



ANKASAM **bulletin**

11 June 2023
ISSUE: 2023/23



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The West's Increasing Interest in the Balkans

It is known that states do not have permanent friends in international relations and interests are decisive. For this reason, actors carry out strategies to achieve their own interests at the maximum level. However, after the First and Second World Wars, states achieved their goals not with wars; focused more on achieving di-

plomacy. For this reason, it is seen that countries turn to international organizations. In this context, the European Union (EU) is one of the actors that is a center of attraction and makes efforts to solve various crises.

The EU is an important example because it has



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managed to institutionalize despite having different views in its city. Security comes first among the issues that come to the fore in the EU, especially after the Russia-Ukraine War. For this reason, the EU closely follows the developments in the Western Balkans and increases its interest in the region. As a matter of fact, the aforementioned orientation has also been defined as a “strategic priority” by Oliver Varhei, Member of the European Commission for Enlargement.[1]

As it is known, the Balkans has been a geography that has attracted the attention of the leading actors in the global system throughout history. In the current conjuncture, it can be said that regional and global powers are closely interested in the Balkans. However, this situation leads to various competitions in the region and increases instability. This is why the President of the European Council, Joseph Borrell, stated that the EU wants a stable and peaceful Balkans.[2]

In fact, there has been Russian influence in the region since the past. It is known that pan-Slavism has a role in this. The EU, on the other hand, wants to prevent Russian-backed developments in the region. For this reason, the EU's interest in the Balkans has increased recently. As a matter of fact, the fact that the President of the EU Parliament Roberta Mezzola said that the region belongs to the EU confirms this.[3] In this context, the union, which tries to prevent Russian influence, strives to improve its relations with Serbia.[4]

On the other hand, it should be emphasized that the EU's interest in the Western Balkans is not unrequited. Because the states of the region are also turning to the EU. For example, according to a study by the Center for Democracy and Human Rights in Kosovo, 76 percent of Montenegrin citizens support EU membership.[5]

At this point, it should be stated that; The West's interest in the Western Balkans is not limited to the EU. The United States of America (USA) is also trying to expand its relations with the region. Considering the US-Russia rivalry, the attitude of the Washington administration is better understood. Therefore, the United States will conduct exercises with more than 24,000 soldiers in the region.[6] It can be argued that this policy of the USA has worked, albeit partially. Because Kosovo President Vjosa Osmani thanked Bob Menendez, Chairman of the US Senate Foreign Affairs Committee, for his commitment to the development and preservation of democracy in the region.[7]

As can be understood, the priority for the US is to limit Russia's influence in the region. In this context, the Washington administration considers the resolution of the conflict between Kosovo and Serbia as one of the priorities. Undoubtedly, in this case, the fact that the Serbs are open to Russian influence in the context of pan-Slavism plays a decisive role. As a matter of fact, US State Department Senior Advisor Derek Schole held a phone call with Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic and drew attention to the importance of avoiding provocations and conflicts.[8]

As a result, the interest of both regional and global actors in the Western Balkans has been increasing recently. Especially after Russia's intervention in Ukraine, with the security of Europe gaining importance, both the USA and the EU accelerated their policies in the Western Balkans. Therefore, these policies basically aim to break the Russian influence in the region.

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[2] “EU i Zapadni Balkan u borbi protiv ilegalne trgovine oružjem”, Al Jazeera, <https://balkans.aljazeera.net/news/balkan/2023/5/16/eu-i-zapadni-balkan-u-borbi-protiv-ilegalne-trgovine-oruzjem>, (Date of Accession: 16.05.2023).

[3] “Мецола: Западниот Балкан припаѓа во ЕУ”, Slobodenpecat, <https://www.slobodenpecat.mk/mecola-zapadniot-balkan-pripagja-vo-eu/>, (Date of Accession: 16.05.2023).

[4] “EP usvojio izvještaj o Srbiji: I dalje veliki utjecaj Rusije u zemlji”, Al Jazeera, <https://balkans.aljazeera.net/news/balkan/2023/5/10/ep-usvojio-izvjestaj-o-srbiji-i-dalje-veliki-utjecaj-rusije-u-zemlji>, (Date of Accession: 10.05.2023).

[5] “Istraživanje: Rekordna podrška članstvu Crne Gore u EU”, Al Jazeera, <https://balkans.aljazeera.net/news/balkan/2023/5/18/istrazivanje-rekordna-podrska-clanstvu-crne-gore-u-eu-u>, (Date of Accession: 18.05.2023).

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[7] “Османи: Благодарност до Менендез за неговата посветеност на демократијата на Западен Балкан”, Slobodenpecat, <https://www.slobodenpecat.mk/osmani-blagodarnost-do-menendez-za-negovata-posvetenost-na-demokratijata-na-zapaden-balkan/>, (Date of Accession: 19.05.2023).

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Europe's Catastrophic Scenario: Chinese Intervention in Taiwan

In April 2023, the foreign ministers of many European countries made statements talking about the possible consequences of China's liable intervention in Taiwan. For example, British Foreign Secretary James Cleverly referred to the global implications of a possible war across the Taiwan Strait and thus the destruction of the semiconductor industry. Cleverly claimed that China's intervention in Taiwan would negatively affect trade all over the world and stated that any distance would not be enough to get rid of this devastating effect.

Cleverly's statement that in the event of a war, no one can escape the devastating effects of this situation, can be perceived as a response to a speech by French President Emmanuel Macron on the subject. Because Macron said that Europe should follow an independent path from the United States of America (USA) in the Taiwan issue[1]. Arguing that this possible war has nothing to do with France, Macron's aforementioned statement has a critical meaning, considering that the United States is one of Europe's key security allies. In addition, Macron's words may call into question France's commitment to the trans-Atlantic security promise.



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Another politician who responded to Macron's statement was German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock. Baerbock, sharing the same views with England, stated that Europe could not remain indifferent to a possible Taiwan-China tension and said that this would bring about very scary scenarios for world trade.

In addition, she argued that America, with which they share common values, is an important factor when faced with security problems such as the Russian threat. Considering the ongoing Russia-Ukraine War, these statements reveal a stable stance in terms of Europe's peaceful and supportive attitude towards Ukraine. Because in a possible China-Taiwan War, Europe's neutrality as Macron suggested may mean that Europe is exposed to the support of the USA in a possible Russian threat.

In addition, Baerbock stated that half of the world trade and 70 percent of the world's semiconductor production are transported by ship from this region. Therefore, she underlined the importance of the Taiwan Strait in the world and European economy. At this point, it can be argued that in addition to the issue of security and human rights, the possible war in this region is also important in terms of economic interests. However, considering the reality that China is one of Europe's largest trading partners, instead of taking a side, it can be stated that Europe would like to keep the tension in the region low. As a matter of fact, Joseph Borrell, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Relations and Security Policy, speaking in a similar tone, said that verbal provocations that cause tension and distrust should be avoided[2].

China, which has increased its pressure on Taiwan in recent years, is trying to bring the island under Beijing's sovereignty. Taiwan Government, on the other hand, is in the desire to preserve the current status quo by rejecting it. Also, the USA cooperates with Taiwan in the field of defense, especially in military technology.

As a matter of fact, in April 2023, Taiwan's Foreign Minister stated that they were preparing for a possible conflict with China, pointing to the year 2027[3]. Saying that he takes the Chinese threat seriously, the minister wants to get the support of the West. It is clear that Europe stands at a point in line with Taiwan's interests. This is why Borell invited European navies to patrol the Taiwan Strait to show how important Taiwan is to Europe[4]. As can be understood from this serious call, Europe stands by Taiwan, even if it is for its own interests.

On the other hand, Taiwan-based discussions gained momentum after the meeting of Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen in April 2023 with the Speaker of the US House of Representatives Kevin McCarthy. Even, China, which held a three-day military exercise around Taiwan in April 2023, sent six navy ships to the strait in addition to flying warplanes in the region[5].

After all, as long as the West's support for Taiwan and China's strategy and claims regarding the island continue, the tension in the Asia-Pacific will not fade. As European politicians point out, the effects of a possible war are not regional; it will be at the global level.

[1] "Germany's Baerbock Stresses Alliance with US on Taiwan in Tiposte to Macron", Politico, <https://www.politico.eu/article/germanys-baerbock-stresses-alliance-with-us-on-taiwan-in-riposte-to-macron-xi-jinping-german-green-party/>, (Date of Accession: 30.04.2023).

[2] Ibid.

[3] "Taiwan Foreign Minister Warns of Conflict with China in 2027", The Guardian, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/apr/21/taiwan-foreign-minister-warns-of-conflict-with-china-in-2027>, (Date of Accession: 30.04.2023).

[4] "Taiwan Strait: top EU Diplomat Calls for European Navy Patrols", The Guardian, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/apr/23/taiwan-strait-top-eu-diplomat-calls-for-european-navy-patrols>, (Date of Accession: 30.04.2023).

[5] "China Flies 38 Warplanes Near Taiwan, 6 Navy Vessels in Area", AP News, <https://apnews.com/article/china-fighter-jets-harassment-taiwan-9156541b4138cfa3865b7232ee6a8970>, (Date of Accession: 30.04.2023).



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Efforts to Increase India's Military Capacity

The Russia-Ukraine conflict has prompted many countries to reassess their defense spending and take steps prioritizing military expenditures. India, which announced an increase in defense production on May 19, 2023, has demonstrated that it is among the countries affected by this trend.

In its statement, the Indian Government highlighted that the country's defense production has increased by more than 12% in the previous fiscal year, surpassing 1 trillion rupees (12 billion dollars) for the first time.[1] The government has also set a target of 25 billion US dollars for defense production by 2025, while attempting to reduce dependence on imports from countries like Russia.[2] These developments in defense activities hold significant importance in the global military equation.



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It is known that India is a country dependent on Russia in the defense sector. Moscow is the most important supplier of weapons to New Delhi. It can be said that the military trade between Russia and India has been partially affected by the Russia-Ukraine conflict. Delays in the delivery of Russian air defense systems serve as an example of this situation. Like many other countries that have increased their defense budgets and expenditures due to the war, India has also taken the path of making innovations in the defense sector. In the 2023-2024 budget, 13.18% of the total budget has been allocated to defense.[3]

Moreover, while India is engaged in critical exports, it is also striving to make significant strides in terms of production. Some of the largest defense production companies in the country include Bharat Earth Movers Ltd. (BEM), Bharat Electronics Ltd. (BEL), and Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd. (HAL).[4] Indeed, various steps are being taken to foster the development of the defense industry, which holds a significant position within the economic structure. Through the aforementioned companies, efforts are being made to enhance the existing military capacity and strengthen the defense sector as a whole.

According to the Global Fire Power 2023 data, India ranks among the top 5 military powers in the world.[5] It is known that India ranks third in terms of defense spending. The strategic regional competition with China and Pakistan necessitates India to maintain its military capabilities and capacities at high levels. Throughout 2022, New Delhi strengthened its military ties with regional partners, formed new collaborations, and conducted exercises in response to border tensions with China.

New Delhi, within the scope of military relations, has conducted joint exercises with countries such as Australia, Bangladesh, France, Indonesia, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Myanmar, Nepal, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States, involving the army, navy, and air force. Additionally, India actively participates in multilateral exercises such as RIMPAC (Rim of the Pacific), MALABAR, and Samv- edna. Some of the recent notable exercises include:[6]

- Vostok 2022: India and Russia, Eastern Military District.
- Gagan Shakti: Indian Army and Indian Air Force, Punjab.
- JIMEX 2022: India and Japan, Bay of Bengal region.
- Joint Sea Exercise: India and Nigeria, Gulf of Guinea.
- Exercise Abhyas-01/22: India and the United States Coast Guard, Chennai, Tamil Nadu.
- Vajra Prahar 2022: India and the United States, Prades.
- VINBAKS 2022: India and Vietnam.
- RIMPAC 2022: Multilateral exercise involving 26 countries.
- VARUNA 2022: India and France.
- AJEYA WARRIOR-2023: India-United Kingdom.
- KazInd: India and Kazakhstan.
- NATO Exercise.

It is known that alongside the development of military capabilities through bilateral and multilateral exercises, the New Delhi government has undertaken initiatives in the production sector. For example, until October 2022, a total of 595 Industrial Licenses were issued to 366 companies operating in the defense sector. Additionally, the Indian government has opened up the defense industry to private sector participation to boost domestic manufacturing. There has also been a significant increase in defense exports. The government has established two Defense Industrial Corridors in Uttar Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. Furthermore, the New Delhi administration has approximately 194 defense technology startups that develop innovative technological solutions to support the country's defense activities.[7]

DefExpo 2022, which is considered the largest defense exhibition held so far, has been a significant development indicating India's defense industry as a critical sector for global-scale investments. In October 2022, India achieved a significant milestone by successfully

testing a ballistic missile fired from INS Arihant, the country's first indigenous nuclear-powered submarine. This test was seen as a crucial step in enhancing India's strategic offensive capabilities.[8] India has indeed emerged as a prominent player in nuclear developments. As the sixth country to possess nuclear-powered submarines armed with ballistic missiles, it has obtained a strategic position. India has been witnessed to increase its missile tests in this field as well. In 2022, New Delhi successfully conducted tests of Agni-V missiles, indicating its continuous efforts to enhance military capabilities and defense potential.

In summary, it can be said that the new security equation resulting from the Russia-Ukraine conflict has created an opportunity for India to innovate in the military-security sector. Many new developments, such as the reform initiatives aimed at making India a center for defense equipment and platform production, as announced by the Ministry of Defense in 2022, provide a basis for India to enhance its defense capabilities and military proficiency. Progress has been observed in various areas, ranging from increasing the defense budget to boosting production and advancing through joint exercises and new agreements and partnerships. Efforts to strengthen security ties with various countries are also evident.

However, it is important to note that these strategic advancements, which are seen as a national development and success, may also have implications in terms of regional security threat perceptions. The Russia-Ukraine conflict has created an atmosphere that intensifies the security dilemma.

[1] "India's Defence Production Exceeds \$12 Billion for the First Time", The Economic Times, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/india-says-defence-production-exceeds-12-billion-for-first-time/articleshow/100348964.cms>, (Date of Accession: 20.05.2023).

[2] "Defence Manufacturing Industry in India", Ibef, <https://www.ibef.org/industry/defence-manufacturing>, (Date of Accession: 20.05.2023).

[3] "Stats IQ: India's Military Strength", Study IQ, <https://www.studyiq.com/articles/stats-iq-indias-military-strength/>, (Date of Accession: 20.05.2023).

[4] "Defence Manufacturing...", a.g.m.

[5] "2023 India Military Strength", Global Fire Power, https://www.globalfirepower.com/country-military-strength-detail.php?country_id=india, (Date of Accession: 20.05.2023).

[6] "Military Exercises of India, Participating Counties and Location", Study IQ, <https://www.studyiq.com/articles/list-of-military-exercises-of-india/>, (Date of Accession: 20.05.2023).

[7] "Defence Manufacturing...", a.g.m.

[8] "India Enhanced Overall Military Capability in 2022", The Economic Times, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/india-enhanced-overall-military-capability-in-2022/articleshow/96660090.cms>, (Date of Accession: 20.05.2023).



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US policy on the Balkans

The main actors of the global system change in various periods. Today, the United States of America (USA), although it is in the position of hegemon power, is faced with serious tests. In particular, Russia and China stand out as actors challenging the leadership of the USA. Therefore, it is seen that Russia and China are in competition with the USA in various geographies. The Balkans is one of the regions where the said struggle takes place.

The Balkans is a geography where regional and global actors have struggled since the past, due to its geopolitical location and demographic structure. Of course, this is one of the main reasons for the instability in the Balkans.

In this context, due to the policies of Russian President Vladimir Putin, the Moscow administration is closely interested in the region in question and displays an anti-American attitude. In this context, the Kremlin is trying to in-



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crease its influence in the Balkans with the influence of historical and religious references and pan-Slavism. Because the Moscow administration sees the Balkans as a buffer zone against the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

Undoubtedly, security concerns of the USA and its European allies increased after the Russia-Ukraine War. Considering the economic cooperation in trans-Atlantic relations, it is very important for the USA, especially for Europe, to address security concerns. There is a strong concern in the European Union (EU) countries that the instability of the region will destabilize Europe as the Balkans is also Southeastern Europe.

Moreover, the USA sees the EU as a tool to maintain its influence in the region and supports the policies of the union. In this context, it is seen that the EU, which wants to break the influence of Russia on Serbia, encourages both Kosovo and Serbia on their way to membership. As a matter of fact, the US Special Representative for the Western Balkans, Gabriel Escobar, considers the negotiations between the parties as positive steps.[1] On the other hand, the United States does not just stay in diplomatic discourses; it threatens Russia by supporting Kosovo.[2]

Moreover, the USA is developing its relations with other regional states in order to break Russia's influence. In this context, the Washington administration's supply of 26 armored vehicles to North Macedonia is important in terms of deepening military cooperation.[3] In addition, the USA has revealed that it is seeking to consolidate its presence in the region by conducting an "Emergency Response" exercise with the Montenegrin Army.[4] In other words, the USA is trying to consolidate its presence in the region by using its military deterrent.

At this point, it should be noted that; It is claimed by Western academia that the level of democracy in the Balkans declined after the Russia-Ukraine War.[5] Here, it can be said that the West is trying to build a unity with the emphasis on democracy by strengthening the authoritarian criticisms towards Russia. That's why Washington puts NATO at the forefront of defending democracies. As a matter of fact, statements about the importance of Bosnia and Herzegovina's NATO membership stem from this.[6] The challenge for the United States in Bosnia and Herzegovina is the Republika Srpska and in this context, the Serbian leader Milorad Dodik. This is why Dodik's meeting with Putin was interpreted by the US Embassy in Sarajevo as an absurd and malicious attempt.[7]

In addition, the USA criticizes the Belgrade administration because of its relations with Russia. Particularly, the participation of the Head of the Serbian Security Information Agency, Alexander Vulin, in the international security-themed conference held in Moscow, drew the reaction of Washington.[8]

As can be seen, while the USA put pressure on the actors in which the Russian influence is felt; On the other hand, it develops its relations with the states close to the West and thus tries to consolidate its influence in the Balkans. In this context, the Washington administration signed a memorandum of understanding with Croatia on the fight against cybercrime.[9] At this point, it is possible to show the exercise called "Defender Europe 23", which started in Kosovo with the participation of five NATO members, as an example in the context of defense-based cooperation of the USA.

As a result, the USA, which is accepted as the leading actor of the global system, is fighting against Russia, which is challenging its hegemony, in the Balkans with the cooperation of the EU. In this context, it can be stated that the priority of the Washington administration in the Balkans is to break Russia's influence.

[1] "Ескобар: Договор помеѓу Србија и Косово може да до крајот на летото", Slobodenpecat, <https://www.slobodenpecat.mk/eskobar-dogovor-pomegju-srbija-i-kosovo-mozhen-e-do-krajot-na-letoto/>, (Date of Accession: 22.05.2023).

[2] "Косовската делегација на седницата на Парламентарното собрание на НАТО", Slobodenpecat, <https://www.slobodenpecat.mk/kosovskata-delegacija-na-sednicata-na-parlamentarnoto-sobranie-na-nato>, (Date of Accession: 22.05.2023).

[3] "Vojska Sjeverne Makedonije dobila još 26 oklopnih vozila iz SAD-a", Al Jazeera, <https://balkans.aljazeera.net/news/balkan/2023/5/23/vojska-sjeverne-makedonije-dobila-jos-26-oklopnih-vozila-iz-sad-a>, (Date of Accession: 23.05.2023).

[4] Ibid.

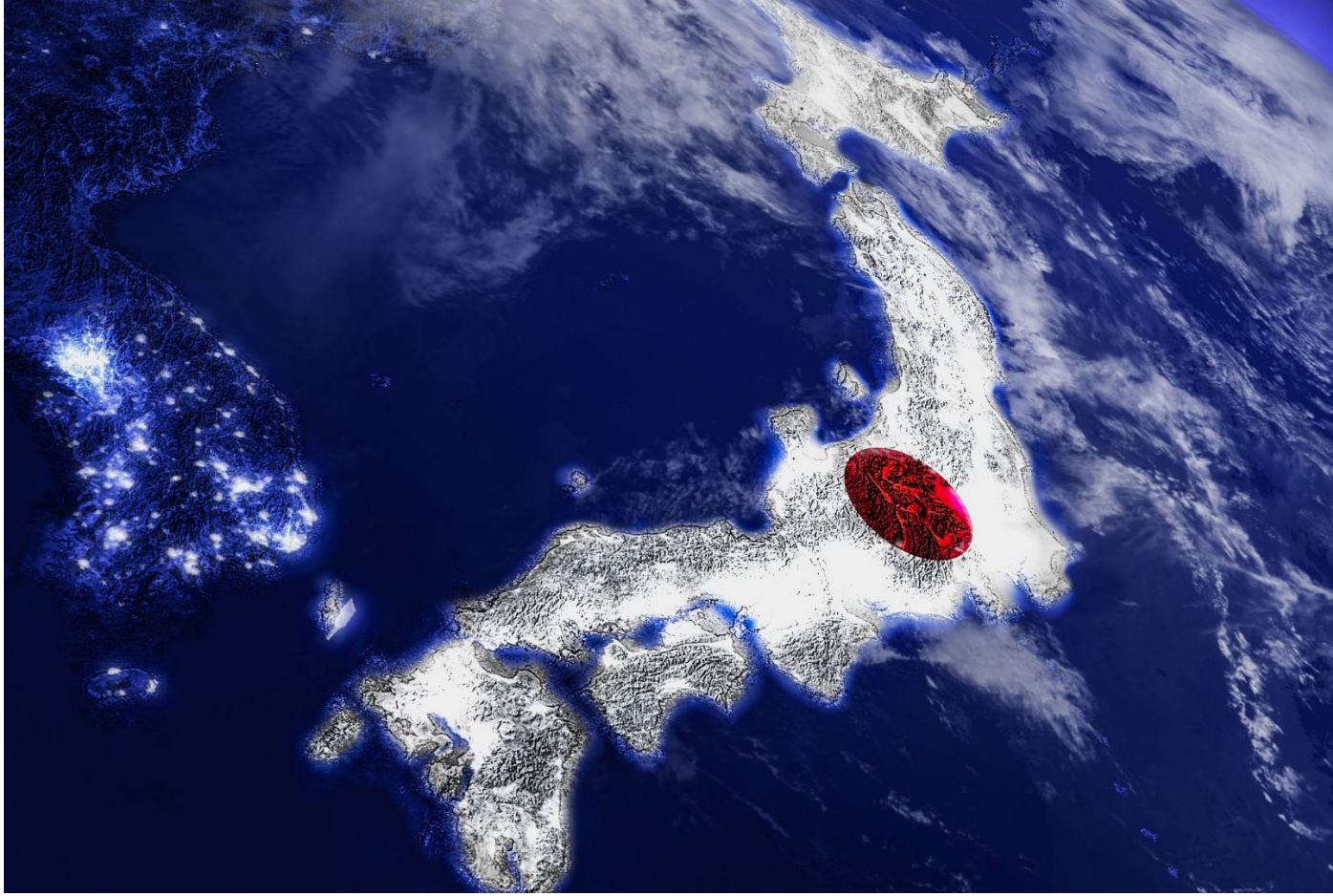
[5] "BiH najslabija, Hrvatska najbolje rangirana u izveštaju o stanju demokratije", Al Jazeera, <https://balkans.aljazeera.net/news/balkan/2023/5/24/bih-najslabija-hrvatska-najbolje-rangirana-u-izvestaju-o-stanju-demokratije>, (Date of Accession: 24.05.2023).

[6] "NATO: Nekoliko aktera potkopava progres u BiH", Al Jazeera, <https://balkans.aljazeera.net/news/balkan/2023/5/24/nato-nekoliko-aktera-potkopava-progres-u-bih>, (Date of Accession: 24.05.2023).

[7] "Američka ambasada: Prijetnje za RS dolaze od Dodika, ne od SAD-a", Al Jazeera, <https://balkans.aljazeera.net/news/balkan/2023/5/24/americka-ambasada-prijetnje-za-rs-dolaze-od-dodika-ne-od-sad-a>, (Date of Accession: 24.05.2023).

[8] "Украина и САД со критики до Србија поради посетата на Вулин на Москва", Slobodenpecat, <https://www.slobodenpecat.mk/ukraina-i-sad-so-kritiki-do-srbija-poradi-posetata-na-vulin-na-moskva/>, (Date of Accession: 25.05.2023).

[9] "Hrvatska i SAD potpisali sporazum o suzbijanju cyber kriminala", Al Jazeera, <https://balkans.aljazeera.net/news/balkan/2023/5/22/hrvatska-i-sad-potpisali-sporazum-o-suzbijanju-cyber-kriminala>, (Date of Accession:22.05.2023).



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Japan's Security Concerns in the Context of the G7 Summit

It can be argued that Japan is one of the most important actors in the Asia-Pacific region. In this context, Tokyo is a critical ally for the United States (US) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Indeed, there are many reasons for this. One of them is the West's containment policy against China. Another is Tokyo's economic power. After the US and China, Japan is the third largest economy in the world.[1]

On the other hand, Japan's geopolitical and geostrategic position makes it perceived as an important ally by the West. Moreover, Japan stands out as a country where the West is increasing its influence due to its historical problems with China and the nuclear threat posed by North Korea.

In this context, Japan's increasingly proactive foreign policy with its rising defense and military expenditures has brought Japan and the West closer. As a matter of fact, one of the most critical examples of this situation is Japan's accession to the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) as a non-permanent temporary member.[2] Bir diğeri ise G7 Zirvesi'nin 2023 yılında Japonya'nın Hiroşima kentinde düzenlenmesi.[3]

It can be said that this situation brings with it an important advantage such as Japan's ability to bring its problems and issues to the agenda of the G7 Summit. Therefore, it can be argued that Japan will bring the nuclear threat to the agenda of the G7 Summit.



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Moreover, Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's decision to take the leaders of the countries participating in the summit to the Peace Memorial Museum[4] in Hiroshima can be considered as an act with a message at this point. On the other hand, it is known that Tokyo aims to develop nuclear weapons with the support of Washington.

It can be argued that the security environment has become increasingly uncertain globally in general and in the Asia-Pacific region in particular. In this context, it can be stated that Japan is seeking a new positioning through the role it is trying to assume at the G7 Summit.

There are two other issues that need to be examined in this context. The first one is China and its rising power. This is because Beijing is likely to accelerate its plans for unification with Taiwan. It can be argued that this has increased Japan's security concerns and led it to decide to accelerate its defense moves.

Another issue worth examining is how long the US can maintain its power and influence in the Asia-Pacific. This is because the distance between the US and the UK and continental Europe is widening. In short, it can be said that Europe's consolidation under the US influence is being undermined.

As it can be understood, there is a possibility of the US becoming isolated in its Asia-Pacific policy. On the other hand, the Russia-Ukraine war is still ongoing and is not expected to end in the short term. This, in turn, creates an obstacle for Washington to channel its resources to the Asia-Pacific. As a result, it is questionable whether the US will be able to maintain its power in the region. Therefore, Japan's security concerns are also increasing.

In sum, although Japan keeps its alliance with the US at the center of its security policies, it does not consider it sufficient for a sustainable security system. It is thought that Japan will pursue a policy of "taking care of itself" in the future. Therefore, it can be predicted that Tokyo will play a more active and effective role in international relations in the near future. It can also be said that regional cooperation will increase. Although this situation creates a conjuncture beyond the control of the US, it can be said that it will be in Washington's favor in terms of building an anti-China bloc.

In conclusion, it can be argued that Japan's proactive foreign policy will continue. However, it can be stated that this situation will continue with a strategy of self-sufficiency rather than a Western-based framework.

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ANKASAM ANALYSIS

Reflections of Increasing Irregular Migration in Europe and Italy's Declaration of State of Emergency

The Italian Government declared a six-month state of emergency in April 2023 to deal with the concentration of migrants on the country's coasts. It can be said that the increase in irregular migrants in the Mediterranean is effective on the basis of the current development. In addition, the decision taken by the Roman administration shows that there has been a serious

increase in an important problem that exists throughout Europe with the year 2023. Accordingly, in 2022, irregular migration attempts have reached their highest level since 2016 in Europe. [1]

Looking at the figures obtained based on the last three months of 2023, it can be said that



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the rate of increase in irregular migration attempts in 2022 continues. In this sense, in the first three months of 2023, the number of irregular border crossings reported by national authorities increased by 26% compared to the same period of the previous year and reached 54.000.[2]

Italy last took a similar decision in 2011 after migrants from Tunisia overwhelmed authorities on the Lampedusa Island.[3] Therefore, this state of emergency decision in 2023 is of great importance. Because it can be said that the new state of emergency decision is the first drastic step taken a long time after the declaration of the humanitarian emergency in 2011. In this context, the development in question is a response to the intense irregular migration initiatives, which are also revealed by the statistics of 2022 and 2023. In addition to all these, the decision of the Italian Government on the state of emergency is an example that highlights the developments in Europe on the subject.

As it is known, Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni and her cabinet pursue a right-populist policy. In this respect, the government's state of emergency decision regarding increasing irregular migration is understandable. However, when looking at Europe in general, it is seen that similar moves have been made in some other European countries except Italy. For example, the Lithuanian Parliament passed a law on April 25, 2023, legalizing the push back of irregular migrants at the border under the state-level extreme situation regime or state of emergency.[4]

This decision taken in Lithuania is remarkable, especially considering the domestic political structure. Because Lithuania is a country where far-right populist parties have not yet gained enough power to enter the Parliament. However, the decision made revealed that other European countries can also follow policies similar to Italy against irregular migration.

In addition, the state of emergency decision issued by Italy is a proof that states can resort to drastic measures on irregular migration, apart from the decisions taken by the European Union (EU). In this context, it is known that there are criticisms against the union on the grounds of inadequacy in EU policies. The humanitarian crisis due to irregular migration attempts in 2023 has made this situation even more visible. The data published by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) reveal that the first three months of 2023 are the deadliest period since 2017 for migrants trying to cross the Mediterranean Sea, confirming this.[5] Moreover, after this report, harsh criticisms of the EU's immigration

policy came from within the European Parliament. This can be interpreted as a harbinger of the deepening of the migration crisis in Europe.

As a result, the increase in the rate of irregular migration initiatives that increased in 2022 in the first quarter of 2023 causes European countries to harden their policies regarding the problem. The state of emergency decision taken by the Italian Government is an important example in this regard. However, some current developments show that the harsh measures taken against irregular migration are not limited to Italy. The fact that the increase in irregular migration cannot be brought under control seems to leave its mark on European politics. This, in turn, may lead to increased criticism of the EU's immigration policy and new demands, especially from Mediterranean countries.

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The Future of Energy Cooperation in Russia-Pakistan Relations

The energy crisis resulting from the Russia-Ukraine war has led to concerns about source diversification in European countries. In response, Russia has sought to compensate for the severed ties with Europe by developing collaborations with new actors. In this regard, the Moscow administration has started to enhance cooperation with Asian countries in order to export its energy resources. Moscow has also revised its Afghanistan and Pakistan policies within this framework and has entered into a petroleum agreement with the Islamabad government.

It is expected that discounted Russian crude oil will reach Pakistan in the first week of June 2023. The vessel, which is stated to reach the Port of Karachi in 10 days, has been observed to have arrived at the Port of Oman. It is known that this initial shipment carried 750,000 barrels (100,000 tons) of Russian crude oil. It is also known that Pakistan Refinery

Limited (PRL) will refine all the Ural crude oil imported from Russia by blending it with crude oil imported from the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Saudi Aramco.[1]

In January 2023, a high-level Russian delegation consisting of officials visited Pakistan to discuss oil and gas supply. During the meeting, which involved discussions between Energy Ministers, the focus was on providing discounted petroleum and gas and exploring ways to enhance economic and trade relations. The aim was to foster the development of economic and commercial ties between the two countries.[2] Indeed, a similar visit took place in December 2022. The pursuit of enhancing cooperation through mutual visits demonstrates the significance both parties attach to the issue of energy supply.



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In early 2023, Pakistani Foreign Minister Bilawal Butto Zardari also visited Russia, emphasizing energy cooperation. It is consistently emphasized on various platforms that the strengthening of commercial and economic ties between the two countries is of great importance. Following Zardari's visit, Maria Zakharova, the spokesperson for the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, stated that Russian and Pakistani companies were actively working to resolve "outstanding issues" related to the supply of Russian energy resources to Pakistan.[3] It is evident that there is a joint effort to overcome the issues of contention. However, Moscow has been facing challenges in the payment system due to its request for arrangements in national currencies or currencies of third countries that are protected from sanction risks. This aspect was also emphasized in Zaharova's statement.[4] Consultations are being conducted to find a solution. In fact, a senior official from the Pakistan Ministry of Energy has indicated that the Chinese currency could be used for payments. In the statement, the following words were used:[5]

"Pakistan will most likely pay for the price of crude oil in China's currency. The yuan and the People's Bank of China could play a role in the transactions."

In the face of rising oil prices, Pakistan is taking advantage of the opportunity presented by Russia to meet its energy needs. Pakistani State Minister for Petroleum, Musadik Malik, has stated that Pakistan aims to import 35% of its total crude oil requirements from Russia.[6] In this context, Islamabad is willing to strengthen energy cooperation, enhance energy trade, and expand energy infrastructure investments. It can be said that Russia shares the same sentiments and objectives in this regard.

Moscow is eager to develop energy trade with Pakistan and Afghanistan as it redirects its energy trade towards Asia. Additionally, agreements are being made with India in this regard. In this context, it can be stated that Moscow is making efforts to establish a partnership in South Asia. It is likely that South Asia will become a major energy consumer in the coming years, and Russia may seek to develop its relations with the countries in the region based on this anticipation. At this point, the relationships and disputes among the regional countries become important factors to consider.

Furthermore, Russia may seek to expand the "Comprehensive Energy Cooperation Plan" it has agreed upon with Pakistan to include other actors in South Asia. Additionally, partnerships are being developed between Pakistan and Russia under the "Comprehensive Gas Infrastructure Plan." The two governments have a consensus on creating a comprehensive infrastructure for sus-

tainable gas infrastructure development and the future of the Pakistan Stream Gas Pipeline Project.[7]

The "Comprehensive Energy Cooperation Plan" aims to strengthen cooperation in various development sectors, including energy, communication, and transportation. The first batch of oil shipments, expected to take place soon, is also part of this plan. Considering Russia's energy cooperation with Afghanistan and India, there is a possibility of engaging in mechanisms for joint action in infrastructure development and comprehensive energy cooperation. However, Pakistan is more inclined towards a co-operation process involving Central Asian countries rather than India.

The statement made by Malik on May 26, 2023, aligns with this direction. Malik stated that Pakistan plans to sign a "comprehensive" energy security agreement with Central Asian countries and Russia by the end of 2023. He also mentioned that Pakistan intends to establish an energy corridor with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries.[8]

In conclusion, regarding Pakistan-Russia energy cooperation, it can be understood that the Moscow administration favors a collaboration mechanism that includes Afghanistan and India, while Pakistan is more inclined to work together with Central Asian countries and the GCC. Through energy dialogues with Central Asia, Russia, and Gulf countries, the energy needs can be met while simultaneously strengthening mutual connections. It can be anticipated that energy will continue to be a driving force in Russia-Pakistan relations in the future.

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[3] <https://peoplesdispatch.org/2023/01/30/russia-gas-union/>, (Date of Accession: 29.05.2023).

[4] Ibid.

[5] "Pakistan to Receive First Batch of Russian Crude Oil in June", Mettis Global, <https://mettisglobal.news/pakistan-to-receive-first-batch-of-russian-crude-oil-in-june/>, (Date of Accession: 29.05.2023).



ANKASAM ANALYSIS

The Role of INSTC in India's Central Asian Strategy

Within the scope of the changing and developing balances of Eurasia, different corridor projects are desired to be implemented. In particular, rising production and power centers play a key role in the realization of these corridor projects in order to reach the West. For example, China has been the main pioneer of this by declaring the Belt and Road Initiative in

2013. Today, it takes the initiative to realize various projects in various countries of the world in relation to the mentioned initiative.

The International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) is a 7,200 km long corridor project with both sea and land dimensions in which India, Iran and Russia are active. Although India is



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a rising power center, its main target can reach Russia and Europe. Since Russia is an energy hub and Europe is a market, the project in question gains great importance. Dating back to 2002, INSTC's route starts from Mumbai, India, through the Arabian Sea to Iran, and then to Russia and Europe via the Caspian Region, covering the Caucasus and Central Asia.[1]

Although the foundations of the project in question went back to the early 2000s, serious steps were not taken in the development of the project for a long time. However, with the start of the Russia-Ukraine War, the states began to give importance to the corridor in question. In fact, the first transfer of goods between states through INSTC was carried out in June-July 2022. At this point, Russia aims to export energy to India at a lower cost and reach the Indian market. Thus, it will be easier for the West to overcome the sanctions imposed.[2] While Iran transforms its geopolitical position to the main line on the north-south route; it will both gain economic gain and weaken the sanctions imposed by the West.

It can be said that India has more comprehensive aims. First of all, New Delhi will be able to reach Russian energy resources in a short time with less cost. It will also be able to enter the Russian market, which has weakened due to the sanctions imposed by the West. More importantly, it will be able to reach Europe and turn into a production center in the eyes of the West.

However, it is known that there is competition between India and China on various issues. At this stage, it can be said that New Delhi will highlight INSTC as an alternative to the Belt and Road Initiative. In addition, the New Delhi administration, which is trying to increase its economic capacity through INSTC, aims to become an effective actor like China with the relations it has established in the context of the corridor.

One of the geographies that India wants to influence is Central Asia. Because the region has important underground riches. It also has a critical geopolitical importance as it is located in the heart of Asia. New Delhi, which wants to take action in the face of Beijing's increasing activities and strengthening relations in the region, will use INSTC as a tool. In this process, India is not only in Central Asia; It will also be an active actor in Afghanistan, which Pakistan sees as an important geography.

As it is known, there are disagreements between India and Pakistan on various issues, as well as with China. New Delhi thinks that it wants to be surrounded by the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which is intended to be implemented between Islamabad and Beijing. At this point, India aims to both break the containment and respond to it by encircling it by reaching out to Afghanistan and Central Asia via INSTC. It is possible to read the normalization process between India and the Taliban in the last year from this perspective.

In summary, INSTC's interest in Central Asia is primarily related to its location on the route used to reach Russia. Because INSTC, which passes over the Caspian Region, is divided into three branches in this geography. In addition to the route along the South Caucasus and the Caspian Sea, there is also a route between Iran, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan and Russia. In addition, in June-July 2022, the first goods transfer between India and Russia, namely the Russia-South Asia connection, was carried out through Central Asia.[3]

Due to the situation in question, various steps are being taken to implement INSTC today. However, it should be noted that; INSTC is not expected to be limited to these routes. Because it is thought that a geographical link should be established in order to strengthen the relations between India and Central Asia and increase the trade volume. Here, it can be said that the New Delhi administration will follow a strategy similar to Beijing's policies. In this context, various infrastructure projects will be tried to be realized in the process of realizing the corridor. Afterwards, it is likely that the relations with the party countries will deepen and expand in a multidimensional way, from energy to mining and agriculture to technology. For example, India is trying to show that it will become an important actor and partner in Central Asia by giving the message that it is about to finish a project in Tajikistan.[4]

As a result, the changing power centers have brought with them a transforming world system. In addition to the West, new centers of power are emerging in Asia. One of the last examples of this is INSTC and hence India. The New Delhi administration wants to deepen its relations with different countries through various projects related to INSTC by adopting a roadmap similar to Beijing's strategy in the Belt and Road Initiative. Central Asia can be seen as the region where the first test will be given for India. In this context, India can add a global vision to INSTC if it gains economic and geopolitical gains in its relations with Central Asian states.

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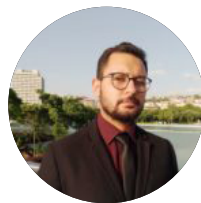
Australia's New Strategic Defense Document and Relations with China

The Asia-Pacific Region has become the main focus of the global power struggle in the 21st century as the area where pole-based competition takes place the most in the world. Both the shift of trade centers to the region due to economic development and the increase in the level of technological development enabled the production of critical technological products easily in the region. On the other hand, the fact that the region has political fault lines and the intensification of global competition in the said geography adversely affects the political stability and thus the commercial continuity of the region.

While the competition between China, the largest economic power in the region and the world, and the United States of America (USA), which is

the global hegemon, in Asia-Pacific, continues through international platforms such as RCEP and APEC; On the other hand, it takes place in the form of a one-on-one struggle and the parties pushing each other's red lines. Although these coercions are usually realized through the steps taken by the parties themselves, such as the US's exit from Tik Tok, sometimes the situations that occur through the allied states indirectly strengthen the hands of the parties.

The most up-to-date of such incidents that emerged through the Allied states is the Australian Government's strategic defense document published on 24 April 2023. While the document published by the Canberra administration reveals Australia's defense paradigm in many ways; It is a



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very important document in terms of clarifying the policy towards China. The Chinese name is used eight times in the document and the influence of the Beijing administration in the region is mentioned. In the section titled "Working with Our Partners in the Region" signed by Australian Defense Minister Richard Marles, it is emphasized that it is in the interests of both the two states and the region that China and Australia have stable relations. In addition, partnerships will be developed in every field where cooperation can be made in Canberra's relations with Beijing; but it has been stated that it is not possible to agree on the areas where there is no disagreement.[1]

Actually, this point of view is not new; it was taken part in many statements of the Albanese Government. For example, in a speech about relations with China at Western Sydney University on 13 December 2022, Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong made statements in this direction.[2] Another example is that on December 19, 2022, Wong used almost the same sentences in a statement she gave on the anniversary of China and Australia's diplomatic relations.[3]

In the fourth and fifth articles of the first part of the document, titled "Current Strategic Conditions", China and in this context the rivalry on the Washington-Beijing line are mentioned again. In the fourth article, it is emphasized that the USA is no longer the sole leader of the Asia-Pacific and that the USA-China rivalry is the defining feature of the region and the era. In addition, it was underlined that great power competition and potential conflicts in the region do not coincide with the interests of Canberra.[4]

When it comes to the fifth article, it is claimed that China has been in a military growth that is far from transparency and does not provide assurance, despite the economic development that many countries in the region, including Australia, have benefited from since the Second World War. In addition, it was pointed out that China's increasing initiatives in the South China Sea had a direct impact on Australia's national interests, and it was argued that China entered into strategic competition over Australia's close neighbors.[5]

On the other hand, various articles against Australia's defense document were published in the Chinese state media and Beijing's approach to this document was revealed. For example, one day after the strategic defense document was published; In other words, an article was published in the Global Times on March 25, 2023. The article in question first stated that there was a consensus with Australia that the USA was not the only leader in the region, and drew attention to the fact that the document continued

the "Chinese threat" theory by making a false assessment.[6] In addition, it was stated in the article that the document in question was a deviation from the logic of the Dibb Report published in 1986, which recommended that Australia concentrate its defense on possible attack points. In addition, the influence of the USA was mentioned by giving the following statements used by Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese at the time the document was published:[7]

"Instead of waiting for the future to shape us, Australia will build its strong defense by working to shape the future."

The article states that China has never seen Australia as a threat; On the contrary, he stated that bilateral cooperation is important not only for economic development, but also for regional peace, stability and prosperity.

To summarize briefly, in the strategic defense document of Australia published on April 24, 2023, the approach of the Albanese administration on Australian defense, which took office in 2022, was revealed. In this context, it is surprising that China is mentioned in this way in the document at a time when relations with Beijing have gained a positive atmosphere. However, it is clear that with this document, it is clear that Australia's concerns about China have not completely disappeared. Although war and conflict possibilities come to mind, this document is insufficient to claim that a war will break out between the parties. As a matter of fact, the state of war is, first of all, a phenomenon related to economic resilience and economic power. In this context, the fact that China is Australia's largest trading partner is important for regional security. On the other hand, it can be predicted that the document will strengthen the hand of the USA in terms of the alliances it tries to revive in the region.

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[2] "Co-Operate Where We Can, Disagree Where We Must: Penny Wong Outlines Plans on China Relations", SBS News, www.sbs.com.au/news/article/penny-wong-outlines-china-relations-australia-to-look-for-co-operation-while-protecting-national-interests/paqlt69b, (Date of Accession: 13.12.2022).

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Is it Possible for France to Join Alliances in the Indo-Pacific?

On February 8, 2023, the French Navy's amphibious assault ship "Dixmude" and frigate "La Fayette" set sail to engage in joint exercises with India, Singapore, Australia, and other allies in the Indo-Pacific region.[1] In recent years, France has actively participated in exercises in the Indo-Pacific, conducting joint exercises with the United States, India, Malaysia, Indonesia, and other regional powers.

In this new mission, the two French ships will depart from the port of Toulon and navigate through the Mediterranean Sea, Red Sea, and Indian Ocean, before reaching the Pacific Ocean and returning to France through the Panama Canal, extending into the Atlantic. The ships will be on duty for a total of 155 days and will visit 12 ports.[2] It is stated that naval vessels from the United Kingdom, Japan, and the



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United States will also participate in some of these exercises.[3] According to experts, France aims to jointly contain China's increasing influence in the Pacific with its allies in the Indo-Pacific.[4]

As the center of global competition shifts from the West towards the Pacific, the Paris administration is adapting to this conjunctural change. Currently, France possesses the largest military force among European countries in the Indo-Pacific region. This is primarily due to France's overseas territories in the Pacific. For instance, Mayotte, La Réunion, New Caledonia, and French Polynesia are home to 1.6 million French citizens. France maintains 7,000 military personnel, 13 ships, 11 fighter aircraft, and 7 military bases to protect these territories.[5] In short, France is deeply integrated into the Indo-Pacific region. Additionally, France is the largest arms exporter to Indo-Pacific countries, with India and Australia being the biggest buyers.[6] However, it can be said that Australia's strategic importance to France has diminished after signing the AUKUS Agreement with the United States and the United Kingdom.

Compared to other allies, France finds it relatively easier to engage with the Indo-Pacific region. The United States, United Kingdom, India, and Japan do not have the same level of connections with the region. For example, apart from Guam, the United States does not have its own territory in the Pacific. Therefore, it needs to collaborate with regional states as part of its strategy to encircle China. Similarly, the United Kingdom does not have a permanent overseas fleet in the region. In the past five years, the British government has been trying to increase its naval presence in Singapore. Even India does not have a permanent fleet in the Pacific. However, France has a dedicated command and an overseas fleet responsible for the region. In summary, Paris is a force that can be as active in the region as Washington.

To become a military power in the Indo-Pacific, having overseas naval presence and aircraft carriers would provide a strategic advantage. In this context, it is known that India has two aircraft carriers, China has three, France has one, and Russia has one. Russia's aircraft carrier is deployed in the Northern Fleet. The United Kingdom has two aircraft carriers, while Germany does not have any. Both countries (UK and Germany) are planning to establish a permanent fleet in the Pacific. All these developments indicate that European powers are preparing for a potential conflict in the Pacific. France, on the other hand, plans to deploy the Charles de Gaulle Aircraft Carrier Strike Group in the Pacific from 2025 onwards.[7]

In August 2021, with the publication of its Indo-Pacific Strategy, the Paris administration began gradually transforming its historical presence in the region into strategic interests. In recent years, France has been striving to establish its own hegemony in the Indo-Pacific while collaborating with the United States towards the goal of a "Free and Open Indo-Pacific." However, it differs from the United States in its strategy towards China. Due to this difference in views, the United States and the United Kingdom have turned to defense cooperation with Australia, excluding France from their plans in the Indo-Pacific.

Another actor who thinks like France is India. Both France and India can be described as actors that do not follow the US strategy for China in terms of the seas. Catherine Colonna, French Minister of Europe and Foreign Affairs, said: [8]

"We fundamentally share the same thinking and concerns with India. We are aware of the role played by China and want to ensure there is no imbalance in the Indo-Pacific region."

France's Ambassador to India, Emmanuel Lenain, also stated, "India occupies a central position in our Indo-Pacific strategy".[9] Referring to the AUKUS Agreement, the French diplomat emphasized that defense blocs would not be useful in resolving issues in the Indo-Pacific. [10]

France advocates for peaceful activities in the Indo-Pacific region. Its primary objective is to maintain a rules-based regional order and seeks further cooperation with regional actors who refrain from bloc politics. The formation of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD) is based on this mindset. Member states engage in joint exercises, port visits, and activities related to navigation and flight safety in the Indo-Pacific. However, with China increasing its regional claims, there is a discussion about transforming regional security

platforms into defense alliances. In this context, the inclusion of India and Japan in AUKUS or the expansion of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) towards the Pacific are being debated.

Japan is planning to sign a Mutual Access Agreement with the Philippines, following the United Kingdom, in order to enhance its regional presence in the event of a potential conflict. Additionally, Japan has started to accelerate its military cooperation with France in the seas. Captain Emmanuel Mocard of the French Navy vessel “Dixmude,” deployed to the region for recent missions, expressed satisfaction in conducting joint exercises with Japan and stated that they are strengthening their partnership with Tokyo.[11]

Fransa advocates for the development of formations like the QUAD and refraining from aggressive pacts like AUKUS. However, it is significant that France is turning towards a defense partnership with Japan, which has been pursuing a proactive policy and thus drawing the ire of China. Similarly, France is also strengthening defense ties with India, which has recently entered into an open confrontation with China.

It appears that the number of actors exhibiting a moderate stance in the Pacific is decreasing. Until now, India, France, and other Southeast Asian countries that have pursued a more moderate security policy have begun to show interest in defense alliances led by the United States. The recent example of this is seen in the Philippines and France. These two countries are increasing their defense cooperation with Japan. As a result, France, through its partnership with Japan, is providing further support to the strategy of encircling China by the United States and the United Kingdom.

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ANKASAM ANALYSIS

Azerbaijan-Uzbekistan Rap-prochement and the Search for Cooperation in the Caspian

It is seen that Caspian Sea-based projects are more important than ever after the Russia-Ukraine War that started on February 24, 2022. This has increased the importance of the Middle Corridor, which is the joint project of the Turkish World, and accordingly the Southern Gas Corridor.

It can be stated that there are two reasons for this situation. The first one is the blockage of the Northern Corridor after the war. Therefore, the Central Corridor came to the fore in the context of energy and transit transportation. The Central Corridor has come to the fore as the lowest-cost, shortest and most stable route for China, the world's manufacturing workshop,



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and the Central Asian states, which are home to rich energy resources, to open up to Europe; in other words, to maintain the East-West interaction. In particular, the relative stability in the South Caucasus following the Second Karabakh War has played a decisive role in bringing the China-Central Asia-Caspian Sea-South Caucasus-Europe connection to the fore.

As a matter of fact, it is known that the European Union (EU), which wants to overcome the energy crisis following the Russia-Ukraine War, turned to the search for alternative suppliers and signed an agreement with Azerbaijan in July 2022. However, it is obvious that the transportation of Azerbaijani gas through the Southern Gas Corridor will not be sufficient to meet the energy needs of EU countries. Therefore, on the one hand, EU countries are demanding an increase in the volume of natural gas transported through the Southern Gas Corridor; on the other hand, the Baku government not only wants to increase its own exports, but also wants to be an intermediary for countries such as Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan to export energy to Europe through the Caucasus. Moreover, as mentioned above, the issue is not limited to energy but also has a logistical dimension. Undoubtedly, this means that Azerbaijan's geostrategic and geoeconomic importance will further increase.

In this context, it can be said that the Baku administration focuses on Caspian-centered cooperation processes and pays attention to developing win-win relations with Central Asian states based on mutual respect and common interest. As a matter of fact, the first outcome of this process was the meeting of Magzum Mirzagaliyev, Chairman of Kazakhstan's KazMunayGas, and Rovshan Najaf, Chairman of Azerbaijan's energy giant SOCAR, in Baku on August 18, 2022 to discuss Caspian-based infrastructure projects, and the subsequent mutual visits of President of Kazakhstan Mr. Kassym Jomart Tokayev and President of Azerbaijan Mr. Ilham Aliyev accelerated the efforts in this direction.

At this point, it is seen that similar efforts are being made on the Baku-Tashkent line. Because on May 18, 2023, a delegation from Uzbekistan-based Uzbekneftegas met with the Azerbaijani delegation headed by SOCAR President Najaf in Baku. During this meeting, the parties discussed joint ventures. This can be interpreted as an extremely important development as it points to the possibility of including Uzbekistan as well as Kazakhstan in Caspian-based energy projects. This is because issues related to cooperation opportunities, including the joint development of natural gas fields in Azerbaijan with Uzbekistan, were discussed and it was decided to develop partnerships between the parties.^[1]

As expected, Uzbek gas is expected to be transported to Azerbaijan via Kazakhstan. This is because Uzbekistan is not among the littoral states of the Caspian Sea. Therefore, the search for cooperation on the Baku-Tashkent line cannot be read independently from the processes on the Baku-Astana line.

On the other hand, the search for cooperation between Baku and Tashkent is not limited to energy. According to reports in the Uzbek press on May 19, 2023, the Tashkent administration is planning to build an ultramodern cargo terminal at the Baku Port. This indicates that one dimension of the relations between the parties consists of developing relations in the context of logistics. In this framework, Uzbekistan is expected to develop its annual exports in line with its target of 1.5 million tons, and the Kazakhstan-Caspian Sea-Azerbaijan connection is expected to play a critical role in this development.^[2] This is undoubtedly a harbinger of an increase in the capacity and potential of the Middle Corridor.

In addition, it is possible that Turkmen gas will also be included in Caspian-based projects. In particular, the settlement of the "Serdar and Kepez" oil field dispute between Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan in January 2021, which had been in dispute for many years, and the renaming of the field in question as "Friendship" strengthened the cooperation opportunities on the Baku-Ashkhabad line. In this framework, it is possible to state that the process initiated by Azerbaijan with Kazakhstan and continued with Uzbekistan in parallel with the increasing energy needs of EU countries is pregnant with new developments, including Turkmenistan.

As a result, the Russia-Ukraine war has increased the importance of Caspian-based projects both in terms of transit transportation and energy crisis. As a reflection of this, the EU signed an agreement with Azerbaijan. However, in order to meet the needs of the union states, other countries in the Caspian region should also be involved in these initiatives. Recent developments in the export of Uzbek gas and logistics through Azerbaijan show that there is a strong will in this direction. Therefore, it can be predicted that developments involving Turkmenistan will take place in the future.

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ANKASAM ANALYSIS

New Zealand's Place in China-US Competition

The political framework of Asia-Pacific is shaped by poles and alliances. As a matter of fact, the presence of states such as China and North Korea in the region draws the attention of the United States (USA) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) to the region, especially within the scope of the global influence struggle with Beijing.

In this context, it can be argued that the global rivalry between the USA and China has many

geopolitical, geostrategic, geoeconomic, military and geographical dimensions. However, Washington is trying to use the advantages of its political experience in its global power struggle with Beijing. The most obvious example of this is the USA's attempt to retry the containment policy implemented against the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) during the Cold War. Because the USA wants to implement the said policy against China within the framework of today's competition.



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The said containment policy has also added a regional framework to the aforementioned rivalry between Washington and Beijing. For this reason, it can be said that one of the most important pillars of the global competition between the two actors is the regional struggle over Asia-Pacific. In this context, the USA carries out a geopolitical competition with China over the region in question and tries to implement a containment strategy against China through alliances, cooperation and exercises.

At this point, it can be said that the actors with which the USA has developed regional cooperation are Australia, South Korea, Japan, New Zealand, Vietnam, Indonesia and the Philippines. At the same time, there are alliances in the region such as ANZUS[1], which was implemented with the cooperation of the USA, New Zealand and Australia, the AUKUS Pact[2] signed in partnership with Australia, the USA and the United Kingdom, and the Quadruple Security Dialogue (QUAD)[3] formed by the cooperation of Australia, India, USA and Japan.

In this political conjuncture, it can be argued that New Zealand is an important actor in the containment policy that the USA and NATO are trying to implement against China. Because, as mentioned above, New Zealand is a member of ANZUS, which is a regional agreement with the USA and Australia[4]. ANZUS was signed between these three states in 1951. The agreement in question is very important in terms of expressing Wellington's perspective, place and side in the Asia-Pacific Region in a concrete way. This situation clearly makes New Zealand a party in the regional geopolitical framework. As a matter of fact, there is a clause in this agreement stating that the use of harsh force and attack on any state that has signed the agreement will be perceived by other states as a threat to their own peace and security[5].

In this context, it can be clearly said that New Zealand is on the side of the USA and NATO, and therefore the West, in the Asia-Pacific Region. Moreover, current developments also reveal the situation in question. For example, one day before the meeting between Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and New Zealand Prime Minister Chris Hipkins on April 22, 2023, Albanese announced its rapid citizenship follow-up plan for New Zealanders living in Australia. Under this plan, New Zealanders who have lived in Australia for four years or more, or who have moved to the country since 2001, will be able to apply for citizenship from 1 July 2023[6]. As a matter of fact, following the introduction of a special category visa that restricts New Zealanders' access to certain health and welfare support in 2001, these changes and the softening of the rules show that New Zealand has developed a positive dialogue with Australia, one of the most important allies

of the West in Asia-Pacific. Because of these reasons, it can be said that the Wellington-Canberra convergence means the New Zealand-West convergence.

In this context, it is worth mentioning that New Zealand is included in the Commonwealth of Nations along with Australia. Because King III. On the occasion of Charles' coronation, British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak met with Albanese and Hipkins in London and announced that a new trade agreement would be signed between these three states on May 31, 2023. In his statement on May 4, 2023, Sunak said[7]:

"The entry into force of our new trade agreement marks a new chapter in the great friendship between the UK and New Zealand. This agreement will unlock new opportunities for businesses and investors in New Zealand and the UK, accelerate growth, increase employment and, most importantly, build a more prosperous future for the next generation."

According to the agreement in question, more than 99 percent of exports from Canberra and Wellington to London will be exempt from tax[8]. This confirms New Zealand's integration into the Western World and that it is one of the West's important allies in the Asia-Pacific.

As a result, it can be said that New Zealand has an important place in the alliances that the USA and the West are trying to establish in the Asia-Pacific, in the cooperation that they are trying to implement, and in their aims at the point of containment of China. As a matter of fact, as the regional effects of the West-Chinese rivalry increase, it can be predicted that the West-Wellington rapprochement will increase as well.

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7 June 2023

ANKASAM President Prof. Dr. Mehmet Seyfettin Erol evaluated the current developments in foreign policy in Diyanet TV News Analysis program.

7 June 2023

Prof. Dr. Mehmet Seyfettin EROL, President of Ankara Center for Crisis and Political Studies (ANKASAM), evaluated the 2nd Central Asia-EU Summit for Yangi O'zbekiston, one of the leading newspaper of Uzbekistan.

7 June 2023

ANKASAM Foreign Policy Expert Dr. Doğan Başaran commented on the South Caucasus-centered normalization processes and Turkey's constructive role in this process for A Haber.

7 June 2023

ANKASAM Foreign Policy Expert Dr. Doğan Başaran's evaluations on Turkish foreign policy were published in A Haber.



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

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CRISIS AND POLITICAL STUDIES VOLUME VII, ISSUE I

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