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NATO and the Asia-Pacific as the Main Competition Area of the New Grand Game

26

Ukraine's
EU Journey

32

Strengthened
Relations on the
Bishkek-Tashkent Line

CONTENTS

ANKASAM ANALYSIS

- 03 Causes of Deadlock in West-North Korea Relations from Drills in Diplomacy to Searching for Dialogue**
Zeki Talustan GÜLTEN
- 06 What Does the Results of the Presidential Election in Czechia Indicate?**
Cemal Ege ÖZKAN
- 08 UK Proposal to Extend AUKUS**
Dr. Cenk TAMER
- 11 The Search for Opportunities in the Midst of Crises: A Period of Strong Cooperation in Iberia**
Yiğit KIRDÜK
- 14 New US Military Bases in the Philippines and Japan**
Dr. Cenk TAMER
- 16 Is Algeria the Indispensable Actor of the Energy Crisis Equation?**
Şeyma KIZILAY
- 19 Increasing Tension on the Bulgaria-North Macedonia Line**
Cemal Ege ÖZKAN
- 21 Montenegro in the Shadow of Political Crises**
Mustafa ÇUHADAR
- 24 The Reflection of the Anti-Russian Alliance on the Romanian Economy**
Veli Can AKKAŞ
- 26 Ukraine's EU Journey**
Mahmut Melih BOSTANCI
- 29 NATO and the Asia-Pacific as the Main Competition Area of the New Grand Game**
Zeki Talustan GÜLTEN
- 32 Strengthened Relations on the Bishkek-Tashkent Line**
Dr. Emrah KAYA
- 35 Seeking for Lasting Peace on the Baku-Yerevan Line**
Dr. Doğacan BAŞARAN
- 37 Kyrgyzstan President's Visit to Hungary and Strengthening Bilateral Relations**
Dr. Emrah KAYA

ANKASAM IN PRESS

- 40 Media**

JOURNALS

- 41 Journal of International Crises and Political Research**
Journal of Regional Studies



ANKASAM ANALYSIS

Causes of Deadlock in West-North Korea Relations from Drills in Diplomacy to Searching for Dialogue

The Asia-Pacific Region has a political conjuncture shaped mainly by alliances and sides. For this reason, the region is becoming a geopolitical chessboard where the power struggle between Western actors and states such as China and North Korea, which are in search of multipolarity, takes place. As a matter of fact, although as an actor who has closed its dip-

lomatic paths, North Korea has an important place in that competition, although it only shows influence with actions, harsh rhetoric and exercises. Because when the West's moves in the region are examined, it can be said that the evaluations made without taking Pyongyang into account would be an incomplete reading.



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Undoubtedly, North Korea is a major nuclear power. Due to the recent developments such as increased missile tests,[1] the decision to increase its nuclear weapons and capacities,[2] and the adoption of the law that declared itself as a nuclear power,[3] the Pyongyang administration is maximizing the security concerns of the regional states. This consolidates the actors led by the United States of America (USA) around a common threat perception. However, the actions, rhetoric and exercises of the countries that are growing together and strengthening their influence in the region do not deter North Korea. On the contrary, this union leads Pyongyang to follow a more proactive foreign policy and provoke it.

The first point that can be examined at this point is that North Korea considers the US and its allies' exercises in the Asia-Pacific Region as actions that bring the current status quo closer to the "red line". As a matter of fact, Pyongyang strongly opposed the military exercises organized in cooperation with Washington and Seoul, claiming that these activities turned the Asia-Pacific Region into a "giant war arsenal".[4]

With its revisionist attitude, its opposition to the West, to the USA and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and its rising and growing nuclear power, North Korea can create a significant break in the security architecture of the Asia-Pacific Region. However, this situation directs the regional capitals to the West in general and to the USA in particular.

These exercises, which do not create any deterrent in Pyongyang, intensify North Korea's rhetoric and actions, thus creating an unstoppable security dilemma in the region. Moreover, increasing tensions deepen the security concerns of states.

For all these reasons, it can be argued that the security equation of the region will become even more fragile and there will be no improvement in the aforementioned table in the short term. At the same time, North Korea's threatening rhetoric does not create a deterrent in the West and finds provocative feedback.

The second issue to be examined is North Korea's harsh rejection of the US's idea of negotiating denuclearization. In this context, it is also known that Washington offered humanitarian aid to Pyongyang within the scope of the Covid-19 outbreak. However, the Pyongyang administration turned down this offer of assistance. North Korea has described these initiatives as "a shameless time-waster". In addition, Pyongyang explained the reason for the refusal as the "hostile attitude and actions" of the USA.[5] This can be interpreted as North Korea has closed the door to dialogue and the issue cannot be resolved through diplomatic means.

As a result, it can be said that the security equation in the Asia-Pacific Region is getting more and more fragile and North Korea plays a decisive role in this. The West, on the other hand, is taking various steps to end this insecurity. However, at this point, it is clearly seen that military exercises, one of the methods tried, did not create the expected deterrence and provoked Pyongyang. Dialogue calls, which are considered as the second option, are also flatly rejected by North Korea. Therefore, it can be stated that the security problems in the region will continue.

[1] "North Korea: What We Can Expect From Kim Jong-un in 2023", BBC News, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-64123657>, (Date of Acession: 03.02.2023).

[2] "North Korea Plans to Expand Nuclear Arsenal", Arms Control Association, <https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2023-01/news/north-korea-plans-expand-nuclear-arsenal>, (Date of Acession: 03.02.2023).

[3] "North Korea Declares Itself a Nuclear Weapons State", BBC News, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-62845958>, (Date of Acession: 03.02.2023).

[4] "N Korea Says US Drills Pushing Stituation to "Extreme Red-Line", Al Jazeera, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/2/2/n-korea-says-us-drills-pushing-situation-to-extreme-red-line>, (Date of Acession: 03.02.2023).

[5] "North Korea Rejects Talks With US, Citing 'Hostile Policy', Voice of America News, <https://www.voanews.com/a/north-korea-rejects-talks-with-us-citing-hostile-policy-/6944347.html>, (Date of Acession: 03.02.2023).



ANKASAM ANALYSIS

What Does the Results of the Presidential Election in Czechia Indicate?

Czechia, one of the countries of the former Eastern Bloc, is one of the most important states in the geopolitics of Eastern Europe. Following the dissolution of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), Czechia's integration with the West developed rapidly, and Prague joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Union (EU), respectively. In this context, the Presidential elections held in January 2023 are of great importance in terms of the candidates' attitudes towards the country's foreign policy.

On the other hand, it is useful to consider the duties and powers of the Presidential office in Czechia. In Czechia, the Presidency has a rather

symbolic meaning. However, the President has a say in foreign policy.[1] In other words, in Czechia, the President is an important actor in influencing the foreign policy of the government.

In addition to all these, the second round of the presidential elections was held in the Czech Republic on January 27-28, 2023. The two candidates competed in the elections, with former Prime Minister Andrej Babis and Petr Pavel, former Chief of Staff and General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). The presidential election was won by Pavel, who received 58.31 of the votes. Moreover, the election was the highest turnout in the history of the Czech Republic with 70.2%.[2] Therefore, this can be interpreted as a reflection of the voters' desire



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for change.

On the other hand, the opinions of the candidates participating in the election about the foreign policy of the country contain clues about what kind of direction Czechia will follow in the future. Babis, who lost the presidential election, drew the ire of Poland and the Baltic states for his statements about NATO just before the elections. Babis stated that if Russia attacked Poland or the Baltic states, it would not send the Czech Army to war.[3]

Especially given that all of these states are NATO members, Babis has in a sense argued that he will not apply the requirement stipulated in the fifth article of the alliance. Because, according to the article, an attack on a NATO member state is considered to have been made to all members of the alliance. As can be understood, Babis did not paint an image that could be in harmony with the Atlantic camp in terms of the foreign policy that Prague would pursue.

In contrast, Pavel, who won the Presidential elections, argues that Czechia should act in harmony with NATO and the EU. Furthermore, Pavel is in favor of increasing financial assistance to Ukraine in its struggle against Russia. However, it can be argued that Pavel's becoming President of the Czechia could lead to a serious change. The outgoing President Milos Zeman was a name that wanted Czechia to pursue pro-Russian and pro-China policies.[4] Therefore, it can be foreseen that during Pavel's presidency, relations with NATO and the EU may gain importance in the country's foreign policy. Moreover, the fact that Pavel is a former Czech General who served in NATO could further enhance Prague's alignment with the alliance. For this reason, it can be said that the Czechia will strive to pursue more active policies within NATO in the future.

On the other hand, Pavel's victory in the elections was welcomed by the EU. Pavel is in favor of further increasing Prague's alignment with Brussels, as well as the adoption of the euro as the Czech currency.[5] Therefore, the completion of the financial integration of the Czechia, which joined the EU in 2004, with Brussels may be experienced during Pavel's presidency.

After being elected President, Pavel had his first telephone conversations with Ukrainian President Vladimir Zelensky as well as Taiwanese leader Tsai Ing-wen. Pavel's meeting with Ing-wen is quite remarkable. EU leaders have traditionally avoided direct political contact with Taiwanese officials. However, Pavel was the first elected leader of an EU member state to do so.[6]

Pavel's move also shows which issues Czechia will prioritize in foreign policy in the future. Therefore, this situation may be a harbinger of the change of policy of the Czechia, which adheres to the "One China Principle", regarding Taiwan. In other words, although Pavel is a pro-EU figure, it can be argued that his pro-NATO identity is more dominant. While the duo of the US and Britain in NATO advocate a more hawkish policy against China, states such as Germany and France are in favor of adopting a cautious policy.

Moreover, it can be foreseen that during Pavel's presidency, the Czech Republic will increase its assistance to Ukraine. In this context, considering that Pavel served in NATO, it is possible that the Czechia will supply heavy weapons to Ukraine. Therefore, it can be said that the relations on the Prague-Kyiv line will gain momentum.

In conclusion, Pavel's victory in the presidential elections in the Czechia indicates that the people want to intensify relations with the West. Therefore, during Pavel's presidency, the Czechia's alignment with international organizations such as the EU and NATO is expected to increase.

[1] "Pro-Western, Retired General Pavel Sweeps Czech Presidential Vote", Reuters, <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/czech-retired-general-aims-beat-tycoon-ex-pm-presidential-race-2023-01-27/>, (Date of Accession: 04.02.2023).

[2] Ibid.

[3] "Baltic States, Poland Fume at Babis' 'Anti-NATO' Comments", Euractiv, <https://www.euractiv.com/section/politics/news/baltic-states-poland-fume-at-babis-anti-nato-comments/>, (Date of Accession: 04.02.2023).



ANKASAM ANALYSIS

UK Proposal to Extend AUKUS

In the UK, Tobias Ellwood, Chairman of the House of Commons Defense Committee, has called for the AUKUS to be expanded and to include India and Japan.[1] The realization of this proposal could radically change the security of Asia-Pacific and the regional balance of power. As a matter of fact, the security activities of the West in the Asia-Pacific have increased recently, new alliances have emerged in the region or their scope has expanded.

The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD) between India, Japan, the United States (US) and Australia, which was formalized in 2017, is currently being discussed to transform it into a broader collective defense organization or to integrate it with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).[2] In this context, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg's strategic dialogue with South Korea and Japan, as well as with India, can be interpreted as the expansion of NATO towards the Asia-Pacific.



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Another formation that is thought to serve the USA's strategy to contain China is AUKUS. This platform, which envisages the UK and USA to export nuclear submarine technology to Australia, is referred to as a defense-security alliance, unlike QUAD. It has been argued for a long time that Japan could also join AUKUS. However, to date, both the USA and the UK have denied the claims that Japan will participate in this cooperation.[3] It is therefore noteworthy that a proposal came from London to expand AUKUS.

Currently, the UK has not been willing to provide nuclear submarine technology to Japan and India until recently. In addition to the will of London, it should also be checked whether Tokyo and New Delhi have a request in this direction. In other words, the latest developments in the production of nuclear submarines of Japan and India and whether they ask for help from the USA and the UK in this sense should also be taken into account. Because this proposal may have no response in Tokyo and New Delhi. As a matter of fact, in the past, Japan has denied claims that it will join AUKUS.[4]

From an Indian point of view, if it had been much earlier than that, New Delhi might have been willing to join AUKUS. However, it cooperates with Russia in this field. Moscow, on the other hand, opposes New Delhi's cooperation with the West in the field of critical-sensitive nuclear technology.[5] India may oppose joining AUKUS for several reasons. The first is Russia's objection, as stated above. Moscow, for example, reacted in 2017 to a British delegation's inspection of a Russian nuclear submarine on lease in India.[6]

Secondly, India requested assistance from Western powers in this direction until 2021, when AUKUS was signed; but the USA and the UK provided the technology in question to Australia, not India. Thereupon, India turned to seek cooperation with France in the field of nuclear submarines. Recently, cooperation has been reached between the two countries on joint submarine production.[7]

Third, India prefers to support the domestic defense industry in the production of nuclear submarines and is working to reduce the share of foreign defense companies.

Fourth, the New Delhi administration, considering that AUKUS is a defense alliance that directly targets China, may avoid participating in it and thus escalating military tensions in the region.

It would not be correct to evaluate the UK's proposal to expand AUKUS independently of the regional and global conjuncture. First of all, it should be noted that; The Western World's struggle against China is deepening. The aforementioned situation allows the USA and the UK to increase harmony in Asia-Pacific and to deepen their cooperation through alliances. As a matter of fact, it is an important question why the UK has not been included in the QUAD until today. At the same time, it is indicative of the diverging interests of the United States and Britain in the Asia-Pacific. But now England seems to have taken action to close this discord. Some analysts interpret the expansion of AUKUS to India and Japan as the UK's effort to join QUAD.[8] Because these two actors (India and Japan) are also part of QUAD.

Britain aspires to establish defensive alliances in the Asia-Pacific, just as it does in Europe. QUAD, on the other hand, envisages cooperation between member states in areas such as maritime navigation and airspace security, joint exercises, fight against piracy and protection of the status quo in order to make the region free and open. In this respect, QUAD is rather than a defense alliance; It is a common platform aiming to contribute to regional security. Therefore, with its latest initiatives, the UK can contribute to the transformation of QUAD into a collective defense-security organization.

If Britain succeeds in involving India and Japan in an "anti-Chinese" regional formation, for example AUKUS; this may naturally pave the way for the formation of NATO-like alliances in Asia. The establishment of "anti-Chinese" alliances in the region is essentially the strategy of the Washington administration. However, London stands out as a useful actor in this strategy. Because India, in particular, does not want to be positioned against China. The USA, on the other hand, cannot persuade India in this regard.

Compared to Washington, London is better off with New Delhi. First of all, it's his former colony and it may be easier to get him to accept what he wants. On the other hand, the USA also has positive relations with Japan. Therefore, while Britain intensified its cooperation with India on the way of establishing a regional defense alliance; The United States may also turn to convincing Japan.

As a result, expanding alliances in the Asia-Pacific is part of the US strategy to contain China. That's why the UK's latest offer is highly compatible with US interests. For this reason, it is possible to argue that actors such as India, South Korea, Japan, Australia, Canada, New Zealand and France will continue to expand the circle of alliances in the region. On the other hand, it should be emphasized again that the British proposal does not belong to the government yet and has been brought to the agenda in the House of Commons. However, it can be argued that London will accelerate its polarizing policy in the Asia-Pacific in the near future.

[1] "UK's House of Commons Defence Panel Calls for Expansion of AUKUS To Include India, Japan", The Print, <https://theprint.in/defence/uk-house-of-commons-defence-panel-calls-for-expansion-of-aukus-to-include-india-japan/1341460/>, (Date of Accession: 30.01.2023).

[2] "NAIPTO-Toward a Eurasian, Transoceanic Multilateral Collective Defense Alliance", Hudson, <https://www.hudson.org/foreign-policy/naipto-toward-a-eurasian-transoceanic-multilateral-collective-defense-alliance>, (Date of Accession: 04.01.2023).

[3] "US Denies Inviting Japan to Join Aukus Security Alliance", SCMP, <https://www.scmp.com/news/asia/east-asia/article/3174185/us-denies-inviting-japan-join-aukus-security-alliance>, (Date of Accession: 30.01.2023).

[4] "Japan Denies Report of Invite to Join AUKUS To Develop Hypersonic Weapons", The Week, <https://www.theweek.in/news/world/2022/04/13/japan-denies-report-of-invite-to-join-aukus-to-develop-hypersonic-weapons.html>, (Date of Accession: 30.01.2023).

[5] "British Team, Not the Americans, Visited India's Russian Nuclear Submarine", The Print, <https://theprint.in/defence/british-team-visited-indian-nuclear-submarine/15766/>, (Date of Accession: 11.01.2023).

[6] Ibid.

[7] "India-France to Join Hands in Fighter and Submarine Design and Manufacturing", Hindustan Times, <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/indiafrance-to-join-hands-in-fighter-and-submarine-design-and-manufacturing-101672890137294.html>, (Date of Accession: 11.01.2023).

[8] @MartijnRasser, "UK Asks To Join Quad", Twitter, <https://twitter.com/MartijnRasser/status/1619355392437362691?s=20&t=98F9P6uwD-7FSnYrbtlHXdA>, (Date of Accession: 30.01.2023).



ANKASAM ANALYSIS

The Search for Opportunities in the Midst of Crises: A Period of Strong Cooperation in Iberia

Within the current international conjuncture, the European continent is grappling with multidimensional and continuous crises. Such environment of instability, encompassing crisis in the field of energy, migration, and environment, is driven by regional and global causes. Nevertheless, regardless of the source of these inconveniences, Europe is one of the regions most affected by them. However, every crisis carries within itself a number of opportunities. Thus, Iberia has taken the initiative to seize these opportunities.

As it is known, António Costa, Secretary General of the Socialist Party, came to power in Portugal in 2015. On the other hand, Pedro Sánchez, Secretary General of the Socialist Workers' Party, became Prime Minister of Spain in 2018. Since Sánchez took office, the parties have maintained relations based on cooperation and solidarity. Ideological affinity has played a decisive role in this. Relations between the sides have widened and deepened, especially amid the crisis brought on by the war following Russia's invasion of Ukraine.



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The first cooperation between Madrid and Lisbon in the midst of the crisis created by the war was a coordinated appeal to the European Commission to contain rising energy prices. Spain and Portugal referred in their objections frequently to the renewable resources they use for electricity production. Moreover, these two governments import energy from North African countries, in particular Algeria, with whom they have deep bilateral and regional relations on historical, cultural and economic dimensions. This possibility, which Spain and Portugal have at their disposal, has made them more autonomous in terms of energy than other European states. Thus, the parties requested that they be allowed to set a ceiling price for electricity supply to soften the impact of rising gas prices on the electricity market. The European Commission (EC) approved this request in April 2022.[1] Since the date of the EC's acceptance of the request, Spain and Portugal have started to provide electricity services that are on average two times cheaper than other European countries.[2]

The cooperation process between Spain and Portugal continued in October 2022 when Spain and Portugal came together with France to sign the Barcelona Agreement. The Barcelona Agreement paved the way for Spain and Portugal to export green hydrogen from the Mediterranean Sea to Marseille using their geopolitical advantage.

Germany has also joined recently the H2Med Green Hydrogen Pipeline Project, which is subject to this agreement, and as a result of the efforts carried out by the parties involved in the project before the EC, the project has been included under the scope of "common interest". Therefore, it was decided that half of the costs of the project would be financed by European Union (EU) funds.[3]

With Germany's participation, the scope of the project has expanded, giving Spain and Portugal the opportunity to become leaders in Europe's energy supply. Thus, Spain and Portugal created the "Iberian Exception" and gained a relative degree of autonomy from the other European countries in the energy sector with the decision adopted by the European Commission, while making other European countries dependent on them, in the same sector, through the H2Med Project.

The H2Med Project does not merely imply progress in the energy sector for both countries. Green hydrogen energy aligns with the EU's legislation for a gradual transition to renewable energy. By 2030, 79% of the energy used by Iberia will derive from renewable sources, as a result of the current usage of renewable energy and the impact of this project.[4] This results in Madrid and Lisbon leading the transition to renewable energy.

These two governments continued the momentum they had gained in their cooperation, through energy initiatives, in the tourism sector as well. The deflationary policy pursued by the governments throughout long periods of time prevented the rising inflation in Europe from affecting these countries, making Spain the country with the lowest inflation rate in Europe in 2022. Portugal, on the other hand, remained below the European average and ranked 11th.[5]

The countries consolidated their policy with the "Cross-Border Tourism Strategy 2022-2024", signed in November 2022, intended to make Iberia one of the most competitive and sustainable tourism destinations.[6] At the moment, Spain is on track to catch up with the number of its tourists before the Covid-19 pandemic, while Portugal hosted the most tourists in its history in 2022.[7] Hence, Spain and Portugal have reaped the fruits of their policy against the rising inflation in Europe.

While the parties continued to cooperate in both energy and tourism sectors, strides were also made towards "sustainability", which encompasses energy supply aspirations. In fact, in December 2022, Spain and Portugal signed an agreement to strengthen cooperation to prevent drought in their shared river basins.[8]

Having taken initiatives to tackle the current EU crises one by one, Madrid and Lisbon have also played an active role in the refugee crisis. Spain has received 164,000 Ukrainian asylum seekers since the start of the Russian-Ukrainian War, making it the 5th country in

Europe with the largest Ukrainian migrant population.[9] On the other hand, Portugal is the second European country to receive the highest number of children migrants from the Middle East, predominantly residing in Greece.[10]

Spain and Portugal have seized the opportunities at hand and embarked on new initiatives. Spain's presidency of the Council of the EU in the second term of 2023 will also be crucial within the sphere of these initiatives. The presidency will play a decisive role in the direction in which current activities and initiatives will evolve.

[1] "España y Portugal acuerdan con Bruselas limitar el precio del gas: este es el tope", Ondacero, https://www.ondacero.es/noticias/economia/espana-portugal-acuerdan-bruselas-limitar-precio-gas-este-precio-tope_202204266267efcdd593ed0001a991fb.html, (Date of Accession: 26.04.2022).

[2] "España y Portugal alcanzan un acuerdo con Bruselas para limitar el precio del gas y abaratar el recibo de la luz ", Rtve.es, <https://www.rtve.es/noticias/20220426/espana-portugal-acuerdo-precio-gas-luz/2340000.shtml>, (Date of Accession: 26.04.2022).

[3] "Sánchez, contento con la entrada de Alemania en el H2Med: "Refuerza su dimensión paneuropea", El Periódico de la Energía, <https://elperiodicodelaenergia.com/sanchez-contento-con-la-entrada-de-alemania-en-el-h2med-refuerza-su-dimension-paneuropea/>, (Date of Accession: 22.01.2023).

[4] "La Península Ibérica evita la crisis energética y liderará la transición de Europa, según Rystad", Pv Maganize, <https://www.pv-magazine.es/2022/10/28/la-peninsula-iberica-evita-la-tesis-energetica-y-liderara-la-transicion-de-europa-segun-rystad/>, (Date of Accession: 28.10.2022).

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[6] "España y Portugal aprueban una Estrategia de turismo transfronterizo con la sostenibilidad como eje central", Mincotur, <https://www.mincotur.gob.es/es-es/GabinetePrensa/NotasPrensa/2022/Paginas/Espana-Portugal-estrategia-turismo-transfronterizo.aspx#:~:text=España%20y%20Portugal%20acuerdan%20una,territorio%20fronterizo%20más%20antiguo%20y,> (Date of Accession: 04.11.2022).

[7] "2022 ha sido el mejor año de la historia del turismo en Portugal", Tourinews, https://www.tourinews.es/destinos-turismo/portugal-nu-no-fazenda-mejor-2022-turismo-historia-fitur-tap-frontera-espana_4473004_102.html, (Date of Accession: 23.01.2023).

[8] "España y Portugal acuerdan reforzar la cooperación para hacer frente a las situaciones de sequía en las cuencas hidrográficas compartidas", Miteco, <https://www.miteco.gob.es/es/prensa/ultimas-noticias/espana-y-portugal-acuerdan-reforzar-la-cooperación-para-hacer-frente-a-las-situaciones-de-sequía-en-las-cuencas-hidrográficas-compartidas/tcm:30-549433#:~:text=España%20y%20Portugal%20han%20acordado,ha%20afectado%20a%20ambos%20países,> (Date of Accession: 15.12.2022).

[9] "El mapa de los refugiados de la guerra de Ucrania: más de 7,9 millones de personas han abandonado el país", Rtve.es, <https://www.rtve.es/noticias/20230105/mapa-refugiados-guerra-ucrania/2297260.shtml>, (Date of Accession: 05.01.2023).

[10] "Portugal é o segundo país da UE que acolhe mais crianças e jovens refugiados da Grécia", Portugal.gov, <https://www.portugal.gov.pt/pt/gc23/comunicacao/noticia?i=portugal-e-o-segundo-pais-da-ue-que-acolhe-mais-criancas-e-jovens-refugiados-da-grecia,> (Date of Accession: 13.10.2022).



ANKASAM ANALYSIS

New US Military Bases in the Philippines and Japan

On January 10, 2023, General James Bierman, Commandant of the United States (US) Marine Corps, stated, "We are building facilities in Japan, the Philippines and elsewhere that will expand our military theater of operations.".[1] These remarks showed that the United States continues to build up its military capacity and capabilities in the Asia-Pacific in preparation for a possible conflict in Taiwan. More recently, the US and Japanese militaries have begun to integrate their command structures in the Pacific and have expanded the scope of combined operations. On February 2, 2023, US officials announced an agreement with Manila to establish four additional military bases in the Philippines.[2] With these new military bases expected to be established near Taiwan, the US is expected to be able to monitor China's activities in the South China Sea and around

Taiwan more easily. These new bases planned to be established in the Philippines are part of the US strategy to contain China. The United States has no territory of its own in the Pacific, except for Guam. Therefore, in line with its strategy to contain China, the United States has to make agreements with states to deploy navy ships, soldiers and warplanes in the Western Pacific. Washington continues to strengthen its bases in Japan, South Korea and Australia, and has also accelerated its military cooperation with the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand. To summarize briefly, in the Pacific, in addition to Diego Gargia Island, which it leased from the UK and converted into a military base, the United States has a base in Guam and military bases in Japan, South Korea, the Philippines, Thailand and Australia, with which it has signed security-defense agreements.[3]



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Currently, Washington has limited access to five bases in the Philippines under the security agreement. With the latest agreements, Washington will have access to four new bases in the country. The location of these new bases has not been disclosed. There is talk that they could be in Luzon, near Taiwan, possibly to counter China. These new bases are reportedly being established to enable a faster response to humanitarian and climate-related disasters and other common challenges in the Philippines.

The phrase "other challenges" may implicitly refer to the "Chinese threat". Thus, during the Taiwan Crisis, the US will be able to deploy in many bases close to the island and intervene quickly. This is because the closest American base outside the Philippines is located on Japan's Okinawa Island. It is believed that if China attacks Taiwan, it will take time for the US to come to its aid and China will seize the island in a "fait accompli". To prevent this, Washington is both increasing the number of bases near Taiwan and developing joint crisis response capabilities with allies such as Japan and the Philippines.

The main purpose of military bases in the Pacific is to advance the US naval power projection and contain China. Both the US and Japan are revising their military bases in order to counter China's claims in Taiwan. In this sense, the aim is to increase the number of naval bases in particular. The US, which only uses air bases in the Philippines, is still denied access to a naval base there. However, Washington is allegedly preparing to return to its naval base near Manila.[4] In return, the United States offered to provide military equipment assistance to the Philippines.[5] If it can dock its naval ships in the Philippines, the US will gain a significant advantage in its Taiwan strategy. In addition, Washington has begun deploying Marines in Guam after 70 years. This deployment will be partly paid for by Japan.[6]

Since November 2022, military cooperation between the US and Japan has accelerated, and it can be said that it has been extended to joint crisis intervention. The two countries are both developing military bases on the Japanese islands near Taiwan and trying to increase coordination in crisis intervention. This is because China's growing claims in Taiwan pose a great danger to the Japanese islands as well. In fact, China would refrain from targeting the Japanese islands even in the event of a crisis over Taiwan. However, the US is willing to use these nearby Japanese islands to help Taiwan in case of war. The islands in question are the Ryukpu Archipelago and the disputed Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands, one of a series of islands claimed by China and Japan.

If China seizes Taiwan, it can then move to take over these islands of Japan. The Western argument is therefore this: If powers such

as Russia and China, which violate the rules-based international order, are not punished for their actions, the door will be opened for the invasion of new territories in the near future. If China invades Taiwan and goes unpunished, it may be emboldened to invade Japan's islands as well. This would make it impossible to maintain a rules-based international order and open the door to World War III.

Recognizing this danger, Japan wants the US to increase its military presence on these islands. But stronger US protection may not be enough to deter China. Therefore, in the future, the US and Japan may start talking about the establishment of collective defense organizations.

The US has accelerated its strategy of containment of China by increasing military cooperation with its allies in the Asia-Pacific. The islands closest to Taiwan belong to Japan and the Philippines. Therefore, these countries are Washington's priority. These collaborations are also spreading to other allied states in the region. In December 2022, Australia agreed to increase the number of American troops in the country and to establish a new defense industrial base. Japan was also invited to be stationed at this American base in Australia.[7]

As a result, all these steps by the US are seen as a provocation by China. The two great powers are preparing for a showdown over Taiwan in the next five years. Washington will continue to take various measures to reduce the risks of this conflict and distribute the costs among allies.

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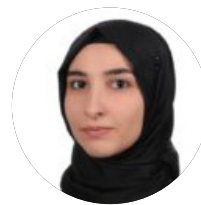
ANKASAM ANALYSIS

Is Algeria the Indispensable Actor of the Energy Crisis Equation?

The energy crisis caused by the Russia-Ukraine War has led states to different pursuits. Many governments have sought to diversify their co-operation dynamics and partnerships. In this process, the international importance and visibility of some countries and regions have increased. The rise of Central Asian geography in global politics is an example of this situation. On the other hand, in North Africa, it is seen that perceptions towards Algeria differ and the

competition over the country has reached new dimensions. The country is one of Europe's major gas suppliers. Therefore, its importance has increased with the energy crisis. However, Algeria has recently come to the fore with its foreign policy decisions.

The most striking development in this regard is the statement of Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov on February 1, 2023 that Algeria



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is one of the leading candidates to join the BRICS. Also, Lavrov; He stated that many countries made official requests to join the group consisting of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. He used the following statements about Algeria's candidacy:[1]

"As a first step we will agree on criteria, parameters and conditions for the admission of new members to our group. Algeria is one of the leaders among candidates with all its qualities."

Algeria applied to join the BRICS in November 2022.[2] The country, which is the largest natural gas importer in Africa, not only with its BRICS membership; It also draws attention with its attitude towards the Russia-Ukraine War. The country does not participate in sanctions against Russia. It also abstained from the vote of the resolution condemning the war at the United Nations (UN) in March 2022. Later, he took an impartial stance at the UN.[3]

Russia is the main arms supplier and strategic partner of Algeria. Algeria bought a total of \$7 billion worth of weapons from Russia in 2021 alone. In this context, the country has purchased advanced Russian warplanes, including the Sukhoi 57. This purchase has made Algeria the 3rd largest buyer of Russian arms in the world.[4] In May 2022, Lavrov made a visit to Algeria. Thus, the rapprochement between the two countries has increased even more.

Standing out with its close stance to BRICS and its membership application, Algeria has signed agreements with China to expand initiatives within the scope of the Belt-Road Project in the fields of infrastructure and energy.[5] At the same time, it can be said that the French influence in the country has been replaced by Chinese influence. As a matter of fact, in November 2022, the Second Five-Year Comprehensive Strategic Cooperation Agreement was signed between Beijing and Algeria for the period 2022-2026.[6]

Therefore, the policy of the United States of America (USA) with Algeria is incompatible with both its global struggle with China and its attitude towards Russia. This situation brought about the counter moves of the USA. For example, on September 30, 2022, 27 members of the US Congress called for "urgent" action to impose sanctions on the Algerian Government regarding the purchase of Russian weapons.

In this context, the proposal to operate the CAATSA sanctions came to the fore.[7] The consensus of opinion of US politicians on this issue is also remarkable. This situation is very important in terms of showing the importance of Algeria's current position and geopolitical importance in American foreign policy.

Russia's response to this move of the USA was also included in Lavrov's discourse. On February 1, 2023, Lavrov stated that the US is trying to "punish" Algeria for not participating in anti-Russian sanctions; but he stated that he was on the wrong track. He also stated that no dictation could be made to the Algerians.[8] In this context, it can be said that Algeria constitutes a new phase of the US-Russian struggle.

On the other hand, Algeria also makes energy agreements with Western countries. This situation also explains the country's preference for a neutral stance towards the Ukraine War. The West, which is experiencing an energy crisis, is trying to increase its partnership with Algeria and is taking various steps for this. Algeria also wants to seize this opportunity and increase its importance. Therefore, the country signs energy agreements with Western actors. It can be said that Russia is not satisfied with this situation. However, the fact that it is a major arms buyer and has important ties ensures that Moscow's stance towards Algeria remains relatively soft. At this point, it can be stated that Algeria aims to turn its geopolitical, geostrategic and geoeconomic capacity into an opportunity as well as being a competitive field. Therefore, it can be argued that Algeria is trying to display a balanced attitude.

On December 20, 2022, Algeria's state-owned oil company Sonatrach and German gas company VNG AG signed a memorandum of understanding for the construction of the first green hydrogen plant in the North African country. With the project, Algeria aims to benefit from Germany's experience in the field of new and renewable energies.[9] In addition, on 22 December 2022, Algerian President Abdelmadjid Tebboune announced that his country is offering spare electricity capacity to Europe and is planning a 270 km submarine pipeline towards Italy.[10]

In addition, an agreement has been made between the Algerian company Sonatrach and the Italian Energy company Eni. Accordingly, Algeria will export 9 billion cubic meters of natural gas to Rome by 2024.7.[11] On the other hand, the country's participation in the USA-Africa Leaders' Summit held in December 2022 at the Prime Minister level instead of the President can be read as a reflection of the aforementioned balanced attitude. Undoubtedly, this participation can be interpreted as a message to Washington.[12]

At the current stage, Algeria is increasing its international influence by developing energy agreements with European countries; On the other hand, it is advancing its relations with Russia. Its ties with China are also important within the scope of the US-China rivalry. However, the BRICS decision has brought the country a little closer to the Russia-China bilateral relationship. 11% of all-natural gas consumed in Europe[13] by Algeria, which has become an increasingly critical player in the West-Russian rivalry, is becoming more and more critical.

Algeria is an important component for the West and the USA, which are in an effort to produce an alternative to Russian energy. This location gives the country an advantage over Washington. Therefore, Algeria may want to use this situation by making some demands from Washington. This, in turn, may have a shaping effect on the US policy towards the region. However, as a result of entering the BRICS membership process and arms deals with Russia, Washington may apply for a sanction card against Algeria.

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ANKASAM ANALYSIS

Increasing Tension on the Bulgaria-North Macedonia Line

Recently, tensions have increased in relations between the two Balkan countries, North Macedonia and Bulgaria. In fact, after the Sofia administration lifted its veto on Skopje's resumption of negotiations with the European Union (EU) in June 2022, there has been a partial improvement in relations between the parties. In this context, from June 2022 to January 2023, relations between North Macedonia and Bulgaria have progressed relatively well. However, this situation has been changing recently.

The basis of the problems between the parties is based on disputes about history, language and identity issues. Bulgaria claims that Macedonian is a Bulgarian dialect and that the roots of the Macedonian people are also Bulgarian. In a sense, the Sofia administration is creating obstacles in the EU accession process similar to the obstacles that Greece created in the process of joining North Macedonia to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). While these problems between the two

countries continue, Bulgaria, which is a member of the EU, has tried to obtain some concessions in the process of North Macedonia's membership in the union.

Although Sofia lifted its veto on North Macedonia and gave the green light for its membership, this development provoked a severe reaction from the opposition and the people in Skopje. The underlying reasons why North Macedonia wants to approve a resolution that has received such a backlash from both the opposition and the public is probably the government's willingness to benefit from EU financial aid and the idea of completing integration with the West after NATO membership.

On the other hand, on January 19, 2023, Hristijan Pendikov, an employee of one of the Bulgarian Cultural Clubs, who calls himself Bulgarian and is considered provocative by some Macedonians, was attacked in Ohrid, North Macedonia. This attack has



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caused the strains of the relations between the two countries. Following the attack, Pendikov received severe brain damage and was transferred to Sofia on a plane belonging to the Bulgarian Government. Bulgarian Foreign Minister Nikolay Milkov stressed that Sofia will not give up on the protection of the rights of Bulgarians in North Macedonia.[1]

In response, on January 23, 2023, North Macedonian President Stevo Pendarovski convened his country's Security Council and then stated that he would ask the government to ban the entry of several Bulgarian citizens who he said were carrying out activities against North Macedonia and linked to the Russian Intelligence Services.[2]

In this respect, North Macedonia's position on the tension with Bulgaria is noteworthy. Skopje claims that its relations with Sofia have deteriorated through third parties. Therefore, considering the war conjuncture in Europe, it can be argued that North Macedonia wants to take advantage of anti-Russianism. On the other hand, Bulgaria recalled its Ambassador to Skopje to the country on January 25, 2023. Milkov said this will continue until signs of change are seen in North Macedonia. North Macedonian Foreign Minister Bujar Osmani described Bulgaria's move as disproportionate. Moreover, Osmani also claimed that Sofia's decision is connected with the country's election in April 2023.[3]

As can be understood, Bulgaria attaches importance to the fact that Bulgarian Cultural Clubs in North Macedonia operate comfortably in the country. In this respect, the existence of the Bulgarian minority in North Macedonia is important in shaping the relations between Sofia and Skopje. Furthermore, the fact that Bulgaria will enter the election atmosphere indicates that this issue may be on the agenda more often.

On January 26, 2023, Bulgarian President Rumen Radev held a meeting with EU Commissioner for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Oliver Varhelyi. Radev urged the EU to take steps to guarantee the protection of the rights of Bulgarians in North Macedonia and ensuring their security.[4] Moreover, Radev pointed out that the attack on Pendikov was a hate crime and that it stemmed from years of policy in North Macedonia to instill hatred against Bulgarians and everything that is Bulgarian.[5]

Bulgaria, as can be seen from Radev's statements, will reactivate the EU factor in its relations with North Macedonia. Thus, the Sofia administration will use Brussels as a pressure factor for its problems with Skopje, just as it has done in the past. Furthermore, another issue that has recently caused tension between Bulgaria and North Macedonia is related to historical heritage. The Skopje

administration has ordered increased its security in the country at events marking the 151st anniversary of the birth of Goce Delcev, whom it describes as its greatest hero, on February 4th 2023. Because both Bulgarians and Macedonians claim Delcev. [6] Therefore, the historical problems between Bulgaria and North Macedonia will continue to play a role in shaping the relations.

To summarize briefly, after Bulgaria lifted its veto on North Macedonia, some fundamental problems remain, although there has been a partial improvement in bilateral relations. Sofia demands that Skopje secure the presence of Bulgarian Cultural Clubs in the country. Bulgaria is therefore uncomfortable with North Macedonia's policy towards the Bulgarian minority.

In conclusion, if North Macedonia does not take steps to please the Bulgarian authorities in the face of this problem, it may face difficulties again in terms of EU membership in the future. In this context, Sofia may reuse its veto card against Skopje. Nevertheless, it can be said that the relations between the parties will be guided by the problem of the existence of "Bulgarian Cultural Clubs" in North Macedonia for a while.

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ANKASAM ANALYSIS

Montenegro in the Shadow of Political Crises

It is seen that the balances in the Balkans also were shaken with the Russia-Ukraine War. Moreover, frozen conflict zones that are ready to be activated still exist. The fragility of the regional states is in line with the interests of Russia, which wants to divert attention from Ukraine. In this context, it can be said that the region has become a competitive playground between Russia and the West. Because the fragile struc-

ture in the Balkans also poses a threat to the security of Europe. For this reason, the European Union (EU) concentrate on the Balkans policy. However, the policies of the EU deepen the disagreements between Russia and the West. On the other hand, Russia either supports or encourages the steps that will destabilize the Serb populated regions.



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Montenegro, which has been mentioned with crises recently, is one of the countries that witnessed this struggle for influence. As a matter of fact, Montenegro, a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), is also getting closer to the EU. Situation in question disturbs Moscow. The deepening of the crises in Montenegro is in the interests of Moscow. The claim that Russia-based cyber-attacks took place in the country, which was dragged into a crisis atmosphere with the signing of the Basic Agreement between the Serbian Orthodox Church and the Montenegrin Government in 2022, becomes remarkable in this sense. In addition to this, the issue of trying to harm the stability in the country with disinformation efforts also maintains its place on the agenda.[1]

As is known, the Government of Dritan Abazovic fell as a result of the Basic Agreement signed in 2022 and a new government has not been formed yet. This situation led to the deepening of the current crisis. On the other hand, a new crisis is being experienced through Montenegrin President Milo Djukanovic. The crisis in question makes the situation in Montenegro even more serious.[2]

In September 2022, Serbian-origin parties submitted the name Miograd Lekic to Djukanovic, requesting that he be given the mandate to form a government. However, Djukanovic rejected this offer. After Djukanovic stated that the rejection was in accordance with the constitution, the reactions continued to increase. Because after this development, with the initiative of pro-Serb parties, a constitutional amendment that restricted Djukanovic's powers in the government formation process came to the fore.[3]

Although Djukanovic initially rejected the amendment and sent it back, he had to approve it. After this development, while protests were held in the country, the streets of the capital almost turned into a war zone. In this context, the evaluations that the Montenegrin politics have reached a dead end have come to the fore. While it is seen that Djukanovic, who brought the situation in question to the EU, was given significant support from the EU; the statements made criticize this regulation in the constitution.[4]

In the statement made by the Council of Europe, it was stated that this development started a constitutional crisis in the country; it was underlined that this amendment was contrary to the decisions of the Venice Commission. It was also stated that the support given to the reform process in Montenegro will continue. But more importantly, it was said in the statement that the crisis undermined Montenegro's EU integration process.[5] This is a worrying development for Montenegro, which until recently was considered the country closest to EU membership.

In addition, the election of the missing members of the Montenegrin Constitutional Court has not been completed. The aforementioned situation reveals that the institutions in the country have become dysfunctional and the deadlock in the decision-making mechanisms. In particular, the EU, which closely monitors the constitutional processes in the country, described this situation as an unacceptable development. Such that; Slovenian Foreign Minister Tanja Fajon even warned about this issue.[6] On the other hand, according to a statement from the EU, the current crises may create political and economic obstacles for Montenegro.[7]

In this context, it can be said that the process that started with the signing of the Basic Agreement created a domino effect and opened the door to new crises in the country. It is clear that Euro-Atlantic institutions and active Western actors in the region are disturbed by all these happens. Because, just like Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro is considered as the soft belly of the Balkans at the point reached today. The EU considers that the tension in the Kosovo-Serbia line threatens the stability in the region. On the other hand, the United States of America (USA) is also concerned about the developments.

After the EU's aforementioned statements, the possibility of the suspension of Kosovo's membership process came to the fore. On the one hand, the EU, which accelerated the integration process of other regional countries; on the other hand, it tries to manage the crises in the region. Undoubtedly, crises complicate the EU's job in this competitive environment.

USA Special Representative for the Western Balkans Gabriel Escobar stated that "heavy consequences" will occur if this crisis that has been going on for months in Montenegro does not come to an end.[8] In the recent period, it can be predicted that the USA, which

has been trying to create an elbow room for itself by increasing its visibility in the region, will put more pressure on Montenegro in the future. Because Montenegro has begun to be seen as a weak link in the rivalry between Russia and the West.

In addition to all these, Presidential elections are expected to be held in March 2023.[9] It can be said that these elections, where the candidates are not yet known clearly, will be tough. Djukanovic, who has been sitting in the Presidency seat since 2018, there is focused on the possibility of being a candidate again.

The re-candidacy of Djukanovic, who has shaped Montenegrin politics for nearly 30 years, may lead to a more competitive environment for the elections. Because, according to some sections, it is believed that the deadlock in the country can only be overcome with the departure of Djukanovic. Accordingly, it can be stated that Montenegro, where a new government has not yet been established, will go through a presidential election process with high tension. This could further deepen the political crisis in the country.

As a result, the inability of Montenegro to cope with the crises is watched with concern by Western actors and regional states. Because considering the conjuncture in the region, it is possible that the crisis in Montenegro has a butterfly effect. It is also possible that this situation will bring other frozen conflicts to light in the region. It can be argued that actors such as the USA and the EU will increase their pressure and initiatives in Montenegro, where the current crises are getting deeper.

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ANKASAM ANALYSIS

The Reflection of the Anti-Russian Alliance on the Romanian Economy

After the Russia-Ukraine War, many states in Europe brought forward their perceptions of threats to their national security. That's why, states have taken various measures. In particular, the European Union (EU) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) have taken some steps to prevent the concerns of actors who perceive the threat. In this context, Romania is one of the countries concerned about Russia's actions.

As a result of this threat perception, Romania increased its defense expenditures.[1] Because the Bucharest administration is of the opinion that if Russia wins the war in Ukraine, it may have to face serious problems. After the war, the West-Russia

rivalry in the Balkan geography increased. In this struggle for influence, NATO comes first among the actors that will limit Russia. In terms of NATO, the position of Romania in the context of the containment policy towards Russia is very important. For this reason, military cooperation and joint exercises between Romania and NATO continue. So, Bucharest wants to increase its deterrence.

Romania, an important NATO member, provides various assistance to Ukraine and supports Kiev. In addition, Romania takes care to position itself next to Moldova. Because there is a serious tendency in Chisinau to connect with Bucharest. The Moscow administration, on the other hand, shows



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a high level of interest in Transnistria, the separatist region of Moldova. Because of that, Bucharest takes care to position itself next to Chisinau.[2]

In this context, Romania describes the steps taken by Russia as a blow to democracy. In this context, the Bucharest administration, which wants to prevent these steps and create public opinion, is taking various steps. Therefore, it is possible to state that Romania will increase its relations with various states. In fact, Romania's participation in sanctions against Russia is the outcome of efforts to improve relations at some point.

On the other hand, the Romanian economy was affected by the Russia-Ukraine War, especially in the field of energy. Although the country has taken various steps in this regard, it has not succeeded in neutralizing its energy. For this reason, the Bucharest administration wants to gain economic gain by improving its relations with Europe and the United States of America (USA). As a matter of fact, the European Commission shows the Romanian economy among the fastest growing economies in Europe.[3] This indicates that various efforts of Bucharest will turn into economic gains.

In this sense, Romania aims to reduce the negative effects of the energy crisis by turning to green energy projects and even hydroelectric power plant projects from European funds.[4] All these developments indicate that the Bucharest administration can achieve success in reviving its economy. So Romania can host significant investments.

As a result, the importance of Romania, which is a NATO member, increased after Russia- Ukraine War. Romania is given serious support by both the EU and NATO. Therefore, the alliance relations of Bucharest, whose threat perception has been updated, have also developed. It can be stated that this situation will reflect on Romania's economic cooperation in the future.

[1] "Romanya Savunma Bakanlığı 150 Adet Daha Piranha 5 Zırhlı Personel Taşıyıcı Satın Alacak", Romania Insider, <https://www.romania-insider.com/romanian-ministry-defense-piranha-armored-vehicles-purchase/>, (Date of Accession: 13.02.2023).

[2] "Cumhurbaşkanı Iohannis: Romanya, Dış Tehditlere Karşı Moldova'nın Yanında Yer Alıyor", Romania Insider, <https://www.romania-insider.com/romania-stands-moldova-against-foreign-threats>, (Date of Accession: 16.02.2023).

[3] "Ak Kış Tahmini Romanya'yı Avrupa'nın En Hızlı Büyüyen Ekonomileri Arasında Gösteriyor", Romania Insider, <https://www.romania-insider.com/ec-winter-forecast-romania-fast-growing-economy>, (Date of Accession: 14.02.2023).

[4] "Güney Romanya'daki 1.5GW PV Parkında Önümüzdeki Baharda Başlayacak", Romania Insider, <https://www.romania-insider.com/works-major-pv-park-southern-romania-spring-2024>, (Date of Accession: 13.02.2023).



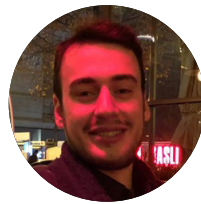
ANKASAM ANALYSIS

Ukraine's EU Journey

As one year of the Russian-Ukrainian War, which started on February 24, 2022, is about to end, issues related to the post-war period are occupying Ukraine's diplomatic agenda. With the recent ammunition supplies to Ukraine, the leaders of the European Union (EU) and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) member states have been visiting Ukraine to show their

support on the border. This has brought the debate on the EU and NATO membership of the country back to the forefront.

Indeed, the traffic of visits that started with former British Prime Minister Boris Johnson continued with the visit of Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen and EU Commission President Ur-



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sula Von Der Leyen to Kiev. [1] The aid provided by the EU countries during the war is gratefully welcomed by the Ukrainian people. In this process, Ukrainian President Vladimir Zelenski, who has rolled up his sleeves for EU membership, has been making efforts to meet the Copenhagen Criteria. Zelenski, who was given the green light for the membership process in his meeting with Leyen, expected the process to be completed in a moderate manner, but Leyen emphasized that the process would continue without any acceleration. [2]

It will not be easy for Ukraine to meet the Copenhagen Criteria for countries seeking EU membership during the war. Although diplomatic visits and incentives continue to ensure the continuity of this process, Kiev still has a long way to go. Zelenski, on the other hand, seems determined to preserve his leadership figure, strengthen his political position and implement policies that can meet the EU's expectations. This determination can be seen in the corruption probe he has recently launched. In an effort to reform the system to meet the EU's criteria, Zelenski aims to restructure corrupt institutions. [3]

In short, what Ukraine is trying to do in the context of EU membership is to turn the war into an opportunity without losing the support of its allies. Because in terms of the conjuncture, the West is on Kiev's side. Therefore, the Zelenski administration sees the intensification of diplomatic contacts as an opportunity for the post-war environment. It can be argued that Ukraine has fulfilled its responsibility towards the EU countries on the frontline. The aid that reaches Europe through the EU and NATO distances Europe from the Russian threat.

On the other hand, the energy crisis and the refugee problem have been threatening EU countries since the first day of the war. The EU, which is very sensitive to border security, wants the process to be overcome with the least damage. In this regard, the West has certain expectations regarding Ukraine. However, the dependence of countries such as Germany, which is the dynamo of the EU economy, on Russian energy can be characterized as the most important challenge for Kiev.

In addition to all these, the threats of Russian President Vladimir Putin regarding the use of nuclear weapons and Ukraine's proximity to the EU border mean that this country is also fighting for the interests of the EU at the front. This is the reason why both military aid and Leyen gave the green light to Ukraine's membership.

Through these visits, the Kyiv government has the opportunity to convey information to the international community and increase the number of its allies. Similarly, Zelenski's visits abroad serve the same purpose. However, there are also reactions from other members and candidates against Ukraine, which believes that the accession process should be fast-tracked. [4] As a reflection of this, Leyen informed on February 3, 2023 that the process would not be accelerated. This is because Ukraine has set a target of achieving EU membership in two years and shared it with the public. However, when the past membership processes are taken into consideration, it is obvious that this situation does not seem very possible.

It includes many activities such as ensuring the criteria for the membership process, examining the internal regulations of the candidate state, ensuring state equivalence and economic balance. Enlargement and opening up processes are also determined by the EU and organized in line with the work of all candidate countries. For example, countries such as the Czech Republic, Estonia and Hungary, which joined the EU in 2004, were accepted for membership after a six-year process that started in 1998. For this reason, the countries warned the EU delegation and recommended that they be notified accordingly.

When the EU's membership conditions are analyzed, the inclusion of a country without territorial integrity and at war in the membership process is also a controversial issue. The condition of "good neighborly relations", which the EU applies and emphasizes in the Balkan countries in line with its criteria, may also disqualify Ukraine from being a candidate country in this context. Ukraine's efforts in this process, such as the fight against corruption, remain weak due to the war conditions.

A stable and orderly economy, peaceful diplomacy and regular social life criteria are not a membership condition that Ukraine can provide due to the ongoing war. [5]It is also a fact that the EU, which tries to remove the Russian threat by putting Ukraine in a buffer position, will border Russia with Ukraine's membership.

As a result, while the war is in full swing, Ukraine continues its diplomacy on EU and NATO membership and takes some steps in line with the Copenhagen Criteria to be met for EU membership. As the war is about to enter its second year, making these arrangements to join the union reflects Zelensky's desire to make the best use of the crisis. However, it should be noted that membership will not be possible due to the fact that the country is at war. Leyen has already clearly stated that the process will not be accelerated.

[1] "EU Pledges to Double Military Aid Programme for Ukraine", The Guardian, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/feb/02/eu-pledges-to-double-military-aid-programme-for-ukraine>, (Date of Accession: 04.02.2023).

[2] "Ukraine EU Membership: No Short Cuts on Joining, Officials Warn Ahead of Summit", BBC, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-64492102>, (Date of Accession: 04.02.2023).

[3] "Ukraine's Fight Against Corruption Isn't New. It's Still Trying", NPR, <https://www.npr.org/2023/01/27/1151326940/ukraine-anti-corruption-efforts>, (Date of Accession: 04.02.2023).

[4] "Ukraine EU membership: No short Cuts on Joining, Officials Warn Ahead of Summit", BBC, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-64492102>, (Date of Accession: 04.02.2023).

[5] "Conditions for Membership", European Commission, https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/enlargement-policy/conditions-membership_en, (Date of Accession: 04.02.2023).



ANKASAM ANALYSIS

NATO and the Asia-Pacific as the Main Competition Area of the New Grand Game

The political conjuncture of the Asia-Pacific Region is mainly shaped by alliances and exercises. As a matter of fact, Asia-Pacific has turned into a field of competition between the West and its regional allies, which are the founders of today's international system, and states that

challenge the international order, such as China and North Korea. Because the region is seen as the area where global geopolitical ruptures will take place. This leads to an increased interest of the West in the region, especially the United States (USA) and the North Atlantic Treaty



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ty Organization (NATO). One of the important reasons for this is that China, whose rise cannot be prevented, is located in this region. Therefore, Washington is trying to surround China on a regional scale in the context of its global struggle against Beijing.

In this context, the visits of NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg to South Korea and Japan between 29 January–1 February 2023 are very important.[1] As a matter of fact, it can be said that NATO wants to strengthen its dialogue with both states and is trying to increase its influence in the Asia-Pacific. Because NATO, a Western-based defense organization, wants to increase the pressure on China and North Korea in the region. Another important reason for this situation is the emergence of North Korea as a nuclear power. Pyongyang has increased both ballistic missile and nuclear tests after passing legislation declaring itself a nuclear power.[2] For this reason, the threat perceptions of the regional states, especially Japan and South Korea, have been reinforced.

Another reason for this situation is China and its increasing global geopolitical and geoeconomic power. In this context, NATO gives the message that it will support Taiwan in a possible crisis by increasing its effectiveness in the region. The message given to Taiwan is also conveyed to Moscow through the Russia-Ukraine War. Because the West sees affinity in Taiwan and Ukraine issues. The point that stands out in this context is actually the West's perception of these crises. Because, in the eyes of the West, a blow to Moscow in the Ukraine War will deter Beijing from attacking Taipei.

In addition to all these, Russia's reasoning for the Ukraine War is NATO's expansion and approaching its borders can be considered within the same framework. In such a reading, Stoltenberg's visits can be interpreted as a message given to China via Taiwan.

On the other hand, it can be predicted that the increasing influence of the West in the Asia-Pacific Region will further provoke China and North Korea. Moreover, the West may be aiming for this and forcing China to make a choice. As a matter of fact, if the increasing influence of NATO provokes China as well as Russia and prompts them to intervene in Taiwan, a study can be carried out to show Beijing as an "aggressive" actor.

On the other hand, if China does not act against this pressure, it will both lose its prestige on a global scale and lose its credibility in the eyes of other revisionist actors who challenge the international order built by Western hegemony.

It can be argued that with Stoltenberg's visits, NATO wants to keep Japan's increased armament and security moves under control. Because the West may want Tokyo to pursue a proactive foreign policy under its control, rather than becoming a new threat. Moreover, it can be deduced that in the future, NATO aims to establish new alliances in the region, apart from South Korea and Japan. Considering that Washington is accelerating its strategy of containment Beijing, the inference in question is strengthened.

In addition, military exercises are held in partnership with Washington, Seoul and Tokyo. The establishment of a stable coordination in the triangle of NATO, South Korea and Japan after these visits may open the door to NATO memberships of South Korea and Japan or creation of regional NATOs in the future.

On the other hand, these visits can be read as NATO will continue its expansion strategy, albeit qualitatively, in the short term, despite the Ukraine War. In this context, it can be argued that NATO may raise the issues of the South China Sea, Taiwan and the denuclearization of the region in order to show interest in the region again.

As a result, the Asia-Pacific region has become the chessboard of global geopolitical competition. The increase in NATO's interest in the region stems from this. In this context, it can be predicted that the tension in the region will not decrease in the short term and the interest of Western actors in the region will continue. It seems inevitable that these visits will provoke more states such as China and North Korea.

[1] "Update: NATO Secretary General to Visit Republic of Korea and Japan", North Atlantic Treaty Organization, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_211016.htm#:~:text=NATO%20Secretary%20General%20Jens%20Stoltenberg,Sup%2C%20and%20other%20senior%20of-ficials, (Date of Accession: 09.02.2023).

[2] "Experts: North Korea's New Law on Preemptive Use of Nuclear Weapons Puts Regime at Risk", Voice of America News, <https://www.voanews.com/a/experts-north-korea-s-new-law-on-preemptive-use-of-nuclear-weapons-puts-regime-at-risk/6749962.html>, (Date of Accession: 15.02.2023).



ANKASAM ANALYSIS

Strengthened Relations on the Bishkek-Tashkent Line

Since the day they gained their independence, the relations of the Central Asian states with each other have been developing in a multidimensional way. Although it lost momentum in various periods, especially in the last five years, there has been a rapidly increasing integration process in the region. Central Asian states show a strong will for both national development and economic development and stability of neighboring states with the relations they have developed in the bilateral, regional and international framework.

Today, there is an important process that Central Asian countries must overcome in order to ensure regional stability and development. Because the states' overcoming this process in the shortest time and with the least cost brings important political, social and economic gains. At this point, the integration process between the states of the region is important. Because the establishment of joint production areas by sharing the different experiences of each country, the technologies they have and different production mechanisms will accelerate regional development.



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On the other hand, sharing of experience, knowledge and technology between countries will bring equal development in Central Asia instead of a single-centered production. Because a strong and stable Central Asia will be possible not only with a developed and prosperous state, but also with the simultaneous and proportional development of the regional states.

In this sense, the recent agreements between Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, the projects that are being implemented and the increase in the trade volume can be presented as a model. In particular, 2022 has been a breakthrough period for economic relations on the Tashkent-Bishkek line. The trade volume between the parties has exceeded 1 billion dollars. In this case, various projects implemented in industry, energy, agriculture, transportation and other sectors played a decisive role.[1]

The China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan Railway Line Project has strengthened the ties as well as the relations between the countries. It is thought that the trade volume will continue to increase with the realization of the said project, which will ensure regional integration. In addition, various agreements on energy are made between countries. The latest example of this is the agreement dated January 6, 2023 for the Kambar-Ata-1 Hydroelectric Power Plant, which also includes Kazakhstan. It is stated that the power plant, whose construction is expected to continue between 2024 and 2028, will be the largest hydroelectric power plant in Kyrgyzstan after it is put into operation. However, it is stated that the power plant will provide electricity to three countries.[2]

The said power plant has been the subject of debate between Bishkek and Tashkent for many years. Uzbekistan opposed the project, thinking that less water would be sent to it because of this power plant. However, it can be said that the relations have settled on a stronger ground after the decision signed on the determination of the border between Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan and the management of the Andijan (Kempir-Abad) Reservoir water resources was approved by the parliaments.[3] The agreement reached in the Andican (Kempir-Abad) Reservoir also facilitated the consensus on the Kambar-Ata-1 Hydroelectric Power Plant.

One of the most important recent developments between the two states is the decision of Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan to jointly produce vehicles such as cars, pickups and minibuses. In the facility planned to be established in Kyrgyzstan, it is planned to produce 3,000 vehicles in the first stage and 30,000 vehicles in the following processes.[4]

The President of Uzbekistan, Mr. Şevket Mirziyoyev, paid a visit to Bishkek in the process of further strengthening the relations with Kyrgyzstan. During the visit, which covered 26-27 January 2023, the parties signed important decisions, hosted by the President of Kyrgyzstan, Mr. Sadir Caparov. First, the leaders exchanged ratifications for demarcation and then signed the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership Statement.[5]

During the visit, 24 more documents on the development and deepening of relations were signed. The leaders signed the Strategic Trade and Economic Partnership Program for industry, trade, energy, investment, tourism, culture, customs, education, sports, agriculture and 2023-2025.[6] Speaking at the Ala-Archa state residence, the Uzbek leader stated that the established ties open up new horizons in relations and that they form the basis of the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership Declaration.[7]

During the visit, seven memorandums of understanding were signed between the Chambers of Commerce and Industry of Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan in various fields such as jewelry, exports, pharmaceuticals, agriculture and tourism. The target is to increase the trade volume to 2 billion dollars.[8] The strong will to solve the problems through dialogue, the visit organized at the highest level, the new projects realized and planned to be implemented strengthen the relations on the Bishkek-Tashkent line.

President of Uzbekistan Presidential Administration Sardor Umurzakov summarized the dynamics and achievements of commercial relations between the parties in his speech at the Kyrgyz-Uzbek Business Forum held in Bishkek on January 26, 2023. Umurzakov em-

phasized that countries can supply their needs from each other and called for strengthening industrial cooperation. Umurzakov also stated that they can establish their production facilities in Uzbekistan in Kyrgyzstan and expressed that they are ready for cooperation in the technology, project and finance sectors.[9]

As a result, it is seen that the Central Asian capitals in general, Bishkek and Tashkent administrations in particular, first overcome the problems and then set policies with a win-win approach. The cooperation environment established between the two states can be read as a summary of the integration and development policy that is being tried to be implemented in Central Asia. The leaders, who show that the problems in bilateral and regional relations are not insoluble, also present an important roadmap at the international level. The messages given that facilities in Uzbekistan can also be built in Kyrgyzstan are an indicator of trust between states. However, it is possible to state that the Tashkent administration is open to sharing experience and technology for a prosperous, stable and peaceful Central Asia. This attitude of Uzbekistan will accelerate the stable development of Kyrgyzstan and will add dynamism to bilateral relations.

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[2] ""Камбар-Ата-1": үч өлкө макулдашууга кол койду", Azattyk, <https://www.azattyk.org/a/32212327.html>, (Date of Accession: 26.01.2022).

[3] Ayzirek Imanaliyeva, "Kyrgyzstan Ratifies Uzbekistan Border Deal in Testy Parliament Session", Eurasianet, <https://eurasianet.org/kyrgyzstan-ratifies-uzbekistan-border-deal-in-testy-parliament-session>, (Date of Accession: 26.01.2022).

[4] "Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan to Jointly Produce Cars", 24 KG, https://24.kg/english/256204_Uzbekistan_and_Kyrgyzstan_to_jointly_produce_cars/, (Date of Accession: 26.01.2022).

[5] "Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan Officially Complete Border Delimitation", 24 KG, https://24.kg/english/256905_Kyrgyzstan_and_Uzbekistan_officially_complete_border_delimitation/, (Date of Accession: 27.01.2022).

[6] "24 Documents Signed Following Visit of Shavkat Mirziyoyev to Kyrgyzstan", 24 KG, https://24.kg/english/256912_24_documents_signed_following_visit_of_Shavkat_Mirziyoyev_to_Kyrgyzstan/, (Date of Accession: 27.01.2022).

[7] "Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan Talk About Strategic Partnership", 24 KG, https://24.kg/english/256902_Kyrgyzstan_and_Uzbekistan_talk_about_strategic_partnership/, (Date of Accession: 27.01.2022).

[8] "Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan Sign Seven Memorandums of Cooperation", 24 KG, https://24.kg/english/256819_Kyrgyzstan_and_Uzbekistan_sign_seven_Memorandums_of_Cooperation/, (Date of Accession: 27.01.2022).

[9] "Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan to Jointly Work on Import Substitution", 24 KG, https://24.kg/english/256782_Kyrgyzstan_and_Uzbekistan_to_jointly_work_on_import_substitution/, (Date of Accession: 27.01.2022).



ANKASAM ANALYSIS

Seeking for Lasting Peace on the Baku–Yerevan Line

Although Armenia's occupation of Karabakh ended with the Moscow Declaration of November 9, 2020 signed as a result of the Second Karabakh War, a permanent peace agreement could not be signed in the more than two years since this ceasefire. In this case, various factors have an effect. First of all, it should be stated that despite the willingness of the Armenian Government to reach a permanent peace agreement, the Karabakh Clan and the Armenian Diasporas, which have given to Armenian politics for many years, advocate a return to the status quo of occupation and try to put pressure on Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan in the negotiation processes through various social movements. In addition, it is recalled that from time to time, radical sections

in the Armenian Army made some provocations and led to border clashes that would sabotage the process.

To explain the situation in question, the basic reality revealed by the normalization winds blowing in the region after the war was shaped within the framework of the sensitivity of solving regional problems by the states of the region and the proposal of the "3+3 Regional Cooperation Format" was put on the agenda. However, over time, an environment has been created in which the United States of America (USA) and France operate mediation diplomacy. Also, France has made a number of initiatives through the President of the European Council, Charles Michel, who is a Frenchman. This has



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led to the involvement of extra-regional actors in the Karabakh Conflict.

The increase in the number of actors involved in the process has led each state to prioritize its own interests, which has already caused the negotiation processes, which already have various difficulties, to become much more complicated.

It has been observed that the meetings between Pashinyan and the President of Azerbaijan Mr. Ilham Aliyev, who have met many times at different addresses, are generally blocked on three issues. The first is the determination of the boundary between the parties. At this point, it can be stated that Azerbaijan does not compromise its borders recognized by the United Nations (UN) and therefore by international law. In fact, it is known that the Pashinyan administration has given some messages that it is ready to recognize the legitimate borders of Azerbaijan in this regard. However, in general, in periods of progress on this issue, the process was intended to be sabotaged through provocations that led to border conflict.

The second issue can be said to be the opening of the Zangezur Corridor. On the occasion of this corridor, Azerbaijan, in addition to constituting the Nakhchivan connection, will ensure an uninterrupted land connection between the countries of the Turkic World and will put forward a stable route in the China-Central Asia-Caucasus-Europe connection far beyond this. This means strengthening the Middle Corridor. Therefore, Azerbaijan has an important expectation regarding the opening of this corridor with reference to the Moscow Declaration. Because the corridor will strengthen the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan, strengthen its role as a bridge in the integration processes of the Turkic World and contribute to the geopolitical and geoeconomic importance of the country with its logistical and energy dimension in the context of the corridors. For this reason, the issue of the Zangezur Corridor is substantial for Baku.

In fact, the corridor in question is in line with Armenia's interests. On this occasion, Yerevan can overcome its isolation by realizing Pashinyan's greatest promise to the Armenian people and gaining the space to establish healthy relations with the West. However, despite this, there are some difficulties in front of Yerevan at the point of the Zangezur Corridor. On this issue again, Pashinyan is facing pressure from the opposition.

The third issue is the situation of the Armenians in Karabakh. In this regard, Yerevan states that Karabakh Armenians have various rights in religious, cultural, etc. issues. On the other hand, Baku states that Karabakh is the territory of Azerbaijan, states that the necessary rights and freedoms are provided to the people living in the whole country and considers this issue as its own internal

issue. While the disputes in question complicate the process; Recently, there have been some discussions on the axis of the Lachin Corridor. Despite the fact that Azerbaijani activists draw attention to the problems in the region, Armenia criticizes the Baku administration by claiming that the Armenians of Karabakh are isolated and carries out an effort to influence the international community.

Despite all these developments, it is seen that the search for peace on the Baku-Yerevan line continues. As a matter of fact, Armenian Prime Minister Pashinyan announced on February 15, 2023 that they had conveyed the draft peace agreement to Azerbaijan. In addition, Pashinyan stated that the draft was sent to the Minsk Trio of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). This development is significant because it shows that Yerevan has not closed the doors to the negotiation process despite all the difficulties. However, the fact that the draft includes statements about Karabakh Armenians reveals that some demands will be rejected by Baku.[1] Nevertheless, the functioning of the negotiation process is valuable.

On the other hand, the fact that the proposal was sent to the OSCE Minsk Trio once again revealed that the United States and France wanted to be included in the process at the point of mediation. Because the trio was established for the peace processes carried out after the occupation of Karabakh, but it did not achieve any success in resolving the issue through diplomatic means. Due to the failure of this group consisting of Russia, the United States and France, Azerbaijan had to liberate its occupied territories by force. Therefore, there is a serious mistrust in Baku that this mission will also carry out a solution-oriented diplomacy in the mediation process. As a matter of fact, Azerbaijani officials in various platforms state that the mediation of the Minsk Trio will not be accepted. Especially considering the tension on the Baku-Paris line, it can be foreseen that Yerevan's effort to involve France in the process will complicate peace talks.

As a result, in the more than two years since the Second Karabakh War, a permanent peace agreement between Azerbaijan and Armenia could not be signed. On the other hand, the Pashinyan administration's submission of its proposal to Baku on the draft peace agreement and the constructive attitude of the Baku administration can be interpreted as a promising development in terms of showing that the negotiation process will continue to work despite all the difficulties.

[1] "Armenia's Pashinyan Says Country Sent Draft Peace Agreement to Azerbaijan", TASS, <https://tass.com/world/1577129>, (Date of Accession: 17.02.2023).



ANKASAM ANALYSIS

Kyrgyzstan President's Visit to Hungary and Strengthening Bilateral Relations

The President of Kyrgyzstan, Sadyr Japarov, paid an official visit to Hungary between 12-14 February 2023. The main content of the visit was economic cooperation, the Russia-Ukraine War, the European Union (EU) and relations between Kyrgyzstan and Central Asia. The main message of the visit of the Kyrgyz leader, who met with Hungarian President Katalin Novák and Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, was that the

deep political relations between the parties allow for the establishment of stronger economic and commercial ties.[1]

Among the main issues discussed by the Kyrgyz leader during the visit were the higher level of relations between the states, the strengthening of ties and the establishment of direct air links. Emphasizing that they are ready to raise



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the strategic partnership between the states to higher levels, Caparov held talks at various levels. During Caparov's meeting with Orban, economy, culture, strengthening of humanitarian cooperation, banking sector and hydroelectric issues were discussed. In addition, the Kyrgyz leader invited the Hungarian Prime Minister to Kyrgyzstan.[2]

Drawing attention to the historical ties between the two nations, Orban said that Kyrgyzstan is the motherland of Hungarians.[3] Orban also said that bureaucracy should be reduced in order to accelerate relations between Europe and Central Asia. In this context, he emphasized that Central Asia is one of the centers of strategic importance for the security and economy of both the world and Europe.[4]

During the visit, Caparov also held a meeting with Novak. Novak has made important statements about the relations and the visit. The Hungarian leader stressed that the economic relations between the two countries have great potential. In addition, Novak noted that although Hungary is in the Western World, it also attaches importance to close relations with the Eastern World, including Central Asia.[5] The two leaders also signed a joint declaration on the strengthening and development of the strategic partnership. The topics highlighted in the declaration are the active interaction of the two countries in the political, commercial, economic, cultural and humanitarian fields, the intention to strengthen and expand the strategic partnership, cooperation in the fields of trade, economy and investment.[6] In addition, seven agreements covering law, forensic medicine, national archives and education have been signed.[7]

During the negotiations, various issues including security were discussed between the parties. Tourism, agriculture, water management and education were also discussed among the parties who expressed their wish for the war in Ukraine to end peacefully as soon as possible. Novak declared that they support the rapprochement between Kyrgyzstan and the EU and called for the signing of a strengthened cooperation and association agreement as soon as possible and announced that the Budapest administration gave the necessary support to this process.[8] She emphasized that Europe needs Central Asia especially during this difficult period. In a statement on her social media account, Novak announced that they have renewed the strategic partnerships between the two states.[9]

Among the issues that came to the forefront of the talks is a joint development fund designed to promote economic cooperation.[10] This situation shows that it is aimed to stabilize the relations that have the potential to develop and strengthen on the Bishkek-Budapest line and to act in a more independent framework. In particular, the projects to be realized in partnership between the two states will bring dynamism to both Kyrgyzstan-Hungary and Central Asia-EU relations.

During the visit, meetings were held at various levels. For example, Hungarian Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade Peer Szijjarto and his Kyrgyz counterpart Jeenbek Kulubaev met and stated that they were working to improve relations.[11] On the other hand, Hungarian Minister of Economic Development Marton Nagy, members of the Hungarian-Kyrgyz Development Fund, Presidents of the Kyrgyz Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Kyrgyzstan and participants from about a hundred large companies of Kyrgyzstan and Hungary participated in the Hungarian-Kyrgyz Business Forum. Within the scope of the Hungarian-Kyrgyz Development Fund, which has a registered capital of 50 million dollars, a special project of 26 million dollars is planned to be implemented.[12]

As a result, relations between Kyrgyzstan and Hungary are getting stronger. While the will of the parties strengthens the ties between the two states, the Bishkek-Budapest line has the potential to turn into an important bridge between Central Asia and the EU. Considering the impact created by the Organization of Turkic States, it can be argued that the relations will gain significant momentum in the mid-term. Orban's reference to historical ties will be an important motivator as well as a win-win-based approach.

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[3] "President Japarov, PM Viktor Orban Hold Talks in Budapest", AKI Press, https://akipress.com/news:694659:President_Japarov,_PM_Viktor_Orban_hold_talks_in_Budapest/, (Date of Accession: 16.02.2023).

[4] "Hungary and Kyrgyzstan...", op.cit.

[5] Ibid.

[6] "Kyrgyzstan and Hungary Sign Joint Declaration on Strategic Partnership", 24 KG, https://24.kg/english/258354_Kyrgyzstan_and_Hungary_sign_joint_declaration_on_strategic_partnership/, (Date of Accession: 16.02.2023).

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[11] "PM Orbán Holds Talks with Kyrgyzstan President in Budapest", About Hungary, <https://abouthungary.hu/news-in-brief/pm-orban-holds-talks-with-kyrgyzstan-president-in-budapest>, (Date of Accession: 16.02.2023).

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