

ASIAN SUMMITS COINCIDENTALLY HELD IN KAZAKHSTAN

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On October 14, the annual summit of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) led by Russia was held in Astana, the capital of Kazakhstan, at a particular moment created by the war in Ukraine. It is a structure that tries to reconstitute the Soviet Union, put in place by Putin more than a decade ago. In addition to Russia and Kazakhstan, it is made up of Azerbaijan, Armenia, Belarus, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Putin stated that peace can be achieved, although he did not give details in this regard. Some of the CIS countries, such as Belarus, are acting as military allies of Moscow in the Ukraine conflict. It should be noted that, parallel to this summit, almost 10,000 men from the Russian Armed Forces were deployed in Belarus, in a binational military operation between the 2 countries, 90 kilometers from Kyiv, posing the threat of a Russian-Belarusian attack from the north. Ukraine ceased to participate in this organization for almost a decade. Moldova is part, but decided this year not to attend. The Russian President thanked the attending countries for their efforts to bring their international trade to their national currencies. An agreement for the fight against terrorism and extremism was signed for the period 2023-2025. Also one to promote the spread of the Russian language. Both Armenia and Azerbaijan, today confronted by the Nagorno-Karabakh war, participated in the meeting, and Putin took the opportunity to reply to French President Emmanuel Macron, who recently accused him of interfering between the two countries.

In the same city and in parallel, the summit of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Measures in Asia (CICA) was held, which aspires to become an international actor that represents the continent. This is the 30th summit of this organization, created almost immediately after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. To some extent, it looks like a parallel structure to that of the Shanghai Group. This organization, whose annual summit was held in September and in the Kazakh capital itself, is made up of China, Russia, India, Mongolia, Pakistan and Iran, all also members of the CICA, as well as Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan. However, they are part of the CICA

without belonging to the Shanghai Group or the CEI, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand and Iraq. Of the Gulf monarchies, the CICA includes Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait and Bahrain. But it is also made up, curiously enough, by Israel (an ally of the United States in the Near East), Palestine and Jordan. Even more striking is the participation of South Korea, a country that houses a US military base on its own territory, with tens of thousands of men, and that of Egypt, despite belonging to Africa. Turkey also integrates it, in another example of its effective diplomatic versatility. Although Putin did not make great diplomatic progress at this summit, his meeting with Erdogan to discuss the possibilities of peace negotiations with Ukraine was a concrete achievement for the Russian leader.

The future of the CICA was under discussion, although without reaching any concrete resolution, but highlighting a fledging "Asian" feeling. In its beginnings, this organization was conceived as an attempt to create an alternative to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), which was created by the European Union and sought to expand to the former Soviet republics, incorporating the three Baltic republics, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan. Yeltsin's Russia was also part of it. In the past decade, there was a certain push from the latter to transform the CICA into a kind of "G20 of Asia". But at this moment, the situation created by the war in Ukraine has begun to raise the possibility of its becoming a national structure that competes with the United Nations, if what Zelensky called for at the beginning of October materializes: that Russia should be deprived of the right to veto in the UN Security Council. An alternative difficult to implement but still a threat to Putin.

The president of Kazakhstan, Kasim-Yomart Tokaev, aspires to become a regional leader of Central Asia, who carries out a diplomatic action of balance between Beijing and Moscow. He came to power in 2019, replacing Nursultan Nazarbayev, a Soviet-era hierarch who became president in 1990 and held power for three decades, resigning under pressure from street protests. It should be noted that, in 1992, Nazarbayev was a strong promoter for the creation of the CICA. Tokaev has had a diplomatic success as Astana hosts three relevant summits for Asia this year: the Shanghai Group in September and the CEI and CICA in October. On November 20, the Kazakh President faces presidential

elections, whose victory would begin to project him as the new leader of the country. Tokaev stressed that they are articulated with the CICA, the CSTO - the "Russian NATO" made up of five former Soviet republics together with Moscow - the Eurasian Union and Turkmenistan and Belarus. Regarding Afghanistan, Putin demanded that the United States release the country's reserves, which are seized from US entities. Uzbek President Mirziyoyev proposed the formation of an international negotiating table for the Afghan problem. For his part, the Belarusian President, Moscow's staunchest ally, warned of the risk of a third world war.

In conclusion: the summit of the Commonwealth of Independent States was constituted in an effort by Putin to show the support he maintains in the related former Soviet republics. The Conference on Interaction and Confidence Measures in Asia (CICA) showed the attempt to generate, from an organization of 28 countries, a new expression of Asian power; but this initiative is juxtaposed with the Shanghai Group, meeting a month earlier in the same Kazakh capital, and also made up of China, India, Russia and Pakistan. Finally, with these three summits that took place in the capital of Kazakhstan, its President is trying to transform himself into a regional leader of Central Asia.