussie Goods", 9News, <https://www.9news.com.au/national/china-news-update-australian-treasurer-jim-chalmers-calls-on-beijing-to-end-bans-on-aussie-goods/b90756d2-95f0-4ac2-b538-e967470f7f49>, (Date of Accession: 13.09.2022).

[7] "Australia election: Anthony Albanese signals climate policy change", BBC, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-australia-61539426>, (Date of Accession: 13.09.2022).

[8] Stephen Sherlock, "Australia's Relations with China: What's the Problem?", Parliament of Australia, [https://www.aph.gov.au/sitecore/content/Home/About\\_Parliament/ParliamentaryDepartments/ParliamentaryLibrary/Publications\\_Archive/CIB/CIB9697/97cib23#CONCLUSION](https://www.aph.gov.au/sitecore/content/Home/About_Parliament/ParliamentaryDepartments/ParliamentaryLibrary/Publications_Archive/CIB/CIB9697/97cib23#CONCLUSION), (Date of Accession: 13.09.2022).



## ANKASAM OUTLOOK

# The Afghan Fund: What Does the USA Aim?

As it is known, United States of America (USA) has withdrawn from Afghanistan within the scope of the Doha Agreement dated 29 February 2020. However, the USA justified its violation of the Doha Agreement by saying that Taliban has obtained power through use of force and failed to fulfil the promises it has given within the scope of the agreement. In this context, the Washington administration is preventing the recognition of the Taliban and does not give the necessary support to remove the Taliban leaders from the sanctions list of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). In addition, the

USA blocks the national reserves of Afghanistan and prevents the use of the reserves by the Taliban. This issue is considerably important because national reserves of Afghanistan are among the leading issues discussed between the Taliban and the USA in the recent years.

On 11 February 2022, the USA President Joe Biden set forth that 3.5 million dollars of Afghanistan's reserves should be given to the Afghan people as humanitarian aid, and the other 3.5 billion dollars should be delivered to families of victims of the terrorist attacks of September 11,



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2001. After this decision, the Supreme Court of the USA rejected the proposal which aimed to give 3.5 million dollars to the victims of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 on the grounds that the decision exceeds its authority.[1] The USA brought forward the “Afghan Fund” issue while the aforementioned case continues.

With a declaration, the USA Ministry of Treasury announced that the 3.5 million dollars of Afghanistan’s national reserves would be transferred to an “Afghan Fund” established in Switzerland in order to ensure economic stability. According to the statement, the fund was going to be managed by a committee and that two Afghans would take part in the committee along with the representatives of the USA and Switzerland.

It was announced that those Afghans were the Governor of the Central Bank of Afghanistan and Minister of Finance Anwarul Haq Ahadi and the Member of the Supreme Council of the Central Bank of Afghanistan, Shah Mehrab. On the other hand, it was indicated that Afghan Fund would be used in accordance with the Switzerland laws. In addition, the USA has stated that Taliban would not be a part of the fund and that fund would be kept in the accounts of the Switzerland-centered Bank for International Settlements.[2]

It can be said that USA abstains from making Taliban a part of the fund because of the political interferences towards the Central Bank and that two people, who were appointed by the Taliban to the Central Bank of Afghanistan are on the sanctions list. It was learned that the fund in question would be used for issues such as Afghanistan’s international payments, electric energy exports and printing money. An executive member of the fund, Envarul Hak Ahadi, has said that the fund would be spent for financial issues rather than humanitarian aid and all activities of the fund would be audited by an international audit company at the end of the year.[3]

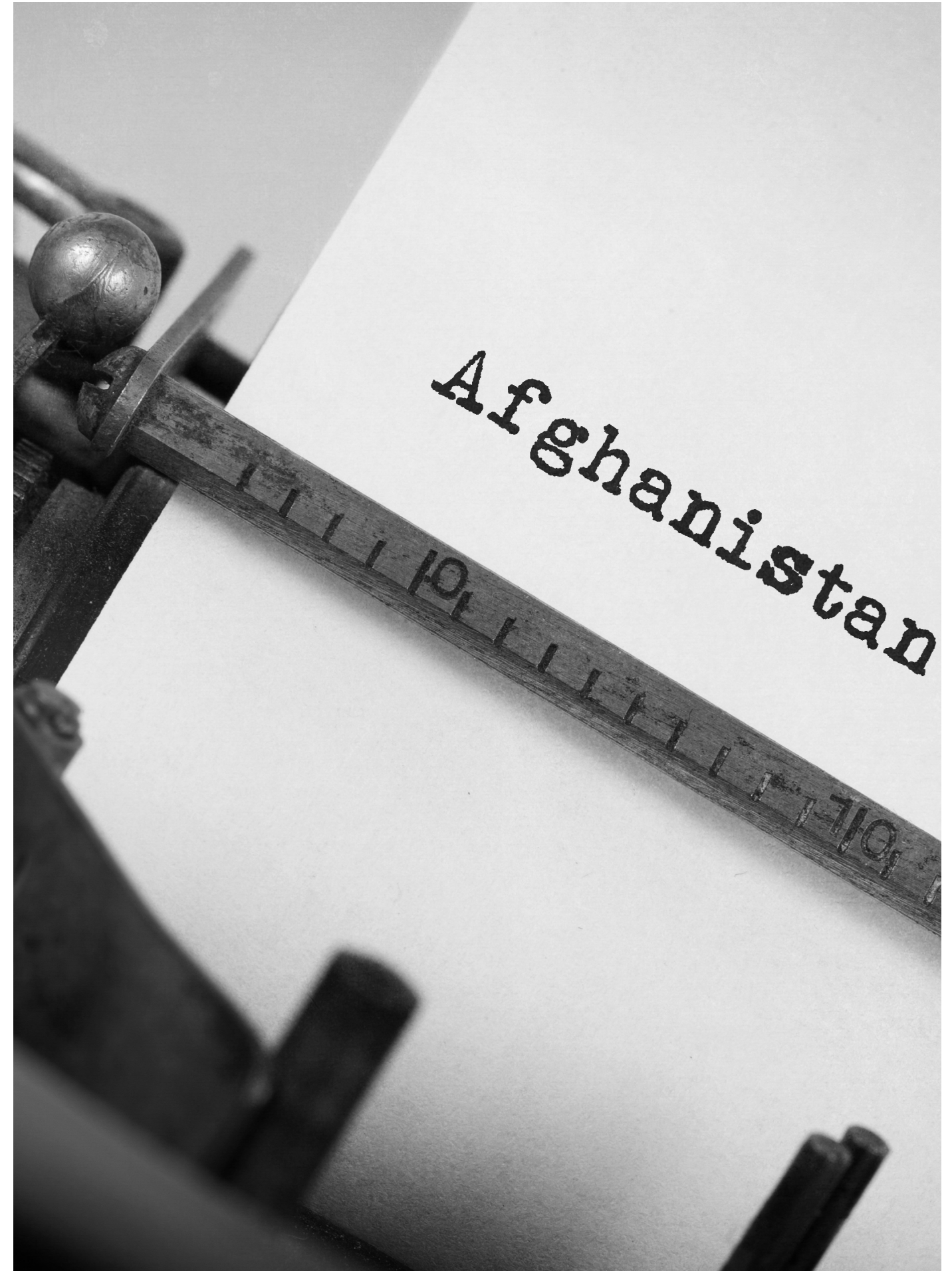
After the statements of the USA, Taliban-controlled Central Bank of Afghanistan stated that national reserves belonged to the people of Afghanistan and it was necessary that they were used to ensure monetary stability. In return, the Central Bank of Afghanistan stated that it was not going to accept the use of money for trade purposes or any other use that does not serve to the purpose of the fund.[4]

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Taliban, on the other hand, issued a statement suggesting that the use of Afghanistan’s reserves for material and financial purposes is a blow of the US against the Afghan economy and announced that the activities of all organizations and firms involved in the use of this money will be ceased in Afghanistan. In this statement, Taliban mentioned that the Central Bank of Afghanistan can accept the external audits that will be performed on issues of independency and professionalism.[5]

There are various reasons for the USA to insist on the establishment of the fund and the Taliban’s opposition to it. It is necessary to state that many governments and international organizations, especially Russia and China, want that the USA gives Afghanistan’s national reserves back and therefore helps prevent the crisis in Afghanistan. The Washington administration that faces serious pressures on this issue might have designed the Afghan Fund as an intermediary to suppress international pressure.

Another goal of the USA is to counteract the Taliban’s policy of blaming the US for the bad economy and low living standards in Afghanistan, which arose from the alleged melting of reserves. As it is known, many people lost their jobs and the economic situation of the Afghan people deteriorated after the Taliban possessed power in Afghanistan. Taliban blames the USA for the bad economics situation in Afghanistan and wants the patience of the people. The US is trying to win the hearts of the people by distributing the reserves to the Afghan people in some way through the fund. In other words, the USA wants to correct the image it has lost by delivering the money as if it is doing a great help to the Afghan people.

Moreover, the USA intends to exercise full control over the Afghanistan economy by using the fund. The fund will not be subjected to any processing without the permission of the USA due to its stipulated usage and it will sort of undertake the mission of the Central Bank of Afghanistan. The establishment of the Afghanistan economy on such a fund brings to the mind the possibility of the inclusion of the Washington administration to the Afghanistan economy in a negative way. In such situation, the USA can increase its pressure towards the Taliban through Afghanistan’s reserves and draw the Taliban administration to the line it wants by threatening to damage the economy.





The main reason the Taliban opposes the fund is that the fund has a structure that makes it difficult for Taliban to be recognized and leads to the isolation of Taliban from other governments. In other words, the fund will deprive the Taliban's features to become a government and will be the ultimate source of authorities such as printing money and making payments. Therefore, the Taliban will become dependent on the fund in order to be involved in trade.

In addition, Afghanistan will be a mere spectator of the fact that its currency will become vulnerable to foreign currencies, and its ability to ensure stability in the market will be out of the hands of the Taliban. Undoubtedly, when a state does not have dollar and gold reserves, it is impossible to maintain the value of its national currency against foreign currencies. In this context, the USA has blocked Afghanistan's national reserves, bringing the Afghan economy to the brink of collapse. Indeed, as Afghanistan does not have a national reserve, the Taliban administration cannot print money. Moreover, printing money on Afghanistan's own initiative will again result in the depreciation of its own currency against other currencies.

It is seen that the Taliban opposes the use of the fund against its own control. However, given the information that the Taliban dominates all of Afghanistan, it is foreseeable that although the USA wants to disable the Taliban in terms of managing the fund, it will have to include the Taliban in the management of the fund after a certain period of time. As a matter of fact, while the Washington administration wants the UNSC to limit the travel exemptions of the Taliban leaders, the Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation, Tom West, announced that he supports establishing a dialogue with the Taliban.

As a result, it can be said that the transfer of Afghanistan's national reserves to the Afghan Fund will be in the interests of the Taliban in the short term; but it will conclude against the Taliban in the long term. This is because more hot money will enter Afghanistan in the short term and the Afghan currency will gain value. In the long term, the Afghan currency will remain vulnerable.

[1] "دڼکیم لقتنم سیوس هب ار ناتسناغفا هډش دمچنم یی اراد فصن اکیرم"، VOA, <https://www.darivoo.com/a/us-sets-up-fund-for-afghan-money-after-taliban-talks-flop-/6747128.html>, (Date of Accession: 16.09.2022).

[2] "دڼکیم لقتنم سیوس رد قودنص کی هب ار ناتسناغفا هډش دودسم یی اراد زا رالد درایلیم ۳.۵ اکیرم"، Euronews, <https://per.euronews.com/2022/09/15/us-sets-up-afghan-relief-fund-with-frozen-central-bank-money>, (Date of Accession: 16.09.2022).

[3] "تسا ناتسناغفا یزکرم کناب یاه یی اراد طفح و یلوپ رارق تسا، ینام قودنص هفی طو: یدح اقلارون"، Afintl, <https://www.afintl.com/202209151229>, (Date of Accession: 16.09.2022).

[4] "دناوخ لوبق لباقریغ ار سیوس هب ناتسناغفا هډش دودسم یاه لوبق لاقتن ا یزکرم کناب"، Etilaatroz, <https://l24.im/QBCth>, (Date of Accession: 16.09.2022).

[5] "دڼکیم میرحت و همیرج ار «ناتسناغفا ینام قودنص» اب راکمه یاه نامزاس و دارفا نابلاط"، Afintl, <https://www.afintl.com/202209157750>, (Date of Accession: 16.09.2022).



## ANKASAM OUTLOOK

# The Transport of Turkmen and Uzbek Gas Reserves to the West and Azerbaijan

The invasion of Russia in Ukraine has shown the dependency of Europe on Russian energy imports, especially gas. Consequently, European actors have begun a new, serious search for various energy suppliers.

Within this context, the European Union (EU) has signed a new treaty with Israel, to replace the gas imports from Russia. However, it is not possible for Israeli gas to reach Europe from another way than Türkiye, in less than five years. Likewise, Egypt is exporting gas to Europe.

Though, both states need at least few years to decrease the pressure on the EU. Therefore, neither Egyptian gas nor Israeli gas can be a solution EU's demand. The nuclear negotiations with Iran have not settled to a consequence yet either. The newly discovered gas fields in East Mediterranean, therefore East-Med Project, shapes through conflicted regions. Right in this situation, it is important to state that the EU has no other choice than the Southern Gas Corridor. The fastest solution is to diversify the Southern Gas Corridor with other gas resour-



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es of states of the Middle Corridor and provide gas to Europe by using existing gas pipelines, for fewer cost.

This situation increases the importance of Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. In this context, the Trans-Caspian Natural Gas Pipeline Project (TANAP), which is the gas element of the concept, which was developed in 1990 as the East-West Energy Corridor, may be predicted to become an active part of the Southern Gas Corridor for the transport of Turkmen gas to the West.

According to data of the British Petroleum (BP), Turkmenistan is the fourth state with the biggest gas reserves, right after Russia (38 tcm), Iran (32 tcm) and Qatar (25 tcm); in territory (Devletabad, Osman, Yolatan) and in sea (Celeken), according to newly found data, with 20 tcm proven gas reserve. Closely 10% of the worlds proven gas reserves are in Turkmenistan.

Because of its geolocation, Turkmenistan exports its gas to Russia, mainly to provide the gas demand of the North, Iran, and China, through pipelines that been built during Soviet Union era. However, the North Stream I Pipeline cut of Russia to Europe caused a two-way effect.

First of them is the increase of Moscow's gas import to China, as a part of market diversification strategy; and therefore, decrease of the impact of Turkmenistan's influence over China.

Second is the clarity that the Europe needs new suppliers. Thus, the addition of Turkmenistan to TANAP is considered as a serious option. Moreover, the addition of Uzbekistan to TANAP may come up as well. The infrastructure steps in the context of the Middle Corridor have been undertaken recently as a suitable basis for this.

About the aspect of Turkmenistan, it can be said that the solution of the conflict between Ashgabat and Baku's jurisdiction over Caspian Sea in 2018, is an important opportunity over the solution of global energy crisis. Both states have decided to re-name the conflict-ed region as "fellowship field" and to cooperate the activities carried in the region. The 8-10 billion metre cubic of Turkmen gas reserves could be transported to Europe was also discussed in the negotiations. Although the EU's gas deal with Azerbaijan is important in the diversification of Western suppliers, production in Azerbaijan is not yet expected before 2030, which can meet the EU's needs. In this context, the support of Azerbaijan gas with Turkmenistan gas is the most reasonable solution. Recent developments suggest that the EU is in a search for this direction.

In this context, time may be saved initially with a capacity of 10-15-billion-meter cubes, and after the price of steel has dropped, a new investment and a new pipeline can also be discussed. This could make the Middle Corridor the main route to the global energy trade. In the aspect of Azerbaijan, Baku may become an energy centre, both as a source state and a route state, with such developments.

It is important to note that 22 trillion cubic meters of gas reserves can be reached when the sources of Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan are combined. If these conditions are evaluated, the Central Corridor may become a gas transport project from Central Asia to Europe. In this regard, the ideal route for the EU is the Middle Corridor. Because of its critical role Europe takes, will take in energy security, the key actor of the process will be Azerbaijan.



## ANKASAM OUTLOOK

# Division or Cooperation in NATO's Fight against Russia

Since Russia started an attack on Ukraine; Eastern European, Baltic and Nordic states have been concerned about becoming Moscow's new target. Except Finland and Sweden, the states of the region which are members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), feel safe in the face of a possible Russian attack, there is no guarantee for that. The most important advantage obtained through NATO is that as a collective defence organization which discourages the aggressors. In other words, an

aggressive state cannot afford to oppose all member states due to Article 5 of NATO. This is an important deterrent factor. If Finland and Sweden become members of NATO, it will reduce the likelihood of Russia attacking these countries, since such a scenario would mean a Russia-NATO War. Currently, the Moscow administration states that "they will protect their interests in the High North in the face of NATO's increasing presence."<sup>[i]</sup>



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The North Pole ranks first in Russia's national security. This is because that the Kremlin considers this area as a natural sphere of influence. Crossing of red lines is the main driving factor for states. Russia's red line is its immediate vicinity. This includes the Arctic Region. As it is known, when Ukraine's membership in NATO came to the agenda, Russia took action. At this point, NATO's expansion towards the Arctic is in question. For this reason, it seems inevitable that Russia will increase its presence here in the near future.

Moscow has never hesitated from war to protect its vital interests. However, attacking NATO states is not a decision that Moscow can take easily. On the other hand, this attack might be possible if it is conducted within the scope of a strategy. In this context, stirring up dissent within NATO may be Moscow's primary goal.

The energy crisis remains a bargaining issue in Russia's relations with Europe. Rising energy bills may cause European states to reconsider their support for Kyiv in the Russia-Ukraine War. Russia is facing the possibility that the energy crisis, which has grown after Russia cut off the export of gas to Europe, will turn into a political crisis across Europe. Accordingly, countries that cannot reach energy at sufficient and cheap prices may end up competing with each other and become politically dissident. This applies to every region of Europe. Divisions between the Balkans, Scandinavia, the Baltic countries and Central Europe can begin.

Due to the Ukrainian Crisis, European states may face an internal conflict within the union. This situation may damage political and military cooperation and the integration process in Europe. For example, Balkan states may start questioning what they gain from the European Union (EU). During such a crisis, the benefits of NATO membership will also become questionable. If Europe is experiencing political divisions due to its support to Ukraine in the war, the benefits of the military alliance will also be questioned. Therefore, Sweden's and Finland's accession to NATO may also complicate the European integration process.

European states may not be able to overcome the energy related and economical effects of the war in Ukraine and a possible NATO-Russia War with an ease. The political rupture in Europe may grow before Sweden and Finland are able to complete their membership in NATO, and its repercussions can be seen in the military field. Most possibly, European states will not engage in a new war with Russia neither in Eastern Europe nor in Scandinavia.

In short, NATO's expansion will deepen the differences of opinion within the organization regarding defence and security fields. Other than NATO, many consider the security issue as a priority topic. Each area has its own security issues. This is called the "Regional Security Complex Theory" in the academic literature. For example, Europe's problem of migration and refugees is not seen as a security issue by the US. Similarly, the Russian threat to the Baltic or Nordic countries may not pose a security issue to every single NATO country.

NATO's expansion brings disadvantages along with its advantages. In order to retaliate against Russia following the Ukrainian War, European states began to increase their military power within the framework of NATO or through regional alliances. In this context, the formation of a Scandinavian bloc within NATO seems inevitable. This is because the security agendas of the Nordic and Baltic nations are similar to each other. Baltic nations such as Latvia and Estonia continue their efforts to strengthen their own defences, even though they are NATO members. The main concern of these countries is that they will be defeated by a sudden attack from Russia until help comes from NATO. Since their land is not as large as Ukraine, it will take much less time to occupy Baltics.

Latvia plans to bring back compulsory military service in order to defend itself without waiting for NATO's help in case of a sudden attack by Russia. Finland and Sweden continue their efforts to strengthen their self-defence until Türkiye approves them. The threat of Russian attacks is increasing day by day. For this reason, NATO membership may put Sweden and Finland under more risk.<sup>[ii]</sup> Indeed, NATO is no longer regarded as a protective shield, but as an organization that provokes Russia.

Europe's security environment is becoming irreversibly militarized. It is estimated that this climbing race between Russia and NATO member states could ultimately lead to a conflict. NATO nations are encouraged to give more support to Kyiv after the recent launch of a counterattack by the Ukrainian Army and the reunion of lost territories with Ukraine. As the belief that Ukraine will prevail in the war grows, NATO's self-confidence and its struggle against Russia increases. NATO's renewed confidence against Russia and continuous expansion steps in the High North will provoke Russia even more.

The collective stance of NATO states reduces the options Moscow can use against the West. Looking for NATO's weaknesses to attack, Russia may withdraw for a while to distract the West and try to create new crises in Asia if it fails in this goal.

[i]"Russia to Protect Interests in Arctic Amid NATO Presence Growth-Foreign Ministry", Urdu Point, <https://www.urdupoint.com/en/world/russia-to-protect-interests-in-arctic-amid-na-1558093.html>, (Date of Accession: 13.09.2022).

[ii] "Top 10 Reasons Sweden and Finland Will Regret Joining NATO", Cheerpost, <https://scheerpost.com/2022/09/08/top-10-reasons-sweden-and-finland-will-regret-joining-nato/>, (Date of Accession: 13.09.2022).

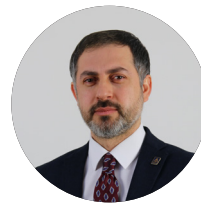


## ANKASAM OUTLOOK

# SCO Summit: Redetermination of Relations in Central Asian Chessboard

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Heads of States Summit, held in Samarkand on September 15-16, 2022, has been on the agenda of the world public opinion. The SCO attracts the attention of the world public opinion in terms of the fact that it is turning into a serious organization uniting the Eurasian states. In fact, it was seen that the relations of the par-

ticipating countries experienced some important developments at the Samarkand Summit. The summit is especially important in terms of revealing that Russia is not decisive at the summit, but that China and Central Asian countries are leading. In fact, it is known that one of the purposes of President of Russia Vladimir Putin's participation in the SCO Summit is to meet with



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President of China, Xi Jinping.

According to Foreign Minister of Russia Sergei Lavrov, Putin-Xi meeting was quite productive.[1] Russia has asked China for support on two issues. These are China's assistance against Western sanctions and its support in the war Russia is waging in Ukraine. However, after Russia's intervention in Ukraine, Moscow did not get the support it demanded from Beijing. The results of the Putin-Xi meeting held at this summit will be emerged in the future.

On the first day of the SCO Summit, a Russia-China-Mongolia trilateral meeting was held and the construction of the Power of Siberia 2 Pipeline for the shipment of Russian gas to China through Mongolia was discussed. The implementation of this project is of great importance in terms of the Moscow administration. Because Russia needs to find alternative markets in the field of energy due to its gradually decreasing relations with Europe. Even if the project is implemented under these circumstances, the countries that will benefit the most from it will be China and Mongolia.

By obtaining the status of a transit country, Mongolia will make Moscow and Beijing dependent on it, and will also provide income from the transit of the pipeline. China, on the other hand, will demand gas prices to be implemented on its own interests, as it always does. If China is the only receiver of Russian gas, Moscow's hand will be weakened and the Kremlin will lose the advantage of bargaining. Thus, Russia will either not sell gas to China or will have to give it at the prices that Beijing wants. Another negative situation for Russia is the uncertainty of the exact start and end dates of the construction, although the construction of the Power of Siberia 2 Pipeline is expected to begin in 2024.

On the other hand, important steps have been taken in terms of China's regional policy. The leader of China visited Kazakhstan before heading to the summit in Samarkand. This visit shows that China will develop closer relations with Kazakhstan in the near future. During the visit, the President of Kazakhstan, Mr. Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, presented the leader of China with the Order of the Golden Eagle and the parties stated that the relations between the two countries would be "like a golden eagle." [2]

Following the meeting between the President of Uzbekistan Mr. Shavkat Mirziyoyev and the President of China, the two countries signed agreements totalling 15 billion in the fields of trade, economy, investment, financial and technical cooperation. It was stated that trade between the parties increased to a record level of 8 billion dollars in 2021 and increased by more than 30% since the beginning of this year. Moreover, it was noted that the volume of investments made in the economy of Uzbekistan in the last five years exceeded 10 billion dollars.[3]

In addition, a cooperation agreement was signed in Samarkand for the construction of the part of the China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan Railway on the territory of Kyrgyzstan. The construction of the China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan Railway is seen as an important project related to the transportation sector of Kyrgyzstan and is one of the strategic projects targeted by the Kyrgyz Government in recent years. If the new corridor is implemented, it is expected that this corridor will be the southern branch of the Eurasian Continental Bridge. Thus, access to the Southeast, West Asia and Middle East markets will be provided. This route will enable the delivery of goods from China to Kyrgyzstan, to the countries of Central Asia and the Middle East, including Türkiye, and to the European Union (EU).[4] Thus, Kyrgyzstan will be able to become one of the key transit countries in the context of the Belt-Road Project.

Kyrgyzstan will turn into an important neighbour for Tashkent, as well as for Beijing. This project is also in line with the interests of Uzbekistan.

Another reflection of the China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan Railway Project will be in the dimension of Kyrgyz-Uzbek relations. Because the integration of the two countries will become stronger. In this case, Kyrgyzstan, which is located between Uzbekistan and China, will increase its strategic importance. On the other hand, at the Samarkand Summit, China signed three cooperation agreements with



Tajikistan:

Memorandum of Understanding on strengthening investment cooperation in the field of green growth,  
Memorandum of Understanding on strengthening investment cooperation in the field of digital economy,  
Additional protocol on the implementation of the construction project of the main partial sections of the second phase of the Dushanbe-Kulma (China) highway.[5]  
As can be understood, the relations between China and the Central Asian countries at the SCO Summit focused more on the steps taken regarding the implementation of the Belt-Road Project through Central Asia, excluding Kazakhstan. China's investments in the countries of the region and the implementation of infrastructure projects have been on the agenda. The acceleration of China's relations with Kazakhstan is mostly due to the negative developments in Russia-Kazakhstan relations.

The deterioration of Russian-Kazakh relations is also in China's interests. Because the Beijing administration is seizing the opportunity to become a more effective actor in the region by developing closer relations with Kazakhstan. Kazakhstan is also accelerating its search for strategic partners to guarantee its own security due to the threat it perceives from Russia.

In this environment, while Kazakhstan is turning to China, there is also a rapprochement in the relations between Uzbekistan and Russia. On September 15, 2022, Putin and Mirziyoyev signed a Declaration on Comprehensive Strategic Partnership in Samarkand.[6] Putin said the following in his statement on the subject:[7]

"This essential document will bring bilateral relations to an entirely new level, which have always been based on the principles of equality and mutual trust, and do not depend on the current global political situation and external pressure."

Putin also presented Mirziyoyev with the Order of Alexander Nevskiy, Russia's state award. The Declaration of Comprehensive Strategic Partnership can be seen as an important development in terms of relations on the Moscow-Tashkent line. Uzbekistan, on the one hand, signed important agreements with China, on the other hand, maintained the principle of "policy of balance between great powers" by taking its strategic partnership relationship with Russia to a more advanced level. At the same time, Uzbekistan has also responded to Russia's quest in the region, and Tashkent has opened up a new area to Moscow at a time when Russian-Kazakh relations are deteriorating.

Consequently, the SCO Samarkand Summit is important in terms of determining the relations of some countries and designing the form of relations that they will develop in the future. The SCO Summit also revealed the rivalries of the member countries over Central Asia. The ambiguous relations between Russia and China have also become more visible at the summit. This summit was fruitful in terms of the countries of the region implementing their national interests. Kyrgyzstan has reached an agreement on the railway project that it has been waiting for many years. Kazakhstan has provided a balance against Russia by attracting China to its side. Russia, on the other hand, directed its relations with Kazakhstan to Uzbekistan and continued its policy of "maintaining the balance of power between countries" in the region.

[1] "Лавров высоко оценил переговоры лидеров России и Китая", Vzglyad, <https://vz.ru/news/2022/9/15/1177750.html>, (Date of Accession:16.09.2022).

[2] "Церемония награждения Председателя КНР Си Цзиньпина орденом «Алтын Кыран», Akorda, <https://www.akorda.kz/ru/ceremoniya-nagrazhdeniya-predsedatelya-knr-si-czinpina-ordenom-altyn-kyran-1485254>, (Date of Accession:16.09.2022).

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## ANKASAM OUTLOOK

# Will Russia Be the Loser of the War in Ukraine?

Russia, which appeared in the international system as its successor of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), started to make political moves on the legacy of its predecessor after Vladimir Putin became the President of Russia in the early 2000s. With his moves towards the near abroad of Russia and the Post-Soviet geography, Putin aimed to create a foreign policy that does not want Western powers to be active in those regions. As a matter of fact, it has shown its stable stance on this issue until recently.

It is known that Ukraine is the most current example of the stance in question. The fact that the Kyiv administration turned to the European Union (EU) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), caused Russia to resort to hard power. In this context, the Kremlin carried out a military intervention against Ukraine, which it called a "special military operation."

While the seventh month of the war in Ukraine is about to be completed; the slowdown in Rus-



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sia's advance and the counter-attack of the Ukrainian Army give momentum to the views that the war will be reversed and Russia will suffer the same fate as its predecessor, the USSR. Moreover, it has come to light that Russia has started to have serious losses in the ongoing war in Ukraine and has difficulties in terms of military power. It is therefore used by Western experts as evidence to show that Russia's influence is waning. In order to support this view, the losses in the front lines of Ukraine and Moscow's withdrawal of its military units in the post-Soviet geography and send them to the Ukrainian front are shown as examples.[1]

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Leaders' Summit held in Samarkand, Uzbekistan, can be cited as an example regarding the changing balances for Russia. At this summit, it is noteworthy that India and China expressed their concerns about Russia's war in Ukraine. At the same time, the fact that Putin, who is famous for keeping the leaders waiting, is waiting for the leaders for bilateral talks can be interpreted as an indicator of the changing dynamics. This means that things are not going well for Russia.

On the other hand, holding Russia responsible for the conflicts on the Azerbaijan-Armenia border comes to the fore. Because, in order to provide military support to the ongoing war in Ukraine, Russia's transfer of many of its soldiers from the Karabakh Region to Ukraine has created a power vacuum in order to maintain peace in the region and an environment of conflict has arisen.[2]

Georgia, another former Soviet country, does not support Russia on Ukraine. Similarly, while Moldova is following the developments in Ukraine closely; it is preparing for conflicts that may occur in the Transnistria Region and is getting closer to the EU in order to secure itself. As it is seen in this environment, Belarus is the only staunch post-Soviet country standing on Russia's side.

Although it is not possible to predict that Russia will lose the war militarily, it can be said that it will be difficult for Russia to recover what was lost after the war. Considering the increasing economic and military costs of the war, as well as its psychological factors, it is likely that the losses will remind Russia the end of the USSR. Instability in the post-Soviet area, which Russia sees as its close environment, can be interpreted as an indicator of new polarizations in the international system.

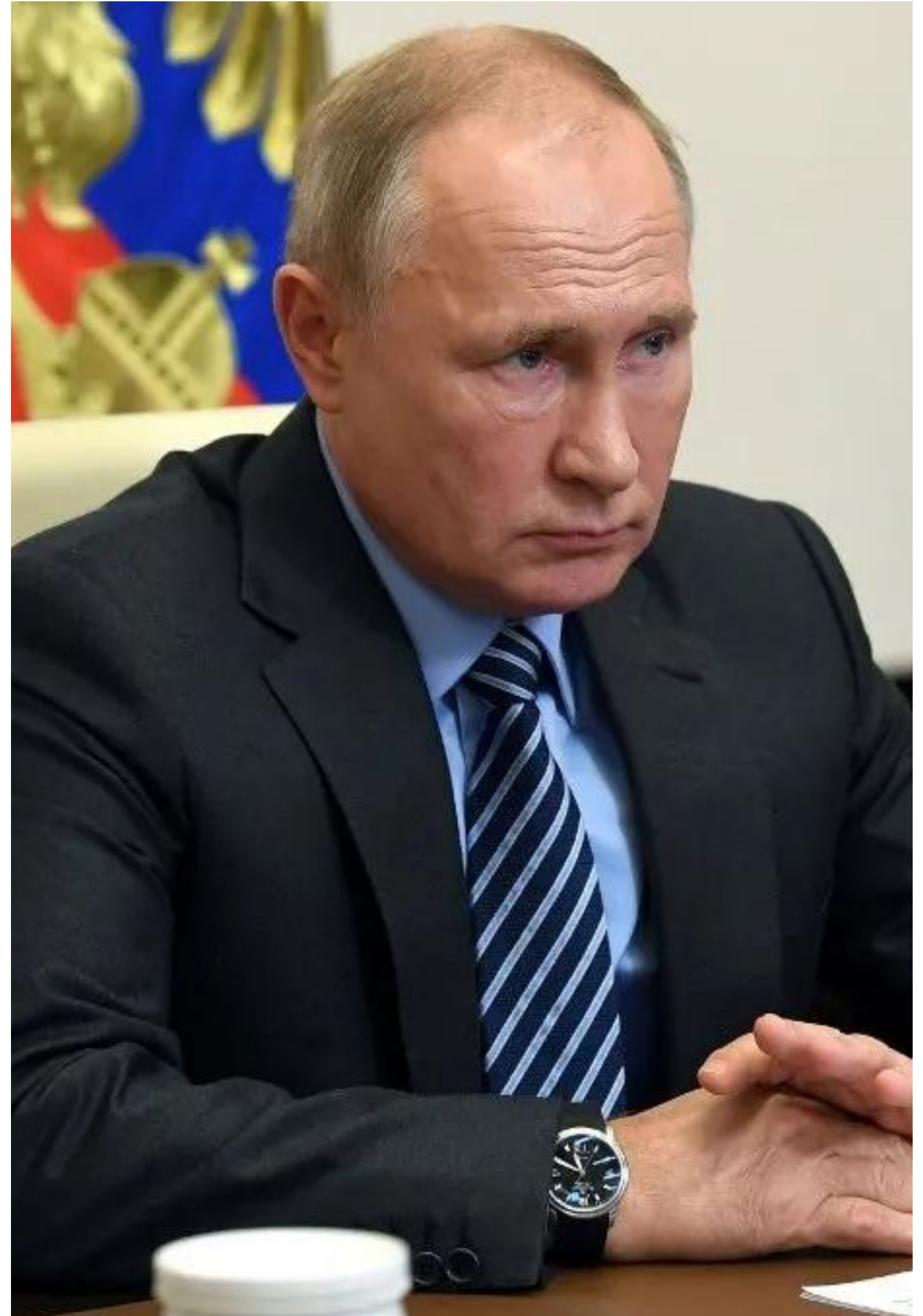
Russia staying away from the expected policy causes the post-Soviet countries to develop bilateral and multilateral relations with countries such as the EU. Moreover, there are developments such as Ukraine and Moldova entering the EU's sphere of influence, Azerbaijan acting independently on energy and making an agreement with the EU. Likewise, the increasing influence of China in the Central Asia reveals that Beijing wants to fill the power vacuum formed by Russia. Based on all these developments, it can be predicted that Moscow will face a deep crisis.

It can be argued that Russia will make some moves to get out of this vortex. In this context, while Moscow continues its energy policy, which it primarily uses against the EU; it will provide energy supply to other countries by resorting to alternative ways and thus will try to survive in the economic context. In addition, Russia will try to make its presence felt in the Caucasus by taking an active role in ending of the conflicts on the Azerbaijan-Armenia line so that the feeling of losing its influence does not arise. It can be stated that Moscow will emphasize mutual cooperation and alliance initiatives by conducting its economic, military and political relations with Central Asian countries through international organizations. The latest mobilization statement of the Moscow administration and the statements of the leaders of Kazakhstan, Belarus and Serbia point that this war is not only for Russia and Ukraine; this war also points to a serious crisis for the survival of the entire world.

As a result, while it is predicted that the winner of the ongoing war in Ukraine will be Russia, it can be said that Russia will be the loser in the post-war period. The invasion attempt carried out by Moscow caused Western states and countries in the post-Soviet geography to question their relations with the Kremlin. This situation will lead to a decrease in the influence of Russia. In fact, the current conjuncture will make it difficult for Russia to be the leading actor in the new international system, which is in the pain of formation. At this point, Moscow's statements aimed at turning the process into a war of survival clearly indicate that Russia will not be the only loser in this war. Therefore, the Russia-Ukraine War is evolving into a war that the whole world will lose.

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## ANKASAM OUTLOOK

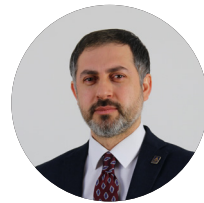
# The Rearmament of Ukraine and the Attitude of the Allies

On 8-10 September, 2022, two important visits took place to Kiev, the capital of Ukraine. Prior to these confidential contacts, no information on the subject was given. The first of these visits was organized by the United States (US) Secretary of State, Anthony Blinken, on 8 September 2022. Blinken, who reached Kiev by taking an 11-hour train journey, met with senior Ukrainian officials, especially Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba.

The US Secretary of State's visit to Ukraine followed the International Atomic Energy Agency's (IAEA) calls to establish a security zone around the conflict-damaged and Russian-controlled

Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant. One week before the visit, that is, on September 1, 2022, a group of IAEA experts visited the station in question.

It has been stated that Blinken aims to support Ukraine with this visit. The US, including the other 18 members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), has announced that it will provide a total of \$2 billion in long-term military aid to Ukraine. The aid reveals that it will exceed the \$675 million package of heavy weapons, ammunition and armored vehicles mentioned by US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin.<sup>i</sup> It was



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previously learned that Washington will send additional shells for the light multiple rocket launcher system HIMARS to Ukraine.<sup>ii</sup> As is known, comments are made that HIMARS has the potential to change the course of conflicts.<sup>iii</sup>

On September 8, 2022, when Blinken visited Kiev, the NATO Summit began at the Ramstein Air Base in Germany. At the meeting in Germany, Austin announced an aid package worth \$675 million dollars for Ukraine. Even after this statement, Ukraine launched a large-scale attack near Kharkov. In addition, the Commander of the Ukrainian Armed Forces, General Valery Zaluzhny, has published an article on how they can defeat Russia with the support of the USA.<sup>iv</sup> Ukraine's offense against Russia in the Kharkov and Kherson regions was appreciated by the USA and NATO, and it was stated that more assistance would be provided to the Kiev administration.<sup>v</sup> In other words, Ukraine's success in the conflict area has influenced the decisions of NATO countries to help.

Ukrainian Defense Minister Oleksiy Reznikov stated that at least six new Ukrainian Army brigades, mainly mechanized, tank and airborne troops, will begin training in Poland and other European countries in the future. At the same time, he said that a "three-level air defense system" will be built with the help of Western countries, and that NATO will arm Ukraine continuously and consistently.<sup>vi</sup>

Two days after the NATO Summit, German Foreign Minister Annalena Burbock, who, like Blinken, secretly went to Kiev by train, only met with her counterpart Kuleba. Burbock said that with the visit in question, they aimed to show that the Ukrainian authorities can continue to trust Germany. In addition to this, Burbock stated that they will "continue to provide humanitarian, financial and military assistance to Ukraine if necessary." Moreover, it was learned that Burbock promised support in the meeting to help with mine clearance and combat war crimes committed.<sup>vii</sup>

During the meeting, Kuleba once again raised the issue of the delivery of German Leopard-2 tanks to Kiev, but Burbock refrained from responding to this. It is known that Germany has been supplying Kiev with heavy weapons for a long time, and it is stated that it will soon supply ten Gepard air defense systems.<sup>viii</sup> However, on September 6, 2022, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz said that none of the NATO allies had supplied modern tanks to Ukraine, so it is not surprising that Germany is acting with a similar approach.<sup>ix</sup>

Within the scope of the program launched, against the attitude of Germany, England announced that it would take part in the training of 30 thousand military personnel attached to the Ukrainian Armed Forces. The statement in question reveals that the attitudes of Germany and England on Ukraine are different.

The fact that Ukraine has achieved a certain success in its ground operations against Russia has been influential in Kiev's receiving serious support from NATO countries, especially the USA. The USA and England do not want Ukraine to be defeated in its ongoing war with Russia, and therefore are trying to give serious support to Ukraine. However, each of the states in question, which have similar approaches, at the same time continues to implement its own policy and give priority to its own interests.

When the Russian-Ukrainian War ends, the UK aspires to be effective in the Black Sea region and Eastern Europe. The USA, on the other hand, does not make such a limitation as it is already effective in the whole of Europe. Germany, on the other hand, sees Eastern Europe as its sphere of influence. The Berlin administration is trying to implement its policy in Eastern Europe by also taking Russia into account. At this point, UK's difference from Germany is that it pursues an "anti-Russian" policy that requires completely taking sides with Ukraine.

Unlike the USA and the UK, another reason for Germany's insistence on not supplying weapons to Ukraine is related to Russia's energy resources. Because the fact that the Moscow administration has cut off the natural gas exported to Europe resulted in an increase in energy prices in Germany.

Berlin's policy of military support towards Ukraine can be read in two ways: First of all, Germany is sending a message to Moscow by not providing the weapons demanded by Kiev, and it expects Russia to take a step back on energy. Secondly, the visit of the Foreign Minister of Germany to Kiev is again a message to Russia, indicating that if Kremlin does not change its energy policy, offensive weapons can

be supplied to Ukraine.

The gains that Ukraine has made in some regions and the relative failure of Russia have both excited and mobilized the NATO member states as well as the Kiev government. It has also caused a rivalry between the countries. As a matter of fact, being on the side of a Ukraine running to victory will give the impression of a successful foreign policy. The countries in question will use this both in their domestic public opinion and when the Russian-Ukrainian War comes to an end, they will rise to the position of country that has a say in the region.

The energy crisis in Europe is leading to criticism of the authorities. Highlighting the victory of the Ukrainian Army over Russia will serve as a defense against those who criticize the governments of the countries that support Kiev. Because the cause of the energy crisis in Europe is the Russia-Ukraine War. The prolongation of the conflict in question is also seen as supporting Ukraine and confronting Russia. In this context, the success of Ukraine will allow the criticisms in question to be pushed into the background.

Despite all this, the answer to the question of whether Germany will provide arms assistance to Ukraine remains unclear. However, it should be emphasized that it is obvious that the Berlin administration does not ignore the scenarios in which weapons aid to Ukraine will provide them with political gains.

As a result, Ukraine is trying to determine a new war strategy. For this, it needs the support of NATO member states. Most of the NATO member actors are ready to provide such support. This also encourages other countries as well. It is still unclear how successful the offensive movement initiated by Ukraine will be. However, offensive movements may trigger the other side to launch a similar attack. Therefore, Russia's war capacity and tactical calculations will determine this. If the offensive of the Ukrainian Army continues and Russia cannot resist it, it will become clear that the power of the Moscow administration has decreased. In such a picture, it can be predicted that Western countries, enjoying the victory, will increase their arms aid to Ukraine.

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iii "“Каждая попытка уничтожить HIMARS будет стоить России дорого”. Украинский эксперт объясняет, как новое оружие влияет на события на фронте”, Nastoyaşaya Vremya, <https://www.currenttime.tv/a/ukrainskiy-ekspert-obyasnyayet-kak-novoe-oruzhie-vliyaet-na-sobytiya-na-fronte/31949159.html>, (Date of Accession: 12.09.2022).

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## ANKASAM OUTLOOK

# Pelosi's Visit to Armenia

Nancy Pelosi, Speaker of the United States (US) House of Representatives, visited Yerevan on September 18, 2022. Although this visit was planned about a month ago, the fact that it corresponded to a period of border conflicts between Azerbaijan and Armenia increased the importance of the visit even more. For this reason, Pelosi's visit has become remarkable in terms of showing the attitude of the USA in Caucasus-centered developments and has been closely followed by the international public opinion.

During her visit, Pelosi harshly condemned Baku and claimed that Azerbaijan committed the violation of the ceasefire.[1] Undoubtedly, this statement, aside from the USA's support for Armenia and the end of the conflicts; on the contrary, it shows that it is in an expectation of exacerbation. Because, referring to the Ukraine War, the US House of Representatives underlined that they were in the middle of a war between "democracies and autocracies" during its speech in Yerevan, and then described Armenia on the side of democracies.[2]



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Based on the emphasis on the war in Ukraine, it can be said that Pelosi's visit had two purposes. The first of these is the discomfort created in the USA by the new status quo created in the Caucasus by the Moscow Declaration that ended the Second Karabakh War and signed on November 10, 2020. As it is known, the Second Karabakh War resulted in the rightful victory of the Azerbaijan Army and the normalization processes in the region gained momentum.

The pursuit of normalization came to the fore with the call of Türkiye and Azerbaijan at the victory ceremony held in Baku on 10 December 2020. This call basically included the regional states to solve the regional problems among themselves and thus the prevention of non-regional actors from intervening in the region. In this context, the "Six Cooperation Platform" formulated as "3+3" has started to be discussed.

Basically, this platform means the liquidation of the Minsk Trio of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). As it is known, the OSCE Minsk Trio could not produce a concrete result in terms of ending the occupation and solving the Karabakh conflict through peaceful means, despite the United Nations (UN) decisions in favor of Azerbaijan during the thirty-year occupation period. As a matter of fact, as of November 10, 2020, Azerbaijan liberated its territories recognized by international law by force and succeeded in creating a status quo in accordance with UN resolutions. The processes carried out for the "Six Cooperation Platform" in the new process led to the exclusion of the OSCE Minsk Trio, and therefore the USA and France, from the equation in the Caucasus. Therefore, Pelosi wanted to turn the recent conflicts into opportunities. In other words, trying to maintain its effectiveness in the global system through crises; that is, the USA, fed by the conflicts, has tried to increase its influence in Armenian politics through the conflicts in Karabakh. The statements of the Speaker of the US House of Representatives also confirm this.

The second point that should be noted about the visit is that Pelosi felt the need to support Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan. After the clashes, Pashinyan announced that he wanted to sign a ceasefire agreement and nationalist sections in Armenia started to street protests. This situation causes Pashinyan, who is claimed to have close relations with the George Soros Foundation, to weaken politically. Currently, Pashinyan is known as a pro-Western politician. The "Velvet Revolution", in which he came to power in his country, can also be defined as a part of the process of color revolutions seen in post-Soviet countries. Therefore, the USA thinks that if Pashinyan is overthrown, pro-Russian factions will come to power in Armenia. There is no doubt that; such a situation would mean an increase in Moscow's influence over Yerevan. This may cause Washington to face a scenario that it does not want to face. However, it should be underlined that Pashinyan is not as useful a politician as Pelosi thinks. Because the Armenian leader is warmly approaching the normalization processes in the region and knows that opening to the West depends on the success of the regional normalization processes. This means that the USA cannot achieve its goal in this sense.

As stated above, the USA builds its leadership over the global system on crises. For this reason, Pelosi, who created a crisis in the Asia-Pacific Region by visiting Taiwan on August 2, 2022, tried to prevent the end of the current crisis with her visit to Armenia on September 18, 2022. However, it should be emphasized that the issue is not limited to American foreign policy. Because Pelosi's visits also have an aspect related with the American domestic politics. As is known, midterm elections will be held in the USA on November 8, 2022. On these elections, the entire House of Representatives, one-third of the Senate and 36 State Governors will change. American politics, on the other hand, is shaped mainly by the support of lobbies and diasporas. Pelosi is also a candidate in those elections. Therefore, Pelosi's visits also aim to gain the support of lobby and diaspora groups. As a matter of fact, Taiwan has been a specially chosen choice due to the large number of wealthy businesspeople living in the USA. On this visit, the Washington administration did

not only challenge Beijing; at the same time, the ruling Democrats have strengthened their hand in Taiwan policy, which the Republicans harshly criticized.

Undoubtedly, a similar situation had an impact on Pelosi's visit to Armenia. Because the USA is one of the countries where the Armenian Diaspora is the strongest. Democrats, on the other hand, care about the support of diaspora Armenians. That's why Vice President of the US Kamala Harris declared that she would recognize the so-called "Armenian Genocide" allegations during Joe Biden's candidacy and used this as an election material. Later, Biden, in his statement on April 24, 2022, used the term "genocide" about the 1915 Events<sup>[3]</sup> and did not hesitate to distort history for political gain. In short, democrats care about the support of the Armenian Diaspora for the continuity of their power. In this sense, the upcoming by-elections have been influential in the realization of Pelosi's visit to Yerevan.

As a result, the Speaker of the US House of Representatives visited Armenia to return to the equation of the region from which USA was excluded after the Second Karabakh War in the Caucasus, to show its solidarity with the Pashinyan administration, which it saw as close to him, and to get the support of diaspora Armenians before the upcoming midterm elections. However, this visit once again revealed the hegemony built by the USA on crises. Therefore, the USA is no longer capable of building a secure, prosperous, and peaceful order in the international system. It is known that the best response to the attempts of the regional states, especially the Washington administration, to shape the regional geopolitics is through regional cooperation. In fact, the "Six Cooperation Platform" proposal has also emerged as a product of this awareness.

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[2] Ibid.

[3] "Statement by President Joe Biden on Armenian Remembrance Day", The White House, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/04/24/statement-by-president-joe-biden-on-armenian-remembrance-day/>, (Date of Accession: 20.09.2022).

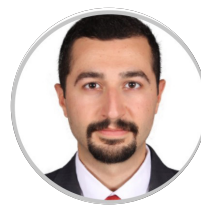


## ANKASAM OUTLOOK

# The Role of Crypto Assets in the Energy Crisis in Kosovo

The energy crisis, which had profound effects in Europe and the Balkans due to Russia's occupation of Ukraine, caused Kosovo to not be able to import enough energy due to high energy prices. Regular power cuts were implemented throughout the country. The KEDS energy distribution company, which is active in the country, publicly announced that after every six hours of electricity distribution, there will be a two-hour power outage.[1]

Since coal is the only energy source that can be used adequately in Kosovo, energy production activity in the coal plant has been increased. Kosovo has the world's fifth largest lignite reserves, estimated at around 14 billion tons.[2] In the country where 1.8 million people live, the average price for imported unit electricity in 2021 increased by about 40% compared to the previous year. In the first half of 2022, the situation



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was dire as almost half of Kosovo's coal plants underwent regular pre-winter maintenance. About two-thirds of the electricity needed by the country had been produced based on coal. The increase in coal-based production capacity has caused air pollution.

In August 2022, the Kosovo Parliament declared a sixty-day state of emergency that allowed the government to take swift and drastic measures against power outages. Starting from August, the country has been experiencing regular power cuts seen in December 2021. In this process, the separation of the Serbian minority in Kosovo with the government on the use of electricity increased the tension in relations with Serbia. Later, with the energy supplied from Albania, the electricity crisis was partially taken under control.

Four regions in Northern Kosovo (North Mitrovica, Zvecan, Zubin Potok and Leposavic) have not paid Kosovo for electricity since 1999. This energy issue has also been on the agenda during the Kosovo-Serbia normalization process, which developed under the mediation of the European Union (EU). As a matter of fact, in 2015, the ground was prepared for a Belgrade-based energy company to provide electricity transmission to four regions. Then, since Serbia did not recognize Kosovo, the relevant company was not registered in the Kosovo registry and then electricity transmission was stopped. In the following process, the Kosovar KOSTT company became the energy supplying company to these four regions. KOSTT has been a part of ENTSO-E, which forms the joint energy bloc with Albania since December 2020.

KOSTT, the electricity transmission network operator of Kosovo, has announced to the public that it will not provide free electricity transmission to four regions where Serbs are concentrated, since a significant majority of electricity consumers consume electricity, in the regions where Serbs are densely populated, but do not pay for it[3]

In the ongoing process, Russia's reduction in energy supply and Kosovo's energy imports at much higher prices have developed the government's reflex to intervene in activities that consume electricity, except for compulsory transactions within the country. Ultimately, in December 2021, a sixty-day state of emergency was declared, allowing the government to allocate more funds to energy imports, electricity cuts and drastic measures.

Crypto asset miners in Kosovo faced government intervention in the country's energy crisis. Kosovo Economy Minister Artane Rizvanolli announced the government decision on 24 December 2021 to restrict electricity supply in the country. With the step taken by Rizvanolli on January 4, 2022, crypto-asset mining in the country was banned as part of the extraordinary measures taken due to electricity shortages.

There are serious doubts about the legal basis of the ban on crypto asset mining in Kosovo. Because, although the extraordinary measures taken by the government impose limitations on electricity generation, they do not contain a regulation regarding the inability to use electricity consumption for crypto-asset mining. A week after Kosovo banned crypto asset mining, the Kosovo Police announced that seventy crypto asset mining devices were seized at two different locations, mainly in the Southern Mitrovica and Podojeve regions. However, no arrests were made in these operations.

Chairman of the Economic Board of the Kosovo Parliament, Ferat Shala, stated that most of the activities related to crypto assets in the country take place in the northern part of Kosovo in Serbian densely populated areas. Shala also stated that crypto-asset mining, which is associated with energy costs in the north, has accelerated the work on crypto-asset regulation in the country. Again, according to Shala, with the regulation, everyone serving in the relevant sector will know that official institutions monitor and control the activities and will be subject to the relevant laws.

According to the information provided by the Balkan Investigative Journalism Network (BIRN), many houses and garages have been rented to mine crypto assets due to the free electricity service that has been used in northern Kosovo for 22 years.[4] According to Reuters, an anonymous crypto-asset mining person in the north of Kosovo obtained 2400 euros of crypto assets for 170 euros of electricity paid to engage in crypto-asset mining activity.[5] Also, according to Reuters, crypto-assets miners in northern Kosovo are usually Serbs



who live in the region, not recognizing Kosovo as a state and refusing to pay for electricity.

Crypto asset miners in northern Kosovo may have been subsidized by around 40 million euros from 2018-2021, thanks to the transmission of electricity with some form of government subsidy.[6] This business has become very attractive and profitable for crypto-asset mining people in Kosovo, especially as the “transaction difficulty” in the blockchains of crypto assets mined due to Chinese interventions in crypto-asset mining has decreased.

Undoubtedly, due to rising energy prices in the world and increasing crypto asset regulations, areas that are still gray in this regard, such as the north of Kosovo, will remain attractive to crypto asset miners, even if it is illegal. In particular, the states that are subject to severe financial isolation, such as Russia, may support activities in such gray areas for distributed data retention networks and require that the registers of “permissionless” blockchains that they can use be kept by miners in the relevant gray areas. In other words, keeping crypto-asset mining or “validating” active in gray zones around the world will benefit financially isolated states. However, due to the shallow liquidity of crypto asset markets, serious financial benefits will not be obtained by using crypto assets.

In short, Kosovo has been adversely affected by energy shortages and rising prices, which have increased significantly because of the political and financial polarizations in the world with the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Due to the special political situation of Kosovo, people living in the four provinces in the north of the country where Serbs are concentrated have not de facto paid electricity charges for years, although they consume electricity. However, due to the serious electrical energy problem in the country in 2021-2022, the Kosovo Government has been given extraordinary powers regarding electrical energy. In Kosovo, energy production based on lignite coal has been accelerated, based on the country's own resources. Again, due to the current electricity shortage, regular power cuts were implemented in the country. In addition to all these, crypto-asset mining activities using free or very cheap electricity are prohibited in the north of the country. The devices of many crypto-asset miners were confiscated.

As a result, the developments experienced accelerated the crypto-asset regulation studies in the country. Although Kosovo has banned crypto asset mining in the socially conflicted northern regions, this activity will somehow continue. Because crypto-asset mining activities in geographies that can be defined as “grey zone” allow other sovereign states in the world to continue to keep their books on public blockchains.

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## ANKASAM OUTLOOK

# The Impact of the Energy Crisis on the EU and the Balkans

The Covid-19 epidemic, which left its mark in 2019-2020, made its impact felt worldwide, causing a significant economic crisis, especially in the Western Balkans and Europe. However, Russia's war on Ukraine in 2022 has dragged the region into more chaos. Leaders on the European continent, who had a weak belief that such a hot conflict would occur in the 21st century, had difficulties dealing with the situation and decided to impose sanctions on Russia.

The European Union (EU) has imposed a partial embargo on crude oil and petroleum products imported from Russia, and a ban on insurance for shipping, within the framework of sanctions. The Europeans set out on this path, considering the difficulty of reducing the weight of Russian oil in the market and reducing the export revenues of the Moscow administration without harming their people. However, at present, it is difficult to say that Russia was intimidated by sanctions.



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Russia, which was thought to be affected by the sanctions at the beginning of the process, did not face the expected results, as well as having cuts in gas exports to some regions, leaving European and Balkan countries in a difficult situation. The Kremlin, which pushed Europe to turn to alternative energy sources, had no difficulty finding other buyers. Russia, which imports gas and oil at a discount to certain countries, especially Myanmar, China, and India, has prevented its income from energy from falling below a certain level.[1]

The energy rate imported by Germany, which can transport gas to its country from Russia via the Nord Stream-1 Pipeline route, decreased from 50% to 30%.[2] Russian President Vladimir Putin, who used his energy card in response to the EU's sanctions, made a counter move to overcome the pressure of sanctions. Because the sanctions, which were expected to discourage the Moscow government from its aggression, revealed the dependence of Europe and the Balkans on Russia in terms of energy.

Russia has not only threatened energy security with its aggressive stance. In the period when the food, environment, migration, and economic crisis were experienced at almost the same time, countries wanted to feel the protection of the EU and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), which they saw as a security umbrella, without being more exposed to the rain of threats.

Since the beginning of the war, along with Ukraine, which has expressed its desire to become a member of the EU, Moldova was given the status of a candidate country and a European perspective to Georgia.[3] In addition, states such as Sweden and Finland, which are known to be relatively neutral and pro-peace, have started to move in a different direction from their usual foreign policy understanding by applying for membership in NATO.[4]

The events were not limited to these, but there was a migration flow from Ukraine to European countries. Considering the migration corridor stretching from the Middle East and African countries to Europe, it can be understood that the migration has now become a security issue. It has been observed that xenophobia and the far right have risen rapidly in the public opinion of these countries. The experiences show how realpolitik practices have dropped states into a web of anxiety spreading like a virus.[5]

The latest move by Western states to impose sanctions has been the G7 countries' bringing the ceiling price application to the agenda. In this sense, while setting a specific limit on the price of oil and even gas purchased from Russia is on the agenda, efforts to include China and India are continuing in the decision that is considered. While Russia has a prominent and influential market like China, any Western restriction will not have the expected effect in the short run. However, China has made it clear that it will not stand by the West, saying that it does not find the resolution envisaged to be implemented as peaceful. On the other hand, India announced that it would not be a partner in the sanction because it could buy oil cheaply from Russia.

Although China, which is a substantial market for Russian gas, keeps Moscow alive even during the war, the Kremlin will also be in a difficult situation after a point due to its infrastructure deficiencies. It is expected that the EU will show the same solidarity by increasing investments in renewable energy sources and signing some practices to stop the worsening of the environment and climate crisis.

On the Balkans side, the economic crisis that shook the region showed itself in the country's gross domestic product (GDP). According to the data from the World Bank, the GDP revenues of the countries in the Balkans decreased by approximately 3.2% in 2020.[6] The global increase in energy prices has blocked the way towards the goals of the Green Agenda, which is intended to be implemented in the Western Balkans region and serves the purposes of ensuring energy security and protecting the environment. For this reason, cooperation with European states has gained importance, and the need for coordination between the region's countries has emerged.

The Ukraine Crisis has entirely threatened the already fragile energy security of the Western Balkans. It is known that the region has been experiencing periodic power outages for a while. Except for Albania, whose primary energy source is hydroelectricity, most Western Balkan countries derive their energy predominantly from fossil fuels, especially coal. Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and North Macedonia heavily depend on Russia for gas. Although all Western Balkan countries, except Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia, have participated in EU sanctions against Russia, since they use gas at a limited level, the Russian administration did not cut off the energy resources of these countries by acting with a retaliatory mentality, as it did with the EU countries. Thus, although they were not directly affected by the increasing gas prices, the high cost of imported electricity is an indication that the Western Balkans will emerge from

the crisis with damage. It is usual for the Western Balkan states to follow the regulations and policies of the union by turning their direction to the EU to ensure their energy security. Such a move is significant for the Green Agenda, which envisages the transition to renewable energy. At the same time, just like Europe, they are expected to turn to alternative energy sources. Because Russia's Power of Siberia-1 Pipeline, which transmits energy to China, has a specific capacity. When the war ends Russia may take many years to build other pipelines. However, Europe and the Balkans also have energy routes, such as the Southern Gas Corridor, waiting to be used more actively. Europe has demonstrated its will to diversify its energy resources by importing natural gas from Norway.

Many Western Balkans states rely mainly on coal-fired power plants to meet their energy needs. However, using these plants jeopardizes countries' capacity to meet the commitments set out in the European Green Deal. However, due to the difficulties brought by the energy crisis, the mentioned states will have to continue to use coal, at least for a while. North Macedonia and Kosovo, for example, have announced that they will postpone their plans to phase out coal-fired power plants over the next few years.

To get rid of the energy crisis, it can be foreseen that the Western Balkan states will develop cooperation with each other. It is on the agenda that they do this, especially by preparing joint investment projects in the use of renewable energy and by ensuring the integration of electricity and gas markets. However, the fact that some countries, such as Bulgaria, which have changed their domestic politics, turn their faces to Russia again may undermine the cooperation.[7]

Within the framework of the actions taken against Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the European Commission presented its proposal called REPowerEU to reduce the EU's dependence on Russian fossil fuels by two-thirds by the end of 2022 and to end this dependence entirely before 2030.[8] The proposed policy demonstrates a critical shift in the EU's approach to energy problems. Of course, this will also have a significant impact on the energy sector of the Balkans. Within the plan's framework, it is foreseen to accelerate the transition to clean energy sources, invest in liquefied gas terminals and other gas infrastructure, and thus accelerate the activities to diversify the energy supply.

Considering the aims and method of this project, it can be predicted that the Balkans will become an essential corridor for Europe's energy supply in the medium and long term. Looking to the the various pipelines connecting EU countries to ener-

gy-rich countries such as Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan around the Caspian Sea, and reaching the Balkans and Europe through South Stream, passing through Türkiye, the importance of the region is understandable. It will not be surprising if the EU uses this situation and builds transportation networks for natural gas and crude oil in the Balkans. The gas pipeline named "Interconnector Greece-Bulgaria" (IGB), which has already been opened, reflects this perspective.

After all, looking at the EU's changing energy policy, it can be said that the countries in the region first understand how risky it is to become dependent on a state in a vital sector such as energy. It can be stated that the West has a more comprehensive approach to energy security and tries to find a solution by addressing the problem of the climate crisis. As a matter of fact, after what happened during the process, the region is not ready to host climate migrants. It can be said that the steps taken by the EU and the Balkans to accelerate the transition to renewable energy sources by acting together against Russia, the attempts to renew the energy legislation, and the moves to accelerate the connections to be built are quite normal because these developments are the manifestation of the effort to overcome the energy crisis.

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[6] The World Bank, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/home>, (Date of Accession: 15.09.2022).

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[8] "REPowerEU: Affordable, Secure and Sustainable Energy for Europe", European Commission, [https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal/repowereu-affordable-secure-and-sustainable-energy-europe\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal/repowereu-affordable-secure-and-sustainable-energy-europe_en) (Date of Accession: 15.09.2022).





## ANKASAM OUTLOOK

# Kyrgyz-Tajik Border Conflicts and Security Risks

In a statement on 16 September 2022 regarding the border conflicts between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan that started on 14 September 2022, the Ministry of Health of Kyrgyzstan announced that 163 people were injured and 59 people died.<sup>i</sup> According to the official statement made on the same day from Tajikistan, 46 people lost their lives.<sup>ii</sup> Due to the conflicts, approximately 150 thousand people were evacuated from Batken and Leylek towns of Kyrgyzstan and Isfara.

As it is known, after the collapse of the Soviet Union between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, there have been frequent border conflicts, which are still continuing. The main reason for this is that the borders between the parties have not been determined and both countries have claims on some border regions. Despite this, it is possible to say that the parties have a strong will to resolve the issue. It is also possible to see this situation from the approach of the two heads of



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state who came together at the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Leaders' Summit held in the historical city of Samarkand in Uzbekistan on September 15-16, 2022.

As it will be remembered, the President of Tajikistan, Mr. Emomali Rahmon, made it clear that he favored solving the problems on the Kyrgyz-Tajik border through negotiations during a meeting with the local people in the border town of Isfara on April 17, 2022. In addition, 663.7 km of the 987 km border line; that is, 68.4% said that a consensus was reached on the point of determination. In addition, Rahmon emphasized that seeking a mutually beneficial solution takes time and requires patience.

Similarly, on April 16, 2022, President of Kyrgyzstan Mr. Sadyr Japarov announced that an agreement had been reached on 664 km of the 972 km border between the two countries. Japarov stated that 308 km of the border issue is still unsolved and that the process is progressing slowly, and therefore it is important not to fall for provocations.

However, it is seen that the border conflicts between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan have intensified in the last few years. Although some negotiations were made by providing a ceasefire thanks to the leaders who acted with common sense during the conflict periods, the frequent conflicts make the ceasefire fragile.

Despite this, the continuation of consultations between border commissions reflects a constructive stance. As a matter of fact, a meeting was held at the Guliston-Avtodorozhnyy checkpoint of Tajikistan on March 12, 2022. The Kyrgyz side was represented by the Head of The Border Guard Service of the State Committee for National Security, Commander of the Border Troops of the State Committee, Ularbek Sharsheev, and the Plenipotentiary Representative of the Batken Region, Abdikarim Alimbayev. Tajikistan was represented by National Security Officer Rajabali Rahmonali and Sughd Region President Rajabboy Ahmadzoda. After the negotiations, the parties announced that they had reached an agreement on some issues. The issues that were agreed upon were:

The parties agreed to take strict measures to implement intergovernmental agreements and protocols on the coordination of efforts to prevent incidents in the border regions of the two countries.

The border representatives of the two countries agreed to carry out explanatory work between the military personnel and to take care not to give in to the provocations of the them. In that sense, the parties declared that they will adopt a more constructive attitude in possible crisis situations.

It has been decided that the border representatives of the parties will be in constant communication.

Military personnel of the two countries are prohibited from using weapons, except as required by the legal regulations of both sides.

After the meeting between the delegations, Batken and Sughd Regional Representatives held a separate meeting and discussed the economic activities of the people living in the border regions of the two countries. It is extremely important that these decisions, and therefore the sensitive approach that is far from emotional, are also displayed in current conflicts in terms of preventing a great war.

As it is known, the border problems between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan and the territorial claims that came to the agenda; are the water problem, smuggling activities and the threat of occupation by armed groups, especially terrorist organizations, which frequently bring the two countries face to face.

Due to these problems, tensions are rising among the people living in the region. As it will be remembered, approximately 20 people from both sides lost their lives in the armed conflict in border regions such as Ak-Say, Ak-Tatir and Samarkandir in April 2021. In addition, 150 people were injured.

Similarly, on January 27, 2022, Tajikistan decided to close the Batken-Isfana highway of the Tort-Koço campus of the Batken district, after which the Kyrgyz border forces tried to prevent this attempt. Thus, conflicts broke out in the region once again. However, also at that time, a ceasefire was reached after the negotiations between the parties that took care to act in common sense. In the context of the ceasefire, the agreement was reached on the following issues:

Ensuring a complete ceasefire

Both sides withdraw their soldiers to barracks

Opening of traffic on the Batken-Isfana road

Joint patrol in the border regions of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan law enforcement to prevent conflicts

In addition, the parties agreed to establish a joint commission to detect conflicts in the border regions. In short, both Bishkek and Dushanbe prevent the crises from growing with their peaceful and constructive attitude, despite the examples where the conflict has turned into hot conflicts. Despite this, 70 settlements on the Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan border are still in dispute.

On the other hand, one of the most important reasons why the border disputes that marked the Tajikistan-Kyrgyzstan relations could not be resolved is the equal power of the parties. Because neither side can put pressure on the other, nor does it want to make concessions. Moreover, the absence of mutual dependence between the parties and the absence of processes based on economic-commercial cooperation also prevent the crisis from being overcome. But both Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan are aware of this situation. Therefore, it can be predicted that the negotiation processes between the two countries will be strengthened by relations that will create mutual economic dependence.

As a result, the tension between the parties will not end, and conflicts will occur from time to time until the borders between the two countries are determined. Although the parties have declared that they want to solve the border problems by peaceful methods, there is a need to support this with economic processes. Undoubtedly, such a step would remove the Fergana Valley from being an area of instability and conflict; will turn it into a basin of peace.

i "Вторжение в Кыргызстан. Пострадавших 163, погибших 59", 24KG, [https://24.kg/proisshestvija/245566\\_vtorjenie\\_vkyrgyzstan\\_postradavshih\\_163\\_pogibshih59/](https://24.kg/proisshestvija/245566_vtorjenie_vkyrgyzstan_postradavshih_163_pogibshih59/), (Date of Accession : 19.09.2022).

ii "МИД Таджикистана: "Акт агрессии Кыргызстана против Таджикистана был заранее спланированной акцией"", AsiaPlus, <https://asiaplustj.info/ru/news/tajikistan/20220919/mid-tadzhikistana-akt-agressii-kirgizstana-protiv-tadzhikistana-bil-zaranee-splanirovannoi-aktsiei>, (Date of Accession: 19.09.2022).



## ANKASAM OUTLOOK

# Russia's New Move in Ukraine War: Partial Mobilization

In the Russia-Ukraine War, which started on February 24, 2022, the Moscow administration could not achieve as many concrete successes as it had planned in the Kremlin, and at this point, it was seen that the Ukrainian Army attacked in Kherson in the south and Kharkiv in the north. It is also observed that the Russian Army has withdrawn from various regions in the face of the increasing influence of Ukraine, which is understood to have reached the offensive capacity as a result of the military and

financial aids of the West. Therefore, Russia is faced with a very negative situation for itself, where things are not going well in the war that has been going on for seven months. In this context, the Moscow administration thinks that the "General Winter," which has worked in its favor throughout history, may turn into a factor that will make it difficult this time. That's why Russian President Vladimir Putin felt the need to take a preventive step.



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As a reflection of this need, the leader of Russia announced that he had declared a “partial mobilization” with his statement on September 21, 2022.<sup>i</sup> “Citizens who are currently in reserve will be called up for military service, especially those who served in the Russian Army in the past,” Putin said in a statement that is related with the situation.<sup>ii</sup> In fact, the words of the Russian President reveal that the Moscow administration is facing a serious crisis in terms of the sustainability of the war in Ukraine. Because this statement clearly reveals the personnel needs of the Russian Army. As a matter of fact, after Putin, Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu also stated that 300,000 reserve soldiers would be called to duty, confirming this situation.<sup>iii</sup>

As it can be understood, the Moscow administration showed that the recent withdrawals in various regions in Ukraine with the decision of “partial mobilization” were implemented to gain time, and gave the message that Russia had any thought but to gain a victory that would present its own people as a victory in the Ukrainian War. But the issue is not limited to this. Because the real message given by Putin can be summarized as “If Russia loses, the whole world loses.”

In fact, the Moscow administration has been giving this message from time to time since the beginning of the war. Because the Kremlin has expressed its readiness to use nuclear weapons many times since the beginning of the war.<sup>iv</sup> Moreover, the war in Ukraine is not just about nuclear weapons; the fact that nuclear power plants can also be used as a weapon has increased the risks.

Accordingly, Moscow makes such moves is related to the Russian interpretation of the Russia-Ukraine War as the Russo-Western War in the main. Frankly, considering the support of Western states to Ukraine, it cannot be said that this is wrong understanding. The role of the Western military and financial aid to the Kyiv administration in Ukraine’s reaching the offensive capacity is undeniable.

At this point, Putin used the phrases that “The West is trying to destroy our country... The West is using nuclear blackmail against us... I am telling the West, we have many weapons to respond to.” This is not bluffing.<sup>v</sup> In his assessment of the Russia-West War, during his “partial mobilization” statement, In fact, when the statements of the Russian leader are considered together with the warnings from the leaders of Kazakhstan, Belarus and Serbia <sup>vi</sup> and especially Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic’s assertion that a war with worldwide conflicts is approaching<sup>vii</sup> points to the possibility of a process in which the whole world

will be the loser. As a matter of fact, on the occasion of Russia’s “partial mobilization” decision, to mobilize for the first time after the Second World War is also extremely important in terms of reflecting the seriousness of the issue.<sup>viii</sup>

On the other hand, it can be said that this step of Russia, which will escalate the war in Ukraine and the tension with the West, aims to deepen the energy crisis in Europe. As a matter of fact, it has been understood in a short time that Putin’s statements caused an increase in transaction prices in the energy markets.<sup>ix</sup>

As a result, Russia is uncomfortable with the attack of the Ukrainian Army in various regions and declared a “partial mobilization” on September 21, 2022, as if to show that the tactical withdrawal from the places where the Russian elements were withdrawn. This decision shows that the Moscow administration has no other thought than to achieve a result that can be described as a victory in Ukraine. In this context, with the decision of “partial mobilization”, Putin gave the message that a war lost by Russia would evolve into a process in which the whole world would lose. Frankly, the fact that the Moscow administration took a decision to mobilize for the first time after the Second World War clearly reveals the seriousness of the issue. Because Russia has shown that the problems it encounters on the field will also have a cost to the West, and Putin emphasized that he is not bluffing on this issue. Of course, this menace is originated from the Kremlin’s interpretation of the war as a Russia-West struggle due to the support Ukraine receives from the West.

i “Putin Declares ‘Partial’ Mobilization Amid Ukraine Losses, Warns West of Nuclear Response”, The Moscow Times, <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2022/09/21/putin-declares-partial-mobilization-amid-ukraine-losses-warns-west-of-nuclear-response-a78850>, (Date of Accession: 21.09.2022).

ii Ibid.

iii Ibid.

iv Şafak Oğuz, “Russia-Ukraine War and the Growing Nuclear Risks”, ANKASAM, <https://www.ankasam.org/russia-ukraine-war-and-the-growing-nuclear-risks/?lang=en>, (Date of Accession: 21.09.2022).

v “Rusya Devlet Başkanı Putin, Kısmi Askeri Seferberlik İlan Etti”, Habertürk, <https://www.haberturk.com/son-dakika-rusya-devlet-baskani-putin-kismi-askeri-seferberlik-ilan-etti-3522188>, (Date of Accession: 21.09.2022).

vi Hüseyin Yeltilir, “Ukrayna’daki Savaşın Kaybedeni Rusya mı Olacak?”, ANKASAM, <https://www.ankasam.org/ukraynadaki-savasin-kaybedeni-rusya-mi-olacak/>, (Date of Accession: 21.09.2022).

vii “World Running Risk of Sliding into Global-Scale Conflict in Couple of Months-Vucic”, TASS, <https://tass.com/world/1510655>, (Date of Accession: 21.09.2022).

viii “Ukraine War: Why is Putin Mobilizing Russia and What It Means”, Mint, <https://www.livemint.com/news/world/ukraine-war-why-is-putin-mobilizing-russia-and-what-it-means-11663743441082.html>, (Date of Accession: 21.09.2022)

ix Scott Disavino, “Oil Gives up Gains as Soaring US Dollar Offsets Putin’s Troop Mobilization”, Reuters, Oil gives up gains as soaring US dollar offsets Putin’s troop mobilization, (Date of Accession: 21.09.2022).



## ANKASAM OUTLOOK

# Open Balkan: The “Mini-Schengen” of the Balkans

The search for regional cooperation in the Balkans dates back to the 1990s. The Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA), which was signed on 21 December 1992 and includes non-European Union (EU) member countries, is one of the first agreements signed to develop commercial relations in the Balkans, is still active.<sup>i</sup> Currently, it is seen that Serbia, Albania, North Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo are members of CEFTA.

Despite the ongoing instability process today, it

is seen that the Balkan countries are in an effort to increase regional cooperation. The most concrete example of this is that Albania, North Macedonia and Serbia’s actions for the Open Balkan Initiative to deepen regional cooperation in line with the EU legislation.

This initiative, which is also described as the “mini -Schengen” of the Balkans, is based on the meeting of Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic, Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama and Former North Macedonian Prime Minister Zoran Zaev in Novi Sad, Serbia in October 2019. Within



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the scope of the regional initiative, which was announced to the public in Skopje, the capital of North Macedonia, on July 29, 2021,<sup>ii</sup> it is planned to establish a common customs system between member states as of January 1, 2023.<sup>iii</sup>

This initiative is interpreted by some regional experts as a move against the EU by forming a “mini-Schengen” among these three countries that are in the EU membership process.<sup>iv</sup> However, critical figures in the country’s administrations stated that the initiative called “mini –Schengen” is not an alternative to the EU. For example, North Macedonian President Stevo Pendarovski of the time stated that the integration of the Western Balkans to the EU is the best option for the democratic transformation of society and that the initiative does not constitute an alternative to the EU.<sup>v</sup>

Serbian Deputy Prime Minister Zorana Mihajlovic also said that “mini –Schengen” does not replace the EU membership.<sup>vi</sup> But one of the actors of the initiative, former North Macedonian Prime Minister Zoran Zaev stated that the Balkans can no longer wait for the EU and that the negotiations have failed: <sup>vii</sup>

“Even if our EU membership processes fail, we will not give up on Europeanizing the region. Brussels may slow down the process; but we must not stop and wait. The Balkans is nothing but Europe. It will continue to fulfill its obligations towards the EU in the three countries.”

What is the Purpose of the Open Balkan Initiative?

The Open Balkan Initiative was established with the aim of establishing a common regional market and facilitating the free movement of goods and services between Albania, Serbia and North Macedonia, which aim for EU membership. This initiative aims that while reducing bureaucratic processes in import, export, and circulation of goods; facilitating free access to the labor market.

In this context, it is envisaged that facilitating arrangements will be made for the work permits of the citizens of the three countries in the relevant countries.<sup>viii</sup> With the agreement signed by the leaders of the countries involved in the initiative on January 3, 2022, customs procedures in the fields of veterinary medicine, phytosanitary and food safety were reduced, and in this context, it was decided that product analyzes would be carried out only in the country of origin of the product, and that physical control and laboratory tests would not be applied at other

borders. The agreement is based on the recognition of the results of laboratory analyzes carried out by accredited methods between the three countries with a trade volume of 420 million dollars.<sup>ix</sup> It is anticipated that the annual contribution of this move, which will be valid only for the countries included in the “Open Balkan Initiative”, will contribute 3.2 billion dollars (2.71 billion euros) to the region.<sup>x</sup> In addition, although the Open Balkan Initiative is a trade-oriented platform, with the entry into force of the signed agreement on January 1, 2023, it is expected that the borders between the three countries will be lifted and thus passport-free circulation will be implemented.

What are the Perceptions of the Neighboring Countries to the Initiative?

Although there are efforts to develop regional cooperation in the Balkans, there are also states that oppose this with the threat of Serbia. Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Kosovo are potential candidates for the Open Balkan Initiative formed by Albania, North Macedonia and Serbia. However, these three countries are not willing to participate in the initiative because they see Serbia as a major security threat due to the historical and current problems in the region. However, the fact that Serbia still sees Kosovo as its territory brings along a political impasse for the country's participation in the initiative.

The leaders of Albania, North Macedonia and Serbia, which are the actors of the initiative, stated that the Open Balkan Initiative, which envisages intensifying cooperation in accordance with EU legislation, will facilitate the EU membership process. Other regional countriesBosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Kosovo, on the other hand, refused to participate in the initiative at the first stage, on the grounds that it constitutes an alternative to the Berlin Process on the way to EU membership.<sup>xi</sup> The person who gave the strongest reaction to the Open Balkan Initiative was Kosovo Prime Minister Albin Kurti<sup>xii</sup>

In his statement, Kurti described the “Open Balkan Initiative” as a trap created in the region<sup>xiii</sup> and used the phrases “To have an open and free Balkan, first Serbia will have to change.”<sup>xiv</sup> Prime Minister of Albania Edi Rama, on the other hand, criticized Prime Minister of Kosovo Kurti, who refused to participate in the initiative, and argued that the only way for Serbia to recognize Kosovo is through this regional cooperation initiative.<sup>xv</sup> In addition, the demonstrations were held in Albania, one of the important actors of the initiative, against the “Open Balkan Initiative”. A protest was held at the call of Former Prime Minister

Sali Berisha against Serbian President Vucic, who attended the meeting held in Tirana on 21 December 2021, and many citizens from Kosovo also participated in the demonstrations.<sup>xvi</sup>

The Serbian Orthodox Church Problem between Montenegro, which declared its independence from Serbia in 2006, prompted the Podgorica administration to approach cautiously towards the Open Balkan Initiative. Bosnia and Herzegovina, on the other hand, does not take kindly to this triple alliance because it is afraid to risk its hopes for EU membership, but Serbia is considered to be the main factor here. It is undeniable that Sarajevo will avoid being in the same alliance with the Belgrade administration, especially in the face of the recent actions of the Serbian separatists. However, it should not go unnoticed that Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina have made a change in their attitude towards joining the Open Balkan Initiative compared to Kosovo. For the first time, Prime Minister of Bosnia and Herzegovina Zoran Tegetlija and Prime Minister of Montenegro Dritan Abazovic attended the Open Balkan Initiative Summit held in Ohri, North Macedonia on 7-8 June 2022. Therefore, at the summit in Ohrid, there was an expectation that Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina would be included in the initiative.

The participation of leaders from Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina at the summit held in Belgrade, the capital of Serbia, two months after the summit in Ohri, is read as a signal that the two countries will be included in the alliance. As a matter of fact, the messages given by leaders in last two summits they attended increase the expectations in this direction. Therefore, Kosovo was the only country that refused to participate in the Open Balkan Initiative with the last summit held.

As a result, Kosovo seems to be reluctant in the face of calls to join the Open Balkan Initiative; Albanian Prime Minister Rama has declared that the initiative will continue even if Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Kosovo do not agree to be included.<sup>xvii</sup> However, it is noteworthy that Open Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Kosovo and the actors of the initiative, Albania, North Macedonia and Serbia, which have problems due to various conflicts among the countries in the region, are the six Balkan countries in CEFTA.<sup>xviii</sup> However, some experts state that the reason why CEFTA is still active is because this trade agreement was signed to help countries join the EU.<sup>xix</sup> But it should not be forgotten that; As long as the Western Balkan countries' problems with each other continue, the EU membership is not easy at all.

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## ANKASAM OUTLOOK

# Upcoming Elections in Greece and Dynamics of Internal Affairs

In the middle of the intense agenda of foreign and domestic affairs, there was the discussion of the possibility of snap elections in Greece. Therefore, Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis has declared that the elections will be held on time in 2023. Even though this declaration, political parties in Greece have escalated their election propaganda.

On the other hand, the "Predatorgate" incident, the hottest topic of internal affairs, has become the main agenda topic of the political parties. In the "Predatorgate" incident, where the investigation continues, it is claimed that the phones of Nicos Androulakis, the leader of the Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK), and other members of the parliament from the Coalition



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of the Radical Left – Progressive Alliance (SYRIZA) were wiretapped by the leading party New Democracy (ND). It is observed that this incident could reshape the coalitions within the domestic politics of Greece.

The first three parties in the election surveys (ND, SYRIZA, and Coalition of PASOK-KINAL) are not ideologically close. ND is a conservative rightist, SYRIZA is a radical leftist, and PASOK is a social-democratic party. The opposition party PASOK has accepted SYRIZA as an opponent to ND. However, lately, the position of PASOK has changed. Therefore, Androulakis has identified himself as a strategic rival of PM Mitsotakis. The most basic reason is that Mitsotakis challenged Androulakis at the Thessaloniki International Fair (TIF). Such developments have changed the dynamics between ND and PASOK. The two parties' approach toward each other turned hostile. That's why SYRIZA and PASOK have developed a unity of discourse in the parliament. For instance, SYRIZA and PASOK lead to establishing an investigation commission for the Predatorgate incident.

In addition to the debate with PASOK, a strategic rival of ND is SYRIZA in today's conjuncture. ND aims to be in power alone, and a powerful PASOK helps with this. ND leader Mitsotakis expressed the name of Androulakis frequently, showing that PASOK is trying to strengthen against SYRIZA. On the other hand, ND is trying to shake the left flank of the Center-Left by opening a communication channel on the anti-SYRIZA base.

According to current election polls, leading party ND is in first place with 35%. SYRIZA and PASOK-KINAL follow ND with 27% and 14%, respectively. However, the deepening of the "predatorgate" incident and the absence of a detailed explanation for this situation by the leading party caused a decrease in the support for ND. In addition, SYRIZA keeps this incident on the agenda, trying to decrease the power of ND.

Besides these internal dynamics, it is observed that the Mitsotakis Government is affected by the Ukrainian War. The energy crisis deepening by the upcoming winter causes oppression against the government.

Although the government indicated that the Greek people would not be mistreated by the energy crisis, Greece does not have alternative resources to Russia and some of the Gulf countries. Thus, the Athens administration has declared that they will receive gas from Gazprom.<sup>i</sup> However, the decision of the Interim Government of Bulgaria that negotiate with Gazprom on the energy issue caused the reaction of the Bulgarian people; a similar situation did not occur in Greece. Because when we look at the public opinion of Greek people, it is observed that there are no anti-Russian views or "Russophobia." The most basic reason for this is that Greece was not a former Soviet Union country. Therefore, the core issue that Greek people care about is how the winter will be. In other words, in general, Greece does not have the "European" precision as other European Union (EU) countries have. Therefore, if Mitsotakis deals with Gazprom, there will not be a serious public reaction.

The real problem of Mitsotakis will be the reaction of the EU. Since the EU clearly expressed that it is on the side of Ukraine and expects member countries to carefully apply sanctions against Russia. Therefore, the opportunities of the opposition parties to compress the ND are limited by these two issues. In the election race, SYRIZA's voting rate is gradually increasing. However, 27% is not enough to form a government alone. SYRIZA needs 151 chairs in the parliament to be the leading power. However, the leader of SYRIZA, Alexis Tsipras, does not have the power to guarantee the elections.

At that point, it is crucial to remember that the most important principle of the political parties in Greece is to form a government alone. Therefore, Tsipras does not consider a coalition with PASOK. Although the two parties have developed a similar discourse within the parliament, there is a divergence outside the parliament.

In addition, the rate of those who want ND power alone in the Greek public is 30%, and the rate of those who want an SYRIZA government alone is 17.7%. While 12.6% wanted an SYRIZA-PASOK coalition, the rate of those who are in favor of the ND-PASOK coalition is 8.5%. On the other hand, 7.9% of the group lean toward the ND-SYRIZA-PASOK coalition.<sup>ii</sup>

Also, European Realistic Disobedience Front (MeRA25), a pro-European leftist party founded in 2018, is mentioned in the possible coalition groups by the political analysts in Greece. However, as a response to these scenarios, the Secretary General of the party, Giannis Varoufakis, has criticized PASOK and SYRIZA, in addition to ND. In his speech at TIF, Varoufakis told SYRIZA and PASOK that “while giving confidence and assurance to the oligarchs, they are promising support to many.” and stated that he would not accept a government with co-chairmanship with SYRIZA.<sup>iii</sup> Thus the possibility of a coalition of SYRIZA-MeRA25 or PASOK-SYRIZA-MeRA25-KKE (Greek Communist Party) has diminished.

As a result, regardless of ideology, all political parties aim to form the government alone. In the current situation, although ND under Mitsotakis is in first place in the election polls, its voting rate is quite lower than in 2018. On the contrary, SYRIZA has an increase trend; yet it is not exactly that if it could receive the majority until 2023 Spring. PASOK-KINAL coalition is also busy with “Predatorgate” incident. However, according to the election polls, PASOK-KINAL is not able to form a government without a coalition with other parties. All of the developments open the discussion of possible coalitions in Greece. However, in the current situation, due to structural and ideological differences, definite comments could not be made. Undoubtedly, this situation will gain a more pronounced appearance towards 2023.

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## ANKASAM OUTLOOK

# Who is Uncomfortable with Uzbekistan's Constructive Role in Afghanistan?

The so-called Emirate of Khorasan (ISKP) by the terrorist organization DEASH is one of the leading actors that destabilize the country and threaten the regional security environment beyond Afghanistan, due to its attacks in Afghanistan. However, in the face of the Afghan Problem, the regional states are developing a constructive attitude based on cooperation. For this reason, the terrorist organization DEASH, in a sense, has an attitude that targets the relations developed by the Taliban with the region,

especially with Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. Because, Tashkent and Ashgabat are actors that come to the fore both with their constructive diplomacy understanding that puts people at the center of the solution of the Afghan Problem and with the projects they have developed in order to attract Afghanistan to international cooperation.

The peaceful diplomacy understanding of Turkmenistan's policy towards Afghanistan has



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been covered in detail in the analyzes previously published by Ankara Center for Crisis and Policy Studies (ANKASAM). Especially the analysis titled “Turkmenistan’s Peaceful and Humanitarian Diplomacy in Afghanistan” written by President of ANKASAM Prof. Dr. Mehmet Seyfettin Erol[1] can be described as an extremely eye-opening study in terms of understanding the subject. In this analysis, the constructive attitude of Uzbekistan in Afghan policy and in this context, the efforts of the terrorist organization DEASH to destabilize Uzbekistan-Taliban relations are mentioned. Because the President of Uzbekistan, Mr. Shavkat Mirziyoyev, in his speech at the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Samarkand Summit held on September 15-16, 2022, stated that Uzbekistan favors peace and stability in Afghanistan, and that imposing sanctions on Afghanistan will increase extremism in the country. He said that Tashkent attaches importance to developing a constructive dialogue with Kabul.[2] This once again brought up the constructive role of Uzbekistan in the Afghan Problem.

As it is known, the terrorist organization DAESH emerged in the Syrian Civil War and reached an important field dominance in Syria and Iraq for a while. In this process, in parallel with the global caliphate claim of the DEASH terrorist organization, there have been groups from various geographies of the world joining the terrorist organization DEASH. One of them is ISKP, which emerged when various regional terrorist organizations united and gave allegiance to the DEASH terrorist organization.

At this point, the reality that terrorist organizations are used as proxy actors in the struggle between great powers should not be ignored. At the same time, it is useful to remember the images showing that terrorist elements affiliated with DAESH in Syria and Iraq were transported to Afghanistan under American escort. Because, in today’s conjuncture, where the global power struggle has shifted from the Middle East to the Indo-Pacific geography, it is seen that the proxy wars are also desired to be moved to the South Asia-Central Asia line. In fact, it is necessary to read the withdrawal of the United States (US) from Afghanistan from this perspective.

It can be said that the goal of destabilizing two important rivals lies in the background of the US withdrawal from Afghanistan. One of these competitors is China; the other is Russia. The Washington administration thought that terrorism and radicalization could spread to China through the Wakhan Corridor, if the power vacuum that will occur during the withdrawal process is filled by radical terrorist organizations.

Undoubtedly, the second country that the US wants to destabilize is Russia. The fact that the terrorist organization DEASH includes groups that are seen as terrorist organizations by the Central Asian states means that the activities of the organization in question may also create instability in Central Asia. In such a case, it should be taken into account that things will get out of control in the Fergana Valley and that the proxy wars may evolve into a regional war in which Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan will be directly involved. In this scenario, there is the possibility of regional war destabilizing Russia and the possibility of radicalization and terrorism spreading to Russian Muslims through the Afghanistan-Central Asia line. Therefore, it can be said that in the global power struggle, proxy wars and terrorism are desired to be moved to a new geography including Pakistan, China, Russia and Central Asian countries through Afghanistan.

Moreover, the West’s approach that aims to isolate the Taliban, and therefore Afghanistan, from the international community can be interpreted as an attempt to radicalize the Taliban. However, it should be emphasized that the states of the region are aware of the game being played. For this reason, the regional states are trying to draw the Taliban to the ground of international cooperation and adopt a constructive stance that includes Afghanistan in the projects. Uzbekistan is at the forefront of the states that have internalized this approach.

The basis of the constructive role of the Tashkent administration in the Afghan Problem is the concern that the radicalization in the region may spread to the Fergana Valley. Because there is a possibility that a crisis based in Fergana will drag Uzbekistan into the war. [3] This risk is the main reason why Tashkent has a de-facto relationship with the Taliban. In addition, it is known that various groups recognized as terrorist organizations by the Tashkent administration have also declared allegiance to ISKP. Therefore, Tashkent thinks that the rise of radicalization in Afghanistan may destabilize Uzbekistan.

In this context, Uzbekistan is making an active effort to solve the Afghan Problem. The most concrete example of this effort is the “Central and South Asia: Regional Connectivity, Challenges and Opportunities Conference” held in Tashkent before the Taliban came to power. [4] The conference in question, which shows that Mr. Mirziyoyev took the initiative in building regional peace, can be expressed as an important development in terms of directing many states to act collectively.

Tashkent maintained this constructive stance during the Taliban rule. In this sense, it should be emphasized that public diplomacy, which puts people in the center, has a critical place in Uzbekistan’s approach to Afghanistan. In addition, Uzbekistan, which is a bridge that provides a connection between Central Asia and South Asia, strives to include Afghanistan in international cooperation and projects through the Tirmiz-Mazar-i-Sharif-Kabul-Peshawar Railway Project.[5]

In this conjuncture, the ISKP terrorist organization wishes to damage the credibility of the Taliban in the eyes of Afghanistan’s neighbors. However, the Uzbek state mind is aware of this scenario being constructed in Afghanistan, which is the main playground of the “New Great Game.” As a matter of fact, this awareness was reflected in Mirziyoyev’s speech at the SCO Leaders’ Summit in Samarkand on 15-16 September 2022, as stated above.

As a result, today, when proxy wars have shifted from the Middle East to the Central Asia-South Asia line, the withdrawal of the US from Afghanistan has brought about a power vacuum in the country. In this sense, various terrorist organizations, especially the terrorist organization DEASH, have focused on filling the said power vacuum. The US plan is to increase instability in the region. The terrorist organization ISKP, on the other hand, is the main actor that raises the tension in the region with its actions. In this sense, the terrorist organization ISKP tries to sabotage the de facto relations on the Uzbekistan-Taliban line in particular and the search for regional cooperation, security, peace and prosperity in general.

[1] Mehmet Seyfettin Erol, “Türkmenistan’ın Afganistan’daki Barışçıl ve İnsani Diplomasisi”, ANKASAM, <https://www.ankasam.org/turkmenistanin-afganistandaki-bariscil-ve-insani-diplomasisi/>, (Date of Accession: 20.09.2022).

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## ANKASAM OUTLOOK

# Could Armenia Suspend the CSTO Membership?

A commission under the leadership of Nancy Pelosi, Speaker of the United States (US) House of Representatives, visited Yerevan on 18 September 2022. The program of the visit included the meetings with the top political leaders about the security problems of Armenia. In her statement, Pelosi has indicated that a commission of Congress has come to Yerevan to understand what Armenia expects from the US on economics and security. According to her, in the context of the visit, the cooperation of defence is evaluated. Pelosi has highlighted that the US is undertaking to solve the dispute in Karabakh.[1]

The visit was realized under the shadow of the disappointment of Armenia on the allies of Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). Right after the beginning of border conflicts between Azerbaijan and Armenia on 13-14 September 2022, when tens of soldiers lost their lives, Yerevan has demanded the operation of the Article 4 of the CSTO Treaty, including military aid, to provide "territorial integrity of the country."

Due to the call, the alliance has decided to send a mission to evaluate the situation in the field. The pioneer group of the mission went to Yere-



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van even though the sides have achieved to make a ceasefire. It is indicated that Secretary General of the CSTO Stanislav Zas will visit the region a week later. Armenia was disappointed due to that kind of approach of the CSTO.

The visit of Pelosi right after the border conflict, has created a mass expectation in the Armenian public, even though the visit was determined to be realized a month ago. At the same time, Pelosi has showed an attitude to increase these expectations. Because, the Speaker of the US House of Representative has made the following comment[2]

"Today we are choosing between democracy and autocracy from the US to Ukraine, from Taiwan to Armenia, and once again, we are amidst a battle between democracy and autocracy"

With this statement, Pelosi referred that Armenia should choose the US, who represents democracy, not Russia. That kind of comparison of the Speaker of the US House of Representatives has inspired the groups in Armenia. Thus, the comparisons were made between the words of Pelosi and the reaction of the CSTO. President of the Parliament of Armenia Alen Simonyan has expressed the disapprobation of reaction and activity of the CSTO to the call of Armenia in the context of border disputes with Azerbaijan, and he indicated that they expected a more critical support from Russia. The explanation of Simonyan is in the following:[3]

"Of course, we are dissatisfied... We could not explain to the public why and what the CSTO did not realize for a long time. And of course, we conclude a result, as we already have done."

In addition, Simonyan has expressed that Armenia is waiting the exact time to leave the CSTO, by saying "Timing is not correct to react immediately today." [4]

In his interviews to various media organizations, Secretary of the Security Council of Armenia Armen Grigoryan he said that Yerevan is dissatisfied due to the CSTO did not react to Azerbaijan. Grigoryan evaluated the incidents as in the following:[5]

"The CSTO did not realize the expectations of Yerevan... The CSTO should think the issue of Armenia suspending the membership of the CSTO. Yerevan believed that the CSTO is working appropriately; however, our hopes towards that have gone."

On the other hand, Simonyan has explained that the US has a strategic position in the economics and politics of Armenia, and played a significant role on providing ceasefire between Armenia and Azerbaijan,[6] and asserted that the US is the determinant power in the resolution of the Karabakh Issue, not Russia.

In sum, it is observed that the CSTO is digressing from Armenia, and Yerevan is digressing from the CSTO. The alliance cared about having a distance with the incidents, when the conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia escalates. Thusly, in 2020, when the conflicts have started in Karabakh, the CSTO has indicated that the war continues outside the Armenia, and that's why it will not intervene the process. In other words, the alliance indicates that it will not intervene with the border disputes when the tensions within Azerbaijan and Armenia increase. Thusly, Chief of the Joint Staff of the CSTO Anatoly Sidorov has continued the same attitude before arriving Armenia, which he visited due to the conflicts, by explaining any military troop will be sent to this country.

In the explanation, Sidorov has indicated that the CSTO Presidents has declared unanimously the dispute between Armenia and Azerbaijan must be solved through political and diplomatic ways, and any power use, even intervention of CSTO is not on the agenda. And soon, that kind of incident will not happen.[7]

In fact, the relations of the CSTO-Armenia are not developed under the shadow of the relationship of Russia-Armenia. Kazakhstan, one of the members of the organization, clearly expressed that it will not send its soldiers to the conflict area. For instance, member of the Kazakhstan Assembly Defense and Security Committee Aydos Sarim said that Kazakhstan is not interested sending soldiers to the field after the demand of military aid of Yerevan to the CSTO. In addition, Sarim has expressed that Kazakhstan will not support Armenia, in the course of harming the relations with Azerbaijan. Also, he indicated that public opinion of Kazakhstan is inclined towards supporting Azerbaijan.[8]

Russia also cares about the relations with Azerbaijan more than the relations with Armenia. According to Moscow, President of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan needs Russia when the conflicts take place with Azerbaijan and tries to use the influence of Kremlin in the region accordingly with his interests. However, in the situation where there is not a security risks towards Armenia, Pashinyan administration is in the search for alternative strate-



gic partners. Moscow realizes this situation indeed. Because Armenia aims to develop the relations especially with the US and France and searches for the ways for decreasing dependency to Russia. That's why, Russia perceives Azerbaijan as a prominent actor in Caucasias. Therefore, it is possible to say the US supporting Armenia and criticizing Azerbaijan on the Karabakh issue, will bring Baku closer to Moscow.

On the other hand, the CSTO members such as Russia and Kazakhstan leaving unanswered the demands of Armenia causes Yerevan to believe that the CSTO is an organization losing its functionality. That means, Armenia loses its trust to the organization politically. However, until a concrete alternative to the organization and Russia was found, it will abstain from making radical decisions. In other words, if Armenia has an alternative ally in the course of time, it would mean ending relations with the CSTO. Pelosi's indication of there will be talks about the security and defence cooperation between the US and Armenia can be interpreted as a preparation for the background of the mentioned situation.

As a result, the US demands that Pashinyan Government stays in power in Armenia and the country reapproaches towards the West. Pelosi's visit should be noted as an event reflecting this expectation. Definitely, continuing support of the US to Armenia would cause Yerevan to diverge from the CSTO. However, if Armenia accelerates its rapprochement with the West, Russia, the main actor of the CSTO, may gradually abandon its obligation to ensure Armenia's security.

[1] "Пелоси заявила, что хочет понять ожидания Армении от США", Ria Novosti, <https://ria.ru/20220918/armeniya-1817652815.html>, (Date of Accession: 19.09.2022).

[2] "Пелоси: От США до Украины, Тайваня и Армении мир стоит перед выбором между демократией и автократией", Panorama, <https://www.panorama.am/ru/news/2022/09/17/%D0%9F%D0%B5%D0%BB%D0%BE%D1%81%D0%B8/2731752>, (Date of Accession: 19.09.2022).

[3] "В Ереване заявили, что ожидали более значимой поддержки от РФ", Interfax, <https://www.interfax.ru/world/862624>, (Date of Accession: 19.09.2022).

[4] Ibid.

[5] "«Этой надежды больше нет»-Армен Григорян о запуске механизмов ОДКБ", Raiyo Azatutyun, <https://rus.azatutyun.am/a/32037505.html>, (Date of Accession: 19.09.2022).

[6] "США сыграли большую роль в установлении перемирия между Арменией и Азербайджаном – Ален Симонян", aysor, <https://www.aysor.am/ru/news/2022/09/15/%D0%90%D0%BB%D0%B5%D0%BD-%D0%A1%D0%B8%D0%BC%D0%BE%D0%BD%D1%8F%D0%BD/2007874>, (Date of Accession: 19.09.2022).

[7] "ОДКБ пока не планирует отправлять военный контингент в Армению", Interfax, <https://www.interfax.ru/world/862266>, (Date of Accession: 19.09.2022).

[8] "Казахстан отказался вступать в армяно-азербайджанский конфликт под эгидой ОДКБ", Moskovaskiy Komsomolets, <https://www.mk.ru/politics/2022/09/14/kazakhstan-otkazalsya-vstupat-v-armyanoazerbaydzhanskiy-konflikt-pod-egidoy-odkb.html>, (Date of Accession: 19.09.2022).



## ANKASAM OUTLOOK

# Russia's Partial Mobilization Move

On September 21, 2022, Russian President Vladimir Putin announced that "partial mobilization" was declared. In the statement made by the Kremlin, it was stated that the decision was made to "protect the territorial integrity of the country and ensure the safety of the citizens in the liberated lands". Also in the statement, "not only neo-Nazi formations; all military pressures of the collective West would be resisted." have also been stated.[1]

In his evaluation on the subject, Russian Defense Minister Sergey Shoigu stated that it is necessary to control the 1000 km contact line

and the "liberated areas" in Ukraine, that a total of 300,000 reserve soldiers will be called for duty, which is just over 1% of the country's total mobilization resource.[2]

On the other hand, Putin emphasized that only those on the reserve list are subject to compulsory military service with those sentences:[3]

"These; They are people who have done military service, have military expertise and are experienced. In addition, these people will undergo additional training before being sent to their relevant units."



**Aidana  
BAKTYBEK KYZY**

Within the scope of the special military operation initiated by Putin on February 24, 2022, with the claim of “protecting the victims who were subjected to genocide for eight years by the Kyiv regime”,<sup>[4]</sup> Russian soldiers made rapid progress in the first days of the war, succeeded in gaining the superiority of space on the Donbas borders, and deployed to the Kherson and Kharkov regions. With those developments Russian Army cut the Kyiv administration’s connection with the Sea of Azov. However, recently, the Ukrainian Army has taken back more than 300 settlements, some of them metropolitan areas, from the controls of the Russians. In addition, in the statement made by the President of Ukraine, Vladimir Zelensky, it was stated that 6000 km<sup>2</sup> of land occupied by the Russian Army in September 2022 was taken back.<sup>[5]</sup>

For Putin, it seems easy at first; however, the war in question, which lasted longer than expected and did not bring any tangible success, has now put Russia in new pursuits and pushed it to take some steps. With its “partial mobilization” move, the Kremlin tacitly acknowledged that the process it describes as a “special operation” was a war; it did not hesitate to threaten the West with its statements that he would not hesitate to use nuclear power.<sup>[6]</sup>

In addition, realizing the dysfunctionality of the “people’s republic” models Russia established in the occupied territories, Russia chose the method it resorted to in the annexation of Crimea in 2014 in order to retain these regions, and that the referendums to masquerading as “self-determination”. Also in Russia’s perspective, those referendums should be implemented under “safe conditions” and should be implemented “officially” and Russia will try to realize at least a part of Putin’s dream of Novorossiya. This decision was not surprising for the Kyiv administration, as preparations for mobilization continued throughout the summer months in Russia. When looking at the country in general, the said decision creates discomfort in a certain part of the public; After Putin’s statements, protests began in the streets. In addition, the number of people leaving Russia has also increased. Nearly 1,500 people were detained during the protests. In addition, air ticket prices have increased very quickly and ticket stocks have run out in many places.<sup>[7]</sup>

On the other hand, Finland has completely closed its border crossing to Russian citizens. Another noteworthy point is the approval of amendments to the Russian Penal Code, which provides for a prison sentence of up to 10 years for refusal to participate in military operations during martial law or armed conflict “with grave consequences”.

While the Western powers declared that they would invalidate the referendums; described the referendums as “violations of international law” and linked the declaration of mobilization with the failure of Russia’s attack on Ukraine.

On the other hand, Lithuania took the declaration of partial mobilization in Russia seriously and took a decision to raise the army’s vigilance. Lithuanian Defense Minister Anusauskas said, “Lithuania has to make some preparations, as Russian military mobilization will also take place in the Kaliningrad region.”<sup>[8]</sup> In addition, Lithuania called on the West to increase military support to Ukraine.<sup>[9]</sup>

As a result, it is possible to say that with the partial mobilization decision, the Russian Army admitted that it did not achieve its goal of occupation on Ukraine. In fact, it was not easy for Putin to decide to take action because of the possible risks. However, the Russian leader chose to increase the pressure to manipulate the Kyiv administration. In other words, it is clear that Russia is experiencing more and more resource shortages. In addition, it can be said that Russia made such a move to force Ukraine to sit at the negotiating table.

[1] “Частичная мобилизация в России. Главные заявления Путина и Шойгу”, Gazeta.ru, <https://www.gazeta.ru/politics/2022/09/21/15488425.shtml>, (Date of Accession: 22.09.2022).

[2] Ibid.

[3] “Путин объявил о частичной мобилизации в России”, BBC NEWS, <https://www.bbc.com/russian/news-62977634>, (Date of Accession: 22.09.2022).

[4] “Обращение Президента Российской Федерации”, Kremlin, <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/67843>, (Date of Accession: 22.09.2022).

[5] “Зеленский: ВСУ освободили свыше 6000 кв. км, движение войск продолжается”, Ukrainskaya Pravda, <https://www.pravda.com.ua/rus/news/2022/09/12/7367187/>, (Date of Accession: 22.09.2022).

[6] “Это не блеф”: Путин пригрозил Западу ядерным оружием”, RBK-Ukraina, <https://www.rbc.ua/ukr/news/tse-blef-putin-prigroziv-zahodu-der-noyu-zbroeyu-1663741633.html>, (Date of Accession: 22.09.2022).

[7] “Побег из России, билеты распроданы и цены взлетели до небес. Протесты в городах, более тысячи арестов”, L’unionesarda.it, <https://www.unionesarda.it/news/mondo/fuga-dalla-russia-dopo-lannuncio-di-putin-biglietti-esauriti-e-prezzi-alle-stelle-oofx9ybl>, (Date of Accession: 22.09.2022).

[8] “Литва привела силы в боевую готовность из-за мобилизации в Калининграде”, BigMir.net, <https://news.bigmir.net/world/6872685-lit-va-privela-sily-v-boevuyu-gotovnost-iz-za-mobilizatsii-v-kaliningrade>, (Date of Accession: 22.09.2022).

[9] “Министр обороны Литвы: Запад должен усилить военную поддержку Украины”, EurAsia Daily, <https://eadaily.com/ru/news/2022/09/21/ministr-oborony-litvy-zapad-dolzhen-usilit-voennuyu-podderzhku-ukrainy>, (Date of Accession: 22.09.2022).



# ANKASAM IN PRESS

## 20 September 2022

Ankara Center for Crisis and Policy Studies (ANKASAM) President Prof. Dr. Mehmet Seyfettin Erol evaluated the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Leaders' Summit held in Uzbekistan to CRI Türk.

## 20 September 2022

Ankara Center for Crisis and Policy Studies (ANKASAM) President Prof. Dr. Mehmet Seyfettin Erol evaluated Turkey's possible membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) for Yeni Şafak Newspaper.

## 20 September 2022

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

## 21 September 2022

Ankara Center for Crisis and Policy Studies (ANKASAM) President Prof. Dr. Mehmet Seyfettin Erol evaluated the visit of Nancy Pelosi, Speaker of the US House of Representatives, to Armenia, to the Türkiye Newspaper.

## 21 September 2022

ANKASAM President Prof. Dr. Mehmet Seyfettin Erol evaluated the 77th UN General Assembly Meeting and Erdoğan's speech on the Diyanet TV News Analysis program.

## 22 September 2022

Ankara Center for Crisis and Policy Studies (ANKASAM) International Relations Specialist Dr. Doğan Başaran evaluated the latest developments in the Russia-Ukraine War, and the role played by Türkiye on TVNet.

## 22 September 2022

Ankara Center for Crisis and Policy Studies (ANKASAM) Eurasia Expert Dr. Sabir Askeroğlu evaluated Russia's partial mobilization announcement on TVNet.

## 22 September 2022

ANKASAM International Relations Consultant Dr. Kadir Ertaç Çelik evaluated the latest developments in foreign policy in Bengütürk TV Report of the Week.

## 23 September 2022

Ankara Center for Crisis and Policy Studies (ANKASAM) Chief Advisor to the President Prof. Dr. Cem Karadeli evaluated the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Leaders' Summit held in Uzbekistan to The Epoch Times, one of the leading newspapers of the USA.

# ANKASAM IN PRESS

## 24 September 2022

ANKASAM Eurasia Expert Dr. Sabir Askeroğlu evaluated the partial mobilization announcement of Russian President Vladimir Putin to İhlas News Agency (İHA).

## 24 September 2022

ANKASAM Eurasia Expert Dr. Sabir Askeroğlu's evaluations of İhlas News Agency (İHA) regarding the partial mobilization announcement of Russian President Vladimir Putin were shared in Star Newspaper.

## 25 September 2022

ANKASAM President Prof. Dr. Mehmet Seyfettin EROL evaluated the latest developments in foreign policy in Akit TV Ankara Backstage program.

## 25 September 2022

ANKASAM Eurasia Expert Dr. Sabir Askeroğlu's evaluations to İhlas News Agency (İHA) regarding the partial mobilization announcement of Russian President Vladimir Putin; Event 53 was shared on Anadolu Gazette, Düzce TV, Memleket, Beyaz Gazette, Urfa News, Diriliş News, Kent News 27, Gündem Alanya, National Agenda, Haber Newspaper, Medya Newspaper, Başak Newspaper, and Vitrin Haber websites.



*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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