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# QUARTERLY

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## ***The macro-regional strategy (The Adriatic Ionian Initiative)***

*Paolo Quercia*

In 2014 South Eastern Europe (SEE), a region stretching from the Gulf of Fiume/Rijeka in the High Adriatic to the Gulf of Iskenderun/Alessandretta in the Eastern Mediterranean, will face a new risk of geopolitical destructuring, due to the persistence of various strategic threats and a prolonged economic stagnation.

Despite the NATO military intervention in Kosovo fifteen years ago, the Euro-Atlantic integration process has failed to complete the political blending of a relatively small region that remains fractured in a multitude of small political entities.

The slowing down of the process aimed at creating a Euro-Atlantic geopolitical space that occurred in the last years, before strengthening after 2008, has seriously jeopardized the political outlook of the region.

Indeed, most of the countries have not yet defined a consistent integration strategy. This is particularly true for many Western Balkan countries (Bosnia Herzegovina, Macedonia/FYROM, Albania, Kosovo, Montenegro, and Serbia), and represents a potentially dangerous environment for the resurgence of unresolved territorial or ethical conflicts.

Moreover a number of sensitive political anniversaries will be commemorated in 2014 in the region. Among them is the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria that occurred in 1914. This tragic event signalled the beginning of World War I in Europe and transformed the issue of national minorities into Nineteenth century nationalism. Ten years after the solemn promises of the EU integration, made during the Thessaloniki EU-Western Balkans Summit (2003), an assessment of EU integration processes may be made today. The EU will likely go through a re-examination of its neighbourhood strategy, especially in light of the expected restructuring of its institutional architecture.

From a political point of view, there are two relevant issues that could affect the integration trends of the region; the process of re-inclusion of Serbia into regional politics and the issue of Turkey's kinship with Eastern Europe.

In view of present geopolitical uncertainties, the creation of a European Adriatic Ionian Macro-Region (EUAIR) remains the most innovative and integrative element for the Western Balkans, although Kosovo and FYROM/Macedonia are not part of this initiative. With the inclusion of Croatia in the EU and the EU Presidency being occupied by Greece and Italy in 2014, there will be a strengthening of the European dimension of EUAIR (Italy, Croatia, Slovenia and Greece).

A further strengthening of the region (and, therefore, the Mediterranean) could be achieved through



## **South Eastern Europe**

the creation of a strategic and institutional synergy between EUAIR and the neighbouring Danube EU Macro Region (EUDR). In particular, energy transport connections amongst the Western Balkan countries that are part of both EU regions should be considered a strategic priority.

On the Southern side of the SEE region, Turkey appears to be losing its momentum in Europe, which is affecting its relations with the EU candidate countries of the Western Balkans. Ankara is either being swallowed by the perils or attracted by the opportunity of an evolving Middle East geopolitical space that is still very uncertain four years after the beginning of the mostly derailed Arab Spring transformation processes. This political turmoil did not produce a neighbouring neo-Ottoman friendly political space but rather a chaos-ridden belt where the interests of distant regional powers such as Iran, Saudi Arabia (and to a certain extent Russia) will become increasingly relevant.

Ankara's influence will be shaped by a growing trilateral confrontation/cooperation with Tehran and Moscow. This process could open a new phase in its foreign policy.

Turkey confirms the most dynamic geopolitical pole of the Southern Eastern region. In 2013, it was a leading driver for change in SEE and the Eastern Mediterranean, but it also experienced significant political challenges to its internal power structure. In some of the countries where Ankara supported regime change (such as Libya, Syria and Egypt) there has been either a progressive decomposition of sovereignty and state or a re-establishment of unpopular authoritarian regimes. In any case, the short term net result for Turkey from these processes is a diminishing number of potential state partners and allies in the region.

If the military coup in Egypt terminates the AKP sponsored Muslim brotherhood revolution, this will give an advantage to Saudi Arabia over Ankara. The developments of the Syrian civil war and the Geneva 5 +1 agreement have strengthened Moscow and Tehran, two of Turkey's historical regional rivals. The combined result of all these factors has produced a strategic weakening of Turkey's regional hegemony, forcing Ankara to reset its foreign policy.

It appears that AKP's moderate Pan-Islamism has produced little results in Turkish foreign policy, at least since the changes it went through after 2008. Now, it seems that Turkey's strategy is again moving towards a more domestic phase, in preparation for the forthcoming political elections. It pays particular attention on how to downgrade and divide the threats and menaces arising from a vast region of instability stretching from Libya to Iraq.

While the AKP government is attempting to find an honourable way out of the Syrian quagmire, it is also focussing its attention on a decade old Turkish issue that Ankara's government is handling with a new approach and determination. Ankara's main priority for 2014 will be establishing trans-border relations with the Kurdish regional government of Iraq, and to a lesser extent with the Kurdish self-government in Syria. Regarding the Kurdish issue, consolidating the relations with these two groups that have achieved or are in the process of achieving a subnational self-government from their respective governments, will represent a strong tool in the hands of Ankara. This tool may be used for homeland security, but also to run (and eventually recover) the future by bilateral relations with Baghdad and Damascus.

The strengthening of the multi-polar character of the region is contributing to the loosening of the target of geopolitical unity, which more than a decade ago was set as an objective for the Balkan geopolitical space.

## **South Eastern Europe**

From the macro-security point of view, the situation has improved and the magnitude of the historical and modern conflicts in the region has slowly decreased. The relationship between Belgrade and Pristina has been significantly improved thanks to the EU brokering a deal in 2013. This area has previously been one of the most dangerous regional hot spots. The accession of Croatia to the European Union has also contributed to the downgrading of the potential skirmish with Slovenia, Bosnia Herzegovina and Serbia, although the issue of the application of bilingualism in Vukovar remains problematic.

The territorial disputes between Greece, Macedonia and the Bosnian entities remain relatively unchanged, with unlikely signs of improvement in the short term. The inclusion of Croatia in the EU has resulted in the upgrading of a border between Croatia and Bosnia Herzegovina that will remain for some time.

As far as Bosnia Herzegovina is concerned, no improvement has been recorded in terms of the functionality and efficiency of the governments on any level. The stalemate in the government of the Federation has blocked the functionality of the policy-making mechanism, while the political conflicts within the tripartite presidency and the parliaments have compromised the adoption of several pieces of EU legislation. The parliamentary and presidential elections, scheduled for October 2014, and the proclamation of their results, could bring about tensions, that may put at risk the integrity of the Dayton Agreement, developed in 1995 to promote peace in Bosnia Herzegovina.

Another matter of concern for the region is the persistence of a negative economic situation in all of the six Western Balkans countries (Bosnia Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, Kosovo, Albania and Macedonia). At the moment none of them can be regarded as a functioning market economy. Per capita GDP is stuck at 2007 levels, fluctuating between 4,000 and 7,000 US dollars, while unemployment rates have exceeded 30% in more than one of these countries.

The risk is the countries of this region will not be encouraged to initiate the economic and institutional reforms that are required due to the stalemate in the European integration process and the continuous stagnant economy. They look for alternative geopolitical projects that may appear at low social and political costs in the short term. This could lead to isolationism tendencies or a need to quest for alternative extra-regional partnerships. On the other side, there are few signs of a concrete renewal of old federalist projects.

EUAIR remains, for the moment, the principal multilateral initiative addressing the countries of the Western Balkans.

Finally, as far as the internal security of SEE countries goes, it should be noted that some concerns still remain in terms of dozens of jihadist combatants from Syria, especially in Bosnia Herzegovina, Serbia, Kosovo and Macedonia who are looking to return to the Balkan region



## Latin America



### **Latin America in the twilight zone**

*Alessandro Politi*

The South American economic miracle is fading away and Latin America's situation is much less rosy compared to the previous two years. The positive points in its strategic picture are:

- The development of the peace process in Colombia and its possible favourable conclusion by May 2014, just in time for general elections;
- The consolidation of democratic electoral cycles: next year the electors of 17 countries will vote;
- The positive effects of the election of the Argentinian cardinal Bergoglio as pope;
- The continuation of Chinese investments;
- The advances in the integration among the countries of the Alianza del Pacifico (Pacific Alliance) and
- Mexico's effort in starting political and economic structural reforms.

That said, there are some rather worrying weaknesses. First of all, the economies of Argentina, Brazil and Venezuela show serious cracks. Caracas is the most critical case in terms of economic sustainability, followed by Buenos Aires where the indicators of a major economic crisis are represented by internal and foreign debt, improvident public expenditures and the retreat of companies delocalising their production, sometimes to Brazil.

Brasilia has to tackle the consequences of a 2.3% growth. It could see its debt rating being downgraded by July 2014 to a BBB- level just before the October presidential elections because fiscal and financial policies are judged unbalanced by major financial companies. Since the pillars of Mercosur are in critical conditions, the deferment of its summit to the 31st of January is the symptom of a wider and deeper malaise in the region.

In the short- and medium-term the Mercosul/Mercosur should not be overly worried by the dynamism of the commercially competing Alianza del Pacifico (Chile, Peru, Colombia, Mexico), rather by the isolation following the conclusion of the negotiations of the great US-led regional agreements TTIP (Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership) and TPP (Trans-Pacific Partnership). These agreements may entail heavy social costs, as underlined by the diplomacy of the Holy See opposing them, and could prove fatal for Mercosur if the EU-Mercosur free trade talks fail. A wild card is represented by the US proposal to reshape an American free trade area, starting from a NAFTA core.

It is reasonable to predict that in the short-term Mercosur could face a rather serious crisis due to the global effects of US economic and political choices and to internal cohesion problems deriving



## **Latin America**

from the fragile situation of its most important member countries.

China's presence in the continent will continue to be relevant, especially through the new investments in the banking and mining sectors, with some risks in Venezuela and Brazil and with the possibility that the Nicaragua Canal project may be reported or cancelled, especially if Beijing will not provide any effective support.

Regarding security issues and leaving aside border disputes, the biggest problems are the extensive infiltrations by organized crime in different countries and the potential consequences of the Snowden affair. In fact, only Colombia is acting effectively against its own narco-guerrillas, but other countries are scarcely able to manage the drug trafficking and mafia problems.

The Snowden affair has already prompted multilateral responses at UN and regional level, with the Argentinian-Brazilian initiative to create a cyber-defence structure within the UNASUR (Unión de Naciones Suramericanas) as one of its example. During 2014, Brasilia is expected to draft a bill forcing internet service providers to "territorialise" Brazilian data by storing them on servers based in the same country.

By the end of 2013, the Latin American subcontinent shows few positive developments and future opportunities, even if some of them have a considerable soft power and political potential.

Colombia, despite an arduous and difficult domestic negotiation, is advancing the peace process with the its main narco-guerrilla, the FARC. The country recently finalised substantial agreements on crucial aspects like land reform and political participation after the conflict. The president, Juan Manuel Santos, aims at closing the talks or at least the bulk of them by May 2014, just in time for his expected re-election.

Another positive element, reflecting and apparently preceding wider developments in the Middle East, is represented by the Iranian diplomatic move in favour of a joint investigation with Argentina about the bomb attack against the Asociación Mutual Israelita Argentina (1994).

The soft power element has been introduced by the election of Pope Francis I and was highlighted by his significant visit in Brazil (August 2013). The political and diplomatic action of the Holy See is now more effective than in the past, thanks to important changes in attitude and communication regarding issue like faith and gender diversity.

Other important opportunities are linked to the economy and in particular to the deepening of China's influence in Latin America and to the developments of the Alianza del Pacífico. Despite a slower growth, China has signed a raft of important agreements: multi-sectoral ones with Venezuela for a value of \$20 billion; one on test bores in Uruguay. Further, an agreement regarding oil extraction with Brazil in the great pre-salt Libra oil field and another one offering China the chance to get involved in the new off-shore field of Sergipe.

The alliance between the most dynamic liberal economies of the area (Alianza del Pacífico) successfully mediated the establishment of a new currency union involving Chile, Peru and Colombia, followed by Mexico's efforts in launching appropriate reforms. Nevertheless, Mexico City should show a stronger commitment in term of reforms because, as the country has one of the lowest tax burdens in the region. During the year, the initial objective of recovering an amount of taxes equivalent to 4% of the GDP was diluted to 2.5%.

Mexico is also considering to open state-owned Pemex oil company to international investments, especially to allow further oil exploration and extraction. The national Parliament approved the



## **Latin America**

opening in December 2013, and in November the Repsol controlled take-over was announced: Pemex would take over Repsol with the help of the Mexican billionaire Carlos Slim.

High-risk situations are mainly in two areas: economy and organized crime. Regarding the first one, Venezuela and Argentina carry the most visible issues. By October 2013, the IMF declared that the Venezuelan economy was unsustainable due to the existence of multiple currency markets for dollars and state aids for fuel consumption. These are two essential governmental supports to the boliburguesia (Bolivarian bourgeoisie), the social class that grew upon the economic perks introduced by the late president Chavez, but that is also generating national deficits. By December 2013, two out of three rating agencies downgraded the economic perspectives of the country.

In November 2013, the Argentinian economic crisis emerged due to few concrete problems: public expenditures and debt beyond budget capabilities, macroeconomic decisions jeopardising investors' confidence and lack of success during the talks about the repayment of outstanding debts vi-à-vis the so called vulture funds.

In the meantime, Brazil's growth slowed down to a realistic 2.3%, inflation went up by 5,91% and a downgrading to a BBB- level seems possible as major financial companies consider national fiscal and financial policies unbalanced. This situation entails a serious survival challenge for the Mercosur economic bloc, dwarfing well-known disputes between Argentina and Uruguay for a pulp mill or between Paraguay and Venezuela for political reasons. A symptom of this malaise is the deferment of the Mercosur summit to the end of January 2014.

Salvador and Mexico are the countries where the organized crime threat is higher. Between November 2013 and January 2014, the crisis of the truce between the government and the main maras bosses (gangs/mafia groups) was evident: the desaparecidos doubled to 1.070 during 2013, killings of security forces members started again, women were conspicuously absent in the truce implementation, and bosses are unable to control their territories.

The massive migration of Colombian Mafiosi towards Central American countries (particularly Nicaragua and Panama) is even more worrying, as well as the infiltration of other criminal organizations in Argentina, Colombia and Mexico.

The situation in Mexico shows only one positive aspect (the recapture of the strategic Lazaro Cardenas port on the Pacific by the police) and many dark sides. The clashes between local self-defence groups and the Caballeros Templarios cartel have increased to such a level in the state of Michoacan that Washington is considering to offer Mexico additional help. At the same time, details are emerging in December 2013 about secret negotiations during the past presidency between the US DEA and major criminal groups, Sinaloa cartel included.

At national level, the lack of a clear and effective anti-mafia strategy is visible, compounded by the silence of the president about this threat and by the growth of the powerful Sinaloa cartel, after the numerous arrests that have weakened the rival Los Zetas cartel.



## **The Vienna agreement between Iran and the 5+1, and the regional evolution of politics in the Middle East**

*Nicola Pedde*

*The Middle East is currently affected by a widespread and deep-rooted crisis, which appears to be the product of a long build up rather than the sudden emerging of instability factors.*

*The regional elements of crisis, although distinct among each other and connected to the evolutionary dynamics of each country, share the effects of the global economic crisis and of the gradual process of generational shift in the elites typical in most of these countries.*

*For 2014, North Africa is likely to continue to be characterized by ongoing tensions in Libya, Tunisia and Egypt, with the variable of Algeria that could be possibly added to the already extended front of crisis.*

*In the Mediterranean Levant, Syria will continue to be the focus of greater regional instability, with the possibility of a progressive involvement of Lebanon and Jordan in the spiral of violence, which has to date cause more than 130.000 deaths.*

*Saudi Arabia considers the Muslim Brotherhood (Ikhwan) and Iran as the two main existential threats to the kingdom and its political continuity. Accordingly, the country is adopting a concrete strategy to face both risks in North Africa and the Levant, strongly feeding the Egyptian and the Syrian crisis.*

*The vast majority of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, with the exception of Qatar and Oman, share the Saudis vision. Qatar has long supported the Ikhwan, and with the ascent of the new king it seeks to define rational and pragmatic choices aimed at not increasing regional instability. Oman instead firmly opposed the increase in the GCC role proposed by Riyadh as part of an anti-Iran strategy.*

*The potential rapprochement between Iran and the United States is considered to be a significant threat by most of the regional countries. This rapprochement was sealed by the fruitful preliminary agreement signed in Geneva in late November, paving the way for a stable and lasting understanding between the Islamic Republic and Western countries.*

*In spite of the Saudi vision of a strong and perpetually aggressive Iran, however, it is worth noting that domestic politics in Tehran is anything but dormant after Hassan Rohani election to the presidency .*

*Only a positive and long-lasting agreement with the 5+1 countries can consolidate Khamenei and Rohani's power, weakening at the same time the radical groups that are still fuelling tensions inside and outside the country.*



## ***Middle East - Persian Gulf***

The dimension of the agreement signed in Geneva between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the countries of the so-called 5 +1 (United States, Russia, China, Britain, France and Germany), is momentous and it is aimed to define the basis for the development of Tehran's controversial nuclear programme.

Although it is still a framework agreement under which the general terms of a broader and more complex relationship have to be defined, the extraordinary nature of the event is confirmed by United States and Iran manifest will to identify and actually start a process of confidence building.

The agreement signed at the dawn of the 24<sup>th</sup> of October 2013 in Geneva is the result of a long and laborious bilateral interaction managed by the now well-oiled machine of unofficial diplomacy in Washington and Tehran, which has worked for months to achieve this result.

The new Iranian administration headed by Hassan Rohani has managed to obtain a full official support by the Supreme Leader (Rahbar) Ali Khamenei, and from most of the political and institutional system they represent. The Rahbar has also firmly marked its position, by defending Rohani from the attacks of the ones opposing this new political course.

In Washington, thanks to a strong and unambiguous Iranian position, President Obama has gradually and progressively defined the margins of a negotiation with Iran that would take into account the possibility of offering concrete and acceptable options to Tehran.

The enemies of any hypothesis of negotiation with Iran are not, and will not, disappear even in Washington, but the signing of the Geneva agreements has significantly reduced the scope for action of those against negotiation.

Russia played a positive role in the negotiations, although their outcome is raising several concerns in Moscow. On the one hand, Russia has always been a supporter of the need to identify elements of negotiations aimed to readmit Iran into the international community, on the other hand Moscow is sceptical about the usefulness of promoting agreements which could lead to a full rapprochement between Tehran and Washington. A similar evolution indeed is perceived as significant limitation for Moscow interests in the region.

China kept its profile low during these negotiations, supporting the Iranian positions and trying to mitigate Washington's concerns and doubts about the Islamic Republic's real intentions.

European participation was and is dismally unco-ordinated and ineffective. The EU is actually represented by three nations, Britain, France and Germany, and by the European Union as a whole. The true, great defeat of Geneva was the acknowledgment the EU's irrelevance, consolidated by the enduring political myopia of Catherine Ashton.

France has openly tried to sabotage the definition of the agreement at the second meeting, raising the ire of the other participants, who forced the country to stop its pressures. Ten days later, France accepted the same terms it previously opposed. Fearing a sudden collapse of his national consensus, president Hollande tried to defend his line of French regional foreign policy (whose adverse effects are already evident in Libya, Syria and Mali). Accordingly, he sustained the relationship with Israel and clarified his interest in benefiting from the economic opportunities coming from Saudi Arabia, who has made no secret about the possibility of identifying a partner in France for important projects related to the renewal of the Air Force fleet.

The United Kingdom appeared out of context even more than usual in the management of this round of negotiations. The country endorsed the American position and accepted the agreement,



## ***Middle East - Persian Gulf***

clearly aiming at a special role on behalf of the United States. London, however, proved once again to have weak analytical capacity regarding the local dimension of the political system and the perception of their own role within the complex Iranian scenario.

In Germany prevailed the line supported by the ministry of Foreign Affairs, which has long pushed for a reopening of relations with Tehran, satisfying the increasing pressures from the national economic system. Therefore, Angela Merkel had to abandon its traditional reluctance toward the dialogue with Iran, being obliged to accept the result.



## **Africa: 54 Countries, One Union**

*Marco Massoni*

As of October the 12<sup>th</sup>, the Ambassador Smail Chergui from Algeria is the new Commissioner for Peace and Security of the African Union (AU), replacing Ramtane Lamamra, who is now the Algerian Minister of Foreign Affairs. Chergui was Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Algeria to Ethiopia, Eritrea and Djibouti from 1997 to 2004. During the same period he served as the Permanent Representative of Algeria to the Organisation of African Union (OAU), then the AU and to the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA).

Beijing, October the 24<sup>th</sup> and the 25<sup>th</sup>, an unusual and far-sighted event came about: the fourth and final edition of the series of lectures entitled 'Africa: 54 Countries, One Union', organized by the *Foundation for World Wide Cooperation of Bologna*<sup>1</sup>, led by *Romano Prodi*. The previous meetings took place the first in *Bologna* in 2010, the second in *Washington* in 2011 and the third in *Addis Ababa* in 2012. In particular, contributors to this important happening were the *Institute of West-Asian and African Studies* of the *Chinese Academy of Social Sciences*, the *Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies* of the *Johns Hopkins University*, the *Wilson Center*, the *United Nations* and the *African Union*. The conference was attended, among others, by very important stakeholders, such *Erastus Mwencha*, Vice-President of the African Union Commission (AUC), *José Costa Pereira*, Head of the Africa Division of the European External Action Service (EEAS), *Maud Arnoul*, responsible of Pan-African issues for the European Commissioner for Development, *Andris Piebalgs*, and professor *Liu Hongwu*, from the *Zhejiang Normal University*. Mr. Prodi – former Italian Prime Minister (1996-1998 and 2006-2008) and former President of the European Commission (1999-2004) – had been given the post of *Special Envoy of the Secretary General of the United Nations for the Sahel* between 2012 and 2013; such mandate formally expired on 7 October. Nevertheless, he was asked to continue his delicate mediation for a few months more, so that by the beginning of 2014 his recommendations about the *UN Integrated Strategy for the Sahel* can be implemented with a strong focus on cross-cutting issues of safety and stability, human rights and food insecurity in the countries concerned, for the most part *Chad*, *Burkina Faso*, *Mali*, *Mauritania* and *Niger*. More specifically, Prodi thinks of an innovative plan for the development of decentralized wind energy in the desert. Evidently, he pursues an aim of a long-term strategy and an ever-deeper relationship that binds him to Africa. Well, in 2009, Prodi had

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.fondazionepopoli.org/?lang=en>

## Africa

coordinated for the UN a panel of experts on the financial sustainability Peace Support Operations (PSOs) in Africa. In addition, during the Libyan crisis, when Gaddafi was still alive, several African stakeholders believed that appointing Prodi as UN mediator to negotiate with the regime would have prevented a bloodshed. Finally, President Putin during his visit to Italy asked him to organize the political party dedicated to the economic impacts caused by migration, with a particular focus on the Mediterranean, for the June summit in Sochi within the Russian Presidency of the G8 2014. Most probably, Prodi will propose to strengthen the agreements with the countries of origin of migrants, so as to avoid massacres like that of Lampedusa. If it is true that many problems and conflicts in Africa are mostly due to *regional criticalities*, it is subsequently necessary a tailor-made regional approach to identify viable solutions, especially if one thinks that because almost African borders are often virtual, because of the colonial partition according to which they were drawn down. The example of the crisis of *Mali* in the *Sahel* is emblematic in this respect: the epicentre happened in Mali, but all the causes as well as the risks of their replicability, can still be found in the Sahel region. The poor Sahelian countries' economy is always at risk, because the precarious living conditions' fragility and the high potential for conflict can easily determine the destruction of their scarce resources as such. In this way the rule of law and the constitutional order of already failing states can be with no doubt at any time jeopardized and public spending simply taken over in favour of military expenditures rather than concentrating it in any productive activities or in some other income-generating practices, thereby drastically reducing the available financial resources as well as the same human capital and, ultimately, making it impossible to develop. Therefore, it is not surprising that the international Qaedism has been trying to make of such a hostile environment its sanctuary, relocating it at will yesterday from northern Mali, nowadays to southern Libya and probably tomorrow to Central Africa, thus demonstrating the mobility of terrorism in a weaker Africa, anyway unlikely to be any longer tolerable for the nearest future. Hence, having hosted the final Prodi's conference right in Beijing is not at all a case. In truth, the holistic Chinese approach towards Africa is not based on any of the Western development models, rather in a *peculiar type of cooperation based on investment and trade*. One has to bear in mind that China is the only country in the world capable of exporting at the same time *labour, capital, goods and technology* in Africa. With the idea that China is the main '*Non-African country*' for the future of Africa, Prodi rightly argues that the United States and China do have a growing responsibility towards the African continent, its development and its peoples. Africa, now more than ever, urgently needs to see in one generation time realized the appropriate configuration of its infrastructure and the consequent essential access to electricity, yet effectively denied to two-thirds of Africans so far, so as to elevate their standard of living and create what is considered the turning point for Africa's development today: *the integration of the African domestic markets, so as to better compete with foreign ones*. In this sense, a single African market, that is an *intra-African* market, is the precondition for a reliable continental growth, especially in the manufacturing sector, as it would attract foreign direct investment (FDI), for now still inadequate or too unilaterally coming from China alone. The inadequacy of infrastructure in Africa today is likely to seriously affect development and *without infrastructure there cannot be any serious industrialization*. Another key step for Africa is to become a place not only in the export of both raw materials and human resources, but also in the production itself, so as to have a specific added value and create jobs and capacities locally. The regional integration in only one actual intra-African market could give the

necessary change to sustainable growth, by triggering a virtuous circle in terms of *economies of scale*, whose absence still makes it hard any balanced economic development of Africa, in spite of the huge economic growth recorded by a number of African nations in the last decade. Once again, the fathers of the African independence, such as the Panafricanist Kwame Nkrumah, were right in saying that only a united Africa can negotiate on an equal footing with other international actors her status in a globalized world.

**Northern Africa: Mauritania.**

In October, after fifteen months of enduring negotiations, *Mauritania* signed the new Fisheries Partnership Agreement with the European Union (EU). Besides, the legislative and municipal elections of 23 November, despite a general climate of mistrust among parties, have witnessed a considerable advancement of the National Rally for Reform and Development (RNRD), namely Tewassoul, the Islamist party.

**Western Africa: Benin, Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Guinea, Liberia, Mali, Nigeria and Senegal.**

Regarding *Benin*, in spite of the around one hundred million barrels of oil discovered off-shore right in the Gulf of Guinea, what is causing great discontent is the revision of the Constitution intended by President Thomas Boni Yayi, which would allow him to run for a third term in the 2016 elections.

Since October the 2<sup>nd</sup>, the *Gambia* notified its irrevocable withdrawal from the Commonwealth with immediate effect, alluding to the neo-colonial setting of the organization, which Banjul was part of since 1965, when it became independent from the British. Then, in November, the Gambian Government has unilaterally broke diplomatic relations with Taiwan, existing since 1995.

In *Guinea-Bissau* the Armed Forces do not seem to appreciate any interference from abroad, having refused the availability of the former President of Cape Verde, Pedro Pires, to mediate in the political crisis.

As per *Guinea*, despite considerable organizational deficiencies in the local elections of 28 September, citizens were given the chance to express their will, by casting their vote, ending in this way the long political transition lasted four years. The majority was ensured to the ruling party (Rally of the Guinean People – RPG), closely followed, by the opposition coalition (Union of Democratic Forces of Guinea – UFDG).

Concerning *Liberia*, in October, a contingent of 140 Chinese police officers landed in Monrovia; the peacekeepers from Beijing will be serving in the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL).

As far as *Mali* is concerned, the new President of the Republic is Ibrahim Boubacar Keita (IBK), while the new Prime Minister is Oumar Ly Tatam. It is worth noting the establishment of an ad hoc Ministry for National Reconciliation and Development of the Northern Regions, led by the diplomat Cheick Oumar Diarra. Actually, the second round of the legislative elections, held December 15, did confirm the Presidential elections in terms of political majority, in an atmosphere of general indifference though. In addition, three Arab and Tuareg political major movements – the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA), the Azawad Arab Movement (MAA) and the High Council for the Unity of Azawad (HCUA) – have merged into a single political entity. A worrying state of insecurity still remains in the Northeastern region, in particular

in Kidal.

In *Nigeria*, a balance of power within the ruling party, the People's Democratic Party, it would be at the base of the cabinet reshuffle occurred in September. Unabatedly, the military offensive against the Islamist sect Boko Haram in the northern regions of the country continues. In fact, the United States of America have registered in the list of terrorist organizations both the extremist groups Boko Haram and its wing, the Vanguard for the Protection of Muslims in Black Lands (ANSARU). Yet, Nigeria is the only African Nation part of the MINT (i.e. Malaysia, Indonesia, Nigeria and Turkey) that, according to Jim O'Neill – the economist who coined also the BRICS – has unique economic credentials in terms of both favourable demographics years and of economic potential for the next twenty.

In October, *Senegal* and South Africa have signed a number of cooperation agreements, to better structure their bilateral relations in the fields of security, agriculture and culture.

#### **Eastern Africa: Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, and Sudan.**

Regarding *Ethiopia*, Turkey has opened an industrial district in Addis Ababa. In actual fact, more than three hundred Turkish companies are present in Ethiopia with investments amounting to three billion dollars. Currently, Ankara has thirty-four diplomatic missions in Africa. Mulatu Teshome is the new President of the Federal Republic of Ethiopia. Belonging to the ethnic group of the Oromo and a long-time diplomat, he replaces Girma Wolde-Giorgios, who had served for twelve years during two consecutive presidential terms.

Regarding *Kenya*, since September, considerable tensions have arisen about the relevance of the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court (ICC) of The Hague on the alleged crimes committed by top executives Kenyans. On September 5, the Parliament passed a motion for Kenya to withdraw from the Rome Statute, which laid the foundation of the ICC in 1998. The impasse stems from the fact that both the Vice-President, William Ruto, and the President, Uhuru Kenyatta, both democratically elected last March, are still accused of crimes against humanity, in relation to the post-election violence occurred in 2007-2008. In this phase of international standoff, Moscow and Beijing have sided with the AU, which had asked the UN Security Council to suspend the two processes. Saturday, September 21, an Islamist terrorist assault of Somalis matrix took place at the Westgate Shopping Centre of Nairobi, where about sixty people have lost their lives. Subsequently, in November, Nairobi and Mogadishu reached a tripartite agreement with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) for the repatriation, scheduled within the next three years, of the one million Somali refugees still living in the Kenyan territory, concentrated especially in Dadaab, the largest refugee camp in the world.

Concerning *Somalia*, in October, a US raid aimed at eliminating the mastermind of the terrorist attack in Nairobi failed, while few weeks later in Middle Juba a drone succeeded in killing an important exponent of Al Shebaab.

In *Sudan*, several uprisings have come about in a number of major cities across the country. These popular protests showed the growing resentment of Sudanese citizens to be ascribed to the Government disposal to cut subsidies on fuel and food. Moreover, the reformist faction of the ruling party, the National Congress Party (NCP), gave birth to a new political party that is the Reform and Renaissance Party (RRP), led by Ghazi al-Salahadeen Attabani. October the 31<sup>st</sup>, in the crucial region of Abyei, at the border between the two Sudan, an unofficial self-determination referendum

took place, whose results, evidently in favour of the annexation to South Sudan, were not however internationally recognized.

**Central Africa: Burundi, Central African Republic (CAR), Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Rwanda.**

The new Vice-President of the Republic of *Burundi* is Bernard Busokoza. Actually, against a backdrop of tense relations between the Government and the opposition parties there has been room for a polemic against the intent of the President, Pierre Nkurunziza, to run for a third term, thanks to an amendment to the Constitution in accordance with the 2000 Arusha Agreements.

As far as the *Central African Republic (CAR)* is concerned, on September 13, the interim President, Djotodia, formally dissolved Séléka, the alliance of several rebel movements that brought him to power last March. Unfortunately, disarmament of its components did not follow. In synthesis, the main factions facing each other in the CAR are on the one hand the aforesaid militias, mainly Muslims, and on the other hand some local self-defence groups – the so-called ‘Anti-Balaka’ – supporting the ousted former President, Bozizé, who are mainly Christians. The African-led International Support Mission to the Central African Republic (AFISM–CAR) – also known as MISCA – is the new AU peacekeeping operation in the country, mostly funded by the European Union African Peace Facility Fund. Consisting of 3652 soldiers, its mandate focuses on the protection of civilians and on the restoration of security and public order, the stabilization of the country and the reintroduction of the civil authorities, on the reform and restructuring of defence and public safety, and on creating the conditions to ensure humanitarian aid to the needy population. Notwithstanding, everything suddenly slipped away up to a point that in November France defined the whole general situation a ‘pre-genocide’ one and unilaterally decided to militarily intervene.

As per the *Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)*, despite the military debacle of the Movement of 23 March (M23) after twenty months of conflict, one cannot say peace has definitely been reached, because M23 split into two fringes, one of which is recalcitrant to all forms of negotiation. Furthermore, it is also too early to talk of any consolidated pacification in the Kivu, inasmuch dozens of other militias are still at large.

Last, in *Rwanda*, the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) of President Paul Kagame won the parliamentary elections on September 16.

**Southern Africa: Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, Zimbabwe and South Africa.**

Hery Rajaonarimampianina, backed by the incumbent ad interim President, Andry Rajoelina, won the presidential elections in *Madagascar* against Jean-Louis Robinson, who was supported by former ousted President ,Marc Ravalomanana.

The President of *Malawi*, Joyce Banda, dissolved the Government for corruption and replaced it by a new Cabinet.

In *Mozambique*, the Mozambican National Resistance (RENAMO) has resorted to violence, de facto circumventing the 1992 peace agreements ahead of the 2014 Presidential elections. The two main reasons are, first, its incapacity to provide a valid political alternative so far and, second, in a country with an annual growth rate of 7 percent, all these huge dividends remain the prerogative of the ruling class – that equals to the ruling party – with no room granted to the opposition, who is therefore claiming its piece of cake.



## Africa

As per *South Africa*, French President, Francois Hollande, made an official visit to Pretoria, where he met his counterpart, Jacob Zuma. In the meeting major trade agreements were signed and, from a political perspective, the crisis in the Central African Republic, in terms of balance of power and influence of both Paris and Pretoria in other African crisis too were widely approached.

In regards of *Zimbabwe*, after the confirmation of Robert Mugabe in power, the EU has decreed to lift the embargo on diamonds export, in order to mitigate the always-difficult relations between Brussels and Harare. Conversely, US sanctions are unchanged.

### Conclusions

Firmly believing in multilateralism, Prodi, who teaches both at *Brown University* in Boston and at the *China-Europe International Business School* in Shanghai, comes more and more across with his main thesis that aims to anticipate international wide-ranging trends by means of multilateral diplomacy, as well as to *promote triangular cooperation between Europe, China and the United States, in order to avoid any direct confrontation, which would otherwise arise amidst Great Powers in Africa in the coming decades*. It is in the interest of the whole international community for Africa to without any further delay turn into a field of factual cooperation rather than being the new frontier of the international competition between old (former colonialist countries) and new actors (Emerging Economies). Otherwise, the collapse of the still very fragile basis for a prosperous future of the African continent would be inevitable, with subsequent enormous implications in terms of international security above all in regards of southern European countries, such as Italy. If continental former dominant economies – Nigeria and South Africa – fumble, there is room for new players, such as Angola, Mozambique, Rwanda, Ethiopia, Tanzania, Ghana, being equipped and willing to replace them also in terms of political influence. *The continental economical and political balances evolve, mainly due to the diversification of partnerships that the aforementioned 'Emerging African Lions' have been able to consolidate, thus demonstrating to what extent depending on a single external actor of reference, most of the time a former colonizer State, it is an old-fashioned practice to be forgotten, as it jeopardizes each one's ownership rather than providing concrete advantages anymore. By now, those African nations that can stand up for as negotiators with the most relevant international actors bring beyond doubt Afro-pessimism's sponsors down to a state of affairs they would have never dared to imagine.*



## The Third Plenum and its discontents

Nunziante Mastrolia

*2014 might be labelled as the year when wide-ranging reforms started, as they have been put forward by the Third Plenum of the CCP Central Committee, entailing the successive reactions and objections from the sectors involved*

*First, there are the political reforms, which will probably follow the guidelines expressed by Xi Jinping: “Power should be restricted by the cage of regulations”, and “No organization or individual should be put above the constitution and the law”. This means both limiting as much as possible the margins of discretionary powers and carrying out in full what is stated in the principles and institutions foreseen by the Constitution, e.g. a greater independence of the judicial (the People’s Supreme Court) and the legislative power (the People’s National Congress).*

*Along with that, there will be economic reforms, whose core principle is the “decisive” role that the new leadership has attributed to the market forces in allocating resources and producing wealth, which entails devolution of power and functions to the market. That is, a deregulation and liberalisation process of those sectors that were earlier in the state domain. This also implies giving more room to the civil society with the chance of setting up free trade unions and industry associations. Once they are carried out, these reforms will unravel the knotty problems that risk strangling Chinese development.*

*The stronger the new leadership’s determination in carrying out these reforms will be, the stronger the resistance by all those interests threatened by change. That is, part of the state-owned enterprises and state banks, part of the military and the security apparatus and part of the vested interests inside the party.*

*Therefore, the new leadership has to strengthen its own grip on the Party and on a part of the administrative apparatus. Hence, the setting up of two new institutions, both chaired by Xi Jinping: The State Security Committee, that could reduce the importance of the powerful Political and Legal Affairs Committee, and the Central Reform Leading Group, that will steer the country’s reform agenda.*

*One may assume that this reforming process, and the subsequent oppositions, can have an impact at a regional level according to the following equation: the greater the strength of the reformist leadership, the fewer the tensions with the neighbouring countries, particularly in the South and East China Seas. This would imply both progress in the existing regional trade integration projects with Japan and South Korea on the one hand and ASEAN countries on the other, as well as a possible Chinese participation in the Trans-Pacific Partnership initiative.*



## China

*Should the new reformist leadership fail to succeed in removing the obstacles impeding the carrying out of the reforms, one may assume an increase in tensions with the neighbouring countries, which will ensure further fragmentation of the regional chessboard.*

2013 may be labelled as the year of sabre rattling between the rival factions with Xi Jinping and Li Keqiang's group of reformers having the upper hand. The Third Plenum of the Chinese Communist Party's Central Committee passed a series of reforms that could trigger an enormous change in the country's contemporary history, once they have taken shape.

Thus, the Third Plenum is essential to understand what has happened during the year and understand President Xi Jinping's drive for reform along with the Conservatives' balancing actions. On the one hand, there is the question of enforcing the Chinese Constitution, on the other document n. 9, which has brought about a stricter control and censure on the media, social networks and the academic world.

In light of the results achieved by this conference, contradictions emerged between reformists and conservatives, in a conflict among those who want to put China on the road leading to an open society and those who want to hold the country back to a closed society. According to Xi Jinping, heading to an open society means that "Power should be restricted by the cage of regulations", that is to say, shrinking the margins of discretionary power "establishing a scientific and effective means of power restriction, with a coordination mechanism"

At the same time, the reformers want to divide the power horizontally among the constitutional bodies and, vertically, widening the area of individual rights and the independence of both the civil society and the market. This implies putting the Chinese Constitution first, a Constitution that contains many principles and concepts of the western liberal tradition.

Xi Jinping recalls that the Constitution has been accepted by the Third Plenum to allow that People's National Assembly to review the constitutional legitimacy of the governmental acts and policies, which could *de facto* guarantee a fuller and stricter enforcement of the constitutional principles and institutions.

Xi Jinping's frequent statements concerning judicial independence find a correspondence, even though still embryonic, in the decision to explore the establishment of a judicial system that is suitably separated from administrative sectors. "Ensure independence and fairness in courts and prosecuting bodies. Unify the management of staff members and properties of courts and procurators below the provincial level. Separate the jurisdiction of courts from administrative divisions". The goal is clear: to improve the transparency of legal proceedings and find ways to reduce the direct control of courts and prosecutions by local governments.

Speaking about economics, Li Keqiang has worked throughout 2013 to carry out a process of liberalisation and deregulation of the economy in order to give to private firms more room for initiative, so as to unleash all the market potential and strengthen economic pluralism. By implication, the public hand must retreat from its current powerful role in allocating resources. That is to say that the government has to play a regulatory, rather than a direct intervention role.

All these initiatives in the economic field are in harmony with the decisions of the Third Plenum, where the CCP has celebrated its "Bad Godesberg", like the German Social Democratic Party. Without giving in to the neoliberals or dogmatists radical attitudes, the Chinese reformists have

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established a division of tasks between the state and the market in the economic field: “Market whenever possible, the state when necessary”, as it was said in 1959. In this context, we can see the continuous commitment of establishing a Chinese welfare state that can boost the development of a rich and prosperous middle class.

For all that, the reforms put forward by the Third Plenum are political rather than economic and can untie the knotty problems that might have strangled the Chinese miracle.

However, regional tensions could have a negative impact on this process. The Air Defence Identification Zone (ADIZ) is the point of maximum tension in the constant frictions between Japan and China in the East China Sea during the past year. This is a precedent that could jeopardize the detente attained in the South China Sea and along the Indian border.

In the meantime, the integration process among regional countries is going on, as demonstrated by the third round of talks between Japan, China and South Korea in an attempt to establish a free trade area by 2015, and also by China’s first steps to join the Trans-Pacific Partnership.

The somehow vague and isolated signs of opening up that occurred during this year have been asserted by the Third Plenum and this may be seen as the return of China to the path leading to the open society.



## New challenges for indian elections

Claudia Astarita

*In 2013, the only priority for the Indian government, led by a coalition headed by the Congress Party, has been the one of gaining new consensus in view of the 2014 forthcoming elections. To achieve this aim, the government focussed on three issues. First, ensuring that the current internal economic and political crisis would not lead to the fall*

*of the government resulting in early elections.*

*Secondly, prepare for the transition identifying the right Prime Minister candidate for the 2014 elections. Accordingly, Rahul Gandhi, the eldest son of Sonia Gandhi, was chosen, and the current Prime Minister Manmohan Singh worked a lot to make sure that Rahul could be accepted and supported by the Congress Party and could gain trust and sympathy among Indians approaching people with a message of hope and renewal.*

*Thirdly, to cope with national economic, financial and social problems, Singh's government tried to prove to be strong and far-sighted by designing and implementing a set of reforms allowing to get some real results in short time, just to regain credibility.*

*At the same time, and again for electoral purposes, New Delhi has embarked on a series of social and political initiatives. The most important one was assuring the distribution of food to poor people at controlled and subsidised prices, followed by the pro-autonomy position the government chose to respond with during the Telangana pro-autonomy claims.*

*It is still difficult to forecast whether, if re-elected, the Congress Party will be able to face the consequences of all these initiatives, which are particularly onerous both from an economic and geopolitical perspective. At the same time, it would be interesting to see if a more nationalist government led by the opposition leader Narendra Modi might decide to endorse these initiatives or not. Despite being a very controversial political figure, the leader of the opposition party BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party) has achieved astonishingly economic and political results in Gujarat, the state he has been ruling for the last 12 years. He has also gained the support of mostly young people and business people in India.*

*Finally, in 2014 it will become extremely urgent for New Delhi to reconsider its foreign policy. Even in this case, the challenges are many. The most important one is linked to the repositioning of the United States in Asia, especially since the famous "Pivot Strategy" has proven to be meant to consolidate the American presence not only in the Far East and the Pacific, but also in South Asia and in the Indian Ocean.*

*The geostrategic balance of this region is changing, and India can no longer afford to keep it in*



## India

*the background. It would be crucial for New Delhi to reshape its political, economic and strategic connections with Pakistan (especially in view of the forthcoming withdrawal of NATO troops from Afghanistan), and with South Asia's smaller countries (Maldives, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh).*

2013 has been another very difficult year for India. However, differently from what happened in 2012, the Manmohan Singh government achieved numerous results that many people, including several elements of the majority coalition and the Congress Party, would not have expected.

First, it is important to highlight that the Prime Minister Manmohan Singh is still in office. This is a significant fact, proving the recent reinforcement of a Congress Party that successfully chose and implemented the right reforms to get some more support from the people and consequently avoiding early elections.

At the end of 2012 Singh, aware of the dangers linked to the adoption of unpopular reforms by looming election, made it clear that it would have been even more risky to keep on passively observing the rapid decline of the country. For this reason, in one of his end-of-the-year speeches, he officially committed to approve the reforms needed to address national political, economic and social priorities. Twelve months later, with several results achieved in many areas, he successfully created new expectations within the country about the usefulness of reforms.

From an economic perspective, the tenacity, commitment and determination of both Finance Minister Palaniappan Chidambaram and the newly elected governor of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), Raghuram Rajan, helped the country to achieve three results:

- Increasing the degree of openness and transparency in the Indian market,
- Contributing to the improvement, albeit limited, of its fundamentals
- And recovering, even if only partially, the confidence of foreign investors.

It was only by the end of 2013 that foreign investors started believing that India, no matter how chaotic and poorly managed is, can offer several economic opportunities as well as an acceptable basis of transparency and predictability.

It is worth mentioning that one of the most important initiatives that has resulted in the consolidation of new perspectives has been the liberalisation of the retail and civil aviation industries. In addition to this, the simplification of bureaucratic procedures, aimed at strengthening foreign participation in infrastructure projects, the reduction of fuel subsidies and the approval for foreign banks to enter the Indian market.

On the social level, the government has been trying to approach poverty-related problems in a more pragmatic way. The National Food Security Ordinance has been approved to guarantee the distribution of rice and grains at a subsidised price. Furthermore, for the first time the Indian government agreed to discuss the problem of the autonomy of Telangana, bravely accepting its detachment from Andhra Pradesh.

Finally, Manmohan Singh has done his best to manage the rise of Rahul Gandhi, the eldest son of Sonia Gandhi, who is now the Prime Minister candidate for the Congress Party. With regard to his candidature, it should be remembered that, until a few months ago, it was not clear whether he intended to work in tandem with his sister Priyanka (who is now completely out of the picture), or whether the Congress Party was keen on supporting Rahul for real.



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Also on the political level, the inability of regional parties to create a solid third pole should be mentioned. They failed in identifying both a policy and an acceptable Prime Minister candidate. Finally, a few words are needed to introduce the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the main opposition party whose candidate is Narendra Modi. Modi is alleged to have played an important role in 2002 Gujarat massacre, a tragedy that caused the death of nearly one thousand people between Hindus and Muslims, for which he always refused to apologise. Modi started his national campaign focusing on economic growth, well-being and transparency; that is the results he successfully achieved in Gujarat where he has been acting as Prime Minister for the last twelve years. Today, the hope of his supporters is to see him achieving similar results all over the country.

Loved by young people, businesspeople, and middle-class Hindus, Modi, now 63 years old, having confirmed his leadership within the country, is now endorsing populist initiatives to win the sympathy and the vote of Indians.



## European Defence Initiatives



### **Internal challenges on the Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP)**

*Claudio Catalano*

The Europe Union (EU) is facing new internal and external challenges. The EU today is deploying 7,000 persons, including more than 3,000 soldiers, in 16 missions: 12 are civilian missions and four are military operations. In more than 10 years, the EU has deployed nearly 30 missions on three continents.

Following the French initiative, a few member states have intervened militarily in Libya in 2011 and Mali in 2013. France is preparing to redeploy in the Central African Republic while disengaging its forces from Kosovo. Germany confirms its commitment in other missions, especially in KFOR, that the French would, however, be replaced by a European military force (EUFOR). Internally, the challenge is to provide the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) with military capability, which should be provided by member states or by means of agreements with NATO. Battle groups (national or multinational units to brigade level to be deployed for crisis management) have never seen the operational use because of national vetoes. The EU Presidency and the Council would like to reactivate this initiative.

The European Defence Agency (EDA) has approved on 19 November 2013 programmes and a roadmap on four areas: Air-to-Air refuelling capabilities, Common Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems (RPAS) by 2020-2025, next generation of Governmental Satellite Communication, cyberdefence. In addition, she decided projects to support small and medium-sized enterprises, stimulating research and innovation initiatives for platform certification, especially civilian and military airworthiness, particularly with regard to the inclusion of RPASs in the controlled airspace.

In Pooling and Sharing (P&S), the EDA has achieved in training for helicopters, but strategic airlift, reconnaissance satellites and other areas remain on the table. The EDA is valued by third countries for the possibility of technology transfer: Serbia has signed a partnership in December 2013, and Turkey wants to become a partner.

The European Commission has played a leading role with two communications on the industrial policy and on the defense industry, the CSDP until now was not formally within its competence, except for the internal market and support to enterprises. In this sense, the Vice President of the Commission and Commissioner for Enterprise and Industry, Antonio Tajani, have reached major achievements.

The aerospace, defence and security industry in Europe had so far the tendency to compete internally, or with U.S. companies, but competition from emerging countries (eg, Embraer of Brazil, AVIC of China, Tata of India) becomes fiercer and fiercer. Greater cooperation is deemed necessary

## ***European Defence Initiatives***

in order to create the critical mass to invest in research and technology and continue to compete not only on a regional but on the global level.

### **An assessment of European Defence initiatives in 2013**

In 2013, France has shown an increase in activity in defence. In January, in particular, it has started operation 'Serval' in Mali with American support in intelligence and strategic reconnaissance, without which the French would not have been able to operate, as it already happened in Libya. The other States have, however, provided essentially logistical support in order to support the ageing French C-160 Transall airlifters which will be replaced by the A400M only in 2014. The operation 'Serval' has been made possible thanks to French troops withdrawal from Afghanistan in November 2012. However, for the stabilization of Mali, France had been helped by African countries in the UN mission and the European training and monitoring mission (EUTM Mali).

The French White Paper published on 29 April, reaffirms the strategic functions contained in the 2008 and indicates as priorities: the 'protection' of the territory and citizens; the nuclear 'deterrence'; 'intervention' in the areas of national interest; plus the 'anticipation' or the intelligence and reconnaissance via satellites or RPASs and the 'prevention' through international agreements.

The United Kingdom seems to have loosened the Anglo-French alliance of the Lancaster House Treaty of October 2010. The initiative had in fact already shown its limits in Libya, either for lack of strategic resources, for which they have had to resort to the United States, both for the level of interoperability, that the British have achieved more with Italy than with France. Italy and the United Kingdom both have an air fleet based on Eurofighter Typhoon and Tornado aircraft, for this reason in 'Unified Protector' RAF aircraft have been supported by the Italian Air Force, while the French have operated separately from bases in Corsica or from Charles De Gaulle carrier.

The operation in Mali has further discouraged the Anglo-French relationship, given that the British did not take part in Operation 'Serval', because Mali did not fall in their strategic interest, but they ensured participation in EUTM Mali. At the December European Council, the United Kingdom opposed to the financing of the proposed French intervention in the Central African Republic, the funding for the CSDP, and to the 'strategic autonomy' for European defence industry.

Germany continues its withdrawal of national assets from international military operations and from common defence policy initiatives. Particularly significant in this respect appeared the refusal to participate in 'Unified Protector' in Libya. Germany then intervened only symbolically in Mali, by sending, along with Belgium, airlifters, as it was done in 2003 for the European Union military operation 'Artemis'. Berlin also continues its logistical effort to withdraw German troops from Afghanistan by 28 February 2014.

On 8 January 2014, Ms Ursula von der Leyen was officially appointed German Defence Minister, she will be the first female Defence Minister of German history. This position is usually held by the designated CDU candidate for chancellorship. However this position did not bring luck to the previous Defence Ministers/CDU candidate for chancellorship: zu Guttenberg had to resign in 2011 following a case of plagiarism on his PhD thesis; his successor Thomas de Maizière lost the chance to be the next CDU candidate after he cancelled the Euro Hawk programme.

The termination of the Euro Hawk programme - a RPAS for strategic reconnaissance derived from the Northrop Grumman RQ-4 Global Hawk - is due to the rising costs of a programme which ex-

## **European Defence Initiatives**

perienced difficulties in fulfilling its requirements: the Global Hawk program is under review also in the United States. Germany has already spent 500 million Euros for the prototype and it would have to spend just as much for the construction of 4 other aircraft and over 600 million for the airworthiness, not to mention the through-life support costs of the RPAS fleet.

Although Italy has not intervened in Mali, despite having strategic capabilities such as: airlifters, Air-to-Air refuelling, and RPASs. Italy, however, aims to support the development of European defence. In September, the defence minister, Mario Mauro, has signed a joint declaration with Spanish and Portuguese defence ministers encouraging the development of dual-use technologies, as well as a European Maritime Security strategy. In addition, the new appropriations planning system introduces for the first time a three-year plan for the defense budget.

Among the other member states, we may mention Poland, which has consolidated its defense industry and announced new weapons programs mainly associated with the "Navy development plan for 2030" and Hungary, who announced in July, the decommissioning of Soviet-era military equipment to be replaced through a modernization plan until 2016.

In 2013, the EU institutions have been engaged in the preparation of the European Council in December. The High Representative Ashton has been commissioned to prepare three clusters to the attention of the Council:

- a) increasing the effectiveness, visibility and impact of the CSDP;
- b) enhancing the development of capabilities;
- c) Strengthening Europe's defence industry.

On July 24, the High Representative has published an interim report in which she detailed the steps for European defense and, on the same day, the European Commission published the Communication "Towards an industrial sector of defense and security more competitive and efficient" COM (2013) 542 which includes an action plan. On October 15, the High Representative has submitted its final report in view of the European Council. The Lithuanian presidency of the EU had the task of preparing the European Council and it identified in its roadmap: energy security and the re-enactment of the Battle group initiative.

*In the December European Council the heads of State and government approved initiatives for the three clusters, by endorsing the EDA decisions on the 4 capabilities of 19 November 2013, and the Council of Ministers conclusion of 25 November 2013, which included further initiatives for capabilities and for financing the European Defence Industry. More has to be done for advancing the European Defence. The Italian presidency is going to be tasked to pursue the development of these matters in the second half of 2014*

## **Pacific** **(Japan-Korea-ASEAN Countries-Australia)**



### **2013's uncertainties in the Asia Pacific: political and military profiles**

*Stefano Felician Beccari*

*Despite the current economic and demographic growth, the Asia-Pacific is still an unstable area. Accordingly, it is difficult to outline a clear geopolitical picture of the region. In this unpredictable situation, many players are trying to increase their own economic growth while managing many internal and regional problems. These contrasts usually put the states against each other. Eventually, the confrontation between Washington and Beijing for regional supremacy as well as other Asian nations' behaviours should be carefully monitored.*

*In order to understand the evolution of Asia-Pacific and Oceania geopolitics and geostrategy, this area should be analysed considering two aspects; the military and the political. Despite many uncertainties, it is possible to identify some trends and critical situations that will continue to exist in the short and medium term.*

*On a political level, despite the lack of a clear hierarchy of regional powers, it is possible to classify the states in five categories:*

- "Great powers", as China and the U.S. Both have nuclear weapons and, in different degrees, a blue-water navy;
- "Proactive states", which want to increase their political weight or influence in the region, as Japan, Vietnam or Russia;
- "Static states", which want to defend their own positions, but without the will or the possibility to be stronger, such as Malaysia, Indonesia, Australia or South Korea;
- "Recessive states", which are reshaping their ambitions due to internal or external factors. This is the current situation of the Philippines, hit by a massive typhoon (2013) and still affected by internal terrorism, but also the situation of Thailand, if the current political crisis persists;
- "Fragile states", such as Myanmar/Burma and North Korea. Despite their diversity, both states are at risk of collapsing due to internal dynamics. This could have a relevant impact on the whole region.

*The military level presents three main issues. These critical situations have been known for many years, but they will probably continue to influence the Asia-Pacific region during 2014:*



## **Pacific** **(Japan-Korea-ASEAN Countries-Australia)**

- *The evolution of the DPRK's nuclear ambitions, recently reinforced by the last nuclear test (February 2013, the third from the beginning of the century);*
- Regional disputes, mainly maritime and concentrated in the Sea of Japan, the East China Sea and the South China Sea;
- The threat of fundamentalist, separatist or independent terrorist groups, which affects the Philippines, Malaysia and Indonesia.

*The whole area is facing a general increase in military expenditures, boosted by the economic growth of the region. The rise of defence investments clearly shows that the region is still looking for its geopolitical stability, which seems unlikely to be achieved in the short term.*

2013 has been an intense year for the whole Asia-Pacific region. This area is progressively assuming a pivotal position in the “great game” between the US and China. The consequences of this confrontation, even if not explicit as during the Cold War, exert an influence over the Asia-Pacific states, which are divided among pro-US, pro-China and neutral.

The “Pacific system” is extremely diverse and it lacks a structured hierarchy of powers. The region does not have clear and prominent regional powers, except for US and China. Nevertheless, four states have such potential in nuce. They are Indonesia, for its population and strategic position; Japan, for the new approach of the Abe administration; Vietnam, especially for its anti-Chinese positions; and Australia.

The weakness of regional organizations depends on the fluidity of regional geopolitics. In other words, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and other ASEAN-related fora are still unable to manage the most difficult political issues of the area; many of them are still legacies of the Second World War and the decolonisation process.

The most important events of 2013 should be selected focusing on two aspects, political and military.

On the political level, South Korea, Japan and Australia experienced a major shift in favour of conservative governments. Up until now only Japan has undertaken a tougher stance in foreign and military policy.

Many tensions exploded in fragile democracies such as Malaysia and Cambodia. In both cases the current ruling parties, which have been in power for decades and have won the elections again in 2013, have been strongly criticised. In Myanmar the political transition toward democracy is proving more and more difficult, and during the year there has been a significant increase in internal religious violence involving Buddhists and Muslims. These clashes pose a serious threat to the whole country and its government.

Another issue is the on-going controversy in the South China Sea and in the neighbouring seas, as well as islands disputes such as the Senkaku/Diaoyu or the Dokdo/Takeshima. These rivalries further complicate relations between states, and contribute to a spread of tensions across the region. On the military level, 2013 began with a DPRK nuclear test (12/02/2013) followed by a dangerous escalation of rhetoric that brought the peninsula on the brink of a new war. The test is the third of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (the previous ones occurred in 2006 and 2009) and the first of this decade; it has further confirmed Pyongyang’s limited nuclear capability.



**Pacific**  
**(Japan-Korea-ASEAN Countries-Australia)**

Another source of concern is the intensification of fundamentalist and separatist terrorism in the Philippines and surrounding countries. The porous borders and the difficulty to control many active terrorist groups are serious security problems. The most blatant case has been the dramatic siege of the city of Zamboanga, in the southern Philippines. During September 2013, the Pilipino Armed Forces fought for more than two weeks against some rebels to reconquer part of the city held by the insurgents.

The majority of the Asia-Pacific states are currently going through a robust modernization of their armed forces. Nearly all the nations of the South China Sea and Australia are undertaking relevant defence programs, focusing on aeronautical, amphibious, naval units (especially submarines) and the related command and control assets to manage joint operations.

Considering regional characteristics, it is evident that the maritime dimension is going to play a crucial role there. This sphere affects many interests, such as sea lines of communication, energy, fishery resources, but especially the disputed areas, a symbolic expression of nationalism. During the year some naval skirmishes without any opening of fire have been recorded.

## International Organizations and Central Asia Cooperation



Lorena Di Placido

### Developments and trends in the Eurasian space

*In 2013, Russia committed itself to strengthen its role as a regional power, reinforcing firstly the traditional ties with the former Soviet republics and laying the foundation for renewed cross-border cooperation with China.*

*It is a strategy centred on capitalising those traditional relationships that will foster the necessary economic recovery and an effective outward projection. This strategy resulted in a great activism in order to diversify productive activities, through development projects targeted at the eastern regions of the country and at the expansion of cooperation in Eurasia.*

*During the year, the attraction of former Soviet countries by the new Customs Union forced them to define their position vis-à-vis the other integration path heading towards the EU. The outcome of this positioning will become evident in 2014, setting a new balance of power in the South Caucasus and in Central-Eastern Europe.*

*From the point of view of security, Moscow's leadership is facing the threat of religious extremism. In the meantime a new risk perception is emerging identifying the mass of illegal immigrants in the country as a substantial threat to stability and social order.*

*For the Central Asian region, 2013 was on the whole a year of transition to the exit of the multinational coalition in Afghanistan originally scheduled for the end of 2014. Since a regional response to the spread of illicit trafficking and the migration of extremists from Afghanistan is lacking, the security framework appears to be fragile and rather compromised.*

*No regional forum has taken (nor it seems wants to take) responsibility to ensure the security of the Central Asian countries. While the presence of a Russian contingent to guard the border between Tajikistan and Afghanistan does not seem decisive, the situation is worsened by different bilateral disputes in the area, which remain difficult to resolve.*

*During 2013, the phenomenon of veteran extremist fighters coming back home from the Syrian front emerged as a common national security problem both for the Caucasian and Central Asian republics. The concern of local leaderships regarding subversive or terrorist propaganda will not abate any time soon.*

*China has confirmed its effectiveness in penetrating the whole of the Central Asian economic region and there are good prospects that this trend will persist and get stronger. Thanks to the good bilateral relations with Russia, China promotes an effective co-management on projects of common interest in the area under the auspices of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.*



## ***International Organizations and Central Asia Cooperation***

The situation in Russia is marked by economic and security problems at the domestic level and by a renewed dynamism in foreign policy.

The decrease in investment and exports in recent years has resulted in a slowdown in economic growth (4,3% in 2011 to 3,4% in 2012). Forecasts from the ministry of Economy confirm this trend for 2013, with a GDP growth of around 1,4%.

President Putin has asked the government to implement a plan of economic measures to stimulate domestic demand and to support the bodies involved in the fight against corruption. However, a plan for structural reforms is still missing. Meanwhile a very expensive regional development programme for the period 2014-2025, called the “Economic and Social Development of the Far East and the Baikal region”, was approved (April 2013). Its main aim is improving transport infrastructure and energy.

In August, in order to strengthen national security and preserve social order, a law that penalises illegal migrant workers entering and staying in the Russian Federation was enacted with fines, imprisonment and the possibility of deportation as penalties. Moreover special collection centres for illegal residents have been set up.

North Caucasus remains considerably instable. The alert level was further increased (3/7/2013), following an appeal launched by the Islamist leader Doku Umarov to militants of the Caucasus, Tatarstan and Bashkortostan, to make every effort to stop the Winter Olympics in Sochi (7/2/2014). Russia is making a considerable effort to transform by 2015 the Customs Union established in 2010 between Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan in a Eurasian Economic Union on the EU model. Moscow attaches enormous importance to this, since it would involve many former Soviet republics and strengthen traditional business relationships.

These aims are in stark contrast with the Eastern Partnership initiative launched by the EU, putting the former Soviet countries in the difficult position of having to choose between the two options. The 18<sup>th</sup> of November Armenia announced that it will join the Customs Union by February 2014. At the Eastern Partnership Summit in Vilnius on 28-29 November, Georgia and Moldova signed association agreements with the European Union, while Ukraine has opted for closer relations with Moscow (sanctioned with a financial agreement signed the 18<sup>th</sup> of December), sparking violent and sustained protests in Kiev and other major cities in the country.

The same efforts to protect foreign interests have been successfully developed on the Syrian issue, where Moscow has managed to avert the possibility of a France-USA led bombing. It has successfully proposed the disarmament of the Bashar al- Assad chemical arsenal. In May 2013, the Russian naval presence in the Mediterranean was strengthened.

In Eurasia, a source of significant concern is represented by jihadi veterans returning to their home countries. In particular, according to May and October 2013 data, about six hundred Central Asian volunteers have joined the war in Syria.

Governments and Central Asian specialists in counter-terrorism believe that due to jihad veterans, there will be an increase in the flow of illegal trafficking and a flow back of jihad groups towards their countries of origin to reorganize new operations.

To limit this risk, Central Asian governments have introduced new controls on religious activities, while those that do not have adequate security systems, rely on cross-border military-technical agreements with reliable partners.

For this reason, under an agreement signed on October the 1<sup>st</sup>, a Russian military contingent will



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remain in Tajikistan until 2042 to carry out anti-terrorist activities and provide technical support for the modernization of local security forces.

The good economic relations that China enjoys with many Central Asian countries have been further strengthened. Energy, mining and the construction of new infrastructures remain key sectors for investment.

Russia and China made use of the Shanghai Co-operation Organization in their efforts to co-manage the Central Asian region, in search of a harmonious and balanced collaboration, free of any critical issues.

*Lucio Martino*

## **The State of Transatlantic Relations in 2014**

*During this first period of its second mandate, the Obama administration appears to show a high degree of continuity with the previous four years. However, the global environment has changed considerably during the last five years. The US economy has strengthened; areas of the Middle East and North Africa have been dramatically transformed, while countries such as Indonesia, Turkey and Brazil are attempting to play a regional role not asserted before. At the same time, the Obama administration is being influenced by new internal factors, reducing the margins of action. Among these are an extreme polarization of the political system and a growing percentage of minorities in the domestic population.*

*Many of the international challenges faced by President Obama since his arrival at the White House remain prominent on his agenda. Among these are questions involving Iran and the Middle East. There appears to be a consolidation in moving in the direction of a more skilled America, a State which works with the international or regional organizations and which is more cautious and targeted in its use of force, for example through the use of unmanned aircraft and Special Forces. The United States of the Obama administration is a country finally congruous with its own rhetoric, oriented to the pursuit of its own vital interests rather than to the universal affirmation of a wider range of values and principles.*

*For this reason, the United States does not seem particularly interested in the simple defense of an international balance of power based in many ways on residue dynamics. The approach taken by the Obama administration with regard to recent developments in the Arab crisis, but also in relation to the new Iranian leadership, continues to recall the great caution with which the administration of the elder Bush reacted to the collapse of the Soviet empire. The relations between the United States, Israel and Saudi Arabia have always undergone periods of crisis and stress, but never of the current intensity and frequency. Essentially, the objectives of these three countries seem to diverge for reasons of a structural nature.*

*Despite appearances, a convergence of interests exists between the United States and the Russian Federation. The two states share many common goals in the international sphere, commencing with the containment of radical Islamic movements and failed States. Neither seems particularly convinced of the need to modernize their strategic nuclear forces and, therefore, of a continuing investment in military programs which are clearly expensive, unnecessary and potentially destabilizing.*

*In recent months, the policies of rebalance decided for the Asia-Pacific region have focused more*

## NATO-Transatlantic Relations

*on the commercial aspects than on the military ones. The strategic repositioning of the United States also seems geared towards the entire Arctic region, as evidenced by the recent National Security Strategy for the Arctic Region.*

*Meanwhile, the withdrawal of combat forces from Afghanistan and the desire to reduce the Federal deficit have catalyzed a reassessment of the way and the means by which the United States can defend its interests, and at the same time remain in line with its values. This re-examination is in turn conditioning the drafting of now imminent new Quadrennial Defense Review, Quadrennial Diplomatic and Development Review and the National Security Strategy.*

*Despite the Obama presidency, the United States and the European Union member States have not been able to transform their current high level of consultation and coordination into a series of common policies. There are many examples, ranging from climate change negotiations to reducing trade barriers. The cases where common approaches have been identified, such as Iran and Syria, are still being fully developed.*

*Transatlantic cooperation thus continues to be more than ever defined by NATO, with the next meeting scheduled for September 2014 in Newport. Reflecting the austerity that is proving to be the dominant element of the European economic and domestic policy, NATO remains immersed in its massive transformation phase, a process which has already lasted several years. The decline in defense budgets in all the major Allied countries has led to a continuous reassessment of the capabilities and priorities of the Atlantic Alliance, forcing NATO to launch new policies for the pooling and sharing of their military resources.*

*Lastly, 2013 ended without tangible progress for the health of the Euro zone, such that the belief, on both sides of the Atlantic, that the lack of economic stabilization on the European continent, and its continuing recession, will inevitably have repercussions on the United States economy is being heard often and loudly.*

It appears that not only the popularity of President Obama has been damaged by the difficulties related to the implementation of his health care reform, but also the Democratic Party as a whole. The inevitable continuation of the present difficulties with the Congress over a series of important issues such as the reduction of the public debt, negotiations with Iran over its nuclear program, and the construction of the Trans-Pacific Partnership seems likely to weaken the White House, and hence block action.

The agreement reached in late November 2013 with Iran paved the way for at least another six months of negotiations. The goal is to achieve a solution to the problem of Iran's nuclear program that could lead to a significant change in regional alignments of the United States.

Meanwhile, the Russian attempt to persuade the Syrian authorities to surrender their chemical arsenal seems to be progressing. For their part, the United States and the United Kingdom appear to have abandoned any insistence on the resignation of President Assad as a precondition of negotiations, something which seems to power a moderate optimism about the prospects of the next Geneva conference, scheduled for the second half of January.

Meanwhile, the situation in Iraq continues to deteriorate both in terms of number of victims, now at its highest since 2007, and of the geographical spread of violence. The smooth conduct of parliamentary elections due by next April is threatened, in addition to foreign investment and exports



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of crude oil.

The August 2013 recommencement of direct talks between Israeli and Palestinian representatives encouraged some optimism about the prospects of a new Middle East agreement, but the obstacles that have doomed similar openings to failure persist. In addition, President Obama does not seem able to spend a great deal of political capital on matters not afflicting his own political system.

Yet another legacy of 2013 destined to surface in the near future is the decision to cancel the fourth phase of the European Phased Adaptive Approach. Not surprisingly, soon after its announcement, the State Department officially acknowledged that the United States was investigating the outlines of a new agreement on strategic disarmament with their Russian counterparts.

In line with the Obama administration's belief that a new series of military installations should not be the only result of the United States strategic shift toward Asia Pacific, the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) appears to be the key element of the entire United States foreign policy. The twelve participating States represent approximately thirty per cent of world trade volume. The TPP is an attempt to create a new trading block at once so powerful and so attractive as to compel China to be a member, accepting its rules and mechanisms. The difficulties to be overcome are not few. The conclusion of the treaty negotiations still seems distant, as does the consent of the Senate, needed for ratification.

Despite the agreement on the 2014 budget, which avoided another shutdown of the federal government, containment of the debt remains more than ever unresolved as an issue. Approval of the debt ceiling increase now seems unlikely. With a repeated suspension of government activities electorally more damaging to the Republican Party, support of the measure is not in the interests of the Democrats. The primaries are in full swing, so this situation could drag on until mid-March, and probably even longer, although there are clear signs of an organized resistance by more moderate members Republican against members of the Tea Party. On the other hand, many Republicans, particularly Senator Cruz, seem determined to do everything in their power to undermine the White House health care reform, even at the cost of causing further unpopular shutdowns of the federal government.



## The new NATO's long-term role in Afghanistan: a real challenge

Claudio Bertolotti

*In December 2014 ISAF mission will be concluded, as well as the 'combat phase' of the U.S.-NATO military operation in Afghanistan; in January 2015 the NATO 'Resolute Support Mission' (RSM) will begin. The new NATO mission is going to modify its name, size, and mandate, but the principles of its long term presence will not change.*

*Prospective analysis suggests looking at 2014 by taking into account all the elements that are currently influencing the development of the contemporary Afghanistan. These are international political and economic support, regional country's interests, NATO long-term presence, the decrease of diminishing of the general interests for Afghanistan, endemic corruption, a lack of a capable and representative political and administrative leadership, unemployment and poverty, criminality, drug-trafficking, unchallenged insurgency phenomena and inadequate unprepared Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF).*

*Several other threats are undermining Afghanistan stabilization. The persistence of a medium intensity permanent conflict (which is linked to NATO disengagement and is also nurturing the economic crisis), the limited support Afghan people are offering to foreign military presence, and the incompetence and ineffectiveness of the Afghan state.*

*In this situation, the Armed Opposition Groups (AOGs) created solid and functional connections with regional war-lords and drug-lords.*

*From a socio-political perspective, several issues should be assessed: indirect effects deriving from the central-periphery contraposition, AOG's access to local and eventually central power, attempts to revise constitutional and human rights, and high risk of electoral frauds during the presidential election.*

*The AOGs – formally undefeated on the battlefield – confirmed their ability to influence security; they are military able, even if not capable to defeat ISAF and ANSF. Owing to these dynamics, a further step forward on peace talks cannot be excluded, aimed at reaching a political 'compromise' with the AOGs. This option could include a possible power-sharing and it could not exclude a possible revision of the Afghan Constitution and Law.*

*In brief, a 2014-2015 scenario will be characterized by:*

- I. A general increase of violence,*
- II. The reduction of the role of the Afghan state,*
- III. Considerable AOGs military pressure,*



*IV. Growing political and social instability.*

*At the same time, NATO is moving to a new long-term advising role in Afghanistan.*

*NATO members and contributors are discussing on two hypotheses concerning the post-2014 Afghan scenario:*

**I. Possible scenario** (8.000 soldiers). “Kabul-centric” (military focus on the capital region), this scenario is finalized to maintain the control on the capital region renouncing, *de facto*, to rural and peripheral areas. This hypothesis should not exclude a compromise agreement among Afghan government, United States, Pakistan, and AOGs.

**II. Probable scenario** (12-15.000 soldiers). “Regional-Limited”, based on troops deployment in the main regional military commands (Kabul, Herat, Kunduz, Kandahar and Helmand). This solution could guarantee the support capability and ability to intervene in favour of the ANSF.

2013 began with new dialogue opportunities among several competitors: the AOGs (Taliban and Hezb-e Islami’s Gulbuddin Hekmatyar), the Afghan government, United States, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and, last but not least, Qatar (whose government has facilitated the opening of the ‘Taliban political office’ in the capital, Doha).

Unfortunately, the attempted dialogue failed, revealing that the conflict actors do not want to concede advantages to each other. Generally speaking, the ‘strategic waiting’ of the Taliban contrasts with the ‘dynamic stalemate’ of the United States (and their allies).

AOGs are looking for more benefits deriving from political and diplomatic developments of a coalition led by United States, determined to withdraw its main assets from Afghanistan, and firmly resolute to maintain a small but fundamental presence in the area; a presence which may be also functional to contrast Chinese interests there.

In fact, China is likely to become a dominant political and economic player in the Afghan region, since it has already access to important mining and energy resources. Finally, Iran is another important player in the new Afghan game.

In this multiple political and diplomatic process, spectacular attacks with a strong media and emotional impact – such as suicide commando attacks – were boosted, while a decrease in direct actions against ISAF-NATO forces and an increase of attacks against the ANSF can be observed. Furthermore, AOGs showed increased ability and willingness in propaganda activities (both traditional and via hi-tech media), and this trend may be confirmed for 2014-2015.

From a security point of view, the transition process has been marked by two interconnected dynamics. On the one hand, a decrease of territory under the Afghan government control has been recorded; on the other hand, ISAF troops reduction provoked a lack in security conditions, because of the increased AOGs operational capabilities.

In addition, the illegal business connected with opium poppy production and drug trafficking should be considered. In twelve years neither ISAF-NATO, nor the international community have been able to implement effective countermeasures. Cross-border and international organized crime play an important role and thrive on the Afghan chaos, for which they are partially responsible



## Focus

due to the direct connections with insurgent groups.

From a political perspective, signs of high uncertainty and lack of satisfaction emerge. The process for the election of the next Afghan president proceeds slowly, the amount of registered voters is small, and women participation is very limited.

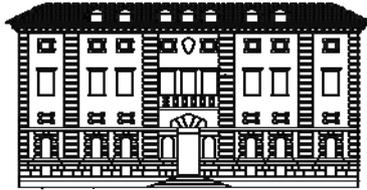
The current instable political situation is further weakened by the failed endeavours of 'political dialogue' with the AOGs (Hezb-e Islami and, in particular, the Taliban) and the hazards of revision (and reduction) of the constitutional rights, in particular women's rights.

The Afghan state, which is currently powerless, unable to maintain stability within the country, economically depending on the international community and security forces, is not so far from substantial failure.

Extensive defections and high rate combat casualties have decimated the ANSF, making them weak regarding air and logistical support and able to guarantee a minimum security level in urban but not in rural and peripheral areas of the country.

The end of the ISAF NATO mission, scheduled for the 2014, represents the symbolic watershed of the International commitment in Afghanistan. Based on the Bilateral Security Agreement (BSA) between Afghan government and United States, this commitment will change its nature from 'combat' to 'train and assist', drastically reducing the number of international soldiers on the Afghan soil: from the current 85,000 to a maximum of 15,000 units of the new NATO task, the "Resolute Support Mission" (RSM).

NATO will no longer be able to assure a widespread operational support, but will ensure, thanks to its military strategic bases in Afghanistan, its medium-long term presence in the country.



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