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A regime change in Syria could be a strategic threat to Iran?

Nicola Pedde

In the recent weeks there had been a proliferation of articles, especially on foreign press, focusing on the historically intense bond between Iran and Syria, and on the consequences of a possible - as likely - fall of the regime of Bashar al-Asad.

Most of the analyses that have been expressed in the United States, agrees on the consideration that the end of the regime of al-Asad will constitute a considerable strategic loss for Tehran in the region. That will be exposed on the western front, and above all compromised in logistics support to the Lebanese Hezbollah.

On the contrary, however, it is useful to make some considerations concerning the state of crisis in Syria and its possible consequences for Iran and the region.

The Western vision of the relations between Syria and Iran is based on an axiom which is probably wrong at its roots. It is difficult to imagine any hypothesis of collapse of the Alawite regime, and the consequent raise of a political and social decidedly anti-Iranian system. With all probabilities a Sunni led political forces will emerge from chaos, but this would not necessarily lead to a freeze or even a closure with Tehran.

Any policy option, in addition, would be almost certainly characterized by feelings of hostility toward Israel, as a result of the national historic heritage and of the continuing problem of the Golan Heights. And it is therefore as well highly unlikely that the links and the relationships with Hezbollah would be put at risk, not because of confessional reasons as for strategic reasons, in order to continue its support to those who asymmetrically threaten Tel Aviv.

At the same time, the Iranian intelligence continues to provide assistance to the Syrian, caring for its economic, logistic and operational needs. In this way, whatever the outcome of the complex Syrian crisis it will be, Iran will have acted from a position of strength. If al-Asad should remain in the saddle, Iran could assert his hidden support to the president. If he were to fall, on the contrary, it can rely on its publicly open condemnation and its support for the masses of insurgents.

In terms of foreign policy, meanwhile, Iran has in fact expressed its open disagreement with the policy of repression adopted by the Syrian government, in fact openly condemning the regime and contributing to its weakening.

The first who have taken a step backwards was president Ahmadinejad, when in early September has officially asked to president al-Asad to cease violence and to reopen the line of dialogue with the opposition. Statements that must have shocked the Syrian president, which has witnessed an inexorable procession of criticism is now also among its allies of the longest.

The choice of Ahmadinejad was however calculated. The extreme defence of Syria would have in fact weakened him both at an international level, where Iran would have been accused to

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support the harsh repression of the Syrian military, and also at an internal level, where he would have further lost public support in the daily and increasingly fierce conflict with the fundamentalist component loyal to the Guide, and increasingly hostile to the president.

For the same reason, the Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei has inserted Syria in the complex of the events linked to the "Arab Spring", trying to identify an Islamic root in the events of Syria, and repeatedly inviting al-Asad to moderation and dialogue. In fact adding also his condemnation to the chorus of those who ask al-Asad to peacefully solve the situation in a short time, or to leave power and promote the less possible disruptive transition.

Iran, in conclusion, had been able so far to manage quite effectively the Syrian crisis. Much better than what many Western analyst is actually thinking. In case of a collapse of the Alawite regime, once again Iran could be in a potentially excellent position for the regeneration of its relations with Syria. Whatever it could be its future executive power.

This means that the risks Iran will face with respect to its capacity of dealing with Syria, will be only linked to its crucial domestic political evolution. Any increase of the level of conflictuality between the president and the Supreme Leader, could be then unexpectedly evolve in terms of foreign politics, with the risk of drastic and concrete changes in its capacity with the neighbouring context, and more in particular with Syria.

The Yemeni president Saleh returns in Sana'a

After several months spent in Saudi Arabia, where he was treated for injuries sustained during the attack the presidential palace of last June 3rd, and where he spent the convalescence, the president of Yemen Ali Abdullah Saleh returned to Yemen on September 23rd.

The arrival in Sana'a, preannounced by some Saudi and Arab media, had been accompanied by riots in the capital and some shootings which have caused some injured in Sana'a and in the immediate vicinity.

The office of the president, right before the arrival of Saleh, sent out a press release where the president announced his return to the solely purpose of stabilizing the country and organizing the forthcoming elections. Once concluded the elections, continue the press release, Saleh will resign and will probably leave the country.

The situation in the country is still somewhat confused. While the forces loyal to president benefited from the prolonged crisis, reinforcing their own structure, expelling hostile or potentially ambiguous forces, and retaking control of the capital and its immediate vicinity, those of the opposition seem to be entering into a spiral of crisis, because of the difficulties to support in the long run, and the ability to manage a crisis of the increasingly uncertain outcomes.

Nevertheless, the loyalist forces do not have today any capacity to definitively drown those of the opposition, leading to a very unstable period of stasis in which is still fought a low intensity war, on an vast part of the country.

It is a mystery, however, that the long period of convalescence in Saudi Arabia of the president was in fact imposed by the Saudi government, which is the main mediator of crisis in Yemen, in the vain attempt to encourage a process of negotiation and to prevent a further evolution of the crisis in Yemen, with the collapse of the institutions and the transformation of the crisis in an open civil conflict. There is no consensus on Yemen inside the Saudi Kingdom, where at least three different positions are visible. The first is represented by the open friendship of King Abdullah, the second by the request of an immediate resignation of Saleh, as indicated by Prince Naif bin Abdulaziz, Saudi Interior Minister, and the third by the pragmatic hold of those who

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consider the alliance with Yemen, in the short period, in the Saudi interest because it represent a strategy to halt Al Qaeda's attempt to threat the Saudi kingdom.

President Saleh doesn't seem to have, however, any real intention of leaving the power, or to leave with a fugue, emboldened by the fact that the Republican Guard troops under the command of his son Ahmed Ali seem to have been able to regain control of the situation in the capital and in the immediate vicinity, pushing the forces of the opposition, and especially those of Brigadier General Ali Mohsen al-Ahmar, in areas where is logistically difficult to defend and supply troops.

According to local sources, it seems that the military forces loyal to general al-Ahmar and his family, are suffering from the lack of ammunition and supplies of all kinds, lessening the offensive ability, but also the potential of resistance. On the contrary, it seems that the cells fighting in urban areas found new impetus, although there is the concrete suspicion that these units have been progressively permeated by elements of international jihad, assuming therefore a completely different connotation in the Yemenite conflict. Conflict which is still today dominated more by a clanic and tribal nature, rather than political, ideological or religious.

And it is on the issue of terrorism and of the possible penetration of al-Houti's cells of Al Qaeda that president Saleh tries to play his international policy strategy, forcing the western support against this and presenting his government as the last bulwark of defence of secularism and "democracy".

Fit and play a role in the Yemenite crisis a plurality of factors, completely different among them. There are, eminently, the conflicting interests between the tribal communities loyal to the president and that of the rebel general al-Ahmar, but it must be also added the non lesser instances of those protesting in the urban communities, where a huge number of young people is revolting against the government because of the crisis, and the ever more dramatic increase in unemployment. Then there are the demands of the ethnic and religious minorities, with positions ranging from request a greater degree of autonomy, up to the independence of some parts of the territory. And, last but not least, it must be included also the activities of terrorist cells linked to international jihadism, desperately seeking for a new combat front where to resume a conflict which could be able to attract international attention.

At the same time, the US had publicly announced their intention to start a more incisive kind of combat based on the use of air drones, by moving some of the most sophisticated in the region in order to be used either in Yemen and in Somalia.

And the first effect of such a new strategy was the supposed killing at the end of September of Anwar al Awaki, an Al Qaeda member operating in the region and considered as one of the top five terrorists on the US criminal list.

Following this operation, although still surrounded by secrecy and where it is not still definitely confirmed the killing of the target, many in the US raised the issue of the effective capacity of Yemen's army and security forces to fight terrorism, since Saleh had reshaped them in the last month into a self protective structure. Enormously reducing their capacities and tasks in the anti-terrorism field, and mostly deploying and tasking the units in Sana'a as a domestic – if not political – defence force.

This has led the US to take a more hard position toward president Saleh, openly asking him to resign and to speed up the political transition of the country. And as well transferring the command of the units involved in anti-terrorist's operation to the actual government, in order to be relocated where necessary and not where useful for the personal protection of the president and his own family.

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Without any doubt a clear and definitive signal to Saleh, whose political career seem to be doomed, even if it is not yet clear how and when a transition could or will be possible.

The Palestinians asked the United Nations to be recognized as a State

It have been welcomed with an explosion of joy and enthusiasm, in most of the West Bank territories, the speech pronounced by the President of the Palestinian Authority Mahmoud Abbas (aka Abu Mazen) to the United Nations General Assembly in the last week of September. Much less enthusiasm had been registered in Gaza, where Hamas opposed the request, on the grounds that it is not compliant with the current interests of the Palestinian people.

The speech of Abbas was certainly moving for all those who, for years, were calling for the birth of the State of Palestine. "The time has come", repeatedly said President Abbas, "that the Palestinian State could be recognized", invoking the recognition by the United Nations.

Recognition that, however, it will be only virtually and impossible to obtain - as Abbas is well aware of - due to the pre-emptive veto announced by the United States in the Security Council. At least for the moment.

Only the Security Council can declare the recognition of a new State and its admission to the United Nations, and the veto of only one of its members is enough to prevent the delicate process.

The United States opposed to recognition as they recognize as valid the instances of Israel on the achievement of a preventive peace treaty, but they are also very keen to send a serious and peremptory message in Tel Aviv, specifying that this is the last opportunity granted by Washington. That has not made a mystery, in more than one occasion, to consider the current Israeli government responsible for the failure of the peace plan.

Also Hamas in Gaza, however, is opposing the request of Abbas, and, breaking its voluntary silence on this issue, denounced as empty the proposal of the president of the PNA, and, above all, the impossibility to accept it because of the explicit recognition of the State of Israel that this would entail. A hard-line stance, and rather peremptory, which have broad consensus among the members of the movement, as demonstrated by the almost total absence of reactions in Gaza at the announcement of the request for the recognition of Palestine at the UN.

However, it was a calculated move that of Mahmoud Abbas. Being aware of the impossibility of rapidly obtaining the coveted result, he has decided to play the card in any case, by focusing on its media and emotional impact. Trying to re-launch the constructive role of the PNA and preventing Hamas - this is his intention - to demonstrate that the correct and winning position is on the contrary the relentless fight against Israel.

As always, therefore, different and conflicting interests and positions summed up in the complex Palestinian story, perpetuating the stasis that rule the existence of the Palestinian people since 1947. There is consensus, therefore, on the principle of the recognition of two States, as now in fact accepted by all. The problem is how the Palestinian State will be created. And it is not beneficial to anyone in this situation, the open and actual diatribe between Hamas and Fatah. That seems to be launched in the direction of a deadlock, if not even of fracture.

If this latter attempt of negotiations launched by the proposal of Abbas will fail - although it will not produce any real political transformation in the direction of the "two States" solution - the risk is that of an explosion of a new wave of protests in the West Bank, probability assisting also the definitive sunset of the same PNA.



The Turkish neo-Ottoman foreign policy and the Arab spring

Paolo Quercia

One year after the general political election in Bosnia Herzegovina of October 2010 the country is still missing a new central government and the old administration is extended sine die, creating the awkward situation of a new parliament and an old government supposed to rule together the central BiH state. Technically it would be possible since the same coalition of ruling parties got a majority both in the old and new elections, but the situation is in a stalemate because of the political problems inside BiH Federation.

In fact, the dimension of the Bosnian political conflict has progressively moved inside the Croat-Bosniak Federation and nowadays the frontline of Bosnia's political struggle is between the two Croat HDZ parties and the ruling Bosniak parties. The most recent renewal of this political conflict is to be found in the formation of the new government of the Federation that has been created, for the first time, without a power sharing agreement with the main Bosnian Croat parties. This was achieved by including Croat representatives from smaller parties in order to respect the ethnic quota required by the Federation constitution. The constitutional dispute that followed – mostly based on the fact that the Federation parliament that voted the government was convened in an improper way, that is before all the cantonal governments were formed – was solved by an intervention of the Office of the High Representative that overcame the opposition of the Central Electoral Committee, giving the green light to the formation of the Federation government. The political marginalisation of the two HDZs in the Federation strengthened their attitude to boycott the formation of the local governments in 3 cantons and the creation of the state level government. Therefore, one year after the political elections, only the entity level governments have been created while the central and some cantonal level of government inside of the Federation are still blocked by the boycott and political retaliation from the main Croat parties. The conflict inside the Federation between Croats and Bosniaks is not a recent phenomena, but it seems that now it is reaching its climax.

The deterioration of the relations between the two constituent people became evident in 2006 when Zelino Komsic, an ethnic Croat member of the Bosniak party SDP, has been elected to the presidency of Bosnia Herzegovina. One of the element that destabilised the Dayton ethnic structure had been the creation of Bosniak interethnic political parties (like SDP) whose multiethnic rhetoric is dangerous for the strictly mono-ethnic political assumption of Dayton. Komsic, who during the war served in the Army of Bosnia Herzegovina and refused to apply for dual Croatian citizenship, has been re-elected to the presidency in the quota reserved to Croatian people in 2010 by a coalition of Bosniak parties. The fact that the tripartite presidency is going to be for four more years made up of one Serb from Dodik's party (SNSD) and two members of

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two allied Bosniak parties (SDP and SDA) is another sign that the political future for the Croat parties of BiH looks grim. The Croats, after 16 years of Dayton appear today to be the most fragile and endangered among the three constituent people of Bosnia Herzegovina. Concentrated only in few cantons inside the Federation and practically disappeared from the Republica Srpska, they retain a demographic majority only in less than a third of the territory of the Federation. Being the third demographic group of Bosnia after Bosniaks and Serbs (760.000 in the 1991 census) their capacity of survival as a constituent nationality after 1995 was tied with two factors: the survival of the Dayton system and the tactic alliance with the Bosniaks. In the last sixteen years both these conditions have slowly disappeared. The Dayton system is in such a bad shape that now the political parties learned how to exploit its weaknesses and its limitations in order to advance their political goals and not only in a self-defensive way using ethnic protection vetoes. The *entente* between the Croats and the Bosniaks collapsed in the last years and a deep strategic divide emerged: while the Bosniaks are willing to create a more centralised state where they should be the majority population and are considering the possibility of getting rid of the national quotas, the Croats option is for a looser union at the central level and for a replica of the rigid ethnic balance system inside the Federation; these options, they believe will “protect” the Croat minority both from the assimilation of the Bosniak majority in the FBiH and from the Serb nationalist agenda.

But the main apprehension of the Croat ethnical group is not really of political or institutional nature rather than demographic: the leaders of the main Croat political parties as well as the leaders of the Catholic Church in Bosnia Herzegovina have a clear picture about the risk that the Federation will turn up to be a ghetto for the Croat minority, that since the end of the war, it seems has halved its population. According to some estimations the Croat population in Bosnia Herzegovina could be as low as 400.000, with a reduction trend that didn't stop after the war and remained a relevant phenomena also after 1995. In Sarajevo there are no more than 15.000 Croats left, almost a third of the original population in 1991. Differently from Serbs and Bosniaks, after the war the Croats were left without their own state entity, making more difficult for the Croatian minority to build its own post war national identity inside BiH. In this situation, Bosnia Herzegovina's Croats deepened their kinship with Croatia as a sort of exit strategy from BiH, considering post-war Croatia has their sole homeland, much more than the Bosnian Serbs considered Serbia their homeland. The deterioration of peace institutional agreement and the divisive lines between Croats and Bosniaks become evident in the middle of the last decade when the Croats advanced their request for the creation of a third Croat entity, on the model of the war time Herceg Bosnia, while the Bosniaks proposed the abolition of the entities and the creation of a single unified state.

While Dayton progressively became an empty armour and the battlefield of the power-ethnic-politics and the state level of government was paralysed by the numerous mechanisms of ethnic block, the real power game shifted at entity and cantonal level. Without a working central state political level where the Croat minority could be over represented by the ethnical balance mechanism, the political weight of the Croat progressively reduced to a third of the Federation, since in 70% of FBiH territory there is only a minimal presence of Croat nationals. Two dynamics could be considered responsible for the decline of the political weight of the Croats in the Federation:

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1) The first element is the strong Croat diaspora from Bosnia Herzegovina during and after the war. The emigration process that reduced the consistency of the community, mostly due to the fact the BiH Croats were granted dual citizenship already during war time, allowing them to travel without visa much before this was possible for the Bosniak and Serb ethnic groups. Resettling in Croatia for BiH Croats was a valuable option considering the generous welfare assistance provided by the Croat state to its nationals from BiH, the coming EU membership and the wealthier economic situation of Croatia. All this causes produced a progressive leaking of Croats out of Bosnia Herzegovina. The demographic reduction is significant non only *per se* in a logic of future ethnic-power-games, but also for its psychological effects that it has got on the Croat political and religious leadership, spreading a fear of existential threat and radicalising its defensive and sometimes aggressive posture.

2) The second element that contributed to the political marginalisation of the Croat ethnic group has been the emergence and the political success of Bosniak political parties built on multiethnic and multicultural platforms such as Lagumdžija's SDP. This opened the possibility in the Federation to fulfil the ethnic quota reserved to Croats by appointing ethnic Croat members of SDP.

The sensation of the Croat leadership that their national community will be finally squeezed between the two main ethnic groups, and especially by the Bosniaks inside the Federation, motivated the main Croat political party to establish a tactical alliance with the old war time Serbs enemies of RS. The strategic *entente* between the Croat minority of the Federation with the Serb overwhelming majority of RS was aimed at breaking down the Federation by creating a third Croat entity that would protect, more than the Cantons, the Croat population from further downsizing. This attitude increased the conflict level between the two ethnic components of the Federation, strengthening the position of the Serb side and unleashing Dodik's nationalist agenda. Dodik, by supporting the Croats' demands against the Bosniak component of the Federation, pursued and partially achieved a double political goal: to stop the already precarious functionality of the central state government and to block the political cooperation between the Croats and the Bosniaks inside the Federation. The Bosniaks reacted by reaching the formation of the Federal level government and as many cantonal local government they could without a power sharing agreement with the two main representative Croat political parties (this was possible by exploiting some "holes" present in the Dayton system using, when needed, anti-systemic small Croat party with less than 1 % of votes or appointing national Croats elected in a Bosniak party for ethnic reserved positions). In this situation the Bosniaks managed to increase their power in the Federation government and cantonal governments, occupying most of the key posts in the public administration especially those of economic relevance. This produced a further marginalisation of the Croats who appear nowadays to be the real losers in the long post Dayton iron first among the three constituent nationalities. The political marginalisation of the Croat minority appeared evident when the OHR approved the creation of the Federal government without the participation of the Croat parties, overruling a decision of unconstitutionality by the Central Electoral Committee.

It seems that the real winner of this situation is Dodik, who can present the RS has the only really functional entity of BiH. The increase of the political power of Dodik and of the weight of the RS in BiH affairs seems to be underlined also by the UE High Representative for Foreign

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Politics mission to Banja Luka when she asked to Dodik to stop the organisation of a referendum against the legitimacy of some measures undertaken by the OHR.

The entry of Croatia in the European Union will have effect on the political situation in Bosnia Herzegovina, but it is still difficult to predict in which way. On one side, the Croatian membership could increase the differences between the social economic environment of neighbouring Croatia with Bosnia Herzegovina, further increasing the potential number of economic migrants from BiH to Croatia. On the other side the Croatian government could decide, once member of the European Union, to use its increased political weight to actively sustain politically and economically the Croatian minority in BiH in order to reduce the inflow of Croats who are leaving the country. From this point of view, it is interesting to notice that the reduction of the powers of the OHR in favour of the EU special representative will increase the possibility of Croatia as a future EU member state to influence, through the EUSR, the EU political action in Bosnia Herzegovina. It will be the first case where the international action of the EU will be carried out in a country where a sizable European Union community is a relevant stakeholder in the local political confrontation.

A key element that could redefine the nature of the inter-ethnic post Dayton political confrontation will be the forthcoming census of the population of Bosnia Herzegovina that could be held in 2012 if the new census law will be approved. The last available census was held in 1991 just before the war started and registered a population of 4,4 million people (1,9 million Bosniaks, 1,3 million Serbs and 760.000 Croats). The unofficial UNHCR census held just after the war in 1996 registered a population of 3,9 millions inhabitants with a slight increase of the Serbian population and a decrease of both the Bosniak and Croat population. According to some forecasts, this asymmetric demographic trend remained such also in the following fifteen years, and it could have changed the demographic structure of the country population as well as the demographic assumptions that are behind Dayton ethnic-power-sharing agreement. Fearing this, the adoption of a census law has been blocked by the Croat and Bosniak parties who demanded to avoid nationality and religion related questions in the next population census. If the political situation will exit the present stalemate it seems that an EU brokered agreement on the census law could be reached, probably including the questions on nationality and religion only as optional ones and with an explicit political agreement that the results of the census won't be used to change the Dayton structure. If such a law will be adopted in 2011, the census could be held in 2012.

Sixteen years after the end of the conflict and the adoption of the Dayton constitution it seems more and more evident how the institutional architecture of the country can't hold any longer. Notwithstanding the enormous economic resources poured in the country (some estimations put it at 20 billion euro in 16 years for a population of 4 million people) the economic perspectives are still grim, with an unemployment rate over 30%, growing interethnic divide and structural state disfunctionality. De facto Dayton is already politically dead, but none of the stakeholders is willingly or has interest in making the first move toward the formal dissolution of the system. The last two US lead attempts to overtake Dayton creating a new restructured agreement have failed and very likely there won't be a third one due to the progressive disengagement of the US from the Balkan region and the global difficulties Washington is facing in different scenarios. The attempts to create a more centralised and unitarian state abandoning Dayton produced a

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renewal of Serbian nationalism that has been accurately exploited by Dodik who built his political success leading the campaign for the defence of the Serbian identity of RS and threatening the secession of the Serbian entity as retaliation.

Very likely, the census of the Bosnian population and the accession of Croatia in the European Union will represent the next two challenges to the status quo in Bosnia Herzegovina and the consequences of these two future processes could produce some shockwaves in the already precarious Bosnian political scenario. In this context, the decoupling of the OHR/EUSR and the creation of an autonomous European Special Representative could represent another internal element of dynamism in the Dayton system. The progressive reduction of the OHR (and the dismantling of the Bonn powers) in favour of an increased EU presence with an all comprehensive mandate would be a ordinary step in a country that progresses towards stability and rule of law in order to drive BiH towards ASA and EU accession. But the present deterioration of the political landscape and the apparent confusion inside the European Union on the future of the enlargement policy should be taken in careful consideration before dismantling the Office of the High Representative that still can make use of its atypical powers in order to prevent hazardous move from BiH political parties.

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Is Yanukovych's Ukraine looking for a "third way"?

Andrea Grazioso

With an unexpected decision, the court of Kiev arrested Yulia Tymoshenko, leader of the Motherland Party, leading member of the political opposition in the country and defeated by a narrow margin in the 2010 presidential election.

Ms. Tymoshenko, already on trial under the accuse of “excessive use of power”, related to the signing in 2009, as Head of Government, of the agreements with Russian counterparts for the supply of natural gas, is accused of having recurred to “shortcuts” or “simplified” procedures, beyond her capacity as Head of Government.

The international reaction was immediate and all unequivocally negative towards the government office, accused of political use of justice. Actually, the context within which it is conducting the current power struggle in Kiev is much more complex than it might superficially appear.

After his success in the presidential elections of 2010, President Yanukovych has gradually strengthened its control over the state machine, but has also begun to address the main “geopolitical dilemma” faced by his country, since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, that is the return to Moscow’s orbit, or to start a “forced march” toward the West, to adhere to the Euro-Atlantic community.

Generally described as “pro-Russian,” Yanukovych has never enjoyed a special sympathy in the West, where his reputation as a post-Soviet technocrat could not rival, in the descriptions of the media, with the charm of his historic rival - Viktor Yushchenko, “hero” of the Orange Revolution - and his most recent opponent, Yulia Tymoshenko.

Yanukovych, in the early months of its mandate, has certainly lived up to the expectations of his many critics, declaring publicly that Ukraine was not looking to NATO membership - thereby effectively ending the process of rapprochement that seemed to have come a step away from the so-called Membership Action Plan - and concluding in record time an agreement with Russia for the renewal - virtually “*sine-die*” – of the stationing of Russian Black Sea Fleet in Crimea.

In a few months, therefore, the country's march towards the West, done in the years of President Yushchenko, seemed to have been nullified by the decisions of the new leader.

As a matter of fact, the reality of Ukrainian politics is far more complex and Yanukovych, rather than a “loyal friend” of Moscow, is the Ukrainian politician with the best ties to the new class of businessmen, the new economic nomenclature formed thanks to the dissolution of Soviet power.

Yanukovych, therefore, maintains the objective of strengthening the country's economic prospects, particularly for the benefit of the establishment and existing financial industry. Neither rapid opening to the principles of competition and free markets, nor a return into the orbit of Moscow and the Russian oligarchs, could therefore satisfy this strategic objective.

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Thus, the current issue should be included in this general framework, and should not be read superficially as a "political revenge by the courts."

Yanukovich, in fact, is fully aware of the fact that Ukraine can not choose any of the above two proposed ways until the country has attained a reasonable freedom from economic constraints which make it almost totally dependent on Russian energy supplies.

Given the current condition, in fact, a strong orientation towards the West would be hard to implement, because the country's industrial and economic system – while obsolete in almost every sector - could not possibly withstand the competition resulting from rapid liberalization.

It would be necessary, according to the political-economic strategy of the Government in office, proceed with a gradual integration into the European system, but only after being assured of competitive conditions - starting with low energy costs - necessary not to succumb due to the inefficient national industrial system.

This project, of course, turns out to be very ambitious - given the dire economic condition faced by the country since the time of its independence - and also difficult to implement because it requires perfect synchronization of the two actions described above: reduction of energy costs and progressive opening up to Western markets.

As far as the second step is concerned, since long time Ukraine is deepening economic ties with the European Union. While Yanukovich has explicitly refrained from joining NATO - also now made virtually impossible by the already mentioned agreements on the Russian presence in Crimea - he never deflected by the objective of integration into European economic system.

That's why the negotiations with the EU on the so-called "deep and comprehensive free trade area" (DCFTA), started immediately after the access of Ukraine to the World Trade Organization, in 2008, and was not slowed-down after the rise of the new political leadership in Kiev.

The European Union as a whole is Ukraine's largest trading partner, accounting for about one third of its exports. The new "free trade area", under negotiation, would substantially increase the volume of trade and, in hopes, it would also significantly increase the level of direct investment.

Ukraine has a desperate need to finance the modernization of its infrastructure, starting from the network of pipelines that provide gas transit directed from Russia to Western markets. As mentioned, the arrest of Tymoshenko has determined the immediate negative reactions from the majority of Western commentators and, more importantly, several prominent politicians. In particular, both the French foreign minister and the High Representative for EU foreign policy have explicitly criticized the use of "selective" justice that closely resembles the methods adopted by Vladimir Putin to curb political pluralism in Russia.

Also, the western press – from the influential Financial Times – spoke very critically against the Timoshenko trial.

The argument put forward in an almost unanimous fashion is that the Union has not, in fact, special need to reach such an agreement of "deep association" with Ukraine, unless it play a substantial role to advance and "anchor" Ukraine to "European system of values", among which economic freedom - explicitly contained in the Agreement in question - is just one aspect.

In other words, even the respect of human and political rights must be contemplated as a cornerstone of such an agreement.

This, in turn, should be denounced or at least suspended unilaterally by the EU, if the partner country would deflect from such commitments.

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However, as argued by the most careful analysts and as indirectly confirmed by the Brussels circles, the technical negotiations, which is in progress, is not at risk of being suspended, but the ratification process of the agreement could be jeopardized.

It should be considered, among other things, that the Motherland Party of Timoshenko is associated with the European People's Party, that is the largest political group in the European Parliament, and is "close" even to the Greens and Liberals.

In essence, if Ms. Timoshenko would really be sentenced for the alleged "abuse of power", a charge that involves a prison sentence of up to ten years, it is likely that her party will be able to mount a strong political opposition, in Brussels as in many European capitals, against the ratification of an agreement with the Ukrainian government.

Obviously the authorities in Kiev have, until now, denied any involvement in the events, stressing the independence of the judiciary and, therefore, refuting their involvement in the judicial decisions.

On the other hand, the arrest of Ms. Timoshenko occurred just after the pleadings of the Head of Government, Mykola Azarov, who announced in the court his intention to take legal action to stop the effectiveness of the contracts signed by Timoshenko in 2009.

The issue of gas supplies to Ukraine

This reflects, in fact, the keystone of the problem and, as mentioned, one of the most important political-economic equilibrium that will determine the future geopolitical position of Ukraine.

These agreements, signed by Timoshenko with the Russian counterpart in 2009, provide that the fees paid by Kiev for the supply of natural gas are linked to the international price of oil, and periodically updated accordingly. By contrast, the rates paid by Moscow for transit of gas through the Ukrainian network remain stable in the long run.

As a result, if at the time of the signing of the Ukrainian government provided a reasonable economic balance between the two components, the evolution of oil prices and, therefore, the rates of imported gas is causing a tremendous disbursement for the country. In the second quarter of 2011, Ukraine has paid \$ 295.6 per thousand cubic meters of gas; because of the mentioned price-adjustment clause, in the third quarter the price will touch \$ 350 per thousand cubic meters.

Kiev, with considerable effort, has so far honored its commitments, also thanks to the fact that the economic crisis has reduced the volume of imports, which fell from 57 billion cubic meters in 2010 to an estimated level for 2011 of 54 billion cubic meters.

On the other hand, another of the contested clauses in the agreements ask Kiev to buy but at least 33 billion cubic meters a year, while the objectives of the government is to drop to just 27 billion, offsetting the reduction with a series of alternative measures. The Russian position in this matter is symptomatic of what the real bone of contention.

The Kremlin, or more precisely, the government headed by Vladimir Putin, has quietly supported the campaign of Timoshenko in 2009-2010; this should already give rise to more than one question regarding actual Yanukovich's "alignment" with Moscow.

After the arrest of Timoshenko, much criticism raised in Moscow towards the work of the Ukrainian government, so that - strangely enough – it seemed both Russia and Europe are on the same side, against a Ukrainian illiberal leadership.

But Moscow - well aware of the costs of supplies defined in the contracts signed by Kiev - has put an alternative offer on the table: to renegotiate the price of gas in Ukraine in exchange for a favorable sale of the network of pipelines that cross the country - now under the control of the

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state - and the accession of Ukraine to the free trade zone that Russia has already established with Belarus and Kazakhstan.

Both of these are highly strategic objectives: the first would guarantee Gazprom the control of what is probably the most strategically significant portion of the transport infrastructure system of gas to Western markets; the second definitely prevent the accession of Ukraine to any economic agreement and trade with the European Union. If, in fact, theoretically a country can simultaneously be part of more than one military alliance, it cannot simultaneously be part of multiple free trade areas. A customs union with Russia would result, therefore, in the end of the project to enter in a sort of "free trade area" with the European Union.

The Ukrainian government, apparently, strongly opposes both the Russian demands. Prime Minister Azarov stressed publicly that his government does not seek any "preferred agreement" with Moscow on gas prices, but expects a "fair agreement", which does not allow the contracts of 2009.

According to Kiev, such agreements would violate previous inter-state agreements, signed in 2004, under which Russia and Ukraine would have to periodically determine the amount of annual supplies. This aspect, according to Azarov, shows how the action of Timoshenko has exceeded the powers conferred upon her, in her capacity of head of government.

Also, Kiev intends to dissolve the state company Naftogaz, thus dissolving also the legal value of contested 2009 agreements, and establish a new legal entity.

Russia, as mentioned, would welcome such a solution, provided that the assets of Naftogaz, which now controls the network of pipelines, are sold to GAZPROM.

Last but not least, Kiev also wishes to develop as soon as possible the national production, in particular through the exploitation of so-called "shale-gas" or gas extracted from clay rocks whose economic exploitation is now made possible with new production techniques. In Ukraine there would present huge deposits and the country is to start the exploration. To that purpose, the first Western companies have already begun to sign agreements with the government in Kiev.

In late September, Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich met with his Russian counterpart Dmitry Medvedev and Prime Minister Vladimir Putin. According to the leaks of information, reported by local media, Russia would no longer be interested in Ukraine's participation in the Customs Union. Rather, Russian government seems now focusing on the take-over of Ukraine's assets, namely the pipeline infrastructure. It seems possible that most of the declaration of the last months by Ukraine's government were actually part of a well orchestrated tactic, aimed at reaching a most favorable agreement with Moscow.

According to the Ukrainian Prime minister, Azarov, who released a public declaration on this matter, Russia and Ukraine had agreed in principle to set up a trilateral consortium, including Energy Companies from European Union member states, in order to manage Ukraine's gas pipelines. This decision would make sure that the "irreplaceable" Russian gas would continue flowing to Europe, uninterrupted.

This solution would represent a departure from the original Russian position, to avoid any EU involvement in the Ukraine-Russia dispute. However, according to some analysts, the proposed trilateral joint-venture would be de-facto dominated by GAZPROM, since Ukraine's government would control just one-fifth of the new Company, while the "European" participant would actually be a face-Company under the control of GAZPROM.

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In another declaration, Azarov explained that Russia agreed to lower gas prices for “non-commercial consumers” in Ukraine, while Kiev would lower gas transit fees, due for the use of its pipeline network.

This would also match with the most probable political objective of Yanukovich government. The country, and the political fortune of Yanukovich, asks for a reduction of energy costs for the industrial sector, especially the heavy industry located in the Donetsk region, which represents the basis of Yanukovich political power.

The arrest of Tymoshenko has aroused a strong international reaction, but negligible effects in terms of domestic protests. Due to the low level of popularity the leader of the Motherland Party now enjoys, only a few thousand activists have taken to the streets of Kiev. On the other hand, there is a serious risk that the process of rapprochement of Ukraine to Europe is hindered or stopped due to this incident. However, in the medium term, the most strategic element for the international alignment of the country will be represented by the ability of Ukraine to free itself from energy dependence on Russia, a dependence that even the "liberal" Timoshenko has contributed to increase.

*Lucio Martino*

After the Fall of Tripoli

Rebels' entry to Tripoli has not meant the end of a conflict that has raged since the early March because Colonel el Qaddafi is still alive and nobody knows what type of resistance he can organize. But it was the end of a new Battle for Tripoli, and the sunset of a long dictatorship. Now is the moment to hope that Tripoli does not follow the same fate of Baghdad, fallen after the end of Saddam Hussein in a long and gory civil war. The greatest unknown is the future relevance of Islamic radicalism across a country large and diverse. A political document distributed by the National Transitional Council of Libya, which has taken the guide of the rebellion, in a quite worrying development assumes the Islamic Sharia as the principal source of law. In addition, one of the leaders of the rebellion has been in other times the commander of a group of Islamic fighters associated to Al Qaeda. Despite the allegations that want this man very close to the western secret services, the sky of Libya is far from being clear of clouds. Perhaps, the safeguarding of the local order will lie again on a direct involvement of the foreign powers that have driven the operations so far. The Battle for Tripoli has been an example of a clever division of duties among an air power that has destroyed the strongholds of the old regime, rebels formations that have hocked into urban guerrilla attacks, and French and English Special Forces, whose precious contribution is obviously preferred to pass under silence.

Overturning traditional positions

The war in Libya has produced some interesting political effects on the western political arena: it has been stalwartly approved by the left-wingers and has been weakly contested by the right-wingers, and it has bring back an otherwise missing foreign policy element in the first stages of the forthcoming American presidential elections. Regardless of the favorable reactions of the American press in front of the fall of Tripoli, some republican candidates, including the perceived frontrunner former governor of the Utah and former ambassador in Peking, John Huntsman, are confident that the future of North Africa does not enter in to the American national interest. As a consequence, the American involvement in the crisis is seen by them as nothing more than the bitter consequence of a wrong strategic assessment made by the present administration.

The readings given by the major European Media to the fall of Tripoli are no less discordant. In United Kingdom, the opinions regarding the colonel's escape from his capital have been starkly positive. The always authoritative "Times" has banned from its analyses any warn on the possible difficulties of the tomorrow, awarding just satisfaction for the present.

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For once, "Le Monde" is sharing thorough the entire Libyan crisis the same views of his by far more conservative British counterpart, passionately celebrating the role of France. Believing that the French national interest is at stake, even the great newspaper of the "gauche" is leaving aside an otherwise constant critical attitude to the present conservative government, boasting the merit of firstly sitting on the side of the rebels to president Sarkozy. To drive the reconstruction efforts in some vital industrial sectors like transports, telecommunications, and oil activities, France is seen now to be in the best possible position. Strong and spread out is the idea of taking back to life some European-Mediterranean Partnership. The entire country seems suddenly proud of a President who proved beyond any reasonable doubt that, economical difficulties aside, France always stays as some of the greatest military players of the day.

The situation in Germany is totally different, even if the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Westerwelle, has futilely engaged in to a band-wagoning effort, manifesting respect and gratitude towards the Atlantic Alliance for the intervention in Libya. Both Minister Westerwelle and Chancellor Merkel, who has always shared the same non-interventionist stances of her Foreign Minister, look today caught between two fires. Criticisms rains heavy over them from the conservative "Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung", now that they are evidently stepping back, showing their availability to get their country involved into an impending stabilization effort. At the same time, their whole stance on the Libyan crisis is fiercely blamed by a Social Democratic opposition claiming that such a turnaround is definitely not decorous for Germany.

Finding itself in a similar embarrassment, the Italian government seems to react with more of the usual cautiousness, to the extent of keeping some distance from the governments of Paris and London. Since the beginning, the Italian Media have always resolved the bilateral "affair" within the personal relationship between el Qaddafi and Berlusconi.

Born in the sign of the oil business, their intimacy has lately ended with a quantity of mutual accusations of betrayal. The Treaty of Friendship signed in the 2008 between Italy and Libya is seen now like nothing more than "façade" hiding too many un-confessable interests. Therefore, the war that started in March of has left the Berlusconi's government in a very uncomfortable position. The voices closer to the Italian government consider the war as a plain negative development, because it has removed a detestable regime at the expense of destroying that progresses that had been laboriously built through the years. In other words, the war is an incident that has stopped a country on its way to modernity. The defense of the German non-interventionism is strong, but even stronger is the attack of a Left charged of betraying his own pacifist history for a new warmongering.

A Conference in Paris

In this framework, a conference has been organized as a tool to involve a greater share of the international community into the Libyan entangle. Open to all the players that have in way or in another sustained the cause of the Rebels, the conference has been characterized by the participation of the countries that had abstained from taking side or had opposed the military intervention, as China and Russia, India and Brazil. Algeria has stuck in with reserve and some ambiguity, postponing to another moment the recognition of the Libya's provisional government. Only South Africa has remained coherent with its original position, and has rejected the invitation. Held in Paris, the conference has been very poor of results banning a clear cut vision of the French foreign policy under President Sarkozy.

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Echoing the speech delivered only few hours before at the XIX edition of the French Ambassadors Conference, president Sarkozy has manifested a boundless trust in the possibilities of his country. In a powerful fresco of the international situation, the French President has reviewed the results lately achieved by his country in Africa, claiming a leading role in the pacification of the Ivory Coast and in the birth of the new State of Southern Sudan, both goals reached only after long years of internecine war. The vision of the international system given at the conference by the French president is one in which Europe is an Anglo-French creature, and Africa is a “treasure island” whose traditional richness is getting bigger and bigger with the passing of time to the enjoyment of Europe. It is a vision empty of any American presence in the Gulf of Guinea, empty of any Chinese involvement in the whole extension of the continent. It is a vision of an Africa all open only to the interests of the heirs of the colonial empires, the very same countries for centuries in struggle with each other over the territories of three continents now united by the memory of their past greatness.

Looking ahead, president Sarkozy seems eager to bring new life to his ill-fated project of Union for the Mediterranean. A remarkable Europeanism pushes him to vindicate an increasing leading role for the Old Continent to fill the vacuum left by a dimming American power. It is not by chance that in a reversal of what happened through the Yugoslavian ordeal of the Nineties, this time NATO has stirred for initiative of the Europeans. Many are the glimpses given by President Sarkozy during this venue of possible further enterprises, ranging from a French initiative in Syria, to a preventive attack against the Iranian nuclear installations. In a such increased international assertiveness, now more than ever Europe needs pursuing a policy built on just two pillars: a new “entente cordiale” for what concern Africa; and a renewed alignment between Paris and Berlin centered on the defense of the Euro Zone.

However, the short Paris’ conference of early September has been quite unsatisfactory under many respects, being its major result the thawing of the Libyan funds and the instantaneous availability of a billion and half of dollars to meet the immediate needs of the National Transitional Council of Libya. Nevertheless, Secretary Clinton has shown some moderate satisfaction, taking the chance to stress the importance of her government recent decision to support President Assad’s opponents in Syria.

Two things

Almost contemporarily, two other events of quite different kind have affected the Transatlantic Relations. First, in the attempt to give an answer to a persistent crisis, President Obama delivered a speech to a joint Congress session introducing his new “American Jobs Act”. Second, in a move aimed at manifesting a stark contrariety to the politics of support of the “weak members” of the Euro Zone, Jurgen Stark, a renowned German economist, resigned from his position in the Executive Board of the European Central Bank.

President Obama’s plan identifies as an urgent goal for its country the fight against an unemployment that now strikes short of the ten per cent of the active population. To this extent, the “American Jobs Act 2011” allows for the expense of roughly half of a trillion of dollars and foresees the lowering of the salary loads, an extension of the insurance for those who are unemployed, the modernization of the educational system, and the construction of some new transport infrastructures. Given that this is the second big effort introduced by the Obama administration to fight off unemployment, and that its major difference with the first one, which has not given satisfactory results, resides only in a third less of funding, the plan has been far from enthusiastically welcomed by the Congress. The only favorable evaluations have been

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offered by the "liberal" core of the Democratic Party, according to which the new plan is a good starting point. Of a different opinion is a Republican Party that keeps denying any political help to the present administration. Though, of greater interest is the negative appraisal of the "American Jobs Act 2011" given by the German financial system.

Doctor Stark resignations were not unexpected: his aversion to the rescuing of the Greek economy and to the endless purchase of Italian and Spanish bonds was well known. Unlike the Bush and Obama administrations, the German and French governments have revealed less reluctance to let Greece face the consequences of its choices. But the resounding gesture of the German member of the Executive Board of the European Central Bank has definitely ignited the financial markets given that it has been

Back to a North – South European divide

The impression given by this kind of developments is that a North to South dualism is slowly ripping apart the Euro zone. An additional evidence of this state of affairs is the negative assessment given, in the very same days, by the "Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung" to the Italian financial maneuver. Such "Euro Zone Divide" seems stressing the increasingly ineffectiveness of a economic union missing an higher level of salary flexibility, labor mobility across member countries, and political integration. Furthermore gives evidences of the institutional vacuum existing within the European Union, the significance of the lack a sturdy central coordinating fiscal authority, and the need for a more powerful European Central Bank.

Wrapping all this up with the lack of results that has characterized the G7 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors Summit, held in Marsiglia again on the first days of September, it is obvious that the two sides of the Atlantic have choose to implement two quite diverging strategies for addressing an already seasoned economical slowdown: The American economists are heading for the stimulus of the production; the European economists are bound for the reduction of expenses and the restoring of the budget. These quite opposite policy responses, both of which engender systemic risks, mirror a profound ideological split: Intervening promptly and massively to contain damage or letting the forces ruling the free market to engage themselves. They also tip to the deep limits of nowadays policymaking, and to the lack of harmony among different countries policymakers in successfully reacting to such macroeconomic events. More broadly, a worrying transatlantic dynamic is taking hold, because the scattering debt in Europe creates new dangers for the United States, and the possibility of another recession in the United States aggravates the effects of the European fiscal crisis, while China and other growing economic powers are doing their best to slow down their economies to fight their high inflation levels.

The cost of such a persistent divergence could be sheer. Successful harmonization of different policies is very much needed at a time when a new balance of the global economical system has not been reached, and a new transatlantic divide is as well evident also when dealing with monetary policy. Less than one year ago, the United States Federal Reserve buying up government bonds through monetary making has prompted a strong European criticism, even though the Central Bank had already an history in buying government bonds to support troubled Euro Zone members. However, the German Minister of Finance, Schäuble, has lately written on the "Financial Times" that the Euro Zone can escape the crisis only if indebted states implement economically, and politically, painful measures such as cuts in expenditures and tax increases. By and large, Germany has clearly shifted towards an austerity that the United States and the Southern European countries are very disinclined to consider.



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Looking ahead

As a matter of fact, new troubles grow thick to the horizon of a transatlantic partnership that has historically dominated the world economy and, building upon shared values and interests, designed and sustained all global political and economic institutions. Economy aside, among those staggering problems an incumbent position is taken by an embargo of the Syrian oil production, a unilateral proclamation of the Palestinian independence, the breakup Turkey-Israel relations, and the leisurely crumple of the Afghan security forces, and the future of Libya. Meanwhile, Prime Minister Cameron and President Sarkozy took a trip to Libya to promise ongoing military and economic sustain for the country's new leadership, and the Assistant Secretary of State Feltman gathered with the National Transitional Council leaders discussing the possibility for international forces to provide military and counterterrorism training... Only the passing of time will answer the question if the war in Libya of 2011 has been a war for the diffusion of democracy or a new kind of colonialism.



The Afghan Transition faces a crisis

Antonio Giustozzi

Abstract: the transition went ahead despite evident flaws because of a consensus among key stakeholders that it was the only solution to the military, diplomatic and political impasse, which emerged in 2010. However, a change of the guard at the helm of ISAF created in the summer of 2011 the conditions for a reconsideration of how the transition was being managed. The indications coming from the field were strongly negative about the possibility of the Afghan security forces being able to handle the situation almost entirely on their own by 2014. The new ISAF leadership therefore set out to reshape the transition, in order to at least ensure that the most obvious flaws could be identified early on and addressed. However, time is beginning to be short and the funding available is already beginning to be curtailed.

Flaws of the security transition

In July 2011 a process of ‘transition’ towards Afghan leadership in the security sector was launched with great fanfare in Kabul, after having been long in the planning. The transition is planned to happen over the years, with each province or region being assessed for readiness on the basis of a number of criteria, including the capacity of local administrations as well as that of the security forces. The set of criteria is such that the areas best sheltered from the threat of the insurgency would transition first; the actual capacity of the security forces was a factor of modest importance, not least because of the difficulty of establishing what such capacities effectively were.

Evaluating the capacity of army and police units is of course critical to the success of the transition, but it has always been an issue which has dogged the NATO Training Mission – Afghanistan (NTM-A), for a number of reasons. The first one is the internal politics of the institutions providing the training: fearful of criticism by over-sensitive political leaderships at home, NTM-A and its predecessors have all focused their assessments on what they knew where their strengths – equipment and staffing levels. The actual skills of the troops and most importantly of the commanding officers were not paid much attention. This is the so-called Capability Milestone system, much criticised but still in use, even if in a modified version.

The second reason is that ISAF and NTM-A have adopted a very protective attitude towards the Afghan army in particular, with the result that the latter has almost never fought on its own. Hence assessing its capabilities is problematic, because in the event of officers making mistakes either ISAF or the NTM-A mentors would come to the rescue. Although mentors are usually very well aware of the capabilities of the Afghan officers whom they train, their views have not been systematically gathered and are not shared by the Afghan Ministry of Defence, which claims all tactical successes in joint operations as its own. In other words, judging the

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competence of commanding officers is a controversial particularly when two different institutions confront the problem with different attitudes and value sets. NATO mentors stress merit and tactical efficiency in arguing for promotions and appointments, while the Afghans tend to stress respect for authority, knowledge of the local way of doing things and (without admitting openly) factional politics. This is in fact a third reason why assessing the army is so difficult: no agreement between Afghans and NTM-A on what a good commanding officer should be looking like.

A fourth reason for the difficulty of making such an assessment has to do with the limited mentorship to which the police has been exposed and with the extremely weak chain of command and reporting within the police. Most police units have never been mentored, because of the scarcity of mentoring teams. At the same time the Ministry of Interior has only a vague idea of what are the capabilities of its units; the latter report little back to the centre, and supervision from Kabul is very poor.

A fifth and final reason why there is so little clarity over the actual capabilities of the Afghan security forces is that initially at least none of the main stakeholders in the transition process might have had a genuine interest in knowing what the situation on the ground was actually like. The transition has become a political imperative, as the only option on the table which could lead to a gradual disengagement from Afghanistan. Careers were at stake in NATO's armies, diplomats had been tasked by their capitals to produce a way out of the Afghan quagmire, and Afghan politicians were looking for a way to regain some internal legitimacy and political room of manoeuvre, erasing the stigma of collaborators with foreign occupying forces. The long-term view of what would actually happen at the end of the transition process in 2014, when only a small contingent of NATO troops was supposed to be still in the country, was left for the next generation of politicians, generals and diplomats to deal with.

Origins of the doubts over the transition

In the months following the change of the guard at the head of ISAF in July 2011, however, this convergence of interests towards sweeping any doubts on the transition under the carpet started showing some cracks. The new commander, Gen. Allen, had a strong incentive to consider the medium if not the long-term perspective. There are also reports that in Washington President Obama was receiving conflicting reports concerning the transition by the host of agencies involved in assessing the situation in the field. Within ISAF, some high rank officers aware of the situation on the ground were raising doubts on the capability of the Afghan security forces, not least because a series of investigations had uncovered massive corruption in some key parts of the Ministry of Defence, which had been believed to be relatively effective and corruption-free. In particular, the Military Hospital in Kabul and the Afghan Air Force were exposed as examples of massive corruption and nepotism, to the extent of compromising the effectiveness of these organisations. Anecdotal evidence coming from other units of the Ministry of Defence seem to indicate a high level of corruption in procurement and in logistics; army equipment was easily found in the bazaars and the insurgents are known to have obtained M-16 rifles, which were not previously available on the black market in the region.

The growing evidence of the spread of corruption within the Army adds to the existing and well established evidence of corruption within the police to configure a worrying picture of decay within the security apparatus.

The situation in Nuristan also served as a warning of what the transition might hold for the future, if not moved to a different track. Nuristan was the first province to be unofficially

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transitioned: the transition was never announced, but American troops were almost entirely withdrawn from the province and Afghan army and police left in charge (in 2010). By the late summer of 2011, six of the seven districts were completely in the hands of the insurgents, with the government only controlling a district centre and the provincial centre. Sources in the UN believed that even among the surviving government outposts collaboration with the insurgents was fairly common.

Indeed infiltration by the insurgents into the police, army and intelligence of the Kabul government appears to have intensified in recent years and months, according to UN sources. In the southern Pashtun belt which accounts for about half of the country, many police stations are reported to have entered some kind of agreement with the insurgents, encompassing at least a ceasefire and often more: passing on information, sale or transfer of ammunition and weapons, collaboration in smuggling operations, etc. One episode of police handing over weapons to the Taliban was even filmed and shown on the BBC. Perhaps the most serious episode of alleged collaboration of policemen with the insurgents was the April 2008 attack on President Karzai, who was presiding over a military parade in Kabul. There were also indications that the attack on the Kabul Serena hotel in January 2008 was facilitated by MoI employee. In June 2010 a Brigadier General was arrested under accusation among else of having collaborated with the insurgents, the highest rank official known to have been apprehended for this reason.

NTM-A mentors and ISAF believe that several operations were compromised because of Taliban infiltration of the police; in Helmand the police were being kept out of planning in order to avoid forewarning the Taliban. Often eyewitnesses have reported instances of police collaboration with the Taliban, or at least passive tolerance of their activities. There were also reports of police helping the Taliban carry out attacks against US units. Proactive police officers sometimes allege that they are isolated in their struggle with the insurgents and are singled out for attacks while surrounding district police stations are quiet.

Diplomatic sources highlighted that even in the north deal making between police and Taliban might be a problem, as for example in the case of Almar's border police, near Central Asia. At the MoI, high rank officers admit that in some areas there might be informal ceasefires with the armed opposition. Even repeated episodes of ANP units opening fire on ISAF units have been reported. Even if the number of individuals involved in the worst incidents (murder of foreign troops) was small, it appears that sometimes investigation highlighted widespread complicity. After the killing of five British soldiers in Nad-i Ali in November 2009, a 'wholesale clear' of the district's police force was carried out, leaving in place only 30 of the 150 policemen. In Nawa in 2010 the police split between supporters and opponents of the district CoP, accused of having links to the Taliban. Four of the about 100 policemen in the district, known to oppose the CoP, were murdered in unclear circumstances in a matter of days. Eventually the CoP was forced to leave by the district council and the governor.

Within the army episodes of collaboration are rarer, but some officers here and there are known to have relations with the insurgents, as are some officers of the intelligence service. In addition, cooperation with the insurgents is also believed to be widespread among civilian officials, particularly at the district level. The Taliban themselves claim to offer the officials a second salary, higher than that paid by the government, in exchange for their collaboration.

While desertions from the army to the insurgents seem to be rare, they are somewhat more frequent from the ranks of the police. In December 2010 the MoI spokesman reported that desertions from the police were on the rise, particularly when units were deployed to the areas most affected from the insurgency.

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A particular problem that Gen. Allen is reportedly looking at is the Local Police, a force created last year and consisting in practice of local militias loosely controlled (if at all) by the police. Several episodes of indiscipline among the militias have been reported already, as well as some episodes of infiltration by the insurgents. Many in ISAF and in the junior ranks of the diplomatic corps believed that the transition was leading to serious trouble, unless a major correction of route took place. Gen. Allen too appears to have entertained doubts, as he decided to revise the criteria for the transitioning of the provinces and argued in favour of the inclusion of some 'difficult' provinces, as a test of the capabilities of the Afghan security forces. An early test would allow ISAF and NTM-A to intervene and fix any flaws which were to emerge. However, in the early negotiations for changing the criteria of the transition process, it appeared soon clear that the Afghan counterparts were not as keen on transitioning early as ISAF was. Quite the contrary, during the summer of 2011 the Afghans expressed a determined opposition to taking responsibility for security in some of the difficult provinces.

Another element which must be adding to Gen. Allen's worries is the lack of clear progress in the 'graduation' of army and police units from the mentoring imparted by NTM-A. As argued above, the actual performance of the Afghan security forces is a matter of controversy. Even if he cannot reach a consensus with his Afghan counterparts on this point, Gen. Allen has data provided by his own men, which do not show an encouraging picture. As of September 2011, only a single army battalion and no police units were rated as capable to operate independently, despite 10 years of training and mentoring. During the summer of 2011, as army units were asked to take some more of the burden of fighting over their shoulders, casualties increased and desertions built up very rapidly, peaking at the yearly rate of 35%.

How to fix the flaws?

If Gen. Allen will succeed in his efforts to change the priorities of the transition, he should be able to test the effective capabilities of the Afghan security forces and most importantly demonstrated unequivocally that something needs to be done. The problem will however remain of how to fix the numerous flaws that are present. For that, Gen. Allen will need the cooperation of his Afghan counterparts, who however are likely to identify the source of the trouble in different causes. Rather than blaming the tendency to appoint officers because of their loyalty and pliability towards their superiors as opposed as to merit and skills, they are likely to raise once again the issue of the lack of heavy equipment for the Army and the police. They will argue that reducing the financial commitment to the development of the Afghan security forces as it has just been decided in the US is going to make fixing any flaws much more difficult. The reduced level of support might force the Afghans to crack down on corruption and waste, but will also reduce the leverage of the NATO countries over their Afghan counterparts. Some subtle diplomacy will be required to align Afghans and NATO allies at least to the extent strictly required to push through sufficient changes. A major problem that will have to be solved is the formation of a new officer corps for army and police. Because little has been done until 2011, a major new effort would have to be launched to train new officers in sufficient numbers. At present there is no plan for that; planning and implementation would probably take several months and most importantly require additional resources. Perhaps the only option would be to send cadets abroad in large numbers, but such courses would take years to produce an output; there are also concern that many trainees would then refuse to return to Afghanistan and either apply for asylum or abscond – it has already happened in the past.

*Marco Massoni*

African crisis: internally and externally driven political paths

African political leadership at large is trying to equip itself to better respond to the unexpected effects of its growing visibility to their peoples. African leaders are aware of the risks of destabilization, even though minimal yet, coming from the emulations of popular revolts occurred in the Maghreb this year, specifically in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya. Needless to say, the above said intentions seem to be more credible in regards of the newly elected executives, but more cosmetic vis-à-vis those well-established kleptocrats who are still leading too many countries in Africa.

Northern Africa: Libya, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia

As far as Libya is concerned, July the 13th and 14th the President of the National Transitional Council (NTC), Mahmoud Jibril, visited the European institutions and NATO in Brussels, where the NTC earned the recognition of Belgium, Netherlands and Luxembourg too. The next day the Fourth Meeting of the Contact Group on Libya took place in Istanbul. July the 18th, EU Foreign Affairs Council has appointed a Spanish diplomat, Bernardino Leon, as the new European Union Special Representative (EUSR) for the Southern Region of the Mediterranean, in order to provide adequate responses to the needs expressed by the *Arab Spring* and to fortify the EU Neighbourhood Policy through a strengthened inter-governmental political dialogue with the countries involved. At the same time the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Baroness Catherine Ashton, insisted on the need for a genuine political process, for effective reconciliation, unity and inclusive post-Qaddafi era within Libya. July the 28th, the Chief of Staff of the National Transitional Council (NTC), General Abdel Fattah Younis, was shot dead in Benghazi in unclear circumstances and was replaced by his deputy, General Mahmoud Souleymane. The former Ministry of Interior of the regime, Younis, had been already loyal to Qaddafi, but defected in February after the first stirrings of revolt. Although Younis was long suspected of duplicity, a settling of accounts inside the NTC might have also be the cause of his end. The episode has caused a crisis within the NTC, so that the President of the NTC, Moustafa Abdel Jalil, instructed the Prime Minister, Mahmoud Jibril, to form a new Executive Committee. Qaddafi and his family left Tripoli, while the Libyan capital capitulated in five days only. September the 1st, on the occasion of the Paris Conference on Libya, the NTC has been asked to quickly launch a process of national reconciliation and indulgence, in order to prevent any the same mistakes made elsewhere in post-conflict situation, inasmuch often accompanied by episodes of violence, recrudescence and revenge. Algeria is hosting part of Qaddafi's family for 'humanitarian reasons' and Niger authorities have recently

announced that thirty-two members of Qaddafi's entourage has been stationing in Niger since September the 2nd. The visit of British Prime Minister, David Cameron, and the French President, Nicolas Sarkozy, in Tripoli, were immediately followed by that of Turkish Prime Minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who for the occasion expressed to the new Libyan authorities the hope that Turkey be considered a political and social model, which to draw inspiration from, as a democratic and Islamic State at the same time. Besides, a further recognition came from New York, where the 66th United Nations General Assembly has decided to award the Libyan seat to the NTC. September the 16th, United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 2009, setting up the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL), as directly managed by the UN Department of Political Affairs. UNSMIL is led by British Ian Martin, Special Representative of the Secretary General to Libya (SGSR), with the mandate either to support Libyan efforts, in order to restore the security and the rule of law in the country or, later, to back the organization of the election of the Constituent Assembly.

In Mauritania, senatorial, administrative and legislative elections have been postponed, but not scheduled yet. Most opposition parties, who complained of the need to be given more time for the organization, logistics and negotiations, required that. Even though less known, in Mauritania there have been several movements of popular revolt since the beginning of the year, demanding reforms and better living conditions too. The Mauritanian President, Mohamed Ould Abdelaziz, has recently decided to initiate talks with the '25 February Movement', which became the greatest interpreter of such claims. At the bargaining table both sides are expected to face major problems of the still weak democracy, such as unemployment and precariousness, the price of essential goods, the apprehension for the formation of a new class of urban marginalized above all in the capital, Nouakchott, the status of the education system and the failure of the justice reform so far.

Parliamentary elections will be held November the 25th in Morocco. In a political and social climate still relatively tight and after approval by referendum of the constitutional amendment of July the 1st, Moroccan political parties have decided to break any delay and hasten the formation valid for new scrutiny of the House of Representatives and the subsequent appointment of the Prime Minister. In terms of foreign policy, for the first time a rapprochement and normalization of relations with Algeria seem to be within reach.

In Tunisia former President, Zine el Abidine Ben Ali, was again convicted in absentia for embezzlement of land, illegal possession of weapons, drugs, and archaeological finds. Furthermore, his party, the Constitutional Democratic Rally (CDR), was irrevocably dissolved, while came to a hundred and fifteen the enormous number of political parties allowed by the transitional authorities in view of the election of the Constituent Assembly, October the 23rd. It is focusing on the analysis of the legal dispute on the entry list and the right of voters the very first phase of the European Union Electoral Observation Mission in Tunisia (MOEUE), setting off its operations since September the 8th. The mission, led by German Member of the European Parliament (MEP), Michael Gahler, is independent of both the European institutions at large and Member States. It is designed to observe the entire Tunisian electoral process, organized and managed by the Tunisian High Independent Authority for Elections (ISIE). The mandate of election observation missions is to promote democracy and human rights in a spirit of cooperation with EU partner countries, strengthening in this way public confidence in the Tunisian election cycle after the departure of Ben Ali, January the 14th. The deployment of election observers is to analyze the whole process, to follow the evolution of the legal disputes and to observe the media's behaviour *before-during-and- after* the election day, thanks to

constant meetings with national institutions, political parties, candidates, national observers, civil society as a whole and the media themselves. Actually any international election observation, covering the pre-election campaign, the election day, and finally the counting, aggregation and publication of results, is based on the principles of impartiality, neutrality and independence. In particular the EU, having joined the Declaration of Principles for International Observation of the United Nations as well as the Code of Conduct for International Election Observers, has developed a standardized methodology, based on the non-interference in the electoral process and adherence to national laws of the host country. To assess the entire electoral process, the mission is observing and analyzing qualitatively and quantitatively the performance of the election administration, the degree of freedom given to parties during the election campaign, the balance of the distribution of public funds, the equal access of parties and candidates to the media, the degree of freedom of expression offered to the voters, the conduct and operation of the polling stations, the consolidation of the election results and finally the timeliness and impartiality of the contentious jurisdiction. Even if Tunisia is going through a delicate transition in terms of long-lasting political-institutional transformation, not all of the Tunisian society seems prepared to deal with change. At the moment it is still unclear whether the plethora of parties and independent lists competing portrays the image of a country, where civil society, long deprived of the freedom of expression, intends to seriously commit to take up the reins of their future or whether, far from civil responsibility and determination, represents new forms of opportunism as a troubling legacy of Ben Ali era. It is true that the opacity, even with regard to funding of major parties, and the uncertainty of the political situation, at both national and local levels, cause many voters to fear the return to power of a new 'strong man'. Beyond a general partition between Islamic forces, progressive and liberal, a clearer picture of the political context could also be shaped in accordance with the patterns of *centralism versus decentralization* and that of *Pan-Islamic world-view versus laicity*.

Western Africa: MRU, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Chad, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea Bissau, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Liberia, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal and Togo

July the 17th, the Twentieth Summit of the Mano River Union (MRU) took place in the Liberian capital, Monrovia. Some measures to allow joint monitoring of borders among Member States of the Union were approved. The Presidents, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Alpha Condé, Ernest Bai Koroma and Ouattara, said they were concerned about the growing insecurity along the porous borders of the four West African countries involved. The MRU, which is based in Freetown (Sierra Leone), is a regional body established in 1973 by Liberia and Sierra Leone; in 1980 Guinea and in 2008 Ivory Coast joined the organization.

In early September the Government of Burkina Faso denied the report of some international media about the offer of asylum by all accounts offered to Qaddafi. For days, in fact, numerous sources speculated that Qaddafi, having crossed Niger, with a convoy would have reached the Burkinan capital, Ouagadougou. The hypothesis is not farfetched, since on several occasions over the last two decades, albeit with ups and downs, Tripoli had cooperated with Ouagadougou in many areas. The Burkinan President, Blaise Compaore, who in the spring had taken upon himself the Ministry of Defence portfolio, has after initiated a remarkable reform of the Army, which in recent months was protagonist of a series of mutinies.

On August 21 Jorge Carlos Fonseca, the candidate of the largest opposition party, the Movement for Democracy (MPD), has won the Presidential elections with fifty-five percent of preferences in Cape Verde. The other contenders were Manuel Inocencio Sousa, official

candidate of the ruling party, the Party for the Independence of Cape Verde (PAICV), Aristides Lima, an independent candidate however coming from the ranks of PAICV, and Joaquim Jaime Monteiro, an independent candidate. The office of President of the Republic was covered by Aristides Pereira (1975-1991), who died in September, by António Mascarenhas Monteiro (1991-2001) and by Pedro Pires (2001-2011). In the parliamentary elections of 6 February, the PAICV has obtained an absolute majority and the third term for Prime Minister José Maria Neves.

In July Senegalese authorities have declared that they will not extradite former Chadian President, Hissène Habré. Habré, who was in power in Chad from 1982 to 1990, when the current President, Idriss Déby Itno, overthrew him in a coup, is currently accused of war crimes and crimes against humanity, committed during his regime. Despite in 2006 Senegal, where he is exiled, had already been sent by the African Union a formal request to process him, however Dakar-budgetary fictitious problems and issues regarding the territorial jurisdiction of the court are delaying the time of justice and of impunity. It is worth saying that for the same charges in 2008 a Chadian court had already sentenced him to death in absentia. As far as current Chadian domestic political issues are concerned, the fight against corruption will be the top priority of the fourth term of office of President Déby Itno, as he stated on the occasion of his endowment on August 8, subsequent to his re-election of April 25, despite the opposition has boycotted the results. A few days later the investiture, Déby has formalized the post of Prime Minister to Emmanuel Nadingar. The second priority is to concentrate efforts and resources in order to achieve food self-sufficiency.

In Gambia the Presidential elections will be held in November, but uncertainty lingers about the credibility of the opposition, inasmuch still too weak against the likely to be re-elected controversial Gambian President, Yahya Jammeh, who in office since 1994, in August has accused some opposition leaders of plotting an alleged coup last May.

The outline of the candidates for 2012 Presidential elections in Ghana has become clear. Mrs. Samia Nkrumah, daughter of the Pan-Africanist leader, Kwame Nkrumah, already elected to Ghanaian Parliament in 2008 (Jomoro, West of the country) will be the only candidate of the party founded by his father, the Convention People's Party (CPP). Yet, CPP is not the favourite, as in the last elections it finished third, getting only 1.3% of the votes. Therefore, next year the most probable competitors for the Presidency of an increasingly important country in both continental and regional arena will be Mrs. Nana Akufo Addo, of the New Patriotic Party (NPS), and the incumbent Ghanaian President, Mr. John Atta-Mills. Atta-Mills resulted the winner of the primaries within his party, the National Democratic Congress (NDC), having had the better of the other candidate, Mrs. Nana Konadou Agyemang Rawlings, wife of former President Jerry John Rawlings - in power from 1979 to 2008 - who last year was appointed African Union High Representative for Somalia.

In September, Guinea-Bissau Prime Minister, Carlos Gomes Júnior Domingos, said he hoped to welcome Qaddafi and give him asylum. Although it is not the first time that the richest man and most powerful man of Bissau launches into hyperbolic statements, it is true that there are numerous African Heads of State and Government personally in debt to the former Libyan leader, remarkably demonstrating the considerable role played by Libya in determining the choices of domestic and foreign policies of many chancelleries of the Continent.

An attempted coup was foiled in Guinea. On the night of July the 19th an armed attack was launched against the private residence of the President of Guinea, Alpha Condé, who remained unharmed, because at that time he was elsewhere. In Conakry twenty-five soldiers and thirteen

civilians were arrested. The suspect is that officers close to General Sékouba Konate, former President of the Transition, and to the former head of the military junta, Moussa Camara Dadis, be responsible of the attempted assault. In a climate of suspicion, the Guinean Armed Forces, however, have reaffirmed their loyalty to the President. In August, under American and French pressure, the Guinean Government has withdrawn the controversial decision that came into force in the aftermath of that attack, which prevented the national media to provide any information about the incident. Condé is the first democratically elected President in the whole history the Nation after a period of transition internationally monitored, following the death of the dictator Lansana Conté, occurred in December 2008. So far, the approval of the new mining code has been the single most important reform made by Alpha Condé, given the fact that Guinea is the first producer of bauxite in Africa. The opposition leader, Cellou Dalein Diallo, President of the Union of Democratic Forces of Guinea (UFDG), is complaining about the way the ruling party (i.e. the Rally of the Guinean People - RPG) is concentrating its power, without taking the opposition into consideration at all. Legislative and Municipal elections are foreseen on December 29 this year, the latest round of which took place in 2002.

In Côte d'Ivoire the stabilization as well as reconciliation are ongoing, but still far from being concluded. The new Ivorian Government, consisting of thirty-six Ministers, issued a decree for the establishment of a commission of inquiry named *Commission Dialogue, Truth and Reconciliation* in regards of the post-election violence. The Commission, chaired by former Prime Minister, Charles Konan Banny, has started its work in September, with the ultimate goal to bridge the divisions between supporters of Gbagbo and Ouattara. Former President Gbagbo, already charged with aggravated theft, hijacking attempt of public funds, will later also be referred to the International Criminal Court, where he must answer for crimes against humanity. In the meantime relations with major international sponsors, notably France and the United States, are intensifying. On 15 July, the French Prime Minister Francois Fillon met with the Ivorian authorities on the spot, for the relaunch of bilateral partnership in economic and political-military terms. At the end of July, the President, Alassane Dramane Ouattara, made an official visit to Washington, where he received the support of President Obama. The Government has also provided important new appointments of military chiefs of the Army, Air Force, Navy and Gendarmerie. In particular, the former commander of the rebel New Forces (FN), Soumaila Bakayoko, is the new Chief of Staff of the Republican Forces in Côte d'Ivoire (FRCI). Also in the interests of compromise and reconciliation, the composition of FRCI is the result of a balanced relationship between the former regular military forces and former rebel militias. Bert Koenders, the new Head of the local United Nations Mission (UNOCI), the mandate (i.e. to protect civilians from violence) of which has been renewed until July the 31st 2012, is said to be concerned about the delay of the preparations for legislative elections, scheduled for November the 15, when the Ivorian National Assembly will be renewed for the first time in eleven years. President Ouattara has publicly reiterated that all those who are guilty of violence against the civilian population will be punished without exception. In fact, about half a million Ivorians who have fled the violence of the post-election crisis in recent months, seeking refuge into neighbouring countries, are effectively prevented from returning home, as they seriously run the risk of abuse and revenge by the FRCI. It has been announced that the FRCI will soon take the name of National Armed Forces in Côte d'Ivoire (FANC).

The Constitutional referendum of August 23 has not reached the quorum, thus Liberia is heading to the legislative and presidential elections, scheduled for next October 11, in view of which the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) decided to strengthen its presence in the

country. With the adoption of Resolution No. 1497 of 2003, the UN Security Council has set up UNMIL with the specific mandate to monitor the cease-fire, following the end of the second Liberian civil war, which erupted in 1999 and lasted until 2003. The three contenders of the upcoming electoral campaign are the incumbent President, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf (Nobel Peace Prize laureate, September 2011), who took office in 2005, Winston Tubman, of the Congress for Democratic Change, supported by George Manneh Weah, and Yorma Prince Johnson. In September President Johnson Sirleaf has been awarded the Nobel Prize. While Liberians living conditions have without doubt improved in the last five years, first offshore oil exploration have begun.

Are still unclear the circumstances of the alleged coup occurred on July 19 in Niger against the President, Mahmadou Issoufou, who has been elected last March. So far, some officers have been arrested and charged with the accusation of attack to the State security. President Issoufou, described the fight against corruption, nepotism and the embezzlement of public funds as the cornerstones of his policy, which will be reflected by the High Authority, specifically designed to combat these phenomena.

In Nigeria Islamist sect Boko Haram is increasing its negotiating power. In July thousands of civilians felt forced to flee the capital of Borno State, Maiduguri, because of repeated attacks perpetrated by the so-called 'Nigerian Taliban', now opposed by a special joint task force of army and federal police, which is conducting some strong operations in the area. To curb this form of terrorism, apparently endemic, although bankrolled from abroad, the Nigerian President, Goodluck Jonathan, seeking to create the conditions to open a dialogue with Boko Haram, without however succeeding in obtaining not even a temporary suspension of hostilities. The terrorist did not desist from carrying out assaults even in the capital, Abuja, where on August 26 a suicide attack occurred at the UN headquarters, causing twenty-three people dead and around a hundred wounded. Since September the Federal State Security Service (SSS) has identified Nur Mamman as the responsible for Boko Haram suicide bomb attack. Besides, former Nigerian President, Olusegun Obasanjo, in his function of mediator with the terrorist organization, has received death threats, while visiting Maiduguri. President Jonathan's tactic would be, once stopped the violence, to start the negotiations, offering a general amnesty in favour of the members of the sect.

In Senegal President Abdoulaye Wade will not withdraw from Presidential elections, scheduled February the 26th next year, unless the Constitutional Council annuls his candidature. His candidacy is controversial, because, as a matter of fact, according to the current constitution, reformed in 2001, a candidate can no longer stand for a third term. However, Wade was elected in 2000, that is to say well before the constitutional change entered into force one year after. Therefore, according to some jurists he could run once again, while others would not agree. Only the decision of the Constitutional Council regarding his eligibility will ultimately be applied. In view of the electoral campaign supporters of the ruling party have gathered under the name the Allied Forces for Wade's Victory (FAL 2012), whereas the coalition of the opposition parties under the umbrella Alternative Bennoo 2012. From a geopolitical point of view, in a context of overall strategic repositioning of France in Africa, French contingent in Senegal has been reduced to a symbolic presence of only three hundred soldiers. On the contrast to the activities of the secessionist Movement of Democratic Forces of Casamance, active since 1982, cooperation was strengthened with the Gambia, where in mid-August Wade has made an official visit to discuss the issue together with his counterpart, Yahya Jammeh.

In September, in Togo, former Defence Minister, Gnassingbe Kpatcha, was sentenced to twenty

years in prison along with thirty other people accused, both military and civilians, accused of attack to the State security, for having orchestrated the foiled coup of 12 April 2009 against the current Togolese President, Faure Gnassingbe Eyadema.

Eastern Africa: Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan and South Sudan

The unexpected return of Eritrea to the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), which is one of the eight Regional Economic Community (REC) recognized by the African Union, has to be read within the regional context of the Greater Horn of Africa. IGAD members are Ethiopia, Somalia, Djibouti, Sudan, Kenya and Uganda, while Eritrea was suspended in 2007, because in contrast to the Ethiopian military intervention in Somalia against the Islamic Courts. In 2009 the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) replaced the Ethiopian troops. Asmara is considered the spoiler of the Horn of Africa, as it accused of supporting international terrorism and funding the Somali Shebab against the still weak Somali transitional institutions. The United Nations have recently published a report that reinforces this hypothesis, even giving details of an attack, fortunately foiled, supposedly organized by Eritrea against the Sixteenth Summit of Heads of State and Government of the African Union held last January in Addis Ababa. For this reason too either Ethiopia or Djibouti have been insistently urging the United Nations Security Council to adopt sanctions against Asmara as soon as possible. The Eritrean diplomatic counter-offensive consisted of President Isaias Afewerki official visit paid to Uganda from 16 to 18 August, to discuss with Ugandan President, Yoweri Museveni, regional security and more precisely the return of Asmara back to IGAD. It is appropriate to recall that most involved actors in the stabilization of East Africa are Ethiopia and Uganda.

September the 17th, Ethiopian President, Meles Zenawi, has made a noteworthy official visit to Egypt, to open a new chapter about the exploitation of the Nile waters by means of a tripartite committee, to which Sudan will also participate. In reality an important role should be also played by Southern Sudan, whose independence Cairo did not demonstrated to be in favour of. A more balanced exploitation of the Nile waters shall certainly improve the complex relationships between Sub-Saharan Africa and the Greater Middle East with specific effects in the virtual triangle made of the Sahel-Saharan region and the Horn of Africa, the Great Lakes and the Nile Valley. Until the birth of South Sudan Cairo claimed to be the sole beneficiary of the extensive exploitation of the waters, right on the basis of the agreement with Sudan of 1929 and of the Egyptian-Sudanese Treaty of 1959. It is however too early to know whether the agreements will give good results, in that the stakes are high. In fact, the countries implicated not only are Ethiopia, Sudan, South Sudan and Egypt, but also Burundi, Kenya, Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda. In Ethiopia oil exploration in the Ogaden are particularly promising. Ogaden is the vast Eastern Ethiopia region, mostly populated by Somalis and hotbed of instability for decades. The news according to which the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) have attacked the escort of the Chinese oil company PetroTrans convoy, killing twenty-five soldiers of the Ethiopian armed forces, was denied by both Addis Ababa and the Chinese company.

In Somalia the temporary withdrawal of the Shebab from Mogadishu seems to have been dictated by tactical considerations. Sierra Leone has announced its participation to AMISOM, which is in need of reinforcement to effectively control the urban area of Mogadishu. The Somali Transitional Federal Government has indicated its intention to offer amnesty to those members of the Shebab who decide to lay down their arms. The agreement regarding the peace roadmap with all key Somali stakeholders, promoted by the UN in order to initiate an inclusive

national reconciliation process, regrettably has not seen any delegate of the Shebab yet. The Somali government has also announced the establishment of a commission that will have the delicate task of presenting a draft of the future Somali constitution by the beginning of 2012.

Concerning Sudan, July the 14th in Doha (Qatar) a peace agreement between the Khartoum government and only one of the Darfur rebel movements, the Liberation and Justice Movement (LJM) has been signed, on the basis of the Framework Agreement of June 2012 which provides for the postponement of the referendum to determine the administrative unification of Darfur. However, both Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) and Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM) remain still out of the negotiations, launched in March 2010 under the auspices of the United Nations and the African Union. In August, the mandate of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) has been renewed for another year. With reference to the relationships with South Sudan, Khartoum government, led by the National Congress Party (NCP) of President Omar al-Bashir, has adopted one law dealing with the loss of citizenship for South Sudanese living in Sudan and another law about the imposition of a transit tax on South-Sudanese oil being transported to the Red Sea refineries through Sudanese pipelines. Yet, South Sudan will soon start the construction of alternative pipelines heading South or East, like in Kenya, Djibouti, or even in the Democratic Republic of Congo, the realization of which will however take a few years. Khartoum and Juba have signed a joint monitoring of borders together with the peacekeeping forces of the United Nations Interim Force for Security Abyei (UNISFA), made up of Ethiopian troops. Yet continuous fighting is reported between the Sudanese Army and militias of Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) in the State frontier of the Blue Nile. Uncertainty reigns among Member States (Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda) of the East African Community (EAC), which will have to decide whether to approve the entry of Sudan, just while South Sudan is negotiating to join the Organization.

Independence Day for South Sudan: after two civil wars (1955-1972 and 1983-2005), in other words fifty years of marginalization and struggle for self-determination, 9 July in Juba the independence of the Republic of South Sudan was solemnly celebrated. The President of South Sudan, Salva Kiir Mayardit, who along with Vice-President, Riek Machar, will serve for the next four years, has signed the interim constitution, whose final version will instead be ready by 2014. The Republic of South Sudan is bordered by Sudan, Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, Central African Republic and Democratic Republic of Congo. It has ten federal states grouped into three major provinces (Bahr-el-Ghazal, Equatoria and Great Upper Nile), over eight million inhabitants and 619,745 square kilometres, with about two hundred ethnic groups (the main ones are Dinka, Nuer, Azande, Shilluk and Bari), whose peaceful settlement will be just one of the many weaknesses of the new born state, which already comes with all the symptoms of a Failing State. The UN, of which the Republic of South Sudan has become the 193rd member, has replaced the United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) with the United Nations Mission in South-Sudan (UNMISS), whose new mandate was approved unanimously by the Security Council in July. Both Sudan and South Sudan have issued their own separate currencies. With the visit of Chinese Foreign Minister, Yang Jiechi, both in Khartoum and in Juba, Beijing shows to be willing to resolve the unresolved issues between Sudan and South Sudan, by committing so for the first time directly into a political mediation in Africa, which is mainly due to its substantial oil interests in both countries. Moreover, Israel has been the first country to recognize South Sudan, showing that Tel Aviv intends to promote a strong cooperation with Juba at the expense of Egypt and Sudan. The rebel army commanded by the former southern Sudanese dissident general, Peter Gadet, said to be ready to disarm its troops and to reintegrate

them into the ranks of the regular Army of the new State. Finally, it has to be noted that Ethiopia and Uganda have established a joint ministerial commission, with the aim of supporting the development of South Sudan.

Central Africa: Burundi, Cameroon, Gabon, DRC, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe and Uganda

On August 29, South African President, Jacob Zuma, has made an official visit to Burundi, to promote economic cooperation agreements, without however addressing any domestic issue, as requested by the Burundian opposition. On behalf of Nelson Mandela, in 2000 Zuma had followed the negotiations that led to the Arusha Peace Agreement concerning the internal conflict in Burundi, which raged from 1993 to 2006. The security in Burundi is worsening, due to the tensions that followed the disputed general election 2010, which brought to power President Pierre Nkurunziza of the National Council for the Defence of Democracy-Forces for the Defence of Democracy (CNDD-FDD). Nkurunziza is also the President of the EAC for the time being. Last year, Burundi has completed a complex electoral process divided into five phases: Local elections (May 24), Presidential (June 28), Legislative (July 23), Senatorial (July 28) and, finally, Hills elections (September 7).

In Cameroon the single round of Presidential elections will be held on October 9, albeit it is unlikely to lead to a change of the regime of President Paul Biya (78 years old), who has been in power since 1982. Actually, John Fru Ndi, the leader major opposition party, the Social Democratic Front (SPDF), has explicitly said that at present real change can only take place through violence, given the non-transparency of the electoral process.

The already well-built bilateral relations between France and Gabon are strengthening even more at military level because of the reinforcement of the French military base, “Camp de Gaulle”, in Libreville. Also at economic level, French Prime Minister, Fillon, has paid a visit to Libreville, where they have signed important economic agreements. In view of the Legislative elections to be held in November, it must be noted that the largest opposition party, the National Union, was dissolved.

The Independent National Electoral Commission has admitted eleven nominations for the Presidential and Parliamentary elections of November the 28th in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Important candidates are, among others, the current President, Joseph Kabila, Vital Kamerhe, former President of the National Assembly, and François Joseph Mobutu Nzanga, son of Marshal Mobutu Sese Seko. President Joseph Kabila has been in power since 2001, when he succeeded his father, Laurent-Désiré. The controversial candidacy of Jean-Pierre Mbemba, who is under arrest since 2008 at the International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague, was excluded from the competition. In fact, he is on trial with the charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity, for mass murders he led in Central African Republic between 2002 and 2003. Mbemba, a wealthy businessman linked to the dictator Mobutu, also ran as major challenger for the presidency in 2006. To be able to win, the opposition parties should agree on and put forward a single candidate to avoid missing the vote and win the Presidency. The elections will be monitored by a European Union Election Observation Mission (EOM), which will be headed by the Bulgarian MEP, Mariya Nedelcheva. The instability is still on the ground in the east of the country, as continued fighting between the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of Congo (FARDC) and rebels May-May are still reported.

Rwandan President, Paul Kagame, has paid an official visit to his counterpart, the Ugandan President, Yoweri Museveni, to strengthen bilateral relations and cooperation in foreign policy.

The two small neighbouring Nations play a key role for stability in the Great Lakes Region. Besides, Nicolas Sarkozy in Paris, where the historic event took place September the 12th and the 13th, received President Paul Kagame. The rapprochement between the two countries after years of mutual accusations of involvement in the Rwandan genocide of 1994 is pivotal for French strategic repositioning in the Great Lakes Region. In 2006 Paris and Kigali had even broken off diplomatic relations, but last year the French President had paid an official visit to Rwanda to revitalize them.

July 24, Manuel Pinto da Costa has won the Presidential elections of Sao Tome and Principe, with fifty-three percent of preferences against former Prime Minister and current President of the Parliament, Evaristo Carvalho. In truth, Pinto da Costa, was the country's first President, from 1975 - the year of independence of all African countries under Portuguese colonial rule - to 1991, when multiparty politics was introduced in Sao Tome and Principe.

In Uganda, the High Court of Kampala handed down its first sentences against the perpetrators of the attacks in the Ugandan capital, which caused 76 deaths during the World Cup final on July the 11th 2010. Terrorist acts were later claimed by militias affiliated to Al Qaeda, who deplored the involvement of Ugandan troops in AMISOM.

Southern Africa: Madagascar, Malawi, Seychelles, South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe

In August, on the occasion of the latest Summit of the Heads of State and Government of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), its President, the Angolan President, Jose Eduardo Dos Santos, declared that the outlook in Madagascar could worsen, if the stakeholders did not make up their minds in sorting out of the deadlock and, that renovated efforts should evidently to be undertaken. September the 17th, after a long impasse, a first step of the roadmap to release Madagascar from its political crisis has been set up. The former President, Ravalomanana, who is still exiled in South Africa, could theoretically return to Madagascar, but it still might be a risky move, because the Malagasy Army said his return could fuel tensions. Further steps shall be the participation of all the candidates to free and fair elections, according to the SADC mediator, former Mozambican President Joachim Chissano.

In July, serious disorders have occurred in Lilongwe, the capital of Malawi, where the gap between the elite and the rest of the population dramatically widens. Spontaneous demonstrations of 20 July soon degenerated into clashes with police, unfortunately causing some casualties. The lack of political reform and the authoritarianism of the ruling party, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), would be the reasons for triggering the protests. In recent times, the despotic President, Bingu wa Mutharika, who is in power since 2004, has taken questionable decisions, including the unilateral suspension of diplomatic relations with the United Kingdom. In September, wa Mutharika, presented a new government, where he has arbitrarily ousted the Vice-President, Joyce Banda, who said she would not leave her place, unless it is the Parliament to ask her to do so.

September the 29th and October the 1st, Parliamentary elections will be held in the Seychelles, because in July the Head of State, James Michel, had prematurely dissolved the Parliament. Presumably, the votes will be boycotted by most opposition parties, mainly represented by the Popular Democratic Movement that was already beaten at the Presidential election of May this year.

September 15 at the Fourth EU-South Africa Summit, held at Kruger National Park, the South African President, Jacob Zuma, has called for the suspension of sanctions against Zimbabwe

and criticized NATO military intervention in Libya. In bilateral terms, the European Union is the main trading partner of South Africa. The next summit will be held in Brussels in 2012.

The Kingdom of Swaziland, essentially facing the risk of bankruptcy, has got a loan of 260 million euros from South Africa. The country, since 1986 led by King Mswati The Third, is experiencing a difficult time, because of the extravagance of the monarch and of a serious budget deficit.

September 20, Presidential and Legislative elections were held in Zambia. With forty-three percent of preferences, the opposition candidate, Michael Sata, leader of the Patriotic Front (PF), is the new President, taking the place of Rupiah Banda, at the head of the Movement for Multi-Party Democracy (MMD). The electoral campaign was very competitive, despite a clear imbalance in favour of the ruling party. Zambia is Africa's leading copper exporter with around seven per cent annual growth rate.

No progresses have been made yet to better schedule next elections in Zimbabwe that should possibly take place next year. The power-sharing system, the artificial political agreement according to which the country is ruled by the three major parties, is simply delaying any political reform indeed: ZANU-PF of President Robert Mugabe, MDC-T's Prime Minister, Morgan Tsvangirai, and MDC- M of the Deputy Prime Minister, Arthur Mutambara. Several observers believe however that as the election deadline approaches it will in all probability be postponed again and again in order to maintain the status quo.

Conclusions

Turkish Prime Minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, on August 19 - during Ramadan - paid a visit to Mogadishu, where he committed to soon re-open its diplomatic mission. Under the pretext of humanitarian support and solidarity towards religious Somali Muslim brothers, the ultimate goal of *Neo-Ottomanism* pursued by Ankara is to feed the image of a moderate Islamic country, presenting itself as *the* reference model for the Muslim countries. Actually, Turkey has been taking up a strategic, economic and political position towards Africa for several years, taking advantage of the voids left out by European countries. In light of this initiative, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) not only has established to allocate five hundred million dollars to fight famine affecting Somalia in particular and the Horn of Africa in general, but also has prepared an internal coordination body, led by Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Kazakhstan, in order to set up a mechanism capable of coping with the recurrence of famine in the future. Above and beyond, Ankara has realized that the current European crisis is actually dividing EU Member States, bringing them to the era of nationalisms. As this will put off any immediate Turkish entry into the European Union, not surprisingly at all, Ankara has decided to perform a more muscular diplomacy towards Brussels and, in parallel, to create a free trade area with the African Union, thus bypassing the European trade competition. Turkish Neo-Ottomanism is seeking to take advantage of the delicate phase of transition of the protagonists of the so-called Arab-Spring, namely Tunisia, Egypt and Libya. As a matter of fact, for the last decade Turkey has been venturing far beyond the Mediterranean, accurately projecting its influence into Sub-Saharan Africa. Doing so, it is in direct competition with Israel not only in the Middle East, but also southwards, more precisely in the Great Lakes Region and in the Greater Horn of Africa. Ankara is increasing its authority on a range of vouchers. It ought not to be forgotten that Turkey is at the same time, Balkan, European, Middle Eastern, Asian and Caucasian, while enjoying the memberships of the Council of Europe, OSCE, NATO and OECD. Also, in 2008, Turkey has become the twenty-fifth non-regional member of the African Development Bank,

and, what is more, since 2005 it holds the observer status of the African Union.

As far as Libya is concerned, the *Responsibility To Protect* (RTP) approach has scored its goal. It must be said that UN Security Council Resolutions 1970 and 1973, adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2005, are, at least formally, based on the RTP principle, with the aim to fill the gap between legitimate intervention - *ethically justifiable* - and legal intervention - *legally authorized* - by the international community overcoming the sovereignty of a State that persecutes its own citizens by means of war crimes, crimes against humanity, ethnic cleansing or genocide. Hence, after forty-two years of power Qaddafi regime ended up in August. Although he is still at large, presumably somewhere in the Fezzan, his era is over. Having left aside *Pan-Arabism*, which had characterized the very first two decades of Qaddafi's foreign policy, since the early nineties, Libya has begun to turn its interests southwards, soon playing a leading and often controversial role in Africa, including funding for at least 15-20 percent of the budget of the AU, which in 2011 is of around 257 million dollars. Beyond that, Qaddafi has surreptitiously backed many African governments and subsequently affected their sovereignty in depth. In addition, Libya has been able to guide a qualitative leap in terms of relations between Africa and the Arab bloc through the revitalization of the Arab-African Summit in 2010.

Concerning the overall geopolitical repositioning which is stirring not only in the Mediterranean, but also in both Northern and Eastern Africa, three trend-lines can be identified so far: firstly, Turkish expansion strategy wrapped around the unifying principle of Islam; secondly, the independence of South Sudan, which is by now determining some new forms of still precarious stability in the Greater Horn of Africa, engaging more and more the presence of Israel and China in the region; thirdly, the entering on a collision course of Qaddafi's hegemony with the strategies of other international competitors. It goes without saying that those players who have initiated the expensive stabilization of Libya will benefit from its dividends more than others.

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The European border control: time for proposals or controversies?

Lorenzo Striuli

In the last few years the following events have been able to decisively enhance the border control issues at the European Union level (at least in a measure debated with a certain “hotness”):

the exploitation, by migrants coming from third countries, of the new EU’s Eastern European member States through which to get to Europe. Such topic, for instance, has hitherto generated the opposition of France, Germany and the Netherlands to the admission of Bulgaria and Romania in the so-called “Schengen area”, currently involving 25 countries among EU member and non-EU member States in a mechanism allowing the free movement of people;

the immigration crisis that has stricken the Greek border with Turkey, and that has even required the first experience of a Rapid Border Intervention Team (RABIT) field deployment, the quick response mechanism of the EU’s FRONTEX agency established in order to strengthen the security forces delegated to border control of those member States adhering to the Schengen Agreements and that are exposed to very important challenges (it is worthwhile to recall how RABIT might be redeployed again, this time along the border between Austria and Hungary, according to a new request advanced in the last few weeks by such countries);

the last months’ Danish decision to restore border checks for its frontiers with Germany and Sweden;

above all, the so-called “Arab spring”, that has spawned a new migration wave from the countries in the southern side of the Mediterranean towards those located in the northern side. For the latter, such event has posed for them not only serious public order problems, but has also pushed them toward bitter and well-known controversies with other EU member States (such as those occurred between Italy and France after the latter’s decision to send back those Tunisian migrants trying to get to it through Italy, thanks to the fact that Rome was providing them for a temporary residence permit).

Therefore, during the beginnings of last autumn, it has been recorded a certain activism, on the part of the European Commission, towards the formulation of a proposal able to delegate a central role to the FRONTEX agency for what is concerned with the potential reintroduction of border controls by Schengen area member countries, currently reserved to their only responsibility (since the homonymous Agreements came into force in 2006, some temporary measures for the reintroduction of these controls, never lasting more than thirty days, have been implemented twenty-six times, and usually on the occasion of international sport competitions and high-grade political *meetings* such as G-8, etc.). According to such proposal, submitted on September 16th, national governments would be compelled to rely on a preliminary assessment by the Commission, should predictable occurrences (such as sport competitions or inability to

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manage border transits by those third countries more or less close to EU states) drive into the necessity of temporary border controls reintroduction. Then, in the event of a positive evaluation, the responsibility of such a decision would have transferred to the qualified majority of EU member states. The procedure would have been occurred in a similar way in the event of not predictable occurrences (like serious terrorist attacks or huge natural or man-made calamities), but, in this case, the role of the EU institutions and member States would have been limited to the discretion if extend or not a maximum period, allowed to the State potentially involved in the occurrence, of five days for the autonomous decision to restore the above mentioned controls. Such extensions could not exceed 30 days, renewable for a maximum of six successive months.

However, the opposition carried out by Germany, France and Spain have immediately wiped out (at least for the moment) the proposal, although they have advanced some alternative suggestions regarding the opportunity to ban a Schengen area's member State if it turns out to be unable to manage and control its borders with third countries. In all likelihood, such hypothesis have been formulated taking into account the Greek case, and, maybe, the above-mentioned one related to the *querelle* between Italy and France regarding the last year's wave of North African immigrants and refugees. That is why it has been also considered that the Commission would have been able to arrange spot-checks, carried out by FRONTEX officers, on Schengen area countries in order to monitor their management capabilities of their borders¹.

It is not hard to point out who would have lost if the proposal were approved: without any doubt, all the EU member countries, because they would have suffered a muddled situation (it is not difficult imagine what kind of tricks, like crossing votes and/or exchanging votes, would have been carried out for this or that country, in search for qualified majority for the extension or endorsement of border controls re-establishment) as well as a reduction of their discretionary powers through which restoring their own territorial sovereignty at any time they would need such a move.

In the same way, it is not hard to figure out who would lose if the second term of the proposal (the one related to the ban from the Schengen area of that State unable to properly carry out the management of its borders with EU external areas) will be retrieved in the future (and there are some possibilities that such *repechage* will happen, since it was able to rise a certain amount of not so negative answers): the States bordering third countries, and among them Italy, that would be cyclically exposed to fact-finding reviews linked to those migration emergencies which usually collect the notorious "coldness" by the so-called "EU family" in terms of tangible joint commitments in form of helpings. In the case of Greece, for instance, FRONTEX sent only (and just for a very limited amount – not more than four – of months) little less of two hundred officers to deal with a problem sized in terms of a much more extended dimension; quite similarly, in the case of Lampedusa, this meant an even more modest commitment. Therefore, it is not so difficult to imagine what kind of semi-punitive attitude the so-called "EU family" would carried out towards those "annoying" countries belonging to the EU southern area, potentially even by adding, to the just-mentioned scarcely supportive approaches it showed in

¹ The frontiers of the countries referring to the current Schengen area encompass 42,672 km of external sea borders and 8,826 km of land borders.

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many years of migration crises², some forms of ban measures to the latter's prerogatives as members of the Schengen Treaty.

In the meantime, on the other hand, the whole Europe continues in collecting image incidents and failures from that transnational civil society toward quite often it boasts special relationships devoted to *openness*, *inclusiveness* and all the other positive adjectives linked to the *-ness* suffix, so dears to the pro-Brussels militancy.

In this sense, some remarks carried out by Nicolas Beger, in charge of the European division of Amnesty International, may be recalled as a quite recent example. On September 19th, for instance, he criticized the absence of the European Union in the international efforts focused to the relief of the conditions faced by about five thousand of African refugees wandering in camps located in the Libyan borders with Egypt and Tunisia. For them, the only proposed aids come so far were from countries such as Canada, Australia and United States, obviously not so involved, both geographically and operationally, in the current Libyan situation, in the same measure of the European countries (and, of the latter, only eight were able to offer much more modest aids compared to those proposed by the nations above mentioned)

Further, for its part, just two days later, Human Rights Watch (a well-known Non-Governmental Organization) issued a report blaming directly FRONTEX, claiming that the European agency would have shared, with the Greek security forces, the responsibilities for the inhuman treatments that quite often would be reserved to illegal immigrants stopped to the border with Turkey, and gathered in below-the-standards local versions of migration centres.

In this case, however, it is important to actually consider these kind of remarks as rather undeserved, since: on one hand, only Greek authorities are in charge of those centres; and, on the other hand, both the FRONTEX and the European Commission have in the past quite often (that means anytime the Agency officers observed and reported some mismanagement of immigrants and refugees) reprimanded Athens just for similar matters, and asked the Greek Government for the improvement of the condition of livings of the immigrants. Such *je accuse*, therefore, are more useful in pointing out how FRONTEX should more conveniently provided with much more personnel and resources for helping with augmented assets those Schengen member States so unfortunate for bordering tumultuous and "plagued" situations, instead of imagining for the agency "suspicious" hypothesis and proposals of supranational competencies and responsibilities.

² What we are describing is not only circumscribed to other member States' attitudes, but may also be ascribed, sometimes, to some examples of scarce consideration borrowed to the reasons of EU "border countries" at the European Union level. For instance, during the early of last May, on the occasion of a press conference, the Commissioner for Home Affairs Anna Cecilia Malmström, commenting the situation related to the influx of some twenty-five thousands Tunisians to the island of Lampedusa, described (textually) Italy "not under extreme migratory pressure", since such the whole population of such a country amounts to 60 million people! See: Pop Valentina, 2011, "Border checks to be allowed only under strict EU criteria", in <http://euobserver.com/22/32268>, 04.05.

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The FRONTEX agency

The FRONTEX agency was set up on October 3rd 2005 according to the document “Council Regulation (EC) 2007/2004”. Its legal denomination is “European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States of the European Union”. The FRONTEX’s headquarters are located in Warsaw, and this, at the time, was greeted as the first case of a European authority established in one of the new EU member countries. The primary task of the agency is to monitor that the management of EU member States borders with third countries, for which they remain the ultimate responsible, is carried out according to efficiency-focused standards delineated by the European Union. The current executive director is Ilkka Laitinen, a former colonel of the Finnish Border Guard. At the beginning, the agency faced some problems for matters related to staff recruitment and also to the assigned responsibilities, since the latter were sometime not well-defined in the EU official papers and documents. However, gradually the resources have been later identified (and, above all, sensibly increased, passing by a mere six millions of euros in 2005 to near 90 millions of euros for each year both in 2009 and 2010; the current staff amounts to 289 officers), currently putting FRONTEX in the position of being able to actively monitor and pool data provided by several member States’ law enforcement institutions (and other sources) about the situations at the external borders of the European Union. This is done in order to draw up predictions regarding movements and routes of migration fluxes. Other improvements were achieved in form of the (more or less) permanent allocation, on a rotary basis, of 20 surveillance aircrafts, about 30 helicopters and 100 naval units. A special attention devoted to technology has required the establishment of a sort of research division, known for actively seeking cooperation with military and security industries and universities. Current projects aimed to enhance the FRONTEX capabilities embrace: real-time surveillance of the borders according to net-centered assets; the live-assistance of satellite imagery; and the direct acquisition and use of drones and unmanned aerial vehicles, on one hand, and, on the other, of land-based assets for border security, like radar, cameras, systems for biometric identity checks, etc. For the moment, the capabilities of air and maritime assets of the agency, when they are in operations, are assisted by the availability of the EU satellite SEA HORSE, very useful for duties related to the monitoring of ships and boats. On April 2007, the above-mentioned RABIT, a rapid reaction redeployment mechanism of both EU and member States’ officers and border agents, was also established. It is worthwhile mentioning that not only the countries belonging to the European Union can provide personnel for RABIT, but also nations adhering to the Schengen Agreements may join the initiative. RABIT however are not the only way for FRONTEX to contribute with its assets. For example, for the so-called “Operation Hermes” (focused on the surveillance of the Mediterranean traits located between Italy and North Africa and established in the context of the Libyan crisis), Netherlands has deployed at Malta a Coast Guard’ DORNIER 228 aircraft, while Portugal an Air Force C-295MPA, all this according to an activation mechanism not related to those that are activated for calling a RABIT “quick response”. The activities of FRONTEX in a lot of situations have fallen under heavy criticism carried out by several Non-Governmental Organizations as well as philanthropic foundations, usually concerned that they are “masking” a *de facto* European policy aimed to block every kind of immigrants, without discerning among them those having, for political or religious reasons, the full right for being considered under the 1951 Refugee Convention. Such worries have been stressed especially by Amnesty International, the European Council for Refugees and Exiled, and the British Refugee Council, that have also denounced some misdeeds in the procedures adopted by the agency in dealing

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with people attempting to cross both sea and land frontiers. Notwithstanding these criticisms, FRONTEX's importance has risen all the same, especially after a certain amount of activism in this sense was carried out by the then (2009) Commissioner for Justice, Freedom and Security³ Jacques Barrot. And, just for concluding with a focus into the growing importance of the agency, for which an important role has been played, in the last two years, by both Italy and France, the decisions adopted by the European Parliament during the last September have to be recalled. Indeed, in that occasion, it has been established that, by the end of the present year, FRONTEX, first of all, should be provided with additional powers that will enable it to set up some autonomous lines of procurement, especially for equipment like helicopters and land vehicles, until now, otherwise, "borrowed" to it on the basis of the will of contributing countries. Secondly, the agency should be given the possibility to set up with third countries the necessary mechanisms aimed to the repatriation of irregular immigrants. Thirdly, in order to preserve the guarantees that EU reserves to refugees and asylum-seekers, FRONTEX should be provided with a new job position among those kept open to the recruitment of their officers, tailored to a strict attention to the safeguard of fundamental rights. In this sense, this position will be assisted in its duties by a sort of a consultative body (that has also to be established), which, as its main characteristic, will gather together some human rights-focused Non-Governmental Organization.

³ Post that, however, the following year was split into the Commissioner for Home Affairs, covering matters related to security issues, and the Commissioner for Justice, Fundamental Rights and Citizenship, covering matters related to human rights issues.



The Chinese transition

Nunziante Mastrolia

China finally has its aircraft carrier. Or probably not? The question arises if we consider some elements. The Chinese authorities in the past had clearly stated that the Varyag, purchased in 1998 from Ukraine, would serve only as a model for the production of a totally Chinese aircraft carrier. Things then went differently. The first test of the Varyag in August was considered in the country and worldwide the launch of the first Chinese carrier.

There is also another point to keep in mind. Beijing has repeatedly accused the United States and other countries in the region, particularly Japan, to feed a China Threat paranoia and to persists in a cold war mentality. Why then the Chinese authorities choose to fan the flames and add new doubts about China's peaceful rise? Moreover, why Chinese authorities publicized so widely the first test of a naval unit, that has not yet a name and that must still remain for years in shipyard before to be combat-read? Furthermore, it is not sure that it will ever be, since the Ministry of Defense declared that the Varyag will be used exclusively for "training and scientific research needs".

A nation in transition

Schadenfreude is a German word, that means to enjoy the troubles of others. "The sequence of bad news from America and Europe has provoked its share of triumphalist commentary in Asia" and in China, writes The Economist, "So some must enjoy the reversal of roles: emerging Asia as the model of steady, consistent economic policy and sustained growth; America, Europe and Japan mired in debt and slow growth or even recession". However, the Economist continues, Asian government have no reason to be so happy "The West's economic woes are also Asia's. Even if renewed global financial upheaval is averted, slow growth in America, Europe and Japan will dent economic prospects across the region. Asia, too, is addicted to American debt, in so far as this finances imports from Asia, which then invests some of the proceeds back in America. (...) Even China is facing a rash of political protests. In particular, the fury caused by the high-speed train crash at Wenzhou in July, in which at least 40 people died, has raised troubling questions about the railways' safety and, more broadly, about the political system itself. Commenting on the debt-ceiling fiasco in Washington, DC, Xinhua took American politicians to task, and asked: «How can Washington shake off electoral politics and get difficult jobs done more efficiently?». But it is hard now for even the most nationalist Chinese commentators to go to town about the superiority of the «Beijing model». One of its supposed advantages is precisely that it «gets difficult jobs done more efficiently». And one example it used to point to as a source of pride was the world-beating high-speed train system."



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Few days after, the Global Times writes, “If Schadenfreude suggests anything similar, it is how the West usually reacts to mistakes in China, which has long felt judged by the West. Western media look for every clue pointing at economic troubles and political instability in China. A street fight could be portrayed as a serious political movement. Bankruptcy in a few factories can be seen as a sign of a grave economic crisis. China has been shrouded in the shadow of imminent doom from a Western perspective”. China's economy will not collapse and its political system is strong and stable. This is the clear message that appears in many other articles on Global Times.

In the same days, Fu Ying, China's Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs, interviewed by the German newspaper *Der Spiegel*, declared: “The West has become very conceited”; then “At the end of the day, democracy alone cannot put food on the table. That's the reality”; thereafter she concluded: “Get down off your high horse of being on top of the world. Come down to be equals and join us on a level playing field instead of creating a new rival in the style of the Cold War”.

The Global Times and Misses Fu Ying are probably right: Western media often are very skeptical about the Chinese future economic prosperity and political stability. But what if are the same Chinese newspaper like Global Times or People's Daily, mouthpieces of China's ruling Communist Party, to highlight the problems of the Chinese economy, the tensions in the Chinese society and the need of a political change? And what if the same prime minister Wen Jiabao is calling the Party to open a phase of political reforms?

According to Xi Langcun, China in the next future has to face four economic uncertainties. The first uncertainty “is whether China should continue with the existing investment model characterized by the high-speed rail network's «great leap forward». As is known to all, China's economic growth has been mainly driven by fixed-asset investments and exports and has long been plagued by sluggish domestic demand. As the foreign trade growth has slowed significantly after the global financial crisis, fixed-asset investments have become the main guarantee of at least 8 percent annual economic growth. (...) China launched a 4 trillion yuan economic stimulus package two years ago, and the high-speed railway sector alone received an allocation of 2 trillion Yuan with support from the State Council. In addition, the planned total length of the country's high-speed rail network was then greatly increased. Currently, the Ministry of Railways of China is facing a large amount of debts and the pressure from low occupancy rates. Once the investment in the high-speed railway is reduced, an engine that drives China's economy will slow down. And then, will China's economy still be able to grow at a high speed?”.

The second uncertainty, Xi writes, “comes from the small and medium-sized enterprises. Although related departments have repeatedly refuted the rumor that China's small and medium-sized enterprises are closing down on a large scale, the difficulties of the second round faced by these enterprises are real and practical. A lot of small and medium-sized enterprises on coastal regions are suffering losses and even are about to go bankrupt. Some of them are facing a situation that is even worse than the situation they faced during the financial crisis of 2008. Labor costs are increasing significantly. In fact, all kinds of costs are increasing, including costs of raw materials, water, electricity and rents. If the bad financial environment is added in, the small and medium-sized enterprises that live by product processing fees are in really poor condition in certain respects”.

The third uncertainty is “China's progress with regard to controlling inflation”. According to a People's Bank of China survey recently released, “inflation expectations among Chinese

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households for the next quarter have risen, despite an August decline in the year-on-year growth of the country's consumer price index (CPI)". On Sept 14 Zhang Xiaoqiang, vice-minister of the National Development and Reform Commission, declared that "China might miss its target of keeping inflation below 4 percent this year". In August inflation eased to 6.2%, from a three-year high of 6.5 percent in July. Nevertheless, in the next months inflation may accelerate its rise, due to the FED's decision to buy \$400 billion in long-term Treasury bonds. Xi writes: "The serious inflation will perhaps lead to the stagflation risk in the Chinese economy. This means that China will face rising inflation and a dramatic slowdown in the economic growth, falling into the trouble emerged in the wake of the international financial crisis in 2008 again".

The fourth uncertainty is "from the dramatic slowdown in the GDP growth of the first-tier cities, such as Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou. This will likely cause the first-tier cities to take the lead in walking into the middle-income trap". According to OECD, countries that are in the middle-income trap are "squeezed between low wages, poor developing countries that can outcompete them in standardized manufacturing exports, and high-skilled, rich countries that grow through innovation. Countries in the middle income trap have yet to find a growth strategy that can navigate between these other competitors". Xi believes that "Certainly, China has its own context, and the current economic slowdown is partly due to its proactive adjustments in order to enhance the quality of the economy. However, China should be alert to the uncertain stagnation risk".

Therefore, China needs to face these economic uncertainties, but there are also political challenges to deal with. Something is changing in China in the relationship between the political elite and the people. Public officials are under careful scrutiny of a public opinion that in the microblogs is beginning to speak openly. Ye Xiaowen, Vice-President and Secretary of Leading Party Group of the Central Institute of Socialism, believe that "As the sole ruling party in China, the Communist Party of China (CPC) must listen attentively to the people's complaints. (...) The Party should always respond to people's demands. The Party should always consider people's concerns. And the Party should always be able to solve people's problems. (...) Only when the people's rights to speak are really protected, can the national wealth distribution be adjusted to maintain a balance of interests and long term social stability"; for this purpose microblogs have to be considered "the voice of people"!

The recent train crash in Wenzhou sparked a blogging and micro-blogging frenzy amongst Chinese citizens who are angered at the way the accident has been handled by the party. Others probably have doubts on the future of the country. The New York Times quoted a Weibo message: "China, please stop your flying pace, wait for your people, wait for your soul, wait for your morality, wait for your conscience! Don't let the train run out off track [derail], don't let the bridges collapse, don't let the roads become traps, don't let houses become ruins. Walk slowly, allowing every life to have freedom and dignity". It is clear that China is in the middle of a cultural and social transition.

If that is the case, there is probably a relationship between the Wenzhou train accident and the launch of the first Chinese aircraft carrier. The Varyag will probably never be the Chinese queen of the seas, but is clearly a symbol and in the meantime a message for a public opinion doubtful and worried about the future. The Varyag has to reassure and appease public anxieties and to proof that the Party is able to conduct the country in the right direction.



The political reforms

It is quite clear that something has to change also in the political realm in China. During the Summer Davos Economic Forum in Dalian, China's Premier Wen Jiabao called again for political reform in China. He made a five-point proposal: 1) "We must govern the country by law. The most important mission of a ruling party is to abide by and act in strict accordance with the Constitution and the laws. The Party should not replace the government in governance, and problems of absolute power and over-concentration of power should be redressed. To achieve this, we must reform the leadership system of the Party and the state"; 2) "We need to promote social equity and justice. That means we need to grow the economy through reform, tackle the inequality in income distribution and bridge the widening income gap so that our people can all live a life with dignity and share the fruits of reform and development"; 3) "We need to uphold judicial justice. Procuratorial and judicial authorities should keep their due independence and be free from interference by any administrative organ, social group or individual"; 4) "We need to guarantee people's democratic rights. People's democratic rights and interests prescribed in the Constitution must be protected. The most important ones are their rights to vote and to stay informed about, participate in and oversee government affairs. (...) We will increase the forms of democracy and enhance self-governance at the village level. We should believe that if the people can manage village affairs well, they can also manage those of a town and even a county"; 5) "We need to resolutely fight corruption".

Ying Chan, the founder China Media Project, observes that "The context and the way Wen's words were handled by China's party media suggested that he might have won greater support among top party echelons in his effort to keep alive the push for political reform. Unlike last year, when Wen's repeated promises on political reform received low-key treatment from party media, the official Xinhua News Agency this time dispatched the full text of Wen's speech across the country". In fact, it is evident that the roadmap that Wen described could transform China in a western-style democracy.

But inside the Party there are also other people who are aware that the Chinese political system must to be reformed, but they don't want to copy the West. On Sept 07 The Global Times asserts that China "should accelerate the pace of reform according to its own needs and prevent the West from making the country deviate from this path". China is looking for a democracy with Chinese characteristics and probably this is the reason why across the country authorities, both at local and central level, continue to look for new ways to improve the fairness and openness of local governments.

On Sept. 05 the Ministry of Civil Affairs has dispatched "community workers in every city to knock from door to door in the next three months to canvass citizens' concerns and difficulties" in order to "address major social problems". Chen Tao, a professor with the social work research center at China Youth University for Political Sciences, believes that these "extensive visits surely will allow the public to explain their problems and will create a channel for delivering grassroots information to policymakers". In other cities local officials are trying a different method: public hearings, where citizens can speak freely, make suggestions and critics. But this method is not working well: "Some people claim the public hearings are merely a formality where «insiders» and «supporters» are often passed off as public representatives. Others think that if many officials are involved in hearings, government voices will overwhelm public opinions".

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In the meanwhile, Wuxi County in Chongqing Municipality has launched the country's largest pilot program that "gives an opening for a grassroots association to assist in governance": the Lehe Association. Villagers elect other villagers to the association so they can get their voices heard while helping govern the village.

This is the democracy with Chinese characteristics. Will it work? It is very difficult to say. However if we think at the Toynbee lesson we should say no. These political experiments will not work. With the economic reforms China adopted the western economic market in order to growth, now Beijing has to open to a western-style democracy if don't want to collapse. Any other political experiment or compromise will not succeed, because the market can not work without a truly liberal-democratic political system.



The contemporary version of India's Look East Policy

Claudia Astarita

In 1944, in his book "The Discovery of India", Jawaharlal Nehru wrote: "the Pacific is likely to take the place of the Atlantic in the future as the nerve center of the world. Though not directly a Pacific state, India will inevitably exercise an important influence there. India will also develop as the center of economic and political activity in the Indian Ocean area, in Southeast Asia, right up to the Middle East. Her position gives an economic and strategic importance in a part of the world which is going to develop in the future". Nehru also added "India will have to play a very great part in security problems of Asia and the Indian Ocean, more especially of the Middle East and Southeast Asia, as India is the pivot around which these problems will have to be considered".

India's "Look East" policy (1991) has been structured on the unfolding of this vision, although in the post-Cold War era New Delhi had to recognize that it had a marginal position in the region, as a rising China was replacing India as the main power in both East and Southeast Asia.

Even though India's Look East policy was not pursued on any conscious assumption of an overt India-China rivalry in Asia, it is evident that the China factor has always played a considerable role in India's interaction with and involvement in the region for the simple reason that China is the largest and potentially the most powerful country and economic hub there.

Feeling threatened by the way in which China is strengthening its position in both South and Southeast Asia, India has recently decided to change the basis of its Look East policy in order to counterbalance the Chinese rise in the region. According to today's Prime Minister Manmohan Singh "India's Look East Policy is not merely an external economic policy; it is also a strategic shift in India's vision of the world and India's place in the evolving global economy. Most of all it is about reaching out to our civilizational neighbors in Southeast Asia and East Asia".

The new version of India's Look East policy has the idea of counterbalancing China as its implicit core, as it explicitly refers to the way in which New Delhi should strengthen its relations with neighboring countries today reckoning China as an important partner. With the aim of destabilizing China's position in these countries, India is developing a new strategy oriented at stressing geographical proximity as well as economic development to convince nations such as Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, but also Vietnam, Myanmar and other Southeast Asian nations that New Delhi can "offer them more" than a distant country like China. India thinks that its functional relations with Asian countries could be reinforced by commonality of affinity of cultures, balancing with diplomacy China's military superiority and economic advantage.



It is reasonable to argue that today's version of India's Look East policy has been shaped as a consequence of China's rise and of the awareness first, that Beijing has much deeper economic engagements with Southeast Asian nations as well as with India's eastern neighbors, and second, that these engagements are going to get stronger. Indeed, many of these neighbors find their engagement with China to be mutually beneficial, notwithstanding occasional reservations. Unfortunately, India is not in a position to match this, and New Delhi is finding it difficult to provide alternative support to them. Indeed, the countries of South Asia engaged China in the region to have a counterbalance to India, which is the historical dominant power in the area. The countries of Southeast Asia, on the contrary, invited India in the region in order to create a more comfortable regional balance. The problem would however arise if and when China starts asserting itself on these countries.

Today, although economic cooperation between India and China is growing, the strategic competition and rivalry between the two is also sharpening. Feeling more and more threatened by China, during the last few months India has drastically changed its regional strategy with the aim of better consolidate its own regional alliances.

In order to have a better outlook on the areas in which New Delhi is currently strengthening its position, it would be better to treat them, that is the Indian Ocean, Vietnam and South China Sea, and Bangladesh, separately.

The Indian Ocean and its littoral States have progressively gained greater significance as at present the region accounts for one-third of world population, twenty-five per cent of its landmass and forty per cent of oil and gas reserves, apart from constituting the hub of crucial international sea lanes of communication.

New Delhi has always considered itself the dominant power in South Asia and the Indian Ocean as part of its sphere of influence. It feels being the natural partner for any country interested in tackling maritime disputes related to terrorism, piracy, fisheries management and food security in order to secure the protection of very important trade routes, with fifty per cent of world's container ships passing through it, and seventy per cent of oil shipping.

Security threats in the Indian Ocean have increased since terrorists started working in collusion with drug cartels, but the main problem in the region is that piracy has progressively intensified. Accordingly, India has decided to take a more active role in fighting it. First for internal reasons, as Somali pirates have taken several Indians as hostages, considering them precious to free Somali prisoners kept in Indian prisons, so New Delhi needs to be stronger in its fight against pirates to protect its citizens. Further, India is aware that if it maintains a low profile in this fight it might lose its role as the main maritime and commercial power in South Asia, where China has been strengthening its own position helping no matter which country asks for its help, gaining in exchange the permission to build strategic ports on their costs. Accordingly, in order to undermine Beijing's position in the so called "string of pearls" from where it can more easily access the Arabian sea as well as Indian Ocean resources, New Delhi has decided to contribute to the development of Special economic zones in Mauritius, Seychelles and Maldives, gaining some trust from these small but strategic territories.

Generally speaking, India's recent attitude to work assiduously with other littoral States in the Ocean, by strengthening its own navy, following relevant maritime rules and regulations, and improving multilateral understanding in order to create a stable and prosperous Indian Ocean, is in some way directed to prevent China from doing the same. Or, considering this target too

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ambitious, New Delhi wants to show to South Asian as well as China and Western countries that it is not going to allow any country, not even China, to further weaken its regional position. China, on its side, argues that it is not intentionally damaging the position of any nation in the area. Beijing always stress that the reason why she is approaching South Asian states is to promote growth and development in some of the most remote regions in Asia. According to China, South Asia will remain peaceful and stable as long as all nations will be economically strong and prosperous.

These arguments are not much reassuring India, also because China's achievements in the region do not reflect the steps of a peaceful country interested in promoting regional economic development only. For example, when China at the beginning of August successfully tested its first aircraft carrier, India started feeling even more threatened in the Indian Ocean. After all, although New Delhi has already invested 11 billion euro to modernize its army, most of its equipment is old and, until now, all the attempts to get the government approval for buying an aircraft carrier have failed.

Further, in July China got another permission that significantly worried India. The International Sea Bed Authority (ISA) authorized the China Minerals Resources Research and Development Association to explore polymetallic sulphides in the Indian Ocean, near Madagascar. Thanks to this agreement, China has become the first country to gain from ISA the right to explore the minerals in Southwest Indian Ridge. The conditions under which China will be able to explore Indian Ocean sea beds are particularly convenient: it has been allowed to explore an area of 10.000 square kilometers for fifteen years where it will maintain priority mining rights. After eight years of exploration, China will have to give up exploration rights on fifty per cent of the approved area and, after ten years, will only be allowed to explore 2.500 square kilometers.

India is totally aware that this clearance means that China will have a continuing presence in the central of Indian Ocean region and, for the first time, Beijing will access the so called "Indian backyard" autonomously, that is without leaning on a third country. New Delhi fear China may use this agreement as "an excuse to operate their warships in the area". Further, according to the Directorate of Naval Intelligence in India, China will now be able to obtain oceanographic and hydrological data in a legitimate manner. Finally, China-ISA agreement also stopped Indian ambition to promote mining activities in southern and central Indian Ocean.

Despite its attempts to strengthen its relationship with South Asian countries as well as its greater involvement in contrasting other security threats scourging the Indian Ocean to gain more credibility among regional nations as well as international powers and to counterbalance Chinese power in an area that until a few decades ago was it exclusive sphere of influence, New Delhi's Indian Ocean strategy until now has not proved successful.

However, in order to disappoint China and counterbalance its stronger presence in its own neighborhood, New Delhi has recently decided to go ahead with oil exploration cooperation with Vietnam in the South China Sea. This choice particularly annoyed China for several reasons. First, despite doing the opposite, China does not like any other country to interfere in what is identified as its sphere of influence. Second, exploration in the resource rich South China Sea is made even more complicated by the sovereignty dispute affecting this area. Briefly, the South China Sea disputes center on two major areas: the Nansha Islands (the Sprady Islands) and the Xisha Islands (the Paracel Islands). The Nansha Islands consist of more than 230, perhaps as many as over 400, islands, cays, reefs, atolls, banks and shoals, and are dispersed over some 250,000 square km of the South China Sea. None of these islands and other



features is permanently inhabitable. Sovereignty over these islands or some of them and other features has been hotly contested by five nations -China (including the local authorities in Taipei), Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia and Brunei. The Xisha Islands consist of more than 20 islands, cays, atolls, reefs banks and shoals lying about 150 nautical miles south of Hainan Island, China. These islands had been grounds for fishing and other economic activities by Chinese fishermen throughout history until South Vietnam's invasion in the 1950's the early 1970's. This island group is claimed in its entirety by both China and Vietnam.

Several countries, including Vietnam, do not recognize Chinese claims in the region. During summer the Vietnamese government has accused China of raising regional tensions by fuelling border and other territorial controversies. In particular, China was accused of authorizing three ships to violate Vietnam's territorial sovereignty by entering its waters and deliberately cut the cables of a Vietnamese survey ship, compromising the operations conducted by Petro Vietnam, the state energy giant. As soon as China replied accusing Vietnam of "violating China's sovereignty and maritime rights by conducting unlawful oil and gas surveys in seas around the Wanan Bank of the Spratly archipelago and by driving out a Chinese fishing vessel", and strongly recommending Hanoi to "cease all violations in order not to complicate and expand the dispute".

However, aiming at counterbalancing China, Vietnam decided to involve other countries in the dispute by calling for foreign investment to finance resources exploration in the South China Sea. India immediately took advantage of this offer and extended its areas of cooperation with Vietnam to oil and gas exploration. According to New Delhi, this partnership will help India to strengthen its relations with other regional states, preventing a Chinese regional dominance that might undermine Indian and regional security interests. Further, it might even convince regional and international powers that today's version of India's Look East policy is serious and effective in counterbalancing China in the region.

Beijing has stated very clearly that "every means possible should be used to stop India's Oil and Natural gas Corporation engaging in exploration projects in the South China Sea". After all, China always tried to avoid any other country interfering with its territorial disputes, preferring to deal with disputants on bilateral terms, where it has significant leverage on its smaller neighbors in both economic and military terms. Several Indians also fear that by meddling where it is not wanted, New Delhi might push China's reaction to the limit". However, it is not clear whether New Delhi really has enough resources to be engaged in this project or whether this will be another case of "positive intention not followed by substantial implementation".

Even more important, the recent agreement on the border that India and Bangladesh just signed shows that New Delhi is not yet ready to offer a new model for South Asian relations.

In early September Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and his Bangladesh counterpart, Sheikh Hasina Wajed, achieved an historic agreement ending their border dispute after finding a compromise for the demarcation of their 4.156 kilometers long land borders and helping 200.000 people currently living in enclaves in a country in which they are not citizens to solve their problems.

However, it is important to highlight that the resolution of the India-Bangladesh dispute can also be interpreted as an anti-China move. Indeed, even though it shares no border with Bangladesh, China overtook India as Bangladesh's biggest trade partner last year. Further, during Bangladesh's Army Chief's visit to Beijing on September 15, the two countries decided to strengthen their military relation "in order to sustain the peace and stability in the region".

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Bangladesh choice to improve its bilateral relationship with China right after the signature of an historic agreement with India is important for two different reasons. First, despite being pleased by the fact that the border dispute with India has been solved, noticing once again that New Delhi opted for keeping open the dispute over the sovereignty of border rivers right after the Prime Minister of West Bengal, Mamata Banerjee, showed its disappointment about a draft proposing to keep 48% of waters under Bangladesh sovereignty and the rest under the India's one, Bangladesh remains aware that the problem with India is not linked to deals signature rather to their implementation, mainly because of the different views the states and the center often have. Accordingly, Bangladesh cannot afford to lose China as a partner, no matter what Delhi decides to offer.

To achieve a better result New Delhi should probably decide to invest more resources and, even more important, to show regional partners that the central government is much stronger than they argue, with pragmatic examples. Further, although New Delhi's choice to act contemporarily on more than one level is understandable since China is moving fast on several regions at the same time, aware of its chronic lack of resources it would be better for India to choose which is the most important region in which she needs to strengthen its position and its credibility and focus on that, only.

India should already be aware that its multitasking Look East policy will not be able to counterbalance China alone everywhere in Asia. Accordingly, it would be better to try to successfully contain China's rise in one area, only, hoping in this way to convince neighboring countries -assuming that at the moment the most important area that India has to protect is the Indian Ocean, that India is realistically an alternative partner in the region, and international powers that New Delhi can be a reliable ally against China.



The Dollar crisis and its geopolitical implications on Latam

This Quarterly report will draw the attention on the effects of the dollar crisis regarding the near and middle term future of Latin American development and geopolitical choices.

The past Latin American dollar standard and the downgrading

Between July and August 2011 two significant weak signals have put into question not only the previous application of the Washington consensus in Latin American economies, but also the recent economic success of some countries.

In July Brazil, through its Finance minister Guido Mantega, voiced openly its concerns about the manipulations of exchange rates by the PRC and the USA, the first using every means to keep low its renminbi currency and the second injecting in the market disproportionate masses of printed dollars with predictable inflationary effects at global level. At the same time Mr. Mantega made the proposal to start a discussion over a new international monetary system within the G20 framework and stated that, if the two mentioned countries would not change behaviour, Brasilia would introduce controls on its capital flows.

In August also the rating agency Standard & Poor's downgraded the value of US sovereign debt from AAA to AA+, confirming the overall weakness and untenability of the local economy.

By September 2011, Mr. Mantega reiterated his concerns, openly adding that the world is experiencing a currency war, which might in the end spark off a trade war. Subsequently the government began an escalation in its capital control measures. The application of a 4% tax on hot money inflows into bonds was not particularly effective in reducing the exchange rate of the real, but it indicates clearly the coming up of serious strategic problems.¹

If indeed a currency war is being waged by several governments who try to restore the competitiveness of their exports by depressing their own exchange rate, this means very clearly the dollar standard dominated local Latin American economies is in disarray.

Until 2008 from a purely economic point of view (admitting this type of analysis can make sense) one could say that there was a differentiated dollar standard in the sub-continent.²

Three countries in the Andes were considered on a practically perfect dollar standard. Ecuador is officially dollarized since 2000. Bolivia and Peru have experienced a considerable amount of financial dollarization, and statistical analysis suggested that changes in the values of the Bolivian boliviano and the Peruvian nuevo sol perfectly reflected changes in the value of the

¹ Cfr. Jonathan Wheatley, Brazil wages currency war; not many hurt in FT, October 5, 2010 6:46 pm; <http://blogs.ft.com/beyond-brics/2010/10/05/brazil-wages-currency-war-not-many-hurt/#axzz1ZhJ7z2mc>.

² In reality the crisis started in 2006, but its public perception started one year later.

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dollar. These three countries, which also happen to share borders, might reasonably be considered to be a solid dollar bloc in Latin America.

Four more countries were nearly on a dollar standard. Three of these countries (Guyana, Paraguay, and Uruguay) are very small economies. These countries could, theoretically, follow the example of Ecuador due to the size of their GDP and the strong links with the dollar. The fourth country in this category was Argentina. Although Argentina abandoned its 1:1 exchange rate against the dollar and its currency board mechanism, precisely due to a politically managed default in 2002, the Argentine peso seemed linked to the dollar.

Two countries, traditionally with strong links to the US, have still a significant link to the dollar: Mexico and Colombia.

The currencies that are rather far from the dollar standard are:

- The Brazilian real (more euro oriented);
- The Canadian dollar (despite being in the NAFTA, is more based on a mixed basket – euro, dollar, yen);
- The Chilean peso (*idem*);
- The Venezuelan bolivar.

If we want to project this dollar standard on a geopolitical reference system, we can see that Latin America can be divided into the following categories:

- Three first level powers like Mexico, Venezuela and Brazil;
- Two minor sub-regional antagonists, namely Colombia vs. Venezuela and Argentina (partially) *vis-à-vis* Brazil;
- The remaining South American countries in different combinations, influenced by structural and contingent factors;
- And the cosmic dust of Meso-American and Caribbean small states.

The past sub-continental currency order saw in geoeconomic terms a small dollarized Indian reserve of third rank countries; two major US allies that had significant links with the US currency and economy, among which Mexico and the two other protagonists that were and are part of global financial connections, but are still not involved in the dollar standard. Ecuador, by the way, is still dollarized, but, within the ALBA regional market, it uses the local SUCRE accounting unit.

Global and regional consequences of the dollar crisis

The first consequence is that Washington is losing its *de facto* role of major financial market regulator because of its loss of credibility and prestige in the crisis of 2006, sanctioned by the downgrading. In reality the role of the US legislation since 1981 has been mainly a de-regulatory one *vis-à-vis* the interests of financial markets, but its concepts and practices have moulded a quarter of century of financial markets headlong expansion.

If we look at this situation in geopolitical terms we are witnessing the transition from a world order (which is finished) to an international liquid reference system (G20), which means that we are living in a dysfunctional multipolarism.³ Part of the lack of direction and effectiveness of

³ During the George Walker Bush presidency the world has seen the defeat of the attempt to establish a world order based on the principle of coercive unipolarism (either with us or against us) and, after 2004, the birth of a disarchic multipolar system, where there were different centres of power but unable to establish common rules or a clear hierarchy. A dysfunctional multipolarism is a system whereby you have

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this world reference system is given by the dominance of financial markets over politics and their destabilising role in international affairs.

At a geoeconomic level this is reflected by two very divisive issues: financial regulation and trade imbalances. There is no global supra-national financial regulation that is seriously affecting the mobility and the freedom of action of the three main components of the financial system: banking financial conglomerates, shadow finance and institutional investors. Regulatory policies remain national and developing countries fear that the creation of tighter international rules for financial firms would bind them more tightly to the financial systems of the very Western economies that they blame for creating the recent crisis. And there are significant disagreements even among advanced economies on how to reform the system of regulation and supervision of financial institutions.

Trade imbalances not only are getting wider among different countries, but also they have not the beneficial effect of the past, financing prosperity and supporting the global economy: today surpluses will be directed mainly at domestic growth and jobs, depriving other countries of the locomotive role that was played once by dominant thalassocracies (Spain, Great Britain and yesterday the United States).

Linked to trade imbalances is the dispute around currencies. The Brazilian proposal or the Chinese one (i.e. giving a greater role to Special Drawing Rights - an international reserve asset based on a basket of five national currencies created by the IMF to supplement gold and dollar reserves) are being blocked by Washington, because it wants to extract any possible advantage from the central role of the dollar.⁴

The second consequence is that, as it happens in geopolitics, there is **no BRICS** (China in first place) that **is interested in paying the high price associated to a currency seigniorage**. In fact a fluctuating exchange rate, reduced controls on capital inflows and outflows, liberalised domestic capital markets and markets for yuan denominated debt are all measures that pose surely near-term internal security risks to the Chinese leadership.

In the past, the central role of the dollar was also supporting the rise of the Euro as a reserve currency, but now there is no more geoeconomic and geopolitical interest in seeing a rising Euro with a weakening dollar.

Politically the distance between the two rivers of the Atlantic has continued to increase after the brief 2001 illusion, when the attack of al-Qa'eda gave the hope of having a common enemy and a common alliance in war. If some Republicans continue to think that a confrontation with China is inevitable, there is scarce interest in having a third independent party mediating at global level. China itself is deluded by the glacial pace of European integration, but it would still welcome a possible political partner.

The geoeconomic interest is in even starker contrast with public expectations. If significant actors of the financial conglomerates and the shadow finance (what in media parlance are called the markets) have decided that the crash of the Euro is an opportunity for extracting value, the responsibility is more diluted and the interest is stronger and less encumbered by political considerations.

a more shared power system, but very uncertain common frameworks and no clear drive towards hegemony or a new balance of power. The economist Nouriel Roubini calls it brutally G-0.

⁴ In 23/4/2009, Treasury secretary Tim Geithner had declared during a conference at the Council for Foreign Relations that he was being "quite open" to the possibility of a new world reserve currency run by the International Monetary Fund. But his policy went the opposite way.

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Moreover, no matter how much the transatlantic economy is intertwined, if there is a perceived currency survival problem, there will be no more solidarity at this level than what is shown in Europe and within the Eurozone. In other words, if crippling the Euro means gaining time for the dollar, so the better.

The regional consequences vary according to the prevailing local economic and political conditions. Mexico increases its dollar auctions in order to prevent the fall of the Mexican peso due to capital outflows and thus to slow its depreciation. The political decision is that capital control policies do not work. It is quite interesting to see a NAFTA (North American Free Trade Association) economy that should profit from its depreciation in competitive terms and yet it is forced to buy depreciating dollars to achieve the opposite.

Venezuela has a three-level exchange system (for essential goods, for companies and black).⁵ This causes shortages that could lead to a devaluation, which means inflation for the domestic market (another hidden tax) and relative reduction of oil revenues since they are negotiated in stronger currencies. That said Venezuela is rather insulated from these fluctuations also because it has created the SUCRE local currency regime within the ALBA market (Alianza Bolivariana para los Pueblos de Nuestra América).⁶

Argentina is following a practice similar to a “managed flotation system”, controlling via its central bank the level of devaluation vis-à-vis the dollar. The economy is now strongly tied to the Brazilian one and the main variables that could negatively affect the present currency policy consist in the fall of global commerce or the devaluation of the Brazilian real.

According to private investors Chile, Colombia, Peru are attractive markets for their commodities and for the coming merger of their stock exchanges, but surely not by virtue of their relationship with a devalued dollar.

The difficult position of Brazil

What makes the geopolitical strength of Brazil, that is its political regional weight and hence the positive relationship with the declining USA, plus its profitable economic ties with Beijing as main market, creates also strong problems at geoeconomic level.

While a balanced budget is a necessary condition to withstand speculative attacks, the usual neoliberal prescriptions (cut governmental spending, cut wages, lower interest rates) are insufficient to correct economic policies decided abroad.

Brazil cannot force China to modify its currency system, but can only wait at least a couple of years until the decision is taken to allow a greater floating of the yuan. Not surprisingly China could be more inclined to take this step once the crisis has passed, which is unlikely to happen before 2015.

Equally difficult for Brasilia is to convince Washington to stop its quantitative easing policy, which translates into more fiat money, more inflation and more devaluation. The United States has every interest in depreciating its huge public and commercial debt as far as possible, that is until the PRC starts to reduce its acquisitions of US debt titles and until the collateral effects

⁵ One is for essential goods that are price controlled, the second is for private businesses and the third is the black market. In the second level dollars are allotted in such an unpredictable, cumbersome and slow way that there is a currency shortage.

⁶ The SUCRE is an electronic currency used by the members of ALBA in order to pay trade with local currency instead of dollars. Its members are: Antigua and Barbuda, Bolivia, Cuba, Dominica, Ecuador, Nicaragua, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and Venezuela.

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begin to be more costly for the US economy.

Unfortunately the Eurozone is not in the position to offer more room for manoeuvre in favour of Brazil, precisely because it is under sustained attack through its more vulnerable members. In addition to this Germany, as the major exporter of the area, is still hesitant in trading-off its competitive advantage for the rescue of the Euro, including its weakest members. It is a necessary step to preserve the freedom of action of the EU and its long-term geoeconomic position, but beyond any doubt it is a costly one, no matter which economic policy is adopted.

The whole Latin America region will still grow, according to the projections of the CEPAL UN commission, but the international factors that supported this growth are absent for a foreseeable period of time. Capital inflow will continue, but at the risk of creating speculative bubbles.

This is exactly the risk that Brazil wants to avoid and one can predict that, despite initial scarce results, the government will increase targeted restrictions on speculative capital inflows. If these measures will be disappointing, Brazil might be induced to devalue its currency as a short-term measure and to work upon a common fiscal agreement in the Mercosur on the long-term.

International Organizations and Central Asia Cooperation



1991-2011: What remains of the Soviet Union?

Lorena Di Placido

Between August and September of 1991 the Central Asian republics have begun the process of independence from the Soviet Union¹. Without any previous experience, they were immediately involved in challenges such as state building and national identity, control of territory and many other issues, frozen during the USSR common membership and re-emerged in the aftermath of its breakup. New tools were sought to overcome the stabilization problems, the definition of open bilateral issues, the arrival of extra-regional partners interested in gaining some advantage in the new Eurasia. Several regional organizations were established on the initiative of Moscow, that tried to reproduce the cooperation mechanisms of the USSR. Moreover, in post-Soviet period the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), an organization whose members are Russia, China and four of the five Central Asian republics, grew up.

At the Astana Summit in June 2011, China took over the SCO presidency. The first major event organized by Beijing was the SCO Council of Regional Antiterrorism Structure nineteenth meeting. The debate within the organization is back again on the fight against three evil forces of terrorism, separatism and extremism, the core interest of members since the foundation. In view of the terrorist attacks of summer 2009 and 2011 in Xinjiang and due to the constant tension that characterizes the relationship between Han and Uighur population in that area, the first official act of the Chinese chairmanship is charged with an additional meaning, addressed to national security.

Independence on the outskirts of the empire

In the wake of the events that were developing in the entire Soviet space, even in Central Asia came the moment of declaration of independence of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan Soviet Socialist republics. As that area has been for 70 years the periphery of the Soviet empire, none of the newly independent states had direct experience of a lifetime autonomous state. In fact, the very existence of each republic was relatively recent. Until the conquest by tsarist empire, which occurred during the nineteenth century, the area was inhabited mainly by Central Asian nomadic people, mainly Muslim and ethnically Turkish or Persian. The Soviet regime re-established the imperial control over the periphery of the tsarist empire. In order to achieve a more effective rule over the Central Asian space (hitherto

¹ Kyrgyzstan August 31st, Uzbekistan September 1st, Tajikistan September 9th, Turkmenistan October 27th, Kazakhstan December 16th.

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remained undivided and marked for traditional forms of government, tolerated imperial era), in the early 30's, Stalin decided to create five republics. The new boundaries were drawn so that each territory took a population mainly belonging to the larger ethnic group on it (each republic is named after Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Tajik, Turkmen, Uzbeks people), while maintaining a certain balance of the ethnic mix in the virtual supremacy of one group. Since then, each republic in the Soviet Union played a role only bounding to the others, due to close ties of interdependence established by Moscow. At the time of independence, the feeling that the creation of the Central Asian republics had a scope that went beyond the mere definition of an administrative area on the outskirts of the Soviet empire was clear. The existence of boundaries took a real meaning, the mechanisms of solidarity among the Soviet republics stopped, the ethnic majority "owner" of the State got a distinctive value. Each republic began its own path towards the establishment of an autonomous new identity. In Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, the secretaries of the Soviet Communist Party and in Kyrgyzstan a physicist of the Academy of Sciences became the first presidents. Tajikistan had a much harder start of independent life, with a civil war that has torn apart from 1992 to 1997, slowing much a departure from the premises but not brilliant.

issues: boundaries and ethnic relations

Many of the issues internal to the Central Asian republics are still opened: twenty years of independence slowly remove a Soviet rule legacy lasted 70 years.

With the Soviet Union decline, the newly independent republics have to deal with the reality that they inherited from the decisions taken in the Stalinist period. In particular, the definition of the boundaries. What until 1991 had a mere sense of administrative division, finally revealed the true nature of a boundary between sovereign states. At that point, two problems opened: cross-border relations and ethnic relations within the state. The ethnic groups living on the border areas have suddenly discovered they were separated by a border, which had also become difficult to cross. In addition, the newly independent republics claimed portions of land assigned to the neighbors. Some stretches of the border were mined. Another priority was the construction of national identity in republics made up of many different nationalities on which one was only slightly numerically superior. Until then, thanking ancestral traditions, people had lived in an undifferentiated mixture. In Soviet times this custom was even functional to the strengthening of the ideal of fraternity among the Soviet peoples. When they had to strengthen the role and the power of the dominant ethnic group, the one typified the name of the state, the scenario changed radically. Both the issue of management of shared borders and that of inter-ethnic coexistence presented several critical issues. Even today, 20 years after independence, borders may be closed without notice at any time, especially close to special circumstances or occurrences, potentially threatening the internal security and, therefore, possible precursors of instability even in neighboring states. For example, the border between China and Kyrgyzstan was closed in late August 2011 for a few days for the combination of the end of Ramadan celebrations (30-31/08) and the Kyrgyz independence celebrations. In terms of interethnic coexistence, southern areas of Kyrgyzstan, bordering Uzbekistan, are still an open case. Especially following the June 10 2010 violence that had bloodied the area, the cohabitation between Kyrgyz and Uzbeks became more and more difficult.

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The post-Soviet organizations: interests of Moscow and implications for regional cooperation

At the regional level, the process started at the independence time, however, involved an attempt to go beyond the Soviet experience, keeping alive at a certain extent the traditional ties with Russia. In light of the facts, in the folds of the past 20 years, there are some elements of continuity in the maintenance of a certain multilateral cooperation under the aegis of Moscow, as most of the regional organizations follow the composition of the USSR.

Immediately after the declaration of independence proclaimed in 1991, Moscow launched an initiative that reproduced (within the limits of the changed circumstances) the Soviet Union itself. On December 8, 1991 the heads of state of Russia, Belarus, Ukraine signed in Minsk the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). Between the following December 8th and 21st, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Moldova and the five Central Asian republics joined; Georgia came in 1993. The stated purpose was to create an organization that was the successor of the USSR in its role of coordination of economic and foreign policies of member states. In the treaty was agreed that each signatory recognized independence, sovereignty and equality with each other, within the boundaries that each had at that time, establishing a free trade area with the ruble as the currency and a common defense system. Strategic nuclear weapons that were in Belarus, Kazakhstan, Russia and Ukraine at the time of their independence remained under the control of those republics. In 1992 was established a Council of Heads of State and one of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs. The purpose of play-established mechanisms of interaction among former members of the Soviet Union had the double meaning: 1) from the newly independent states viewpoint, not losing a well-established habit of relationship and interaction, useful in a first phase of consolidation; 2) from the Moscow viewpoint, providing the opportunity to continue to exert influence over areas controlled well before the establishment of the USSR. This mechanism, however, was not particularly successful. During the process of consolidation of the newly independent republics, they acquired the ability to capitalize on its own resources. Gaining self confidence, they were able to forge new relationships with new extra-regional actors. This was a disturbing variable in the original plan of Moscow. Several CIS members have moved away over the years (Uzbekistan, 1998, Georgia, 2008), to free themselves from a too restrictive partnership. Over time, tighter ties with Moscow have been established outside the CIS, as in the case of EurAsEc (Eurasian Economic Community, founded in 2000 through a customs union initiative of Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, Uzbekistan added in 2005) or another customs union operational among Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan since July 2010 (Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Ukraine have indicated their interest to join it).

On 15 May 1992, the republics of Armenia, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan signed for a five years period, the Collective Security Treaty (CST). The treaty was registered with the United Nations Secretariat in 1995. In purely Central Asian context, the organization has expanded its activities in the prevention and suppression of infiltration of extremist groups (which at the turn of 2000 had put an immediate threat to the countries adjacent to Afghanistan), as well as peace in Tajikistan. Since 2002, the CST has become an accomplished Organization (CSTO) in order to promote a system of collective security which also had an Asian dimension. It became an organization having as Eurasian members Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan. Since 2001, the process is underway for the establishment of rapid intervention forces. The initiative appears, however, controversial because of the strong Russia-led

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connotation. It seems destined for a better success of the initiatives adopted in the fight against drug trafficking, the fight against terrorism and the creation of a security system adopted by all the members.

From this brief analysis we can get some considerations. Since the very first moment, it was also in the interest of the Soviet republics maintaining relations with Moscow. Later, when they reached a certain level of maturity and awareness of their abilities, this pattern failed to the extent it was too close to the Soviet model. Moreover, the post-Soviet organizations demonstrated that they can last and maintain a degree of effectiveness of action only if practicable and able to respond to the wider security issues posed by the five republics. Terrorism, extremism, illegal trade, security, economic cooperation are the main current issues. The special relationship with Moscow and of Moscow periphery with the former empire makes sense losing nostalgic connotations and projecting itself on the challenges that these republics are nowadays called to face.

The three evil forces

In this framework, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization represents a new and effective tool created in order to face the new threats of the Central Asian area. The SCO has its origin from the negotiations initiated in 1986 between Soviet Union and China to resolve longstanding border issues, known as "Vladivostok initiative". After 1991, by the states that emerged from the disintegration of the USSR, Russia, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan joined the negotiations. Over time, as the negotiations were producing encouraging success, additional areas, such as the establishment of mutual confidence-building measures, demilitarization of border areas and, finally, forms of economic cooperation were added. At the Shanghai meeting held on June 16, 2001, the five participants established the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, accepting Uzbekistan as sixth member. In the final declaration of the founding summit they set out the guiding principles of the Organization and its fundamental values. First of all, the members wished to fight jointly against the three greatest threats felt by the members: Islamic terrorism, religious extremism and national separatism. Mentioned in official documents as the "three evil forces", the triple threat to the stability of Central Asian region is hiding meanings not openly confessed, but that clearly represent the true, deeper reason for cooperation within the SCO. In other words, the threats of terrorism, extremism and separatism have got a deeper meaning, aimed at maintaining regional balance, through a tacit and mutual support to continue (in the form and manner deemed most appropriate) to contrast any form of dissent and subversion (such as Russia's war in Chechnya and then, in 2008, the one against Georgia, the Chinese repression in Xinjiang and the opposition of Taliban in Afghanistan). The local leaders are guarantors of regional balance, and thus the very survival of their regimes. Fight against the three evils means, ultimately, that each member supports the other by way of reciprocity in the development of national long-term and emergency actions aimed at controlling the territory, to prevent infiltration or terrorist activities, secessionist or separatist movements and to repress any form of rebellion. Maintenance, whatever the cost, of existing balance means to achieve the best conditions for a more favorable partnership with Russia and China. Ultimately, fighting against the forms of subversion, even acts of terrorism, perceived in 2001 as a real threat to the Central Asian space, means acting together for the preservation of regional and optimal conditions to maintain profitable relationships with regional powers.

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The RATS summit in Beijing

In the wake of such beliefs, in January 2004 was established the SCO Regional Antiterrorism Structure, based in Tashkent. Its duties are collecting data, ensuring the exchange of information, coordinating joint activities to combat subversive phenomena related to the "three evils". The nineteenth meeting of the RATS Council, held in Beijing, has been one of the first major activities of the 2011 Chinese presidency of the SCO, taken in June at the Astana summit. The talks were related to the definition of the program of activities for 2012, the issue of cross-border cooperation also aimed to exchange information. In this regard, in May 2011, China, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan were involved in the exercises "Tianshan-2 (2011)". Cooperation between China and Kyrgyzstan is

a constant. Given the limited capacity of the Kyrgyz security forces, the support of Beijing becomes imperative to counter the terrorist threat coming from Xinjiang and the possible connections with the groups active in the tribal areas between Afghanistan and Pakistan. In addition, following the protests that occurred in Hotan and the terrorist attacks of last July in Kashgar, for China borders control is a top priority, since it was confirmed that the attackers (members of the Turkistan Islamic Party, a minority terrorist group) were been trained in the border area between Afghanistan and Pakistan. Border security and the fight against the three evils continue to be a priority. In light of recent events, having hosted a RATS summit meeting in Beijing takes on a very specific meaning: China, current SCO Chairman, backs to the origins of the Organization in order to maintain a constant fight against the three evils which represent an ever current threat, for Xinjiang and regional balance as a whole. In the past ten years, SCO kept alive the deep reasons for the aggregation of the Central Asian leaderships: the fight against three evils and preservation of regional balance.

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Towards the end of the Libyan crisis: what's new for the global energy sector?

Nicolò Sartori

In the last weeks the possible end of the Libya's civil war, determined by the successes of the rebel forces in Libya led by the NTC over the loyalist factions supporting the Colonel Muammer Gaddafi's regime, raised expectations over a prompt resumption of the country's oil & gas production. After the big setback experienced by the national energy industry, the prospect of a new political course in Libya is expected to have positive effects over an international energy markets currently characterized by high levels of tightness and volatility.

Since the early days of uprising against the Gaddafi's regime the activities of the country's oil & gas industry have stopped, while workers fled the energy companies' oilfields, refineries and export terminals. Military troops and armed forces replaced them, taking control of the facilities but letting the overall production falling down close to zero. During the six-months conflict, the Libya's missing output has contributed to produce relevant effects on the international energy markets: a new oil prices peak in April, the split within OPEC over the possibility to increase the cartel's output to compensate for Libya's collapsing production, and the International Energy Agency (IEA) to release crude from its Strategic Reserves to cope with supply shortages.

New developments on the Libyan political arrangements and the set up of the national energy industry could contribute to modify the current global energy scenario. However, the fall of Gaddafi is unlikely to produce rapid and decisive effects. Expected developments, such as reduced pressure over oil prices, may be downsized both by domestic constraints and international dynamics.

For these reasons, and considering the impasse (not only political) of OPEC to cover the volume lost by ensuring the required increase of oil supply, the global energy sector is experiencing other interesting evolutions. One of these is the raise of new non-OPEC titans, which are increasingly fundamental in ensuring market stability and are expected to reshape and rebalance the World's energy geopolitical and economic arrangements.

A long internal process

At the end of August the success of the rebel forces over the Gaddafi's troops and the conquest of Tripoli has temporarily exerted downward pressure on crude prices. Brent immediately fell below 105 dollars per barrel (\$/b), while WTI went down below 80 \$/b. The fluidity of the political and security situation in the country, and the doubts concerning the status of the national energy industry, however, have not allowed the prices to further decrease towards the pre-crisis levels. Despite initial hopes, international markets remain tight and volatile. As clearly expressed by several energy experts and oil companies' officials, expected effects on the global

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market are necessarily intertwined with a rapid (and possibly complete) resolution of key domestic issues.

In fact, despite the substantial advances of the rebels, the internal situation in the country is still uncertain. The country is currently producing only about 160,000 b/d from the oilfields located in Cyrenaica, far away from Sirte, the Gaddafi's birthplace and epicentre of the battle between Ntc troops and the old regime's loyalists. Despite the support of Nato air strikes, the rebel forces appear to be making little progress in the pro-Gaddafi stronghold.

Military difficulties on the field are associated with troubles and difficulties at the political level. The National Transitional Council (Ntc), which during the last months has been lobbying around Europe seeking political support, and in mid-September obtained in Paris the release of frozen funds "*for humanitarian and civilian needs, to support renewed activity in the Libyan oil and banking sectors and to assist with building a civilian government*", recently failed to reach an agreement on an interim government. The fragile position of Ntc is further threatened and destabilized by questions about the role of Islamist in the post-Gaddafi era; in their attempt to increase their political appeal over the Libya's population, Islamists are in fact blame on the secular liberals of Ntc for their past ties and connivance with the former regime of Col. Gaddafi.

These high levels of uncertainty about the processes of reconciliation, transition and securitization in the country are necessarily slowing down the pace of the energy industry's reconstruction. Stability and security are in fact paramount to those big international oil companies involved in the country's energy sector. Eni of Italy, Repsol of Spain, Total of France, OMV of Austria, Wintershall of Germany and the American ConocoPhillips, Occidental and Marathon, require and expect minimum security standards (as well as basic rule of law) before sending back personnel to Libya and heavily re-investing in its oil & gas industry.

At the end of August Eni attempted to lay the foundations for a quicker reconstruction process. The Italian company, operating in the country since 1959, signed with the Ntc a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) aimed to strengthen its dominant position in the country by rapidly enhancing the energy cooperation with the new ruling elite. Optimistically, the parties committed themselves to creating the conditions for a rapid and complete recovery of Eni's activities in the country, including doing all that is necessary to restart operations on the Greenstream pipeline. Moreover, the Italian energy giant extended its commitment to supply refined petroleum products to NTC and to provide technical assistance to assess the state of the national energy infrastructure and to restart industrial activities.

Such effort effectively led to the resumption of the production (approximately 31.900 b/d) at the Abu-Attifel oilfield, located at 300 km south of Benghazi;¹ however, the reluctance of other international firms in restarting activities reveals uncertainty about how long the process to bring back Libya on tap will be. At present, few foreign companies are willing to risk deploying national personnel and technicians and investing capitals to restart exploration and production unless the situation in the country reaches at least basic security standards. Therefore, the competition between energy companies to (re)enter the *new* Libyan oil & gas sector still lays more at the diplomatic level than at the industrial one.

¹ Eni is also in the process of retaking possession of two platforms in the Mediterranean that feed gas into the Greenstream undersea pipeline.

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If we exclude Tripoli, capital and political heart of the country, and Sirte, Gaddafi's birthplace and loyalist stronghold, it is not a coincidence that during the six-months conflict the oil towns are those who have witnessed some of the fiercest fighting. In these areas, energy facilities and infrastructure rapidly abandoned by both foreign and national personnel at the beginning of the conflict have been often damaged (intentionally or collaterally) during warfare operations.² Particularly in the last phases of the conflict, before their final retreat, loyalist Libyan forces have intensified their sabotage activities against energy assets in the desperate attempt to weaken the enemies' offensive.

Therefore, energy firms aiming to restart their industrial activities will have to invest huge financial resources to repair or replace twisted pipelines, melted storage tanks, blown junctions, valves and metering station, burnt equipment, and sabotaged control rooms. These main structural interventions will have to be accompanied by specific logistic efforts necessary to ensure leaving conditions to companies' personnel, engineers and technicians as well as basic working conditions. Compounds, offices, warehouses and residential complexes, often looted by loyalists forces (and criminals) will have to be rebuilt, refurbished and resupplied; roads and areas surrounding energy facilities to be accurately cleared by landmines planted by the pro-Gaddafi forces; spare parts to reach oilfields, refineries and export terminals; power supply to be provided.

In addition, forced inactivity is likely to do its course, worsening the already critical situation in various energy facilities. In fact, the lack of ordinary maintenance caused by the six-month interruption of working activities could threaten the wells integrity and severely damage sophisticated equipment. In the country's older oil fields, which normally need to be constantly pressurized by injecting gas or water, resuming the oil to flow will require complex operations to re-establish necessary levels of pressure. Moreover, due to irreparable damages to equipment such as electric submerged pumps, hundred of wells will need complete workovers; in some cases new pumps will have to be installed, while in others companies may be forced to drill new wells.

In order to carry out these activities, huge financial resources are to be invested. At present, only foreign energy firms can assure backing to Libya's government and its national energy companies. Foreign actors, particularly those operating in the country's oil & gas sector before the outbreak of the civil war, are also fundamental in providing technical support in terms of equipment, competences and skills. These actions to rehabilitate Libya's energy industry will have to be accompanied by reliable securitization efforts; soldiers loyal to Ntc and security corps will have to ensure physical protection to energy facilities and foreign personnel, at least until the situation in the country will be fully pacified and every pocket of pro-Gaddafi resistance will be defeated and annihilated.

Securitization and reconstruction need, of course, political stability and effective government action. At present, the political situation in the country is still confused. As said, Ntc failed to reach an agreement on an interim government, the formation of which has been postponed until the end of the hostilities. Internal animosity against the Ntc's leadership is mounting.

On the one hand, revolutionary activists (as well as members of the Ntc itself) call on the executive committee of the transitional body to show resoluteness in the fight against the pro-

² The situation around the country is rather heterogeneous: some facilities are heavily damaged (i.e. Es Sider and Marsa el-Brega) while others are nearly intact (Ras Lanuf).

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Gaddafi resistance and to speed up the formation of a new government. In this context Prime Minister Mahmoud Jibril's long diplomatic mission abroad, seen as a useless deviation from the country's priorities, has been strongly criticized. Such inaction of the top leadership, either real or perceived, risks to generate a power vacuum and to give way to an harsh competition among the country's several competing factions.

On the other hand, the Islamist bloc increasingly attacks the legitimacy of the Ntc leadership, dominated by former officials of the Gaddafi's regime and exiles from abroad. At present there is no full clarity over the nature of the Islamist movements, as there is no single political Islamist organization that dominates the scene. However, there is the concrete risk that the Islamist arguments, severely repressed under the Colonel's rule, may have significant appeal over Libya's middle class, as happened in the first phases of the uprisings when Salafi groups gained momentum among parts of the country's conservative society.

In this situation, the current leadership is expected to maintain political control and ensure governance in order to avoid centrifugal tendencies within the rebels coalition; at the same time, it has to provide incentives to the disparate Islamist rebel groups to integrate them into the security and political apparatus, and ensure stability to the Ntc action. Otherwise, its progressive de-legitimation would risks to generate irreparable chaos within the country.

In particular, competition for power and rivalries between regional and local actors, members of the former establishment, newcomers and outsiders risk to paralyze the rehabilitation of the oil industry. Under the Gaddafi's rule, the energy industry's management was characterized by chronic bureaucratic inefficiencies and systemic corruption. Today, good governance is necessary for the reconstruction of the industry itself, but also for the success of the whole political transition. The Libyan revolution has started rewriting the who's who of the national energy establishment, but since oil & gas revenues are extremely remunerative³, it is likely the struggle for power will be particularly heated.

After the defection of Shokry Ghanem, *deus ex machine* of the sector during the Jamahiriya, new figures are competing to assume the control of its levers. In the new government, the former exile Ali Tarhouni was expected to lead the Ministry of Finance, Economy and Oil; however, because of its limited familiarity with the matter, is likely that energy issues will be directly dealt by former NOC and Eni official Abdel Rahman ben Yezza, supported by the deputy Ahmed Omar Shakmak. On the industrial side, Nuri Berruien is the newly elected chairman of NOC after a longstanding career at its eastern subsidiary Agoco. The latter is currently run by Ahmed Majbri; born in a small desert village in eastern Libya, the new chairman has worked at the Benghazi-based company for 25 years.

The future and the balance of power between the two main Libya's energy firms is currently object of a regional power struggle. Political elites in Tripoli and Benghazi are in fact competing to host the powerful state-owned NOC, not only because eager to control big oil revenues, but also because interested in economic growth and job creation spin-offs. In Benghazi, where the anti-Gaddafi revolts have started in February, politicians, businessmen and groups of workers

³ In 2010 the Libyan government earned \$ 44 billion from oil and gas exports. These revenues accounted for around 95% of the country's income.

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are pushing strong to relocate the company's headquarters back to the Cyrenaica's capital⁴ in order to balance the economic power accumulated by Tripoli under the former regime.

In the attempt to overcome this potentially destabilizing impasse, as stressed by Mustafa el-Huni member of Ntc in charge of energy issues, the transitional council is considering the potential split of NOC in different companies focused of specific core businesses: oil exploration and production (upstream); oil refining and distribution (downstream); natural gas. On the one hand, this solution would potentially increase the national companies' efficiency in each of the sectors considered, distributing the economic and social benefits deriving from the energy industry to different regions at the same time. On the other hand, structural changes and a profound reorganization of the oil industry could destabilize the international energy companies, used to deal almost exclusively with one single entity. Such situation could potentially slow down the pace of investments and the reconstruction process.

Libyan oil and gas in the international context

Libya has a huge energy potential. In fact, it holds around 46.4 billion barrels of oil reserves, the largest in Africa⁵, and close to 1.5 trillion cubic meters (Tcm) of natural gas reserves. Despite its promising geological endowment, the country has for years punched below its weight in terms of production because of lack of investments and industrial mismanagement.

In the past decades, negligence by the ruling elite as well as the effects of international sanctions against the country's energy industry caused the Libya's crude output to decrease progressively. In 1969, at the time of the Col. Gaddafi coup d'etat, the country produced 3.1 million barrels of oil per day (mb/d), nearly as much as the World's oil giant Saudi Arabia.⁶ In 2011, prior to the uprising, Libya was producing around 1.6 mb/d of crude, the lower output among the African members of OPEC (Nigeria 2.4 mb/d; Algeria 1.85 mb/d; Angola 1.8 mb/d).

Also the natural gas sector has been for a long time overlooked. Ambitious industrial plans and international collaborations started only in 2004, and in four years the country almost tripled its gas production (up to 15 Bcm) boosting net exports. Despite this rapid success, the sector is still underexploited compared to other regional producing countries such as Egypt (2.2. Tcm of proven reserves and an output of 60 Bcm in 2010, four-times Libya's one).

In perspective, having assured socio-political stability and a favourable environment for foreign investments, Libya has certainly the potential to renew its national energy industry and exceed, even largely, former production levels. In the long term, the country could aspire to double its pre-war oil output and achieve its full production target of about 3 mb/d of oil and of around 30 Bcm of natural gas.

Such developments would potentially contribute to ease the tightness on the international energy markets, making commodity prices less volatile. These effects may characterize in particular the oil sector. The Libyan high-quality crude production is important for the global economy and for the *equilibrium* of the international markets. In fact, although the country's pre-crisis

⁴ The National Oil Company was founded in 1968 in Benghazi, and then was moved to Tripoli after the Colonel Gaddafi coup d'etat at the beginning of the 1970s.

⁵ Nigeria is the second African country in terms of proven oil reserves (37.2 bb), followed by Algeria (12.2 bb) and Angola (9.5 bb).

⁶ In 1969, when Gaddafi came to power, the country nearly reached Saudi Arabia's production level (3.3 mb/d). Nowadays, the Saudi output amounts to 10 mb/d.

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production accounted for a mere 1.8% of global consumptions, its low-sulphur blends (i.e. El Sharara and Es Sider) represent roughly 15% of the global output of high-quality crudes. Refiners mostly demand these scarce light sweet oils, as they are easier and cheaper to convert in light distillates (liquid petroleum gas, gasoline, naphtha) and diesel.

The incapacity of suppliers such as Saudi Arabia to bridge this quality gap is contributing to the persistent tightness of the oil markets and the volatility of prices. The resumption of Libya's exports at the pre-crisis level, to be completed in 15 months according to NOC's chairman Nuri Berruien, would certainly contribute to calm down market turbulences and to exert downward pressure on prices. However, the potential benefits of the return on stream of standard quantities of Libyan oil may be partly curtailed the effects of exogenous variables, such as geopolitical instability and global macroeconomic trends; enduring conditions of political and security uncertainty in other producing countries of Middle East and North Africa, or the potential resumption of global oil demand driven by the persistent growth of China's and by a (possible) recovery of the Western economies may sensibly reduce the real impact of the Libya's oil industry rehabilitation.

In the gas sector the resumption of Libya's production and export activities is likely to have minor global effects; the country's total output accounts to nearly 0.5% of the World's natural gas production, in a market still characterized by oversupply. Benefits are expected at regional level (in Europe), particularly for Italy, which is the main recipient of Libya's natural gas supplies through the Greenstream undersea pipeline.

Two other interesting aspects related to the resumption of the Libyan energy industry are the possible re-positioning of international companies in the country (and in the region) and the rise of new oil titans determined by the persistent tight conditions of the energy markets.

As stressed above, in the past decades Libya's huge oil potential has been significantly underexploited, in particular because of both direct and indirect (negligence; international sanctions) responsibilities of the Col. Gaddafi's regime. The emergence of a new Libyan ruling elite, eager to get recognized by the international community and to fully exploit the national energy potential, has raised speculations over the possible modification of the balance of powers between foreign nations and oil companies within the country. When the conflict broke out in February Eni, Repsol, Total and OMV were the key players, but during the last months the list of potential bidders has considerably extended. Chinese, Russian, Brazilian and Indian firms, started courting Libyan resources, causing anxiety and concern among Western capitals.

The August 31st Paris Conference showed something slightly different, with Europeans (plus Americans) still in the frontline for the future reconstruction of the country's energy industry. According to official declaration of Agoco spokesperson Abdeljalil Mayouf, some nations are to pay the soft approach maintained in the Ntc-vs-Gaddafi struggle; the Nato coalition's most active members (France and the UK, and to a lesser extent the US and Italy) would instead benefit from their pro-activeness. However, also this *black-or-white* interpretation could be misleading: although the political and military support provided by these countries to the Ntc is likely to influence the future Libyan leadership's energy choices, financial and industrial considerations are expected to play their role. And with the European countries and the US struggling with sovereign debts and poor economic performances, the hard cash of fast growing economies such as China, India or Brazil could become fundamental for the country's reconstruction efforts (and, as a consequence, for the political stability of its ruling elite).

The rise of new global energy actors can be also considered a collateral effect of the Libyan crisis. The north-African country's missing output has contributed to tighten the international

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energy markets favouring the rapid increase of oil prices. In the last months, the thinning cushion of spare capacity and the sustained cost of crude have encouraged non-OPEC producing countries to heavily invest in their energy industry. Companies' investments focus on conventional liquids production, enhanced oil recovery projects and unconventional liquids production and, according to the International Energy Agency, should assure non-OPEC countries 30% production growth by 2035.

At present, this overall increase results primarily from higher production in Brazil, Russia, Kazakhstan and the US. In the mid-to-long term, the Western hemisphere is believed to become the gravitational centre of a new, global, energy rebalancing. From south to north Argentina, French Guyana, Colombia, Mexico and Canada are eager to take advantage of the oil boom. Ultra-deep drilling technologies, which are helping Brazil to catch up Iran's production by the end of the decade, can help Latin American companies to commit in a rush to explore clusters of coveted underwater oilfields. In Canada, huge investments in the oil sands sector may almost double the current output to 3 mb/d by 2020.

Another hotspot for future energy developments is the Arctic. In the next few years the global warming and the Arctic ice meltdown could provide the opportunity to intensify exploration in the last frontier of the oil industry, expected to be extremely promising in terms of recoverable resources. Norway is already on the frontline, having successfully started exploration activities in the Svalbard region. Also Russia, after the conclusion of the BP-TNK *affaire* and the final signature of the Rosneft-Exxon deal, is ready to get on move in the Kara Sea. Canada and the US will follow soon.

Conclusions

Developments and dynamics in the global oil & gas sector are often difficult to anticipate. Political interests have always to square with economic and financial capabilities (or constraints), technological and industrial aspects and, of course, geological variables. Also the analysis of the potential outcomes of the end of the Libyan crisis could not be carried without taking into account all these elements.

The first result emerging from this analysis is that expected outcomes are likely to emerge later, and more blurred, than expected. Domestic conditions, concerning security and stability, are likely to be key factors in defining the pace of Libya's return in the international energy arena.

The second result is that the global oil sector, notwithstanding the unequal distribution of reserves among nations, is still capable of adapting according to market forces and supply-demand dynamics. The progressive emergence of new energy actors, determined (also) by the turmoil in the Middle East and in particular by the effects of the Libyan crisis, shows how misleading univocal geopolitical interpretations of the energy events can be. And it gives hopes for further progress and better energy security conditions in the years to come.

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Preventive diplomacy: delivering results

Valerio Bosco

A few months ago, at the beginning of his second term, Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon (UNSG) indicated his intention to confirm and further increase his engagement on consolidating his reform efforts aimed at improving UN preventive diplomacy tools and strengthen the cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations in conflict prevention. The report issued by the UNSG on 28 August provided the UN system and Member States with an additional opportunity to discuss gaps, challenges and achievement of UN most recent prevention activities as well as ways to strengthen international capacities in preventive diplomacy over the next five years. The report was reviewed by the United Nations Security Council on 23 September. Despite having issued a presidential statement welcoming Ban Ki-Moon's findings and proposals, the Security Council did not carry out a comprehensive review of the different preventive efforts and initiatives undertaken by the UN. It is now likely that an in-depth analysis of the results achieved so far by the UN preventive diplomacy would be carried out by the General Assembly in the upcoming months.

Ban Ki-Moon's focus on preventive diplomacy

It might be recalled that in October 2007, almost one year after his first appointment as UNSG, Ban Ki-Moon submitted to the General Assembly a detailed plan aimed at strengthening the Department of Political Affairs (DPA), the focal point of the UN Secretariat for preventive diplomacy, conflict prevention and peacemaking. The proposed strengthening of DPA focused on four issues, namely: a) the strengthening of early warning and analysis capabilities of the regional divisions, with particular attention to the availability of professionals at disposal of the Africa divisions (Eastern and Southern Africa Great Lakes region) and Africa II (North Africa, West and Central Africa); b) the creation of a Policy Partnerships and Mediation Support Division to coordinate cooperation with Member States and regional organizations in mediation; c) the allocation of new resources to the Electoral Assistance Division; d) the increase of the expertise available to Sanction Committees, subsidiary bodies of the Security Council responsible for ensuring compliance with economic sanctions adopted by the latter in relation to different crisis situations. The reform of DPA was also presented as an opportunity to finally correct the imbalance between the growing demand for services and support for mediation and UN preventive diplomacy by the Member States and regional organizations and the real capacity of the Department to provide such service, mainly due to its lack of financial and human resources. One of the key elements of Ban Ki-Moon proposal was to create a small network of regional offices to be opened in consultation with Member States and regional organizations concerned. According to the UNSG, these offices were expected to provide a more agile platform to support preventive diplomacy conducted by the Special Envoy and the

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Special Representative of the Secretary General, to strengthen cooperation with regional organizations on peace and security, and to support regional conflict prevention activities. According to Ban Ki-Moon's plan each office should work closely with the plurality of the UN presence in the area - peacekeepers, UNDP, UN agencies and programs - offering a "*localized hub for conflict prevention activities*" by the United Nations system and other regional partners¹. While the SG's intention was to create regional offices in Central Africa, Great Lakes region, the Horn of Africa, Latin America / Caribbean region, in Balkans and, in the south-east Asia, the UNSC approved so far the creation of a regional centre for preventive diplomacy in Central Asia - whose task was to coordinate the efforts of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan in the fight against terrorism, trafficking drugs, organized crime, as well as to support regional initiatives and capacities in crisis prevention – and of the UN Office for Central Africa. A small liaison unit of the DPA was also established in Gaborone, Botswana, with a view to ensuring coordination and cooperation in conflict prevention with the Southern African Development Community, SADC.

2008-2011: preventive diplomacy at the UN

After over 14 months debate in the Fifth Committee of the UN General Assembly, the proposed strengthening of the DPA was approved unanimously by the Member States in December 2008. Resolution 63/261 had in fact authorized a significant increase in human and professional resources available to the DPA, especially in Africa divisions I and II, the Electoral Assistance Division, and the Mediation and Support Unit. In particular, the Mediation Support Unit was established to provide policy advice and financial and logistical support to peace processes. Designed also as a service provider for the entire UN system, the MSU has been supporting the mediation efforts carried out by different departments of the UN Secretariat. Between 2008 and the first quarter of 2009, MSU has offered support to the DPA 18 peace processes - new or already underway - and has also launched programs of cooperation and capacity building in mediation with the SADC, the Economic Community of West African States, the African Union and the European Union. The most intense activities of support to the mediation arranged by the DPA in recent months have focused on Cyprus, the Central African Republic, Kosovo, Darfur, Kenya, Democratic Republic of Congo and Somalia. The creation of a standby team of experts, deployable within 72 hours, called to assist mediators and the parties in negotiation processes related to the constitutional issues of power / wealth-sharing, management of natural resources, transitional justice, reconciliation and security also represented a crucial step. During his first two year of existence, the stand-by team of six experts, attended the mediation process in Kenya, Central African Republic, Cyprus, Comoros Islands, Iraq, Madagascar, Nepal, Somalia, and also facilitated the dialogue between Pristina and Belgrade. With voluntary contributions from Member States, the MSU has recently established the "*mediation start-up funds*" or mechanisms that enable flexible funding and support rapid diplomatic missions carried out by the DPA officials and experts with a view to planning and facilitating negotiations between the warring parties. Furthermore, the proliferation activities of joint mediation between the UN and various regional organizations (Organization of American States, African Union, European Union, Organization of Southeast Asian Nations), the work done in this regard by the United Nations regional offices (the United Nations Office for West Africa or to the newly created

¹ Bertrand G. Ramcharan, *Preventive Diplomacy at the UN*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2008.

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United Nations Office for Central Africa) and, finally, the recently consolidated practice of “*horizon scanning briefing*” by DPA officials requested to update the Security Council on current or emerging crisis, represented the most significant developments on the issue. More recently, an historic UN General Assembly resolution, adopted last June, recognized the need to strengthen the role of mediation in peaceful resolution of disputes and resolution and conflict prevention². In July 2010, however, the Security Council also added its voice to the process. A meeting organized by the Nigerian Presidency requested the SG to present a detailed report on the UN preventive diplomacy activities and the possibility of further strengthening cooperation and coordination with regional organizations in the field of conflict prevention³.

The 28 August SG report

The report of the SG, dedicated to the memory of Dag Hammarskjöld – who is considered the first theorist of preventive diplomacy conceived as “*diplomatic actions taken to Prevent Disputes and Conflicts from escalating into to limit the spread of Conflicts When They Occur*” - describes how recent preventive diplomacy engagements have made a difference on the ground in a range of different contexts. It discusses the risks and obstacles that continue to hamper preventive efforts and identifies key elements which, in the experience of the United Nations and its partners, have proven critical in maximizing the success of these efforts: early warning, flexibility, partnerships, sustainability, evaluation and resources. The report also presents recommendations aimed at further strengthening international capacity for preventive diplomacy over the next five years. In particular, the document provides a positive assessment of the work carried out by the Special Envoys of the SG, emphasizing, in particular, the success achieved by the mediation efforts carried out by former President Obasanjo of Nigeria in the Great Lakes region and, in particular, in improving relations between the Democratic Republic of Congo and Rwanda. Particular emphasis is given to the positive work done by the regional offices of the UN as the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia (UNRCPDCA) and the United Nations Office for West Africa (UNNOWA). The report also refers to other success stories which included the successful holding this year of the referendum that saw South Sudan secede from Sudan, the easing of tensions between the governing and opposition parties in Sierra Leone in 2009, and the end to inter-ethnic violence and return to constitutional order in Kyrgyzstan in 2010. Nevertheless, the recent proliferation of “*political resident missions*”, or missions undertaken to assist the national dialogue and local initiatives for conflict prevention, post-conflict stabilization and reduction of social and political tension is indicated by the report as an experience offering so far very encouraging results. Among the “*resident political missions*”, there are those with a specific focus on peace-building - *United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone (UNIPSIL)*, *United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Support Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNIOGBIS)*, *United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Support Office in Central African Republic (BINUCA)*, *United Nations Office in Burundi* - and those which, while having a post-conflict support profile, are currently operating in more fragile political and security environments, such as the *United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq*, UNAMI, the *United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMI)* and the *United Nations Political Office for Somalia, UNPOS*. The report also identifies the development of an effective early warning – “*no matter how accurate the*

² United Nation General Assembly Resolution, A/65/ 283, 22 June 2011

³ Security Council Report, Update Report, Preventive Diplomacy, 20 September 2011.

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early warning, the real test is whether it leads to early action” – the promotion of structured relationships between the UN, regional organizations and civil society organization, the flexibility of approaches in preventive diplomacy approaches – “indirect talks between third parties and one party to a dispute appear to be preferred model in some regions, while direct talks between parties to a dispute are significantly common in others”- the creation of national structures capable of preventing conflicts and, finally, the availability of adequate human (“skilled mediators”) as key-conditions for the success of any preventive diplomacy initiative⁴. Effective exchange of information between the UN and regional organizations on early warning, an increased numbers of skilled mediators, envoys and support staff experienced in mediation support, the consolidation of the partnership between the UN, regional organizations and Member States and, finally, the strengthening of national capacities for mediation, are suggested by the SG as measures that can ensure the goal of “delivering results” indicated in the report. Nevertheless, the SG also called for adequate, predictable and timely financial support for rapid preventive response to emerging crises, as well as further investment in “preventive diplomats” on the ground with a view to facilitating the rapid deployment of envoys and mediators to situations of concern.

The 23 September debate

The debate was held on September 23 in the presence of the Lebanese president Seuliman, the president of Colombia Manuel Santos Calderon, the president of South Africa Zuma and Goodluck Jonathan, President of Nigeria. The speakers were among others, the Portuguese Prime Minister Pedros Coelho and foreign ministers of France, Britain, China, India and Brazil. Despite the basic consensus emerged, during the debate, on the need to strengthen the mediation capacities of the UN and regional organizations, in particular by ensuring the availability of human and financial resources for preventive diplomacy initiatives, discussions in the Security Council were largely affected by the different views over the crisis in Libya and the interpretation of resolution 1973. While the Brazilian delegation, commenting on the “Arab Spring”, stressed that military action proved to be unable to promote the desired political stability, **Jacob Zuma, president of South Africa**, strongly criticized NATO countries, accusing them of having imposed a “military solution” in spite of the wording of resolution 1973 and support by the Security Council for the diplomatic initiative undertaken by the African Union. According to Zuma, the African Union initiative to ensure a political rather than military solution in Libya was deliberately undermined, despite adoption of resolution 1973 (2011) to support the African Union road map. He also added that “such blatant acts of disregard for regional initiatives potentially undermined the confidence that regional organizations had in the United Nations as an impartial and widely respected mediator in conflicts”⁵. On a completely different line was instead the speech given by **William Hague, Secretary for Foreign Affairs of Great Britain**. He noted that all means available must be used to prevent conflict and ensure it did not escalate, while sustainable peace should be encouraged through mediation and

⁴ United Nations Security Council, *Report of the Secretary-General, Preventive Diplomacy: Delivering Results*, S/2011/552, 9 September 2011.

⁵ United Nations Department of Public Information, SC/10392, *Security Council Pledges Strengthened UN Effectiveness in Preventing Conflict, Including Through Use of Early Warning, Preventive Deployment, Mediation*, 22 September 2011, 6621st Meeting.

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dialogue. According to Hague, military action might be necessary, as it had proven to be the case in Libya, but it was a last resort. While adding that the United Kingdom was not calling for military action in the case of Syria, he recalled that a strong response from the Council was long overdue. With regard to the situation in Yemen, he called upon the UN System to continue using its good office to mediate a peaceful settlement. Furthermore, Hague underlined the importance of the relevant commitment taken by the The United Kingdom by deciding to spend 0.7 per cent of its GDP to alleviate poverty abroad and ensure that a larger proportion of that amount went toward conflict prevention. He concluded by saying that by 2015, 30 per cent of the United Kingdom's official development assistance (ODA) would go to support conflict prevention in fragile areas. All the five permanent members of the UNSC took the floor during the open debate. Ambassador Susan Rice, United States Permanent Representative at the United Nations, noted that the transformation from a culture of reaction to a culture to prevention in the international machinery for peace and security was incomplete. Stressing the linkages between poverty and conflict, she called for a comprehensive approach to prevention that addressed sustainable development, good governance, gender equality, the rule of law, democracy and respect for human rights. While **Yang Jiechi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of China**, called for increased attention to preventive diplomacy through the increased use of early warning systems, conflict prevention and mediation, **Vitali Churkin, Russian Ambassador to the UN**, underlined that interference in the political process did not serve the interests of long-term stability. He added that *"today's conflicts could not be resolved by force"*. Both China and Russia highlighted the continuing need for the Secretary-General's good offices, and fully supported the creation of United Nations regional centres on preventive diplomacy. **Somanahalli Mallaiah, Minister of External Affairs of India**, joined Russia and China in arguing that coercive measures should be avoided and used only as a last resort and with extreme caution. A more focused intervention on the need to strengthen preventive diplomacy efforts around the world was made by **Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, President of Nigeria** who stated Nigeria's interest in conflict prevention as *"motivated by a profound concern that the nature of conflict was outpacing our collective ability to respond effectively to it"*⁶. According to the Nigerian President, while far too much emphasis was being placed on the military dimensions of peacekeeping - *"without addressing the root causes of conflicts"* - little attention was given to mediation and preventive diplomacy. Therefore, he called upon the International Community to redress the above-mentioned imbalance and increase the financial and technical support to African regional and sub-regional organizations efforts in creating early warning and mediation mechanisms. At the end of the debate, the UNSC issued a **presidential statement** which emphasized the need to ensure that preventive actions taken by the United Nations support and complement the primary responsibility of national Governments in preventing conflicts. The Council also encouraged the Secretary-General to use all the diplomatic tools at his disposal under the Charter, including his good offices, representatives and mediators to help facilitate peaceful settlements most effectively, and to continue to improve the coherence of the United Nations system in those efforts. The Council recognized the role of regional organizations in preventive diplomacy and reiterated the need to continue strengthening regular exchanges of views, with the aim of strengthening national and regional capabilities for conflict prevention. Finally, the UNSC also recalled the importance of enhancing coordination among

⁶ United Nations Security Council, 6621st Meeting, S.PV/6621.

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donors to ensure predictable, coherent and timely financial support to optimize the use of preventive tools, including mediation, throughout the conflict cycle⁷.

A missed opportunity...

Whilst highlighting the crucial point on the need to ensure coherence and coordination of UN actions in conflict prevention, the 23 September debate did not undertake a comprehensive review of the recent preventive diplomacy initiatives carried out by the United Nations. According to a recent report issued by the World Bank - *World Development Report 2011: Conflict, Security and Development* - the average cost of civil war is equivalent to more than 30 years of gross domestic product (GDP) growth for a medium-size developing country, with the most severe civil wars imposing cumulative costs of tens of billions of dollars. It is now clear that prevention efforts can be much less costly. UNOWA, which has played an important role in prevention efforts in Guinea, Niger and elsewhere in the sub-region by promoting and facilitating the return to constitutional order in countries affected by coups d'État, has a regular budget of less than \$8 million per year. The "inexpensive" shuttle diplomacy undertaken by Ban Ki-Moon's Special Representative for West Africa, the Algerian Said Djinnit, clearly confirms the cost-effective nature of preventive diplomacy during an historical phase where the budget of UN peacekeeping operations has been constantly exceeding the annual budget of \$ 8 billion. The results achieved by UNOWA and the UNRCPDCA - whose action was crucial in stopping the inter-ethnic violence erupted in Kyrgyzstan during the summer 2010 - should suggest the need to consider the creation of new regional offices in areas where sub-regional approaches in preventive diplomacy could prove to be more effective than political missions with a country-specific focus and profile. Moreover, the option of a UN regional presence could be particularly useful in relation to Northern African or Middle East countries. A regional approach in facilitating political dialogue and promoting conflict prevention initiatives would ensure a greater acceptance of the UN action in areas where opposition to external political interference - Syria, Yemen and Bahrain - is quite strong. The SC debate also missed the opportunity of reviewing possible risks of duplication and overlap in existing UN structures and actors engaged in conflict prevention. The proliferation of integrated peacebuilding offices - which recently became the "favourite" exit strategy for UN peacekeeping operations - raised the issue of their relationship with the United Nations Development Program Country Offices, whose mandate in development assistance often includes post-conflict recovery and crisis prevention initiatives.

The way ahead

Ban Ki Moon's focus on the need to strengthen UN preventive diplomacy capacities - which he confirmed as one of his top priorities in his second term as UN - is likely to inform the work of the 66th session of the United Nations General Assembly.

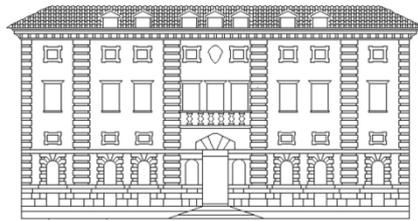
While the UNSC will continue discussing the issue and following the current mediation initiatives carried out by the UN Secretariat, a more detailed review and analysis of the performance of the UN regional offices engaged in preventive diplomacy might be carried out within the technical committees of the General Assembly, especially in the Administrative and Budgetary Committee (the so called 5th Committee). As requested by the historic resolution adopted by the GA in July 2011, Ban Ki Moon is expected to present, in the upcoming weeks, a detailed reform package aimed at strengthening and consolidating the UN special political

⁷ United Nations Security Council, Presidential Statement, S/PRST/2011/18.



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mission through the creation of more flexible funding mechanisms. The above-mentioned package might be also complemented by a new training plan for the UN Secretariat staff with a view to expanding the pool of professionals able to provide preventive diplomacy activities with technical and logistical support.



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