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New Proactive Politics of Japan and their Impact on the Region

One of the most remarkable developments in the Indian and Western Pacific is Japan's growing strength in the field of defence and security and it's moving away from its pacifist structure to a proactive policy. Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida recently stated that they will in-

crease the share of defence expenditures in the budget to 2% in the next five years.[1] The country had allocated budgets ranging from 0.9% to 1.1% for the defence item since the Second World War. The budget of 40.4 billion dollars to be allocated to defence for 2023 repre-



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sents the highest amount to date. Raising defence spending to 2% is like the limits set by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Therefore, it can be argued that the pressures of the United States of America (USA) were also effective in Japan's following a more proactive policy in the field of defence. The fact that the 2% target will be reached in 2027 may be a sign that a new NATO will be established on this date. In other words, the USA and its allies in the Indo-Pacific may consider forming a defence alliance by this date, bringing defence spending to at least the level of NATO countries within five years. Japanese officials argue that defence spending should increase due to the growing "Chinese threat." [2]

It can be argued that this fear was artificially created by the USA so that allied states such as Japan and Australia could give more security-defence support. When you position China as the "other/rival/enemy," as a natural consequence of this, states will take measures to ensure their security. Whether Beijing is a real threat militarily is open to debate. However, it is known that there is a goal of reunification with Taiwan. The Pentagon argues that this will not happen peacefully, but through military force, and urges Japan and other regional states to prepare for it.

Tokyo says Beijing should refrain from using force to change the status quo in the Taiwan Strait. [3] In other words, Japan is concerned that the status quo regarding Taiwan will be changed unilaterally by Beijing. This is like the fears carried by the USA. The policies followed by Japan and the USA due to their common security interests are also similar. It is estimated that the National Security and Defense Strategy Document to be published by Japan at the end of the year will bear great similarities with the one published by the White House.

Possibly, Japan will devote a large place to Taiwan in its new national security strategy and will focus on the "Chinese threat." Increasing its defence budget, citing these security concerns, Tokyo may begin to prepare a war cabinet and budget in the coming years. Because the Pentagon's warnings are in this direction: It is stated that in the third term of Cinping, he included experienced people related to Taiwan in his party cadres, and therefore it may go for unification through military force. [4] In other words, the USA wants Japan to focus on defence by targeting China. Therefore, the Tokyo Government is moving away from its pacifist structure in preparation for the war that may arise over Taiwan.

In recent years, cooperation-dialogue mechanisms realized by Japan in the Indo-Pacific in bilateral and tripartite formats have also gained momentum. For example, Japan is to hold talks with Australia, India, and the USA in a 2+2 format, in which the defence and foreign ministers participate. In addition, in triple format "Japan-USA-South Korea," "Japan-India-Italy," "Japan-England-Australia," "Japan-USA-India," "Japan-Australia-India" and "Japan-Australia-USA" meetings are also held. Soon, Australian Defense Minister Richard Marles and Foreign Minister Penny Wong will visit Tokyo to hold talks in a 2+2 format. [5] Australia and Japan revised their security agreements in October 2022. Today, it is discussed to take this cooperation one step further and Japan's participation in AUKUS. Again, in this process, the USA decided to increase the number of its military units in Australia, citing the increasing "Chinese threat." According to the information confirmed by the Pentagon; Australia will invite Tokyo to join these associations at the 2+2 format talks in Japan. [6] In other words, the USA and Australia invite Japan to join their alliance. The UK's position is not yet clear.

There is talk of the possibility of AUKUS turning into JAUkus with the participation of Japan. But the purpose of the dialogue at AUKUS is to support Australia in the procurement and development of nuclear submarines and is considered a defence-security alliance. In this respect, it differs from other bilateral, triple, and quadruple security dialogues conducted to keep the Indo-Pacific free and open. In other words, to make a sound assessment of Japan's participation in AUKUS, it should be looked at how much Tokyo needs this military-technical cooperation. It is also unclear whether the UK and the US will offer this support to Japan. In previous statements, such a possibility was denied by all parties. In AUKUS, it is more likely that the UK shares nuclear submarine technology. In other words, it is estimated that London will make the main and final decision on Japan's participation in the alliance.

The Chinese claim that Japan and Australia are jeopardizing their interests and independence for the sake of "American hegemony." [7] In other words, Beijing states that Tokyo has been dragged into crises by Washington and is a victim of the policy of the bloc. To prevent this political polarization and re-establish bilateral relations, the leaders of China and Japan met in Bangkok, the capital of Thailand, in November 2022 and signed a joint five-point memorandum of understanding. [8] Accordingly, the two countries do not threaten each other; they would see them as partners and turn to cooperation. Thus, a stable and constructive Sino-Japanese relationship would be established. However, less than a month after this agreement, Tokyo continued to take new decisions supporting Washington's policies.

In short, Tokyo's increasing its defence budget, allocating a large place to Taiwan in its national security strategy, continuing to criticize China's unilateral moves, and most importantly, joining regional military alliances such as AUKUS with the support of the USA and Australia, China-Japan can lead to the irreversible deterioration of their relationship.

As a result, although Japan reaffirmed its commitment to the "One China Principle" in the memorandum signed with China in November 2022, it continues to take steps and make statements to support Taiwan's independence. [9] Japan's move towards a proactive policy may cause history to repeat itself.

[1] "Japan Set to Hike Defense Budget Amid Ongoing Tension in Region", Anadolu Agency, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/asia-pacific/japan-set-to-hike-defense-budget-amid-ongoing-tension-in-region/2751777>, (Date of Accession: 12.12.2022).

[2] "Japan Lawmaker In Taiwan Says China Threat Needs More Military Spending", The Asia Today, https://theasiatoday.org/news/east-asia/japan-lawmaker-in-taiwan-says-china-threat-needs-more-military-spending/?utm_source=ReviveOldPost&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=ReviveOldPost, (Date of Accession: 12.12.2022).

[3] Ibid.

[4] U.S. Department of Defense, "Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China", S3, <https://s3.documentcloud.org/documents/23321290/2022-military-and-security-developments-involving-the-peoples-republic-of-china.pdf>, (Date of Accession: 12.12.2022).

[5] "Australia Extends Military Invitation to Japan", ABC, <https://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/breakfast/australia-extends-military-invitation-to-japan/101749738>, (Date of Accession: 12.12.2022).

[6] "Australia Warned Not to Become US' 'Spearhead', As '2+2' Meeting Goes Beyond Hying 'China Threats'", Global Times, <https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202212/1281371.shtml>, (Date of Accession: 12.12.2022).

[7] Ibid.

[8] "China and Japan Reach a Five-point Consensus on Stabilizing and Developing Bilateral Relations", FMPRC, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/zxxx_662805/202211/t20221118_10977637.html, (Date of Accession: 12.12.2022).

[9] "Japan Could 'Recognize Taiwan as Country' One Day", Taipei Times, <https://www.taipeitimes.com/News/front/archives/2022/12/09/2003790399>, (Date of Accession: 12.12.2022).



ANKASAM ANALYSIS

The Last Ring of Nuclear Cooperation: The New START Treaty

The 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis is at the forefront of events that demonstrate how close the world is to nuclear war. Although on the brink of war, because of the wise actions of the leaders in the United States of America (USA) and the Soviet Union, the problem was solved peacefully and the international community, which was on the knife's edge during the crisis, breathed a sigh of relief.

On the other hand, the crisis resulted in a time of easing during which the two sides' dialogue expanded and nuclear weapons agreements were signed. As a matter of fact, immediately after the crisis, the "Partial Nuclear Test Ban

Treaty" was signed in 1963[1], which stipulates the prohibition of nuclear weapon tests in all areas except the underground.

In addition to international conventions, the USA, and the Soviet Union, which have the largest nuclear weapons infrastructure in the world, have aimed to restrict the production of nuclear weapons with bilateral conventions and then reduce the number of nuclear weapons in their inventories. In this context, the "Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty" dated 1972[2] was signed because of the negotiations that started in 1969 and provides for the limitation of strategic nuclear weapons. Thus, the goal was to prevent the research and manufacture of new



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strategic weapons. Despite the various crises experienced at that time, the cooperation between the USA and the Soviet Union resulted in the signing of the second of the same agreement in 1979, but the US senate did not sign the agreement upon the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan and the agreement did not enter into force.

Over time, the delimitation negotiations of nuclear weapons have evolved into a process of reducing the number of existing nuclear weapons. Although it resulted in the reduction of nuclear weapons in 1982 and the "Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty" in 1987 by Ronald Reagan,[3] the "Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty" was signed between George Bush and Michael Gorbachev, the President of the Soviet Union, immediately after the Cold War in 1991.[4] With this convention, which entered into force in 1994, an agreement was reached on the reduction of the number of strategic nuclear weapons. With the contract, both parties stipulated that the number of nuclear warheads should be limited to 6,000 and launch vehicles to 1,600.

In this period, in parallel with the cooperation process between the USA and Russia for the proliferation of nuclear weapons, both states signed THE START-II Treaty in 1993, which was complementary to THE START-I Treaty. Aside from the nuclear weapons limit, which will be implemented in two stages, many other concerns have been addressed, including the prohibition of the use of more than one head in intercontinental ballistic missiles.[5] The USA ratified the START-II Treaty in 1996 and Russia in 2000, providing that the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty[6] was maintained. However, Russia withdrew from this treaty on June 13, 2002.

Although the USA and Russia have started to experience a crisis in bilateral conventions since then, they have agreed on the prohibition of nuclear weapons before the international community. It completely banned nuclear weapon tests with "The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty" in 1996.[7]

Although START-II did not stay in force for a long time, the USA and Russia continued their determination in this regard by signing the Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty.[8] With the treaty signed on May 24, 2002, and entered into force on June 1, 2003, the USA and Russia agreed to keep the number of strategic nuclear weapons to 1700-2200. The end date of the treaty is December 31, 2012.

The 2009 Prague speech, in which then-US President Barack Obama announced his vision of a nuclear-weapon-free world, also accompanied the signing of a new START agreement between the USA and Russia to replace the Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty (SORT). This contract, which entered into force on February 5, 2021, within 7 years.

The number of nuclear missiles and bombers ready for duty is limited to 700,

The number of nuclear-heads ready for duty is limited to 1500 and

The number of all nuclear weapon launch vehicles is limited to 800, whether they are ready for duty.

START's validity ended on February 5, 2021. The New START Treaty was worked on to renew the treaty, but then-US President Trump refused to sign the contract, especially under the influence of then-National Security Adviser John Bolton. In his early days in office, President Biden signed off on the treaty the former President Trump had rejected and agreed to extend the New START Treaty for another five years. Thus, they agreed to extend the duration of the only remaining treaty between the USA and Russia for strategic and tactical nuclear weapons.

Within the scope of the treaty, periodic meetings between the delegations are required. However, there were problems in conducting these meetings, especially during the pandemic period. The Russia-Ukraine War and the tension between the West and the East were other factors in this regard. As a matter of fact, regarding the negotiations expected to be held in 2022, Russia suspended the negotiations due to the arms support provided by the USA to Ukraine and stated that they expected the USA to meet conditions for the negotiations for the next year.[9]

In this period, when the world is on the verge of a tipping point due to the Russia-Ukraine crisis, when nuclear weaponry, particularly hypersonic missiles, is approaching a more dangerous point than ever before, and nuclear deterrence has returned to the forefront of national and international security, it is highly unlikely that both parties will reach a compromise and sign an agreement. In other words, it would not be a surprise if the last legal treaty on nuclear weapons was repealed during the "New Cold War" period, which started with the USA's unilateral withdrawal from the ABM Treaty in 2002.



ANKASAM ANALYSIS

The Changing Geopolitics of Eurasia and the Return of the Great Game

Beyond the ancient or modern chess called “Timur or Tamerlane Chess,” the practice of strategy that both expands the playing field and includes more actors in the game, the game that includes more options and situations, opportunities, and risks than other chess games, is being played in Central Asia, the heart of Eurasian geopolitics. Indeed, the establishment of a chessboard with more actors than other sub-regional systems in the interna-

tional system is among the most concrete indicators of this. Another factor is that each actor tries to maintain a dynamic relationship with many actors. Finally, it should be noted that in this competition, more agendas, areas, and dynamics are blended than in other examples, and it is difficult to predict which moves are made against whom and with what strategic calculation.



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Eurasia, which is at the forefront of the central struggle areas at the important thresholds of political history, has been the focus of global competition, especially during the periods when colonialism and imperialism occupied the agenda of international politics. In this context, although the process called “The Great Game” in the international relations literature, which refers to the struggle between the British Empire and the Russian Empire, has been completed, there is a more complex competition called the “New Great Game” today.

It can be argued that this new rivalry has witnessed much beyond the limited game, which had clear rules and clear options, which the two imperialist powers had previously carried out over imperial motivations. In this context, it is obvious that the number of competing actors in Central Asia in the heart of Eurasia, where the Great Game is being played today, has increased. The actors interested in the region and the competition for geopolitical influence in the region have moved beyond a situation where only certain power centers in the West and East are positioned against each other. On the one hand, in addition to Russia, which is the main actor of the Eastern World, China, India and even Pakistan are joining the process; on the other hand, the US, the gendarme of the West, as well as the UK, Germany and France are trying to gain a position in the game, albeit with varying levels of interest.

Another difference between today's Great Game compared to the previous ones is that it is not a game consisting of states, which are the main players of the modern international system. As it is known, in the “First Great Game”, two great empires directly competed by their imperial interests and hegemonic goals. In the current situation, it is undeniable that there is a civilizational struggle in which various alliance systems and international organizations are involved, as well as the competition of states. To illustrate this point more clearly, while pursuing its own interests and strategic goals, Germany also seeks to protect the interests of the EU and thus the West. The US, together with NATO, devotes its energies to preserving the existence and leadership of Western Civilization. In the same way, China and Russia make the idealism of building a new global system based on the phenomenon of civilization a subject of this rivalry.

In the context of Central Asia, where there is a wide range of struggles ranging from energy to financial issues, from trade to environment and climate, and from military to political issues, the following are the issues that draw attention based on recent developments:

In the context of Germany's Central Asian initiative, Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock visited the countries in the region.

Foreign Ministers of Central Asian states and the German Foreign Minister met in Poland as part of the OSCE Meeting.

At the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA) held in Shanghai, one of the most important cities in China, the will of the 28 member states to unite on issues concerning the region, including Afghanistan, was put forward and it was decided to transform CICA into a full-fledged international organization.

China's investments and credit support to Central Asian states under the Belt-Road Initiative continue.

A common will was developed by the actors to bring the 35 agreements and cooperation documents signed between Kazakhstan and France to a strategic level.

The most striking aspect of the developments mentioned above, and which has not been discussed before is the idea of transforming the said structure into an international organization and the concept of acting together in regional developments, including Afghanistan, at the CICA Summit in Shanghai. This shows that Beijing aims to become more influential in the region and limit Moscow's influence through the Shanghai Cooperation Organization as well as CICA. In addition, it is very important to act together in terms of regional developments and to include Afghanistan in these developments. Therefore, China signals that it will fight the West, especially the USA, and other non-state actors such as terrorist organizations.

As a result, it is very difficult to identify the actors, rules, options, and scenarios in the New Great Game. In this context, it can be predicted that the dynamic process taking place in Central Asia will reveal different equations.



ANKASAM ANALYSIS

Could the North Korean Threat Cause China-US Cooperation?

China aims to be the leading actor in the global power struggle. It also wishes to achieve this goal by challenging the United States of America (USA), which is accepted as the hegemonic power in the current global order, and the international order created on a Western basis under the leadership of the USA. Beijing

clearly states these goals and tries to compete politically, economically, and geo-strategically with the Washington administration on a global scale. Beijing is considered the only actor that can compete with a global power like Washington. However, for China to maintain the competition and achieve its global goals



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by resisting the US-based Western hegemony, it will first have to be an undisputed power at the regional level, gaining influence over the states of the region and becoming the dominant actor in the regional security architecture.

The efforts of the USA and the West to suppress China through Taiwan, and the exercises carried out in partnership with the USA, South Korea, and Japan, citing the “North Korea danger”, aim to surround China. In addition to all these, the AUKUS security pact signed between Australia, the USA, and the United Kingdom in line to deploy nuclear-powered submarines in the Asia-Pacific region and increase the military presence of the West in the region was also implemented to counter the influence of China. The US and its allies are trying to oppose Beijing’s regional power and prevent China from increasing its regional influence within the framework of the security dilemma that will be created over AUKUS and Taiwan issues. At the same time, this effort is fueled by the idea of hindering the Beijing administration’s achievement of its global goals.

Therefore, it can be said that Washington is trying to establish superiority with regional moves in its global struggle against Beijing. All of these prove how important regional factors are for China to achieve its goals. Because of all these reasons, China is primarily trying to increase its effectiveness in the Asia-Pacific region and strengthen its position as a regional actor.

At this point, it can be said that there are other obstacles in front of Beijing to increasing its regional power. For example, North Korea may be one of the obstacles standing in the way of China’s regional influence. It can be argued that although North Korea and China have a common stance through their opposition to the West and the USA, Pyongyang’s activities pose a serious problem in strengthening Beijing’s influence in the region.

In this context, the possible negative impact of North Korea on China’s regional influence can be read from two perspectives. The first of these is the security danger posed by Pyongyang. North Korea is a great nuclear power and is trying to increase this power even more. Therefore, it frequently conducts ballistic missile tests and nuclear tests. All these developments worry the regional states. This insecurity created by Pyongyang poses a problem in terms of the policies that China plans to carry out consistently in line with its global goals, and therefore in terms of its regional security architecture.

Finally, North Korea tested its missile called Hwasong-17 in November 2022.[1] This missile is an intercontinental ballistic missile with a range of 15,000 kilometers,[2] and when fired from Pyongyang, it is claimed to be able to hit Washington. Moreover, considering that North Korea and China are border neighbours, it can be claimed that Pyongyang’s actions are also worrying for China.

The second issue to be examined at this point is the West’s attempt to increase its presence in the region by citing the North Korean threat. Because the USA, South Korea and Japan organize various exercises in the region, citing the threats posed by North Korea and the missile tests it has carried out. These exercises create legitimacy for the American presence in the region, for the consolidation of Western allies such as South Korea and Japan, and Western-based military cooperation. Undoubtedly, this poses a threat to the regional supremacy that China is trying to achieve in line with its global goals. As it can be understood, the reason for the emergence of this threat is Pyongyang, albeit indirectly. In other words, the actions of North Korea make it difficult for China to achieve its regional-global goals.

As it is known, on December 7, 2022, approximately two weeks after China and Russia vetoed the proposed sanctions on North Korea in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), the US Special Representative for North Korea Sung Kim and Chinese Special Representative for Korean Peninsula Affairs Liu Xiaoming organized an online meeting on the nuclear threat posed by Pyongyang.

During the meeting, it was stated that North Korea’s behaviour was destabilizing and escalating tensions, and the United States once again called for harsh sanctions to be imposed on North Korea. In addition, the meeting is very important in that Kim emphasized that maintaining regional peace and stability should be an important common goal.[3]

However, during the meeting, Beijing may have felt the need to send a message to Pyongyang. Although the parties seem to be united in foreign policy, China may think North Korea is going forward. That meeting can also be read as a message from Beijing not to go further to the Pyongyang administration. But China’s stance may mean accepting the idea that North Korea poses a threat. This, in turn, could provide legitimacy to the United States in its exercises with South Korea and Japan.

As a result, China’s continued assertion in global competition depends on increasing its regional influence and providing a regional security environment. North Korea, on the other hand, disrupts this through its actions, and even makes room for the US to have a presence in the region. Perhaps therefore Beijing felt the need to develop a dialogue with Washington to send a message to Pyongyang.

[1] “North Korea Claims It Successfully Tested a Hwasong-17 ICBM”, NK News, <https://www.nknews.org/2022/11/north-korea-claims-it-successfully-tested-a-hwasong-17-icbm/>, (Date of Accession: 12.12.2022).

[2] “Kuzey Kore’nin Nükleer Gücü”, ANKASAM, <https://www.ankasam.org/ankasam-infografik-kuzey-korenin-nukleer-gucu/>, (Date of Accession: 12.12.2022).

[3] “U.S. Envoy For North Korea Holds Rare Talks With Chinese Counterpart Over Recent Provocations”, Korea JongAng Daily, <https://korea-joongangdaily.joins.com/2022/12/09/national/northKorea/korea-Sung-Kim-North-Korea/20221209094207309.html>, (Date of Accession: 12.12.2022).



ANKASAM ANALYSIS

The Problem of Parthenon Sculptures in UK-Greece Relations

The issue of the return of the Parthenon Statues to Greece has been an element of tension between Athens and London for years. This issue is extremely important in terms of showing what kind of problems culture and art factors can create in interstate relations. Along with all these, the historical background needs to be examined to better understand the problem.

At the beginning of the 19th century, Lord Elgin, the British Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, removed about half of these statues in Athens from the ruins of the Parthenon under the supervision of the relevant authorities thanks to the edict he received. Thus, the sculptures were taken to England. In 1816, the ownership of the works passed into the hands of the British

Museum in England.[1] Therefore, some of the Parthenon Sculptures are in the British Museum in England, while other parts are in Athens. In this context, the main goal of the Greek Government is to ensure that the remaining part of the statues is returned to Athens.

The first official request by Greece for the permanent return of all the Parthenon Sculptures in the collection of the British Museum to Athens was made in 1983. Although various negotiations have been held between the parties since that year, there are no current negotiations between the museum and the Greek Government during the current process.[2] It is also useful to look at the stances of the two countries on the problem. Athens wants the return of



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the Parthenon Sculptures, saying that they are part of the Greek cultural heritage, while the British Government claims that the return of these sculptures depends on the decision of the British Museum. London states that the legal ownership of the works belongs to this museum.[3]

With all this, it is seen that Kyriakos Mitsotakis, who became the Prime Minister of Greece in 2019, attaches special importance to this problem. So much so that, during the Prime Ministership of Mitsotakis, Athens increased its contacts to ensure the return of the Parthenon Sculptures from London. The Greek Prime Minister has repeatedly called for the statues to be returned to Athens, even offering to lend some of his country's other treasures to the British Museum.[4]

On the other hand, the fact that Mitsotakis raised this issue even at the United Nations (UN) General Assembly on September 27, 2022, shows the importance given to the issue by the Greek Government. From Mitsotakis' words, "No matter how long it will take, the Parthenon sculptures will eventually be coming home." [5] it can be predicted that this issue will continue to occupy the Athens-London line. Moreover, these statements are also very important for Greece to show its determination.

On the other hand, despite the initiatives of Greece, it should not be expected that the Parthenon Sculptures will be returned. The adoption of such a decision may create a precedent. In such a situation, various countries may also be encouraged to return works belonging to other countries exhibited at the British Museum. Therefore, this is a risk that the British Government cannot afford. Considering that the British Museum is one of the few museums in the world, it is quite difficult to say that London can consent to the removal of the Parthenon Sculptures from the country.

Despite all this, it cannot be said that Mitsotakis has taken a step back. In an interview with The Times newspaper in October 2022, the Greek Prime Minister stated that the time for the return of the Parthenon Sculptures to the country is rapidly approaching and stated that he will continue to keep this issue on the agenda. Moreover, Mitsotakis suggested that this would be a great gesture at a time when Britain was cornered in terms of its overall image after the funeral of Queen Elizabeth II.[6]

Finally, the Greek Prime Minister, during his visit to London on November 28, 2022, brought the issue between the two countries back to the agenda. Mitsotakis stated that there has been progressing in the negotiations with London to reunite the Parthenon Sculptures and suggested that the return of the works to Athens could be a win-win solution for the parties.[7] On the other hand,

on December 5, 2022, the British Government made a statement about the Parthenon Sculptures. The office of Prime Minister Rishi Sunak has stated that the British Museum is legally "prohibited" from returning the Parthenon Sculptures to Greece.[8] Therefore, the London administration does not want the British Museum to take any initiative in the face of this problem.

As can be seen, the dispute between the two countries over the Parthenon Sculptures is important in terms of showing the importance attributed by the states to the heritage of civilization. In this context, there may be problems in inter-state relations not only around political problems but also in issues such as culture and art. The dispute over the Parthenon Sculptures is one of the most beautiful examples of this. The disagreement over the Parthenon Statues is one of the best examples of this.

Consequently, the possibility of a positive decision on behalf of Athens on the return of the Parthenon Statues in the British Museum to Greece is extremely slim. The British Government thinks that such a decision may have a precedent. Therefore, a possible concession to Athens may raise the issue of the return of the works in the British Museum by other countries to the UK. Therefore, it can be said that the UK would not desire such a situation in any way.

[1] "The Parthenon Sculptures", British Museum, <https://www.britishmuseum.org/about-us/british-museum-story/contested-objects-collection/parthenon-sculptures>, (Date of Accession: 08.12.2022).

[2] Ibid.

[3] "Return of Parthenon marbles is Up to British Museum, Says No 10", The Guardian, <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2021/nov/16/return-of-parthenon-marbles-is-up-to-british-museum-says-no-10>, (Date of Accession: 08.12.2022).

[4] "British Museum Calls for 'Parthenon Partnership' with Greece Over Marbles", The Guardian, <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2022/jul/31/british-museum-calls-for-parthenon-partnership-greece-marbles>, (Date of Accession: 08.12.2022).

[5] "Greek PM References Parthenon Sculptures at the UN", Greek City Times, <https://greekcitytimes.com/2022/09/27/greek-pm-references-parthenon-sculptures-at-the-un/>, (Date of Accession: 08.12.2022).

[6] "Return of Parthenon Sculptures Fast Approaching: Greek PM", Greek City Times, <https://greekcitytimes.com/2022/10/03/return-of-parthenon-sculptures-fast-approaching-greek-pm/>, (Date of Accession: 08.12.2022).

[7] "Greece PM Senses 'Momentum' in 'Elgin Marbles' Talks with Britain", Reuters, <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/greece-pm-senses-momentum-elgin-marbles-talks-with-britain-2022-11-28/>, (Date of Accession: 08.12.2022).



ANKASAM ANALYSIS

A New Stage in Uzbekistan–Kazakhstan Relations: A Strong Strategic Partnership

Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan celebrate the 30th anniversary of the establishment of mutual diplomatic relations. There is strategic partnership relevance between the two countries based on common cultural and historical ties and shaped by good neighbour relations. This partnership is getting stronger day by day with the spirit of alliance.¹ In this context, it is seen that political, cultural, scientific, and economic ties between the two states have developed.

On November 28, 2022, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan published the draft agreement on the establishment of political, economic, and military cooperation with Uzbekistan.

As it will be remembered, the first strategic partnership agreement between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan was signed in 1998. The first changes in the document were made in 2013 and some revisions were made over time de-



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pending on the conjuncture. At the point reached, Prime Minister of Kazakhstan Alikhan Smailov stated that the main purpose of the agreement is to increase the interaction between the parties to the level of alliance and that it is envisaged to develop cooperation.²

The legal framework for bilateral cooperation consists of more than ninety documents covering almost all areas of interaction. On the other hand, the President of Kazakhstan Kassym-Jomart Tokayev and the President of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev ensured that the consultation meetings of the heads of state of Central Asia came to the fore as an important mechanism for the solution of bilateral and regional cooperation. In addition, the two leaders led the establishment of the Interstate Supreme Council between the parties.³ This is reflected in the draft agreement. Moreover, close cooperation on oil and natural gas, including in the Aral Sea, is planned.

Clause 3 of the said agreement states that Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan shall refrain from participating in any alliance or action against each other: this includes military-technical cooperation. Additionally, most of the agreement is devoted to creating the necessary conditions for the restructuring of logistics routes based in Central Asia. In this sense, it is possible to prescience that investments in corridors will increase in the region.⁴ The parties intend to expand the economic and political partnership as well as to jointly counter the possible aggression of third states.

On the other hand, the draft agreement does not mention Moscow's integration projects in the former Soviet geography, the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU), and the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). Clause 20 has sorted the international organizations with which Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan plan to interact the United Nations (UN), the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and Islamic platforms. The draft agreement was published by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan during Tokayev's visit to Moscow and stated that it will be open for discussion until December 12, 2022. As a matter of fact, Moscow noticed the rapprochement between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan when Russian President Vladimir Putin proposed to Tokayev the establishment of a trilateral gas union including Russia.

As can be expected, the reason for the revision of the said agreement in question is the geoeconomic and geopolitical changes in the global conjuncture. In this situation, the key countries of the region, Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan are trying to consolidate their positions and avoid possible competition with respect to the power centers of the world, the US, the European Union (EU), Russia, and China.

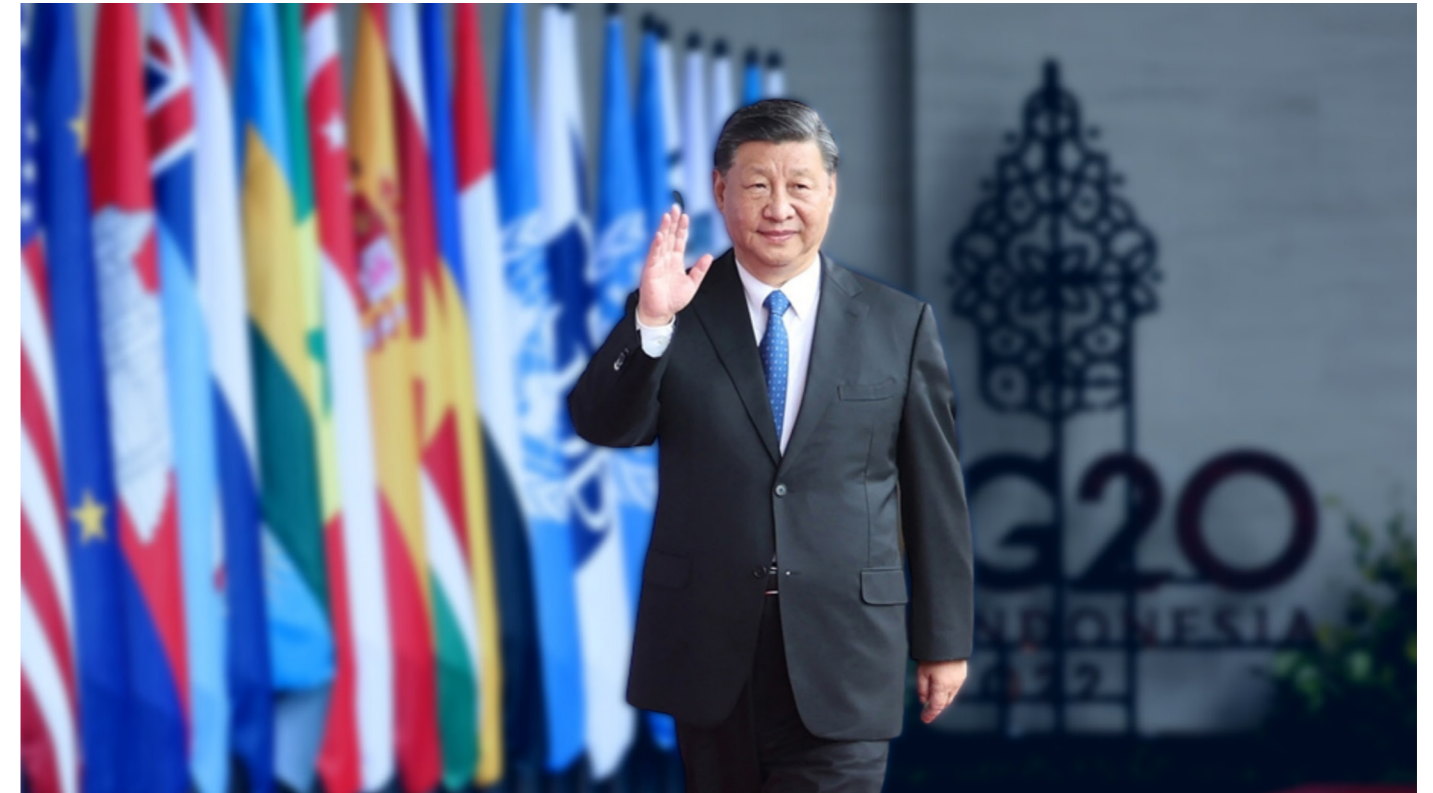
As a result, the agreement provides for the coordination of the positions of the parties by regularly exchanging views on bilateral relations and current issues of mutual interest. This shows that the alliance relationship between the parties tends to expand and deepen.

¹ "Казахстан и Узбекистан отмечают 30-летие дипломатических отношений", WorldNews, <https://dknews.kz/ru/politika/261619-kazahstan-i-uzbekistan-ot-mechayut-30-letie>, (Date of Accession: 14.12.2022).

² "Казахстан и Узбекистан готовят новый союз", Express, <https://exk.kz/news/149153/kazahstan-i-uzbiekistan-ghotoviat-novyi-soiuz>, (Date of Accession: 14.12.2022).

³ "О подписании Договора между Республикой Казахстан и Республикой Узбекистан о союзнических отношениях", Открытые НПА, <https://legalacts.egov.kz/npa/view?id=14312865>, (Date of Accession: 14.12.2022).

⁴ Ibid.



ANKASAM ANALYSIS

Western-Chinese Relations in the Context of Taiwan Visits

The island of Taiwan has become a highly problematic area for Beijing following the end of the Chinese Civil War and the refuge of former Republic of China President Chiang Kai-shek in Taiwan. It was not until 1971 that China was recognized by the international community and was denied a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council (UNSC).

In the following period, China made breakthroughs in economic, political, and military fields. This has caused concern among Western states, particularly the United States (US). In 2018, the US launched a trade war against China, plunging Western-Chinese relations into a tense atmosphere.

In August 2022, Nancy Pelosi, Speaker of the US House of Representatives, visited the island of

Taiwan. The visit of a high-ranking official to the island was seen as a highly hostile act by Beijing and China conducted military exercises around Taiwan, encircling the island. These exercises have increased tensions in the region.

At the G20 Heads of State Summit on November 15-16, 2022, there were attempts to soften the strained relations between the West and China. However, in the face of these attempts, China warned that the US should support its commitment to the "One China Principle" with concrete steps through an article published in the state media China Daily[1] on November 15, 2022.

Beijing continued to act cautiously but nonetheless saw that there was no change in the West's policy. Both the statements made after the Australia-US



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Ministerial Consultations (AUSMIN) between the US and Australia and the visits to Taiwan by parliamentarians from various states have shown that tensions between the parties remain hot.

The Taiwan Question is a tool of Western pressure on China, and Western states have not hesitated to use it directly or indirectly. Because it is obvious that Taiwan is an issue that has been waiting for a solution for a long time, but no progress can be made in practice, except for a few steps. In this context, the recent visits to Taiwan by Western states seeking to exert pressure on China are of interest.

First, a delegation of British MPs visited the island on November 29, 2022. The delegation held meetings with senior officials, including Foreign Minister of Taiwan Joseph Wu.[2] It is also noteworthy that earlier in the week of the visit, British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak stated that the “golden age” of relations between Beijing and London had come to an end. Sunak also warned against being too optimistic about China and said that China’s global importance cannot be ignored.[3]

Beijing responded to the visit through the British Embassy. In a statement, the embassy said that the visit was a flagrant violation of the “One-China Principle” and that any action to undermine China’s interests would be met with a strong response.[4]

Another meeting that provoked a reaction from China and strained relations was the visit of Australian MPs to Taiwan. On December 4, 2022, a delegation of MPs, including former Deputy Prime Minister of Australia Barnaby Joyce, visited the island. As news of the visit spread, Prime Minister of Australia Anthony Albanese stated that the delegation had nothing to do with the government and that there had been parliamentary visits to Taiwan before.[5] But these explanations were not enough to satisfy Beijing.

Indeed, an article published in the Global Times, a Chinese state-owned media outlet, argued that Albanese could not escape his responsibilities by saying that the delegation had nothing to do with the government.[6] The same article said that even if Albanese as Prime Minister could not block the delegation, as Prime Minister, he should make it clear that the government was against the visit.

Following these visits, the AUSMIN talks took place in Washington on December 7, 2022, as another factor affecting China-West relations. During the talks, the US and Australia agreed to increase military cooperation with Japan, joint exercises, and the US presence in Australia to counter growing Chinese influence in the

Pacific.[7] An article published in the Global Times on December 7, 2022, against the decisions taken in the talks suggested that Australia should not give up its own interests and autonomy for the sake of US expectations.[8] The fact that three important actors in the region have adopted a common stance against China means that they want to increase the pressure on China.

Finally, on December 11, 2022, Koichi Hagiuda, a senior official of Japan’s ruling Liberal Democratic Party, visited Taiwan. During the visit, Hagiuda said that in addition to increasing China’s military expenditures, North Korea’s missile tests were also effective in increasing Japan’s defence budget.[9] China responded to this visit through its Embassy in Tokyo. In a statement on December 12, 2022, the Embassy Spokesperson stated that this violated the “One-China Principle”, the four political documents between China and Japan, and Japan’s commitments to the Taiwan Issue.[10]

As a result, the expected positive atmosphere in West-China relations after the G20 Summit did not emerge. On the contrary, visits to Taiwan by Western states and their allies have led to further escalation of tensions. In the face of these Western moves, China is likely to take much more assertive steps.

[1] Shen Dingli, “US’ Sincerity to Its Commitments Vital to Sino-US Ties”, China Daily, www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202211/15/WS-637335b6a310491754329ce5.html, (Date of Accession: 15.11.2022).

[2] “U.K. Parliamentary Delegation Arrives in Taiwan for Five-Day Visit”, Focus Taiwan, focustaiwan.tw/politics/202211290018, (Date of Accession: 29.11.2022).

[3] “Rishi Sunak Says “Golden Era” of UK-China Ties Over”, NDTV, www.ndtv.com/world-news/rishi-sunak-says-so-called-golden-era-of-uk-china-relations-is-over-3561506, (Date of Accession: 29.11.2022).

[4] “China Condemns British Lawmakers’ Taiwan Visit”, BBC, www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-63826052, (Date of Accession: 01.12.2022).

[5] “Government and Opposition MPs to Visit Taiwan as Part of Australian Parliamentary Delegation”, ABC News, www.abc.net.au/news/2022-12-03/australian-mps-to-visit-taiwan-parliamentary-delegation/101730950, (Date of Accession: 03.12.2022).

[6] “Albanese Criticized for Insincerity on Improving Ties with Beijing Amid His Attempts to Distance Himself from Taiwan-Visiting Delegation”, Global Times, www.globaltimes.cn/page/202212/1281102.shtml, (Date of Accession: 04.12.2022).

[7] Phil Mercer, “Australia, US to Reinforce Defense Ties With Japan”, VOA News, www.voanews.com/a/australia-us-to-reinforce-defense-ties-with-japan/6865960.html, (Date of Accession: 07.12.2022).



ANKASAM ANALYSIS

What Does Macron’s Security Commitment to Russia Mean?

French President Emmanuel Macron visited the United States (US) between 29 November and 2 December 2022. Macron made a statement to the French news channel TFI during his visit. In an interview published on December 3, 2022, Macron pointed out that Europe must prepare its future security architecture. The French president also stated that if Russian President Vladimir Putin were to negotiate to end the war

in Ukraine, the West should consider how to address Moscow’s security concerns.[1]

Nevertheless, one of the most striking points in Macron’s statements is his emphasis on Europe’s “future security architecture.” As can be understood from Macron’s statements, the security concept is planned to be shaped in a framework where Europe will stand on its own



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feet. In other words, Macron's emphasis on security architecture is Eurocentric rather than transatlantic-oriented. Moreover, the French President wants this architecture to include security commitments to Russia.

Furthermore, Macron made the following statements about how the West's approach to Russia should be:[2]

"As Russian President Vladimir Putin has always said, one of the essential points we need to address is the fear of reaching the doorstep of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the deployment of weapons that could threaten Russia."

In this context, it is not surprising that France is the country that has come to the agenda by making a security commitment to Russia within the West. In his remarks, Macron highlighted the concerns that Russia claims to have heard from NATO. It should also be considered that Macron's statements questioning the alliance in the past years and that he is the European leader most open to dialogue with Putin in the current process.

Therefore, if Russia takes a step back, it can be said that the Paris administration will be the most open party to communication with Moscow in NATO. Parallels can be drawn between Macron's policy and the policies pursued by former French President Charles De Gaulle. This similarity is more clearly seen when one considers that the Paris administration left NATO's military flank under de Gaulle and that Macron is in a sense sceptical of the alliance.

On the other hand, the fact that the French President made these statements during his visit to the US makes Macron's words even more important. In particular, the fact that Olaf Scholz, who succeeded the previous German Chancellor Angela Merkel after leaving her post in 2021, could not be as effective as Merkel led to Macron becoming more prominent in Europe. In other words, it can be argued that France stands out in European politics rather than Germany. In addition, the fact that Berlin is the European country that had the closest relations with Moscow, especially before the war began, may-

be narrowed Germany's field of action in the current process. On the other hand, like Macron, Scholz has made statements aimed at addressing Moscow's security concerns. On December 1, 2022, the German Chancellor proposed that if Moscow abandons aggression against its neighbors, Europe must return to the pre-war peace order with Russia and solve all common security problems.[3]

The point that draws attention to Scholz's statement is that the solution envisaged to be realized with Russia is "Eurocentric." The two most powerful leaders of the European Union (EU) are therefore ready to address Moscow's security concerns if the war ends.

Moreover, while the tenth month of the Russia-Ukraine War has entered, Europe has been the region most adversely affected by the war. The war is taking place on the European continent. In this context, it is seen that Europe is gradually running out of energy. As a matter of fact, the statements of Macron and Scholz can be read as a reflection of this.

On the other hand, various countries in Europe reacted sharply to Macron's statements. In addition to Ukraine, Latvia, Sweden, and Finland have been critics of Macron.[4] It is not surprising that the countries that have reacted the most to Macron are the Baltic states. In the current conjuncture, the Baltic countries are the states that have the threat perception from Moscow. Sweden and Finland decided to join NATO under the influence of the war and put an end to the neutrality policy they had been following for years.

Furthermore, it can be argued that one of the most important reasons for the criticism of Macron is that the current conjuncture is advancing against Moscow. Macron's security commitment to Russia may therefore have been perceived by the Baltic states as a sign of weakness.

In addition to all these, there are serious disagreements within NATO about what kind of attitude should be taken towards Russia. It can be argued that the UK and the US are positioned at a

different point than the France-Germany duo. Therefore, it can be foreseen that London and Washington may adopt a negative attitude towards Moscow regarding the security commitment. These countries think that Russia is the one who should provide the actual commitment to security.

In this context, it can be argued that Germany and France represent one front within NATO, while the UK and the US represent another front. Therefore, while the Paris-Berlin duo wants the war to end as soon as possible, it can be said that London and Washington are calculating the prolongation of the war. As can be understood, there are disagreements between the US-UK duo and the main representatives of Continental Europe.

Consequently, Macron's guarantees, which address Europe's future security architecture and address security concerns of Russia, are met with major opposition, exposing the division within the Western World. Especially given the opposition of the Baltic states and Eastern European countries to the security concept presented by the French President, it is extremely difficult for this plan to be accepted in Europe.

[1] "Macron Says New Security Architecture Should Give Guarantees for Russia", Reuters, <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/macron-says-new-security-architecture-should-give-guarantees-russia-2022-12-03/>, (Date of Accession: 11.12.2022).

[2] "Macron's Idea of 'Security Guarantees' to Russia Faces Backlash", Euractiv, <https://www.euractiv.com/section/europe-s-east/news/macrons-idea-of-security-guarantees-to-russia-faces-backlash/>, (Date of Accession: 11.12.2022).

[3] Ibid.

[4] "Ukraine, Baltics Rebuke Macron for Suggesting 'Security Guarantees' for Russia", Reuters, <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/ukraine-baltics-rebuke-macron-suggesting-security-guarantees-russia-2022-12-05/>, (Date of Accession: 11.12.2022).



ANKASAM ANALYSIS

South Korea's Security Moves in the Shadow of North Korea

Since the first nuclear crisis with North Korea in the 1990s, South Korea has sought diplomatic solutions to the problem together with Japan and the United States of America (USA). Despite these efforts, North Korea continued to develop its nuclear capabilities. The Pyongyang administration, which made commitments regarding the liquidation of the nuclear weapons program within the scope of the US-North Korean Agreed Framework in 1994, has repeatedly given up on these promises.[1]

Looking at the 21st century, it is seen that there is no change in the attitude of North Korea. Kim Jong-un, who was the First Secretary of the North

Korean Workers' Party in 2015, said, "We must manufacture powerful and state-of-the-art military hardware in our own style in greater numbers and continually strengthen our nuclear deterrence"[2]. He pointed out that the Pyongyang administration should develop nuclear weapons.

Then in 2016, North Korea conducted its fourth nuclear test.[3] To stop these attempts, it was tried to sit at the table with the Pyongyang administration again. In 2018, three summits were held between North Korea and South Korea. Subsequently, South Korean President Moon Jae-in visited Pyongyang in September of the same year. Compared to



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the threats and increasing security problems in 2017, diplomacy started to come to the fore in the North Korean issue after 2018. Therefore, there are signs of improvement in relations between Seoul and Pyongyang.[4]

Despite all this, as of 2021, North Korea has started missile tests again. Finally, in November 2022, North Korea conducted ballistic missile tests. Based on calculations based on the flight trajectory of this latest missile test, Japan stated that the estimated range of the missile could exceed 15,000 kilometers. In other words, North Korea can hit the entire continent of Asia, Europe, North America, and part of South America with its missiles.[5]

In addition to missile tests, North Korea fired approximately 130 artillery shells at the South Korean maritime buffer zone in December 2022, according to the statement of the South's Joint Chiefs of Staff.[6] South Korea, which seeks a solution against the threats of North Korea by coming together with both regional and non-regional states, can't go a long way in solving the problem. On the contrary, Pyongyang displays a much more aggressive foreign policy. North Korean President Kim's statement that his country plans to become "the world's most powerful nuclear force" also reveals Pyongyang's aggressive stance.[7]

Even if an agreement is reached with North Korea, the Seoul administration will never be sure of Pyongyang's sincerity due to past experiences. Therefore, the ultimate step for South Korea is to increase security measures. As the Realist theory emphasizes, in an environment where there is a security dilemma, the parties will tend to strengthen themselves militarily.

First, South Korea began work to develop a domestic ballistic missile defense after North Korea's first nuclear test in 2006.[8] South Korea, which is largely dependent on the security services of the USA, developed its own missile defense system by not participating in the global missile defense system led by the Washington administration. Seoul launched its first guided missile destroyer, Sejong the Great, in 2007, followed by Yulgok Yi I in 2008 and Seoae Ryu Seong-ryong in 2011.[9] In 2022, South Korea has successfully tested a new anti-ballistic missile system, the L-SAM vehicle.[10] South Korea's ballistic missile defense has become an increasingly important component of the country's defense capabilities since 2006.

Secondly, the US and South Korean armies have been conducting exercises together for years. The last one was in November 2022, after North Korea's intercontinental ballistic missile test, and the joint air exercise involving strategic bombers was carried

out by US Air Force B-1B Lancer bomber and F-16 warplanes and South Korean F-35A jets.[11] Regarding the issue, South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol stated that the joint exercises with the United States strengthened South Korea's defense.[12]

Thirdly, South Korea is increasing the budget allocated to defense expenditures in order to modernize its army. As seen in Table 1, the defense budget of the Seoul administration has increased gradually in recent years and this trend continues.[13] According to the statement made by the Ministry of National Defense of South Korea, it is foreseen that the Seoul government will allocate a defense budget of KRW 57,1 trillion (US\$ 42,1 billion) for 2023. This budget is 4.6% more than the 2022 defense budget.[14]

Table 1: Percentage of South Korea's Defense Spending in Recent Years[15]

As a result, Seoul's security concerns include not only the threat of North Korea, but also the economic rise of China, the tension around Taiwan, and the dependence on the global supply chain for energy.[16] But the problem that has the potential to cause the greatest damage to South Korea's national security and territorial integrity is the North Korean issue. As stated by the Institute for National Security Strategy, North Korea considers itself superior to Seoul due to nuclear weapons and therefore continues its military attacks actively.[17] Due to this perception of Pyongyang, Seoul has placed it among its priorities to overcome this problem by improving its military capabilities.

[1] Hirofumi Tosaki, "The North Korean Nuclear Issue and Japan's Deterrence Posture", Japan and the World, Japan Digital Library, 2017, p. 1.

[2] "The Cause of the Great Party of Comrades Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il is Ever-Victorious," KCNA, <http://www.kcna.co.jp/item/2015/201510/news06/20151006-20ee.html>, (Date of Accession: 12.12.2022).

[3] Tosaki, op. cit., p. 1.

[4] Jojin V. John, "South Korea's Approach to North Korea under President Moon Jae-in", Major Powers and the Korean Peninsula: Politics, Policies and Perspectives, Titli Basu, (Ed.), KW Publishers, New Delhi 2019, p. 207.

[5] "US Seeks International Condemnation of North Korean Missile Launch at UN", VOA, <https://www.voanews.com/a/us-seeks-international-condemnation-of-north-korean-missile-launch-at-un-/6844019.html>, (Date of Accession: 12.12.2022).



ANKASAM ANALYSIS

Rising Tension on the Kosovo-Serbia Line

Although the tension between Kosovo and Serbia, which rose in the summer of 2022 with the decision of the Pristina administration to implement the uniform identity and license plate application for everyone in the country, including Kosovo Serbs, softened from time to time, especially with the mediation efforts of the Euro-

pean Union (EU), 8 December 2022 Once again in its history, it caused Europe to feel the fear of war.

At the date, Kosovo police increased the number of personnel in the Serb-dominated Northern Mitrovica region,[1] It drew the reaction of



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the Serbs living in the region and barricades were set up at the entrances of the cities.[2] This led to an increase in ethnic tensions. In this context, a process took place that brought Kosovars and Serbs, who constitute most of the population in the country, against each other, and Pristina and Belgrade in terms of interstate relations.

At this point, it can be stated that the events in Kosovo should be handled from three different perspectives, based on the country's internal dynamics, the balances in the region, and the global power struggle. Ignoring one of the mentioned perspectives may lead to an incomplete reading and thus make erroneous determinations.

First, it should be stated that Kosovo's biggest concern is "Being Bosnia." In this sense, it is seen that the main event that increased the tension in the region is the issue of the "Serbian Union of Municipalities." Because although a certain consensus has been reached in the negotiations on the license plate and identity crisis under the mediation of the EU, the differences on the issue of the "Serbian Union of Municipalities" continue.

The establishment of the "Association of Serbian Municipalities" was accepted by the Government of Kosovo in the Brussels Agreement in 2013, but it is a bill that the Constitutional Court later rejected. The person who brought the issue to the Constitutional Court is the current Prime Minister of Kosovo, Albin Kurti, who was in the opposition at that time.

As can be expected, the Kurti administration refrains from opening the door to a process that may lead to division in the future, based on the experience in Bosnia. In such an environment, the early local elections to be held in the municipalities of Northern Mitrovica, Zubin Potok, Leposavic and Zvečan were also influential during the developments. Because the Serbian regions, which were withdrawn from the municipalities during the license plate crisis, are in a sensitive position. Therefore, the President of Kosovo, Vjosa Osmani, announced that he postponed the elections to April 2023.[3] In other words, Kosovo has sensitive dynamics that stand out from the ethnic tensions in other Balkan countries.

Undoubtedly, at this point, the issue is closely related to the regional balances between Kosovo and Serbia. What makes the issue complicated here is that Kosovo unilaterally declared its independence from Serbia in 2008; However, this independence is not recognized by the Belgrade administration.

Moreover, Serbia is not indifferent to its compatriots living in both Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo. This situation is closely related to the idea of "Greater Serbia" and pan-Slavist ideas. Accordingly, the escalation of ethnic tension in the north of Kosovo automatically turns what is happening into a crisis on the Pristina-Belgrade line. Moreover, Serbia's interest in the Serbs in Kosovo, on the one hand, compares Bosnia and Herzegovina with similar events; On the other hand, it worries the Tirana administration because most of Kosovo's population is Albanian. This means that if weapons explode in Kosovo, regional chaos may become inevitable. Therefore, regional dynamics are quite fragile.

The Balkans, which hosts fragile fault lines in geopolitical terms, draws attention as an area where the global power struggle takes place. It is not possible to evaluate the crisis between Pristina and Belgrade independently of the Russia-Ukraine War and therefore the power struggle between Russia and the West.

Currently, Russia has a certain influence over Serbia, with the influence of pan-Slavism. In this sense, the Moscow administration, which could not achieve the desired results in Ukraine, may be trying to send a message to the European states through the emergence of new crisis areas in its close vicinity and to direct the EU's attention to geographies other than Ukraine.

On the other hand, Kosovo has been positioned as an actor close to the United States of America (USA) since its independence. Even after the Kosovo police were shot at, Kurti expressed that his country is democratic and pro-Western.[4]

In this sense, it is possible to state that Kosovo, which is concerned about "Bosnia", attaches importance to the USA and NATO in general, and tries to ensure its national security through the North Atlantic Treaty Organization Kosovo Task Force (KFOR).

Serbia, on the other hand, is close to Russia in the global power struggle, but it mainly takes care of its national interests and tries to implement a versatile foreign policy. As a matter of fact, on the one hand, Belgrade kept a distance from the sanctions targeting Moscow; on the other hand, the EU maintains its goal of membership and attaches importance to it in terms of its future projection. In short, in the Balkans, an area where the global power struggle takes place, each country tries to achieve maximum gain in line with its national interests and seeks ways to effectively use the balance in the region.

At this point, both Kosovo's positioning on Western values and Serbia's EU membership goal position Brussels as a mediator. The role of the EU has come to the fore in the negotiation processes carried out since the summer of 2022. As a matter of fact, despite all the tensions, it can be foreseen that there will be a search for reconciliation under the mediation of the EU. However, it is known that on 12 December 2022, the US State Department Western Balkans Advisor Derek Chollet started his regional visit.[5] This indicates that the USA can also be positioned as a "peacemaker" actor in the Balkans. Because Serbian President Alexander Vucic wanted the international community to take action for peace and Serbian Defense Minister Milos Vucevic drew attention to the importance of dialogue.

As a result, the tension between Kosovo and Serbia in the Balkans, which is extremely fragile geography due to ethnic fault lines, has once again escalated in the case of Kosovo Serbs. However, it can be said that hot conflict is not the priority option of any side and there is a prudent approach that prefers dialogue. Although a serious war is not expected in the short term in the Balkans, which has been thrown into an even more sensitive ground with the Russia-Ukraine War, it does not seem easy to achieve sustainable peace in the medium and long term. The main reason for this is that the parties cannot develop a reasonable dialogue language to understand each other's concerns.

[1] "Kosova Polisi, Ülkenin Kuzeyindeki Mevcudiyetini Artırdı", TRT Haber, <https://www.trthaber.com/haber/dunya/kosova-polisi-ulk-enin-kuzeyindeki-mevcudiyetini-artirdi-729459.htmlve>, (Date of Accession: 13.12.2022).

[2] "Kosova'da Sırlar Yolları Kesti", Hürriyet, <https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/dunya/kosovada-sirplar-yollari-kesti-42186574>, (Date of Accession: 13.12.2022).

[3] "Kosova'nın Kuzeyindeki 4 Belediyede Erken Yerel Seçimler Nisan 2023'e Ertelendi", TRT Avaz, <https://www.trtavaz.com.tr/haber/tur/>



ANKASAM ANALYSIS

The Opening of the USA to Turkmenistan

The United States of America (USA) is developing its relations with various regions and countries of the world since it is a global power. The main purpose of this policy is to expand its influence, to ensure the spread of the values it advocates, and to strengthen relations on security issues. In this context, it is seen that the USA focuses on improving its relations with the Central Asian states.

The Central Asian republics generally implement a multi-vector foreign policy. Since they are in the heart of Eurasia, they are neighbours with global powers such as Russia and China, and they are trying to turn their geopolitical positions into gains, they are using this policy in a balancing way within a pragmatist framework. The mentioned situation makes the Central Asian states a centre of attraction for regional and global actors.



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In this context, the interest of the USA towards Central Asia is increasing every day. There are various reasons for this interest. First of all, Central Asia is in the post-Soviet geography. Assessing the power vacuum created after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Washington administration has pursued a policy aimed at increasing its influence in various regions of the world. Today, it has increased its interest in Central Asia due to the vacuum created by the Russian-Ukrainian War. Peculiarly, it can be said that the “New Great Game” has increased the interest of the USA.

On the other hand, Central Asia has a critical place in the security of Eurasia. It is a natural barrier that prevents the spread of security threats, radical and separatist terrorist organizations, especially since it is neighbour to a country like Afghanistan. In addition, the cooperation of Central Asian states in the prevention of drug trade shows that the USA and the states of the region have a similar approach in terms of security threats and perceptions. This facilitates easier security-based cooperation between the parties.

The main reason for the increasing interest of the USA in Central Asia in the recent period is the energy crisis experienced by Europe. As is known, Europe is turning to Central Asia in order to diversify its energy alternatives and meet its energy needs. In this sense, the Washington administration supports Europe's policy of moving towards Central Asia. The active diplomatic support of the USA will make Europe's job easier.[1] Moreover, it is obvious that the important underground resources of the region also attract the USA and pave the way for its orientation to the region. Additionally, it is also important for the USA that the Western capital, which has left Russia, prefers Central Asia.

One of the reasons for the USA's orientation towards Central Asia is the growing relations of Russia and China with the regional states. The Asian countries of the region are developing relations with all their neighbours within the framework of equality, mutual respect and win-win principle due to their multi-vector foreign policies. However, the USA, which is concerned about the increasing influence of actors such as Russia and China on the world, aims to balance these countries by strengthening its relations with Central Asia. Accordingly, the Washington administration's approach, which seeks to balance other governments rather than being based on a win-win logic, may cause unease in the region.

The USA is trying to strengthen its relations with Central Asia through meetings held both bilaterally and within the framework of the C5+1. The Ashgabat administration also shows a will to strengthen its relations with the USA within the framework of the principle of equality by maintaining the Permanent Neutrality Status.[2] During this process, the USA focuses on issues, especially economic and security, and trying to have an impact. On the other hand, Turkmenistan's influence on the process of USA orientation towards the region is quite significant. Firstly, Turkmenistan is the fourth richest country in the world in terms of natural gas reserves. This situation increases the importance of Turkmenistan.

As will be remembered, the US Assistant Secretary of State for the Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, Donald Lu, said during his visit to Turkmenistan in November 2022 that the USA wants to strengthen its relations with this country. In this context, the Washington administration plans to develop relations in a multidimensional way, including the economy, regional security, climate change, trade, education and culture.[3]

In his statement, Lu also gave important details about the relationship. Lu stated that they want to improve their commercial relations with Turkmenistan, that they have given scholarships to 920 Turkmen students within the framework of the Future Leaders Exchange (FLEX) and that they intend to strengthen their relations with universities in Turkmenistan.[4] In addition, Lu stated that he also visited other Central Asian states in May 2022. During this process, he said that he did not come to Ashgabat because he wanted to organize

a separate visit to an important country such as Turkmenistan.[5] At the US-Turkmenistan Business Council meeting held in Ashgabat on December 5-6, 2022, the parties demonstrated that they have a common will to strengthen relations and cooperation in a multidimensional way.[6]

When the security dimension is considered, issues such as response to natural disasters and emergency situations, cyber defence, security, cooperation in engineering and building trade were discussed between the authorities of the two states in September 2022. Turkmenistan expressed its readiness for the development and strengthening of relations in accordance with the country's constitutional norms and military doctrine in a way that does not harm its neutrality status.

In addition, one of the common points between Turkmenistan and the USA in terms of security is Afghanistan. The parties agree on the adoption of a joint position for the establishment of peace and security in Afghanistan and the strengthening of economic and humanitarian relations with Afghanistan.[7]

It is possible to say that the opening of the USA to Turkmenistan was positively received by Ashgabat. Because this situation will strengthen the multifaceted-vector policy pursued by the country, as well as facilitate Turkmenistan's access to the Western energy market and pave the way for attracting investment.

In conclusion, the USA opening to Central Asia in general, and Turkmenistan in particular, has economic, political, security and social dimensions. The Washington administration has started to show more interest in the region due to the recent developments in Eurasia. The multifaceted foreign policy of the Central Asian states, on the other hand, allows intensifying relations with the USA. Turkmenistan has an important position in Eurasia due to both its underground riches and its geopolitical position. Therefore, in today's conjuncture, when the West turns its face to the East, Turkmenistan is becoming a critical centre with its multifaceted and neutral foreign policy. This increases the importance of Turkmenistan in the eyes of the USA.

[1] Emil Avdaliani, “The EU Returns to Central Asia”, Modern Diplomacy, <https://moderndiplomacy.eu/2022/12/10/the-eu-returns-to-central-asia/>, (Date of Accession: 15.12.2022).

[2] “Расширенное заседание Кабинета Министров Туркменистана”, <https://turkmenistan.gov.tm/ru/post/68530/rasshirennoe-zasedanie-kabineta-ministrov-turkmenistana-13>, (Date of Accession: 15.12.2022).

[3] Aybulat Musaev, “Turkmen President, US Official Discuss Strengthening Bilateral Ties”, Caspian News, <https://caspiannews.com/news-detail/turkmen-president-us-official-discuss-strengthening-bilateral-ties-2022-11-10-35/>, (Date of Accession: 15.12.2022).

[4] “Investments in business and education are on the agenda of Turkmen-American cooperation”, Orient, <https://orient.tm/en/post/41512/investments-business-and-education-are-agenda-turkmen-american-cooperation>, (Date of Accession: 15.12.2022).

[5] Ibid.

[6] “Ashgabat Hosts Turkmenistan-US Business Forum”, Business Turkmenistan, <https://business.com.tm/post/9529/ashkabat-turkmenistanabd-%C4%B0sh-konferans%C4%B1na-ev-sahipli%C4%9Fi-yapt%C4%B1>, (Date of Accession: 15.12.2022).

[7] Aybek Nurjanov, “Turkmenistan, US Discuss Revival of Ties Within Partnership Program”, Caspian News, <https://caspiannews.com/news-detail/turkmenistan-us-discuss-revival-of-ties-within-partnership-program-2022-9-28-0/>, (Date of Accession: 15.12.2022).



ANKASAM ANALYSIS

“Constitutional Coup” Crisis in Montenegro

The process of forming a new government in Montenegro, which began after the government led by Dritan Abazovic failed to win a vote of confidence on August 20th 2022, turned into a political crisis. In this context, within the scope of the formation of the new government, the parties were given 30 days to present the prime ministerial candidate; however, the pro-Serbi-

an parties in the country were unable to deliver to the president all the signatures of the deputies supporting the candidacy of Miodrag Lekic of the Democratic Front Party to form a new government for President Milo Djukanovic. For this reason, Djukanovic refused to give Lekic the task of forming a government because he did not accomplish the necessary conditions and



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demanding early general elections, announcing that this could happen at the beginning of 2023.^[1]

Following these developments, the Democratic Front Party demanded an amendment to the Law on the Presidency. So much so; On November 2, 2022, the 81-member Montenegrin Parliament adopted the legal amendment, described by President Milo Djukanovic as a “constitutional coup”, with the votes of forty-one deputies. However, the President of the Republic sent the relevant decision back to the Parliament on 8 November 2022.

According to the said legal regulation in question, if the President does not give anyone the task of forming a government to enable the formation of pro-Serbian parties in Montenegro, the candidate with the support of the parliamentary majority will take over. Democratic Front MP Predrag Bulatovic argued that the arrangement would solve the political crisis.²

Djukanovic did not invite political parties to consultations to form a government. The law restricting the powers of the president was voted on for the second time in the Montenegrin Parliament on 12 December 2022 and passed the approval of the deputies. However, the members of the Constitutional Court could not be determined because Djukanovic’s opposition Democratic Party of Socialist Party (DPS) deputies did not attend the session. The session also raised a proposal to launch an investigation to determine whether the President violated the Constitution by failing to appoint a representative despite his constitutional obligation.³

Following the adoption of a draft law restricting the president’s powers, thousands of demonstrators began to protest in the country under the leadership of Montenegro’s DPS, led by Djukanovic. In the demonstrations that have been going on for weeks; “We are here for Montenegro and the European Union (EU),” and “We want elections,” are carried placards. The demonstrators are demanding early elections by chanting “We are uncomfortable with fascism”, “We are not here to be silent” and “We will not violate the constitution, we want elections”. Reacting to the parliament, activists gathered in front of the Parliament building and threw stones and bottles at the building. In violent demonstrations, protesters have called Prime Minister Abazovic and Interior Minister Filip Adzic “traitors.”⁴

Meanwhile, the EU has summoned political actors in Montenegro to revoke the “decision restricting the powers of the President”. European Commission Spokesperson Ana Pisonero said the provocative actions in Montenegro must end as soon as possible. Pisonero also pointed out that Montenegro has once again missed the opportunity to end the institutional crisis by appointing the members of the Constitutional Court, adding, “A functional Constitutional Court is key for Montenegro to protect the fundamental rights of its citizens and move forward on the path to the EU.”⁵

At the same time, the United States (US) Embassy in Podgorica called for peaceful and constructive talks. “We call on Montenegrin politicians and all citizens of the country to find peaceful solutions to political problems,” the embassy said in a statement.⁶

As can be understood, although the citizens of the country are not satisfied with the DPS government, they think that this will be solved with early elections. Therefore, if early elections cannot be held in the country, there is a possibility that these events will turn into internal turmoil. In addition, since the law is not accepted by the President, it is possible to hold early elections at the beginning of 2023.

As a result, the EU and the US will not welcome the formation of a pro-Serbian government in the country, which will have the support of the Russians. Therefore, it may make some attempts to prevent this from happening. This indicates that the country could become one of the playgrounds of the Russian-Western struggle.

[1] "Karadağ Cumhurbaşkanı'ndan Yeni Hükümet Kurulması Yerine Seçime Gidilmesi Kararı", Anadolu Ajansı (AA), <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/dunya/karadag-cumhurbaskanindan-yeni-hukumet-kurulmasi-yerine-secime-gidilmesi-karari/2692392>, (Date of Accession: 13.12.2022).

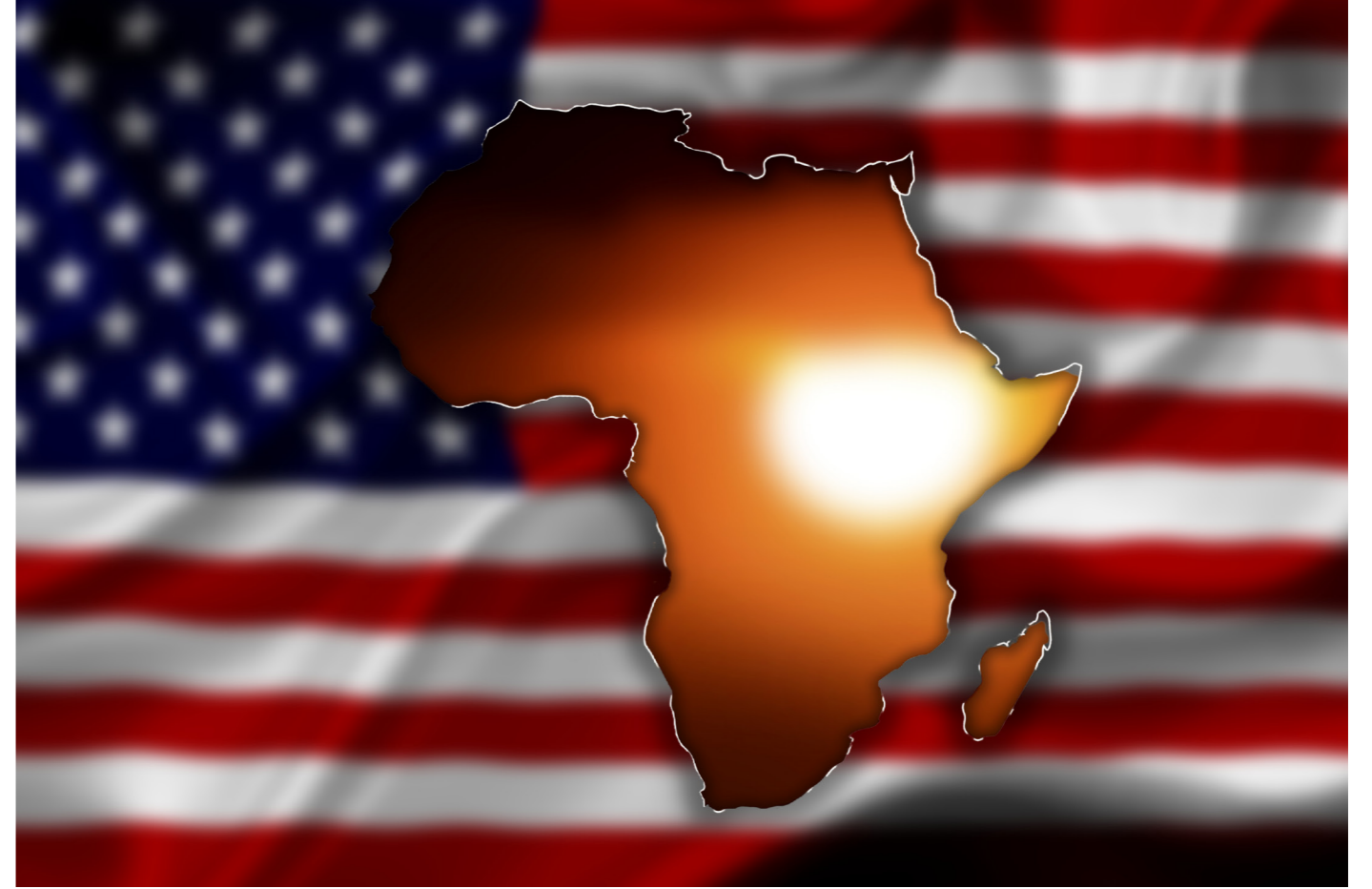
2 "Thousands in Montenegro Clash with Police over Political Tension", Anadolu Agency (AA), <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/europe/thousands-in-montenegro-clash-with-police-over-political-tension/2762549>, (Date of Accession: 13.12.2022).

3 "Propao pokušaj izbora sudija Ustavnog suda Crne Gore", Al Jazeera Balkans, <https://balkans.aljazeera.net/videos/2022/12/12/propao-pokusaj-izbora-sudija-ustavnog-suda-crne-gore>, (Date of Accession: 13.12.2022).

4 "Karadağ'daki Protestoya Polis Müdahalesi", Balkan News, <https://www.balkannews.com.tr/karadag/karadag-daki-protestoya-polis-mudahalesi-h5255.html>, (Date of Accession: 13.12.2022).

5 "AB'den, Karadağ'a 'Cumhurbaşkanının Yetkilerini Kısıtlayan Kararı' İptal Çağrısı", Balkan News, <https://www.balkannews.com.tr/karadag/ab-den-karadag-a-cumhurbaskaninin-yetkilerini-h5260.html>, (Date of Accession: 13.12.2022).

6 Ibid.



ANKASAM ANALYSIS

US-Africa Summit: A Message to Russia and China?

In the United States (US) National Strategy and Security Document proclaimed on October 14, 2022, one page was reserved for Africa. Accordingly, it was stated that cooperation and joint work with African countries would be augmented. In addition, the Washington administration, which wants to review its relations with African countries where Russia and China's influence has expanded, does not want to leave Africa under the domination of China and Russia. In this context, the White House announced that a US-Africa Summit will be held on December 13-15, as announced in July 2022.[1]

The first of these summits were held in 2014 under the leadership of then-US President Barack Obama. During the Donald Trump era, no such summit was held for Africa. Therefore, the call for the second summit made during the Bid-

en period can be interpreted as the US has put Africa on its agenda and the continent will be more prominent in the coming period. Topics at the summit; peace, security and good governance, food security, health, climate change, education, youth, and diaspora ties that Africa suffers from.

49 out of 54 African countries were invited to the US-Africa Leaders' Summit held between 13-15 December 2022.[2] If the President of the African Union is included, it is seen that 50 leaders attended the meeting. Four of the remaining countries are Burkina Faso, Guinea, Mali, and Sudan; considering the coup situation, they were not invited to the summit. Eritrea, on the other hand, was not invited due to the lack of bilateral relations. The summit in question can be expressed as one of the most significant



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foreign policy priorities for Biden's second year in office. Because around 1000 Africans, consisting of 50 leaders and many officials with them, came to Washington and forums were held on many issues, especially on issues such as business, security, trade, food insecurity, and climate change. The interviews here revealed both the US policy towards Africa and the perspective of Africans towards the US.

US President Joe Biden had the opportunity to meet with African heads of state during and after sessions. This summit, organized by the Washington administration, which does not hold high-level meetings with African states very often compared to European countries and Asian countries such as China, Russia, and India, provided an important opportunity to bring the US foreign policy to a new ground. As it is known, the Washington-Beijing tension that started before Biden was elected President of the US continued with Biden's appointment. Despite China's increasing geopolitical and economic influence around the world, the decrease in the influence of the US and the deterioration in its relations with important countries reveal the world that has evolved into a multipolar system. Considering the increasing influence of China in Africa, it has an important influence in many areas, especially in the economy, in almost all the continental countries. However, this is arduous to say for the US. Because when the trade volume of the US and China with African countries is compared, this situation comes to the fore. In this context, the summit move of the Washington administration against the increasing influence of China and Russia is very prominent both in terms of US foreign policy and Washington's relations with African capitals.

The fact that China is not mentioned even once in the 34-page agenda report prepared for the summit, and that Russia takes place twice due to the Ukraine War in the context of food security and the global food crisis means that the agenda includes significant changes compared to the African strategy published at the time of Trump. While the increase in China's influence and investments was at the forefront of the African strategy published during the Trump era; it is noteworthy that the Biden administration put forward an agenda that never mentioned China.

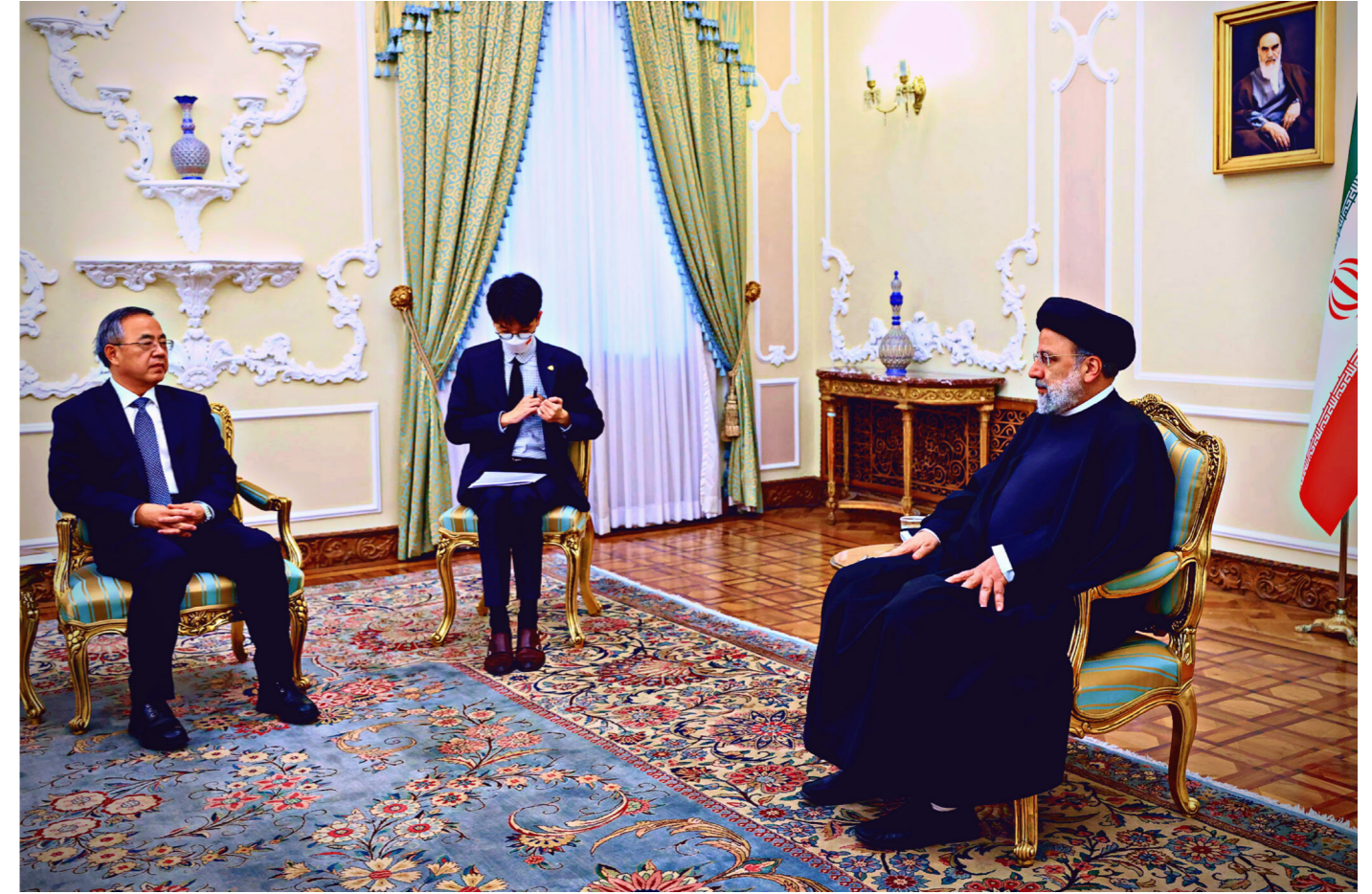
Considering that China has increased its commercial activities in Africa in recent years, has become more visible militarily, and its diplomatic ties with almost every country are considered, the attitude of the Washington administration can be better understood. Although Russia is at war with Ukraine, it is closely watched by the US as it develops its relations with Africa and establishes military partnerships by increasing its presence in African countries. Accordingly, without mentioning these two countries at the summit, issues such as developing commercial relations with African countries, strengthening the African diaspora within the US, conflicts in the continent, food insecurity, climate change and

developing agricultural activities came to the fore. Therefore, the summit in question is important for the US to keep up with the new dynamics of the region, to produce eligible policies and to make new agreements.

To summarize, Africa is of great importance both diplomatically and economically. The continent, which has 54 votes in the United Nations, also has enormous economic market potential. Knowing this, the US wants to create opportunities against the increasing Chinese influence in the continent. It can be said that this is one of the main aims of the summit. In addition, in July 2022, the US's humanitarian aid of close to 1.3 billion dollars to prevent drought-induced hunger in East Africa coincided with the date when the African summit was announced. In addition, in his closing speech on the last day of the summit, US President Joe Biden's statement that 2 billion US dollars in humanitarian aid will be provided for food insecurity in Africa can be seen as proof that such aid can continue, and that the US wants to strengthen its profile in Africa. The situation in question indicates that the US has undergone a significant change in its African policy.

One of the important implications of the summit for Africa is that the US announced that it would support the African Union to become a permanent participant in the G20. If this happens, Africa will be mentioned more as a union and the African Union will be able to strengthen its position in the continent. Another implication is that the US will provide 2 billion dollars of humanitarian aid to the food insecure places in Africa. In this way, many people who are starving or cannot reach food in Africa will be saved. Finally, the US signed trade and cooperation agreements with African countries in various fields, and President Biden made some economic commitments for Africa. In this context, the summit in question can be seen as important both for the development and recovery of Africa and for the US to catch up with China's influence in the continent.

In conclusion, it can be said that the US-Africa Summit marks the beginning of a new era for both Washington-Africa relations and the world. It is possible to argue that by 2023, the US will take a greater role in terms of economic and humanitarian aid in Africa. However, the US can develop an economic initiative towards Africa. The US, which wants to increase its influence in Central Asia in response to China and Russia, helps the countries of the region through economic initiatives can be given as an example. For this reason, it can be claimed that the Washington administration's aid to the continent will continue to increase, and the summit will give a message to Russia and China. In addition, the Biden administration's devotion to the first day of the summit, considering the African diaspora in the US, may indicate important changes in African policy.



ANKASAM ANALYSIS

Chinese Vice Premier Hu Chunhua's Visit to Tehran

The month of December 2022 witnessed developments that showed that the Beijing administration's Middle East opening accelerated rapidly. In this context, the participation of Chinese President Xi Jinping in the China-Arab Countries Summit and the China-Gulf Cooperation Organization Summit held on 7-9 December 2022 made a lot of noise.[1]

At the same time, the development in question was also interpreted as rapprochement between Beijing-Riyadh. Considering that Saudi Arabia has not taken steps to confront Russia on oil prices despite the pressure of the United States of America (USA) and that it has joined the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)



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with the status of “Dialogue Partner” at the SCO Dushanbe Summit held in August 2021, it can be said that Riyadh is willing to improve its relations with Beijing and Moscow. Of course, there are also claims that this rapprochement has elicited Iran’s response. Therefore, in order to understand the current state of relations between Beijing and Tehran, it is necessary to examine the visit of Chinese Vice Premier Hu Chunhua to Tehran on December 13, 2022.

As it will be remembered, in the final declaration of the China-Arab Countries Summit, it was pointed out that Iran’s regional activities created instability and the situation in question led to Tehran’s reaction. In fact, Iranian President Ibrahim Reisi opened this issue to discussion during his meeting with Hu and said, “Some of the issues that have come up during the Chinese President’s recent visit to the region have caused dissatisfaction and complaints in the Iranian people and government.”[2] Hu’s visit also garnered attention because it took place in the shadow of the statement in question.

At this stage, it is possible to interpret Hu’s visit to Tehran in two ways because, during the same time period, Xi was visiting Riyadh. The first of these is that China maintains its contacts with Saudi Arabia at the presidential level, that is, at the highest level, while choosing to establish relations with Iran at a lower level. This can be interpreted as there being some problems between Beijing and Tehran. Still, considering that Xi’s visit to Riyadh took place within the scope of the summit, it can be stated that this would be an exaggerated assessment. For this reason, it is useful to put forward the second perspective. This means that Hu’s visit was developed within the framework of the “China-Iran 25-Year Comprehensive Cooperation Agreement” signed in March 2021, and therefore things are on track. The indications that strengthen this interpretation are found in the statements made at the summit and in the memorandums of understanding signed.

The most important consideration in the meeting between Reisi and Hu is that Hu stated that China has always respected Iran’s national sovereignty and territorial integrity and supports Tehran’s efforts to secure its core interests.[3] On the occasion of these words, Hu implied that the Beijing administration is in solidarity with Tehran in the face of the protests in Iran. This can be described as a support that Iran expects in such a period. Also, in the context of regional developments, Hu made a statement by saying, “China’s determination to strengthen and deepen its relations with Iran will continue regardless of regional and international developments.”[4]

During Hu’s visit, a meeting of the “Iran-China Comprehensive Cooperation Program” was also arranged. Speaking at the meeting, Iranian First Vice President Mohammad Mokhber said, “Tehran is ready to develop cooperation with Beijing in various sectors such as energy, transit and co-production.”[5] and he emphasized the potential for cooperation between the two countries. This means that there is no serious problem between the parties. As a matter of fact, in the context of the “China-Iran 25-Year Comprehensive Cooperation Agreement”, 16 different memorandums of understanding were signed for the implementation of projects related to energy, oil, natural gas, joint investments, banking, trade, foreign exchange, strategic transit and ports.[6] It was also stated that the cooperation between the parties will be discussed in detail at a meeting to be held later between Xi and Reisi and a road map will be drawn up for the relations.[7]

All these developments mean that China cares about relations with Iran and sees the Tehran administration as an important partner in the Belt and Road Project. Because the memorandums of understanding signed are a harbinger that the relations between the parties will continue to develop. Consequently, it can be argued that Beijing’s Gulf Opening, especially through energy-based needs, is not a step taken against Iran. On the contrary, when the visit schedule is considered, China is almost like saying, “End the disagreements between you. Because I don’t want instability in the region within the framework of the Belt and Road Project.”

At this point, it is necessary to remind the Iran-Gulf normalization, which came to the agenda in March 2021 and was discussed through various meetings until August 2022. Because the process indicates that while the Beijing administration increases its influence in the Middle East, it may want to mediate the normalization processes between Tehran and Riyadh. Therefore, it is possible to talk about a Chinese reality that wants to fill the power vacuum created by the USA’s withdrawal from the Middle East and tries to achieve the image of a “peace-building actor” while doing so. In fact, the approval of Iran’s “full membership” status at the Dushanbe Summit, where Saudi Arabia joined the SCO with the status of “dialogue partner”, shows that a certain balance is being observed.

As a result, China is opening to the Middle East for various reasons, especially its energy needs and the security of the Belt and Road Project. This expansion has two basic sheet metal pillars. One of them is the Gulf countries, the other is Iran. Although the convergence on the Beijing-Riyadh line is among the possibilities that the rapprochement in Tehran is among the possibilities, Hu’s visit has revealed that there is no serious problem in China-Iran relations.

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[2] “İran, Cinping’in Riyad Ziyaretindeki Tutumundan Rahatsızlığını İletti”, TRT Haber, <https://www.trthaber.com/haber/dunya/iran-cin-pingin-riyad-ziyaretindeki-tutumundan-rahatsizligini-ilette-730545.html>, (Date of Accession: 14.12.2022).

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[4] “Ayatollah Raisi Stresses Implementation of Key Pacts Made in Previous Meetings between Iranian, Chinese Presidents / Dr Raisi: Some Positions Raised During Recent Visit of Chinese President to the Region Caused Iranian Nation, Gov’t to Complain”, President.ir, <https://www.president.ir/en/>, (Date of Accession: 14.12.2022).

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[6] “Minister: Iran, China Finalize MoUs to Implement 25-Year Deal”, Pars Today, https://parstoday.com/en/news/iran-il90776-minister-iran_china_finalize_mous_to_implement_25_year_deal, (Date of Accession: 14.12.2022).

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ANKASAM ANALYSIS

Sovereignty Debate over Karabakh and Russia's Increasing Support for Armenia

On December 11, 2022, after the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan gave a protest note to the Moscow administration regarding the activities of the Russian military unit temporarily stationed in Karabakh, on December 12, 2022, Azerbaijani activists on the Shusha-Lachin road, which connects Armenia to Karabakh and stands out with its strategic importance, organized a protest.

The note given by Azerbaijan resulted from a group of Azerbaijani geologists not allowing the Russian peacekeepers to monitor the environmental situation in Karabakh. Azerbaijani protesters state that the mineral deposits in Karabakh are being illegally exploited and covered

up. Armenia, on the other hand, claims that the closure of the highway led to the complete blockade of Karabakh. At the same time, Yerevan claims that the flow of natural gas to Karabakh has been stopped. Following the tension in Karabakh, Armenia's National Security Council held an extraordinary meeting on December 13, 2022. It was announced that Armenian President Vahagn Khachaturyan, Speaker of the Parliament ALEN Simonyan, Head of the Prime Minister's Office ARAYIK Harutyunyan and Speaker of the Parliament HAYK Konjoryan attended the meeting as well as the members of the council.



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In addition, in its statement, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Armenia claimed that the sixth article of the trilateral agreement signed between Moscow, Baku and Yerevan in November 2020 was violated. It says that the parties guarantee traffic safety along the Lachin Corridor.

The Baku administration, on the other hand, announced that the allegations regarding the flow of natural gas to the region were not true. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan Spokesperson Ayhan Hacizade said, "The purpose of this protest is not to block the road. Civilian vehicles can move freely in both directions on the road" and denied the allegations that the area was besieged.[1]

The Russian Ministry of Defense stated that it is in talks with Azerbaijan on reopening the highway to traffic.[2] "We call on the Azerbaijani authorities to restore free movement along the corridor," said Ned Price, spokesperson for the United States (US) State Department.[3]

It is clear that Russia and the US do not want a new escalation in Karabakh. According to these actors, instability in the region will have a negative impact on the Armenia-Azerbaijan talks. This is why Washington and Moscow are trying to mediate a solution to the problem. At the same time, this shows that there is competition between the two actors.

The USA does not want either Baku or Yerevan to move away from it. At the same time, it is keen to improve its relations with Armenia. In fact, during Nikol Pashinyan's prime ministership, relations between the two countries started to take on a different dimension. Russia, on the other hand, does not completely abandon Yerevan, although it has a problem with the Pashinyan Government. Therefore, Russia will be closely interested in a conflict that may occur in the region.

The second issue that concerns Moscow is the status of the peacekeeping force in Karabakh. Russia's official mission is to ensure the security of the Armenian population in the region and to prevent conflicts between Azerbaijan and Armenia.

Despite all this, the unresolved Karabakh conflict and the failure to sign a lasting peace agreement lead to debates over who owns the region. As the winner of the Second Karabakh War, Azerbaijan gained the right to re-establish its sovereignty in the region. However, Russia wanted this to spread over time and placed a temporary peacekeeping force in the region. In this context, the Baku administration thinks that the sovereignty over Karabakh belongs to itself and therefore believes that the

underground resources of the region should be operated by itself. Moscow, on the other hand, sees Azerbaijan's demand for sovereignty over Karabakh as an "ambiguous definition" and thinks that the region cannot come under Azerbaijan's domination without a political solution. Armenia, on the other hand, is against Azerbaijan's sovereignty in Karabakh.

Another issue that disturbs Azerbaijan is Armenia's search for external support to balance Azerbaijan and Russia's decision to develop a new form of relations with Armenia in this process. On December 9, 2022, Defense Minister of Russia Sergey Shoigu met with Defense Minister of Armenia Suren Papikyan at a meeting attended by Shanghai Cooperation Organization and Commonwealth of Independent States members. At the meeting, Shoigu said the following:[4]

"Armenia is our ally in the Collective Security Treaty Organization and a key strategic partner in Transcaucasia. We are very interested in maintaining stability in the region and we are making every effort to do so. We pay special attention to the development of bilateral cooperation and enhancing the potential of the Armenian Armed Forces."

As a result, according to Azerbaijan, Russia is once again supporting Armenia and strengthening its army. This may make the resolution of the Karabakh conflict impossible. Because if Armenia gets stronger, it will start to claim rights over Karabakh again. It can be said that what happened in Karabakh is a reflection of Baku's discomfort with the developments in the region.

[1] "В МИД Азербайджана заявили о готовности пропускать гражданские машины", Krasnaya Vesna, <https://rossaprimavera.ru/news/3d1d8e3f>, (Date of Accession: 15.12.2022).

[2] "МО заявило о диалоге с Баку по разблокировке дороги Степанакерт-Горис", Ria Novosti, <https://ria.ru/20221213/dialog-1838452079.html>, (Date of Accession: 15.12.2022).

[3] @statedeptspox, "Closure of the Lachin Corridor has severe humanitarian implications and sets back the peace process. We call on the government of Azerbaijan to restore free movement through the corridor. The way forward is through negotiations.", Twitter, <https://twitter.com/StateDeptSpox/status/160275217734105089>, (Date of Accession: 15.12.2022).

[4] "Шойгу заявил, что Армения является ключевым стратегическим партнером России в Закавказье", Ria Novosti, <https://tass.ru/armiya-i-opk/16549693>, (Date of Accession: 15.12.2022).



ANKASAM ANALYSIS

Visit of the President of Kazakhstan to Russia: A Period of Strong Cooperation in Strategic Partnership

Kazakhstan is one of the most important states in Central Asia. Moscow is an important strategic partner for the Astana administration, given its multi-vector foreign policy that considers the balances between power centers. Therefore, Kazakhstan is determined to be Russia's main ally in the region. In fact, Kazakhstan works to foster positive relations with all states of the region, not just Russia. Therefore, Kazakhstan's

cooperation with other countries is becoming more important with each passing day. Of course, commercial relations and joint projects play a decisive role in Kazakhstan's foreign policy here. As a matter of fact, pragmatic relations based on economic cooperation play a decisive role in relations with Russia. As a result, the role of national currencies in bilateral interactions between the two countries is increasing.



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As a reflection of this, Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, who triumphed in the early presidential elections held on November 20, 2022, made his first foreign visit to Russia.

As a matter of fact, during the meetings held within the scope of the visit, Russian President Vladimir Putin told Tokayev that the relations between Astana and Moscow had a "special character" and congratulated the Kazakh leader for the election victory.[1]

Tokayev emphasizes that Russia, China, and Central Asian republics are sister countries at every opportunity and draws attention to the importance of developing cooperation. In fact, there is a will to expand collaboration in Kazakhstan-Russia relations.

Tokayev, on the other hand, emphasized that Astana wishes to create strong relations with the West, that it is important to develop comprehensive relations in foreign policy, and that it is open to new partnerships.[2] Of course, this means that Kazakhstan's multi-vector foreign policy will continue.

Turning to Kazakhstan-Russia relations, it is important what Tokayev stated that, even during the Covid-19, Russian direct investments in his country tripled to 1.9 billion dollars. Kazakhstan's investments in Russia increased by 34% to \$535 million.[3] This indicates the volume of trade between the two countries tends to grow.

Moreover, Putin called for the strengthening of economic ties between Kazakhstan and Russia and underlined the importance of every step taken at a time when international trade is in crisis. In this framework, the parties are making efforts to develop the transportation logistics infrastructure. As a matter of fact, Tokayev also stated that the priority is to develop the infrastructure, eliminate customs barriers between countries and in this context, strengthen the Eurasian Economic Union. For this reason, it is possible to foresee the establishment of common trade zones in the border regions between the two countries.[4]

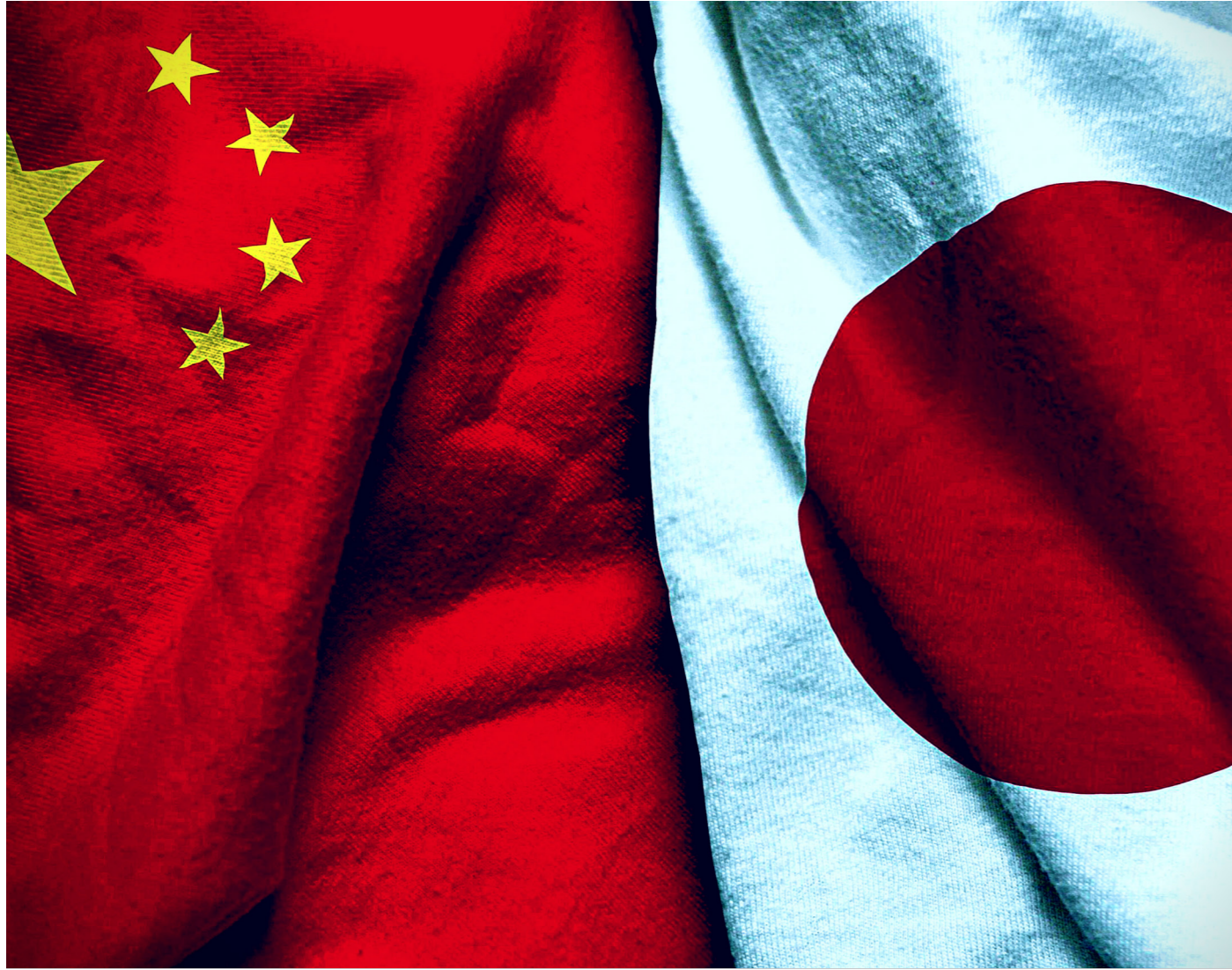
In conclusion, concrete steps are taken to strengthen the relations between the two countries. Tokayev's visit to Russia confirms this. Moreover, relations are shaped by a pragmatic approach that centers on economic cooperation based on mutual respect. This indicates that the strategic partnership between the two countries will further develop.

[1]"Kazakh President Tokayev Meets with Putin, Macron on First Foreign Tour After re-Election, Bne Intellinews, <https://www.bne.eu/kazakh-president-tokayev-meets-with-putin-macron-on-first-foreign-tour-after-re-election-263958/>, (Date of Accession: 9.12.2022).

[2]"Как в Казахстане понимают союз с Россией", Moskovsky Gazeta, <https://mskgazeta.ru/politika/kak-v-kazahstane-ponimayut-soyuz-s-rossiej-10850.html>, (Date of Accession: 07.12.2022)

[3]Ibid.

[4]"Визит с " глубокимполитическим значением ". Токаев сразу после переизбрания посетил Москву ", tass, <https://tass.ru/ekonomika/16445897>, (Date of Accession: 07.12.2022).



ANKASAM ANALYSIS

China-Japan Relations and its Geopolitical Implications

Developments in the Far East affect the geopolitical environment in the rest of the world. Due to its national capacity, China's relations with other states and especially with its neighbours create a domino effect and direct global politics. In this context, the recent developments in China-Japan relations are the capacity to change the agenda and politics not only of

the Far East but also of Europe and the Western World in general. The main reason for this is that Japan is first and foremost a G7 country and is seen as part of the Western camp due to its democratic structure.

China has many reasons to keep its relations with Japan good. The first is that it aims to



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break the West's prejudiced attitude towards it and end its political hostility. Second, Japan aims to soften the crisis environment caused by this polarization policy of the West and to reduce the tension regarding Taiwan in this context. Third, the Tokyo administration desires to accurately explain its principles in foreign policy and to paint an image of a peaceful country. The fourth and most pragmatic reason is Japan's plans to maximize its political, economic, and military interests in the region by softening its foreign policy environment and reducing geopolitical tensions.

Beijing's foreign policy interests require positive relations with the actors allied with the United States (US), especially Japan. However, the geopolitical environment does not allow China to achieve these goals. Beijing argues that the US is primarily responsible for this tense geopolitical environment. According to Beijing, it is the Washington administration that has agitated and provoked Japan, Australia, and India against it. The effects of this are seen in Japan's view of China. For the past two years, it has been seen that the annual reports of the Japanese Ministry of Defense have given more space to the "Chinese threat" than necessary, and the 2022 report has focused on the Taiwan Issue.

Also in this process, Beijing drew attention to the importance of developing bilateral relations by sending moderate messages to Tokyo as the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties with Japan approached. However, as tensions with the US continued, it carried on its security patrols and exercises in the Sea of Japan, the South China Sea, and the Taiwan Strait, thus aiming to deter its rivals. The US, on the other hand, presented these security steps to Japan as a "Chinese threat" and mobilized it.

With the effect of this secret escalation race between the US and China, Japan has started to allocate Taiwan in its security strategies. Going further, Japan is expected to characterize China as a "strategic competitor" in its National Security Strategy Document. This categorization was probably inspired by the White House's National Security Strategy Document. In other words, there is a clear direction of the US in Japan's China policy. Despite the US, the continuation of the Japan-China rapprochement can be seen as a remarkable success.

Japanese Foreign Minister Hayashi Yoshimasa is reportedly planning to visit China in the coming days.[1] Minister Yoshimasa, who will visit Beijing for the first time in nearly three years, is expected to discuss critical issues, especially the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands and the Taiwan Issue. Another indication that bilateral relations are beginning to soften is the face-to-face meeting of Chinese President Xi Jinping and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida on the sidelines of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Summit in Thailand in November 2022, during which a joint declaration on the restoration of bilateral relations was issued.

After this incident, which took place on November 18, 2022, Japanese officials continued their criticism that China was trying to change the status quo in the region. However, the positive atmosphere in the diplomatic sense continued. Even expectations for Jinping to visit Tokyo have increased. China's Ambassador to Tokyo Kong Xuanyou said that if Jinping visited Japan as an official invitee, it would be very valuable for bilateral relations.[2]

Despite all the negativities and geopolitical tensions in the region, Beijing strives to improve relations with Tokyo and reduce the risk of war and crisis related to Taiwan. The Beijing government says it expects an official invitation from Japan so that Jinping can visit Tokyo. Therefore, we can say that if Japan invites it, Jinping can visit Tokyo. Therefore, there is a positive atmosphere between Beijing and Tokyo diplomatically.

It seems inevitable that this political harmony between the two countries will have geopolitical consequences. First, China aims to break the alliance that the US has established in the Indo-Pacific by drawing Japan to its side. If we accept the US-led Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD) as an axis, Japan is the most critical actor and at the same time the weakest link in this axis. China plans to disrupt the harmony between the allied states by pulling the most critical link on this axis. Japan is a country with deep historical

ties with China. Due to this acquaintance, Tokyo understands Beijing better and easier than its other American allies. To make a brief comparison, India is more prejudiced and reactive towards China than Japan.

The second geopolitical influence will be seen more clearly in the alliance that the US is trying to forge regarding Taiwan. Western countries such as Japan, Germany, and Australia may begin to think about how dangerous it can be to distort the facts about China. Beijing is telling Western states that this is a race to climb and that this fire is deliberately fueled by the US. As China increases its dialogue with these countries, Western countries' support for the US decreases. Therefore, China will continue to strengthen its communication with Japan and other American allies to achieve its goals regarding Taiwan and eliminate geopolitical risks.

In conclusion, China-Japan relations will continue to influence regional dynamics and shape Western policies. Historical ties soften the nature of bilateral relations. The parties are making efforts to avoid a possible conflict, especially in Taiwan. It should not be forgotten that economic factors also lie behind this diplomatic effort. China is Japan's largest trading partner.[3] In this context, China constitutes more than 20 percent of Japan's foreign trade. This interdependent relationship between the two countries also reduces the geopolitical risks in the region.

[1] "Japanese FM Eyes Visit to China Amid Tense Ties Overshadowed By 'Aggressive Defense Strategy'", Global Times, <https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202212/1281989.shtml>, (Date of Accession: 16.12.2022).

[2] "Xi's Visit to Japan 'Invaluable' for Bilateral Ties: Chinese Envoy", Japan Times, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2022/12/02/national/china-japan-xi-visit-guest-relations/>, (Date of Accession: 16.12.2022).

[3] "China-Japan Relations Moved Forward in General in Last 50 Yrs Despite Twists and Turns: Expert", Global Times, <https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202209/1275187.shtml>, (Date of Accession: 16.09.2022).



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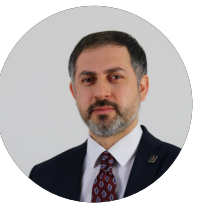
The Problem of Leopard 2 Tanks in German-Ukrainian Relations

On 12 December 2022, Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba said that the supply of German Leopard 2 tanks to Ukraine had been postponed once again. Kuleba stated that Kyiv could not come to an agreement with Berlin on the supply of these battle tanks, and that the latest agreements were related to defense weapons such as IRIS-T air defense systems and Gepard anti-aircraft systems.[1]

Oleksiy Makeev, Ukraine's Ambassador to Berlin, indicated Kyiv's hope that Germany will decide

on the delivery of Leopard 2 combat tanks in early November 2022, and that Germany was already "leading the charge" with the delivery of the Iris-T missile defense system. Makeev stated that approaches such as "avoiding provoking Russia" should be abandoned and that Ukraine needs battle tanks and armored vehicles such as Leopard, Marder, Füchse and Dingo, and also Leopard 2 main battle tanks should be delivered directly to Ukraine.[2]

In early December 2022, United States of Amer-



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ica (USA) National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan allegedly forced Berlin to supply battle tanks to Ukraine during a meeting with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz's Foreign Policy Adviser Jens Plötner in October of the same year. In addition, American officials stated that Washington would not oppose the supply of tanks, but that Berlin should make its own decision regarding the possible shipment of Leopard 2 battle tanks to Ukraine.[3]

At various times, Germany has given different reasons why it has not given its battle tanks to Ukraine. For example, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz stated on 1 May 2022 that Germany was cautious about supplying heavy weapons to Ukraine. Then, on July 7, 2022, German Defense Minister Christine Lambrecht said that although Berlin wanted to help Kyiv, it had to maintain its own defense capability.[4] On 22 October 2022, Scholz stated that 20–30% of the Germans opposed to the supply of weapons to Ukraine and their opinions were taken into account.[5] In addition, Scholz announced that with the help of a “cyclical exchange” he had supplied Ukraine with more than 100 tanks from the Czech Republic, Greece, Slovakia and Slovenia that could be used “immediately”. [6]

The fact that Leopard 2 tanks, which are heavy battle tanks, were not given to Ukraine by Germany is similar to the issue of Patriot air defense systems. The difference is that the Patriot is American made and is a type of weapon that can be supplied by the USA by negotiation and with that country's permission. The sale or supply of Leopard 2 tanks, which are produced by Germany, depends on Berlin's will.

When Ukraine and Poland met with Germany about Patriot systems, the Germans opposed it and said they could only supply it to Poland. There is a similar situation with regard to leopard 2 tanks. This demonstrates that the Berlin administration has made a mark across Europe. As in the case of Poland, Germany primarily focuses on the defense of the member states of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and makes a distinction between these states and Ukraine.

There are various reasons why Germany does not want to give some weapons such as Leopard 2 tanks to Ukraine and has a certain distance with Kyiv. The first of these is Germany's approach to Russia, which is also criticized by the Ukrainians. Because Berlin still sees Moscow as an important component in European security and thinks that it can cooperate with Russia when a new order is established in the following years.

Secondly, Germany is developing a form of defense relationship within NATO and especially with its neighbors. In a sense, Germany is creating a security ring around itself.

Third of all, Ukraine is a battleground and Berlin believes that its influence over Kiev will be limited. Because Russia, the USA, Poland and the United Kingdom have various plans and designs for the future of Ukraine. For this reason, Germany also has to make some choices. According to Ukraine, Germany will make a choice in favor of Russia.

The fourth is Ukraine's approach to Berlin. Kiev blames Germany for the concessions made to Russia in the past years and for preventing it from joining NATO. Therefore, Ukraine will not favor Germany after the war.

In conclusion, Berlin does not want to stand out as an actor who led to the defeat of Russia because Germany argues that Russia should withdraw from Ukraine not by defeat, but within the framework of a political reconciliation.

[1]“Германия не хочет принимать решение о передаче Украине танков Leopard 2”, Post Factum, <https://postfactum.info/world/germaniya-ne-hochet-prinimat-reshenie-o-peredache-ukraine-tankov-leopard-2-13937.html>, (Date of Accession: 12.12.2022).

[2]“Посол Украины в Германии надеется на поставки Leopard 2”, Post Factum, <https://postfactum.info/politics/posol-ukrainy-vermanii-nadeetsya-na-postavki-leopard-2-12913.html>, (Date of Accession: 12.12.2022).

[3]“В С УлitsaA прокомментировали решение Германии отправить Leopard 2 Украине”, Lenta.Ru, <https://lenta.ru/news/2022/12/07/germania/>, (Date of Accession: 12.12.2022).

[4]“Германия отказалась передать Украине 200 бронетранспортеров Fuchs”, Post Factum, <https://postfactum.info/politics/germaniya-otkazalas-peredat-ukraine-200-bronetransporterov-fuchs-9369.html>, (Date of Accession: 12.12.2022).

[5] “«20–30% немцев против». Шольц назвал еще одну причину, почему не передает Украине танки Leopard 2”, NV, <https://nv.ua/world/geopolitics/leopard-2-kandler-germanii-nazval-eshche-odnu-prichinu-pochemu-ne-peredaet-ukraine-tanki-50278592.html>, (Date of Accession: 12.12.2022).

[6]Ibid.



ANKASAM ANALYSIS

Can Greece Be a Solution-Finding Actor for the Disputes in the Balkans?

The increasing interest of Greece in the Western Balkan countries in the recent period does not go unnoticed. Because the Western Balkans constitutes the most important strategic goal of the Greek foreign policy and its main priority in the region in the current process. As a matter of fact, in June 2022, Athens appointed Sofia Grammata, the country's Ambassador to Bucharest, as Greece's Special Representative for the Western Balkans. Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis also said that they have made a dynamic return to the Western Balkans.[1] Therefore, it can be said that Greece, which does not have very strong relations with the Western Bal-

kan countries, is in an effort to develop its ties with the states of the region.

The fact that Greek membership of the European Union (EU) is an important factor in the development of bilateral relations. It is seen that this is emphasized in the statements made by state officials. In the current process, Athens closely supports the participation of the countries of the region, which have been waiting for EU membership for years. As a matter of fact, Mitsotakis frequently emphasizes the urgency of EU membership and integration of Serbia, Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Bosnia



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and Herzegovina and Kosovo, recommending that these countries be given until 2033 to complete their EU membership processes.[2] In this context, while it is a matter of debate how much of an impact Greece will have on the European integration of the Western Balkans, it is no doubt that this will make a positive contribution.

It can be argued that Greece wants to be a solution-finding actor by keeping a balance in the disputed issues in the Western Balkans. From this point, increasing high-level contacts and visits with the Western Balkan countries are considered as an indicator of Greece's desire to accelerate its bilateral relations with the states of the region.

In this context, Mitsotakis' visit to Albania, which is considered as one of the most important visits to the countries of the region, to solve the maritime borders problem comes to the fore. Athens wants to solve this problem as soon as possible. On the other hand, Albania's initiation of participation negotiations with the EU may constitute an important basis for the development of bilateral relations.

One of the countries that Greece attaches importance among the Western Balkan countries is Kosovo. Although Greece does not recognize the independence of Kosovo yet, it is observed that the relations between the two countries have gained a positive momentum recently. As a matter of fact, it is seen that the official visits between the parties have increased reciprocally. As will be remembered, Greek Foreign Minister Nikos Dendias visited Pristina in June 2022. The Prime Minister of Kosovo, Albin Kurti, also emphasizes that the relations between the two countries are improving day by day. In addition, a memorandum of understanding was signed between the parties in the context of the Greece-Kosovo Business Forum in October 2022.[3] Therefore, it can be said that economic cooperation, together with the visits between Kosovo and Greece, will have a positive effect on the relations between the two countries.

It is very critical for Pristina that Kosovo receives support from Greece in the current process. Because Kosovo applied for EU membership on December 14, 2022. However, Kosovo needs the approval of 27 EU member states to gain EU candidate status and membership. Besides, the Greek Cypriot Administration (GCA), Spain, Romania, and Slovakia, including Greece, which are currently an EU member, do not recognize the independence of Kosovo. So, for Kosovo to gain EU membership, it must first be recognized by these countries. In this context, if relations are further developed, Greece's recognition of Kosovo's independence may come to the fore. Moreover, if Greece recognizes Kosovo, a similar decision can be expected from the GCA. This can be

a development that will facilitate the country's EU membership path. It seems essential to resolve the problems on the Pristina-Belgrade line for Greece to recognize the independence of Kosovo. Because Greece does not want to lose Serbia by recognizing the independence of Kosovo. Serbia has been a traditional ally of Greece since the Balkan Wars of the early 20th century. Therefore, Athens can try to be a mediator to find a solution to the problem between the two countries. However, the recent Greek-Kosovo contacts can disturb Serbia. Hence, the possible mediation efforts of Athens, which is trying to balance the relations between the two countries, can fail.

The fact that Greece did not leave any problems with North Macedonia, which it had a name problem before, has been an important development in terms of improving its relations with this country. After signing the Prespa Agreement with Greece, the Skopje administration entered the process of normalizing its relations with Bulgaria, and as a result, started participation negotiations with the EU. However, it is not easy for North Macedonia to solve the identity problem with Bulgaria. This is an issue that will negatively affect the EU membership process of North Macedonia. Therefore, Athens can step in to solve the identity problem between Skopje and Sofia. It can also be said that Athens will continue to support Skopje in the EU membership process.

Greece also accelerates its relations with Bosnia and Herzegovina. In this context, Prime Minister Mitsotakis hosted the newly elected president of the tripartite presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Zeljka Cvijanovic, in Athens.[4] Although Greece is a state that supports the EU membership of Bosnia and Herzegovina, it can become a key actor in the solution of political instability in the country, especially through its good relations with the Serbs.

As a result, Greece, which has developed its relations with the Balkan countries, aims to be an actor that will play critical roles in many areas in the region. Therefore, it tries to establish a balance in its relations with the states of the region and tries to open a new page in its relations with the countries with which it has problems, such as Albania. In addition, the issue of energy is also considered as an important factor here. Because Athens tries to come to the forefront in ensuring energy security in the region by turning the energy crisis into an opportunity. However, the effort of Athens to strengthen its relations with the regional capitals does not seem sufficient to make it a solution-finding actor.

[1] "Miçotakis: Yunanistan Batı Balkanlara Dinamik Bir Dönüş Yapıyor", Euronews, <https://tr.euronews.com/2022/06/10/micotakis-yunanistan-bat-balkanlara-dinamik-bir-donus-yap-yor>, (Date of Accession: 15.12.2022)



ANKASAM ANALYSIS

Central Asia-Japan Dialogue: New Perspectives for Partnership

The 9th Foreign Ministers Meeting of the "Central Asia+Japan Dialogue" will be held on 24 December 2022. During the meeting, it was announced that the parties would discuss joint cooperation and sustainable development of the Central Asian region. Also on the agenda will be international issues, including the situation in Ukraine and Afghanistan. According to the announcement made by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan on December 15, 2022; Japanese Foreign Minister Yoshimasa Hayashi and his Central Asian counterparts will attend the meeting.[1] It is expected that this event will pave the way for a tangible partnership in all areas of mutual interest.

The "Central Asia+Japan Dialogue" was established in 2004 to promote regional cooperation

by Japan, which considers such cooperation to solve common problems in the region to be essential for the stability and development of Central Asia. Considering the development of the Central Asian countries in the thirty years since their independence, Japan; seeks to expand cooperation for a free and open Central Asia that is based on the rule of law, maintains, and strengthens the international order, and practices sustainable development.

Within the scope of this dialogue, 8 foreign ministers' meetings, 15 high-level official meetings, 11 intellectual dialogues (Tokyo Dialogue), 7 expert meetings and 2 business dialogues have been held so far.[2] Japan's engagement in Central Asia is shaped by the concept of 'human security', which aims to assist both infrastructure



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and human development projects. Japan, especially recently, has focused on improving its relations with Central Asian countries. In November 2022, the Association of Members of Parliament for Japan–Central Asia Friendship was established in Tokyo. Taro Aso, Vice President and Former Prime Minister of the Liberal Democratic Party in power in Japan.[3] As it will be remembered, the Extraordinary Meeting of Foreign Ministers of “Central Asia+Japan Dialogue” was held on 11 August 2020 in the form of a video conference. On December 24, 2022, Tokyo will host the 9th Foreign Ministers Meeting of the “Central Asia+Japan Dialogue”.[4]

At the meeting, which will be attended by the Foreign Ministers of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, it is expected that Japanese Foreign Minister Hayashi will hold bilateral meetings with his counterparts from Central Asian countries and exchange views on strengthening bilateral relations, among other issues. With the said meeting, it is aimed to develop relations that prioritize mutual interests and are shaped by a sense of solidarity on the 30th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations.

It is possible to explain Tokyo's interest in the region through its desire to balance the growing influence of China or the independent policy of the Japanese authorities to seek new opportunities for the country's economy. In addition, it is possible to argue that Tokyo primarily counts on the support of the countries of the region to become a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council. The states of the region also see Japan as an alternative source of financial and technological support, free from geopolitical ties.

The “Central Asia+Japan” or “5+1” format has become the main platform for consensus on promising areas for the development of relations, and these areas are built around five pillars. These are: political dialogue, regional cooperation, business promotion, intellectual dialogue and cultural exchanges.[5]

However, one of the most important advantages of Japan in the region is its economic diplomacy and positive image. Tokyo can achieve greater success in the region, as it does not experience typical superpower issues such as border issues and is unlikely to impose its policies. Because it has a foreign policy concept that will not disturb the regional states. As a result, it is possible to observe that Japan has focused on economic and human ties by adopting a more pragmatic and balanced approach while evaluating the opportunities and constraints in

Central Asia in recent years. On December 2, 2022, Tokyo hosted the 2022 Central Asian Investment Forum, organized by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD). [6] Forum; It brought together government representatives, international experts, industry experts and EBRD representatives from Central Asia, Mongolia, and Japan, as well as the Japanese business community. Discussions were held in the forum on issues such as green energy, infrastructure development, ensuring the integrity of transportation and logistics corridors. Currently, Japan is one of the leading investors in the Central Asian market. It is possible to foresee that the volume of these investments will increase even more.

[1] The 9th Foreign Ministers' Meeting of the “Central Asia plus Japan” Dialogue, Japonya Dışışleri Bakanlığı Resmi Sayfası, https://www.mofa.go.jp/press/release/press4e_003190.html, (Date of Accession: 17.12.2022).

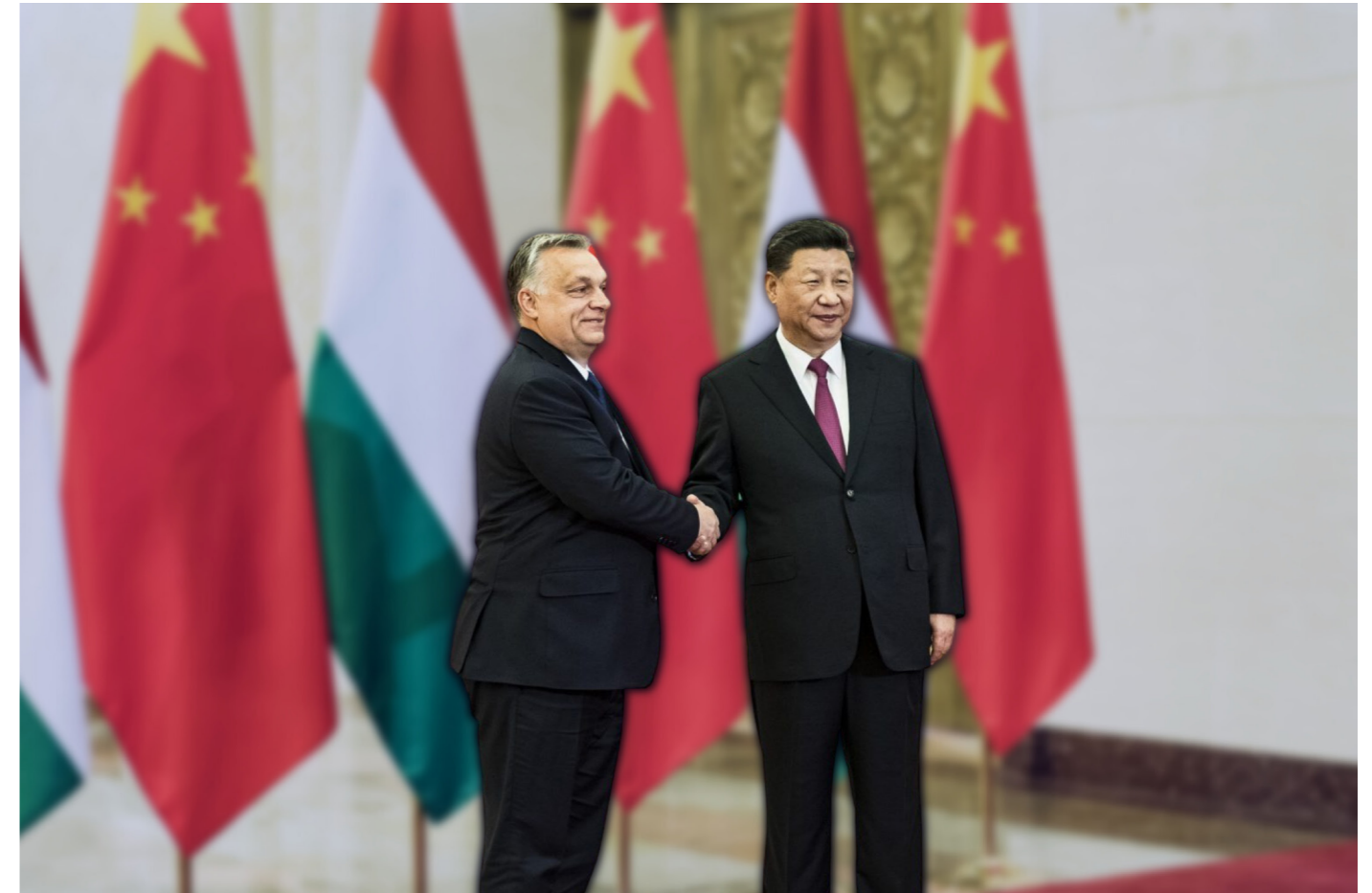
[2] Главы МИД Японии и стран Центральной Азии встретятся на следующей неделе, News Central Asia, <https://www.newscentralasia.net/2022/12/15/glavy-mid-yaponii-i-stran-tsentrallynoy-azii-vstretyatsya-na-sleduyushchey-nedele/>, (Date of Accession: 17.12.2022).

[3] Встреча глав МИД Японии и стран Центральной Азии пройдет в Токио 24 декабря, Tass, <https://tass.ru/mezhdunarodnaya-panorama/16596695>, (Date of Accession: 17.12.2022).

[4] Central Asia Investment Forum 2022, Avrupa İmar ve Kalkınma Bankası Resmi Sayfası, <https://www.ebrd.com/news/events/central-asia-investment-forum-2022.html>, (Date of Accession: 17.12.2022).

[5] Joint Statement “Central Asia + Japan” Dialogue/Foreign Ministers' Meeting —Relations between Japan and Central Asia as They Enter a New Era—, Japonya Dışışleri Bakanlığı Resmi Sayfası, <https://www.mofa.go.jp/region/europe/dialogue/joint0408.pdf>, (Date of Accession: 17.12.2022).

[6] Центральная Азия и Япония устойчиво развивают торгово-экономические отношения, World News, <https://dknews.kz/ru/ekonomika/263478-centralnaya-aziya-i-yaponiya-ustoychivo-razvivayut>, (Date of Accession: 17.12.2022).



ANKASAM ANALYSIS

Deepening Ties Between China and Hungary

As European Union (EU) member Hungary's relations within the bloc deteriorates, it is seen that its ties with non-EU actors are getting stronger. The Budapest administration is trying to maintain close relations with non-EU powers, both within the framework of its multifaceted and multidimensional foreign policy and in terms of balancing its relations with Brussels.

Hungary's positive relations with global actors such as China and Russia are extremely important in the realization of this policy.

One of the most important factors driving Beijing to deepen its relations with Budapest is that Hungary constitutes an important pillar of the Belt and Road Project that China is trying to



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realize. Because Beijing's ties with the Balkans and Eastern European countries are decisive in the development of this policy. Therefore, from China's point of view, Hungary is an extremely important country.

In this context, important developments have recently taken place on the Hungary-China line. On 13 December 2022, Hungarian Foreign Minister Peter Szijjarto and his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi participated in a video conference and the two countries signed an important agreement. According to the said agreement, the parties agreed on the establishment of an intergovernmental "Belt-Road Cooperation Committee".[1]

Wang Yi pointed out that Budapest was the first European country to sign the Belt and Road Project documents with Beijing. In addition, the Chinese Foreign Minister emphasized that the agreement will give a new impetus to the development of the Belt and Road Project between the two countries. Another noteworthy aspect of Wang Yi's speech is that he refers to relations with Europe. The Minister having advocated that China and Europe have always been partners, not competitors also expressed his belief that Hungary will continue to play a constructive role in developing China-Europe relations.[2]

As can be understood from Wang Yi's statements, China does not consider the agreement it signed with Hungary only in the context of the two countries. In a sense, Beijing considers Budapest as a critical actor in the development of its relations with the EU. In this context, it can be said that Hungary carries out mediation and lobbying activities for the development of China's ties with Europe.

Otherwise, the Hungary-Serbia Railway Project realized by China is very important in seeing Budapest as an important part of the Belt and Road Project by Beijing. Because the railway in question is described as the bridgehead of the Belt and Road Project in Europe. [3] Beijing's initiative will also be China's first major infrastructure project within the EU. The Hungary-Serbia Railway Project is planned to be completed by 2025. In addition, the aim of the project is to contribute to the shipment of Chinese goods to Western Europe through Greece. [4]

On the other hand, it is seen that the education and culture dimension has started to come to the fore in the relations between the two countries. China is planning to build a campus in Hungary's capital Budapest for Fudan University in Shanghai. Due to the project, China will invest \$ 1.5 billion, which will be the first Chinese University in the EU.⁵ Therefore, it can be said that the relations between the two countries have a multidimensional nature. Moreover, Hungary is considered by China as a country where it can increase its cultural influence in Europe. In other words, China sees Hungary as a point where it can make a breakthrough to Europe both culturally and within the framework of the Belt and Road Project.

In addition, another reason for the acceleration of Hungary's relations with China is Beijing's policy of not interfering in the internal affairs of the countries with which it has established diplomatic relations. It is known that there have been problems between Brussels and Budapest recently due to internal problems. In this respect, it can be argued that this is one of the most important points that attract Hungary to improve relations with China. In other words, the tension on the Brussels-Budapest line serves to gain space for China in Hungary.

Moreover, the recent difficulties in the Hungarian economy and the difficulty of receiving the financial aid it wants from the EU increase Beijing's importance for Budapest. However, the fact that Russia, one of Hungary's most important partners outside the EU, is also struggling with embargoes puts China at the forefront in economic terms. Given the current conjuncture, Beijing has much more eco-

nomic offers to offer Budapest than Moscow. As a result, it can be said that there is a multidimensional cooperation between Hungary and China. Also, Hungary is one of the important components of the Belt and Road Project. Beijing sees Budapest as an important and constructive actor in the development of its relations with Europe. Due to the latest agreement signed in this context, it can be foreseen that the relations between the parties will gain further momentum.

[1] "China, Hungary Inject New Impetus into Belt And Road Cooperation", China Global Television Network, <https://news.cgtn.com/news/2022-12-13/China-Hungary-inject-new-impetus-into-Belt-and-Road-cooperation-1fJHA1KfOyQ/index.html>, (Date of Accession:14.12.2022).

[2] Aynı Yer.

[3] Andreea Brînză, "China and the Budapest-Belgrade Railway Saga", The Diplomat, <https://thediplomat.com/2020/04/china-and-the-budapest-belgrade-railway-saga/>, (Date of Accession 14.12.2022).

[4] Krisztina Than, Anita Komuves, "Hungary, China Sign Loan Deal For Budapest-Belgrade Chinese Rail Project", Reuters, <https://www.reuters.com/article/hungary-china-railway-loan-idUSL5N2CC6A0>, (Date of Accession: 14.12.2022).

⁵ Balint Szalai-Reid Standish, "New Polls Show Increased Support in Hungary For Ties With China", Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty, <https://www.rferl.org/a/hungary-china-ties-warming-standish/31957393.html>, (Date of Accession:14.12.2022).



ANKASAM ANALYSIS

A Review of the North Korean Cyber Attack Allegations

Chainalysis, what is a blockchain analysis firm, has reported some cyberattacks by North Korean hackers. According to the firm, hackers have carried out at least seven cyber attacks against platforms where cryptocurrencies are bought and sold in 2021. With these attacks, the hackers who organized the attacks carried out the theft of approximately 400 million dollars worth of crypto money. In the report, it was stated that the main targets of the attacks were generally Western investment firms.[1]

However, the United Nations (UN) has accused North Korea because of organizing cyber attacks in the past both in order to avoid sanctions imposed on it and to finance its nuclear

and ballistic missile systems.[2] cAs a matter of fact, although the theft of cryptocurrencies is a relatively new phenomenon for North Korea, the Pyongyang Government has been facing various accusations in terms of cyber attacks from the past. For example, in 2016, North Korean hackers stole about \$81 million from the Bangladesh Central Bank. Moreover, they came on the verge of stealing an amount of approximately 1 billion dollars; but it was not successful. [3]

Along with all this, North Korea has been described as responsible for the cyber attacks on Sony Pictures,[4] a film company, in 2014, and the WannaCry attack, which was felt in more



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than 150 countries in 2017 and caused billions of dollars worth of damage to banks, hospitals and companies.[5] In addition, there are claims that the numbers in question have increased in 2022 and that North Korea has gone further in terms of crypto money theft. At this point, North Korean hackers started using Decentralized Finance (DeFi) protocols. DeFi protocols are generally defined as decentralized finance protocols that aim to solve the problems in the traditional financial sector, created with special autonomous computer programs in line with this goal.[6] Because, according to the 2022 data published by TradingPlatform.com, North Korea is responsible for the theft of approximately 1 billion dollars worth of crypto money through these platforms only in 2022.[7]

The claims regarding North Korea and their economic and political justifications can be examined on three main points. The first of these is the sanctions targeting the Pyongyang administration. North Korea is isolated by the West due to both posing a very high nuclear threat and the risk it poses to global security. As a result, North Korea cannot find a place for itself in the global supply chain. This causes need for financing.

Moreover, North Korea is also a major nuclear power. It feels a serious need for financing both in terms of financing its nuclear power and not succumbing to sanctions. Therefore, assuming that the claims are true, it can be said that the Pyongyang administration, which is excluded from the global economy, generates a significant economic income from illegal methods.

In this context, why crypto assets are preferred is the second issue that needs to be examined. Because, as mentioned before, hackers, who are the perpetrators of these thefts, use DeFi protocols. Because crypto assets are called “decentralized finance” assets. The decentralization of these assets makes it difficult to trace and reduces their security. This makes assets preferable targets for theft that may occur as a result of cyber-attacks compared to more traditional and centralized exchange types.

In addition to all this, another reason why the decentralized nature of the crypto market makes it more criminal-proof is that it is difficult to track. As a matter of fact, this makes it difficult to prove any crime that may occur. All the accusations made against North Korea at the moment remain at the level of allegations precisely for this reason. Although the existence of some evidence strengthens the allegations in question, the Pyongyang Government can easily reject the arguments put forward. In other words, the decentralized nature of the cryptocurrency market makes very difficult to trace, which makes the crypto market a more obvious target for illegal activities compared to traditional markets.

The third issue to be examined here is the framework of propaganda and power. As a matter of fact, it can be said that the cyber attacks allegedly carried out by North Korea, in addition to financial reasons, are a propaganda and show of power against the West. For example, Pyongyang’s alleged cyber-attack on Sony in 2014 has no financial consequences. This attack took place while Sony was preparing to release a comedy movie called “The Interview” in which North Korean Leader Kim Jong-un was criticized. In this process, the Pyongyang administration denied that it was the perpetrator of the attack, but announced that the perpetrators might be sympathizers of North Korea.[8] This indicates that Pyongyang is turning to this method not only for financial but also for propaganda purposes.

As a result, North Korea is a country that has been known for cyber attacks for many years. The most important of these are the allegations made over crypto money theft. In the analysis made by assuming that the claims are true, it is seen that both the exclusion of the Pyongyang administration from global markets and the decentralized structure of crypto assets are decisive.

[1] “North Korea Stole \$400 Million of Crypto in 2021, Report Says”, Bloomberg, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-01-14/north-korea-stole-400-million-of-crypto-in-2021-report-says?leadSource=verify%20wall>, (Date of Accession: 10.12.2022).

[2] “North Korea: Missile Programme Funded Through Stolen Crypto, UN Report Says”, BBC News, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-60281129>, (Date of Accession: 10.12.2022).

[3] “Explained: The Story of How North Korea hackers Stole \$81 Million from Bangladesh Bank”, The Indian Express, <https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/bangladesh-bank-robbery-north-korea-lazarus-heist-7375441/>, (Date of Accession: 10.12.2022).



ANKASAM ANALYSIS

EU Membership Process of Kosovo

Kosovo Prime Minister Albin Kurti's statement that "Kosovo will apply for European Union (EU) membership this week,[1] caused the debate in the region to the peak. Because the President of Kosovo Vjosa Osmani called the application "a historical moment." [2] It shows that the EU has an important position in Kosovo. In fact, the messages about EU membership come from the executive wing of Kosovo; it is based on some crises in the past, and the resolution of these crises is also associated with the membership process by Pristina. Kosovo's application for full EU membership has been on the agenda since May 2022. The first statement

on the subject came from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Kosovo. In this context, it would be useful to consider the messages given by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Kosovo, Donika Gervalla-Schwarz.[3]

Expressing that 90% of the public supports the membership of the EU and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), there is good news that cooperation agreements will be made with other international partners. The fact that Kosovo is an example of democracy with the title of the youngest country in Europe creates



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the idea that the process will result in the rapid approval of the EU. However, there are several obstacles to Kosovo's EU membership, and the "Serbia Issue" comes first among these obstacles. As it is known, after Kosovo declared independence unilaterally in 2008, Serbia did not recognize this country.

Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić stated that he was pressured by Brussels; however, he stated that he did not trust any EU member, especially Germany, regarding Kosovo.[4] In this context, it can be stated that Serbia's refusal to recognize Kosovo is the biggest obstacle for the Pristina administration on its way to the EU. Despite this, the EU's official website with the subtitle "Foreign Issues" announced that they are in the final stage of the agreement envisaging the normalization of Serbia-Kosovo relations.[5]

Considering that the announcement of the agreement, which is said to have reached its final stage, was made in 2017, it can be argued that no progress has been made in the Serbia-Kosovo tension for the last five years. The Union will recognize the legitimacy of Kosovo with its accession to the EU and will open a new door for the regional states, which are especially afraid of Russia.

Another dimension of the issue is the relationship of the EU with African countries. The colonial hatred of African peoples towards Europe may be softened by the EU's "democracy leadership" role over Kosovo. In fact, the message that the EU will give over Kosovo will be an important message to all Eastern civilizations, especially to Africa.

In addition to wanting to include Kosovo, the EU is also considering the accession of Serbia, which gained the status of a candidate country in 2012. The country, which has made significant progress in adapting to the EU membership processes, comes to the fore with the claims that it will become a member in 2025. Here, it can be argued that the Kosovo-Serbia conflict is more against Kosovo. Although the general opinion about the membership status is that Serbia is victimizing Kosovo, the meeting of the EU High Representative for Foreign Relations and Security Policy Josep Borrell in Brussels after the plate crisis with the leaders of the two countries says the opposite of this opinion.[6] Because after the meeting, Borrell stated that although the proposals for the solution to the license plate crisis were accepted by Vučić many times, Kurti rejected the proposals. Therefore, it is stated that Kosovo acts hastily and unplanned regarding the license plate change.

The failure to resolve the license plate crisis, because of Kosovo's uncompromising policies, led to the resignation of Serbs residing in Kosovo, who make up about 6% of the population, and the start of protests.[7] These layoffs and protests invite a new war in the region.

Currently, it does not seem possible for the EU to act on the same plane as Kosovo. Especially with the recent developments, it is seen that Kosovo and Serbia have moved away from the ground of reconciliation and peace. On the other hand, Serbia's candidacy, which is said to be accepted by 2025, is not at the same distance as Kosovo and seems quite far away. On the other hand, it can be said that Kosovo has given some implicit messages by applying for candidacy. Because the application in question is an important indication that Kosovo has completely turned its face towards Europe.

Vučić's alleged close ties with Russia make it easier for Kosovo to act with Europe against the Serbian-Russian bloc.[8] In fact, Kosovo's unwillingness to stand alone against the Russia-Serbia duo has also been influential in bringing its application for full membership to the EU to the agenda.

[1] Alice Taylor, "Kosovo to Sign EU Membership Application on Thursday", EURACTIV, <https://www.euractiv.com/section/politics/news/kosovo-to-sign-eu-membership-application-on-thursday/>, (Date of Accession: 14.12.2022).

[2] "President Osmani Calls Kosovo's EU Membership Application a Historic Moment", Schengen Visa, <https://www.schengenvisainfo.com/news/president-osmani-calls-kosovos-eu-membership-application-a-historic-moment/>, (Date of Accession: 14.12.2022).

[3] "Kosovo PM Says the Country Will File EU Membership Application by Year's End", Schengen Visa, <https://www.schengenvisainfo.com/news/kosovo-pm-says-the-country-will-file-eu-membership-application-by-years-end/>, (Date of Accession: 14.12.2022).

[4] "Vucic: I'm Going to Brussels, but I'm not an Optimist, I don't Trust the Germans Anything About Kosovo", Kosovo Online, <https://www.kosovo-online.com/en/news/politics/vucic-im-going-brussels-im-not-optimist-i-dont-trust-germans-anything-about-kosovo-20>, (Date of Accession: 14.12.2022).



ANKASAM ANALYSIS

Reflection of Algeria-Morocco Rivalry in Ukraine

During the Cold War period, a multidimensional competition process was experienced between the United States (US) and the Soviet Union within the framework of the bipolar world system. In this period, Africa became one of the significant areas of competition between the two states and the bloc. In particular, the Soviet Union gained a significant influence in the continent thanks to both its ideological discourses and the support it gave to African countries. On the other hand, it is known that the US also implements various activities and establishes important relations in the continent.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, African countries continued to strengthen their rela-

tions with the US. However, China, which has been on the rise in Asia, has emerged as a new alternative for Africa. In the 2000s, a new phase was entered in Russia with the coming to power of Vladimir Putin. Because Russia, led by Putin, is trying to recover, and become stronger; in geographies such as Africa, it followed a policy of using the legacy of the Soviet Union.

In such an environment, Russia has augmented its influence and activities in the region both by establishing bilateral relations and multidimensionally using the African Summits. Russia continued its interests in Africa, which were compatible with China on a regional basis. As a result, Russia and China have shaken the influ-



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ence of Western actors in Africa. An example of this is the present position of the Central African Republic, which had close relations with France for a while, and Mali. Because these two states are very close to Russia.

On the other hand, Algeria, one of the African countries, has robust relations with Russia. Algeria is one of Moscow's most important customers in terms of the defence industry. In fact, from the perspective of Africa and the Arab World, Algeria stands out as Russia's first customer. The relations between Algeria and Russia are not limited to the arms trade. In addition, the parties also conduct military exercises in areas close to the Moroccan border.[1] Moreover, Algeria has also proclaimed that it wants to join the BRICS. While this situation brings a multidimensional feature to Algerian-Russian relations; the request of the Algerian government was met positively by Moscow.[2] The developments in question reveal the orientation of the foreign policy of the country in question.

On the other hand, there are still governments in Africa that have strong relations with the West. An example of this is Morocco. Rabat is an actor with important relations with Washington. The previous US President Donald Trump has announced that if Morocco establishes relations with Israel under the Abraham Agreements, it will recognize its sovereignty in Western Sahara. After Rabat established relations with Tel Aviv, the US recognized Morocco's sovereignty over Western Sahara.[3]

There are various regional problems and competition between Morocco and Algeria. First, there are some discords between the parties remaining from French colonialism. The most important example of this is the sovereignty of the Western Sahara. The Algerian government underpins the Polisario Front against Morocco in this process. In return, Morocco supports the people of Kabul who want to leave Algeria.[4]

As it can be understood, the rivalry between Algeria and Morocco also affects the foreign policies of these countries. While Morocco strengthens its relations with the US; Algeria, on the other hand, deepens its ties with Russia. This situation also paves the way for a regional problem or competition to gain a global character. Because the latest development in this regard is the claim that Morocco will support the Ukrainian Army.

As it can be understood, the rivalry between Algeria and Morocco also affects the foreign policies of these countries. While Morocco strengthens its relations with the US; Algeria, the other hand, deepens its ties with Russia. This situation also gives rise

to a regional problem or competition to gain a global character. Because the latest development in this regard is the claim that Morocco will support the Ukrainian Army.

Along with all this, Russia has a significant influence in Africa. After the start of the Russia-Ukraine War, it is seen that nearly half of the African countries adopted a neutral stance and kept their distance, due to Moscow's influence in the continent and the continental states' unwillingness to suffer economic losses. However, it can be said that Morocco, which did not participate in the votes against Moscow at the United Nations (UN), commenced exhibiting a different attitude in response to the developing relations on the Algeria-Russia line, the increasing arms trade, and the organized military exercises.

As it is known, no African state has sent support to the Ukrainian Army since the beginning of the Russia-Ukraine War. However, it is claimed that Rabat decided to send support to Kyiv after the US stepped in and convinced the Moroccan administration. If the claim is true, the decision was taken and the step to be taken gained importance as the first aid to be sent from an African country to the Ukrainian Army. This is already drawing attention because Morocco will send aid to Ukraine in the process of boosting the Algeria-Russia rapprochement.[5]

Considering the allegations in question, Morocco will send spare parts of T-72 tanks to the Ukrainian Army. It was decided that the aid would be sent in "great secrecy" thanks to the persuasion of the US. However, it is seen that Rabat, which was distant from the Russia-Ukraine War, chose his side and acted in harmony with Washington.[6]

In a nutshell, the regional rivalry between Algeria and Morocco also has a global dimension. For this reason, states, not only each other; it also targets actors that support states they see as rivals. In this context, Morocco is not just Algeria; it also tries to wear down Russia, which supports Algeria by helping Ukraine's struggle. If the allegations are true, it is possible to say that the problem on the Algeria-Morocco line will grow and the competition will deepen. Rabat's change of attitude towards the Russia-Ukraine War will lead to an increase in tension in the Rabat-Moscow line and a deepening of the Algeria-Moscow relationship. At this point, the effect of the attitude to be adopted by the global powers is also prominent. In short, the rise in tension in Morocco-Algeria relations and the involvement of the US and Russia in the process can be interpreted as a gain for Ukraine.



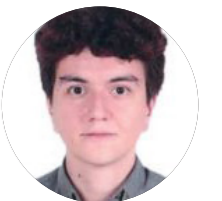
ANKASAM ANALYSIS

The Equation of Evolving Security in North Korea, South Korea, and China Triangle

The year 2022 went down in history as the year that North Korea conducted the most ballistic missile tests. Pyongyang administration, which carried out a total of six trials in 2021, carried out approximately 70 trials before the end of 2022. [1] That situation raised security concerns in the region to a critical level. The concerns that North Korea's activities have increased have

been answered in the form of military exercises in the region in partnership with the United States (US), South Korea and Japan. Those exercises, on the other hand, provoke North Korea rather than deter it.

It was tried to decide to increase sanctions by the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) to



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deter North Korea, which could not take a step back with the exercises, but this decision could not be taken because China and Russia did not approve. In addition, the US has stated many times that diplomatic channels are open in this regard and Washington seeks diplomacy, but Pyongyang has not responded to calls for dialogue.

In the current situation, Pyongyang continues its trials at the same pace, so the security concerns of regional actors are not settled. Especially South Korea and Japan are the states that feel this danger most closely due to their geographical proximity and North Korea's targeting attitude towards them. The inability to force North Korea to take a step back also triggers the danger and pushes the actors to look for different ways.

As it can be understood, Pyongyang is creating a growing nuclear danger and it cannot be avoided. For this reason, South Korea, which felt the danger most closely and was exposed to many threats from North Korea, made a call to China, which is seen as a geostrategic ally of Pyongyang in terms of foreign policy production, to solve the problem.

In this context, South Korean Foreign Minister Park Jin held a video conference call with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, and Park told Wang that South Korea expects China to actively support dialogue efforts with North Korea. Park then mentioned North Korea's record number of ballistic missile tests in 2022 and its growing nuclear power, expressed Seoul's concern and stated that Pyongyang should refrain from further provocations such as possible nuclear tests and engage in dialogue.[2]

On the other hand, it is extremely striking that the call made by South Korea came at a time when China did not approve the North Korean sanctions within the UNSC, and Seoul was holding exercises with the US.

The first point that can be evaluated at this point is the extent of the discomfort caused by North Korea's actions on South Korea. As mentioned, South Korea exhibits a pro-Western attitude. Because in the Asia-Pacific region, Washington, Seoul, and Tokyo cooperate. It is even claimed that the exercises aim to surround China. However, despite this, South Korea felt the need to call on China to establish dialogue due to increasing security concerns.

Another issue that can be evaluated is the acceptance of both China's regional influence and close cooperation with North Korea on the call. Because both the sanctions, the exercises and the UNSC do not have an impact on North Korea. At this point, asking China to participate as an active actor in the solution to the North Korean Problem means accepting the strong ties between Beijing and Pyongyang and Beijing's influence.

In addition to all these, knocking on China's door regarding the solution to the problem may also create question marks in the eyes of regional actors regarding the effectiveness of the West and the US. The UN and the Pacific alliance, consisting of the US and its allies, have not solved this problem successfully. The fact that a member of that alliance requested support from China confirms this.

The last point that can be evaluated at this point is the possibility of the call causing tension between Seoul and Washington. Because it is not known whether the US was aware of this action by South Korea. This move of the Seoul administration is likely to disturb Washington. Because this approach, which prioritizes communication with Beijing, may harm the alliance on the Tokyo-Seoul-Washington line in the long run.

In short, this call made by Seoul to Beijing may lead to consequences that may harm the Western-based alliance in the region rather than solve the North Korean Problem. If the nuclear threat posed by North Korea continues, it can be predicted that states that closely feel this threat will act in their interests, which will harm their relations with the United States.

[1] "In Growing Arms Frenzy, North Korea Launched Nearly 70 Missiles in 2022", El Pais, <https://english.elpais.com/international/2022-12-02/in-growing-arms-frenzy-north-korea-launched-nearly-70-missiles-in-2022.html>, (Date of Accession: 13.12.2022).

[2] "South Korea Urges China to Support Dialogue with North Korea-S. Korea Ministry", Swissinfo, <https://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/south-korea-urges-china-to-support-dialogue-with-north-korea-s-korea-ministry/48127886>, (Date of Accession: 13.12.2022).



ANKASAM ANALYSIS

Can US-China Relations Progress "Unbroken"?

Before the G20 Summit, which took place in Indonesia on November 15, 2022, United States (US) President Joe Biden met with Chinese President Xi Jinping and gave moderate messages on improving bilateral relations and keeping them away from crises. With this meeting, the possibility of a new crisis in Taiwan decreased and the international community took a deep breath. Shortly after that, on November 22, 2022, US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin met with Chinese Defense Minister Wei Fenghe in Cam-

bodia, where he went for the 9th ASEAN Defense Ministers meeting. Austin said that communication channels between the two countries should remain open to avoid conflict at a time when tensions are rising in the Indo-Pacific.[1]

These two developments gave the impression that the US was trying to get its relations with China back on track and to prevent competition from turning into a crisis. However, upon the emergence of the Covid-19 protests in Chi-



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na in this process, the White House continued to interfere in China's internal affairs by making a statement on the subject. "We've been saying for a long time that everyone in the US and around the world has the right to peaceful protest," said John Kirby, spokesman for the White House National Security Council. This includes the People's Republic of China," he said.[2]

In the continuation of his words, Kirby stated that China's "Zero Covid Policy" did not yield results and this was proven by other examples in the world.[3] At a time when it was trying to improve relations with Beijing, the White House signaled that it would not give up on its old policies with this statement.[4] The US defends democracy, open and free society and liberal economic order all over the world. But applying these policies against China can lead to dangerous tension and even conflict.

The national strength of the US is based on democracy, and China's weakest point is the states that are autonomous or governed by a special system. In other words, Washington uses values such as democracy and human rights. With the export of democracy, countries liberalize, and the door is opened for Western companies. But since China is a closed society, acting without knowing the realities of the field is risky for the US. In other words, the US's implementation of wrong policies regarding the Covid protests in China could have caused a Taiwan-like crisis in bilateral relations.

Washington has started to get more involved in China's internal affairs with the statements it has made in recent years. Again, in the Trump era, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo went so far as to say that China would be held accountable for the Xinjiang-Uyghur issue.[5] In the Biden period, however, the Taiwan Issue began to be addressed. Because Taiwan's situation, status and position are more different and sensitive than Xinjiang-Uyghur, Hong Kong, and other internal dynamics.

The White House administration considers that it may be the wrong policy to be too concerned with China's internal affairs since the Trump era. Because it is very risky for Washington to follow and defend a clear policy without knowing the future of the protests in China. The US will not want to spoil its bilateral relations with China and lose the dialogue again. Therefore, it will continue to walk a "fine line."

This sensitivity of the US in order not to spoil the relations has also found a response on the Chinese side. Beijing, which signals that it can soften the "Zero Covid Policy", announced that it is at a new stage in controlling the epidemic with the decrease of the Omicron variant and the increase in the vaccination rate.[6] However, when the demonstrations first broke out, the Beijing administration had given the message that it would not compromise its "Zero Covid Policy." Therefore, the prospects for the reopening of the Chinese economy were delayed until the first half of 2023. It can be said that the factor that changed China's thinking in this process was the statement made by the White House. Because by declaring that it supports the people's right to peaceful demonstration, Washington has shown that it will continue to interfere in China's internal affairs.

China, on the other hand, does not want a conflict with the US in a new area or a Cold War. If domestic problems persist, the US will have more instruments at its disposal to put pressure on China. Beijing, which wants to defuse the Taiwan crisis and distract the US from this issue, can also develop strategies to distract from protests and other internal dynamics. In other words, giving up the "Zero Covid Policy", can both relax society and reach the old growth figures again by enabling the economy to open early. However, since reducing measures will also increase deaths, the already low age of productivity may fall further, and thus the rate of economic growth may again slow down. In this respect, China is in a dilemma to give up or continue its current Covid policy.

In general, China wishes to reduce and, if possible, get rid of external pressures on internal dynamics, to put relations with the US back on track, and to stay away from crisis and conflict. This foreign policy goal causes China to reconsider its domestic policies. For the US-China relations to progress without breaking, a process seems to be working towards reducing the potential crisis areas. Beijing is

taking steps in this direction. For example, China is reflectivity on Taiwan as in the past; that is, it responds to the moves of the US rather than being proactive.

The US, on the other hand, acts more proactively by focusing on crisis politics. The reason why Washington wants to keep channels of dialogue with Beijing open is its desire to advance this policy of crisis. The US in these relations aims to control China. Washington's hegemonic stances cause China to be seen as a potential threat in the world. The bloc policy of the US also raises the risk of a potential war with China.

[1] "Austin To China's Defense Chief: US Concerned About 'Increasingly Dangerous Behavior' in Indo-Pacific", Legion, <https://www.legion.org/news/257543/austin-china%E2%80%99s-defense-chief-us-concerned-about-%E2%80%98increasingly-dangerous-behavior%E2%80%99-indo>, (Date of Accession: 14.12.2022).

[2] "White House Says 'Everyone Has the Right to Peacefully Protest' After China Covid Demonstrations Intensify", NBC News, <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/white-house/white-house-china-covid-protests-rcna58952>, (Date of Accession: 14.12.2022).

[3] Ibid.

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22 December 2022

The President of ANKASAM, Prof. Dr. Mehmet Seyfettin Erol's evaluations on the Symposium titled "Geo-Economic Dimensions of IOR-Opportunities for Region and Beyond" held by the National Institute of Maritime Affairs (NIMA) in Pakistan, was published in PTV World, one of the prominent media organizations of Pakistan.

22 December 2022

The President of the Ankara Center for Crisis and Policy Studies (ANKASAM), Prof. Dr. Mehmet Seyfettin Erol's speech titled "Regional Connectivity Through Eurasian and Global Perspective: Challenges and Way Forward" in the Symposium "Geo-Economic Dimensions of IOR-Opportunities for Region and Beyond" held by NIMA in Pakistan was shared by Lead Pakistan.

22 December 2022

The President of the Ankara Center for Crisis and Policy Studies (ANKASAM), Prof. Dr. Mehmet Seyfettin Erol's speech titled "Regional Connectivity Through Eurasian and Global Perspective: Challenges and Way Forward" in the Symposium "Geo-Economic Dimensions of IOR-Opportunities for Region and Beyond" held by NIMA in Pakistan was shared by MM News.

22 December 2022

The President of the Ankara Center for Crisis and Policy Studies (ANKASAM), Prof. Dr. Mehmet Seyfettin Erol's speech titled "Regional Connectivity Through Eurasian and Global Perspective: Challenges and Way Forward" in the Symposium "Geo-Economic Dimensions of IOR-Opportunities for Region and Beyond" held by NIMA in Pakistan was shared by The Gulf Observer.

22 December 2022

The President of the Ankara Center for Crisis and Policy Studies (ANKASAM), Prof. Dr. Mehmet Seyfettin Erol's speech titled "Regional Connectivity Through Eurasian and Global Perspective: Challenges and Way Forward" in the Symposium "Geo-Economic Dimensions of IOR-Opportunities for Region and Beyond" held by NIMA in Pakistan was widely shared in the Pakistan national media.



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