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CeMiSS Quarterly is a review supervised by CeMiSS director, Major General Nicola Gelao. It provides a forum to promote the knowledge and understanding of international security affairs, military strategy and other topics of significant interest.
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QUARTERLY

South Eastern Europe

The awkward relations between South Eastern Europe and Eastern Mediterranean: Turkey's role, energy issues and jihadism

Paolo Quercia

Since few years, the "unity" of a complex and differentiated region such as South Eastern Europe has been characterised by many different and contradictory developments that have put in question the fragile Euro-Atlantic integration strategy that had inspired most of the cohesion efforts among the countries of the region. The most striking development occurred in the region has been the geopolitical re-configuration of Turkey into an instable post Arab Spring Middle East that can be considered one of the main element of fragmentation of South-Eastern Europe. A region whose balance of power relations could not avoid being affected by the political developments occurred in the Eastern Mediterranean in the last years and, mostly, by the Syrian conflict. In 2014 the Syrian conflict has entered its third year. While the civil war in the very heart of Eastern Mediterranean continues to produce victims and refuges, from the military and political point of view its outcome appears to be almost established, at least for the short-term: the regime has defeated the forces that tried to demise it and Bashar al-Assad with his circle will remain in power. At international level, the status quo has been preserved and there won't be significant geopolitical modification in the regional context. Nevertheless this conservative ending, the unlikelihood of a military victory by the divided and unruly anti-Assad rebel groups won't imply a simple return to the status quo before the conflict, since a relevant part of the Syrian territory at the borders with Iraq and Turkey will remain un-ruled and ravaged by militias and exposed to all the permanent risks typical of failed states for several years to come. But what consequences the Syrian civil war setting could produce for the neighbouring region of South Eastern Europe? Obviously, for geopolitical and religious reasons, the country of the region mostly involved in the conflict has been Turkey, whose dual geopolitical dimension (European and Middle Eastern) has represented the main link between Syria and South-Eastern Europe. Turkish political leverage, on different Muslim countries in the Balkans has partially worked in the direction of increasing the interest in some capitals of the region for a more proactive position for a regime change in Syria but, in general, the conflict has been regarded as marginal by most of the countries of South-Eastern Europe. Albeit some similarities between the war in Yugoslavia and the war in Syria, the lack of a US direct involvement in the conflict has contributed to minimise the relevance of the Syrian conflict for many countries of South-Eastern Europe (SEE), also for those with Islamic religion such as Bosnia Herzegovina, Albania, Kosovo. The "lonely" involvement of Turkey in the Syrian conflict, its tactic alliance with non SEE countries like Saudi Arabia and Qatar and the worsening of its bilateral relations with Russia – one of the main international sponsor of Assad's regime – has contributed to further

isolate politically and strategically Ankara from the rest of the region. This progressive separation of Turkey's geopolitical interests from those of most of the countries of South-Eastern Europe has been the result of Ankara's strategic leaning towards the so called "neo-ottoman" political space, a process that has started in 2008 and reached its climax with the involvement into the Syrian civil-war. Before the Syrian conflict, the strategic rift created with Israel and the Turkish involvement in the Arab spring has facilitated a re-orientation of Tel-Aviv toward Greece, a process also facilitated by the common interests that have emerged between Cyprus and Israel on the new discoveries of hydrocarbons in the Eastern Mediterranean.

Energy discovery in Eastern Mediterranean is in fact a potential changer of the energy balance of power in the region. The new gas resources located off-shore Israel, Cyprus, Lebanon, Gaza are transforming regional energy relations, opening the potential for the creation of a new route of supply of gas to Europe via Cyprus and Greece, that could decrease the dependence from Russia. But until the estimated quantities of the reserves won't be certified, the ownership of the resources won't be settled, and the regional conflict and terrorist threats won't be reduced, it will be difficult to asses which consequences could be produced by the new energy revolution taking place in the Eastern Mediterranean. A very first assessment of the situation shows that the great oil and natural gas exploration activity, started before the begin of the Arab Spring in Eastern Mediterranean, is now mature and it is expected to change the same concept of energy security of Cyprus, Israel, Gaza, Lebanon and potentially Egypt (the third African gas producer). This revisionist phase won't necessarily happen in a cooperative way since new energy discoveries have been frequently responsible for the increasing intra-state rivalries, exacerbating border disputes and fuelling conflicts. The new relevant gas discoveries in Eastern Mediterranean – together with the Azeri gas that will flow to the Mediterranean through the TAP project and with the potential Iranian and Iraqi gas exports – could change relevantly the role of South Eastern Europe as multiregional energy hub bridging different hydrocarbon resources. A multiple geo-energetic role becomes more and more realistic for South Eastern Europe, not only as a transit route for the gas originating from Russia or from Eurasia but also from the Middle East/Eastern Mediterranean space. A growing energy integration between South Eastern Europe and Eastern Mediterranean will be one of the main emerging issue in the coming years, with Greece, Cyprus and Israel that are appearing to play an important and growing role in the construction of a common energy security space in the Eastern Mediterranean. For Israel, this will be a great opportunity to break its energy isolation from its neighbours, linking its energy security to that of the European Union, that has been searching for South-Eastern land alternative (such as Nabucco) to diversify its dependency from Russia. For Cyprus and Greece the opportunity to cash in short-term revenues from gas fields in their off-shore waters is a desperately needed necessity in order to finance their sovereign monetary debt. The development of gas reserves in Israel and Cyprus, that in the best-case scenario in the medium-term could relevantly exceed the national consumptions necessities, brings the question of possible future export routes. Theoretically, three main regional options are available: export toward the Arab countries of the region; export toward Turkey (and maybe Europe via Turkey); export toward the European Union via Rhodes and mainland Greece. For political and economic reasons the best route that could guarantee the needed stabilisation environment to invest in such a corridor would

appear to be the Israel-Cyprus-Turkey route. But here comes the peculiar geopolitical situation of Turkey that, having abandoned the policy of zero problems with its neighbours in 2008, is now in difficult terms with most of the countries of the region. The present growing international isolation of Turkey – that implies a fragmentation of the geopolitical conflict of South-Eastern Europe in its two constituent parts, the Balkans and Anatolia – represents the first critical challenge for the construction of a cooperative energy security system between South Eastern Europe and Eastern Mediterranean. The second one is represented by the growing deterioration of the bilateral relations of Turkey with several neighbouring countries in the Middle East (Turkey has no Ambassadors in Israel, Egypt, Cyprus, Syria) and relations with Russia, Iran and Iraq can be considered tense. This was the context when the skirmish between Turkey and Cyprus sparkled over the exploration of the off-shore Afrodite gas-fields, and Ankara decided to retaliate conducting its own exploration in the North of the island after signing an agreement with the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) for the creation of an EEZ that stretches from Turkey to Northern Cyprus. The on-going Syrian conflict is another element that will very likely contribute to alienate Turkey from possible future regional agreement on Eastern Mediterranean gas exploitation as far as Turkey won't change its posture on the issue. Turkey sided with Saudi Arabia and Qatar (two extra regional energy superpowers) in a regime change policy that failed to topple Bashar al-Assad, with Iran and Russia bearing the costs of maintaining Damasco's regime in power. Although the security architecture of the Middle East and Eastern Mediterranean is extremely complex – and extraordinarily irrational and contradictory – it will be very difficult to detach regional energy security from hard security. The Syrian conflict, while has confirmed the geopolitical status quo of the region, it has reshaped the power hierarchies and, together with the turbulence that followed the Arab spring, it contributed to diminish Turkish regional influence, political weight and soft power. Analysing holistically the different interests of a number of stakeholders, it appears more realistic a future development of energy routes towards South-Eastern Europe based on the emerging geopolitical interests of Israel, Cyprus, Greece, and partially Russia. The intervened Ukraine crisis may modify this scenario only partially, since it should resist even in the case that the hostility between US and Russia over the political future of Ukraine will escalate, forcing the EU to adopt measures to further reduce the dependency on Russian gas. After the transformative quinquennial 2008 – 2013 it seems that – unless Ankara won't invert its process of isolation – the geopolitical connections between South Eastern Europe and Eastern Mediterranean may become less relying on the Turkish geopolitical kaleidoscope and more functionally marked by the energy dimension.

A second theme that in the last years has interconnected South-Eastern Europe and Eastern Mediterranean with the Syrian conflict is represented by the issue of Islamic foreign fighters that have been attracted by the civil war. The most accurate estimates put the number of foreign jihadists in Syria around 8.000 individuals. It may be calculated that a bit less than 10% was represented by citizens coming from South-Eastern Europe countries, with figures oscillating in several hundreds, up to a maximum of 900. The country from where most of jihadists have been coming from is Turkey, followed by Kosovo, Albania, Bosnia Herzegovina, Macedonia, Serbia and Bulgaria. Considering the size of the countries, Kosovo and Albania have demonstrated a significantly high per capita propensity to jihadism in the Syrian conflict. Some estimates put up to 300 the number

of Albanian speaking jihadists active in the Syrian conflict that have joined groups such as Jabhat al-Nusra and the Islamic State of Iraq e al-Sham. In March 2014, Albanian authorities have arrested two radical Imam and 6 other persons with the charges of recruiting jihadists in Albania, Kosovo, Macedonia and Serbia in order to send them to fight in Syria with anti Assad militias. On March 25th, Blerim Heta, a Kosovo national born in Germany that moved back to his village of Ferizaj/Urosevac, has died in Baghdad while performing a suicide attack that produced dozens of victims. Blerim Heta has been the first Kosovar who committed a suicide terrorist attack. The issue of Albanian speaking jihadist appears to be a peculiar sensitive topic inside the Western Balkans, as it was evident by the words of the famous Islamist scholar Tariq Ramadani from Oxford University. Ramadani has specifically invited the Albanians of Kosovo, Albania, Macedonia and Preshevo (Serbia) to abstain from participating to the anti-Assad war in Syria, with the argument – somehow atypical in a global jihadi context – that this fight is a task only of the Syrian Muslims.

In South-Eastern Europe, the main routes of recruitment seem to be Novi Pazar, Sarajevo and Pristina while, at the gates of the region, Wien has assumed to the role of the main centre of Eastern Europe Wahhabism. This is also due to the fact that the Austrian Muslim sizable – but mostly secularised – community (300.000) that flooded into Austria from Yugoslavia in the early nineties is now facing the well-known problem of second-generation radicalisation. In this context, Turkey has a "natural" role of transit country and logistic hub for the fighters coming from the Balkans and South-Eastern Europe in their way to Syria's battlefield, where they mostly concentrate in the Aleppo province. Turkey is also the place were jihadists from former Yugoslavia get in touch with jihadists coming from other regions, such as Northern Caucasus, Dagestan and Cecenia. In most of the cases the radicalisation process doesn't take place in Turkey, but in the home countries where illegal radical organisations set up parallel religious indoctrination and training centres. Salafism is mostly considered the root ideology and moving force behind radicalisation and recruitment. It has established a strong presence in the Balkans with the aids and investments that have been provided by Saudi Arabia during the Jugoslav war. In Syria most of the fighters from the Balkans and from Bosnia Herzegovina in particular have joined the Al-Nusra Front. A great number of jihadists destined to Syria are coming from Northern Europe and some of them travel through the Balkan route before gathering in Turkey, that represents the final hub and the rear-front of the fight. In the last year Turkey felt more and more uncomfortable with the growing presence of jihadists coming from the Middle East, Europe, Balkans, North Africa, whose presence caused increasing tensions with the several governments, especially from Western Europe. Under growing pressure from few foreign governments Turkey has started to deport EU nationals linked to radical Islamist groups based in Turkey. Only in 2013 Ankara has deported to EU countries more than 1.000 European jihadists linked to radical Islamist groups. The countries where radical jihadists originated are often tracking the movements of their own extremists, but sometimes they have failed to communicate to Turkish authorities the personal data and other information of their own jihadists travelling through Turkey. It appears that many countries in Europe still don't have a clear policy to prevent Islamist radicalisation and to curb the jihadist flow between Europe and the Middle East and sometimes they consider the departure from their territory of potential radicals as the best option. In this context, Turkey is playing a delicate – and dangerous – role of strategic

transit country of would-be jihadists inward and outward the Syrian-Iraqi battlefield. This role that Turkey is playing could become more and more relevant with the proliferation of the lands of Jihad and their drawing-near to Europe's Near Abroad and to the Mediterranean basin. Such a sensitive and ambiguous cooperation brings the problem of burden and cost sharing between EU and Turkey of such policies, including the risk of retaliation and terrorist attacks by disrupted networks. This intelligence and de-radicalisation capability of Turkey may become a new informal asset in the EU – Turkish relation, as far as the Syrian civil war will remain an attractive battlefield for many radicals. In order for such a cooperation to be maintained, an improvement of the political climate between EU and Turkey should be achieved, especially in the foreseeable back-flow flux of former jihadist from Syria to their naturalisation/origin countries.

Latin America

Italian companies in Mexico: security issues

Alessandro Politi

The vitality and resourcefulness of Italian companies is demonstrated once again by their activities in Mexico, a very problematic country in terms of public and business safety. A recent survey of Italian private and public entities shows nevertheless that 63 % of the surveyed firms would advise to invest in the country and that 60% of them will invest even more in it.

The geographical distribution of the surveyed companies (69 out of more than 200 listed in a report by PwC) shows a concentration in areas that are considered safe, including the Federal District (DF, Distrito Federal), where Mexico City and its conurbation are located.

However, an overall threat analysis of the narco-cartels in the country and especially in the major areas where Italian companies have their offices or plants (namely DF, Edomex, Queretaro, Nuevo León and Guanajuato), shows relevant risks that require more attention to be devoted to the security of the enterprises, in order to protect them from intimidation and extortion and to prevent potential negative blowbacks in the connections between companies and Italy itself, especially regarding financial operations.

The geography of the Italian corporate presence

The history of the Italian companies in the country can divided during the decades into three waves: the first during the early 80s, the second during the 90s of the last century and the third during the first decade of the current century. A study carried out in cooperation between the auditing and consulting firm PwC (PricewaterhouseCoopers), the local office of the ICE (Italian Trade Promotion Agency)[1] and the Italian Chamber of Commerce in Mexico, not only shows that the presence is significant (see map below), but also that 60% of the companies surveyed plan to increase their investments, 30% of them intend to keep them at the same level and only10% intends to reduce them.[2]

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[1] ICE stands for Istituto per il Commercio con l'Estero - Agenzia per la promozione all'estero e l'internazionalizzazione delle imprese italiane (Agency for the promotion abroad and the internationalisation of the Italian companies).

[2] See PWC, Ambasciata d'Italia Città del Messico, ICE, Camara de Comercio Italiana en Mexico, Presenza e sviluppo delle imprese italiane in Messico, June 2013, http://www.pwc.com/es_MX/mx/publicaciones/archivo/2013-06-presenza-messico.pdf (19/3/2014) .

Map of the main Italian companies in the Mexican federal states

Source: PWC et al., *op. cit.* Map elaborated by the author.

Leaving aside purely business considerations, a component of the confidence that most Italian enterprises have in the country is also due to the new president who clearly has a free trade agenda and is preparing the launch of the Bajío as a promising area of industrial development which could be a new manufacturing core of Mexico.[3]

This area, unlike other federal states in the country, is considered relatively safe and free from mafia influences and therefore a suitable platform to boost the manufacturing production to the detriment of the old Chinese competitors. Since Chinese labour costs are considered by some observers higher than Mexican ones, this may lead to a partial relocation of industrial production lines to Mexico. Other sources evaluate Mexican labour costs 30% higher than Chinese ones, but compensated by the geographic closeness to the US market, allowing even a win-win scenario where China that could use Mexico as commercial springboard for locally manufactured products of Chinese design.[4]

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[3] The Bajío in economic terms includes the states of Aguascalientes, San Luis Potosí, Guanajuato and Queretaro (according to the strategic analysis company Stratfor and to Mexican economic sources), that are considered relatively secure for new international investments. In fact, the traditional geography of the Bajío does not include San Luis Potosi and instead includes Jalisco, a state that is quite problematic.

[4] See EIU, Latin America as an FDI hotspot Opportunities and risks, November 2013, http://www.asia.udp.cl/Informes/2013/LatAm_FDI_2013.pdf (17/1/2014). Contrarily to the Goldman Sachs TIMBI acronym, indicating the rise of Turkey, Indonesia, Mexico, Brazil, India, the Economist Intelligence Units does not include Mexico in its CIVETS group comprising Colombia, Indonesia, Vietnam, Egypt, Turkey and South Africa.

It is easy to see on the previous map that the area of the Bajío (represented by a circle) overlaps with a number of states where a sizeable part of Italian companies is already well placed, especially in the states of Guanajuato and Queretaro.

That said, most company sites are in the Federal District of Mexico City, which until May 2013 was considered well protected by the police.[5] However, an update of the cartels geography in the country leads us to think more carefully about the typical organized crime (OC) risks that Italian companies may run into, a problem well known also in Italy.

The evolution of the OC threat

In January-February 2014, the violence of Organized Crime has been concentrated mainly in the states of:

● Michoacán
● Guerrero (Acapulco is the third most violent city in the world after San Pedro Sula in Honduras and Caracas)
● Sinaloa
● Cohauila
●Nuevo León
● Tamaulipas
● Along the US border (Baja California, Sonora, Chihuahua and the already mentioned states of Coahuila, Nuevo León and Tamaulipas)
● Sinaloa (more violence in February)
● Durango (idem).
   Moreover, also in other states to the south the violence is increasing at an alarming rate, namely in:
● Morelos
● Mexico State (and its valley)
● Federal District (that is Mexico City and its conurbation)
● Hidalgo.[6]

[5] The 26th of May 2013 12 youngsters were abducted in front of the bar "After Heaven" in a very central area of Mexico City. They were all killed due to an ongoing turf war for the repartition of drug peddling areas; their bodies were discovered three months later in a clandestine mass grave. The crime produced considerable emotion in the public and showed that Mexico City was less safe than considered.

[6] See Seguridad, Justicia y Paz, Boletín de seguridad enero 2014, Werner Strohlein, 12/2/2014, http://www.seguridadjusticiaypaz.org.mx/sala-de-prensa/961-boletin-de-seguridad-enero-2014 (22/3/2014); and also Seguridad, Justicia y Paz, Boletín de seguridad febrero 2014, Werner Strohlein, 21/3/2014, http://www.seguridadjusticiaypaz.org.mx/sala-de-prensa/983-boletin-de-seguridad-febrero-2014 (22/3/2014). The state of Mexico is also abbreviated in Spanish with Edomex.

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In order to understand better the violence that runs throughout the country, it is necessary to observe the following table prepared by governmental sources.

Map of the narco-cartels

Source: Procuradoria General de la Republica (PRG), March 2013, http://www.sinembargo.mx/20-05-2013/622023 (20/3/2014).

Almost all states are infiltrated by mafia groups, sometimes of different affiliations as a result, more often than not, of the dismantlement of old cartels. This allows to understand that the six-year war against narco-cartels, waged by the administration of former President Felipe Calderón Hinojosa has not succeeded. A fact confirmed by the evaluation of FTI Consulting that considers Mexico the fifth most dangerous state where to do business in Latin America, after Venezuela, Honduras, Guatemala and Haiti.[7]

[7] See PRG, ibidem. Compare FTI, Public Insecurity in Latin America, March 2014, http://www.fticonsulting.com/global2/media/collateral/united-states/2014-latin-america-security-index.pdf (31/3/2014). The costs of the war against the narcos, launched by Calderon, have increased from $925 million in 2006 to $3,133 billion with a number of victims between 60.000 and 80.000 dead, see http://revoluciontrespuntocero.com/alrededor-de-40-mil-mdd-el-gasto-de-felipe-calderon-en-juguetes-para-la-guerra-contra-el-narco/ (06/4/2014).

Another aspect highlighted by this map is the absence of OC infiltrations into eight federal states (Guanajuato, Queretaro, Hidalgo, Tlaxcala, Puebla, Tabasco, Campeche and Yucatán) which should prove the existence of areas where it could be easier to attract investments. The Bajío is not fully included, but coincides with two out of four states, namely Guanajuato and Queretaro, where are located 17 offices/plants (24.6%) of the 69 major Italian companies listed in the map of the PwC et al. document.[8]Unfortunately other sources raise serious doubts about this relatively rosy picture.

DHS map regarding the spread of narco-cartels
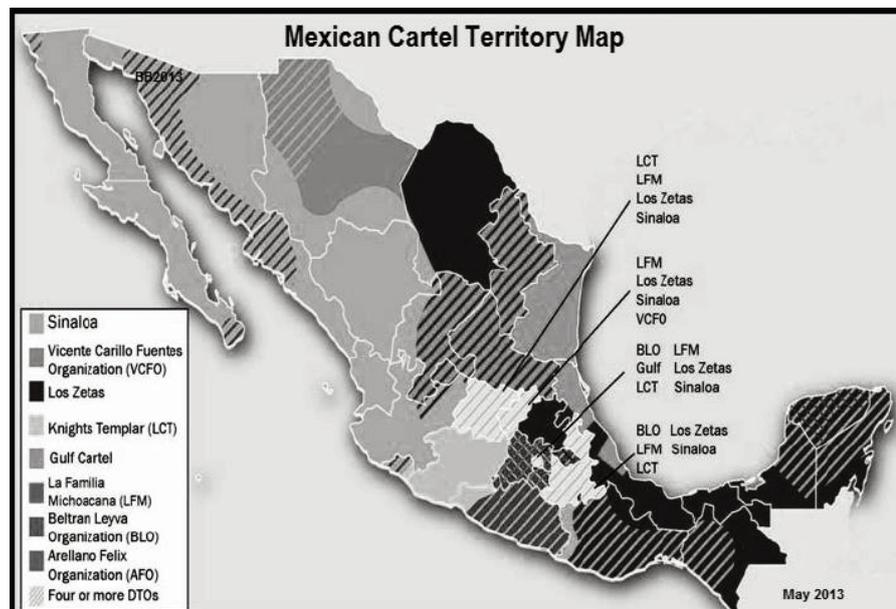
Source: Department of Homeland Security, May 2013, http://www.borderlandbeat.com/2013/06/bar-heaven-mass-kidnapping-tepito-12.html (24/3/2014).

The map shows clearly that there are no free zones left by the cartels, even in the remote areas bordering with Guatemala and Belize, because since July 2012 drug traffickers in these countries

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[8] The Mexican government has already designated as free trade areas the entire border area with the U.S. (Zona Fronteriza, border zone) and the states of Baja California, Baja California Sur, Sonora in the north and Oaxaca, Chiapas and Quintana Roo in the South.

avail themselves of clandestine airstrips for the delivery of cocaine to the North.[9] The following table correlates the base of large Italian firms with the presence of cartels and other relevant factors.

Rating table of the OC risk for Italian companies in Mexico

	Numero imprese	Impianti produttivi	nr. cartelli	Qualità cartelli	Scala di rischio
Distretto Federale	24	7	2 – 8	- BLO resti, cellule della Barbie * LFM, Golfo, LCT, Zetas, Sinaloa	16
Mexico-Edomex	10	7	4	- BLO resti, cellule della Barbie, LFM, LCT	17
Guanajuato	4	4	0 – 4	* LCT, LFM, Zetas, Sinaloa	11
Jalisco	3		2 – 5	- Pacifico (BLO) resti, LFM * Sinaloa, Zetas	10
Nuevo León	6	3	2 – 3	- Zetas, resti BLO * Golfo	11
Puebla	2	2	0 – 6	* BLO, LFM, LCT, Golfo, Zetas, Sinaloa	12
Queretaro	13	8	0 – 4	* LFM, Zetas, Sinaloa, VCFO (Juarez)	19
San Luis Potosi	2	5	1 – 2	- Zetas * Golfo	7
Sonora	1	1	1 – 2	- Resti BLO * Sinaloa	8
Tamaulipas	2	2	1	- Zetas - Golfo	9
Tlaxcala	1	1	0 – 2	* BLO, LCT	7
Veracruz	1	3	[1] – 3	- Pacifico - BLO * Golfo * Zetas	9

Source: Author's elaboration of PWC, PGR, FTI, DHS data.[10]

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[9] Moreover Mexican police sources show that the allegedly "narco-free" states, mentioned above, were already infiltrated at least by the Zetas since 2008, according to a map prepared by the SSP (Secretaría de Seguridad Pública – Public Security Secretariat) and dated 10/11/2008. The states controlled then were: Sonora, Cohauila, Nuevo Leon, Tamaulipas, Aguascalientes, Zacatacas, Guanajuato, San Luis Potosì, Hidalgo, DF and Edomex, Puebla, Veracruz, Oaxaca, Tabasco and Campeche; see Blog Populi Blog Dei, Los Zetas : mapa y organigrama,10/11/2008, http://blogpopuliblogdei.wordpress.com/2008/11/10/los-zetas-mapa-y-organigrama/ (7/4/2014).

[10] Legend: BLO (Bertran Leyva Organization, also called the Cartel Pacifico Sur), LFM (La Familia Michoacana), LCT (Los Caballeros Templarios), VCFO (Vicente Carrillo Fuentes Organization, also known as the Cartel de Juarez). The names preceded by a hyphen are mentioned by Mexican government sources, those with an asterisk by U.S. ones. The risk scale takes into account several factors including: the general context, OC presence, the fragmentation of these groups, areas of particular interest to the cartels (contested drug dealing markets, ports, hot spots, etc.), the vulnerability of businesses, the density of companies operating in the state, the current levels of violence.

Therefore starting from the fact that there are no mafia-free areas and that the level of violence is also affected by the presence self-defence forces, on may conclude that the Bajío may still be considered an area where Mexican manufacturing capabilities can be augmented but not an island of peace.[11]

Additionally one should also take into account that port operators or firms depending from crucial seaborne supplies are further vulnerable to OC hazards because the major ports (Veracruz, Altamira, Manzanilllo, Mazatlan, Guaymas, Puerto Morelos) are heavily infiltrated by local cartels, just as the port of Gioia Tauro in Italy.[12]The strategic port of Lázaro Cárdenas in Michoacan can be considered safer since November 2013 thanks to a general offensive by government forces to regain control, but Mexican sources do not see the matter settled.[13]

Charter of the security situation in Michoacán and surrounding areas (February 2014)

Source: El Blog Chinaco, Los Autodefensas en Michoacán y el Santuario de la Violencia, 14/2/2014, http://blogchinaco.wordpress.com/2014/02/14/autodefensas-michoacan-santuario/ (15/3/2014).

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[11] Traditional manufacturing areas are the states of Nuevo Leon, Mexico-Edomex, Distrito Federal, followed by Jalisco, Guanajuato, Puebla and Coahuila.

[12] The port of Gioia Tauro in Italy is one of the major Mediterranean container hubs and it is heavily infiltrated by the 'ndrangheta, the powerful Calabrian organized crime group that has links also with Mexican cartels (Zetas and Golfo); see http://www.proceso.com.mx/?p=346700 and http://www.vice.com/es_mx/read/frutas-y-cocaina-0000420-v6n4 (8/4/2014).

[13] The self-defence forces (some of which may be related to agricultural or mining interests), snatched the valleys of the state to the control the LCT, but these are present in the four major cities including Lázaro Cárdenas (i.e. Morelia, Uruapan del Progreso, Zamora de Hidalgo and Apatzingán de la Constitución) and

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The spectacular arrests announced by the government in the last four months (bosses known by the code names as Z-40, X-20, M-10 and el Chapo), respectively belonging to Los Zetas, the Gulf Cartel and the last two to the Sinaloa federation, have equally hit these three major criminal groups, but without visible effects regarding an increased security.

The security picture outlined above is serious enough to prompt a careful reassessment of corporate security needs in areas traditionally considered "safe", first of all in the Federal District and in the states of Edomex and Queretaro. One should consider a set of vulnerabilities whose combination can be very problematic both in country and the relationship with Italy itself. Chinese firms, for instance, have never been intimidated, but one cannot say that the methods used to guarantee their security are without critical drawbacks.

throughout the state of Guanajuato. The whole area diagonally striped is the second drug production area in Mexico, including six states (Michoacán, Guerrero, Morelos, Estado de México, Querétaro and Hidalgo) and it hotly contested between the LCT and an alliance between the Zetas and LFM. The Cartel Jalisco Nueva Generación (CJNG) instead protects its positions in the top left of the map. The Cheran is a municipality freed from the cartels and traditional parties, electing their representatives according to local traditions in agreement with the federal government.

Middle East - Persian Gulf

Saudi regional security vision, within the framework of the generational transition of power

Nicola Pedde

Obama's visit to Saudi Arabia

Several expectations surrounded Obama's visit to Saudi Arabia on March 28th. In particular, there were hopes to fix bilateral relations by defining a joint position on the most relevant regional issues. Although divergences on security and foreign policy issues are evident within the royal family, a point of convergence between the various factions is undoubtedly their desire to look for a strategy to rebuild the relationship with the United States.

The reasons that led to the critical relationship between the two countries must be certainly identified within a regional framework, and above all, in the worsening of the Syrian conflict[1]. Nevertheless, no one in Riyadh is hiding the existence of a bilateral reason for the problematic relationship, hardened because of a mutual inertia. The Saudis were not expecting a visit in which all problems with Washington would be solved, but in any case welcomed Obama's desire to insert the Saudi capital in his most recent trip abroad, interpreting the gesture as a declaration of interest to start a dialogue on two relevant regional issues: Syria and Iran.

Expectations for greater US flexibility on the issue of the Iranian dialogue were not met and hopes to be included in any activities of the US-Iran negotiation process as manifested by the Saudis remained unfulfilled. Riyadh was forced to accept the mere guarantee to be informally informed of the developments. Similarly disappointing was the discussion on Syria, where Saudi Arabia is constantly accused of having triggered a sectarian conflict dominated by international *jihadism*, and has expressed the desire to help contain the conflict within the Syrian borders. The US's position, once again, stressed the need to promote a "moderate opposition", to maintain the flow of economic aid and light weapons in order to support the fight against the predominant governmental forces, an initiative on which few seem to express real optimism. It is not clear what will be the outcome of the Saudi suggestion to the United States to provide man-portable anti-aircraft equipment (MANPADS) to the Syrian opposition, demands previously categorically ruled out due to

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[1] Ragheda Dergham, "Obama's visit to Riyadh: semi-accord over Iran and divergence over Syria", *Al-Hayat*, 28 March 2014.

fears of a transfer to ISIS or other jihadist forces[2]. One of the few points of convergence between the two countries has been their focus on strengthening China's position, which both see as a tool to weaken Russian endorsement of Syrian elections. Peking's perplexities regarding Russian's determination to sustain Syrian elections, within a framework dominated by regime's forces, represents an unexpected advantage for those sustaining opposition forces. In this context, the US is hoping to convince China to explicitly affirm this position.

Obama's brief visit to Saudi Arabia has not produced concrete results on regional issues of common interest, but it was understood by both parties as a concrete gesture to rebuild an evidently eroded relationship. There have been no agreements, nor the definition of any common strategy outside the framework of a mutual recognition of each other's role and relevance.

On a separate note, just before leaving for his trip to Europe and the Middle East, Obama made it clear that he would not organize any meetings with the Gulf Cooperation Council, informally communicating his position on the growing infighting within the organization[3]. Washington remains well-aware of the fears expressed by most of the Gulf's monarchies, namely the US retreating from supporting its regional allies, simultaneously opening up to Iran, and expressing doubt on the evolution of the Syrian conflict. Still, the US has clarified that their requests for an increase of stability in the region through the adoption of urgent political reforms should not be interpreted as a critique of the role of the local political elites. On the contrary, it should be seen as a request to reinforce the elites' positions through the awareness of the changing social context in the region. This challenge must be tackled with political reforms and a more effective synergy with the various cultural and political challenges coming from the social context[4]. Nevertheless, Gulf countries have often perceived these calls for reforms as open and deliberate critiques to their political trajectory and as a clear support to all those forces, religious and secular, which are increasingly playing an antagonist role to the traditional monarchical status.

Change of strategy for the Saudi security?

Around mid February, the Saudi security apparatus experienced a radical shift, especially with respect to the strategy adopted in Syria. Prince Bandar bin Sultan, who led the Saudi intelligence system for several years, has been *de facto* sidelined and replaced by Prince Mohammed bin Nayef, who is close to the United States and well known for his efforts in fighting al Qaeda. It seems that the decision has been conceived within the inner system of the crown, as a consequence to the failure of Bandar bin Sultan's strategy on Syria, which was based on indiscriminate support to *jihadist* groups opposing Bashar al-Asad's regime. This strategy has alarmed the United States and

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[2] Ellen Knickmeyer, Maria Abi-habib e Ahmed al Omran, "Obama seeks to repair frayed ties with Saudi Arabia – Riyadh looking for signs of U.S. friendship, arms for Syrian rebels", *Wall Street Journal*, 28 March 2014.

[3] Jay Solomon, "U.S. cancels summit with divided group of Gulf nations – Obama plans to meet with Saudi King next week", *Wall Street Journal*, 20 March 2014.

[4] Frederic Wehrey, "A new U.S. approach to Gulf security", *Policy Outlook*, Carnegie Foundation, 10 March 2014.

the vast majority of the Western countries who are concerned about a possible proliferation and consolidation of terrorist groups linked to al Qaeda in Syria and in the region in general. Furthermore, this strategy did not produce any tangible results, and perhaps even weakened the Syrian opposition.

Mohammed bin Nayef, on the contrary, is the man who successfully handled the security crisis in Yemen, facing the *qaedist* forces and managed to guarantee an essentially linear political transition, earning the approval of the US and gaining considerable personal credit[5]. At the same time the Saudi National Guard has recently been transformed into a full Ministry, becoming the more efficient and equipped military apparatus of the kingdom. This has further increased the political and operative relevance of the King's son, prince Miteb bin Abdullah, commander of the Guard. The consolidation of this axis of power aims at abandoning the traditional Saudi radicalism and moving toward a new and more pragmatic foreign policy and security strategy. This was a necessary move after more than two years of failures in Syria, which among others elicited a dangerous deterioration in the relationship between Saudi Arabia and the United States.

Bandar's strategy in Syria was based on an indiscriminate strengthening of all religious opposition forces, without selecting among *jihadist* and moderate opponents to the regime. The effect was a growing empowerment of the more structured units and, above all, those linked to the al Qaeda network, enabling them to set up a new operational platform where to traffic, men, arms and resources into Syria. However, Bandar's strategy, was built on the certainty of obtaining the support of the United States and some European countries (France in particular) for an armed intervention against Bashar al-Asad. The aim being to cause Asad's military collapse and thus leave the Islamic opposition forces linked to Saudi Arabia free to dominate the terrain. The refusal of the United States to intervene, and the following strengthening of the Syrian governmental forces, brought about the collapse of Bandar's strategy. This transformed the groups, at that time generously funded, into autonomous and out of control structures, sparking fears of spill over of the conflict into Lebanon and Jordan among regional and Western powers.

The appointment of Prince Mohammed bin Nayef is thus linked to a forceful shift in strategy, at least in regards to the country's intentions. Aware of the impossibility of an aerial intervention by the United States, the new Saudi strategy in regards to the Syrian conflict is built upon two separate lines of action. On one side, they ask for the delivery of sophisticated man-operated anti-aerial missiles to the opposition forces, in order to oppose the aerial dominance of the regime without an American intervention. On the other side, the Saudis offer to make a net distinction in their support for opposition forces, separating those linked to jihadists from the moderates and isolating the former as well as favouring the latter. This strategy is theoretically welcomed by the United States, but fails to convince the US defence and intelligence forces, aware of the difficulties of such a project and above all aware of the predominance of the *jihadist forces* over the moderate ones.

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[5] Ellen Knickmeyer, "Saudi Arabia replaces key official in effort to arm Syria rebels – Frustrated kingdom set out to assuage U.S. worries on extremists in three-year conflict", *Wall Street Journal*, 19 febbraio 2014

US fears are also reinforced by the awareness of continuous flows of money from the Gulf to the *jihadist* forces. Those cannot directly be attributed to the local governments, but are certainly tolerated by them to maintain more delicate local social equilibriums. On March 7th, a Saudi commission composed of the ministries of Interior, Justice, Islamic Affairs, Foreign Affairs and smaller entities, defined a preliminary list of regional terrorist organizations. Among these can be found al Qaeda and its regional ramification in Iraq, the Arab peninsula and Yemen, the Syrian group of Jabhat al Nusra, the Islamic State of Iraq in the Shams (ISIS), the Saudi Hezbollah, the Muslim Brotherhood and the Houthi group[6]. The list made headlines as it mentioned some of the regional organizations that have been notoriously more close to Saudi Arabia. Regarding Syria on the other hand, the data provided is so generic, making it ill suited to better identify sub-units and smaller groups. Furthermore, there is no mention at all of the Islamic Front, making the list unbalanced. A common line of interest between Washington and Riyadh has become their fear of the more radical *jihadist*'s cells, which are considered today a risk for both countries. The Saudis, in addition, also strongly fear the so called *blow back* phenomenon – fighters holding a Saudi passport who decide to come back home – and the possibility of terrorism on national soil. The United States have in the last two years blamed Saudi Arabia for systematically boycotting the consolidation of the Free Syrian Army (FSA), considered by the US as the more moderate and pluralist opposition to the regime of Bashar al Asad. Last December's attack to an FSA facility by a group linked to ISIS, the killing of some soldiers and the seizure of military materials recently donated by the US, led Washington to admit the organizations failure due to Saudi support for radical groups[7]. The consequence was a further entrenchment of the countries' bilateral relationship by now worn-out and dominated by reciprocal distrust. This episode, however, had repercussions also in Riyadh, where the inner circle of the royal apparatus eventually decided to remove prince Bandar from his position, ending the senseless strategy of support to the jihadists in Syria. The gradual recovery of the relationship with the United States has become a vehicle to limit Washington's unilateral approach on Iran, considered by Riyadh as an existential threat.

Change and continuity of Saudi politics
How much support does the shift in security approach by Prince Mohammed bin Nayef's gather within the heterogeneous Saudi structure of power?
Such a question, as always in Saudi Arabia, remains difficult to answer, although some considerations could provide the stimulus for a deeper analysis. Mohammed bin Nayef embodies the third generation of the Saudi royal family, being the son Nayef bin Abdulaziz al Saud – son of the first Saudi king, Abdulaziz, and his wife Hassa bint Ahmed Al Sudairi – who was among the more in-

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[6] Abdallah Suleiman Ali, "Saudi terrorism list raises question about Islamic Front", *As-Safir*, 10 marzo 2014
[7] Patrick Cockburn, "Al Qaeda's second act. Is Saudi Arabia Regretting its support for terrorism?", *Counterpunch*, 19 marzo 2014

fluential members of the royal family, and one of the so-called "seven Sudairis".

He gained respect and popularity between 2003 and 2006, leading the fight on terrorism within Saudi Arabia. He wisely alternated between firmness in repression, and flexibility in rehabilitation of *jihadists*, allowing for their treatment in well equipped, luxury facilities, specifically conceived to treat former radical fighters. Unlike his father, who was a radical conservative and not keen on flexibility, Prince Mohammed bin Nayef has always demonstrated significant pragmatism and a pronounced negotiation capacity. After serving for almost twelve years as deputy minister for security, gaining in the field a reputation for fighting terrorism, in November 2012 he was appointed Minister of Interior, achieving for the first time access for a member of the third generation into the complex system of the inner circle of power. Nevertheless, Nayef's strategy for Syria, and his plan to pragmatically rebuild the relationship with Washington, has several enemies within the kingdom. Among them, the vast majority belong to the second generation, nowadays still largely dominated by less diplomatic and flexible members, fearing the evolution of the social and political developments in the region, and essentially convinced of the need to fight with all means both the Shia heresy and the Muslim Brotherhood's sedition.

However, several things are changing in Saudi Arabia, and the imminence of a generational shift at the helm of the kingdom seems to be fully in place. On March 27th, with a royal decree prince Muqrin was officially appointed as second in line for succession to king Abdullah, right after the crown prince Salman, who is considered a moderate. Muqrin is the youngest living son of king Abdulaziz, and, although part of the second generation, he represents a sort of link to the following generation, where he has built the vast majority of his political bonds and alliances. It is not clear if this appointment is the product of a negotiation within the court, or, on the contrary, if these are expression of the will of the aged and ill king, Abdullah, trying to grant a non conflicting transition, by limiting the impetus of those with a radical vision within the second generation. Among those, only Salman and Muqrin would agree with the king in favour of a gradual change of the rigid court's orthodoxy.

An additional element in this complex picture is Prince Miteb bin Abdullah, the third son of King Abdullah and current chief of the Saudi National Guard, which has been progressively transformed into the most powerful and better equipped military apparatus of the kingdom. Prince Miteb and Mohammed bin Nayef have thus been identified by many as the most important elements in this process of political and generational transition, getting ready for a rise that would soon propel them within the first rows of those managing the political power. Several traps lie ahead in the new generation's path. Today, Saudi Arabia is obsessed on the one hand with Iran – seen as an hegemonic actor conquering the region – and on the other hand by Islamic progressive and participative movements, like the Muslim Brotherhood – considered as an existential threat to the monarchical *status quo*. Furthermore, the regional alliance of the Gulf Cooperation Council is teetering, increasingly dominated by individual interests and divergences with respect to the relations with Iran, the conflict in Syria and the relationship with the Muslim Brotherhood.

The challenges the third generation is facing right now center on mediating between the more conservative and radical forces within the second generation, as well as the more pragmatic approach of its youngest members. These dynamic relationships remain in the context of uncertainty and confusing developments.

QUARTERLY

Nigeria is the first economy in Africa

Marco Massoni

Actually, the annual GDP of Nigeria exceeds five hundred billion dollars, which means Nigeria is the first economy in Africa. The figures refer to the past few years, but have been disclosed and verified by the International Financial Institutions (IFIs) only in the last few months: Nigeria, which stood 28th world economic power, has become the first economy of the entire African continent, having overcome the GDP of a declining South Africa. Estimates predict that it will grow by 7 percent in 2014. The unexpected strength of Nigerian growth should be ascribed to the diversification of its economy for the last two decades. Before that change, Nigerian revenues used to be solely dependent on energy and agricultural sectors. In particular, the difference in terms of growth has been set by the service industry, such as telecommunications, finance, insurance, airlines, and entertainment industry, as the success of Nollywood cinema witnesses. Yet, the factor of greatest tension and instability of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, the most populous African country (with approximately 175 million inhabitants) as well as potential first player of the entire West Africa, concerns the spread of terrorism of the Islamist sect Boko Haram the so-called 'Nigerian Taliban', founded by Ustaz Mohammed Yusuf in 2002 in Maiduguri, the capital of Borno State. Boko Haram (in Arabic *jamà atu ahlis sunna lidda' awati wal-jihad*) is translated as *the people dedicated to the propagation of the teachings of the Prophet and Jihad*; anyway, in Hausa 'boko' means non- Islamic, and 'haram' in Arabic means forbidden. Subsequently, the Boko Haram is conventionally translated '*Western education is sin'*. The purpose of the sect is to ban the western education system, to facilitate the roots of Islamic fundamentalism, creating the conditions necessary for the purposes of the *Al Qaeda Associated Movements (AQAM)* across the Sahel and West Africa. The assassination in recent days by Boko Haram of the Emir of Gwoza in the State of Borno clearly indicates that the Nigerian terrorism is not directed exclusively against the Christians, as many mistakenly claim, but against anyone who does not embrace its radical positions, even if a moderate Muslim. As a matter of fact, at the beginning of last year, Boko Haram had attempted to murder in an attack the Emir of Kano too, Alhaji Ado Bavero. The Federal Government counter-insurgency actions and the consequent militarization of the northern regions of the country, commissioned by President Goodluck Jonathan did not foresee, however, the dismissal of the Governors of the three States concerned in the Northeast, Borno, Yobe and Adamawa, in all of which it was however declared the state of emergency. The U.S. State Department has included in the list of terrorist organizations both Boko Haram and also one of its splinter, the *Vanguard for the Protection of Muslims in Black Lands (ANSARU),* headed by *Khalid al Barnawi*. The two ter-

rorist organizations' strongholds are in the North-East of Nigeria, together with some rears over the border in Cameroon in the troubled Central African Republic (CAR) as well, from where they lead attacks and kidnappings, as the authorities of Yaounde and Bangui cannot adequately cover these remote territories that are completely out of control. Thus, the border between Niger, Nigeria, Chad, Cameroon and RCA is a macro-region that is becoming increasingly insecure, due to the worrying conjunction of the East-Africa instability with that of the Great Lakes Region. To be honest the incoming Saudi salafism in such is completely new. As for the regions affected by the incursions of Nigerian Boko Haram and ANSARU, the Federal Government has difficulties very similar to those of other neighbouring fragile countries, since the whole of northern Nigeria, predominantly Islamic, has always been marginalized and never has benefited from the dividends of the oil-rich southern regions. Armed fundamentalists, Boko Haram and ANSRU, are Non-State Actors (NSA), growing in impoverished zones of a larger federal State, which has not never intended to promote any economic development so far; therefore, where any prospect of a prosperous future for young people is much more scaled than in the rest of Nigeria. Obviously this asymmetry being at the basis of social discontent and protests can only feed centrifuges and independence expectations, then exploited and stressed by extremists. Not even the change in the leadership of the Armed Forces of January, at the head of which Alex Sabundu Badeh was appointed, replacing Ola Ibrahim in office since 2012, has been able to sort out the problem of Boko Haram, which is in fact still at large. In early March, there has been a major reshuffle, which involved eleven ministers, including the Foreign Affairs (Ambassador Aminu Wali) and Defence (General Aliyu Mohammed Gusau). On the other hand, as early as last September, there was a balance in power relations within the ruling party, the *People's Democratic Party (PDP)* of President Jonathan, whose candidacy for the presidential election of 2015 is taken for granted. In order to put an end to the hegemony of the PDP, begun with the end of the military regime, the four main opposition parties in Nigeria (the Action Congress of Nigeria, the Congress for Progressive Change, the All Nigeria Peoples Party and the All Progressives Grand Alliance) have formed a new coalition, the *All Progressives Congress*. By the end of next year, seven of the fastest growing economies in the world will be African: Ethiopia, Mozambique, Tanzania, Congo, Ghana, *Nigeria* and Zambia, all countries which, having been able to develop a diverse network of partnerships not only with Western stakeholders, are now freer to unilateral constraints, such as with the former colonial powers. *MINT countries (Mexico, Indonesia, Nigeria and Turkey)*, despite the market turmoil, will no doubt be the most promising destinations for international investors over the next ten years. Not only they are all young countries, so as to provide a significant increase in domestic consumption in the near future, but also enjoy excellent geographic locations next to the equally promising surrounding markets, which as far as Nigeria is concerned is the whole West Africa and a large part of Central Africa, thus laying the foundations for becoming the hub of whole African economy and return to play a leading role especially at regional level, recently fading away, because of the military dictatorship in the nineties and the instability caused by terrorism. More importantly, it would be necessary that Nigeria regain her weight within the mechanisms and balances of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). It is time for Nigeria to get back to ECOWAS, which did not see it as a leading player, also due to the influence of extra-regional actors mediated by some francophone states. At the same time, many criticalities still mark the state of health of Nigeria, such as: the endemic corruption and bribery (Transparency International

puts it at 144th out of 177 countries); high debt; inadequate governance; insufficient infrastructures; asymmetric redistribution of the national income. By the end of March Emefiele Godwin has been appointed as the new Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria, having replaced Lamido Senusi, who was deposed in February, for denouncing the state oil company (Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation - NNPC), due to a shortfall of thirteen billion dollars as the proceeds received from the sale of crude oil. The accusation of lack of transparency about the management of a strategic sector such as that of oil and gas is nothing new in a country that, notwithstanding being the leading exporter of crude oil in Sub-Saharan Africa, however is still does not have any refinery yet. Regarding the relationships with other global players and emerging markets, relations with Beijing are remarkable; Abuja last year has secured loans for infrastructure from China for over a billion dollars at subsidized rates, not to mention the fact that the Central Bank of Nigeria is about to enter the Chinese bond market through the Chinese Peoples' Bank of China. Let us not forget of another MINT Country – Turkey – whose interchange with the whole of Africa is worth over 23 billion dollars.

Northern Africa: Mauritania.
Since February 12, Moulaye Ould Mohamed Laghdaf is the new Prime Minister of *Mauritania*.

Western Africa: Burkina Faso, Economic Community of West Africa States (ECOWAS), Guinea Bissau, Mali, Nigeria and Sierra Leone.
In the presidential elections scheduled next year, *Burkina Faso*, one of the countries of reference as regards the stability in West Africa and the Sahel seems to show the first signs of a crisis within the ruling party, the Congress for Democracy and Progress (CDP). Seventy members of it resigned, because contrary to the constitutional reform, which, if approved, would open in fact another mandate for President Blaise Compaoré, in power since 1987. There are two scenarios: one would give rise to the formation of a new party, by a majority willing to actually change the structure of Burkina Faso, the other instead constitute just a mere diversion for the regime to remain in power. The latest Summit of Heads of State and Government of the *Economic community of West Africa States (ECOWAS)*, meeting in Yamoussoukro in the Ivory Coast, has assigned the office of the President to the Ghanaian President John Mahama, in place of the Ivorian President Alassane Ouattara. Regarding *Guinea-Bissau*, the former Minister of Finance and former Mayor of Bissau, José Mario Vaz, is the candidate of the PAIGC vying for the presidential and legislative elections of April 13, because its strongest competitor, Carlos Gomes Júnior, unexpectedly withdrew from the race. The candidates of the other political forces are Abdel Incada (Party of Social Renewal - PRS), Helder Vaz (Resistance Movement Guinea-Bissau Bafata), the economist Paulo Gomes and the former Minister of Education Tchemo Djalo. As per *Mali*, the author of the coup of 2012, General Amadou Haya Sanogo, was arrested for murder. It is a judicial act by purely political implications, formally expelling this ambiguous actor from the political scene. The former President of the Republic, Amadou Toumani Touré (ATT), exiled in Senegal, has become the subject of the Malian High Court of Justice, accusing him of high treason, as he allegedly would not have opposed the rooting of terrorists in the northern regions of the country, while in office. In the meantime French raids are still being conducted against AQIM cells still active in the area. In February,

the President of the Republic, Ibrahim Boubacar Keita (IBK), has made an official visit to Doha, to strengthen relations with Qatar, due to its pivotal importance as an actor more and more involved in African politics. Furthermore, Bamako has set up a bilateral committee on northern Mali, in order to strengthen the dialogue with the northern parts of the country, so as to listen to their concerns. Besides, a new Tuareg political party has arisen: the Coalition of the People of the Azawad (CPA), led by Ibrahim Ag Mohamed Assaleh, a dissident of the National Movement of Liberation of the Azawad (MNLA). *Nigeria*'s GDP has overcome that of South Africa, having therefore become the first African economy today. Focusing on *Sierra Leone*, March 13th former President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah passed away. Elected in 1996, he was the first Muslim to become Head of State of the country. He was ousted by the military coup of 1997, and then came back in 1998 and re-elected in 2002 for another five years to coincide with the end of the long civil war.

Eastern Africa: Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan and South Sudan.
As per *Ethiopia*, the crisis between Addis Ababa and Riyadh is escalating, where hundreds of thousands of Ethiopian migrants have been deported. The Saudi forced repatriation was followed at the end of the times of regularization, causing numerous clashes and protests among them. The conditions of the millions of foreign workers, mostly from the Horn of Africa and Southeast Asia, in Saudi Arabia and in other Gulf countries are considered inhumane by all human rights organizations. The economist Abdiweli Sheikh Ahmed is the new Prime Minister of *Somalia*, to replace Abdifarah Shirdon. The elections for the Presidency of Puntland January 8 were won by Abdiweli Mohamed Ali, former Prime Minister of Somalia, who beat the ballot the former President, Abdirahman Mohamed Farole. Since the beginning of the year there has been a resurgence of hostilities, which resulted in a long series of terrorist Shebaab's attacks in Shebaab also in Mogadishu. Meanwhile, the Ethiopian Armed Forces have been integrated into AMISOM, the African Union Mission in Somalia. As it regards *Sudan*, clashes have resumed in Darfur. Although President al-Bashir has proposed an amnesty for all armed groups in the country, as long as willing to disarm and participate in the talks mediated by the African Union, however AU's negotiations between Khartoum and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N), about the dispute over areas of Blue Nile and South Kordofan, had to be suspended. As per *South Sudan*, December the 15th 2013 in Juba, there was an attempted coup at the hands of troops loyal to former Vice-President, Riek Machar, who, while denouncing the illegality of the incumbent President, Salva Kiir, has denied the early existence of the failed coup. Such fighting within the ruling party, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), split into two belligerent machines facing each other. Some important spots, initially under the control of the rebels, were taken back by the national Army with the help of the Ugandan troops, but the truce announced by the Intergovernmental Authority for Development (IGAD), the official mediator of the crisis has not been able to avoid a conflict of larger-scale and longer-lasting so far. The IGAD has made a proposal to establish a transitional government with both contenders in the executive, until new elections. The regional REC has also announced that five of its Member States (i.e. Ethiopia, Djibouti, Kenya, Rwanda and Burundi) are willing to create a neutral force to secure South Sudanese critical installations in the meantime. Anyhow, it could be the South African Cyril Ramaphosa, Vice-President of the African National Congress (ANC), to end the stalemate in the course of mediation between the parties, having already visited the region and talked to relevant interlocutors. The humanitarian situation is dreadful,

even if data are uncertain: on the whole up to 10 thousand dead and about 800 thousand refugees, of which 600 thousand internally displaced persons and 130 thousand refugees fled into neighbouring countries.

Central Africa: Burundi, Central African Republic (CAR), Chad, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Rwanda.
Burundi and the USA signed a Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) with regard to training and logistical support. The Tutsi opposition party has been in fibrillation for weeks, because of internal disputes. With the authorization of the UN Security Council on December 6, Paris has launched the Operation Sangaris in the *Central African Republic (CAR)*. The French intervention is aimed at disarming all the militia that are ravaging the country. January 23, in order to replace the former temporary President Djotodia, the National Transitional Council (NTC) has elected Catherine Samba-Panza, former mayor of the capital, Bangui, as the new President of the Transition. After taking office, she stated that the elections would take place by the beginning of 2015. The new Premier is André Nzapyeké, former Secretary General of the African Development Bank. In addition, Brussels has decreed the deployment of the military mission CSDP-EUFOR RCA, thanks to a recent agreement between President Hollande of France and Chancellor Merkel of Germany. The mission German-French led mission will receive the contribution of some EU countries (Estonia, Poland, Latvia, Lithuania and Romania) plus Georgia. The command will be based in Greece. Most likely, the UN Security Council is going to authorize a new peace-UN enforcement mission in the next coming weeks. Concerning the *Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)*, parliamentary and provincial elections shall be held next year, while presidential elections in 2016. Besides, there are international concerns about the new outbreak of instability this time located in Katanga, the mining province in the southeast of the country, by reason of claims for autonomy, which have always characterized the area. As far as the Kivu is concerned, next targets of the Armed Forces of Kinshasa are Rwandan Hutu rebel militias belonging to the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR), the Ugandan Allied Democratic Forces - National Army for the Liberation of Uganda (ADF-NALU) and some other Mayi Mayi groups. The former intelligence chief of *Rwanda*, Colonel Patrick Karegeya, in exile in South Africa, Was murdered in mysterious circumstances.

Southern Africa: Angola, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, South Africa and Zimbabwe.
Angola and the Republic of the Congo have agreed on the demarcation of the common border. Actually, last fall, a few accidents involving military units of the two countries occurred in the Angolan enclave of Cabinda, more precisely in Pangui in the area of Kimongo district in the region of Niari. Brazzaville and Luanda agrees that that Pangui is Congolese, whereas Miconje is Angolan. Hery Rajoanarimampianina is the new President of the Republic of *Madagascar*, having defeated his competitor, Jean Louis Robinson. This means that the former chairman of the transition, and former mayor of Antananarivo and the author of the coup of 2009, Andry Rajoelina, will be able to indirectly preserve his political power. While Antananarivo is back in the International Organization of the Francophonie (OIF), Washington informed the new Malagasy Government that, in order to ensure the full normalization of bilateral relations, it is urgent for Madagascar to put in place the release of all political prisoners, to promptly initiate the national reconciliation, to

fight corruption and to provide appropriate compensation to the victims of political violence, which occurred during the last five years of transition. Presidential and legislative elections in *Malawi* ought to be held May 20. Among the leading candidates in lice there are the incumbent President, Joyce Banda, then Peter Mutharika and Muluzi Atupele. In *Mozambique*, presidential, parliamentary and legislative elections will take place October the 14th. Not only all political parties have approved the new electoral law, but also a framework agreement between the ruling party, FRELIMO, and the main opposition party, RENAMO was signed in ahead of the beginning of the electoral process, in such a way as to prevent any further escalation of violence, that undermine the course of the events. The Minister of Defence, Felipe Nyussi, is FELIMO's candidate, inasmuch the incumbent President, Armando Guebuza, will not be able to run for a third consecutive term. Afonso Dhlakama will compete on behalf of RENAMO, while Daviz Simango on behalf of the Democratic Movement of Mozambique (MDM). In a climate of growing social tensions, national and local elections have been scheduled for May the 7th in *South Africa*. Pretoria's economy, once the engine of both Southern Africa region and of the entire African Continent as such, is stagnating, as marked by structural contradictions and a persistent sense of crisis. In this context, despite some inevitable loss of votes, Zuma's African National Congress (ANC) should nevertheless remain dominant in relation to other political parties, who are still in a phase of profound internal reorganization. The European Union (EU) has lifted all sanctions imposed on *Zimbabwe*, in force since 2002, except for the President Mugabe in person.

Conclusions

Nigeria's quest to establish herself as a new economic hub of Africa collides with an inadequate governance. Other countries, such as Ethiopia for what concerns West Africa or Ghana to remain in West Africa, for instance, seem to provide greater assurance of a more balanced and long-term development to international investors, who are inevitably seriously concerned of the expansion of the terrorism in the former British colony. *Nevertheless, Nigeria is destined to become an indispensable player in the near future for anyone wishing to relate to the last global economic frontier: Africa.*

China

The Third Plenum and its discontents

Nunziante Mastrolia

The Third Plenum could really represent a fundamental turning point in the contemporary history of China. The reason is that the heart of "The Decision on Major Issues Concerning comprehensively Deepening Reforms," which is the master plan of the new reformist phase, consists of political and institutional reforms, which are an absolute novelty in China's history.

Three are the main guidelines of this reformist attempt: 1) an horizontal devolution of powers towards constitutional bodies such as the National Peoples Congress and the People's Supreme Court, in order to ensure the independence of the legislative and jurisdictional powers; 2) a vertical devolution, widening the area of individual rights and the independence of both the civil society and the market; 3) the rationalisation and streamlining of administrative structures, curbing the ability of public officials in conditioning citizens and firms.

The foreseeable ultimate goal of these three guidelines is to build – according to Xi Jinping - the rule of law in China. Obviously, one may suspect that this is nothing more than a different kind of empty rhetoric. However, some considerations might induce optimism.

Party's authorities and many international observers fear that Beijing may fall victim to the middle income trap. The term "middle-income-trap" was first defined in Indermit Gill and Horni Kharas *An East Asian Renaissance – Ideas for Economic Growth* (World Bank, 2007). It refers to "a developmental stage characterised by a slowdown in growth due to an inability to move up the value chain, away from factor-driven, export-dependent growth and into new innovation-driven industries". Hence, in order to avoid the middle-income trap "countries in East Asia should witness three transformations: first, diversification will slow and then reverse, as countries become more specialized in production and employment; second, investment will become less important, and innovation should accelerate; third, education systems will shift from equipping workers with skills that allow them to adjust to new technologies to preparing them to shape new products and processes".

However, if it is true that the middle income trap is an economic phenomenon, its causes are routed in the political and institutional architecture. In fact, if we consider the countries that have reached the club of developed economies – i.e. Japan, South Korea and Taiwan - it is possible to observe that they have completed the transition process: namely, economic and technological modernization *plus* political and institutional modernization. Not by chance, Zhao Minghao, a research fellow at the China Center for Contemporary World Studies, the think tank of the International Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, writes that "China's biggest threat

comes neither from the US nor Japan but from economic, political, and social institutions that have still not caught up with the times"[1].Consequently, it is possible that the new priorities imposed by CPC leadership are not just pure rhetoric, but a real attempt to create an institutional framework enabling a lasting and stable economic growth. In fact, there are some concrete signs that the reforms proposed in the Third Plenum and approved in March by the National People's Congress are now in progress. On December 24, Xinhua announced that China's lawmakers was discussing a draft amendment to the existing Administrative Procedure Law, that "should make it easier for citizens to take the government to court"[2] Xin Chunying, deputy director of the Legislative Affairs Commission of the National People's Congress (NPC) Standing Committee, declared to *China News* that "When citizens, legal persons or other organizations have disputes with governments or governmental staff, governments are unwilling to be defendants and courts are reluctant to accept and hear such cases, leading many citizens to try to solve their disputes through 'letter and visit' (petitions). In many parts of the country, citizens have more confidence in petitions than in laws". If the reform will succeed "People's courts will now accept suits in which administrators have infringed citizen's legal ownership or right". Moreover: "Citizens may bring cases against governments which fail to provide appropriate subsistence allowances or social insurance benefits. To further protect citizens' right to sue, the draft allows individuals to sue the government via oral deposition. For those who have difficulty writing a statement of charges, the court will write the plaintiff's oral statement into records and notify the sued party".[3]In February, something begins to happen. On February 28, the *Global Times* tells the case of the 27-year-old Lei Chuang, who decided to take the Guangzhou-Shenzhen Railway Corporation to court. The reason? The Railway Corporation charges the same price for both standing and seated tickets, even though trains are always overbooked. For Lei it is something more than a scam: "I'm not going to profit off of this case, and it might be a stupid way to defend your rights, but my dignity is priceless". The trial has begun on March 6.

On 25 February, the *Global Times* tells the story of Li Guixin, resident in Shijiazhuang, the capital of north China's Hebei province, who is attempting to sue the local government over the heavy air pollution that has enveloped the city, requesting the bureau to fulfil its obligation to curb air pollution based on article 7 of the Environment Protection Law[4] Li also asked for compensation of 10,000 yuan ($1,630) from the bureau for economic and health damage caused by air pollution. According to *The Huffingnton Post* this is a "landmark case". *The Diplomat* clarifies that "Li's case is especially sensitive because it brings suit not against a polluting company, but against the

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[1] Zhao Minghao, "Caution needed as growing strength comes with new problems", Global Times, March 13, 2014.

[2] "China makes it easier to sue government", China Daily, December 24, 2013.

3"China to revise law to make it easier to sue government", Xinhua, December 24, 2013

[4] "Hebei resident sues gov't over heavy air pollution", China.org, February 25, 2014.

government for not doing a sufficient job of policing pollution (…) Should it be allowed to proceed (…) it would set the precedent that local governments at least can be held accountable for pollution that occurs within their jurisdiction"[5]. The case of Li Guixin is noteworthy not only because it shows the increasing environmental awareness of Chinese citizens (not by chance, Li Keqiang in presenting the *Report on the Work of the Government* 2013 declared a real "war on pollution", which costs to China every year nearly 3% of GDP), but mainly because it shows as some Chinese citizens are becoming more and more aware that they are entitled of certain rights (in this case the right to health), which can not be waived in name of economic development and above all that public authorities can be held accountable for their mistakes.Therefore, accountability *plus* transparency, considered crucial in "building a modern government", as Li Jun writes on *China Daily*. In February the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences released the *2014 Blue Book of Rule of Law*, in which central government bodies are classified on the basis of their degree of transparency. The Ministry of Education ranked number one in the index, followed by the State Administration of Work Safety and the National Development and Reform Commission. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Justice and the State Bureau for Letters and Calls are ranked at the bottom[6]. Wang Yiqiong on the *Global Times* explains that research fellows from CASS: "asked government departments to disclose information in written form, but found that many departments were reluctant to comply with the requests. A majority cited State secrets as an excuse to withhold information". However, this bad practice could soon come to an end. Starting from March 1, a new regulation on the state secrecy law came into force: "Organs and units have been told not to label items that should be made public as 'state secrets'"[7]. In the meantime, the judiciary system reform goes on. According to the *Work Report of the Supreme People's Court* released in March during the annual session of the National People's Congress: "the reform will include reducing the government's influence on jurisdiction, improving transparency of trials and exploring a way to set up a jurisdiction system of courts that is not completely based on administrative divisions"[8].
 Cao Jianming, president of the Supreme People's Procuratorate, announced that in the following months a comprehensive plan of the reforms in the judiciary field will be released[9].
Also in the field of human rights it seems that something is changing. The Third Plenum has

[5] "Chinese Man Sues Local Government Over Smog", February 26, 2014.

[6] "Govt transparency below par" Global Times, 25 February 2014. See also "China to increase government transparency", China Daily, February 24, 2014

[7] "Li signs regulation on state secrecy law", China Daily, February 2, 2014

[8] "China's chief justice warns of weakness, pledges reform in court system", Xinhua, March 10, 2014

pledged to end the controversial "re-education through labour" programme[10].

Moreover, on March China banned the imprisonment of petitioners seeking government redress[11]. At this series of innovations must be added the war - unleashed by Xi Jinping - against the corrupted "tigers and flies" inside the Chinese establishment. A war without borders, ranging from thousands of officials indicted and convicted, to the ouster of senior members of the Armed Forces, as in the case of General Gu Junshan, former deputy logistics chief in China's Army, or the tycoons of big business, such as billionaire Liu Han, until the cautious encirclement of Zhou Yongkang, the powerful head of the Political and Legislative Affairs Committee, whose fall would break the unwritten rule that guarantee immunity to the members (or former members) of the Politburo Standing Committee.

There is a widespread suspicion that these defenestrations are nothing but a massive purge to oust those who are able to weaken the leadership of Xi Jinping. However, other factors must be taken into account.First, the convictions that have affected a large number the judicial system officials [12]. : during the last year 11,948 administrative law enforcers had been investigated and punished; 2,279 judicial staff have been investigated on abuse of power for personal gains, embezzlement and bending the law for personal interests, and dereliction of duty[13].; moreover, China's procuratorates investigated and punished 210 prosecutors in 2013 for violating laws and regulations[14].Second, the first electoral scandal in China. On March 18, the *Global Times* refers that "two former government officials in Central China's Hunan Province have been arrested and put under criminal investigation over an election scandal". In an election of provincial legislators in Hengyang City of Hunan in late 2012 and early 2013, 56 city lawmakers offered bribes to 518 of their fellow lawmakers and another 68 staff in order to get elected. The scandal, of which the two officials arrested is just the tip of the iceberg, involves more than 500 people for a round of bribes amounting to 18 million of dollars[15].

Also in this case, one may describe this war against corruption as a power struggle within the

[9] "Highlights of work report of China's Supreme People's Procuratorate", Global Times, March 10, 2014. The main goal is to free "the courts and prosecutor's offices from the administrative interference of local governments to ensure judicial independence (…)The focus of the reform is to bring the personnel, funds and goods of local courts and prosecutor's offices under the control of provincial authorities and separated from local governments"

[10]"China's labour camp system officially abolished", South China Morning Post, December 28, 2013

[11] "China bans the locking up of petitioners seeking government redress", South China Morning Post, March 20, 2014

[12] "China targets judicial corruption in commutation", Xinhua, February 24, 2014

[13] "Highlights of work report of China's Supreme People's Procuratorate", Global Times, March 10, 2014

[14] "210 Chinese procurators punished in 2013", China Daily, March 10, 2014

Party. Although it seems really odd that in China someone can be ousted for having rigged the elections in a country where elections have never been an example of fairness and transparency. Therefore, in the post-Third Plenum China it is necessary to do a different hypothesis, namely that the Beijing authorities are saying to all party members that in the coming years the election process - at the grassroots level at least - has to be free and transparent.As mentioned earlier, one of the cornerstones of the reform process is to ensure greater rights and greater freedom and autonomy to civil society. One of the essential tools to ensure this greater role of civil society is - as Tocqueville pointed out - guaranteeing the freedom of association. Up to now in China there weren't trade unions or professional associations independent from political power. However, on 6 December, The China Daily informed that: "China's trade and professional associations will become independent from government agencies by 2015"[16].

The novelty is important because, beyond the economic and social reasons, these associations could be the first counter-powers, legally recognized, able to curb and limit the arbitrariness of political power.

What do these signs mean? It is possible, as we said before, that this might be the new rhetoric of political leadership in China: an empty rhetoric that only serves to strengthen the power of the new leaders. In other words, it is possible that Xi Jinping may be the new Chinese Gattopardo, who wants to change everything to not change anything.At the same time, it is possible that the new Chinese leadership really wants to open a new phase of modernization for the country: the institutional modernization. What does institutional modernization mean? In one word: Rule of Law[17].

Hence, it is possible that in Beijing the main purpose of the reform plan is to build a liberal but not (yet or not fully) democratic institutional order. According to Norberto Bobbio, – "the liberal state is the prerequisite not only historical but legal of the democratic state. (...) In other words, it is unlikely that a non-liberal state can ensure a proper functioning of the liberal democracy"[18].

Thus, the priority should be given to the establishment of the rule of law, without which there can

[15] "Two arrested over central China election scandal", Xinhua, March 18, 2014. See also "China Cash-for-Votes Scandal Shows Xi's Graft Challenge", Bloomberg, December 30, 2013

[16]He Dan, "Social organizations to become independent", China Daily, December 6, 2013

[17] Xi Jinping recently said that in order to modernize the Nation the CPC must rule in a "scientific, democratic and legal manner (…) A governing system is determined by history, cultural tradition, economic development, and the will of the people", "Xi urges modernization of governing system", Xinhua, February 17, 2014.

[18] N. Bobbio, *Il futuro della democrazia*, Einaudi, Turin, 1995, p. 7

be no democracy.In conclusion, it is still possible to support the hypothesis that the new Chinese leadership want really "kill the Gattopardo", that is to say to change everything in order to change everything. Even David Lampton sustains this hypothesis, when he envisages a scenario "in which China's leaders propel the country forward, establishing the rule of law and regulatory structures that better reflect the country's diverse interests. Beijing would also have to expand its sources of legitimacy beyond growth, materialism, and global status, by building institutions anchored in genuine popular support. This would not necessarily mean transitioning to a full democracy, but it would mean adopting its features: local political participation, official transparency, more independent judicial and anticorruption bodies, an engaged civil society, institutional checks on executive power, and legislative and civil institutions to channel the country's diverse interests. Only after all these steps have been taken might the Chinese government begin to experiment with giving the people a say in selecting its top leaders."[19]

[19] D. M. Lampton, "How China Is Ruled", Foreign Affairs, January/February 2014.

India

The Arvind Kejriwal saga and the aftermath of Indian elections

Claudia Astarita

Mr Arkvind Kejriwal, now 44 years old, came to the limelight in 2011 as the backroom organiser of the anti-corruption campaign led by Mr Anna Hazare, a sociologist as well as one of India's most famous social activists and anti-corruption fighter. However, from the closest right-hand of Mr Hazare, Mr. Kejriwal succeeded in launching his political party, Aam Admi Party (AAP), or Common Man's Party, with the aim of providing a corruption-free alternative to Indian people. A successful alternative we should say, as the AAP and Mr Kejriwal's work have been rewarded in January with the latter appointment as New Delhi Chief Minister, a position that the activist turned politician kept for less than two months.

To a certain extent, his resignation after 49 days of office came as unexpected as his appointment. This decision was the immediate consequence of the embarrassment following the opposition's firm stand on blocking the introduction of the Jan Lokpal Bill – Mr Kejriwal's pet project - in the Delhi assembly. The Jan Lokpal Bill, which is also known as the Citizen's Ombudsman Bill, is an anti-corruption bill drafted and drawn up by civil society activists in India seeking the appointment of a Jan Lokpal, an independent body to investigate on corruption cases. This controversial bill aims to deter corruption, compensate citizen grievances, and protect whistle-blowers. To draw the attention of the government on India's corruption failures, Anna Hazare launched his "India Against Corruption" campaign cantered on Jan Lokpal Bill implementation in 2011, supporting his idea will hunger strikes and mass gathering. However, it was Mr Kejriwal, in January 2014, who for the first time had a real chance to make the bill approved with a parliamentary vote. He failed, and resigned afterwards.

Remaining loyal to his political priorities, Mr. Kejriwal proved he is a fighter like Mr Hazare used to be. Accordingly, after his most recent announcement to run-up to the upcoming general election and take on the main opposition Bharatiya Janata Party's PM candidate Narendra Modi, it is crucial to uncover his position to both understand his move and to decode potential arrangements and alliances in the new government. In order to do that, Mr Kejriwal and his party successes, strategy and objectives are reviewed. Further, strategies and commitments of the main political parties in India, the Congress Party and the Bharatiya Janata Party, as well as strengs and weaknesses of their leaders, Mr Rahul Gandhi and Mr. Narendra Modi, are also introduced.

Going back to Mr Kejriwal's political rise, it is a matter of fact that he made a spectacular debut last December, when his party won 28 seats in Delhi's state assembly out of the 70 on offer, propelling him to the post of chief minister in the capital. Nobody expected at this stage that his gov-

ernment would have lasted only 49 days, and that he would have been defeated on his anti-corruption campaign.

Mr. Kejriwal formally entered politics in 2012. At that time, he made clear to his potential supporters that he would have been able to accomplish his mentor's anti-corruption goal without his support. Unfortunately, it took 49 days only to the opposition in Delhi to prove him wrong, and despite Mr. Kejriwal resigned from his Delhi position to remain loyal to his strategy and priority, he is now back on the major political arena with the aim of "replicating on the national stage what his party did in Delhi."

The AAP has nominated more than 400 candidates for the general election, pitting many of them against some of top Congress and BJP leaders. As soon as, during the run up to the polls, Mr Kejriwal started extensively touring the country, taking out road shows and addressing rallies to canvass support for his party candidates, some people started thinking Delhi's resignations might be interpreted as political strategy rather than the mere proof of his firmness on the anti-corruption fight. Or, even better, that Delhi's debacle proved to be functional to Mr. Kejriwal strategy to strengthen his image as a leader loyal to his values and commitments, leaving him a new and broader space of manoeuvre to compete in the national political arena.

That said, it is important to remember that when Mr Kejriwal decided to launch his political party on 2 October 2012, he assured his supporters he wanted to fight against the culture of "bribe-taking" and pledged to contest the election. He explained the need to create a new party stressing that India had been sold to corrupted politicians and that all existing parties were guilty of that.

As reported by the BBC, "born in 1968 in the town of Hisar in the northern state of Haryana to middle-class parents, Mr Kejriwal graduated from the prestigious Indian Institute of Technology in Kharagpur with a degree in mechanical engineering. After a brief stint working with the private sector Tata group, he joined the Indian civil services in 1992 as a revenue officer. He took voluntary retirement from his job in 2006 and set up an NGO - Public Cause Research Foundation - to work full time to promote transparency in government and to create awareness about the Right to Information movement."

Mr Kejriwal is used to say that "what led him to quit his job as a senior bureaucrat and become an activist wasn't anger or bitterness; it was the loss of his own faith in government after a decade in its service."

When he decided to leave Anna Hazara to continue his campaign out of the parliament by himself and create a new party to conduct his fight from the inside, Mr Kejriwal started circulating a draft document in which he stated some of the goals of his new party, which included devolution of power, fighting corruption, containing inflation and ensuring fair prices for farm products. He also chose an extremely evocative symbol for the AAP: a broom, to remind his supporter that his main priority was the one of making a clean sweep of his corrupted colleagues.

He began his campaign by making corruption claims against Law Minister Salman Khurshid and Robert Vadra, son-in-law of Congress party chief Sonia Gandhi. Although his initial protests seemed capturing only small crowds of people, leaving his opponents to make fun of him highlighting how unlikely it would have been for him to translate his commitment into votes for his political party, the Delhi elections result proved them wrong. This was indeed the first occasion in which the AAP was identified as a threat for others major parties.

It would be unfair not to recognize that, during his brief time in office, Mr Kejriwal's political inexperience became visible to everybody, both inside and outside the Parliament. For example, he decided to focus on a series of what some analysts called "headline-grabbing initiatives", among which the anti-corruption hotline to help people deal with demands for bribes by government workers. "He spent two nights in the open as part of a mass sit-in to press the federal government to grant him greater control over the city police", which is something a worldly politician would have avoided. However, some analysts consider extremely clever Mr Kejriwal's choice to resign after the opposition blocked the implementation of the law that would have created a Citizens' Ombudsman, or Jan Lokpal. This independent body was about to be granted the power to investigate politicians and civil servants suspected of corruption, but opposition parties prevented this from happening arguing that introducing legislation that did not have the approval of the federal government was unconstitutional. Mr Kejriwal threatened many times to quit if the bill did not go through, and duly did so to keep his word and to be consequently identified as a trustworthy leader whose priority was remaining loyal to his anti-corruption agenda rather than chasing political power *per se*.

However, Mr Kejriwal's resignation from Delhi's Chief Minister offered him more time to organize and compete in the national campaign for the forthcoming general elections, at a stage in which his 49 days of office in the Indian capital had incredibly raised his popularity all over the country. Indeed, even if Mr Kejriwal and his party continue to be perceived as unable to keep their promise "to bring about a complete political revolution in the next general election, they would at least have the satisfaction of changing the political discourse". The AAP has already nominated 407 candidates for the election and said it would contest all the 543 seats.

In order to understand the impact or Mr Kejriwal candidature, especially after his recent announcement that he is going to challenge Mr Modi in Varanasi directly, it is crucial to introduce the other main players of this extremely awaited political consultation.

At the moment, the BJP leader Narendra Modi appears to be the most important political figure in the country, as well as "India's most divisive politician - loved and loathed in equal measure."

Mr Modi has served as chief minister of the western state of Gujarat since 2001 and is seen as a dynamic and efficient leader who has made his state an economic powerhouse. At the same time, he is accused of having done too little to stop the religious riots that in 2002 killed more than one thousand people, except for rejecting since then this allegation.

Opinion polls have put the BJP and Mr Modi far ahead of their main rival, the ruling Congress party, and he has been broadly recognized as the overwhelming favourite to become India's next prime minister. Indeed, despite his turbid past, Mr Modi's defenders like stressing that their leader is both clean and reliable. Indeed, if on the one hand it is a matter of fact that investigations, including the ones conducted by the admirably independent Supreme Court, have found nothing to charge him with, on the other hand nobody can deny how much he has changed since the 2002 massacre.

However, as *The Economist* recently pointed out, "On both counts, that is too generous. One reason why the inquiries into the riots were inconclusive is that a great deal of evidence was lost or wilfully destroyed. And if the facts in 2002 are murky, so are Mr Modi's views now. He could put the pogroms behind him by explaining what happened and apologising. Yet he refuses to answer ques-

tions about them. In a rare comment last year he said he regretted Muslims' suffering as he would that of a puppy run over by a car. Amid the uproar, he said he meant only that Hindus care about all life. Muslims—and chauvinist Hindus—heard a different message. Unlike other BJP leaders, Mr Modi has refused to wear a Muslim skullcap and failed to condemn riots in Uttar Pradesh in 2013 when most of the victims were Muslim."

Mr Modi's Congress party rival, Rahul Gandhi, could not be more different from him. Mr Gandhi is the heir of India's powerful Nehru-Gandhi dynasty, as he is the great-grandson of Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first premier. He was appointed second-in-command of the Congress party only last year, and it was only during the past several weeks that he eventually start being politically active and travelled all over India to address rallies and hold meetings with party workers and supporters.

However, most of analysts believe that "bearing the brunt of voter unhappiness over a slowing economy, high inflation and a string of damaging corruption scandals", 2014 election may end up in a debacle for the Congress party, forcing it to give up more than half of its current 206 seats. At the same time, nobody can deny that the Italian-born Sonia Gandhi, the Congress party president and head of the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty, continues to be the most powerful woman in India. Her grip over the party has never been in doubt, and her attitude for influencing votes is unpredictable. Before discussing whether it would be better for India to choose Mr Modi or Mr Gandhi as a Prime Minister, is it important to introduce the regional leaders that may play a significant role in rebalancing the final electoral outcome.

The first one is Ms Mayawati, four-time chief minister of Uttar Pradesh who lost ground to her rival Samajwadi Party in the state elections in 2012. Many analysts believe that "her Bahujan Samaj Party is likely to play a crucial role in the formation of a new government if the national parties fail to get a clear majority in the general elections". Ms Mayawati is an extremely charismatic politician, and as the icon to millions of India's Dalits. She enjoys tremendous popularity among the lower castes. Although she is dreaming to become Indian Prime Minister, she may become particularly appealing for parties interest in creating a coalition government to keep a winning but minority political opponent out of the Government.

The same could be said for Ms Mamata Banerjee, the chief minister of West Bengal as well as the leader of the Trinamool Congress party (TMC). The TMC has already aligned itself with the Congress party in the past.

Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, instead, is a former ally of the BJP, although his party, the Janata Dal United party, decided to break this alliance right after Mr Modi was nominated the prime minister candidate for BJP. Mr Kumar is considered a good administrator, as well as the politician who eventually helped Bihar to abandon his legacy of extreme poverty and corruption to embrace development. 40 MPs are elected in Bihar, and it is not sure whether they will support Mr Modi, and risk to lose the support of Muslim in the state, or not. They will probably not join the Congress Party either, but refusing to explicitly back the BJP they will end up supporting Mr Gandhi indirectly.

Jayalalithaa Jayaram is the chief minister of the southern state of Tamil Nadu and head of the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam party (AIADMK). She a former actress of Tamil cinema who claims a strong presence in both national and state politics since when she was elected chief

minister for the first time, in 1991. Her party is expected to perform well in the elections, and it seems that both the BJP and the Congress will be happy to gain her support after the vote.

The reason why it is so important to understand what kind of allies the defeated leader between Mr Modi and Mr Gandhi may choose to contact is linked to the fact that, sharing *The Economist* view, "We do not find the prospect of a government led by Congress under Mr Gandhi an inspiring one. But we have to recommend it to Indians as the less disturbing option". No matter how unlikely the victory of the Congress party is now, it is highly possible that if the BJP obtains the majority of votes, opposition parties might prefer to form a coalition among themselves to back a prime minister other than Mr Modi.

As far as Mr Kejriwal is concerned, it seems that by choosing to fight him directly in Varanasi he has to a certain extent ruled out for himself (but not for his party) the option to join this eventual anti-Modi coalition. However, no matter how suicidal this choice can be for the AAP, Mr Kejriwal has certainly proved one more time that he is a fighter. That said, it would be interesting to see if India is going to offer him a reward for his outstanding bravery, determination, commitment and integrity.

European Defence Initiatives

The EU set its priorities for 2014: key capabilities and African missions

Claudio Catalano

The EU has started to set its defence priorities for the year to come. On 12 February 2014, these priorities have been discussed in a meeting of the Security and Defence subcommittee of the European Parliament.

The European Parliament does not have any competence on the decisions on the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), which is an intergovernmental issue dealt with by the EU Council of Ministers. Nonetheless, European defence has become a key issue since the December 2013 European Council, and a more open debate on these issues is welcomed by the EU.

Representatives from the military staff and EU defence agencies, such as the chairman of the EU military Committee and the Head of the European Defence Agency (EDA), have been invited to deliver a speech on their specific issues.

Therefore, the European Parliament has debated on: Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems (RPASs), and the Operational cyber-security. The committee has also assessed the military missions in Africa such as: European Union Training Mission (EUTM) Somalia, EUTM Mali and the new mission in Central African Republic (CAR).

This is because, on 10 February 2014, the Council of Ministers has approved the launch of an EU peacekeeping mission to the CAR.

The EU key capabilities
On 19 November 2013, the EDA steering committee has approved a medium-altitude long-endurance (MALE) RPAS common project for 2020-2025. This project has been endorsed by the European Council on 19-20 December 2013.

The military use and development of RPAS has been debated in the subcommittee. Several European Member of Parliament expressed concern for a European Research and Development of Unmanned Combat Aerial Vehicles (UCAVs). The military use of RPAS for targeted killing has raised moral issue in The United States, but the European MALE RPASs shall be utilised for reconnaissance purposes only. In this way, RPAS are a solid complement to ISR (intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance) aircraft and satellites, by allowing a permanent surveillance in theatres of operation. The EU military staff is planning to utilize a few MALE RPAS in CAR. Maritime surveillance could be another key role for RPASs.

The EU still lacks a doctrine for operational use of RPAS, a need which shall be addressed as soon as possible.

The EDA, the EU Commission, together the national airworthiness agencies are now working to set the rule for the airworthiness of RPASs in European controlled airspace.

The EU agencies are also working on the DeSIRE project. The initial phase of the DeSIRE I in 2012-2013 demonstrated the use of satellites to enable the insertion of RPAS in non-segregated airspace in Europe for

maritime surveillance services. The second phase, the DeSIRE II project will demonstrate that services such as environment and maritime surveillance applications, can be performed with RPASs flying beyond radio

line of sight through the use of safe and secure satellite-based command-and-control data links. For this purpose, space assets, such as communication satellites, navigation satellites, and imaging or Earth observation satellites, shall be integrated in the RPAS loop.

Cyber-security is another key issue. The EU military staff is particularly keen on the cyber-security of communications between the operational headquarters and the in theatre headquarters. State-of-the-art cyber-protection is expected for secure communications between EUFOR RCA head-quarters ion Bangui and the EU operational headquarters in Larissa, Greece. For this purpose, the EU Military staff has also intensified cooperation with the NATO Cyber defence Center of excellence in Estonia.

The shrinking European defence budgets paint a dire picture for European defence. In 2013, the defence budgets of the five major Member States (France, Germany, Italy, Spain, and the UK) have decreased by 1.6%. Projections predict a further budget reduction of 2.4% in 2014. An exception to the rule is Germany, where cuts have been relatively modest. It has seen its share of total Western European expenditure increase to 18%.

The French defence budget has followed a gradually declining path following the fallout from the global financial crisis. The *Projet de Loi de Programmation Militaire* (LPM) 2014-2019 released in August 2013, which covers six years of French military spending, will see spending remain static in nominal terms from 2013-16 at € 31.38 Bn a year, rising slightly to € 31.56 Bn in 2017, € 31.78 Bn in 2018, and finally € 32.51 Bn in 2019. In the UK, the Chancellor of the exchequer has released in December 2013 the Autumn Statement, which details additional cuts of 1.14% for the Ministry of Defence (MoD) budget. However, the MoD has been promised a real-term rise in its equipment budget from 2016-21 of 1%: about £ 3 Bn in total.

The reimbursement to the UK Treasury of the Urgent Operational Requirement (UOR) for the Afghanistan deployment are still eroding the core UK military procurement budget.

The raise of cooperative armaments programmes, and the pooling and sharing of military capabilities are the only hopes for EU Member States to maintain credible military capabilities.

EUTM Mali

On 18 March 2014, EUTM Mali has concluded the first mandate by training 4 battalions of the Malian Armed Forces (FAMa). The EU mission now prepares for a second mandate to train another 4 battalions by May 2016.

The FAMa have now a strength of 14,000 military personnel, with the Gendarmerie and National Guard adding another 13,000, and 3 elite battalions can now be deployed in the Malian northern region to fight Tuareg separatists and Islamist militants. In mid-March, after a final exercise at the

Koulikoro facility 60 km from Bamako, EUTM has completed the 12 weeks training of the last FAMa: Balanzan Battalion. The Battalion is expected to deploy to the North of the country.

The deployment of FAMa units to the north is becoming increasingly important as France withdraws some of the unites assigned to French Operation 'Serval'. French units have been deployed in Mali since January 2013. Operation Serval force shall be reduced from the current strength of 1,600 personnel to 1,100 personnel by mid-2014.

The FAMa battalion have been trained by EUTM according to French military doctrine in four essential tasks: area control (establishing and manning check points, escorting convoys, and patrolling); defensive operations; offensive reconnaissance; and combined attack. The programme starts with two weeks of leadership training for the officers and non-commissioned officers (NCOs). Over the following five weeks the different units are trained in their core specialisations. It then finishes with three weeks of training in combined operations involving all the different elements.

The 4 battalions are structured along the French doctrine in 700-strong Groupements Tactique Interarmes (GTIAs). The GTIAs are structured to be self-sufficient: they consist of 3 infantry companies, 1 armoured unit equipped with BTR-60 vehicles, and an artillery unit with single-barrel 122 mm Grad 2M rocket launchers and 60 mm mortars. The GTIAs are also equipped with around 80 vehicles, including Toyota pick-ups, ACMAT ALTV and VLRA vehicles, and Renault Kerax trucks. The GTIAs include engineers, and logistics supports units. GTIAs also a+have a Tactical Air Control Party (TACP) trained to liaise with the Tetras light reconnaissance aircraft of Malian air wing, as well as with the French Mirage 2000s flying in support of Operation 'Serval'.

When deployed to the north, FAMa battalions are joined by French Army liaison detachments (Detachment de Liaison et d'Appui Opérationnel - DLAO). These units are made up of 32 soldiers and they mentor their Malian GTIAs and co-ordinate their activities with French operations. French military is filling the FAMa's capability gaps, in providing intelligence, close air support, helicopters, logistics, and medical assistance.

The GTIAs training evolved during the first mandate of EUTM. When the second mandate of EUTM begins, The first GTIAs trained by EUTM, the Waraba Battalion is expected to return to the Koulikoro Training Centre, in order to re-train again its new recruits.

One of the lessons learned from Waraba Battalion's deployment was the need to "win hearts and minds" of the local populations, who are hostile towards the FAMa. EUTM Mali has had to add courses to teach civilian-military relations to the Malians. The 2nd(Elou) and 3rd (Sigui) battalions trained by have since improved their relations with locals, partly by offering medical assistance or supporting various community projects.

In its second mandate, EUTM Mali will also include delocalised training for the first four battalions, as well as a train-the-trainers (TTT) programme. The delocalised training will consist of mobile EUTM Mali teams carrying out two-week sessions for FAMa units at their garrisons. The TTT programme will be carried out at Koulikoro, with 14 FAMa trainers being trained alongside each of the four battalions. This will be divided into three modules: 'shaping' to teach the training method; 'embedded' where the cadets shadow EU trainers and learn to brief and debrief; and 'consolidation' where they will learn to set up exercises.

In the second mandate the composition of EUTM Mali will be reshaped, with 160 soldiers from

the Franco-German Brigade relieving the current French and German contingents. France will remain the lead nation, but Germany will increase its troops contribution. The Polish contingent, which had been specialising in logistics training, will withdraw. The Polish withdrawal may cause some concern if no EU Member State steps forward to replace it.

EUTM Mali also has an Advanced Liaison Task Force (ALTF) which has started in November 2013 to advise the Malian Government on the reform of national armed forces. The ALTF has 18 officers from 6 Member States, who are all specialists in a particular field (finances, intelligence, logistics, etc). They are divided into several working groups covering areas such as human resources and operational readiness. These groups are co-ordinated by a steering committee that is itself guided by an executive committee made up of European advisors and senior Malian military officials, including the defence minister.

The ALTF has overseen an audit and helped draft a reform bill for military planning for the 2014-2018 period, including its financing. The bill will be submitted to the Malian parliament for approval.

The eight existing military regions will be replaced by three permanent zones. A centralised operational planning and command structure is expected to be created in Bamako to oversee and co-ordinate every military action in real time.

The Malian authorities also want to acquire information and communication systems and some helicopter capabilities, tough the costs could deter them from doing it.

The EUTM Mali advising is a model that can be applied in others countries, such as the CAR.

EUFOR CAR mission

Following a political accord between EU ministers in January 2013, the European Council of ministers has approved a battalion-size EU force (EUFOR) in CAR to assist French and regional peacekeepers, with a budget of € 29.5 million costs, with national contributions costs based on the principle of costs lie where they fall.

The military planning and force-generation for the mission has started with a first force-generation conference on 13 February 2013. EUFOR RCA with full operational capability is expected for the end of May 2014, hopefully before the region's rainy season starts.

EUFOR RCA is based on UN Security Council resolution 2134, its goal is to relieve a 6,000-strong Africa Union (AU) African-led International Support Mission to the CAR (MISCA), and the 1,600 French troops operating in the capital, Bangui. MISCA and French troops will then be redeployed in other areas of the country. The EUFOR RCA is expected to transfer its responsibilities and operating area to MISCA when its mandate expires, though a larger UN mission in late 2104 have also been rumored.

Preliminary planning for the mission has seen an unprecedented level of consultation between the EU Military Staff and DG-ECHO, the European Commission's office for humanitarian aid so as to develop a comprehensive approach for the mission, which integrates military, humanitarian, development, and civil governance efforts.

Another challenge for EUFOR planners is the cooperation with MISCA on command and control (C2) issues so as to clear the ground for the future UN Mission.

EU Military staff planners have also considered a police component for EUFOR RCA, with one

option for structured police units of Carabinieri-style forces (MSU-like units) to fill the public security gap. To deploy an executive police unit the conditions of jurisdiction and prosecution in the CAR shall be clarified beforehand.

EUFOR RCA do not involve the deployment of EU Battle Groups as the Battle Group concepts and structures are now under review by the EU.

ISR capabilities, including RPASs,logistics, force protection, and MEDEVAC capabilities are needed for the demanding tasks of EUFOR RCA.

A robust mandate on rules of engagement (RoE) has been suggested by the EU military planners. On 13 February 2014, EUFOR RCA appointed operation commander, French Major General Philippe Pontiès, announced that the mission will have a 6-months mandate and will not be renewed. EUFOR RCA will also have a limited area of operations in the Bangui area, including its airport where an estimated 100,000 internally displaced Muslim refugees are sheltering from militias 100,000 internally displaced persons have sought refuge from militias.

On 1 April 2014, the EUFOR RCA mission was officially launched by sending to Bangui area combat units and a police component. Nonetheless, the force-generation process is still ongoing, as EUFOR RCA still lacks some capabilities, such as force protection and infantry elements.

EUFOR RCA combat units are deployed to Bangui's airport to protect its refugee camps and to the capital's third and fifth districts. All units will have autonomous command and control and logistics support.

To date, the following commitments have been made by EU Member States: maintenance units and gendarmerie from France; a combat section from both Estonia and Latvia; special forces and gendarmerie from Spain; gendarmerie and a C-130 type transport aircraft from Portugal; military engineering experts from Italy; two specialist teams from Finland; gendarmerie from Poland; and strategic air transport from Germany, Luxembourg and Sweden. EUFOR RCA staff expects a reinforcement of air transport capabilities to be provided by Germany. Other Member States, such as Austria, Greece, and the UK took part in the first force-generation conference, but do not have provided capabilities yet.

Non-EU contries such as Georgia have provided a combat company with about 100 troops. During the first force-generation conference, Canada had promised to offer intelligence and surveillance capabilities.

The EUFOR RCA's combination of combat, force-protection, intelligence, logistics and civil police capabilities will enable it to fulfill its role, to fight against bandits and militias, who are mainly armed with machetes.

As EUFOR RCA deploys in the country, French Operation 'Sangaris' enters its third phase, by redeploying forces to the east of the country, starting from 3 April 2014. France is also contributing to EUFOR with a combat unit made up by the 152ème Régiment d'Infanterie.

The aim of French Operation 'Sangaris' is to protect civilians in the north from the militias that have emerged since the Séléka rebel coalition deposed then president François Bozizé in March 2013.

The key goal of the first phase of Operation 'Sangaris' was to establish security in Bangui by disarming militia and facilitating the deployment of MISCA. The second phase secured the main supply route to Bangui from the western border with Cameroon, which is now used by around 200

trucks a day.

On the other hand, MISCA is experiencing some problems with the troops of neighboring Chad. Chad troops are said to have killed on 29 March 2014 at least 30 people and wounded another 300 locals when they opened fire on a crowd in Muslim-dominated PK12 district in the Bangui area, according to the preliminary findings of a United Nations human rights investigation. Chad subsequently said it would withdraw the 850 troops that it contributes to MISCA due to persistent allegations that it is supporting the predominantly Muslim ex-Séléka militias. MISCA had reached a strength of around 6,500 (including police) by the time Chad announced its withdrawal.

The EU is keen on improving its capabilities, so as to boost its force projection capabilities. The RPASs and cyber defence capabilities are aimed at the operational use. RPASs shall provide with ISR capabilities, while cyber defence is essential for the secure communications. Another key capabilities are communication satellites, which have been shortlisted as one of the 5 EDA key capabilities in November 2013. Force projection is key as Sub-Saharan Africa is becoming a key area for EU peacekeeping. After about 15 years of Western Balkans peacekeeping, the EU strategic interests is shifting towards another war-torn area, which is far away from EU neighborhood.

2014: a turning point for Japan's defence

Stefano Felician Beccari

When the Second World War ended, Japan's empire was dismantled, its navy was annihilated, its industrial base was destroyed and two cities – Hiroshima and Nagasaki – suffered the first and the only nuclear bombardment in history. Since the end of WWII Japanese defence lives in a kind of limbo; even today its military forces (Japanese Self Defence Forces or JSDF) cannot be considered as some truly "armed forces", but rather a "third way" between a civilian and a military body of the State. But in 2013, after more than a decade of cuts, Japan's defence budget has begun to rise. Moreover, the current Prime Minister, Shinzo Abe, is openly asking to revision the article 9 of the Constitution, a cornerstone of Japanese defence and foreign policy. According to this vision, in the first part of 2014 the government has begun to openly change the Japan's security strategy and to increase the defence spending. On the one hand, some experts and governments are shouting against this "new militarization" of Japan, saying that it is an open threat to the region's stability. On the other hand, Tokyo has many reasons to look for a tougher national security. It is clear that this new approach and the modernization of Japanese defence, wittingly or unwittingly, will have a relevant impact in the whole Asia-Pacific.

Abe's vision: a stronger Japan

Since the victory of Abe's Liberal Democratic Party (LPD) in December 2012 the approach of Japan towards its neighborhood has changed. This change has been backed by a series of internal and external initiatives of the Government. These aim to increase Japan's role in the Asia Pacific and to protect the Japanese sovereignty from foreign threats. The current government is also trying to change the Constitution to establish a proper defence. Right now, *de iure,* Japan does not have some "regular" armed forces, but just a "Japan Self Defence Force", also known as JSDF. Since the end of WWII, the JSDF has suffered more limitations than the services of other countries which also lost the war, like Italy and Germany. But the victory of Mao's forces in China (1949) and the Korean war (1950-1953) clearly demonstrated that a complete demilitarization of the country was impossible and maybe dangerous for the US interests in the Pacific. Therefore, despite the still existing article 9 of the Constitution (<<to accomplish the aim of the preceding paragraph, land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained>>) today the JSDF are *de facto* a professional military, even if, "politically", they cannot be considered as such. But since

the beginning of the 21ˢᵗ century something began to change. President Abe and his vision are widely seen as the main drivers of this change. In 2007, during the previous mandate, Abe decided to transform the *Japanese Defence Agency* in a real "Ministry of defence", but without changing the status nor the name of JSDF or the Constitution.

After the beginning of his second mandate, Shinzo Abe has mainly focused his action in the economic ("Abenomics" is the nickname given to his doctrine) and in the security sphere. The latter has immediately sparked off a series of comments within Japan and in the neighbor countries. LDP's tougher line is especially uncomfortable for China and South Korea, where Abe is considered a nationalist (<<arch-nationalist>>, according to *the Economist*) and a revisionist. Usually his historical views about WWII and its legacy (like the issue of the "comfort women" or the visit to the controversial Yasukuni Shrine) are considered unacceptable and sometimes outrageous. Moreover, both China and South Korea have some open territorial disputes with Japan, respectively concerning the Senkaku/Diaoyou and the Dokdo/Takeshima islands. After more than a decade of cuts in the defence budget, Abe's administration decided to increase it since the beginning of 2013. This trend is likely to continue in 2014, igniting new critics in the neighbor countries and beyond.

Japanese security and defence according to the last strategic documents
According to many analysts, Tokyo's government is increasing the military spending due to a "nationalist" or "aggressive" posture. But these reflections are not enough to explain the current Japanese vision of national security. December 2013 has been a crucial month for the future developments of Japanese defence: in less than thirty days the Government has approved the first National Security Strategy (NSS) and, in the same day, the "National Defence Program Guidlines" (NDPG) and the "Medium Term Defence Program" (MDTP). According to the Government website, the first document, <<Japan's first ever NSS>>, is <<an umbrella document, presenting guidelines for policies related to national security>> but it also <<includes the assessment of global and regional security environment and its challenges as well as the strategic approach Japan takes as a "Proactive Contributor to Peace">>. On the other side, the NDPG <<publicly displays Japan's basic defense policy direction with budget implication>>. At the beginning of December it was also established a National Security Council <<with the aim of establishing a forum which will undertake strategic discussions under the Prime Minister on a regular basis and as necessary on various national security issues and exercising a strong political leadership>>. Therefore, 2014 will be a decisive year for Japanese defence. The last documents clearly outline the new security approach of Japan, which is shifting from a "static" and "national-oriented" defence to a more "dynamic" or <<proactive>> posture. For instance, among the main priorities set by the NSS there are tasks like <<strengthening and expanding Japan's capabilities and role>>, <<strengthening diplomacy and security cooperation with Japan's partners for peace and stability in the international community>> or <<proactive contribution to international efforts for peace and stability of the international community>>. If Japan's neighborhood is evolving quickly, Tokyo wants to follow this change but being ready for any future challenge in the area.

Japan's main threats
The new Japanese approach to national security cannot be only analyzed by a political point of

view. It is clear that these new documents reflect the position of the ruling party, but it should be also considered that the process of modernization of JSDF and "standardization" of their role is a trend which dates back to the 90s. Moreover, the strategic environment has completely changed from some years ago, and Japan feels an increasing pressure on its national security. These <<grave national security challenges>> are one of the main reasons which are backing the new defence posture. Today there are three main concerns for Japanese national security: North Korea (or Democratic People's Replublica of Korea, DPRK), China's assertiveness in the region and its rising defence spending and eventually three maritime disputes.

a) DPRK is in the first position in both the NSS and NDPG. Weapons of mass destruction capabilities (chemical, biological but especially nuclear weapons and the missile arsenal) and the country's <<provocative rhetoric and behavior against Japan and other countries>> are considered a direct threat; therefore the situation in DPRK <<needs to be closely monitored>>. Even if a direct attack from DPRK is a very unlikely scenario, Tokyo is increasingly annoyed by the missile tests carried on by the North. But listing DPRK as threat "number one" has also a clear political reason: it was the only possible "number one" enemy. If China would have been put in the first position, this could have been perceived as a very "aggressive" step. Therefore, even if Japan's attentions are more oriented to the People's Republic of China (PRC), DPRK is still considered, at least formally, the first threat for the country.

b) It is no secret that Japan is particularly concerned by the new political and military developments in China. The NSS clearly explain this anxiety: <<China has been rapidly advancing its military capabilities in a wide range of areas through its continued increase in its military budget without sufficient transparency. In addition, China has taken actions that can be regarded as attempts to change the status quo by coercion based on their own assertions, which are incompatible with the existing order of international law, in the maritime and aerial domains, including the East China Sea and the South China Sea. In particular, China has rapidly expanded and intensified its activities in the seas and airspace around Japan, including intrusion into Japan's territorial waters and airspace around the Senkaku Islands. Moreover, China has shown the move that appears to unduly infringe the freedom of overflight above the high seas by establishing its own "Air Defense Identification Zone" over the East China Sea>>. These words may sound rough and impolite, but reflect quite honestly the (low) *status quo* of the relations between China and Japan. It should be also noted that the NSS and the other documents were released in December 2013, while the two countries were arguing about the Chinese initiative to establish an Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ) over the contested Senkaku/Diaoyu islands.

c) Currently Japan has three main open transnational issues, concentrated in the maritime domain: Kuril Islands with Russia, Dokdo/Takeshima with South Korea and Senkaku/Diaoyu with China, recently emerged as an "hot" friction point between the two countries.

Kuril islands, a part of the Russian Federation, right now are not considered as a top priority. Of course Japan still considers them as part of its national territory, but since the beginning of the new conservative administration, relations with Russia have improved, and now, after a visit of President Abe in Moscow (spring 2013) the ties between the Moscow and Tokyo are stronger. This does not mean that Japan has forgotten URSS' (then Russia's) occupation of some Kuril islands;

but this row currently has been sidelined in favor of other priorities, with a kind of tacit "don't ask, don't tell" agreement. Right now Russia is more concentrated in its Western border, while Japan is focusing its attention on PRC's behavior; therefore, Kuril islands are a "cold case" and now are not considered as a security priority. They are not even mentioned in NSS. The situation in the Dokdo/Takeshima Islands is more complicated. Despite the continuous sovereignty of South Korea since the end of the Second World War, Japan is still claiming the islands as part of its national territory. The relations between the two countries are still deeply influenced by the legacies of WWII and this maritime dispute. But, in any case, South Korea and Japan are "natural if strained" allies against DPRK. Pyongyang now is the real common enemy of both the countries. Seul and Tokyo's territories also host many US military bases and troops and they are longstanding and strategic partners of Washington. Therefore the confrontation about Dokdo/Takeshima is more a political row than a serious threat for Japan's national security, and the NSS adds that <<with regard to the issue of Takeshima Japan will make preserving diplomatic efforts based on the principle of peaceful resolution of conflicts>>. It is very unlikely that the issue of these islands could ignite a military confrontation between the two countries; but, as *The Diplomat* said, <<Japan and South Korea [...] have had limited high-level diplomatic contact since Shinzo Abe's return to power in Japan because of historical issues and a general mistrust of Abe's intentions>>. One of the spillover effects of this mistrust can be some periodical (verbal) clashes about the sovereignty of the Dokdo/Takeshima.

The frontline of Japanese concerns lies in the south, more precisely around the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands. These tiny islands and rocks are a longstanding problem between the China and Japan. Despite Japanese sovereignty on the Senkaku, PRC has never stopped to consider them as part of its national territory, but, during the years, has tolerated the *status quo,* because they were a private property of a Japanese family. But when Tokyo nationalized the islands (fall 2012), China began to claim them again. The election of Abe and its well-known positions has further complicated the issue; during December 2013 the islands were the flashpoint of another confrontation between the countries. Japanese reaction has been to increase surveillance and amphibious and naval drills in the area, as well as drafting – openly - some plans to reconquer the islands in case of aggression. These plans have been widely publicized, and can be also downloaded from the website of the Ministry of Defence. Beside the islands, Japan is also worried of the new developments of the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN), the PRC Navy. According to these fears, Tokyo is reacting with a relevant acquisition of new assets, that will strengthen JSDF's ballistic missile defence, cyber, naval, amphibious and *Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconaissance* (ISR) capabilities, as well as facilitating some future joint operations, especially in the southern part of Japan, where the islands lie. On the other side the "Chinese scare" is also raising many doubts in the public opinion: <<many on the left in Japan think Mr Abe is using the threat from China to pursue his own nationalist dreams>> (BBC), while others fear that this new increase in the defence budget will revamp Japanese militarism, a bitter legacy of the past. The next domestic elections will be crucial to evaluate if the Japanese voters like or dislike this new and tougher approach of Abe's administration.

Pacific
(Japan-Korea-ASEAN Countries-Australia)

New capabilities and acquisitions

The new JSDF's acquisitions mirror the concerns expressed in the strategic documents, and, for the first time in more than a decade, will be backed by an increasing of the defence budget. Japanese navy is going to enlarge both the submarine and the destroyer fleets. The total number of submarines will rise from 16 to 22 (probably with some new *Soryu-class* subs), while the destroyers will rise from 47 to 54. Among the new units, there will be two *Aegis-class* destroyers. The ISR capabilities will be reinforced by the modernization of the existing Boeing E-767, an Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS), and the acquisition of new aircrafts like the Kawasaki P-1 (with ISR capabilities), probably seventeen V-22 Osprey and three *Global Hawk* drones. These assets are vital to tighten the surveillance over the vast areas of the south, and to cooperate closely with a new US Marines-style "amphibious brigade" that the JSDF want to create. In the past years over the national air space Japan has intercepted more foreign airplanes than during the Cold war, therefore a careful control of this domain is atop priority. The Japan Air Self-Defense Force will be reinforced by some F35 (the government has a plan to buy 42 units) that will replace the old F4 Phantom still in service. Overall, the whole JSDF are planning a more <<proactive>> and "dynamic" presence in the south of the Japanese archipelago, close to the disputed islands, as well as developing a more efficient approach to manage large joint operation in this area. These challenges are huge, and are closely monitored by Japan's neighbors, rising many questions about the real intentions of the Japanese government and further contributing to the defence modernization, or "arms race" according to some analysts, in the Asia-Pacific.

The effects of the new defence developments in Japan go well beyond its national boundaries, and will probably influence the whole 2014. These changes and the new acquisitions will strengthen the Japanese military, paving the way, in the future years, for the transformation of the JSDF in a "real" military. Abe's choices, until now, have been supported by the Japanese public opinion, but now Tokyo should carefully plan the next steps, especially considering the strong economic ties with China and the role of the US in the Pacific. The modernization of Japanese defence is still perceived in Asia as a very sensitive topic. The legacy of the Second World War is still a heavy burden for the whole region, therefore the best way to pursue a full recognition of the Japanese defence should be to avoid "muscular" actions and, maybe, symbolic acts, like the nationalization of the Senkaku/Diaoyu or the visit to the Yasukuni Shrine, but investing more in confidence-building measures and cooperation, at least with some closer partners.

The crisis in Ukraine: a new cold war?

Lorena Di Placido

Ukraine's socio-political situation deteriorated in February 2014, with consequences that have caught the local leadership and the international community completely unprepared. The Ukrainian difficult economic situation has worsened due to the unresolved internal political dualism between "pro-Westerns" (linked to Yuliya Timoshenko, leader of the United Opposition bloc - Homeland) and "pro-Russians" (represented by President Viktor Yanukovych, leader of the Party of Regions.) The situation further deteriorated in March, when the leadership in Kiev had to deal with the loss of the Crimean peninsula, as well as the increasing intolerance and anti-government and pro-Russian demonstrations in the eastern – and to a lesser extent – in the southern regions of the country. In this scenario, the interim government appears to be weak and the international community inconclusive in the face of the Russian foreign policy being more and more assertive and aware of national interests.

A political solution to an economic crisis

Ukraine has hardly found its place in the European framework since being in the focus of political and strategic attention of both Russia and European Union. Conditioned by the leadership in Kiev, political forces have tried to meet the interests of either Moscow or Brussels. This unstable attitude combined with the tragic economic and financial conditions of the country (an estimated 35 billion U.S. would be necessary for an economic recovery) finally led to the choice at the heart of the still ongoing crisis. The situation required Kiev to take urgent decisions, with two possible options: reaching an Association and Free Trade Agreement with the European Union, or joining the Eurasian Economic Union alongside Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan. On 21st November 2013, on the eve of the Vilnius summit during which Ukraine should have signed an agreement with the EU, President Yanukovych decided to end negotiations. Accepting the conditions of that agreement could have implied difficult sacrifices that the Ukrainian population would not easily tolerate, with possible serious political consequences in the next presidential elections (scheduled for 2015). Hence the decision to prefer the Russian proposal rather than meet the EU's pressing demands to impose austerity measures and implement structural economic reforms. On 17th December, Yanukovych signed an agreement with Russia for $15 billion in financial aid and the promise of a significant reduction in the price of gas.

Two months of protests

The President's decision was seen as another choice to his advantage. Later on, anti-government protests erupted in Kiev and in other cities in the western regions of the country, with the occupation of several institutional buildings and barricades set up in the center of the capital. The demonstrating group was rather heterogeneous and had diversified requests, which is why the opposition supporters often protested alongside extreme-right groups. Among them, Pravy Sektor (Right Sector), which was the only one to give its members a paramilitary training, particularly stood out in the acute stages of the fighting (19th-20th January, 18th-20th February), when more than 100 people died. The resignation of Prime Minister Mykola Azarov (27th January) did not match with Yanukovych's commitments to Moscow. As a consequence, the Russian leadership froze the December agreement waiting to see how the crisis would end and which government would replace the outgoing one.

Some negotiation attempts between demonstrators and members of the institutions failed, because the president refused any contact with the opposition. An agreement was reached between Yanukovych and the opposition only on 21st February, thanks to the international mediation of the foreign ministers of France, Germany and Poland, with the help of a Russian observer. The parties agreed to restore the 2004 constitution, create a national unity government and hold presidential elections later in 2014.

A further step of the crisis

This scenario could have helped to solve the crisis, but the situation deteriorated into an even worse stage.

On 22nd February, after the signing of the agreement between the Ukrainian government and the protesters, parliament voted for the dismissal of Yanukovych (immediately fled to Russia) and called for new presidential elections to be held on 25th May. In addition, parliament released Yuliya Timoshenko, who was serving a sentence of seven years in prison and two years of disqualification from public office for corruption and abuse of office. In the afternoon of the same day, Yuliya Timoshenko showed up at a public event in a symbolic square of the protest in Kiev, and was hailed as a symbol of victory by protesters. On 23rd February, Oleksandr Turchynov was appointed as interim president by parliament, while on 26th February, a transitional government (which also includes some of the extremist forces that had taken part to protests) took office with Arseniy Yatsenyuk as prime minister. Once established the new leadership, Kiev started again negotiations with the EU and international financial institutions and launched a direct dialogue with the United States and other Western countries. By contrast, Russia decided to freeze the December agreement, demanding extra payments for gas and abolishing discounts. The weakening of the 21st February Agreement and the establishment of a government away from Yanucovich's pro-Russian positions prompted Russia to permanently change attitude towards Ukraine. Between 27th and 28th February, on the Crimean Peninsula, thousands of armed Russians (which the authorities in Moscow called a spontaneously created militia) started occupying offices in the capital (Simferopol) and gained control of airports, roads, infrastructure, accesses to the peninsula and television stations. Kiev completely lost control of Crimea within two days.

Towards the referendum

Dominated by Russia for most of the past two centuries (since the annexation in 1783), the Crimean peninsula was donated by Krushov to Ukraine in 1954, so as to establish good relations between Moscow and the local leadership. According to data from the 2001 census, the population of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea is made up of 2,300,000 people, divided into three main ethnic groups: Russians (58%), Ukrainians (24%) and Tatars (12%), a Turkic community deported by Stalin in 1944 for collaborating with the Nazis. On 1st March, the regional parliament voted for the dismissal of the local government and called for Crimea's annexation to Russia. After Moscow accepted the request, a referendum was held on 16th March, which ratified the parliament's decision with 97% of the vote. On 21st March, a decree by President Putin formalized the referendum results and the annexation. Meanwhile, the Russian parliament agreed (1st March) to send troops to Crimea in order to defend national interests and the rights of ethnic Russians, threatened by the "ultra-nationalist forces" leading the government in Kiev.

A difficult negotiation

The militarization of Crimea by pro-Russian forces and Moscow's support to secession plans further exacerbated tensions between the international community and the Russian leadership. The European Union, United States and several European countries, indeed, challenged – on an individual basis – the legitimacy of the referendum, which was held in a climate of coercion. On the other hand, Russia's refusal to recognize the interim government in Kiev (considered illegitimate since it was established in violation of the 21st February Agreement) prevented negotiations from being started. On 17th March, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov made a proposal consisting of five points: 1) military neutrality of Ukraine; 2) federal reform of the state, with more powers to the regions; 3) Russian as a second official language; 4) establishment of a team of international support to the mediation with Ukrainian political parties and factions; 5) Ukraine's sovereignty, territorial integrity and military neutrality guaranteed by Russia, United States, European Union, United Nations. The proposal did not find the necessary international support. Morover, the Ukrainian leadership expressed its final position, resuming plans to get close to the European Union by signing a political agreement on 21st March.

Military stalemate

Due to the lack of guidelines, the Ukrainian armed forces in Crimea continued to be hostage of the pro-Russian militias, that had started occupying bases and seizing the naval fleet after the referendum. Only on 24th March, Ukraine Ministry of Defence allowed the soldiers to leave military installations and return to Ukraine. However, this situation was traumatic for many soldiers, who had lived in Crimea for a long time and saw no safe prospects in returning to Ukraine. Hence, many of them preferred to stay in Crimea.

The defense minister was removed for mismanaging the crisis. Meanwhile, the situation in the eastern regions of the country continued to deteriorate, with frequent pro-Russian protests seemingly backed by a massive movement of troops and military vehicles near the border. A further worsening of the crisis was due to the activity of extreme-right groups that moved to the eastern regions after the end of protests in Kiev. The death of Oleksandr Muzychko, a leading member of

the Ukrainian nationalist organization Pravy Sektor, during a police operation in Rivne in western Ukraine (25th March) further tightened the group's position.

Economic aid

Meanwhile, the Ukrainian economy shows no signs of recovery, while internal instability and the absence of an effective reform plan have further worsened the situation. According to many analysts, $ 35 billion would be needed in two years to save Ukraine from the financial crisis. The U.S. approved the allocation of one billion dollars, while the International Monetary Fund (IMF) could provide between 14 and 18 billion dollars, subject to the adoption of a comprehensive program of economic reforms and an effective fight against corruption. Moscow had long frozen the aid promised to Ukraine in December 2013. Russia also announced that the price of gas sold to Ukraine will increase to $385.5 per 1,000 cubic meters starting from 1st April, compared to the $268.5 per 1,000 cubic meters in the previous quarter. In the case of a delayed payment of the debt so far accrued (1.7 billion dollars), supplies could be cut off, with repercussions also for Western countries getting their supplies from the Ukrainian territory.

A dual crisis

The crisis started in late November 2013, and culminated in February 2014 with an illusory resolution of negotiations. In late February, the events developed into different scenarios.

On the one hand, the country is focusing on defining its new aims. In particular, Ukraine is now moving towards the Western world, although this decision would imply mandatory and unpopular economic reforms. Despite more than two months of protests and political upheavals, Ukraine has found itself in the same situation as in November 2013, but with a suffering population putting more and more pressure on the new leadership.

Moreover, in terms of international relations, the pro-Western choice of Ukraine has reinforced Russia's feeling of being encircled. Moscow has thus rushed to protect its military and strategic interests, occupying the Crimean peninsula. The quick development of the events clearly shows that Moscow had long been planned them and waited for the Ukrainian leadership to become weak to carry out its plans.

However, the developing scenario does not outline a new Cold War, but shows a feeling of distrust, which has been worsening over the last two decades.

The assertive choices of Moscow, which has often reiterated the need to protect its own interests and the safety of the Russian-speaking population in Ukraine, have not been followed by an equally clear political line from the European Union, that was involved in the 21st February Agreement and is now supporting the interim government (which appears to be more and more at the mercy of the events). The Ukrainian decision to resume the path towards the European institutions reinforces Moscow's belief that the Western countries have been trying to encircle Russia. An effective dialogue for a solution to the ongoing crisis will be possible only by taking into account this recurring element of Russian politics. Kiev lacks a leadership to face the current challenges, while Brussels lacks the ability to deal with the situation with determination and pragmatism. In order to overcome the current post-Cold War scenario, it is necessary to pragmatically define the relations between the West and post-Soviet Russia, in the light of common interests, and in view of the goals of the emerging states of Central and Eastern Europe. In this context, the European Union

does not show sufficient cohesion in terms of policy planning, while it is clear that the choice to support Ukraine threatens to radicalize the EU's internal rifts. The Southern European members, instead, fear that the funds they need to receive will be assigned to Ukraine. Many of the issues which were at the heart of the international debate just over 20 years ago are, thus, still alive and present.

NATO-Transatlantic Relations

The Pentagon and the Intelligence Community look to the future

lucio Martino

The events of September 2001 have led to a rethinking, characterized by a large number of objectives, of the complete functional and structural make-up of the U.S. intelligence community. Among these objectives, the most important is certainly identifiable in the desire for closer coordination on counter-terrorism. To this end, the position of Director of National Intelligence (DNI) was created in 2004. The position was granted powers of an unprecedented breath, a supervisory and coordination authority greater than that ever exercised by the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency, including the authority to transfer staff and funds from one agency to another. Ten years after its introduction, the debate on the actual contribution made by this new power to national security has not yet ended. Although the innovations adopted by the Office of the DNI (the sixteenth Intelligence Agency) to promote coordination and information sharing have been many and important, strong skepticism persists about the need for the DNI and its ability to ensure a more agile and flexible operation of the intelligence community. At any rate, since the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004, the DNI has also become the true spokesman for the U.S. Intelligence Community. In this context, in his capacity as DNI, retired Air Force General Clapper this year presented and publicly discussed a document entitled the Worldwide Threat Assessment of the U.S. Intelligence Community (WTA). As far as its importance goes, this document is not immune from the criticism aimed at many aspects of the offices of the DNI, so much so that strong doubts exists about its actual impact in the elaboration processes of the national strategic vision.

In this year's edition, cyber threats once again lead the list of the most relevant hazards, with terrorism in all its forms and natures in second place. According to the intelligence community, the chance of an attack capable of deleting entire databases or destroying important plant and equipment constantly increases. In this regard, there are many aspects which seem worthy of note. Firstly, the 2014 WTA recognizes the importance of the dangers arising from the growth of internet network use. The health sector is of particular concern. The vulnerability of information in this field is considered so great that action controlled at a distance and aimed at dramatically altering diagnostic outcomes and manipulating medical instruments causing the death of whole categories of patients is conceivable. Secondly, the 2014 WTA recognizes the benefits of print in three dimensions, but notes at the same time that it could revolutionize the more hidden aspects of diverse criminal activities. Thirdly, and most surprisingly, one reads from the information in the report that the problems inherent in today's National Counter-Intelligence activities pose a greater threat

than weapons of mass destruction and organized crime. Within the section devoted to the Counter-Intelligence, possible internal threats are the greatest identified danger, trusted insiders who may take advantage of their access to information and proprietary algorithms to impair performance, either as part of a personal ideology or at the direction of a foreign government. Biological weapons are largely ignored in the report, after having been the justification for international intervention in Iraq in 2003. According to the most recent WTA, natural biological threats, not those produced in a laboratory, represent the real threat to American interests, and not least because many of the antibiotics used to treat common diseases are not as effective as they once were. Added to this factor are the complications brought by globalization. Old and new infectious diseases are identified as the most important threat to the security of a world increasingly crowded and interconnected. We inhabit a world where it is increasingly likely that human or animal diseases will evolve and spread globally in pandemics persisting for several years, because at least two-thirds of all known bacteria is now drug resistant, bringing us almost into a pre-antibiotic era.

In its analysis, the intelligence community assumes that in the near future the United States will not let slip the opportunity to take full advantage of any new hydraulic fracturing technologies, and recognizes that this new energy abundance, while not sufficient to completely isolate the United States from the dynamics inherent in the global energy market, will still be large enough to minimize its effects. The 2014 WTA assumes that the polar region will grow in importance for European-Asian trade, as well as becoming a source of energy. Changes in climate dynamics resulting in warm air over the Arctic Ocean may therefore become relevant to the national security of the United States. However, for the moment, the Arctic Council is judged as an adequate instrument by which the nations of this region and beyond for the discussion and resolution of any related issues. The strongest message that the 2014 WTA appears to project in its focus on how climate and natural resources can intertwine to encourage new crises and conflicts is that the first line of defense of the United States is no longer represented by the military but by diplomatic measures, an area where under-financing is even more dramatic.

The 2014 WTA reflects the awareness that the Russian Federation is not an enemy of the United States. There is no other explanation for the absence of any mention of the Russian nuclear arsenal in the almost thirty pages of the new document. While Soviet nuclear forces occupied the place of honor in any compilation of threats during the entire Cold War and well beyond, today the attention of the U.S. Intelligence Community focuses on thirty specific regional threats, but completely ignores what for many years was described as the only real existential threat. There is, in fact, no mention of an apparatus that could still destroy the United States and radically alter life on the planet. The most obvious explanation for this interesting "omission" is that the U.S. Intelligence Community believes the probability of a Russian nuclear attack to be more remote than ever before, and not worthy of mention.

The Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) is the document in which the Department of Defense illustrates the organizational choices and financial resources necessary to supply the U.S. military. Not surprisingly, the QDR is submitted to Congress at about the same time as the Defense Budget Request (DGB). Given the uncertainty caused by a sequestration of federal spending which makes it increasingly difficult to determine the amount of funds actually allocated to the Department of Defense, not even this year's DGB really sheds light on the actual impact of these budget cuts on

the military system. The Obama administration has proposed approximately five hundred billion U.S. dollars in funding for the 2015 defense budget fiscal year, roughly as much as was approved by Congress for the previous year. The request does not include basic programs relating to the management of nuclear weapons, as always the responsibility of the Department of Energy. If we add the eighty billion U.S. dollars required for the so-called Overseas Contingency Operations, the Department of Defense budget for next year would appear to reach over six hundred billion dollars. The DBR 2015 shows then that even if the Obama administration has ordered the withdrawal of the bulk of the troops from Afghanistan by the end of this year, this withdrawal does not result in a proportionate change in the level of expenditure. It is interesting to note how, in the face of a reduction in the size of the contingent sent to Afghanistan in the order of forty percent, the relative demand for spending has been reduced by just under ten per cent, from nearly ninety billion U.S. dollars 2013 to eighty in 2014.

The 2014 QDR is much more ambitious and much longer than the one published in early 2010. Comparing it with the previous edition, a small series of interesting developments in the strategic programming of the Department of Defense stands out. The first is represented by an acknowledgment of a new strategic direction in the Asian Pacific in which, however, almost no mention is made of that Indian Ocean so dear to the strategic planning of allies and partners such as Australia. Such a stance in the new regional strategic posture is quite surprising, given the fact that the 2014 QDR confirms the adoption by the United States of the operational doctrine known as Air-Sea Battle, which attaches great importance on the role of regional allies and partners. At the same time, the 2014 QDR does not even attempt to explain what the Air-Sea Battle could mean in operational terms, and does not reduce fears about its possible regional effects, resulting in an increase in a perceivable strategic ambiguity. An ambiguity which is even more noticeable when one remembers that the U.S. Navy plans to base sixty per cent of its fleet in the Pacific Ocean, instead of the traditional fifty per cent. Whatever it may be, given that the Persian Gulf may be quite easily reached from the Indian Ocean, this apparent regional augmentation of force does not seem to appreciably change the actual capacity of the U.S. Navy.

The most striking aspect of the 2014 QDR is the frequency of references to the concept of "balance". The new official document offers the impression that the strategic footprint of the United States in Asia is changing because Asia's north-east no longer has a strategic weight comparable with the Cold War. The rebalancing promoted by the Obama administration responds more to a global dynamic than to new paradigms within the Asian sub-region. The rise of China and India is shifting the strategic centre of gravity towards the South and the West, and therefore pushing the U.S. military presence in the same direction. It is in any case still difficult within this context to derive from the 2014 QDR which role should be given to countries such as Australia, the Philippines, Indonesia and Vietnam, exacerbated by the fact that the 2014 QDR allocates different forms of military presence to the region, defined variously as permanent, pre-positioned, rotation, and peak. On the other hand, the new document states in no uncertain terms that it is the Allies and European partners, and not those of Asia Pacific, which are the leading producers of security, and the only States really able to support U.S. action at a global level. At the same time, perhaps with a certain degree of contradiction, the 2014 QDR recognizes as unlikely the possibility that reductions in U.S. military capabilities will be fully mitigated by an increase in the role and capacity of

the Allies and partners. The Department of Defense seems to be aware of how the United States will expect more and more from their allies at a time in which its military power is largely in decline, in particular as regards the preparation of the skills necessary to cope with the potential threats of the future.

As per the mandate, the 2014 QDR lists and sorts by priority what the structure of the U.S. military system should be. The U.S. Air Force is given essentially three goals of modernization to defend and carry forward: the first is the acquisition of the fifth generation aircraft F-35; the second is the development of a new stealthy, long-range strike aircraft; the third is the KC-46A next-generation tanker/cargo aircraft to replace the legacy tanker fleet. To free resources for these new weapons systems, the U.S. Air Force will shortly retire more than eighty aircraft, including the entire fleet of KC-10 tankers, this last a move which cannot help but result in some reduction in the immediate operational capabilities.

The new Department of Defense strategy document would seem to satisfy those who envision an Army of only four hundred and fifty thousand soldiers on active duty, the lowest number deployed by the United States since World War II, although only ten per cent less than the average of the last years of the Clinton administration when the United States planned the size of their forces according to the numbers projected for fighting two major concurrent regional wars. Today, this possibility is not even taken into consideration and military planning concentrates on drones, computer science, space, Special Forces and long-range detection systems not on "boots on the ground". The number of units supplied to the U.S. Navy will continue to grow throughout the next decade, and will be influenced by a review of its capacity in view of emerging and new environmental threats. In particular, the AEGIS cruisers will be subjected to long-term modernization programs which should significantly extend their operating life by approximately two decades. On the other hand, before acquiring further Littoral Combat Ships, the U.S. Navy will carefully examine whether the protection and firepower of these units would be able to survive against adversaries equipped with more modern military capabilities. Finally, again from what is apparent from the contents of the 2014 QDR, it is likely that attack groups positioned on board aircraft carriers will be reduced from eleven to ten, while even the U.S. Marine Corps is expected to undergo a reduction of approximately ten per cent, being now obliged to plan a force of, in the most optimistic of hypothesis, around one hundred eighty two thousand men in active service.

Wrapping all this up, the 2014 QDR, like all other QDRs of the past, it seems to have very little or nothing to do with reality because it is just words. Honestly it seems somewhat more decent than past QDRs, but it has nothing to do with actual defense decisions. Those decisions are still, rooted in the Services' programmers. A flat or stagnant budget is the most difficult for which the Services must plan, especially as they try to sustain current forces despite continually rising real costs for personnel and maintenance. There are no indications that those rises will not continue. Personnel costs will rise in pay and particularly in health care, reflecting the out-of-control health care costs in the whole of the U.S. economy. Operations and maintenance costs have also long risen in real terms as well. These real rises in these kinds of costs would severely squeeze funds for acquisitions through all the next years. This time, the Services have done well in their essentially flat budget to sustain readiness that is keeping the forces maintained, manned, and exercised.

Procurement has been cut back, but research and development sustained. Looking forward, Congress will not let to the service programmers any greater control over costs, so those will squeeze the other elements of the budget, particularly U.S. Army personnel numbers. With the end of any interest in counter-insurgency and large-scale stabilization missions, there are many who believe that over the next few years the United States might even reduce the men at the disposal of the U.S. Army to only three hundred thousand units.

Focus

Afghanistan: from elections to regional proxy conflict?

Claudio Bertolotti

Afghan presidential elections took place on April, 5, despite Taliban threats to disrupt the electoral process. From the beginning the candidates Abdullah and Ghani were believed to have the best chance of winning the election; this assessment was confirmed by the results.

Reported high participation and frauds in Afghan elections. What does it means? Seven millions of voters but thousands of reports of irregularities.

In numbers, the Independent Electoral Complaints Commission has registered nearly 3,500 complaints, including 2000 having documents in support. 343 of 892 complaints classed a "Priority-A" had so far been investigated and the rest being probed. Afghanistan's Independent Electoral Complaints Commission report ballot boxes that had been quarantined due to fraud have to be investigated in the presence of national and international observers. It is improbable that it could change the result of the election, but it could postpone the next step of the electoral process, scheduled for the 28th of May, that will formalize the name of the next President of Afghanistan.

Regional debate on the future of the Afghan situation after 2014 is focusing on prospects for increased cooperation with Afghanistan and regional actors, in particular Iran.

The main part of the international forces are due to leave Afghanistan, ending a 13 years' war against an apparently undefeated insurgency. The new mission, which will be formalized through the signature of Bilateral Security Agreement by the next President of Afghanistan, should start on January 2015 (Nato "Resolute Support Mission").

NATO's combat troops are scheduled to leave the country by the end of 2014. This is likely to have deep implications for Afghanistan and, in general, for South Asia also because tensions between Pakistan and India may intensify, if the Afghan political reconciliation process with the armed opposition groups fails.

Focus

It is assessed that there are four main factors that will contribute to the war-torn South Asian nation:

1. the number of international troops in the country after 2014,

2. the success of negotiations with the Taliban,

3. the results of the presidential elections,

4. the role of the regional countries in facilitating the reconciliation process.

In briefly.

NATO's and Us forces remaining in Afghanistan from 2015 could be about 8,000-15,000 advisors/trainers and counterterrorism and special forces, the main part from the US. In general, from the security point of view, the situation in Afghanistan seems to be deteriorating and NATO troops will remain in a multifaceted war shaped by two pre-existing and overlapping conflicts: one is the inter-ethnic conflict, the other is the regional conflict between India and Pakistan.

The Karzai government has held informal talks with Taliban since 2001, and has renewed peace efforts in recent years and in particular in recent months, perhaps to ensure Karzai leaves a legacy as he readies to hand over the leadership before the end of the year. Furthermore, it is not excluded that Karzai is negotiating with Taliban in order to protect his "family's interests" and power in Kandahar area (this could confirm the decision to avoid his direct involvement in the signing of the Bilateral Security agreement with the Us).

Regarding the electoral process and the election of the next President of Afghanistan, the results will take time to be officially publicized, and Afghans are waiting to participate to the second part of the elections which will formalize the successor of the President Karzai: the former foreign minister Abdullah or the ex-finance minister Ashraf Ghani.

About the role of the regional countries, it is important to underline that if Afghanistan's neighbors do not start to cooperate, competing desires for influence could decline into a bloody proxy war in the country. The risk is real but what is unclear, because of the overlapping interests of the main regional players (Pakistan, Iran, India and China) as well as the United States, is if a coherent regional common agreement will emerge. In general, regional dynamics are changing and the political and security future will depend on the strategic decisions taken by the new political leaderships in Iran, Pakistan, China, India and Afghanistan. The decade-long conflict between Pakistan and India for strategic influence and foothold in Afghanistan could further intensify. It is assessed that, in order to realize an "acceptable stability" in the country, on one hand India and Pakistan should start a realistic and pragmatic dialogue on their strategic objectives and, on the other hand, a regional consensus on an agreement has to be reached on how to include the Taliban in the existing political system.

Finally, preparing to withdraw its troops from Afghanistan by this year's end, the US is now focused on connecting the economies of South and Central Asia.
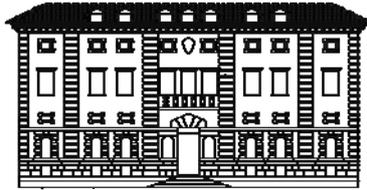
Brief Analysis

Because of the lack of the government capabilities and because of the Taliban capacities, it is re-

Focus

ported that some Afghan factions warn of civil war and are rearming as well as recruiting militia-men. Furthermore, some elites are moving their businesses and funds out of the country due to the fear of chaos and instability after the pullout of the international troops by the end of 2014. Afghan national security forces deaths have doubled since NATO troops handed over security responsibility to local troops. There is a large number of armed opposition groups, as well as drug and war-lords, seeking to increase their influence by attacking Afghan forces. This is the consequence of the decreased NATO presence and support; for these reasons Afghan troops will become incapable of dealing with these strikes and continue to suffer from combat-related incapacities. Finally, what it is needed to define clearly is not if the Taliban will participate or not to the "power sharing" in Afghanistan but in what form and under what terms and conditions will they really participate in the Afghan political process. Even if not publicized, the cost of this participation will be probably an agreement on the access to power and resources (both officially permitted and illegal) and the plausible revision of some constitutional principles: hard and unavoidable mission for the next Afghan President.