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

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Paolo Quercia

## **The Turkish – Syrian crisis in the Eastern Mediterranean**

The downing of a Turkish military plane in the waters in front of the Syrian – Turkish border has boosted tension between Ankara and Damascus to the highest levels since August 2011, when the crisis between the two countries started escalating. The shooting of the Turkish Phantom F4 happened close to the border region of the Gulf of Alessandretta and the Turkish province of Hatay, an area that historically have been a matter of contention between Syria and Turkey<sup>1</sup> since 1938 when it was granted to Turkey by the French colonial administration. Since then this area has been a sensitive geopolitical hot-point, especially due to the fact that Damascus has refused to officially recognise the international border, and occasionally has claimed sovereignty over the “unredeemed” province. The border issue seemed to be close to a solution only few years ago, when Syria appeared ready to recognise the 1938 border with Turkey: the Hatay border mutual recognition was supposed to be (implicitly and with very little publicity) part of a comprehensive uplifting of the bilateral relations that Ankara’s AKP lead government has pursued with Damascus between 2008 and 2010, leading to the creation of a strategic bilateral partnership.

The beginning of the “Arab spring” revolts has profoundly changed the geopolitical and ideological setting around Turkey, producing deep structural changes in the Turkish external posture itself. The consequences of the Arab spring on the Turkish foreign policy has been already analysed in the April 2012 issue of CeMiSS Quarterly<sup>2</sup>. Here it is only worth recalling that the changes produced by the Arab spring on Turkish foreign policy brought to the surface – and exalted the political and ideological differences existing between the reformist, islamist and internationalist (almost

<sup>1</sup> According to the Treaty of Losanne Syria remained under French colonial mandate and the former Ottoman area of Alessandretta was granted to Syria but it was governed with a peculiar administrative regime, especially for the protection of the sizeable Turk speaking population. Article 7 of the Franklin – Bouillon agreement stated that “a special administrative régime shall be established for the district of Alessandretta. The Turkish inhabitants of this district shall enjoy every facility for their cultural development. The Turkish language shall have official recognition”. Nevertheless this was a temporary solution. French decided to modify the peace agreement in 1938, letting the Turkish army policing the area in order to protect the Turkish population. This lead to the forced expulsion of Arab-Alawi and Armenian population. With a successive referendum the short-lived Republic of Hatay was created and with a successive decision it voted for the unification with Turkey in June 1938.

<sup>2</sup> See Paolo Quercia, *After the strategic depth: Turkey in 2012, between the strategic debts with the West and the strategic rift with Iran*, in CeMiSS Quarterly Vol. 1, 2012.



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pan-islamist) Turkish AKP and the secular, nationalist and Arab-socialist Syrian Ba'ath party. The neo-Ottomanist and realist Turkish approach of the last years has downplayed the ideological differences (and blinded its eyes on the nature of the Syrian regime) in the name of mutual advantages in terms of security and economic benefits (namely, cooperation against pro Kurdistan terrorist movements and creation of a Turkish Arab free trade area). But the political line of appeasement with Syria couldn't survive the exacerbation of the internal conflict between the Syrian regime and the opposition. When such a conflict has escalated into a military confrontation, Ankara attempt to act as an honest broker and reach an agreement among the "parties" appeared to be an impossible outcome. Just as impossible as to persuade the Syrian regime to agree on a path of reform that would have lead to fair elections and to a democratic confrontation between the regime and the opposition. Having realised this - that is the cul-de-sac where the neo-Ottomanist Turkish policy towards Syria has led to - Ankara didn't hesitate to jump bag and baggage from a policy of "zero problems with the neighbours" to a policy of full political support and moderate logistical backing to the Syrian opposition.

This change had a double political and religion motivations. From the political external point of view Ankara aimed at putting under a "friendly hat", the greatest number of the divided branches of the Syrian opposition, containing the all-around initiatives (political-religious-military) carried on by several Islamic Gulf kingdoms. From the religious-internal point of view, the AKP government was put under pressure by its islamist electorate and by the vibrant world of Turkish militant islamist NGOs.

Both have been shocked by the flux of tens of thousand of Muslim refugees, seeking shelter in Turkey from the violence in Syria and reporting with their live account the atrocities committed by the Syrian security forces. The interfaith solidarity with Muslim populations persecuted by secular authoritarian regimes has always been a powerful religious mobilisation tool in the Middle East, and Turkey islamist government makes no exception.

The Syrian crisis has partially overlapped with the maturity phase of the Libyan one, and this has contributed to produce a more volatile decision making process, swinging back the Turkey's Syria policy pendulum<sup>3</sup>. In fact, even at the beginning of the Syrian crisis, Ankara's position was quite different from the present one. Traditionally, Turkey was reluctant to embrace a policy of interference in Syria's internal affairs, being Damascus one of its most problematic neighbours - especially one that had a record of meddling, with the support of USSR, into Ankara's Kurd internal security issues. The proximity to Damascus' regime was quite soon abandoned, hoping to find a strategic gain in the grey area in between the regime and its enemies, leading an eventual mediation between Assad's regime, its opposition and the international community. This appeared to be to Ankara the option that could have maximised the benefits for Turkey. No other western countries could have remained that close to the Syrian regime while, at the same time, elbowing with the Gulf regimes for the role of leader of the Syrian opposition. The initially neutrality stance sought by Ankara with Damascus was most likely aimed at gaining time, avoiding a possible break-up of the situation

<sup>3</sup> See Erol Cebeci and Kadir Ustun, *The Syrian Qagmire: what's holding Turkey back?*, Insight Turkey, Vol. 14, N. 2 /2012 pp. 13 - 21.



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into a full scale fighting before Turkey had managed to engage and put under its umbrella the Syrian opposition. In fact the uncontrolled break-up of its neighbour-states remains one of Turkey highest security concern, especially for the possible consequences that it could produce on the Kurd regional issue. The pendulum from *a strategic alliance with Assad's regime to an approach of non interference to a position of neutrality and mediation* all the way to *a full scale political engagement* is partially an adjustment of Ankara's tactic to Syrian internal development, but it is also consistent with the process of restructuring of the Turkish foreign policy and in particular to the abandon of the so called neo-Ottoman approach.

As far as the Syrian scenario, two were the causes that led to Ankara's change of strategy: the escalation of the internal Syrian conflict between the regime and the opposition and the globalisation of its dynamics, especially the involvement of a large number of actors from State ones (like Qatar and Saudi Arabia) to non state ones (like the Muslim Brotherhood organisation and its affiliations). Ankara's near abroad soon become a global crossroad for all those countries attentive to control the insurrectional scenarios where international jihadist militants are possible to engage and regroup and, especially, for those interested to take advantage of and exploit the inter-islamic sectarian divides, such as the Sunni – Sh'ia one.

After Ankara failed to convince Assad's regime to open up to liberal reforms for engaging in a political transition those forces of the opposition with a democratic agenda, Turkey political elite was convinced of the non-reformability of Syrian political system and the necessity to take action to facilitate a "controlled fall" of the regime. Probably, during the short but intense time period of the rapprochement between Turkey and Syria (2008 – 2010) the Turkish political and security apparatus had the possibility to deeply engage the Syrian state structures in different joint security and governmental activities, realising that the Syrian president is probably un-capable – not only unwilling - to put under its will the whole country's security system. Apparently the Turkish political swift on the Syrian dossier was the only possible option for Ankara, being both incapable to follow Assad down to the road of repression and powerless in front of the automatism of the military and security apparatus of a regime that is four decades old in its power grip. Being left out of the power-game in Syrian by the regime securitarian response to the crisis and without the possibility to play an hegemonic or a surveillance role in the outcomes, Turkey decided to break definitively with the Syrian regime and to exploit as much as possible its geopolitical assets, that is the land and maritime border that separates the two countries. Crossing that border, thousands of Syrian refugees had already been seeking shelter from Syrian civil war.

The humanitarian assistance in the refugee camps has been the first kind of involvement in the Syrian dossier: humanitarian assistance outside Syrian borders is an intrinsically non partisan activity<sup>4</sup>, but for the point of view of the globalized Muslim public opinion it was the first step of Ankara's way out of its ambiguous proximity to Assad regime. That is why it has been mediated much more than the similar intervention carried on by Lebanon and Jordan at their borders with Syria. It was also a strong message to the whole galaxy of islamist movements inside and outside

<sup>4</sup> Even if it should be reminded that in many parts of the world, and also in the Middle East, refugee camps that become more or less definitive accommodations easily become a ground for political activism, radicalisation and sometimes recruitment of "freedom fighters".



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Turkey that Ankara was open to the political changes in the Middle East and it wouldn't have allowed its reason d'état to give up its "duty" to come to rescue a friendly Muslim population when confronting a repressive regime. After the first humanitarian step, Turkey has opened up its territorial shelter and its political protection to support the Syrian free opposition and also the deserters of the Syrian Army, offering an opportunity for the creation of the Free Syrian Army. The operative hinterland offered by Turkey to the political and military wings of the anti-Syrian regime was definitely instrumental in maintaining active for so long the opposition and the resistance to the Syrian regime, allowing the anti-Assad forces – to a great extent military equipped not by Turkey but by other Islamic countries – to create a cross-border operational area that could integrate both the illegal smuggling routes and the more "official" Turkish logistical support. In this way, ruled out the possibility of remaining close to Assad's regime, Turkey build its middle way between neutrality and intervention, adopting an innovative posture of – literally – geo-political support, remaining formally not involved in the military confrontation. As many issues concerning Turkish foreign and security policy, its posture is the result of a complex equilibrium of forces and, in the case of Syria, it also includes the bilateral relations with Teheran and Moscow.

The present Turkish posture for a regime change in Damascus was not – very likely – carefully planned in the political and strategic circles in Ankara, but is mostly the results of a progressive adaptation to evolving circumstances and of a reaction to the moves of the main regional competitors, including the Gulf Arab states that, as result of the Arab spring, increased their presence in part of Turkish near abroad.

The downing of the Turkish Phantom F-4 took place in such a context. Putting aside the two different versions of the events provided by the Syrian and Turkish governments, it is evident that nobody will change its version whose substance is anyway clear: in this undeclared trans-border war between Turkey and Syria the flying over or the land border crossing by military units from the sides has been almost a daily occurrence. Damascus in a key moment of international confrontation over Syria, and counting on its renewed international support, has tried to disrupt the Turkish soft-war style, sending a concrete message to Ankara aimed at discouraging Turkey of prosecuting its low intensity backing of the military opposition. In other words, the message was "if Ankara continues to get involved in our internal conflict they should be prepared – militarily and diplomatically – to a full conventional war".

Damascus behaviour could have been also a preventive move in order to make it more difficult for Turkey to propose in the coming months the creation of an international no-fly zone in the Syrian airspace. Turkish reaction to the downing of its military plane and the lost of two pilots has been vocal but concretely humble. The Turkish government has declared a change in its rules of engagement, hardening them and making easier for its army to engage a Syrian military unit, even if it is moving in Syrian territory approaching the Turkish border. Both sides have built up their military presence along their common border, increasing the strength of their respective air defence systems and sending more troops to patrol the borders. But, despite the bellicose reaction coming from the Turkish government, another "incident" as the one occurred is quite unlikely, and the possibility that the two countries will escalate the border attrition to a real conflict are modest. In the days after the downing of the Turkish plane Turkey tried to operate a limited "retaliation", creating a de facto thin no-fly zone along the border, 4 miles deep into Syrian territory, commanding



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its F16 from Incirlik military base to engage the Syrian military helicopters approaching the border. The measure resulted in lengthy flying over the border by Turkish airplanes, dissuading Syrian air forces to operate too close to the border itself without crossing it. No incidents have been reported so far, indicating that – aside from muscular rhetoric – none of the two countries is willing to escalate the status quo into a full scale conflict. Anyway, beefing up both sides of the border with conventional military presence could result in a reduction of the paramilitary trans-border activity, unless Turkey would decide to pair its increased military strength with a higher level of asymmetric warfare. At this point of the crisis this seems unlikely, considering that the international context will not favour an evolution of the Syrian situation for the next half year or so. From Ankara's strategic point of view, the downing of the Turkish airplane happened at the wrong time, in a moment when the situation is stalling and when Syria could benefit from the incident more than Turkey. Especially due to the transatlantic constraint that Ankara has to face with, since quite few of NATO countries are not only unsupportive of a military intervention in Syria, but are also uncomfortable with an increase of the military tension at Turkey's border. In this regard a message to Turkish government has come also from the Pentagon, when an interpretation of the downing of the Turkish F4 contradicting the official Turkish version has been leaked out. If the downing of the Turkish Phantom took place in a situation of limited international support, Turkey appears to be going to meet more disagreement on its Syrian policy also in the home front. Turkish public opinion doesn't seem particularly enthusiastic of a possible military escalation with the neighbouring Syria. Notwithstanding the governmental attempts to provoke in the Turkish public opinion an anti-Syrian nationalist indignation, only a minority of the Turkish population seems to be favourable to a conflict. The predominant feeling in the majority of the country population seems to be one of astonishment, asking themselves and to their government how it is possible that the bilateral relations with president Assad evolved in less than 20 months from a strategic partnership to the brink of a war that nobody, in and outside Turkey, would like to get into.



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### ***The near abroad is a bit more distant***

*Andrea Grazioso*

*The issue of so-called "near abroad", i.e. the geographical space surrounding Russia which, according to historical periods and geo-strategic conditions, becomes more or less depth, remains central for the strategic thinking in the Kremlin, especially when the internal political balance portend greater capacity for the Russian leadership to engage in assertive form its political strategy in the international arena. Now overcome the critical step of the presidential elections, Putin feels sufficiently strong to start a new and particularly "assertive" phase in relations with other international actors.*

#### ***The historical origins and the psychological function of the "near abroad"***

There is no historical era in which Russia, in its various faces of imperial, Soviet and post-Soviet reality, has not claimed a "privileged interest" on a range of countries surrounding her national and "holy" land. According to some analysis, this attitude has always been connected with the geo-morphological characteristics of the Russian territory, namely the existence of vast plains and the virtual absence of natural defense, which abut on to exert resistance to enemy invasions. Only the sheer extension of territory and the hostile climate have historically provided Russia a significant form of protection. But there is also a second reading, certainly less benign, according to which the imperial character of Russian politics - that runs through every period of history, regardless of its outward connotation - leads almost inexorably to subdue the surrounding peoples and cultures. After all Russia itself, in its present geopolitical configuration, is a "federation" built around a central core, (apparently) homogenous in ethnicity and culture. Already in the Russian Federation, therefore, we may find that configuration made of "concentric circles" that the Russian politics research and builds tenaciously for centuries. This almost permanent character of Russian politics has been very inappropriately ignored for a relatively long period, since the Soviet collapse, and especially during the deep economic and political decline of the country. Especially, for over ten years has been genuinely thought in the West that Russia could and would leave behind this - as other - its peculiarities, to embrace an entirely different pattern of relations with its neighboring states and peoples.

It was considered possible to get a painless "inclusion" of Russia into a system of international relations where the sharing of values and the pursuit of common interests in cooperative form prevailed on the traditional attitudes made of competition and antagonism. This phase of hope and, perhaps, of illusion, actually began to close several years ago, when Putin began to support the



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concept of "sovereign democracy", namely the idea of a Russian autonomous path to democracy, national-minded and not necessarily concordant with other international actors. Over the years, the return of Russia to a politics of confrontation with the countries of the West has established itself with ever more explicit clarity. With it, it returned the central concept of the "near abroad" and related "privileged interests" on the Russian territories, states and, ultimately, on the people surrounding the "Holy Mother Russia".

Today, there are three areas where this renewed assertiveness from Moscow produces explicit friction with Western countries and NATO in particular. The Russian opposition to the missile defence project remains ultimately strong. In Eastern Europe, Russia claims a "special right", that is the right to essentially pose a veto against the adoption by the states of the region of political or military measures judged as not compliant with the interests of Moscow. During the Cold War, the existence of the Warsaw Pact and of COMECON made it very easy to enforce such alleged right. With the so-called "Brezhnev doctrine" - or the doctrine of limited sovereignty - Russian politics formalized this position in a manner to some extent similar to the "Monroe Doctrine" conceived in the U.S. more than a century before for the Caribbean and, then, for the western hemisphere. The practical exercise of that doctrine - even before its formulation - led to armed intervention in Hungary and Czechoslovakia, and would have led to a similar intervention in Poland if the Poles had not "done by themselves" to bring the country on the "prescribed tracks". Even the limitation imposed by the sovereignty of Finland, albeit in much milder form, was within the same diagram.

Today the same principle is the basis of strong Russian opposition to the U.S. and NATO missile defense program in Europe. Many were the occasions during which, from the western part, extensive explanations and assurances about the features and capabilities of the system were provided. It will not be able to reduce Russian offensive capabilities both because the placement of sensors and missiles in Europe would preclude their effective use to intercept any Russian missiles headed for the United States through the polar route, and because the "firepower" of the system is too low to oppose a massive Russian attack. Moscow, however, still does not listen to reason, because it claims that this system has a "strategic" value and, as such, its installation in the region which joined NATO after 1997 - the year marking the Founding Act of relations between NATO and Russia - must be negotiated between the parties. In fact, the Founding Act of 1997, mentioning only nuclear weapons and NATO's commitment not to base weapons in the "new territories", is unilateral and not the result of a negotiation with Moscow. The Russian position, therefore, is instrumental to assert a "right" of Moscow to pursue in that region a "privileged interest", i.e. a power of influence that may go so far as to veto unwelcome choices. Very recently, but absolutely in line with the same principle, was the position taken by the Russian military chief of Defense, General Makarov, who, speaking of the hypothesis of further movement in Finland and Sweden toward the joining of NATO, has explicitly defined such hypothetical choices as a threat to which Russia could not but oppose, by all means available. The obvious reaction of Scandinavian diplomats, who do not like seeing all questioned the full sovereignty of their countries, war really worried.

### ***In the Caucasus there is a real risk of conflict***

Even more "hot" is the situation in the South Caucasus region, also because this area retains a strategic value for the access of Russia to the Middle East region. The knot of Georgia has not yet



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been dissolved, in the sense that Moscow has not given up on re-acquire a substantial political control and strategic direction of the country. The 2008 conflict has clearly demonstrated what could be unscrupulous action of Russia in this region; the following, slowed-down path to NATO membership of Georgia has still not fulfilled the ambitions of the Kremlin. Moreover, in the same geo-strategic area it remains the problem represented by the isolation of the one true ally of Russia in the region, namely Armenia, and of Russian forces stationed there. After the conflict, in fact, Tbilisi has obviously prevented the Russians to pass over land and replenish spare parts supplies to the Russian bases in Armenia, which are therefore supplied only by air, given the closure of the territories of Azerbaijan and Turkey. The crisis in Syria, with the unlikely alliance between Russia, Iran and China in support of Assad, explains how it can be created a "coalitions of opponents" to counter effectively, at the diplomatic level, any "willing" who sought to impose by force a regime change. Russia has sent several times, naval forces in Syrian waters, and maintains a presence of some - not too discreet - of his "advisors" in Syria. No wonder that some politicians in Turkey have floated the idea that the turkish plane shot down by Syrian was actually hit by a Russian missile system, probably operated by technicians in Moscow. But more than any Russian armed opposition to the intervention in Syria of a NATO-Arab coalition, or a heavy interference - as was the case years ago in Kosovo - we must assume a Russian counter-move in the Caucasus, as an immediate reaction to any reduction of the Syrian regime. Georgia, in short, could again be targeted by the Russians, who pawn exchange with Syria. Not a perfectly symmetrical game, but a highly strategic one, when one considers that regaining control of Georgia, Russia at a stroke negate any possibility of trading - without its control - oil and gas from Central Asia to the West, reconstitute a territorial "continuity" with Armenia - even isolating Azerbaijan, an ally of Turkey - and would establish a physical link (rail) with Iran and with the area of the Gulf, from which was ousted following the overthrow of Saddam Hussein. So, rather than an enforcement of symmetric action in Syria, it could be imagined an "asymmetric" reaction in the Caucasus.

In Central Asia, the game is still open. It can be imagined that the Russian response to a hostile action against Syria and Assad also could include a closure of the land and air communication routes to and from Afghanistan, crossing paths with Russia itself. Even after the re-opening of land communication routes through Pakistan, all countries that have forces in Afghanistan depend in fact, to a significant extent, on the "northern network" across the countries of Central Asia and Russia (and in some cases Ukraine). NATO has reached an agreement with Russia - and some other countries in the region - to provide for such transits, and even individual countries - including Italy - have reached or are negotiating bilateral agreements. But these agreements would not survive, of course, in case of explicit opposition of Moscow on an issue of strategic importance, as it could be the action against Syria.

Moreover, even within the countries of Central Asia, in the Russian perspective well within the so-called "near abroad", Moscow is certainly anxious to state its "rights", perhaps by imposing an "expulsion" of the West from these countries. The Russian concern about losing control of these countries has become more acute in recent months because of the urgent need to ensure a "way out" to their forces in Afghanistan has prompted the United States and the United Kingdom to undertake detailed negotiations with the countries of the region. It seems that the basis of agreements to be defined there is also the supply of military equipment to these countries - which therefore would no longer depend entirely on Moscow for future military supplies - and even the creation



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of "logistic dumps" of U.S. military equipment, ready for use in the event of renewed commitment to Washington in Central Asia. All this, of course, would undermine the Russian monopoly - or, perhaps, the duopoly with China - in the management of security in the region, and Moscow certainly does not want that "a stranger" enter, without his knowledge, from the "back door".

Many of the positions taken by Russia in recent months have been considered with concern by analysts and Western politicians. Domestically, the repression of anti-Putin protests are certainly not a reassuring signal of the evolving political climate in Russia. Externally, the explicit support to Assad and the violent anti-NATO and anti-United States rhetoric make it very difficult re-establish an effective bond with Moscow. However, a proper analysis on the strategic goals of Russia on the international stage is still lacking. In truth, the opposition to anti-missile system in Europe, the adhesion of Scandinavia to the Atlantic Alliance and the rapprochement of Georgia to NATO, as well as the establishment of ties between Washington and the Central Asian capitals, is the result of a specific cultural and political posture of the Kremlin, a posture that has its roots in imperial history and geo-strategic perception of the Russians.



## **Strategic deals and approaches: irreversible transition and chinese presence in Afghanistan**

*Claudio Bertolotti*

*In occasion of the NATO Summit, held in Chicago on 20-21<sup>st</sup> of May, Alliance members and allies declared an «irreversible transition» – complicated by an unresolved dispute with Pakistan, which has refused to reopen ground routes vital to a swift departure of international forces – that will put Afghan national Security Forces (ANSF) formally in the lead of the combat mission by the middle of next year. The main concern is how to leave Afghanistan formally. But ready or not, Afghan security transfer accelerating.*

*ANSF will now be responsible for 75 per cent of the country, with ISAF forces in a support role only. A third swathe of Afghanistan will see ANSF take the lead on security, with the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) scaled back into to a supporting role. «Transition will have begun in every one of the 34 provinces of Afghanistan, including every provincial capital»: NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen said.*

*But some of the areas involved in this latest handover are astonishing (in negative terms).*

*Some examples. The most striking is Kandahar City, the former Taliban stronghold where today no one could say it is a secured area. Furthermore, half the districts in Nuristan – a mountainous region recently under insurgents' influence – were handed over, as were a third of the districts in Paktika, another border enclave for insurgents. The same is for Uruzgan, an unstable region in the middle of the country, also handed over.*

*Within a few months only a quarter of Afghanistan will be under security-control provided by ISAF troops. The timetable for withdrawal is speeding up and United States predicts its forces will be off the battlefield and in a non-combat role by mid-2013.*

*However, security situation remains far from stable (according to United Nations 2011 was the most violent year on record). It is assessed that Taliban will continue the offensive campaigns on NATO and Afghan targets possibly augmenting stress with «Suicide commando» actions and «Green on blue» attacks (see CeMiSS Quarterly, Winter 2011).*

### **Point of views and funds**

*Afghan economy is 70 per cent dependent on foreign support and ANSF are 90 per cent dependent on grants for their salaries and it is more than clear that Afghan government surely will not sustain such huge forces. United States and Allies have generally agreed to spend about USD 4.1 billion a year on ANSF after combat operations ended by the end of 2014.*

*According to financial strategic plan, United States and non-ISAF countries (Gulf States, India,*

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Japan, Pakistan), would cover more than half the funding, providing USD 2.3 billion per year. NATO and ISAF countries (US excluded) will give USD1.3 billion. And USD500 million will come from the Afghan government.

The amount of ANSF is expected to reach 352,000 by the end of 2012 and will remain at that level until 2015 when the reduction of the forces will end in 2017 at around 230,000.

NATO members have agreed to be out by the end of 2013, even if France wants to leave the Afghan battlefield by the end of 2012.

US post-withdrawal strategy seems to be depending upon two strategic developments –agreement and political compromise with Taliban and deflecting trade to the «New Silk Road» in order to boost Afghan economy. Taliban cadres claim they are ready for talks provided that International Community accepts their requests including that holy Quran shall be the base of the Afghan constitution and no foreign troops shall stay in Afghanistan. Two points formally not acceptable neither for Karzai government nor for the International Community.

Meanwhile US sponsored New Silk Road idea looks ambitious but not too practical when China has already shown its New Silk Road works and has proven its utility while US Silk Road project has serious impediments and it may take years to implement it.

### ***Afghanistan's context: a competitive regional approach***

On one hand India and US announced trilateral dialogue with Afghanistan in order to help Kabul assume greater responsibility for governance, development (including in areas such as agriculture, mining, energy, capacity building and infrastructures) and security (India's role would be confined to training the country's security forces, nothing in terms of additional military efforts ). Both India and the US separately have strategic agreements with Afghanistan and are seeking a three-way consultation process to cooperate and coordinate the support to Afghanistan. This could be read as a policy to create a sort of “bastion” – probably not enough efficacious – against further attempts to expand China's influence on Afghanistan.

On the other hand China is smartly moving toward Afghanistan.

A bloc bringing together China, Russia and central Asian states wants to play a bigger role in Afghanistan. The Afghan future, facing the withdrawal of most foreign troops by the end of 2014, was a main issue at the two-day meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization<sup>1</sup> (SCO) in June; but bigger role doesn't mean a possible military contribution or involvement by SCO members. Also Afghan President Hamid Karzai attended as a guest, and Afghanistan is due to be granted «observer» status (without right to vote).

Chinese President Hu Jintao and Hamid Karzai agreed to upgrade bilateral relations to the level of a strategic and cooperative partnership. They reached the agreement during formal talks in Beijing.

Calling Karzai «an old friend of the Chinese people», Hu Jintao expressed appreciation for his long-term commitment to bilateral friendly cooperation. This marks a new step for the development of bilateral ties, said Hu, adding that «it not only meets the fundamental interests of the two coun-

<sup>1</sup> The SCO, founded in 2001, includes China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

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tries but also benefits world and regional peace, stability and development».

Hu made a five-point proposal on the development of bilateral relations. He called on the two sides to intensify political mutual trust and maintain close high-level contacts, so as to improve strategic communication on major issues.

He suggested that the two sides have to expand cooperation in areas including economy and trade, contracted projects, resource and energy development, agriculture and infrastructure. Furthermore Chinese president urged the two sides to enhance security cooperation and jointly combat the threats of terrorism, separatism and extremism as well as trans-boundary crimes, including drug trafficking. According to China's official statements, the two sides should expand multilateral coordination and cooperation within the framework of the SCO and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation. **Numbers and supporting activities.** China has paid 58 million dollars (USD) in aid for Afghanistan in 2010. In 2011 China pledged a further USD 75 million for Afghanistan over a five-year timeline and has been involved in several projects in the country, including: USD 5 million for humanitarian aid, an irrigation initiative in Parwan province, the rebuilding of hospitals in Kabul and Kandahar cities, the construction of the USD 25 million Jamhuriat Hospital in Kabul, and the establishment of the «Confucius Institute» at Kabul University. Furthermore China has provided scholarships for Afghans wishing to attend Chinese universities. China has also take additional steps in Af-Pak: these include the contribution of financing for the construction of the Pakistani port at Gwadar: this port could reportedly serve as a means of importing goods into Afghanistan and could facilitate the export of agricultural and industrial products from the country, including natural resources.

Furthermore, in order to promote trade cooperation, Afghanistan and China signed a bilateral economic cooperation agreement in 2006 (with the formation of a Sino-Afghan Economic Trade Committee).

Regarding the natural resource exploitation, the value of Afghanistan's natural resources has been estimated at up to USD 3 trillion. China has reportedly been involved in gaining the rights to Afghan mineral deposits: the Aynak copper deposit in Logar province, oil fields in Sar-e Pul and Faryab provinces and the Hajigak iron ore deposit (reported as the second largest in the world).

### **Chinese concerns?**

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Liu Weimin said China would increase cooperation with Afghanistan in the fields of resource development, infrastructure, energy and training but «events in Afghanistan are of great concern to the security and stability of central Asia». For this reason China will remain cautious about Afghanistan, edging rather than rushing towards any bigger presence on concern about getting dragged into its security troubles without the lure of extensive energy resources. China has mining and other investments in Afghanistan, and its companies would probably look to more investment if security conditions allowed.

As the United States and other Western nations prepare to withdraw their military forces from Afghanistan, China is growing worried about the prospect of instability after they have left.

So, after years of standing in the background, Beijing is starting to show signs of closer engagement with its strife-torn neighbor in a bid to ward off disaster. When Afghan President Hamid Karzai meets his Chinese counterpart Hu Jintao, they raised their countries' bilateral relations to a «new

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strategic level».

Though it is still unclear what that will mean in practice, the step reflects Beijing's feeling that it is urgent that China strengthen its relationship with Afghanistan.

### ***Improbable security role.***

Afghanistan's security situation could have a direct impact on China's security. The NATO military pullout probably means for China more problems than opportunities because China should take more responsibilities; but Beijing cannot play a significant security direct role because of a lack of presence in Afghanistan which impose caution. For sure China will not be involved in Afghanistan as a military actor because is neither qualified nor interested to play an «unwinnable» and «never-ending» military game.

But China efforts will probably obtain successes on a different front thanks to a strategic regional support policy: more aid, more infrastructure projects, and more training for ANSF. This could be obtained through the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. Beijing is also likely to step up its tentative diplomatic involvement in the Afghan conflict after it hosted a first trilateral meeting with Afghan and Pakistani officials last February that showed China's intention of strengthening its influence on Afghan security issues.

What is clear is that for sure China will continue to manage regional affairs and will play a bigger role in Afghanistan's reconstruction, and furthermore will strengthen communication, coordination and cooperation in dealing with major international and regional issues.

*Nicola Pedde*

## ***Iran threat Hormuz closure***

Iran recently renewed its threats to close the Strait of Hormuz, replicating to the imposition of a new round of sanctions imposed since July 1<sup>st</sup> by the international community. Despite it should be unclear how Tehran could shut down the strait, given his dated and unreliable defence arsenal, the threat is taken seriously by the Americans, which had further increased their presence in the region, adding further aerial capacity and new anti-mines naval units.

A debate on the issue of the strait had been held by the Iranian parliament, where some members are seriously considering the hypothesis to promote an official request to the government. This request, in the form of a bill calling for the strait to be closed, could be seriously provoking a major and unexpected crisis in the region, alimenting again the fears of a possible conflict.

The Iranian Parliament is certainly not exerting any control over national defence and foreign policy decisions, but it have a capacity of influence and could count on a growing number of MPs which are ferociously protesting for the new sanctions imposed on the country.

Foreign and defence policy are exerted by the Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, within the context of the Supreme National Security Council and the leadership of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps.

Within these contexts, the attitude toward Hormuz seems to be much more pragmatic and cautious, and there are few signs of any possible serious consideration of the bill in the sense proposed by the Parliament.

Iran has historically repeatedly threatened to close the Strait of Hormuz, through which almost 30 percent of the world's oil exports passes, in retaliation for sanctions placed on its crude exports by Western powers.

Seyed Hassan Firouzabadi, chief of staff of the Iranian armed forces, commented on the bill adding that any decision to close the strait had ever been discussed or proposed by Ali Khamenei, within the Supreme National Security Council, freezing the enthusiasm of some radical members of the Parliament.

Despite the harsh words pronounced by some MPs, in fact, there very little chance that any serious attempt to determine a crisis in the region could be intentionally provoked by the Iranian leadership today. Although the possibility of an incident seems to be always a clear and present danger in the turbulent waters of the Persian Gulf.



## **Middle East - Persian Gulf**

### ***A Turkish fighter shot down in Syria.***

On June 22<sup>nd</sup> a Turkish military aircraft, an F-4 Phantom II, have been shot down by Syrian anti-aircraft units in circumstances that are still not clarified, triggering a new and even more serious dynamics of crisis between the two countries.

According to the top military élite of Damascus, the aircraft flew at very low altitude (about 100 meters) at short distance from the coast and fully in the Syrian airspace. The shooting was ordained because of the uncertainty of the threat, and it had been conducted by an antiaircraft battery on the coast.

According to Turkey, on the other hand, the plane would have been not only disarmed, but completely outside of Syrian airspace, and shot down by a laser guided ground-to-air missile. Turkey also stressed the intentionality of the action by Syrians, as well as the fact the fighter would have been flying over the international airspace.

The episode have generated harsh protests in Turkey, and the unanimous condemnation of the international community, although in the absence of certain elements about the dynamics of the facts and, especially, the position of the Turkish jet at the moment of fire.

The Turkish premier Recep Tayyip Erdogan wanted to confirm that Turkey, although indigenised for the episode, does not intend to change the status of their relationship with Syria. That, although critical, never had resulted in open conflict. Erdogan has thus confirmed his desire to resolve the incident within the frame of international law, although considering to denounce it to the UN Security Council.

Diametrically opposite the press communiqué released by Bashar al-Asad, according to whom the country had been interested by a real intentional hostile action, aimed at the goal of overthrowing the Syrian legitimate government by adopting any useful provocation to trigger any further closure and threat on policy.

A coordinated and premeditated plan, according to Damascus, with the only purpose to oust the *alawite* government and pursue the Saudi hegemonic aspirations in the region. To the detriment of Iran and, consequently, of Syria.

According to al-Asad, then, a undeclared state of war with Turkey would be in substance already in place, while Damascus seeks to cope while protecting its own interests and the stability of the national system.

The European Union has condemned the shooting of the Turkish aircraft, expressing solidarity to Ankara and arranged a further increase of sanctions against Damascus, adding one new name to the list of the banned contacts and relationships, and as well six new companies and some smaller entities.

At the same time, according to the London based Observatory for Human Rights, the number of civilian casualties raised to 15,800. Of these, about a third (4,681) would have died in conjunction with the announcement on the ceasefire, proving that none of the parties had respected it.

On the diplomatic front, on the other hand, the special envoy Kofi Annan organized a meeting on June 30<sup>th</sup> in Geneva with the countries which are most interested by the Syrian crisis. This program was followed by a regional tour of Kofi Annan, which ended in the mid of July.

There had bee also an increase in the last weeks of the attacks conducted by the opposition forces against the regime's military, by further consolidating however the role of the *salafite* formations within the heterogeneous structure of the groups hostile to Bashar al-Asad. And alimenting more

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and more the danger of an escalation that, sooner or later, will directly affect the specific interests of western countries and Israel in the region.

### ***New president in Egypt, but without powers nor parliament***

On June 15<sup>th</sup>, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces Egyptian (SCAF) has formally dissolved the Egyptian Parliament, justifying the decision with the evaluation of anti-constitutionality of the law with which the Parliament was elected last November.

The Council of State, in fact, specified that the electoral law, amended several times in the course of the year by the SCAF, had in fact heavily penalised the candidature of the independent candidates with respect to those of the lists of parties, requesting the waiver of the vote in October.

On June 15<sup>th</sup>, then, an impressive array of military forces has surrounded the Parliament, preventing its members to access inside and dispersing the crowd of demonstrators, who in the meantime had poured into the streets to protest.

The Secretary of the Defence of the United States, Leon Panetta, has called by telephone the General Mohamed Hussein Tantawi, the head of the SCAF, expressing the concern of the American government for the evolution of the situation in Egypt, and inviting him to find a solution to facilitate the political transition after the troubled collapse of the regime of Hosni Mubarak.

Panetta has invited the Egyptian military authorities to organize in the shortest possible time a new round of elections of the Egyptian lower chamber, stressing its importance for the purpose of maintaining the political and social stability. A need recognized also by Tantawi, together with the commitment for the transfer of power within July 1<sup>st</sup> from the military to the democratically elected civilian authorities.

Many however have strongly protested against the dissolution of Parliament, by defining the manoeuvre as a "bloodless coup d'état". Both the organization of the secular movement April 6<sup>th</sup> - that was among the main architects of the revolt of Tahrir square - both the Islamist party of Freedom and Justice, expression of the Muslim Brotherhood, openly protested and asked for the reinstatement of the Parliament. Both claiming the validity of the elections that have elected the lower chamber, and inviting the Egyptians to recognize the right of the MPs to exercise their role.

The protest, however, have been also triggered by some other amendments to the constitution, surreptitiously adopted by SCAF and aimed to greatly limit the powers of the future President of the Republic of Egypt. These amendments, which in fact will reintroduce a sort of martial law, assign to the SCAF the legislative power and the control over budgetary legislation, defence, internal security and the power of veto over the new constitution.

The amendment to the constitution adopted by the SCAF has certainly little chance of being accepted by the Egyptian public opinion, which have openly accused the militaries to have orchestrated the manoeuvre at a time at which it had appeared clearly the dominance of the Islamic forces on the secular ones, in an attempt *in extremis* to maintain a power that the Egyptian people no longer seem to be willing to negotiate with the militaries.

If the SCAF does not demonstrate flexibility and willingness to engage in dialog on the issue of the amendments to the constitution, then, is not excluded that the violence could erupt again in the Egyptian streets, with consequences which are this time unpredictable but certainly not useful to the general interest of the nation.

Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> and Sunday June 17<sup>th</sup>, it had been regularly held the ballot for the presidential elec-

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tions, in thirteen thousand sieges in 27 provinces of the country. Turnout swinging in two days of voting, with peaks higher than in the first round on the first day, and collapse in the second. Both candidates have on several occasions announced the victory on their opponent, but the final phase of the examination have at the end confirmed the advantage of Mohammad Mursi, the candidate of the Muslim Brotherhood.

With 13,238,298 against 12,351,184, Mursi won with 52% of preferences, but as well demonstrating the net and nearly equal fracture within the Egyptian electorate.

A fact that imposes a serious and precise reflection for the leadership of the Muslim Brotherhood, which should take into account the fact that a non negligible part of the voters demonstrated to be not supportive of the Islamic instances.

The application of a too stringent or orthodox Islamic law, in fact, it is bound to generate discontent and protests in the certainly not small secular segment of the population - or in any case at least those who are not observant - and the Copt part of Egyptian society, by imposing the need for the adoption of a pragmatic and moderate policy strategy from the outset.

The election results were announced with a large delay, on June 24<sup>th</sup>, after the long and laborious step counting. This, however, has added the verification of many cases of fraud reported by the population to the police forces, which the Commission will have to individually evaluate in order to determine whether, and to what extent, it could be conditioning the overall vote of the Egyptians.

A verification process which had also been deliberately amplified in terms of time, so as to facilitate negotiations between the various forces on the political field, and then identify a coexistence mechanisms, for the near future, less traumatic than that of this complex phase of transition.

The subject matter of the dispute is, and remains, that of the first stages of the revolution. This is to ensure that the Egyptian armed forces could accept a transition that will not detract from their immense industrial and economic apparatus, nor the role they have always played within the political system. Prerogatives, however, deemed too expensive on the side of the Islamic and secular-liberal forces, who wish on the contrary a strong and definitive resizing of the role of the military and their pervasive control system.

The Muslim Brotherhood, even in the initial uncertainty of the result of the elections, hastened to communicate to the press the intention to compose a government which could be considered as representative of the entire Egyptian political and religious spectrum, including representatives of the Coptic community, of salafites and the "nasserians" which had so boldly emerged to the forefront in occasion of the first round of the presidential elections.

The opportunity of meeting with the press was also useful to send signals to Israel, which, although not directly mentioned, was in fact secured about the intentions of Egypt to take faith to international agreements in the interest of security and regional stability.

A press release that has not fully convinced the political élites in Tel Aviv, that on the contrary accuse from months Egypt of having voluntarily reduced the effectiveness of its security system in the Sinai region, by facilitating the access to Israel of guerrilla members and terrorists from north Africa.

And this came along with the last episode of violence along the border with Israel, on June 18<sup>th</sup>, when an Israeli civilian died in a conflict which had erupted during an infiltration attempt from Egypt of an individual, which had not yet better identified.



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The local press had release news related to the health conditions of the former President Hosni Mubarak, which would have been further worsened and which would be now based on artificially feeding and, according to some doctors, almost clinically dead.

The former *rais* does not seem to have reacted positively to the pharmacotherapy administered as a result of the last cerebral ischemia, gradually deteriorating up to the total loss of consciousness just before the presidential elections.

However, many are skeptical about the real health conditions of the former president, especially within those of the Muslim Brotherhood, according to whom Mubarak would be in quite stable and non-serious conditions, almost free in a military hospital where it would be revered by the military staff still today faithful to the former president of the Republic. In particular, are denouncing the Islamists, Mubarak would be always assisted by his wife and daily visited by his sons. A status, then, quite different that imposed by the court that sentenced him to life imprisonment, and that on the contrary would provide to the former *rais* a wide freedom and discretion in the movements and in the management of the personal visits.

The general situation, in Egypt, still is highly unstable and potentially fraught with even dramatic changes. The major concern is certainly today that of the constitutional amendment operated by SCAF, which is likely to inflame the minds of the tumultuous Egyptian streets, possibly bringing in chaos throughout the country.



Marco Massoni

## Coup d'état in Guinea Bissau and Mali: is West Africa under attack?

Not only March the 22<sup>nd</sup> a coup occurred in Mali, but also April the 6<sup>th</sup> the Tuareg led National Movement for the Liberation of the Azawad (MNLA) unilaterally declared the secession of the Northern regions of Mali, claiming the independence of a so-called Azawad State. MNLA succeeded in its goal right because of the help of several AQ-Associated Movements (AQAM), such as Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), Ansar Dine, The Unity Movement for Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO) and Boko Haram. Despite a failed counter-coup by loyalists of ousted President, Amadou Toumani Touré (ATT), an agreement was reached for a transitional government that within a year will have to make new elections in Mali. Besides, to preserve the territorial integrity of Mali, the African Union (AU) called for urgent intervention of a military force under the aegis of the UN Security Council. Evidently that would open up in Africa, after Somalia, a second front against AQAM in the Sahel, in other words along the 16<sup>th</sup> Parallel North, with the risk of widening the conflict to other Tuareg communities, settled in all surrounding countries (i.e. Algeria, Burkina Faso, Libya, Mali, Mauritania and Niger).

Concerning the April the 12<sup>th</sup> putsch occurred in Guinea Bissau, it is widely accepted that one of the reason of the fragility and of the structural weakness of this country is given by the failure to reform the security sector. Actually, wherever put in place the Security Sector Reform (SSR) standards usually provide a controlled transformation and a progressive reorganization of the Armed Forces, as well as the retirement of old fighters and the gradual replacement of the Military for specific targets with adequate police force. The United Nations for several years have been underlining the urgent need for Guinea Bissau to implement a SSR and facilitate the handover from the Army to the Police. In truth, the Army keeps on performing inappropriate tasks in terms of skills and areas of responsibility, preventing the natural development of civil institutions in the country, which is kept in an ever-lasting Failed State situation. Bearing all this in mind and with the aim to overcome the failure to reform the security sector, in December 2010 Guinea Bissau agreed with Angola the deployment of a technical cooperation military mission – MISSANG – that operated from March 2011 until June 2012, when overall circumstances required its withdrawal. The idea was to put an end to the widespread corruption run by some sectors of the Armed Forces of Guinea-Bissau, which, by providing logistical support to Latin American drug traffickers, have made the former Portuguese colony the logistical hub for drug distribution from South America onto the European markets.



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### ***African Union (AU) and European Union (EU)***

From 9 to 11 May Addis Ababa hosted the *World Economic Forum on Africa* entitled *Accelerating Quality Growth, Creating Shared Opportunities*. Between May and June in Midrand, South Africa, the *Pan-African Parliament (PAP)* held its annual plenary session, during which *Bethel Nnaemeka Amadi*, a member of the Nigerian Parliament, was elected President of the overarching Institution for the next three years, replacing Moussa Idriss Ndele of Chad. Next African Union Summit of Heads of State and Government will take place in Ethiopia instead of Malawi, as expected. In fact, the new Malawian authorities stated to be in favour to arrest the Sudanese President, Omar al-Bashir, wanted by the International Criminal Court (ICC), should he set foot in the country. As far as the European Union is concerned, May the 16<sup>th</sup>, the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Baroness Catherine Ashton, has appointed 17 new Heads of Delegation, including the Czech, Marek Skolil, in *Algeria*, the Spanish, Laura Baeza, in *Tunisia*, the Portuguese, Manuel Pinto Teixeira, in *Cape Verde*, while the Italian, Michele Cervone D'Urso, former Head of EU Delegation in Yemen, has been appointed *European Union Special Envoy for Somalia*.

### ***Northern Africa: Algeria, Libya and Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR).***

In *Algeria*, the legislative elections of May 10 confirmed in power the *National Liberation Front (NLF)*, that is to say the secular party that has been continuously running the country since independence from France. It was therefore awarded the ruling parties coalition whereas penalized the alliance of a number of parties of Islamic inspiration that run united under an umbrella named *Green Alliance*. As a matter of fact, 44 political parties and 185 independent candidates took part for the renewal of the Algerian Lower House. Apart from the sound defeat of the Green Alliance and the subsequent victory of secular forces, the real protagonists of this election were the *reluctance* of Algerian citizens to actively participate in debates during the election campaign and tackle the hot issues of national politics such as the role of the Armed Forces in the management of power and so on. However, this is just the beginning, inasmuch shortly local and presidential elections will follow.

In *Libya*, the National Assembly elections, initially scheduled in June, have been postponed to July 7, due to some internal strife within the National Transitional Council (NTC) and technical issues such as voter registration, which was extended until May 21. On April 29, the former Minister of Petroleum of the Gaddafi regime, Shukri Ghanem, was found dead in Vienna under circumstances still not clear to investigators yet. Tunis allowed clearance for the Libyan authorities regarding the extradition of former Libyan Prime Minister, Baghdadi Ali Mahmoudi.

In May, the *UNSG Personal Envoy for Western Sahara*, Christopher Ross, was discouraged from Morocco a few days before he would have made his first visit ever to both occupied and liberated territories in the former Spanish colony. The unilateral act of Rabat was caused by the disputed April the 5<sup>th</sup> *Report of the Secretary General of the United Nations on the situation concerning Western Sahara*, as reporting severe complaints about major Moroccan pressures over the work of the *United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO)*.

### ***Western Africa: Guinea Bissau, Ivory Coast, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria and Senegal.***

The scenario before the coup of April 12 was marked by the following main events. President of *Guinea Bissau*, *Malam Bacai Sanha*, democratically elected in 2009 – already sick – January the



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9<sup>th</sup> died in a clinic in Paris. *Raimundo Pereira*, President of the Parliament, as provided in these cases by the Constitution, assumed the role of interim President until the elections, set March 18, for which the Prime Minister, Carlos Gomes Junior (since 2008) too, announced to compete. The first round was not sufficient to designate the new President, so April the 22<sup>th</sup> the run-off should have taken place between *Kumba Yala* (23 percent of preferences), leader of the *Social Renewal Party (PRS)* and the favourite, *Gomes Junior* (49 percent of preferences), belonging to the ruling party, the *African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (PAIGC)*, but only ten days earlier, April 12, a coup ordered by the Army did take place and prevented the completion of the process of the current election. The coup has further weakened a very delicate process of democratization, pushing the country into a spiral of greater uncertainty and distrust: state sovereignty in Guinea Bissau is no longer practiced. Angolan military presence, MISSANG, was the scapegoat needed to justify the coup. The implementation of the SSR MISSANG intended to realize must have threatened and definitely undermine the well-established hegemony of the Armed Forces, which have reacted as expected. Between the 16<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> of April an agreement between the military and opposition parties, thus excluding the majority party, the PAIGC, gave rise to a self-styled National Transitional Council, which should have remained in office for two years up to new general election, but it was not recognized by the African Union nor by the European Union. At that moment the PAIGC required the UN to send a peacekeeping force, to prevent any further dangerous drifts. On 26 April, ECOWAS agreed to send a regional mission of in Guinea Bissau – *ECOWAS Mission to Guinea Bissau (ECOMIB)* – initially equipped with 629 men, with the specific mandate to ensure security during the transition until new elections, that will take place in one year. Former President of the Parliament, *Manuel Serifo Nhamadjo*, is the interim President, while former Minister of Finance, *Rui Duarte Barros*, the Acting Premier. Remarkably, as part of the agreement, by the end of June MISSANG shall have completely left the country.

In *Côte d'Ivoire*, *Bictogo Adama*, Minister of African Integration, was deposed, in that allegedly involved in the notorious scandal of toxic waste '*Probo Koala*' that dates back to 2006. Bictogo was engaged in the difficult mediation on the Malian crisis so far. His appointment was immediately entrusted to Daniel Kablan Duncan. In truth, this is a strong signal originated from the Ivorian executive against any form of impunity. On June 18, the trial against former Ivorian President, Laurent Gbagbo, opened at the International Criminal Court (ICC) in the Hague. Besides, Togo has authorized the extradition of the former Minister of Defence, Moise Lida Kouassi. Moreover, the situation along the border with Liberia is increasingly deteriorating, where military raid perpetrated by Ivorian pro-Gbagbo militia are intensifying.

May 29, in The Hague, the *Special Court for Sierra Leone (SCSL)* sentenced former Liberian President, *Charles Taylor*, to fifty years imprisonment, for crimes committed in neighbouring Sierra Leone by the rebels of Foday Sankoh's *Revolutionary United Front (RUF)* during the Civil War. The eleven charges, of which he was convicted, are terrorism, murder, violence against the physical well-being of people, rape, sexual slavery, outrage to human dignity, violence against mental well-being of persons, other inhumane acts, conscription of children, enslavement and looting. His lawyers said they would immediately appeal. This is the first conviction ever enjoined to an African head of state so far.

In *Mali* the April the 6<sup>th</sup> Northern territories' *National Movement for the Liberation of the Azawad (MNLA)* unilaterally declared independence was immediately followed by the split within the sep-



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arapist groups: the *Islamist* Tuareg – *Ansar Dine* – and the *secular* Tuareg – MNLA – who had been trying to reach a compromise without effect to establish the Islamic law in the occupied territories. Following the failure of the attempted merge between the two sides, MNLA created the *National Transitional Council of the Azawad*. The President of the African Union, Thomas Boni Yayi, has explicitly called for the deployment of an African Union force to be sent under UN mandate, in order to restore the territorial integrity of Mali. The regional military intervention force will be called '*ECOWAS Mission in Mali*' (*MICEMA*). In terms of countermeasures against the internal putsch, an interim Government led by civilian has been set up: the former President of the Parliament, *Diounounda Traore*, has become the President of Mali, while *Cheick Modibo Diarra*, Prime Minister. However, the AU has announced the complete removal of the military junta – the *National Committee for the Restoration of Democracy and the Restoration of the State (CN-RDRE)* – from the management of national political transition.

As far as *Niger* is concerned, the 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> of March *EU Foreign Affairs Council* approved the deployment by the summer a *mission in the Sahel* under its *Common Security Defence Policy (CSDP)*, which aims to improve 'interoperability and the capacity level of the repressive police, national police and national guard in the country. In June, the President of Niger, Mahmadou Issoufou, denouncing the presence of training camps for Afghan and Pakistani jihadists in Mali, namely at Gao, operated by Nigerian militants Boko Haram, has theorized the *existence of a comprehensive plan of external intervention, jeopardizing not only in Mali, but the whole Sahelian-Saharan region*. Evidently, intent of the authorities is to prevent any attempt to emulate the *Tuareg* secession within Niger itself.

In *Senegal*, *Abdoul Mbaye* is the new Prime Minister, recently appointed by the newly elected President Macky Sall, in conjunction with a government consisting of just 25 ministers. Sall, who paid a visit to Paris, as to strengthen bilateral ties, obtained loans for 130 million euros by the former colonial power. The electoral campaign for legislative elections of July the 1<sup>st</sup> began; *Benno Bokk Yaakaar (BBY)*, the coalition supporting the current government is expected to win the vote.

### ***Eastern Africa: Eritrea, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan and Sudan.***

As per *Eritrea*, Washington withdrew its diplomatic staff from Asmara. Late in April, the Eritrean President, Isais Afewerki, has reappeared on television to deny rumours about his death, although his health is very poor indeed. According to some leading international experts, the Eritrean regime is a step away from the end and some officers would be ready to replace or to depose him.

Following a government reshuffle, *Sam Oneri* is the new *Kenyan Foreign Minister*, replacing Moses Wetangula. On June 10, in circumstances yet to be clarified, the Minister of Internal Security, George Saitoti died in a helicopter crash. Actually, between 1976 and 1979, he had been Vice-President of Kenya and was currently running for the forthcoming Presidential elections.

Kenyan troops of the *African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM)* have been able to conquer Afmadow, a strategic location in the direction of Kisimayo. For the first time ever the *EU mission 'Atalanta'* hit a logistics base for pirates on land. *Atalanta's* mandate is to contribute to the deterrence, prevention and repression of acts of piracy and armed robbery off the coast of Somalia. From May 31 to June 1 the *Second Istanbul Conference on Somalia*, entitled "*Preparing Somalia's Future: Goals for 2015*", was attended by fifty-four international delegations. In fact, the very first conference on Somalia wanted by Mr. Erdogan took place in 2010. Yet, this time the Confer-

ence, without great results, has tried to make the point on the mandate of the *Transitional Federal Institutions (TFI)*, whose deadline of August the 20<sup>th</sup>, will not be renewed. At least in theory, the following steps should follow: Constituent Assembly and a new Parliament, new Constitution and, finally, Presidential elections. It is significant to point out how important stakeholders such as *Puntland*, *Galmudug* and *Ahlu Sunna Waljama'a (ASWJ)* did not intend to take part in the conference, delegitimizing this way Turkish diplomacy's efforts.

In less than a year after *South-Sudanese* secession, Khartoum and Juba are the protagonists of a growing military escalation along the common borders and nothing is worth the Non Aggression Pact, signed on February 10 between the two countries. On 24 April the United Nations Security Council has asked Sudan to immediately stop the bombing of South Sudan, particularly concentrated in the *State of Unity* and *South Kordofan*, those that April 12 in Washington, *G8 Foreign Ministers* called "*The Two Areas*". On 20 April, the Sudanese Armed Forces have recaptured the oil-rich area of *Heglig*, which had been occupied by the forces of Juba ten days before. Seemingly, the objective of the regime of Omar al-Bashir is to prevent by every means the energy independence of South Sudan, whose President, Salva Kiir, had to interrupt his official visit to China and to at once go back home, because of the ongoing hostilities. Actually, Juba specifically asked Beijing for funding, to implement such pipeline that would be decisive, not to depend by Sudanese refineries any longer. To avoid problems with Khartoum, Beijing has decided not to fund anymore the construction of the pipeline alternative to the already existing one, as required by Juba. As a serious effort at *détente*, in anticipation of the resumption of negotiations with Juba, Khartoum has decided to withdraw its troops from Abyei, so that ultimately the *United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA)* would intervene and complete its mandate. However, the first round of negotiations mediated by the AU in Addis Ababa ended with a stalemate. The goal would be always to reach an agreement to demilitarize the border between the two States. In the meantime, *South Sudan* has become member of both the *International Monetary Fund* and the *World Bank*. The President, Salva Kiir, has formally asked the AU negotiators to refer the dispute over the borders with Sudan to the *International Court of Justice* in The Hague.

***Central Africa: Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Gabon.***

In the *Democratic Republic of the Congo* the former Finance Minister, *Augustin Matata Ponyo Mapon*, has become the new Prime Minister, while the new President of the Parliament is now *Minaku Aubin*. In parallel, the international community is getting more and more concerned about the growing movement of *May-May* rebel troops in *North Kivu* along the border with Rwanda and Uganda, where newly formed rebel army is born, the mutineers of the '*March 23 Movement*' (*M23*), led by *Colonel Makenga Sultani*, allegedly supported by Rwanda. Actually, Sultani is known for having played a major role in the ranks of the irregular militias named *National People's Congress*, of the fugitive *General Bosco Ntaganda*, currently wanted by the International Criminal Court. Between May and June escalating fighting between the DRC regular Army (FARDC) and the M23 have occurred. The North-eastern regions of DRC are infested with some other *May-May* militias and with the *Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR)*, articulation of the Hutu Rwandan rebellion. Apparently, a few FLDR elements would have infiltrated the loyalist FARDC, creating confusion and embarrassment among the regular troops, now openly accused of double-cross. Besides, there are rumours about the formation of the so-called *Coalition*



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of *Ituri Armed Groups (COGAI)*, headed by *Colonel Banaloki Matata*. The following three armed groups would compose COGAI: the *Popular Front for the Sustainable Development of Ituri*, the *Army for the Revolution* and the *Army for Integration of Ituri*.

In *Gabon*, *Raymond Ndong Sima* is the new Prime Minister. Because of the stalemate in negotiations with Equatorial Guinea on the *island of Mbanié* sovereignty, the dispute will be referred to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in The Hague. Early June, the *New York Forum Africa* took place in the Gabonese capital, Libreville, focusing on renewable energy for sustainable development across the Continent.

### ***Southern Africa: Malawi, and Lesotho.***

*Joyce Banda* has become the new President of *Malawi*. After the heart attack that April 5 caused the sudden death of the controversial former president, *Bingu wa Mutharika*.

In *Lesotho*, the Premier of the new coalition Government is the former Foreign Minister, *Thomas Thabane*, of the *All Basotho Convention (ABC)*. He succeeded to *Pakalitha Mosisili*, leader of the Congress Party (CP), who had resigned on May 30.

### ***Conclusions***

Guinea-Bissau in recent years has increasingly become for Western Africa *the* best theatre, giving room to antagonism and rivalry of external and exogenous interests: this time on the one hand one has Angola, as the expression of both Portuguese speaking countries block – the *Community of Portuguese Language Countries (CPLP)* – and of Southern Africa countries as well, looking for more leadership at Continental level, and on the other hand, the ECOWAS block principally made of Ivory Coast, Nigeria and Senegal, that are determined to maintain their supremacy over all West Africa region. More precisely, Angola indirectly supported the Presidential candidacy of *Gomes Junior*, who, once elected, would have undoubtedly reciprocated by supporting and strengthening the presence of *MISSANG* in Guinea-Bissau. In fact, *Gomes Junior* not only is a politician, but also a businessman in the oil industry in direct connection with Portuguese and Angolan oil companies. On the other hand the Ivory Coast sees with increasing suspicion any Angolan interference in the region, as it reminds the unconditional support that Luanda had credited to the former Ivorian President, *Laurent Gbagbo*, during the post-election crisis last year. More in depth, Ivorian leadership of President *Ouattara* has been able to better express its own weight and ostracize Angola, by virtue of the fact that since February it holds the ECOWAS Presidency. Still, Senegal wants its Southern borders secured with no risk of easily becoming an easier transit to the rear of the rebellion in Casamance. From its point of view, Nigeria, although very weak in recent months as dealing with domestic terrorism of *Boko Haram*, is suspicious about the role of any other emerging power in Africa, such as Angola. Subsequently, they all agree to find a way to drive once for all Angola out of the games in Guinea-Bissau. The spillover of the fall of the Libyan regime of *Gaddafi* is causing an acceleration to the previously latent crisis across the countries of the Sahara and the Sahel, becoming the epicentre of forthcoming clash, with the concurrence of Islamist terrorism and illegal trafficking in the area. Right now the goal of *Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM)* is properly to destabilize the already precarious institution building process of all concerned States along the Sahel and the Saharan belt. The first to have paid the expenses of such a strategy was the weak Malian government of *Amadou Toumani Toure*, who had not been able to firstly face with AQIM and after to stop the advance of *Tuareg* rebels, who, allied with a



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net of *AQ-Associated Movements (AQAM)*, have taken possession of Northern territories of Mali, declaring the independence of the *Azawad State*. Also in light of the shift of geopolitical gravity across the African Continent, further polarization of the clash seems inevitable. Therefore, West Africa and the Sahel as a whole should be urgently more deeply considered of strategic interest to the European Union as a whole.

*In addition to it, the pervasiveness and the hegemony of Guinea-Bissau Armed Forces are objectively the main obstacle to peace, security and national stability, with dangerous repercussions at regional level in West Africa. In a country where since 1994 no democratically elected President has ever been able to close his mandate, the more Guinea-Bissau will be able to manage its own state sovereignty, by limiting the exceeding role of the Army through a factual SSR implementation, the less divergent interests of external and regional actors will continue to make use of Guinea Bissau as their combat zone. For Tuareg the partnership with AQIM together with the heavy weapons coming from the Libyan arsenal made their dream come true, by winning the battle against the weaker Malian Army. Unfortunately for them, having allied with public enemy number one in the world, is making lawful whatever military action at regional level, in order to restore the territorial integrity of Mali, which is to be authorised by the United Nations Security Council, the sooner the better.*



## ***China and the Wealth of Nations***

*Nunziante Mastrolia*

Why are some countries poor while some others are rich? For centuries, generations of economists, political scientists, sociologists and geographers have worked to answer this question, by making the most disparate theories but without reaching a definitive conclusion. Some identify the independent variable as the cause for the abysmal disparities of wealth and welfare among world countries: the rich ones are those who live in temperate climates; or those who possess a special endowment of natural resources: English coal for example; others emphasize the importance of cultural factors: the best known thesis is that of Max Weber, according to which the Protestant ethic was the engine of development for some European countries; some others emphasize the importance of “Asian values” for the development of the Asian tigers in the 80s and China in the 90s and early 2000.

Yet none of these hold up. When it comes to the “geographical theory”, this does not explain, just to name a few examples, the difference in economic development between Eastern and Western Germany during the Cold War years, or that between South and North Korea nor the chasm of difference that exist between the California of the United States and Baja California in Mexico. Max Weber's thesis has been widely falsified: the point is not that the Protestant ethic was actually quite contrary to the trade, indeed when applied rigorously it suppressed the development rather than encourage it; even more, it does not explain the extraordinary development of the most Catholic communes of Italy in XI – XIV centuries. The same thing works with regards to Asian values: because even though the influence of Confucianism in China has always been strong, why was it only in the 80s that it started a development process? Same story for the Korean peninsula where “Asian values” are equally strong, if not stronger than elsewhere, but still there is still no trace of economic development.

Yet the answer to that fundamental question is before the eyes of all, and it is ironic how generations of scholars have closed their eyes to reality the reality of facts: free and democratic countries are rich; non democratic countries are poor. As Bill Emmott writes: “ if we were to consider the fifty nations that have the highest GDP per capita, non democratic ones are reduced to only a handful of micro-States and oil producers”. This means that an authoritarian State cannot restrict the development of science, technology and economic development and if there are States, such as China, which seem to prove otherwise since it exploits the know-how produced by the capitalist countries with liberal regimes. In other words, an authoritarian regime could trigger a development process and launch the country towards economic well being, but only up to a certain point, beyond



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which in order to evolve into a manufacturer of scientific research and technological innovation that fuels the economic machine it has to stop being authoritarian and turn into a Western-style democracy.

This point has been identified by economists: the moment in which a developing country, following a long phase of trying to reach the leap is forced to “jump”, arrives when the GDP per capita reaches 3 thousand and 6 thousand dollars. If at this stage the country is unable to change the development path it adopted it will find itself stuck in the so called “middle income trap” and gradually begins to recede. In order to overcome this challenge the example of Seoul should be followed: to move away from cheap textile products to the peaks of hi tech, a result that was possible in 1987 once South Korea put an end to autocratic regimes that ruled since 1945, an event gave life to a new Western – style political regime. This means that political reforms are needed in order to escape the “middle income trap”.

China today is like South Korea of the early eighties. For a segment of the Chinese political world what is expressed today in terms of understanding the issue, at least in part, is quite clear. The Chinese economic miracle is largely due to exportations (technology produced in democratic countries) and to the State's infrastructural investments. For a number of reasons, this pattern of growth will not last long: hence the need, in the words of the Party's press, to move from the “made in China” to the “created in China”. The Prime Minister Wen Jiabao has repeatedly emphasized this point. Most recently during a speech held at the Chinese Academy of Sciences on June 13<sup>th</sup>, Wen underlined the need to promote academic freedom and the “independent thinking” as engines of innovation. But it is evident that free thinking requires not only academic freedom but also the right of freedom of press, speech and criticism and for those rights to be tangibly guaranteed (and not left to gathering dust in the solemn pages of the Constitution) they require the existence of an independent judiciary system to protect them from political power that safeguards it, and this means to break the monopoly of the party and open the door to the division of powers. In fact, one of the *leit motiv* Chinese dissidents is to demand the enforcement of the rights enshrined in the constitution.

But there is more: for innovation to emerge there will be a need of a financial system willing to put in stake and nurture good ideas (and a strict regime that protects intellectual property rights). The United States is a country that produces scientific research and technological innovation, and thus produces real economic revolutions, not only because they have the best university system in the world, but also because they have a financial system that has allowed entire generations to nurture the ideas of Bill Gates, Steve Jobs and Mark Zuckerberg. Wen Jiabao even mentioned this point while thundering against the monopoly of State-owned banks. However, breaking such monopoly, opening the financial system to private investors, both foreign and domestic and restore independence of the central bank, means in effect, put an end to the supremacy of the Party over the Country's economic life. This again brings us back to square one: the nature of main obstacle that presents itself on the path of China's well being is political and consists of a particular institutional conformation molded to ensure the absolute power of the Chinese Communist Party.

If this analysis is correct what follows is that the various stimulus measures that the government is putting in place in order to curb the alarming slowdown in the economy (on which the political legitimacy of the CCP totally depends), from “scrapping incentives” to new investments in infra-

structure, to cutting the cost of money and the percentage of reserve requirement ratio (RRR) for major banks, are all dangerous palliatives (dangerous because they could provoke the opening a door for a new inflationary phase, in which the government, in a continuous succession of damaging hot and cold shower, could provoke a new phase of deflation), which solve nothing since they simply do not address the main issue: a liberal-democratic reform for the country.

It is also true that with the explosion of the Bo Xilai *affaire* a sort of reformist enthusiasm has infected international observers, to the extent that someone got to the point to proclaim that with the XVIII Congress the Party could declare the conclusion of its historical mission and dissolve into a broader framework of democratic pluralism.

In other words it is argued that once the lump of power represented by Bo and his followers is eliminated the way to reforms will be free of obstacles. Hopefully so, because this is what the country needs. But doubts remain.

First of all a pluralistic system is in need of “forts” and “pillboxes” which means to say counter-powers both within the political sphere and civil society which limit and control power. In this sense, the defenestration of Bo and the sword of Damocles hanging over the head of internal security czar Zhou Yongkang may be compatible with both the elimination of a faction that, through the abuse of power, brutally persecuted its political dissidents and the followers of Falun Gong, and both against the elimination of beneficial power. Thus, considering the latter case, it would mean that the party is trying to strengthen its own power rather than opening up to political pluralism which would explain the alliance between the reformists of Wen and the orthodox Hu Jintao.

There is even more, Bo Xilai has been eliminated – only politically for now – because he altered already weaken rules which govern the succession of power. It is therefore about consensus from the bottom instead of the alternation of factions: in fact Bo had turned Chongqing into his constituency. If such a hypothesis makes some sense, this means that Bo's greatest fault has been to introduce germs of a representative democracy that is totally incompatible with the institutional implant of the Party. The question is then, with a hint of provocation, isn't Bo Xilai the real reformist? Only time will answer this question.

In summary, what could be conveniently defined in China as the “democracy deficit” is the direct cause for both the wheezing in the Chinese economy and for its difficulties to abandon the development path (autocracy in addition to the market) it had adopted so far: a step that has to be taken (think of Korea) if the country does not want to stop; this is also the cause of the political turbulence in recent months: the difficulty in the process of power transfer which directly depends on the lack of a clear definition on who holds the sovereign power in China: the constitution declares the sovereign people but their voice remain silent.

### ***The difficult path for regional hegemony***

The democratic deficit does not only explain the internal difficulties, it also remains the ultimate cause for the tensions and fibrillations occurring at a regional level. In recent years, Beijing has persistently led an intense diplomatic campaign of “good neighborliness” in order to convince all regional countries not to fear China's rise: the now famous peaceful development. In fact, the Chinese growth has polarized the structure of regional trade. The economies of Japan, Korea, Vietnam



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and the Philippines have also significantly benefited from the Chinese growth, nevertheless, economic growth has not calmed political anxiety, and on the contrary it increased them. Tokyo, Seoul, Hanoi and Manila still do not trust Beijing. Again, the reasons are purely political and relate not only and not so much to the uncertainties towards China's future intentions at the regional level, but rather to its non transparent institutional system that remains closed and undemocratic.

The major assertiveness shown by Beijing on the many open issues of territorial disputes in the South and East China Sea has made it necessary to push these countries to demand an ever greater American involvement.

During the XI Shangry – La Dialogue on June 1st Secretary of Defense Leone Panetta clarified the terms of U.S. involvement: by 2020 60% of U.S. Navy units will be stationed in Asia. At the conclusion of his speech Panetta flew into Vietnam and visited the naval base of Cam Ranh Bay: not since the end of the Vietnam War had any U.S. Defense Secretary set foot there.

Beijing interpreted such visit as a clear endorsement by the Americans of the Vietnamese claims in the South China Sea (the tension between Hanoi and Beijing increased significantly during the same days). It is to be taken into consideration that American naval units will use the port of Singapore, according to an agreement reached on June 2nd. In addition to the Darwin base in Australia which will host 2500 U.S. marines and the support Washington is guaranteeing to Manila: recently the United States have declared their willingness to “assist the Philippines with a National Coast Watch Center” which will have the task to “improve the Philippines' maritime domain awareness of a breadth of security issues”. Finally, if you take into consideration the latest agreement for closer collaboration efforts between the U.S. and New Zealand, signed in Washington on June 20th, together with all the existing agreements with other countries in the region and the system of military bases already active with increasingly frequent exercises between the navies of the United States, Korea, Japan, Vietnam and India, it is quite evident that the U.S. is strengthening its defense system in the region.

It is clear that the recipe suggested by Kennan for the Soviet Union (pure and simple containment) cannot be applied to the China of today: Beijing is part of the international economy and is the guardian of the (now) nuclear regime of Pyongyang. This probably means that the U.S. has a twofold goal; persuade Beijing about the fact that there are no empty spaces in the region; but above all to avoid all reasons that might trigger nervousness among the countries in the region which might lead to a dangerous race for weapons. But there is more: this is not just about the fact that Washington has an interest in keeping an active role as a major player in the ongoing transformations in Asia; nor because it sees it as a pure U.S. national interest, as expressed clearly in all the National Security Strategy, no matter if they have been published under Democratic or Republican administrations, that neither the West nor the East Rimland fall under the absolute domination of a power hostile to America. There is more to this: the reconstruction of a post-war international order by Washington had a principle objective and that was to break those political-economic blocs (the sterling bloc, the mark and the yen ... etc) which competitiveness led to the outbreak of World War II. From this point of view, it is interest for the Americans and for a global stability of the international system that Asia does not constitute a closed block ruled by a non-democratic China.

The nervousness witnessed in Asian countries – including India – and the “return” of America,



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proves two elements: Beijing has failed to demonstrate as a “benign power” and has not been able to put together an effective system of alliances with the major players in the region: intense economic cooperation, but no strategic confidence. The reason for this is to be found – most likely – in its institutional conformation: a non-democratic system that is not transparent or open.

In other words, without necessarily having to invoke the theory of democratic peace, the countries of the region – no matter how more or less democratic they are – said “no” to a Chinese Monroe Doctrine and thus throwing their trust on the U.S. superpower and its institutional system that is democratic and transparent and, what has not be underestimated, open: in the sense that the allied nations can participate in a direct or indirect (pressure groups, lobbies) to American decision-making process.

### *Conclusion*

If you agree with the above analysis, it is evidently clear how China will be forced to abandon its model of development if it does not adopt the road of economic stagnation and social instability. For China this could mean opening up to liberal democracy. Similarly, the institutional nature of China remains the main obstacle to a process of economic and political integration, based on the European model, which can ensure peace and prosperity among the countries of the region.

Therefore, continuing along this path can only accelerate China’s internal decline worsen its relations with neighboring countries and the United States. The mother of all reforms is purely political and without which things will only deteriorate.



## **Are India and Pakistan eventually ready to enter a “New Era” of Bilateral Relations?**

*Claudia Astarita*

*It is definitely true that something is changing in India-Pakistan bilateral relations. Official representatives of these two countries have never met as often as they have been doing during the last few months. And even facts that until a few weeks ago would have been used as an easy pretext to deepen confrontation, today are not even preventing official meetings to take place. Sometimes encouraged by both Beijing and Washington, sometimes not, New Delhi and Islamabad have already announced several times their intention to “improve bilateral relations to maintain regional peace and stability”. However, their commitment has never been particularly serious, mainly because their historic rivalry kept on nurturing bilateral distrust rather than favoring the achievement of any compromise. Since today something seems really changing, it is worth trying to understand what is happening, why, and how serious this new positive trend can be in pushing the historic South Asian enemies towards a sustainable compromise.*

The first tangible sign that India and Pakistan are eventually interested in favoring a positive evolution of their bilateral relations was Asif Ali Zardari visit to India in April 2012. This has been the first Pakistani official visit in seven years, following the one made in 2005 by the then President Pervez Musharraf, who used the cover of an Indian-Pakistani cricket match to hold talks with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. Even though it has been stressed many times that Zardari trip has been a private one (the Pakistani president travelled with a 40-members delegation including his son Bilawal Bhutto Zardari), and that his intention was the one of visiting a famous Sufi Muslim shrine in the state of Rajasthan, he did hold a 40-minute private meeting while having lunch with Manmohan Singh.

During their talk, both leaders expressed their intentions to “consolidate better relations” and “find practical, pragmatic solutions” to all the issues which have remained unsettled. While Zardari took the occasion to invite Manmohan Singh to visit him “on Pakistani soil very soon”, most of their talks was dominated by the problem of Hafiz Sayeed, the man suspected of masterminding the Mumbai 2008 attacks in which 166 people were killed. India holds Pakistan-based groups, including the Lashkar-e-Taiba which Sayeed leads, responsible for the attacks and wants Sayeed to be arrested. During these talks both leaders could not expect that a few weeks later the arrest of Syed Zabiuddin Ansari, an Indian national living in Saudi Arabia on a Pakistani passport, another key player in Mumbai terrorist attack, would have reopened this wound, officially confirming, as Indian Interior Minister Palaniappan Chidambaram highlighted, Pakistan state support for the 26/11 mas-



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sacre.

What is important to stress is that this visit has been followed by a wide range of positive signs, confirming Islamabad and New Delhi's intentions to try to consolidate this encouraging trend. Among them, it is worth quoting the "new treatment" of Pakistani prisoners in India and vice versa; the new commitment in strengthening bilateral trade; and a new way of handling both border disputes and the evolution of the Mumbai crisis.

In April, just a few days after the Zardari visit, Pakistani doctor Khalil Chishti, 80 years old, was granted bail by the Indian Supreme Court and released from prison after serving 14 months in jail for a 1992 murder. He had been found guilty after an 18-years trial and sentenced to life imprisonment. A few days later, New Delhi's Supreme Court unexpectedly mentioned it was "pained by the plight of mentally disabled Pakistanis languishing in Indian jails", admitting that "many Pakistani are still in jail even after they have served their sentences because they do not have proper identifications". Accordingly, the Government was officially asked to "find out a way to repatriate them".

In June, Surjeet Singh returned to India after spending more than 30 years in jail in Pakistan for spying, and more than 300 Indian fishermen held in a Karachi jail were released as a goodwill gesture. Two decisions taken on the one hand to reciprocate Indian new approach towards the nearly 250 Pakistani nationals currently held in its jails. On the other hand to dull pressure on the new evolution in the Mumbai case after the arrest of a new key suspect, Syed Zabiuddin Ansari. In May, during a meeting in Islamabad, India offered to export petroleum products to Pakistan to help it overcome an energy crisis which is crippling the country's industry and leaving millions of people suffering during the hot summers and chilly winters.

It is evident that, for New Delhi, the real aim of the meeting was not (only) proving its interest in helping Islamabad to face one of its numerous crisis, rather also broadly discuss the option of further increasing bilateral trade and the one of investment flows liberalization. Consolidating a positive trend inaugurated just one month before when Pakistan organized a fair trade in New Delhi to give "a soft image of the country" and to show the reasons why, as Tariq Puri, head of the Trade Development Authority of Pakistan, pointed out, "terrorism should not take business hostage". A success immediately followed by India's commerce secretary official commitment to "confirm the in-principle decision, as a part of the process to deepen our economic engagement, to allow foreign direct investments from Pakistan in India". A sort of "wait-and-see" approach waiting for Islamabad Parliament ratification of the promised Most Favoured Nation trade status to be confirmed.

A few months after Zardari visit, top defence officials from India and Pakistan met in the Pakistani city of Rawalpindi to talk about the Siachen glacier (in Kashmir), an area claimed by the two countries, which have thousands of troops stationed there. Even though India's Defence Minister AK Antony announced before the meeting that no major breakthrough could be expected as "this issue is very important for Indian national security", the fact that this round of talks has not been canceled is a positive sign.

Tragically, on the eve of this meeting Siachen experienced a deadly avalanche killing 135 Pakistani soldiers and civilians, confirming one more time the urgency of solving a dispute because of which both militaries have lost an estimated 5,000 (India) and 3,000 (Pakistan) soldiers respectively, pri-



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marily due to adverse climate and treacherous terrain. Reminding that the cost of deploying battalions in the region, to defend a 50-mile long icy wasteland, runs in millions of dollars each year, both countries recognized that defense expenditures in Siachen do not justify its lack of strategic advantage. And even agreeing that a compromise may not be reached very soon, the latest tragedy seems having suddenly transformed the “demilitarization option” as an actionable one. One week after these talks, a new round of dialogue was opened in Delhi, this time focusing on the Sir Creek maritime boundary dispute. In this case, no significant result has been achieved.

Islamabad and New Delhi’s new positive attitude has been challenged in late June, following the Pakistani Supreme Court’s dismissal of Yousuf Raza Gilani as Prime Minister (a move that might lead to the collapse of Gilani’s coalition government, forcing elections ahead of the voting scheduled for early next week), and the arrest of Syed Zabiuddin Ansari, a key suspect in the 2008 attacks on Mumbai, who told Indian investigators that officials from Pakistan’s intelligence agency were present in a control room in the Pakistani city of Karachi while he and others directed attackers on the ground in Mumbai. Ansari also informed Indian investigators that he went to Saudi Arabia on Lashkar’s orders to raise funds and recruit Indian expatriates as militants. Officials said he might have remained in the shadows had he not opened a Facebook account in his real name to find new recruits and to contact Lashkar accomplices.

It is impressive and remarkable that top diplomats from India and Pakistan have been authorized to begin peace talks in June despite the recent revelations implicating Pakistan’s intelligence agency in the 2008 terror attacks on India’s financial capital. It is also true that Saudi Arabia’s decision to hand Ansari over to India, rather than Pakistan, surprised Indian officials, as Saudi Arabia and Pakistan have long had close ties. Although it is untimely to understand whether Islamabad influenced this choice or not and whether the release of Indian prisoners was indirectly linked to this scandal, the non-cancellation of the meeting remains a success.

June’s India-Pakistan official meeting had been scheduled to “discuss peace and security, Jammu and Kashmir and promotion of friendly exchanges”, but also to prepare the agenda for talks between the countries’ foreign ministers, originally scheduled for July 18 but later postponed with a new date yet to be announced.

A senior Indian government official said the talks in New Delhi between Foreign Secretary Ranjan Mathai and his Pakistani counterpart Jalil Abbas Jilani had the sole aim of keeping the “dialogue process on track”. Following this path, in early July the two foreign secretaries, Ranjan Mathai and Jalil Abbas Jilani, met in Delhi to discuss the Zabiuddin Ansari issue. In it important to highlight that, in this occasion, Pakistan officially offered to help India investigating this key figure involved in the planning of the Mumbai attacks.

Even though some analysts have stressed that “Pakistan confirmed its interest in fighting terrorism but denied that its intelligence agents were involved in the bloodshed”, adding that “India has not yet provided usable information to unmistakably prove that Pakistani militants participated in the attacks”, the ones that have decided to read Pakistan’s statements in a more constructive way have highlighted that while rejecting “any insinuation of any involvement of any state agency in acts of terrorism in India”, Jalil Abbas Jilani invited his Indian counterpart to “share with him whatever evidence they have with them and they will investigate the matter”, reminding that Pakistan is “even willing to offer joint investigation into the whole affair but finger-pointing won’t help”.



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South Asian powers' historical records prove that under any other circumstances similar crises would have pushed both governments to cancel any meeting. Accordingly, this paper argues that if despite these huge crises India and Pakistan have decided not to freeze the achievements they reached during the last few months, it is reasonable to assume that their bilateral relations eventually have the potential to change. However, it is assumed that if this trend is going to be confirmed, it would be difficult to justify such an astonishing "revolution" with a "sudden change in New Delhi and Pakistan's mutual perception". On the contrary, it is claimed that two reasons might have influenced South Asian powers' positive engagement: their contemporary economic needs and the role they aim at playing in Afghanistan in the near future.

At a time in which Brics economies have also started suffering for the consequences of the global financial crisis, and with India currently experiencing its worst downturn since the late 1980s and Pakistan that cannot afford to remain isolated in South Asian, it is somehow natural for two neighboring countries to try to strengthen their economic connections even though the complementarities of their markets are not that remarkable. Within this background, it is not a coincidence that last year Islamabad decided to promise to reciprocate by the end of 2012 the Most Favoured Nation trade status that India had granted it in 1996.

As the Indian Express wrote, "Under Mr Zardari's watch, India and Pakistan are considering a sweeping agenda for economic co-operation for the first time in decades. The prime minister has every reason to welcome Mr Zardari warmly and consider the next steps in consolidating the unexpected movement in bilateral relations": ending trade discrimination against India, easing petroleum imports from across the border, and moving towards a liberal visa deal. To consolidate this trend, several analysts have stressed the need for Manmohan Singh to make an official trip to Pakistan, to "convey to Mr Zardari his readiness to move as fast and as far as the Pakistan president is willing to go". Further, Indian has been recommended to "remain patient" no matter what happens. That is even if faced with another Mumbai-style attack. It has been argued that New Delhi should continue to engage with Islamabad, help the civilian government in Pakistan politically, try to resolve at least a few outstanding disputes such as Siachen and Sir Creek, build a relationship with the army, and explore the possibility of cooperating with Islamabad on the future of Afghanistan.

Several clues help to infer that the "Afghan issue" has been much more crucial than the economic one in determining what might become an epoch-making turning point in South Asian relations and balance of power.

The United States have recently started supporting the idea of a "new Afghanistan that might ground its new rise on trade", a "rejuvenated network of commerce, communications and energy transmission, a 'land bridge' connecting the Middle East and Central Asia to the insatiable markets of China, India and Southeast Asia". As U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton reminded last fall, "an Afghanistan firmly embedded in the economic life of a thriving south and central Asia would be better able to attract new sources of foreign investment, connect to markets abroad and provide people with credible alternatives to insurgency". With the unique goal of transforming this war-racked nation into a country that can stand on its own when Nato forces depart in 2014.

It is a matter of fact that to make this vision true Central Asian powers' cooperation will be needed. As soon as U.S. and Nato forces depart, the war economy and the aid program will go with them.



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Accordingly, Kabul will need Asian help to cover the costs of its security forces and maintain existing infrastructures. Today everybody knows that Afghanistan vast unexplored resources (an estimated \$1 trillion to 3 trillion in gold, copper, iron, gas, oil and rare earths) are the surest bet to rapidly fill the gap. And that China and India have already become the most active powers in securing this advantage.

While of the one hand it will not be a problem for Beijing to import Afghan resources through Pakistan, to enjoy the tremendous opportunities for Indian companies to get more involved in Central Asia it has become particularly urgent to unlock the India-Pakistan transit trade route. Confirming the recent inauguration of a regional “more positive and engaging attitude”, on May 23<sup>rd</sup> Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, India and Pakistan, after two decades of setbacks and false starts, have finally signed the TAPI deal, the project aimed at building a 1.680-km pipeline to connect Turkmen gas fields to New Delhi and Islamabad. Two months earlier the representatives of Afghanistan, India, Pakistan, China and Iran met to define a list of projects to promote Afghan development. Among them, the construction of thousands of kilometers of rail and road, dam and hydroelectric projects, electrical-grid expansion and pipelines, cross-border economic zones, paperless customs proceeding and regional transit-transport agreements.

It is a matter of fact that a country like India, which has already invested a lot in Afghanistan re-birth, is significantly disadvantaged compared to its regional competitors as it does not share even a small portion of border with Afghanistan. In this context, the improvement of its relations with Pakistan becomes crucial. If this result will ever be accomplished, this historic change has the potential of strengthening security and stability in the whole region, consequently restoring its current balance of power and, even more important, making the Afghanistan post-2014 scenario much



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### Colombia: an impossible peace?

Alessandro Politi

*Incumbent President Santos is trying, despite violent attacks by his predecessor Uribe, to continue a military attrition campaign against the FARC narcoguerrilla, while offering some dialogue to the guerrillas and some social assistance programmes to the more destitute border regions.*

*On the other hand the FARC have made different peace gestures, whose effect risks to be minimal due to structural blockages in Colombian politics (substantial bipartisan system, heavy collusion with organized crime, persistence of paramilitary groups turned into criminal gangs, corruption). A first obstacle to peace is socio-economic because economic growth postulates a free market that cannot exist when organized crime and political patronage distort competition and rules, marginalising civil society*

*The second obstacle is of socio-political nature. No actor is ready to overcome the actual political model based on a century-long alternance without alternative between Conservative and Liberals. The possible element of medium or long-term transformation could be the new Marcha Patriótica, a grassroots formation, born in April 2012 and federating more than 1.700 social organization that feel under-represented by traditional parties.*

*The important variable is that this is not a top-down movement of demobilized guerrillas or terrorists, but a bottom-up organization that could be more networked and thus more resilient to possible armed criminal intimidation and governmental interferences.*

*Accusations of collusion with the FARC have been already formulated by the establishment on the basis of alleged intelligence evidence. The very idea of the existence of a legal political wing of FARC and ELN is strongly opposed. But historic precedents are less negative: if the Spanish experience (Herri Batasuna-ETA) is still negative, the Italian one (SVP, Südtiroler Volkspartei) or the British one in Northern Ireland (Sinn Fein-IRA) have been decisive in defusing the conflict.*



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### *Another peace proposition?*

On the 22<sup>nd</sup> of June 2012 the FARC-EP (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia - Ejército del Pueblo; Armed Revolutionary Forces of Colombia – People’s Army) have issued a public declaration, signed by the General Staff’s Secretariat, that declared the intention to begin a peace process towards a political solution of the long-standing conflict.<sup>1</sup>

Unfortunately this is the last of a long series of attempts to end the most persistent internal conflict in the world (48 years since the birth of the FARC). The best-known effort was carried out in 1998 by Colombian president Andrés Pastrana Arango, who started peace talks with the narcoguerrilla in El Caguán. The result was the creation of a de-militarized zone that lasted until 2002.

The initiative failed because the de-militarized zone became simply a guerrilla sanctuary, used to carry out attacks in the governmental areas instead of being a confidence building measure. On the other hand the government avoided curbing the activity of illegal and private paramilitary groups that attacked the guerrillas.

Today, propagandistic tones notwithstanding, the guerrilla’s proposals are simple:

- Yes to a process of dialogue and reconciliation entailing deep social, political and economic reforms to be reached through a democratic debate involving all political forces;
- No to an unconditional surrender leading just to the reintegration of the former guerrillas in the existing political game.

It is easy, of course, for the actual president, Juan Manuel Santos Calderón, to follow the course traced by his predecessor, Álvaro Uribe Vélez (2002-2010), precisely because Pastrana’s attempts were fruitless. The strategy consists in the military attrition of the biggest guerrilla in the country (the second being the ELN, Ejército de Liberación Nacional; National Liberation Army), complemented by some additional social programme.

This course is highly probable because the strategy of the outgoing president achieved concrete gains and enjoyed a widespread popular support. In fact during 2001 the FARC had approximately a strength of 16.000 units, well co-ordinated by a number of set units (blocks, fronts, columns), while in the 2010-2011 period the force was estimated around some 8-9.000 fighters, perhaps supplied by some 8.000 supporters of different types; during the same period the homicide rate decreased considerably.<sup>2</sup>

The Colombian MoD statistic indicate positive results against both major guerrillas: ELN had

<sup>1</sup> Cfr. FARC *Declaración Pública En torno a la paz y la solución política al conflicto interno* (Public Declaration about peace and a political solution of the internal conflict), , (27/6/2012). This declaration had re-inforced the general feeling that the FARC were making diplomatic overtures, since it followed a similar declaration, made the 26<sup>th</sup> of February 2012, announcing the end of kidnappings for ransom. The option of capturing troopers of the security forces was left open. Since then an internal debate is raging within the guerrilla about the opportunity of cutting an important financial source.

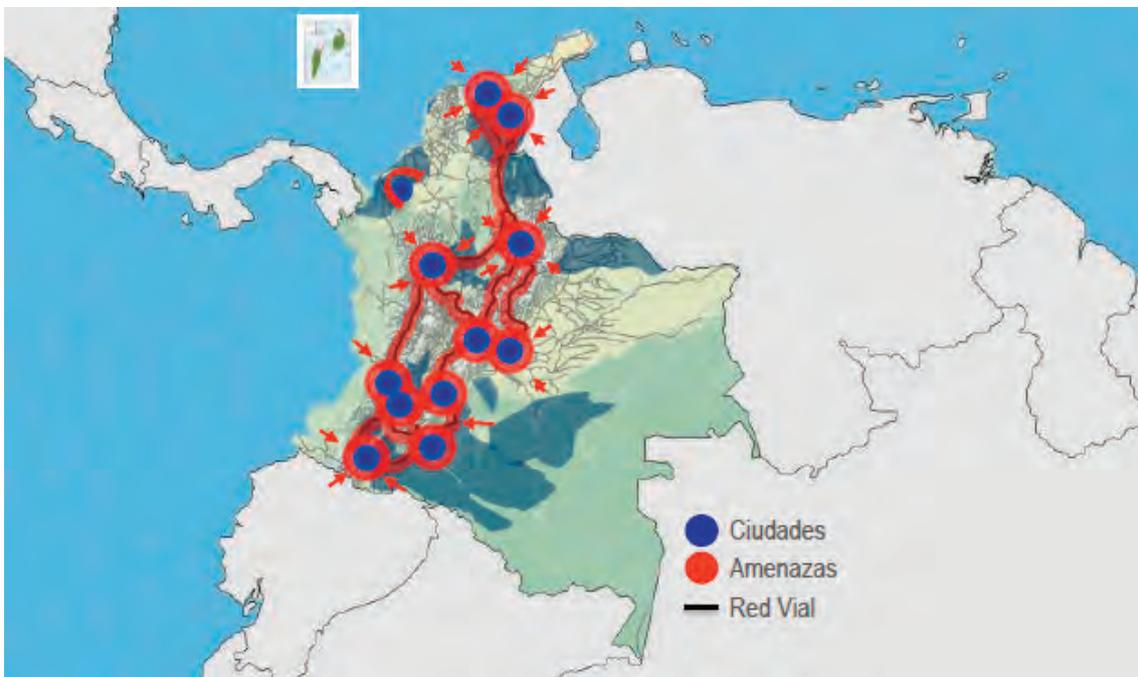
<sup>2</sup> These are controversial figures, especially in their teeth to tail ratio (1:1 is not very credible, especially with regards to a guerrilla situation). Sources of international NGOs indicate that some 20-30% of the force is made up by child soldiers, recruited by force.



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suffered casualties by a factor of five; FARC had to sustain +21% of neutralised personnel, +72% captives and +39% killed in action (data compared between the January-May 2011 period and the January-May 2012 one).<sup>3</sup>

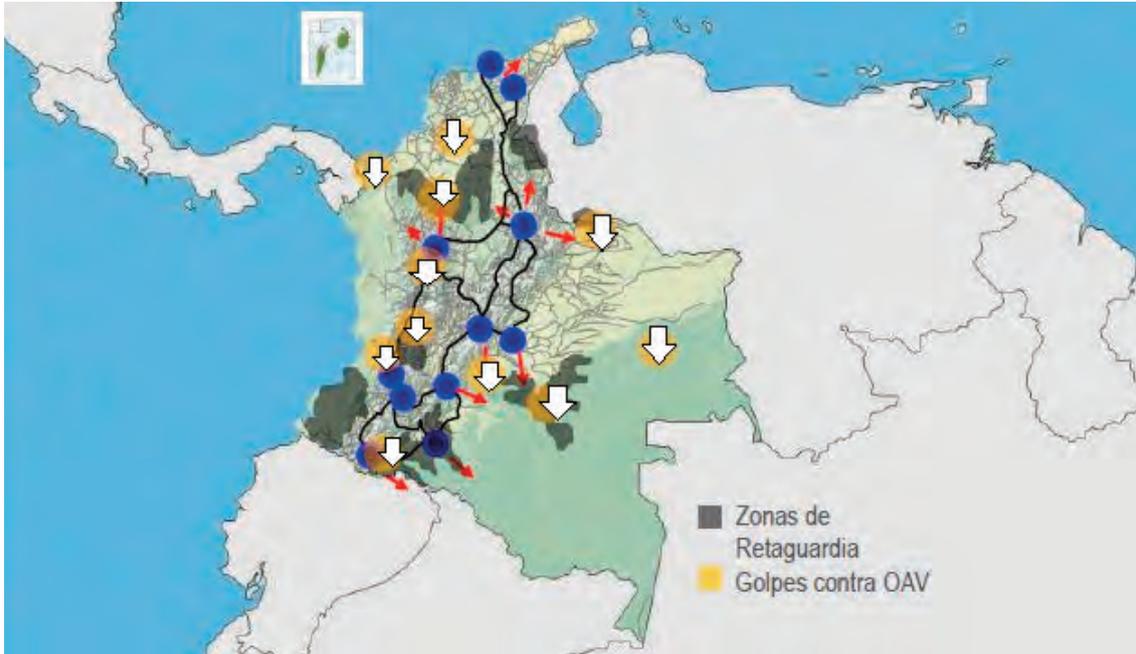
### *Situation of major Colombian guerrilla movements 1996-2002*



Source: Ministerio de Defensa Nacional, Nuevo concepto estratégico y sus resultados, Foro Revista Semana, 31/5/2012, Neiva<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Ministerio de Defensa Nacional, Nuevo concepto estratégico y sus resultados (National Defence Ministry, The new strategic concept and its results), Foro Revista Semana, 31/5/2012, Neiva.

<sup>4</sup> Black bullets represent the cities, the grey areas around cities and transportation networks are guerrilla-infested zones, the grey zones far away from cities are territories controlled by guerrilla. Arrows indicate the pressure points of the threat.

***Situation of major Colombian guerrilla movements 2006-2011***

Source: Idem<sup>5</sup>

The biggest difference vis-à-vis the Uribe presidency lies in four distinct components:

- Better diplomatic relationships with Ecuador and Venezuela, with whom communication was very bad and collaboration almost non-existent. In this respect there has been significant change also regarding military and judicial co-operation, although the frontiers running through the Amazonian forest are still very porous;
- Creation in 2001 of the Plan Fronteras para la Prosperidad (PFP; Plan for Border Prosperity), that aims at developing precisely the peripheral regions of the country and at improving the living standards of local populations (who often are indigenous or Afro-Colombian). This includes the provision of a minimum of land communication infrastructure and better liaisons with the central regions in order to strengthen the influence of the state;
- A constitutional reform (Reforma a las Regalías mineras, 9/6/2011; Mining royalties reform) that allows to allocate revenues also to poorer departments, diminishing the share received by producing regions, and a law in favour of the victims of the internal conflict, offering compensations for some 4 million victims, hit by the violence of

<sup>5</sup> Dark grey zones are guerrillas' rear logistic areas, dark arrows depict the offensives of the security forces and white arrows show attacks against High Value Targets (OAV = Objetivos de Alto Valor). The map has been slightly modified to adapt it to a black and white colour.



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guerrillas, government's forces or paramilitaries (Ley 1448 de 2011, Ley de Víctimas, 10/6/2011);

- Continuation of the rural programmes Programa Familias Guardabosques (PFGB; Forester's Families Programme) e Programa Proyectos Productivos (PPP; Productive Projects programme). Their goal is respectively to create forester's families in areas formerly producing drugs (coca or poppy) and to set up alternative cultivations.

### *Plan Fronteras para la Prosperidad and the regions involved*



Source: Ministerio Relaciones Exteriores, [www.cancilleria.gov.co/en/node/295](http://www.cancilleria.gov.co/en/node/295) (25/6/2012)

### *Persistent security threats*

The Santos presidency has signalled that it wants to use a wider set of social consolidation means to bring life in areas devastated by decades of combats and social upheaval. Nevertheless there are four factors that cast a dark shadow on the short-term perspective for a budding peace and a lasting reconciliation.



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The first factor has deep historic roots and dates back to the Nineteenth Century when the actual bipartisan system was formed by Liberals and Conservatives.<sup>6</sup> The stake of political bipartisan competition is still land reform, an issue that remains substantially unsolved and that is a heavy hindrance for the modernisation and stability of the country.

Land ownership has engendered such a political polarisation that a culture of extremism, delegitimization of political adversaries, disregard for institutions and human rights were the logic consequences. Colombia has witnessed during the Nineteenth Century eight civil wars, culminating in the Guerra de los Mil Días (1899-1902; the Thousand Days War) that saw the temporary defeat of the Liberals.

The following century began with a quasi-civil war (the Primera o Pequeña Violencia 1930-1934; the First or Little Violence) and a great civil war (La Violencia, 1948-1958; the Violence). The first was lead by the Liberals, who had unexpectedly won the elections and who in some parts of the country unleashed groups of irregulars (bandoleros or bandits) that systematically massacred conservative land owners.

After 14 years the political tension sharpened again and the Conservatives killed the Liberal leader Jorge Eliécer Gaitán Ayala to prevent him to take power. His assassination lead to the Violencia during which on one side the Conservative troops and their irregulars committed several atrocities and on the other side Liberal and Communist guerrillas displayed often great cruelty against the enemies.

These were the origins not only of the existing narco-guerrillas, but also of the paramilitary units and the new BACRIM (Bandas Criminales, a hybrid between criminals and paramilitaries), that are scourging the country and practicing forced land expropriation since 1964. Moreover, starting from that period, one can recognise the cyclical Colombian conflict dynamics, that lead to the continuation of war precisely because the fighting units disintegrate and become independent groups instead of being massively defeated and thus allowing the return of peace.

The second factor is linked to coca (cocaine) and then poppy (heroin) networks. During the 'Eighties emerged and developed strong vertical organizations for the production and trade of narcotics, called cartels.<sup>7</sup> These organizations were defeated and dismantled, also thanks to the US efforts in the War on Drugs, but with perverse effects.

- I. In the meantime, due to political complicity or corruption, the cartels had formed alliances with the paramilitaries of the AUC (Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia; United Self-Defence Units of Colombia), who on one hand helped protecting drug cultivations, logistics and traffic and on the other financed their own operations in the same way;

<sup>6</sup> Nowadays the change of power between the two parties has become less clear cut and rigid since the election of president Uribe in 2005, due to typical phenomena either of cross-party agreements or of shifting political alliances. Nevertheless there is still alternance between the two political alignments or there are national coalition governments covering the spectrum from the Right to the Centre-Left, as in the present government.

<sup>7</sup> The most infamous ones were the cartels of: Cali, Medellín, Norte del Valle and the Cartel de la Costa or Cartel de la Costa Atlántica.



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- II. The cartels defeat opened an opportunity for FARC and ELN to introduce first a tax on cultivations (called gramaje) and then a protection system of cultivations and laboratories, diversifying criminal revenues vis-à-vis the existing funds coming from extortion, kidnapping at industrial scale and revolutionary “taxes”. In two decades the criminal logics became more important than the political ones for both great guerrilla movements;
- III. The disbanded cartels were replaced by lighter, more flexible and resilient organized criminal groups specialised in narco-trafficking.

The third factor, that stems from the first and thrives on the second, is given by the cluster of irregular militias, death squads, goons, vigilantes and paramilitaries, called in general self-defence units. In a first time they were recruited at regional level to protect landowners from guerrillas, then they became the unofficial contractors of the government in the fight against the guerrillas. The advantage that paramilitaries provide to regular security forces is to avoid attrition in controlling the territory and to spare them the guilt of nasty atrocities, whereas these irregulars lead a real extermination and ethno-political cleansing campaign in order to repopulate the territory with reliable Conservatives.<sup>8</sup>

Thanks to these criminal practices, the paramilitaries were able to extend their influence in political life until they were not exposed in the “Parapolitica” affair (the scandal of politicians colluding with paramilitaries).

The last factor is represented by the mafia-ridden phoney political change (gatopardismo mafioso) that is a constant of political competition in Colombia. Its first symptom is given by the impossibility for a left-wing guerrilla to disarm and participate in the normal political debate.

As a matter of fact, the movements that made this experience were physically wiped out by assassination and intimidation campaigns, as it happened to M-19 and the UP party.<sup>9</sup> This explains why the FARC needed a de-militarized zone providing a sanctuary and having the same function as the Huguenot strongholds in France during the Sixteenth Century. It was an essential safeguarding measure.

The second symptom was evident during the de-mobilization of the AUC in 2006. It was carried out with great media emphasis and it featured also the capture or the extradition of some important ringleaders, but it ended up with the impunity of several cadres and their covert reconversion into mafia-like structures, helped precisely by the demobilization programmes.

The present BACRIM, despite being hybrid criminal gangs, capable to make alliances of convenience also with the FARC in order to share the narco-market, continue to have an ambiguous paramilitary background due to their training, armament and local patronage, that makes them

<sup>8</sup> At a lower level, but nonetheless with deadly, cruel and tangible results, also the FARC have carried out forced land expropriations,

<sup>9</sup> The M-19 (Movimiento 19 de Abril) was a guerrilla movement born out from an electoral fraud in 1970; it later became a political movement and disappeared due to political violence directed by the establishment. The Unión Patriótica (1985) was a leftist party including Communists and two de-mobilized front of the FARC and was terminated by a protracted assassination campaign led by paramilitaries, security forces, narco-traffickers.



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less vulnerable to the action of the police, the only security body that can lawfully chase them.<sup>10</sup>

### *The obstacles to peace and the emerging of a new actor*

The method of Mr. Santos in managing the conflict is essentially based on a combination of means:

1. Opening, at least in the public international discourse, a possible dialogue with the armed opposition;
2. Keeping military pressure;
3. Increasing economic growth, mainly through mining industry revenues;
4. And allowing a certain redistribution of national income to social programmes.

The first obstacle is socio-economic because the five economic growth “locomotives” (infrastructure, building trade, agro-industry, mining, research science and technology) are all driven by free market imperatives, but in a context where the manipulation of rules and economy by organized crime is strong, while the involvement of civil society and local communities remains low.

When last year the ERPAC BACRIM (Ejército Revolucionario Popular Antisubversivo de Colombia, 28/12/2011) was dismantled, the doubts by local observers were even stronger than during the AUC de-mobilization: the surrender was a sham, the disarmament far from transparent and complete and justice utterly ineffective.

In this respect the planned restitution of two million of hectares to the victims risks to be a foretold failure because the small landowners could and would not be able and willing to be involved in great market-oriented agro-business projects. This would pave the way for the gradual re-acquisition of that land by latifundists and their mafioso figureheads.

The second obstacle is of socio-political nature. No actor is ready to overcome the actual political model based on a century-long alternance without alternative between Conservative and Liberals. Without the arrival of new political personnel belonging to new parties outside the spectrum represented in the existing parliament, it is highly improbable that there will be a real possibility to negotiate a peace allowing the rebirth of the country from this internal war.

And yet there is an emerging political actor that has started organizing political meeting by mid-April (21/4/2012), the so called *Marcha Patriótica*, a grassroots formation, federating more than 1.700 social organization that feel under-represented by traditional parties. The MP wants to uphold traditional Indian social and popular demands and to find a political solution to the social and economic conflict that is bleeding Colombia.<sup>11</sup> It is too early to assess the real impact of MP

<sup>10</sup> This leads to the paradox that not only the military cannot assist in the fight against BACRIM, but also that the victims cannot be compensated by the Ley de Víctimas and that the criminals that surrender may not be reintegrated into society through the procedures envisaged for paramilitaries proper. All this happens against the backdrop of the heated debate on the justice reform approved by the Colombian Congress by mid-June, because it opens loopholes favouring the impunity of congressmen targeted by investigations on ordinary and paramilitary crimes.



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on the stability of the current bipartisan system, although the establishment is trying to discredit the movement by leaking alleged intelligence information on FARC infiltrations in the MP, that refutes the accusation.

The important variable is that this is not a top-down movement of demobilized guerrillas or terrorists, but a bottom-up organization that could be more networked and thus more resilient to possible armed criminal intimidation and governmental interferences.

It is absolutely clear that the major political forces fear and condemn the idea of a legal political wing of FARC and ELN, but looking at historic precedents one can see that, if the Herri Batasuna-ETA liaison in Spain was until now a failure, the relationship with the SVP (Südtiroler Volkspartei) was essential fifty years ago to end ethno-nationalist terrorism in Italy (Alto Adige-South Tyrol region) and that the same applies to the IRA-Sinn Fein couple in Northern Ireland.

<sup>11</sup> Regarding Marcha Patriótica see ; . Regarding intelligence sources on the liaison between MP and FARC or ETA or between Chavez, Correa and FARC see .



## European Defence Initiatives



### Polish defence renewal in a changing Europe

*Stefano Felician Beccari*

*Europe is facing a hard time for the defence sector, with cuts in budgets and expenses. But Poland is probably the only big European state that is going against the tide, developing a new approach to its national defence. An overall development of the Polish military is currently underway, boosted by a mix of geopolitical, economical and strategic ingredients. After twenty years since the end of the Cold War, Poland is no more a marginal state of the biggest Soviet empire, but it is a lively democracy located in the centre of Europe and fully committed to be an European protagonist. Over the last years the Polish population and economy have taken many steps forward. The turmoil and the weakness of the Eighties and Nineties seem like a distant shadow, and today Poland <<stands out as a success story among transition economies>>, CIA World Factbook reports. The GDP growth has continued steadily during the last years, while the country was developing a solid and full democratic system. In the current European geopolitical environment Poland is a key player, and its recent transformation of the defence sector is something that other EU partners can not overlook anymore. In a European defence market that is in the doldrums, the general strategy of Polish government and its renewal of the defence sector confirm Polish fears about the future of an European defence, but this behaviour could also be a tool to revive this issue.*

When Poland joined the European Union, in 2004, a vast reform of the domestic market was underway, moving the country from a socialist and centralized economy to a capitalist one. This hard time of transformation proved to be successful: according to a report of the US Department of State, since 2004 Poland <<rate of economic growth has outpaced those of the U.S. and of its EU partners<sup>1</sup>>>, avoiding the recession effects of the recent financial crisis. Despite a general stagnation or recession of European economies in the four-year period 2008-2012, Poland instead scored well, raising its GDP by + 1.6% in 2009, + 3.8% in 2010 and + 3.8% in 2011 (CIA World Factbook data). GDP forecasts are also positive, but the country still suffers from some shortfalls in infrastructures and the domestic market.

#### ***Polish role in the European Union and foreign policy priorities***

The nearly forty million population and the average age of 38 makes Poland the biggest country of the former Eastern Europe, and one of the biggest inside European Union. The country com-

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2875.htm>

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pleted his formal transition to democracy with the approval of the new constitution (1997) and now Poland is a full democracy, able also to resist after massive shocks like the 2010 air crash, in which most of the country leaders and top brass died. The accession to NATO (1999) and to European Union (2004) opened new areas of Polish commitment. Recently, the end of the 2000-2010 decade paved the way for some of the highest European political responsibilities. Poland gained the highest seat in the EU Parliament when Jerzy Buzek, former prime minister, was elected President (2009-2012). In addition, from July to December 2011 Poland held the prestigious Presidency of the EU Council<sup>2</sup>. The decades following the 1989 also marked a new commitment in foreign operations, especially in Kosovo, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Afghanistan, Iraq and Macedonia, where the Polish Armed Forces (PAF) served with many men and assets. Such a relevant contribution made by the PAF was backed by many reasons. First, the necessity to show Poland as a reliable ally even in the most dangerous theatres. Second, the need to increase cooperation with the new Western allies. Third, the will to sustain and develop the domestic transformation of the defence in order to face new threats and challenges. Foreign PAF deployments are playing an important role for Poland international role too. Currently, Poland contributes to international security with nearly 3,000 soldiers and observers. The main areas of deployment are Afghanistan, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo and the NATO operation Active Endeavour, but few units are also involved in observer missions in Africa and Asia.



Source: *Basic information on the MoD Budget for 2012*, Polish Ministry of Defence (Budgetary department)

<sup>2</sup> <http://pl2011.eu/en>

<sup>3</sup> [www.msz.gov.pl/files/docs/komunikaty/20120329/pr\\_ang\\_final.pdf](http://www.msz.gov.pl/files/docs/komunikaty/20120329/pr_ang_final.pdf)

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In the recent document *Polish Foreign Priorities 2012-2016*, issued by the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs<sup>3</sup>, the concerns for international security and its menace are well highlighted. Some topics are specifically mentioned in the document, as:

- A multi-polar world, in which the <<primacy of the United States is called into question>>, leading to <<questions about the stability of the global order>>. Therefore, European Union should act in a comprehensive and cohesive way, because a single-state answer now seems unrealistic.
- Institutional weakness of the global order is backed by a massive change in demography, economy and it is a consequence of a <<political awakening of many developing countries>>, while the answers of international institutions are insufficient;
- Transatlantic links and regional cooperation, because NATO and the European Union, in the Polish view, are complementary. But regional cooperation plays an important role too, especially a <<close cooperation with Ukraine and other countries in Eastern Europe and South Caucasus>> and the <<enhancement of cooperation among the Visegrád Group>>.

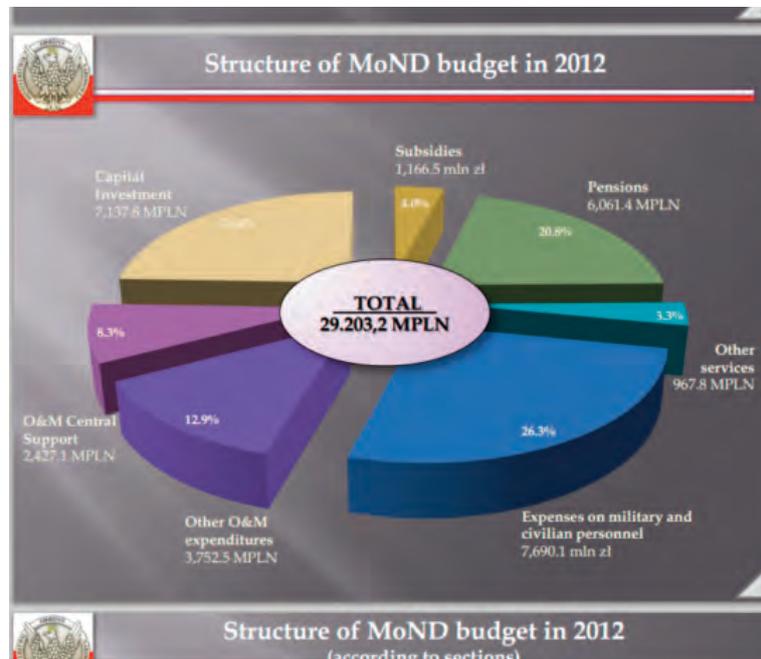
### ***Poland defence structures and strategies: NATO, EU and regional cooperation***

From the end of the Warsaw Pact era to the formal accession to NATO (1999) PAF sustained a general and robust effort of renovation, and today this transformation is still underway. The actual PAF structure is based on four branches: Land Forces, Navy, Air Force and Special Forces. The total strength, which relies exclusively on voluntary personnel, is around 100,000 men, divided in Army, 45,870, Navy, 8,063, Air Force, 16,547 and other personnel (29,520). The budget allocated to defence expenditures counts on nearly 30 billion zloty (nearly 7 billion euro) of which 29,203 million Polish zloty are used for the national defence. This total amount should be divided roughly in three different areas: Operation and Maintenance (21.2%), Investments (24.4%) and pensions, military and civilian personnel expenses (50.4%<sup>4</sup>). Today Poland allocates 1.95% of its GDP to the defence budget.

<sup>4</sup> data are taken from *Basic information on the MoD Budget for 2012*, Ministry of defence (Budgetary department), on [www.mon.gov.pl/pliki/File/budzet/basic\\_information2012.pdf](http://www.mon.gov.pl/pliki/File/budzet/basic_information2012.pdf)

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Source: *Basic information on the MoD Budget for 2012,*



Polish Ministry of Defence (Budgetary department)

The main strategic orientation of Polish defence is summed up in a couple of important documents drafted in 2008 and 2009. They are the *Defence Strategy of the Republic of Poland* (2008) and the *Vision of the Polish Armed Forces 2030* (2009). Both offer a comprehensive and deep view over the transformation of the Polish defence but they are also crucial to identify the reasons of the current development of the defence sector. The first document, more focused on a politico-military level, contains some important keys to analyse the framework in which Polish defence should be considered, starting from a political reflection on NATO, the EU and the United States, <<basic tenets>> of the Defence Strategy. In section number 2.2, paragraph 35, this approach is explained as <<the Republic of Poland's security and defence architecture is based on an Atlantic and a European pillar. An important element enhancing our state's security and defence is a strategic bond with the United States of America<sup>5</sup>

>>. From a Polish point of view the "transatlantic link" with the United States remains a cornerstone of the security strategy, as well as NATO membership. The country, like many other of the former "Eastern block" is known to be more pro-US than other EU member states. But Warsaw's government is also considering the role of a European defence. Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) are <<significantly important>> but they are also seen as a useful tool to fulfil European integration. This positive approach toward

<sup>5</sup> [www.wp.mil.pl/pliki/File/English/strategia\\_obronnosci\\_eng.pdf](http://www.wp.mil.pl/pliki/File/English/strategia_obronnosci_eng.pdf)

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European Defence is also followed by a specific reference to the defence market and the European Defence Agency. Today the incumbent EDA Deputy Chief Executive for Operations, former Polish General Adam Sowa, holds a top position in the Agency. Poland also cooperates in the European Secure Software defined Radio (ESSOR) project, lead by the Organisation Conjointe de Coopération en matière d'Armement (OCCAR). Despite the main role of NATO as a security guarantee (<<membership in NATO is still the main pillar of Poland's security policy>>, says the Ministry of Defence website<sup>6</sup>), the Polish MoD gives also prominence to security cooperation within European Union. This topic, included in the *Programme of the Polish Presidency of the Council of the European Union* (2011), was not a short-time commitment, but rather a long term goal. CSDP <<is the second next to NATO membership pillar of Poland's security policy>> and it is a field in which Warsaw wants to play a pivotal role, as highlighted in the document *Common Security and Defence Policy - Presidency Objectives*<sup>7</sup>, drafted by the MoD. The main priorities of the Polish Presidency, shared also by the government, refer both to the relation between NATO and EU and the EU capabilities. In this field the main areas of development are the planning and conducting of EU military and civilian operations, the harmonisation of civilian-military cooperation, the pooling and sharing approach, and also the deepening of cooperation with the "Eastern neighbours"<sup>8</sup>. Finally, regional cooperation is the lowest, but not less relevant, level of security engagement of Polish defence. It aims to foster the ties among Central European states, and in this field Warsaw is in the front row too. The Visegrad Group, also called Visegrad Four or V4, was established soon after the end of the Cold War, in 1991, gathering Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary<sup>9</sup>. Its original role was to develop a local framework of cooperation before NATO and EU accession. Today Visegrad Group consists not only in mutual contacts and relations between the countries, but also in a broader framework for security cooperation. V4 as a <<new European military force>>, as said by George Friedman in a Stratfor analysis<sup>10</sup>, is no longer an ideal initiative, but a concrete answer to the geopolitical shift in Eastern Europe. V4 has planned the creation of a battlegroup, that should be ready for 2016, after a preliminary exercise in 2015. A battlegroup command will be established on a rotational basis, and Poland will be the first nation to lead the unit. In the light of regional cooperation, Polish units are also contributing to NATO mission "Baltic Air Policing"<sup>11</sup>, patrolling the Baltic States skies with some airplanes of the Polish Air Force.

### *Poland defence procurement*

After the statements of the official documents, it is necessary to understand the real reasons which are backing this new Polish geopolitical approach towards its national security. The Polish defence renewal, compared to the considerable rhetoric on NATO and future EU military capabilities, re-

<sup>6</sup> [www.wp.mil.pl/en/strona/311/LG\\_183\\_240](http://www.wp.mil.pl/en/strona/311/LG_183_240)

<sup>7</sup> [www.mon.gov.pl/pliki/File/Banery\\_do\\_wydzrzen\\_Prezydencji\\_RP/download/OBJECTIVES.pdf](http://www.mon.gov.pl/pliki/File/Banery_do_wydzrzen_Prezydencji_RP/download/OBJECTIVES.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> Other references on Poland priorities can be found on [www.wp.mil.pl/en/strona/310/LG\\_183\\_239](http://www.wp.mil.pl/en/strona/310/LG_183_239)

<sup>9</sup> [www.visegradgroup.eu/about/history](http://www.visegradgroup.eu/about/history)

<sup>10</sup> [www.stratfor.com/weekly/20110516-visegrad-new-european-military-force](http://www.stratfor.com/weekly/20110516-visegrad-new-european-military-force)

<sup>11</sup> [www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/news\\_85569.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/news_85569.htm)



## European Defence Initiatives

veals a new attention of Warsaw on national security issues. This new approach is justified by the sudden appearance of some weakness in EU and NATO, and the new rising of Russia as a regional player. NATO and EU – the two pillars of Polish national security – can no longer be seen as the only reliable partners. The Libyan war and the following divisions among the allies, as well as the lack of solidarity among EU states during the economic crisis, have cooled Warsaw expectations. But on the eastern side, Putin's Russia is now modernizing its forces and its geopolitical role, former Western-looking Ukraine is now in search of stronger relations with Moscow, and Belarus keeps its pro-Russia stance. Therefore, Polish security also needs to be improved on a regional and domestic level, and this requires, firstly, to have a reliable national military system. Thanks to the growing economy, Warsaw can now invest more on its defence sector, especially in some new assets vital for a modern military organization. The document *Vision of the Polish Armed Forces 2030* provides a comprehensive vision on the PAF future, anticipating the next challenges for Poland national security. After a general modernisation of some traditional fields (flexibility, interoperability, training, women's involvement, international cooperation) the document affirms that <<modern weapon systems and military equipment shall constitute the main foundation of the operational abilities of the future Polish Armed Forces<sup>12</sup>>>. The recent Strategic defence Review 2010-2011<sup>13</sup> confirms Polish commitment to a modern defence, recalling the most important modernisation programs adopted under the MoD *Plan of Technical Modernisation of the Polish Armed Forces for 2010-2018*. The programs are:

- Air defence and anti-aircraft defence systems;
- Combat support and service support helicopters;
- Modernisation of the Navy;
- Integrated command support and battlefield imaging systems C4/SR;
- Unmanned reconnaissance systems and attack-reconnaissance systems;
- Soldier's individual equipment and weapons (advanced individual fighting system);
- Simulators and trainers;
- Lead-in Fighter Trainer (LIFT) aircraft;
- M-28 transport aircraft;
- WR-40 Langusta rocket launchers;
- Land artillery (Krab, Kryl, Homar);
- Wheeled armoured personnel carriers - Rosomak;
- SPIKE anti-tank guided missiles.

It is easy to understand that Polish modernisation is driven by a will to generally improve military capabilities acquiring modern technologies that today lack in the country arsenals. In the last issues of *Osservatorio Strategico* there were many references to PAF renewal, especially focusing on

<sup>12</sup> [www.dt.wp.mil.pl/plik/file/Wizja\\_SZ\\_RP\\_2030\\_MON\\_eng\\_pdf.pdf](http://www.dt.wp.mil.pl/plik/file/Wizja_SZ_RP_2030_MON_eng_pdf.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> [www.dt.wp.mil.pl/plik/file/1\\_DT\\_STRATEGIC\\_DEFENCE\\_REVIEW\\_REPORT\\_1\\_07\\_2011\\_1x.pdf](http://www.dt.wp.mil.pl/plik/file/1_DT_STRATEGIC_DEFENCE_REVIEW_REPORT_1_07_2011_1x.pdf)



## **European Defence Initiatives**

naval and air dimensions. The will to privilege the upgrade of high-technology Services is a clear trend. The government also want to provide a joint and full set of C4ISTAR capabilities, net-centric technologies and electronic assets. Despite the 8.000 men, the Polish Navy is looking for new surface and submarine vessels, while in May 2012 Sikorsky, Augusta Westland and Eurocopter bid for a 460 million euro helicopter contest. The winner will provide to all PAF in 2015-2017 with 26 new aircrafts for search and rescue, anti-submarine and transport roles. In June 2012 the government also announced the will to acquire between one and two hundred UAVs (Unmanned Aerial Vehicles), useful for all the PAF. Poland previously bought some Aerostar UAVs from Israel in 2010, and the MoD is firmly committed to developing these technologies, also acquiring armed aircrafts. The land sector will be supplied with 118 Light Strike Vehicles (LSVs), useful for Afghanistan operations. Polish procurement, helped by the growing of domestic GDP, is a cornerstone of MoD strategy to modernise PAF and their capabilities.

### ***National security first***

In the current European landscape Poland is clearly pursuing a new kind of strategy, aimed to reinforce its national security in the light of the recent geopolitical shift in Europe. The first goal is to maintain and keep national security avoiding "Eastern threats". In the East the former ruler, Russia, is increasing its geopolitical role. Moscow is interested in securing its neighbourhood fostering the ties with Belarus and Ukraine, keeping a firm hold of the Caucasus and patrolling the Arctic area to avoid foreign intrusions. The new couple Medvedev-Putin is ruling a country far from the fragile state of the Yeltsin era. In order to guarantee its security, Poland must stay loyal to NATO and EU political framework, but the recent renewal of the most sensitive defence areas is showing an evident decision to also rely on its own forces, another important target of Polish strategy. The future US disengagement from Europe will cause a general discomfort, which will affect especially the eastern countries. The weakening of Polish first security pillar (the US) and the difficulties of EU defence initiatives, which are not a priority for many European governments, require a domestic attention on the security field that is quite unusual for any other member state. Today Poland is probably the only big state in all European Union to increase its defence budget. The EU institutions and the defence market should take this new Polish approach in consideration. Polish contribution in the international field was successful and appreciated by the international community; maybe Polish contribution in defence acquisition could be a tool to foster the discussion on a future European Defence market, developing multinational projects in cooperation with Polish companies and the PAF renewal.



## Transatlantic Relations



*Lucio Martino*

### Romney vs. Obama

*Governor Romney has been clearly confirmed as the winner of a long Republican Primary season, and attention is now focusing on the two huge up-coming Party conventions. The Republicans will hold theirs at the end of August in Tampa, Florida, and the Democrats will gather in early September in Charlotte, North Carolina. The progress of the economy dominates political debates in the United States even more than it does in Europe, so much so that President Obama was unable to refrain from expressing his preoccupations regarding the possibility that the crisis in the Euro-zone could eventually have a negative effect on the slow American economic recovery. The latest polls offer an ambiguous picture. The increase in popularity of the challenger is balanced by the unexpected confirmation of support for the President from voters in traditionally Republican districts which backed the Democrat candidate in the last election. At least for the moment, the visions of the two current candidates are closer in substance than has happened during the last few elections. This points more to a clear battle for the conquest of the centre than for the extremists of either electoral direction. Even the slogans chosen by the respective campaigns sound indistinguishable. The President talks of “Reclaiming American values”, while the Republican challenger presents the almost identical “Reclaiming America”.*

Now more than ever, any attempt to analyze the foreign and strategic policies of the United States cannot ignore the condition the Nation finds itself in, and take into account both the present international situation and the historical processes which produced that situation. Past evidence has shown that all too often it is the prevailing environment which has conditioned the foreign policy choices made by the various administrations, and how often the policies implemented by Presidents have diverged dramatically from the promises made during the election campaign. With this in mind, two circumstances seem to be influencing the foreign policies of the Obama administration. The first is the hope of an election result which will not only confirm the second mandate, but also stabilize the Democrat majority in the Senate.

Perhaps because of the extraordinary expectations which accompanied the advent of the Obama Era, it is not easy to summarize the results of his Administration. The speeches given at Prague, Cairo and Oslo had explained the objectives of the new Administration to the world, and the rather premature bestowal of the Nobel Peace Prize showed the United States just how positively the world was disposed towards the new President. However, almost four years later, the situation in Afghanistan remains “fragile” and “reversible”, the Middle East is more complex than ever, and



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Iran continues to attract international attention. North Korea seems to have slowly become a minor problem compared to the preoccupations generated by a collection of States which stretch from Morocco to Pakistan. The relationship with the Russian Federation continues to be targeted by the same old opponents, while China and India have shown that they are only minimally interested in supporting the Obama Administration's list of priorities. And to top it all off, radical Islamism is still strong and widespread, despite the dramatic killing of Osama bin Laden.

Undoubtedly, the newly-won international confidence in an American leadership, a leadership which had been seriously compromised for the whole of the previous decade, is due to the Obama Administration. However, even before the mid-term elections, the highly polarized political system had impeded the path of the Obama Presidency. Obama's attempts to repair foreign affairs also achieved uneven results. The immense popularity the President enjoys in Europe and Africa is not duplicated in India and Israel, and the lowest approval levels are seen just where the efforts to create consensus have been the greatest; in the Islamic world. Of the last, the dynamics of the intervention in Libya and the caution shown in the face of revolts in Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, Bahrain, and Syria have demonstrated how difficult it is to balance ideals, alliances, and interests.

### ***Two major criticisms***

At the base of the Obama Administration's foreign policy is a vision of Globalization, with all its flaws and merits, at the centre of the international dynamic. This globalization would be necessarily linked to a reinforcement of the alliances and international institutions in order to better confront a combination of global challenges ranging from terrorism to climate change, from nuclear proliferation to the spread of old and new epidemics. With the passing of time, the criticisms aimed at the White House have coagulated in two clearly defined directions. The first judges the attempts to "normalize" the position of the United States within the international community to be naive, because the United States are not, and never can be, a "normal" State. The second pronounces as absolutely counterproductive the re-launching of the aggressively militaristic approach typical of the previous Administration, because it would be destined to damage the credibility of American strategies in international opinion.

In the eyes of his opponents, Obama is prone to see himself as covering the Bismarck-like role of honest broker in international disputes, preferring to maintain equidistance in his relationships with adversaries and allies instead of a decisive and strong defense of traditional American ideals. According to this analysis, Obama is guilty of placing himself, and the United States, in a position which goes beyond strictly national interests. The record of the Obama Administration seems, in any case, ironic. Despite constant efforts to remind the Nation that terrorism is only one of the problems the United States must confront on a daily basis, it is exactly in this area that it has had its most astounding successes.

Romney's direct accusation that Obama has placed the security of the United States at risk adequately sums up his opinion of the Obama Administration's foreign policies. To counter this, Romney aims to reject the "weakness" of President Obama and to give the United States absolute supremacy militarily, and to not follow the example of a Europe which, in order to cover its social welfare costs, continues to reduce both the dimension and the capacity of its military apparatus. On the other hand, the Republican candidate has not bothered to explain how he intends to pay

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for this supremacy during an epoch marked by extremely restricted financial resources. He has been even less forthcoming about how the foreign affairs of his administration would differ from that of the present incumbent of the White House. Both seem to share a vision of a world which is anything but multipolar, let alone of a nation in decline.

### ***Searching for the “real” Romney***

Despite his publication of a white paper, the naming of an extensive team of advisors, and his underwriting of an entire series of articles and editorials, Romney’s candidacy appears to be characterized by an almost complete lack of information useful for the understanding of his real intentions. Romney’s arrival in the White House could foreshadow the initiation of new military interventions, as in the case of Bush the younger, or a strenuous defense of the status quo, as seen in the times of Bush the elder. Or else, it could be the beginning of a progressive contraction of the international role of the United States.

During this entire electoral season, Romney has continued to run a quite negative campaigning, preferring to underline the inadequacies of the present President in his role of Commander in Chief. There are probably twin reasons for this strategy. One is the attempt to take advantage of an ancient skepticism of the electorate regarding the performance capacity of the Democrats in military matters. There is also the need to distract from his own intrinsic weakness in foreign policy. Four years ago, a lack of knowledge of international affairs was one of the reasons Romney lost against the other Republican contender for the Presidential candidacy, Senator McCain. The image Romney presents of himself is of someone who is better at domestic than foreign politics, and above all, that of a business man, a successful manager capable of solving the problems of the United States just as he would those of a large company in crisis.

There is also a third explanation for this clear lack of clarity: a vision which is almost the same as that of the Democrat President. There are numerous clues for this conclusion. Not even Afghanistan seems to divide Romney and Obama. Both agree on the need to withdraw the combat units, following a strict timetable. The only point of divergence is seen in the greater consideration Romney would like to see given to the Commanders in theatre. Although Romney has on several occasions attacked Obama for an appeasement with Russia which would lead to relinquishing on an anti-ballistic missile system based in Eastern Europe, he has never proposed any other arms system in direct substitution to the one planned by the Obama Administration. Romney seems content to leave foreign affairs in the background, even if in the very near future the next occupant of the White House will not only have to contend with the immense task of reconstructing the American economy. There will also be at least four huge international problems which will unavoidably impact on the domestic affairs of the States.

### ***Four short term issues***

The first is Iran. The Obama Administration appears to have substituted the initial policy of an out-stretched hand with a strategy of strict isolation, sparing no efforts to obtain a regime of economic sanctions and other diplomatic initiatives. The next President could once more find himself having to make a decision regarding an attack with the potential to lead to a new large-scale mil-



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itary involvement, or else finding a way to manage the growing regional assertiveness. Romney is convinced that Obama waited too long to change his approach, but at the same time he does not seem disposed to go beyond imposing further sanctions.

China follows. The next occupant of the White House will not be able to avoid reorganizing the architecture of the various relationships with that which has become America's third largest commercial partner after Canada and Mexico. The Obama Administration initially saw China as a 'responsible' actor, so much so that the Administration considered re-examining its own relationship with India in order to meet China's preoccupations halfway. The indefatigable determination of the Chinese authorities to manipulate their own currency, however, then convinced the White House to send quite a different message. Again the difference between the two candidates is more a question of tone than substance, because Romney has never effectively explained what he would do in addition to what the current Administration is already doing to defend intellectual property and to ensure that it is the market which decides the exchange rate of the Chinese currency.

The Middle East follows closely behind China on the list, defined by the Palestinian participation in the United Nations. The next President must decide how much pressure to use on the various sides in order that these accept some new negotiations. In any case, the public opinion polls indicate that less than half of the country would be ready to become involved in a defense of Israel. The topic which has been historically a strong catalyst of bipartisan consensus appears to have turned into yet another factor of polarized politics. Today, only mainstream Republicans are in favor of an unconditional support of Israel.

Finally, the difficulty of sustaining the present military system over time forces a return to that revolution in military thinking which was reluctantly shelved in order to combat a, now ready for the archives, global war against terror. This all implies a difficult dialectic between the White House and Congress. For his part, Romney is opposed to the reductions in the Pentagon budget of over one trillion dollars already planned for the next decade and beyond. He would like to increase the man power numbers of the U.S. Army and the U.S. Marine Corps rather than reduce them by one hundred thousand. This in addition to guaranteeing that the spending for defense in future accounts would never be lower than the four per cent of the gross domestic product.

### ***Looking forward***

From a Trans-Atlantic relations point of view, the European Union and the United States are two realities which find themselves more than ever in evolution. Two distinct political schools of thought co-exist within the European Union. The first, following the lead of Germany, firmly believes in financial rigor, energy security, and a political integration to be attained through a progressive series of institutional reforms. The second, made up of the new Member States, continues to see the vicinity of Russia as the specter of past and future dangers, instead of an asset. These Members prefer to count on the protection of the United States rather than contribute to the foundation of a new continental community. At least up till mid 2012, the first of these two directions seems to have prevailed.

To sum up, the last few years have witnessed a notable mutation of the direction of foreign affairs in the United States. The refusal to consider the German thesis, which was categorical during the period of the previous Administration, seems to have the wind taken out of its sails. The impression



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is that the United States, while conceptually rejecting any multi-polar approach, in its practical operations seems to be slowly accepting it. Of course, this tendency is supported by the fact that the members of the present Administration are Democrats. However, there is no evidence that the Republicans are not also leaning in this direction, because it is in part imposed by an obstinate economic crisis and by the changes which this crisis has brought about in the strategic and political weight of the various global powers.

Independent of the results of the up-coming elections, there is enough evidence to assume that the White House will not return to the neo-conservative unilateralism that was so pressing in the early years of the second millennium. Rather, they will probably continue to be involved in attempts to convince as many Heads of State and Governments as possible of the inevitable advantages they guarantee will come from a sharing of the burdens of strategic engagements, which many the foreign States see as neither strictly necessary nor desirable. The limits inherent in this approach lie in a conduct of international policies rich in incentives and relatively poor of sanctions. This has the “disadvantage” in American eyes of fostering a perception of a relative weakness in the powers of the United States, and this, paradoxically, feeds an American tendency to resort to military solutions to international issues.



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



### **Expectations and prospects of the SCO summit in Beijing**

*Lorena Di Placido*

*On the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> of June the annual summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) was held in Beijing. Since 2001 SCO is the regional organization that comprises: Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, in an attempt to build an effective regional cooperation, together with the observer countries (Mongolia, Iran, India and Pakistan) and the dialogue partners (Sri Lanka and Belarus). The attention to regional security, which accompanies the activity of SCO since its foundation, has acquired a new key to understanding: the threshold of 2014 calls the organization to become aware of a situation of great uncertainty in the face of an attitude that thus far SCO has been a lazy and unhelpful actor. However, many Western analysts think that there is the basis for a renewed commitment to an effective way to face the current threat to regional security.*

*With the start of the second presidency of Vladimir Putin (he took office on May 7th), Russia's strength deserves a new definition, in the light of new demands of regional security, reaffirming traditional ties of mutual benefit with the former Soviet states.*

#### **Anniversaries and returns**

On May 15th, in Tashkent CSTO celebrated its 20th anniversary. Called CST at the very beginning, it was consisting of Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan. With the signing of a further treaty (also in Tashkent) 7th October 2002, the first members formed the current organization, acting as a military alliance, which thus became CSTO. Uzbekistan has signed its accession in 2006. Proponent in respect of the former Soviet republics of fluctuating foreign policy, its participation has lacked consistency and dedication. Uzbekistan manifested, rather, the will to assert itself as a real independent state, in a context where Russian positions and orientations are sometimes difficult to accept. The presence of the Uzbekistan's President, Islam Karimov, at CSTO summit in Moscow (May 15th) has never been hitherto taken for granted, scoring, rather, the development of relations with Moscow. Karimov presence in Moscow seemed to mark a resurgence of interest in security issues, at a time which calls for a pragmatic choice to counter the current threats more effectively. From the transcript of the interview held in May 15th, that occurred bilaterally between Putin and Karimov, it clearly emerges that a common response is needed to prepare strong common policies, especially in the socio-economic, as well as in political and defense fields. In this context, according to Karimov, Russia's role is to be a global power. Anyway, one month later, Karimov announced the withdrawal of Uzbekistan from CSTO. This is further con-



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firmation of his fluctuating behavior.

Launched after the CSTO meeting, the CIS summit marked a perfect continuation of cooperation and integration in a broader context of post-Soviet space, in which the protagonists find themselves confronted in another discussion forum, which follows in part the membership of the CSTO: Armenia and Azerbaijan (formerly part of the CST for only two years, between 1992 and '94), Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan.

The shadow of the customs union is, however, in the background. The Moscow summits preceded, in fact, the confirmation of the integration path taken by Russia, Kazakhstan and Belarus, committed to the creation of a customs union which should become operational by 2015, representing a kind of cooperation among former Soviet republics not in a non-traditional or nostalgic key, but being proactive.

This is the reading that one can make of the approach of Mr Putin's second term, oriented to reassert Russia on spaces once dominated by Moscow, providing dynamic solutions for the improvement of economic and financial conditions, against a pervasive soft return, in terms of culture, education, personal ties. It was announced that in the next summit of the CSTO, scheduled in November, even the military organization of the post-Soviet space will be equipped with new regulations, able to allow more immediacy in response to attacks or threats in the areas of competence. A further step towards the 2014?

### ***The contents of the SCO summit***

Beijing was the scene of the annual summit of heads of state and government of the SCO, a meeting point where members, observers and (more recently) dialogue partners deliver an account of its activities and the Progress of regional cooperation on the Eurasian space. This year there were many distinguished guests: the Special Representative of UN Secretary General and head of the UN Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia, Jaroslav Jenca and the Chairman of the Executive Committee of CIS, Sergei Lebedev, the Secretary General of Eurasian Economic Community, Tair Mansur, Secretary General of CSTO Nikolai Borduzha.

The outcome of the talks and discussion topics lays in the final declaration, which is entitled "Building a region of lasting peace and common prosperity", in which members express a common vision for the establishment of a just, democratic and multi polar architecture of a new development of state-state relations. Members have noted that the threat of terrorism, separatism and extremism – which SCO tries to tackle since its foundation - are still alive and present and have become increasingly extended as well as narcotics trafficking and activities of transnational crime, while the crisis erupted outside the Eurasian space makes urgent the creation of politico-diplomatic warning and rapid response to emergency situations with the creation of effective cooperation on security. The members approved the "Guidelines for a medium term strategy of SCO", which stipulate that the organization is open to a harmonious regional cooperation, strengthening of good neighborliness and initiatives of a common prosperity for its members.

During the works, reports on the activities of the SCO have been approved, presented by its top executives, (also from the Regional Anti-Terrorism Structure, RCTS), together with a revised version of the Regulations on Political and Diplomatic Measures and Mechanism of Response to Events that Undermine Regional Peace, Stability and Security and the Program on Cooperation

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in the Field of Fight Terrorism, Separatism and Extremism for the biennium 2013-2015, which lays the legal basis for security in the context of cooperation between member states. The topic of information security and computer networks, present in the recent regional debate, has been directly addressed, concluding reliance on the United Nations, through the promotion of an "International Code of Practice for Information Security".

With regard to regional issues, the members claimed to be able to address the Iranian nuclear issue through political and diplomatic means, while condemning the possible decision of a state or group of states to set up its own missile defense system in the unilateral decision affecting the legitimate interests of other states, international security and global strategic stability.

Appreciating the progress so far achieved in the areas of regional economic cooperation and recognizing the need for further promotion of trade and investment, strengthen economic and technical cooperation in non-energy fields, to fight cross-border illegal trafficking and to protect the property rights intellectual, the parties acknowledged the role played by regular meetings at the level of finance ministries and central banks to support countries in the exchange of experience on the preservation of economic stability and financial and tax cooperation. The efforts and results achieved by all institutions and specialized agencies of the SCO have been recognized and appreciated by the members agreed.

The heads of state have designated the Russian Dmitri Mezentsev as the new Secretary General of the SCO and China's Zhang Xinfeng as the new Director of the Executive Committee of the RCTS, which will take office from 1st January 2013 to December 31st, 2015.

The presidency of the SCO goes from China to Kyrgyzstan, which, therefore, will host the next summit in 2013.

### ***Expectations and Perspectives***

Overall, the Beijing summit was following the usual formula, halfway between the self-celebratory and didactic. Member States remain the main actors in the fight against the three evils (terrorism, separatism, extremism) and criminals cross-border trade, together with a general strengthening of all institutions that are part of the activities of the Organization. A new element has emerged from the decisions to accept a new dialogue partner such as Turkey and a new observer, Afghanistan. The generality of western analysts have concealed the new position of Turkey within the SCO, devoting full attention to Afghanistan, loading up his new status as excessive expectations. To affect the emotions of international observers was the threshold of 2014. The date of the withdrawal of coalition operations in Afghanistan at the time (only few soldiers will remain on the field), motivated by reasons other than the actual conclusion of a successful mission, opens controversial and disturbing scenarios about the future of the country, with all heavy implications that its failure will likely implicate for regional security. Despite a strongly reduced NATO / USA commitment, the supposed prospect of a regional organization to take a real commitment to stabilizing Afghanistan and integration with neighboring countries has led to a too easy enthusiasm, in the wake of the recent attempt to coalesce around the Afghan question an effective regional engagement. In fact, the history of relations between the SCO and Afghanistan has very different colors, made of distrust, fear and helplessness in response to the many threats coming from that country, largely coinciding with the heart of the SCO concerns. From a political and diplomatic point of



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view there is little reason to believe that the status of observer changes to some extent the SCO's commitment to Afghanistan, since this condition has not so far had success with respect to critical situations in place at other observers. While having the status of observer in the SCO, Pakistan and India have not passed the opposing positions that characterize their relationship and the nuclear dispute with Iran is still open, while SCO prefers to focus on the question of the missile shield. Then, it is difficult to think that the new observer Afghanistan can enjoy a different fate. By its nature, the SCO is responsible to foster dialogue between the Central Asian regional powers and the acolytes, in a context of formal equality that is based on non-interference in internal affairs of other states. Given this original condition, a greater closeness to the SCO could be translated, rather, a freeze on the current political situation, and not in a collaborative cooperation. A further undermine hopes of a possible action of the SCO's success in Afghanistan, adding the experience of the bankruptcy group of SCO-Afghanistan Contact Group, commissioned in 2002 by Vladimir Putin. Launched just months after the start of the multinational campaign in Afghanistan, that Group was supposed to represent a regional response to the ongoing crisis in the country and a sign of the neighboring powers in the face of decisive action from afar. Well, this group has not produced any concrete result in 10 years, no project, no decision has had the slightest effect on the ongoing situation. Does not seem quite credible that the ineffectiveness of the Contact Group is due to the presence of foreign troops on Afghan soil (as stated by the SCO Deputy Secretary General at the time), which vitiated the autonomy of the government to cooperate with other parties, since the group born after the start of the campaign multinational. Remains rather doubt that the SCO has been the interpreter of the will of Putin show interest without wanting to engage actively, given the history of reticence and mistrust that characterizes relations with neighboring Afghanistan. From an economic reason to distance themselves partly overcome, so far, reaching the rank of bilateral cooperation as possible despite the current conditions of instability of the regional context, through the various initiatives in the field of infrastructure and energy made both bilaterally and multilaterally (mainly with the ADB).

Even from a military point of view it would seem unrealistic to say that the SCO can enjoy some role in regional security post 2014. While it is true that the Organization carries out annual military exercises (called Peace Mission), mostly in the anti-terrorism key, it still do not have its operational military structures. Moreover, it cannot act in neighboring states by virtue of the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of states, so far rigidly observed. Finally, some of the members almost never participate (Uzbekistan) and, in some cases, other members have a shortage of men and material to assure the minimum operating capacity (Tajikistan). Also this year, between 8 and June 14, there were exercises in northern Tajikistan, attended by 2,000 men from China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. The particularity of this edition was the coordination with departments of the CSTO (started from the basis of Kant, Kyrgyzstan) and a battalion of rapid reaction forces, from the CSTO too, stationed in Tajikistan. In fact, this seemed to be a test for the CSTO forces, rather than only for the forces made available by members of the SCO, thus further distancing the idea that it is next to the creation of a "NATO of the East". If the SCO has so far consistently committed to top-level military meetings, he did so in order to coordinate between structures to be realized in the long term and not with the spirit of creating in a short mode of action independent of those already active in region.



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*In a nutshell, only after 2014 we will see the actual will of regional players towards the Afghan situation and the time seems ripe for a purely regional intervention, although the recent decisions of the SCO may lead to confusing the expectations of those who hopes for a regional approach and the outlook dictated by the story so far experienced by the SCO.*



## International Organizations



Valerio Bosco

### **The protection of civilian in armed conflicts: the new report of the SG**

*In early June, the Secretary General of the United Nations (SG) issued his latest report on the “Protection of Civilian in Armed Conflict”. The document provided a comprehensive update on progress made in responding to the core challenges, namely, enhancing compliance by parties to conflict with international law; enhancing compliance by non-State armed groups; enhancing protection by United Nations peacekeeping and other relevant missions; improving humanitarian access; and enhancing accountability for violations. The report took stock of encouraging developments and ongoing or emerging concerns affecting civilians in contemporary conflicts and made further recommendations for responding to the core challenges. The publication of the report was followed by a Security Council open meeting which allowed the entire UN membership to further reflect on measures aimed at ensuring an increased protection of civilians in conflict situations within the UN peacekeeping operations, improving access to humanitarian assistance, and bolstering accountability for violations of international humanitarian and human rights law. The issue of promoting increased compliance by non State armed groups of international humanitarian law was also discussed.*

#### ***The SG report: Afghanistan, DRC, Somalia, and Syria as “ongoing emerging concerns”***

Submitted to the Council during the first days of June, the report noted that, despite the partial progress, the “reality on the ground” continues to be marked by frequent violations of the obligations existing under international law with respect to the protection of civilians in armed conflicts. According to the report, displacement within and across borders remains a conspicuous feature of conflicts: at the end of 2010, some 27.5 million people had been internally displaced as a result of conflict and violence and a further 15.4 million were refugees. The SG noted that while the number of internally displaced persons reportedly declined slightly in 2011, to 26.4 million, their number had steadily increased over the previous 15 years. While mentioning the situations of Sudan/ South Sudan and the Israeli-Palestinian crisis, the report focused on Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia and Syria which were identified as the most problematic environments. With regard to Afghanistan, UNAMA (United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan) documented 3,021 civilian deaths in 2011, an increase of 8 per cent compared with 2010. Of these, anti-Government elements were supposedly responsible for 2,332 civilian deaths, an increase of 14 per cent from 2010, and pro-Government forces caused 410 civilian deaths, which accounted for 14 per cent of all conflict-related civilian deaths, a reduction of 4 per cent from 2010. Civilian



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deaths from aerial attacks increased in 2011, despite a decrease in the number of such attacks. According to the report, more than 185,000 people were also displaced during the last year, and the number of internally displaced persons reached approximately 500,000.

In relation to DRC, Ban Ki-Moon noted that the adoption of zero tolerance policy by the government against human rights violations and crimes against civilians committed by its own security forces did not produce the expected results: perpetrators, including senior army and police officials, kept being unpunished. Furthermore, the resumption of military operations against non-State armed groups in the east of the country has resulted in displacement and reprisals against civilians. In addition, LRA attacks on civilians in remote areas of the country and in the Central African Republic and South Sudan continued to produce serious humanitarian consequences. More than 445,000 civilians were currently displaced in LRA-affected areas.

With regard to Somalia, Ban Ki-Moon reported that, beyond the continuing and deliberate “targeting” against the civilian population committed by Al-Shabab forces in areas outside of Mogadishu, summary executions of civilians in Beledweyne and Baidoa were carried out by militias aligned with the Transitional Federal Government. It was also added that recent clashes between Al-Shabaab and Transitional Federal Government forces and those of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) continued to result in massive displacement in the southern and central regions.

The SG report also gave strong and renewed emphasis to the excessive use of force by Syrian security forces since March 2011: Ban Ki Moon recalled that over 9,000 people have been killed, while thousands more had to leave their homes. According to the report, extrajudicial killings, a widespread use of torture of civilians by security forces, blockades and curfews on cities such as Homs, Hama, Dar`a and Idlib increased the brunt of the violence on the civilian population. While blockades prevented residents from using water, food and medical supplies and injured from reaching the hospitals, the use of explosive weapons in populated areas, as in Homs and Idlib, was reported to have further aggravated the humanitarian consequences of the conflict, including in terms of damages to buildings and essential infrastructures. The SG also noted that the violence in the Syrian Arab Republic and last year’s conflict in Libya highlighted the dangers for journalists and other media professionals working in such situations. While six journalists were killed in Libya in March and April 2011, at least 11 have been killed in the Syrian Arab Republic since November 2011. In this sense the SG recalled the crucial role that journalists could play in reporting on the treatment and suffering endured by civilians in situations of conflict and on violations of humanitarian law and human rights.

### ***“Some encouraging developments”***

Nevertheless, the report also highlighted the importance of several positive developments occurred

<sup>1</sup> Resolution 1975 (2011) authorized the United Nations Operation in Côte d’Ivoire (UNOCI) to use all necessary means to carry out its mandate to protect civilians, including preventing the use of heavy weapons against the civilian population. With regard to the conflict in Libya, while resolution 1970 imposed a comprehensive arms embargo and targeted sanctions against the perpetrators of violations against civilians, resolution 1973 authorize Member States – individually or through regional organizations – to take all necessary measures to protect civilians with a view to preventing deaths and injuries

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in the protection of civilians in armed conflict. Besides referring to the increased practice adopted by the UNSC to include language relating to the protection of civilians in most of its relevant situation-specific resolutions as well as its greater willingness to use targeted sanctions against those who violate international humanitarian and human rights law, the importance of resolution 1975 (Cote d'Ivoire) and resolutions 1970 and 1973 on Libya was highlighted<sup>1</sup>

. Whilst recalling the disputes over the implementation of resolution 1973 carried out by NATO, the SG noted the positive development linked to the Brazilian initiative which introduced the concept of “*responsibility while protecting*” within the SC debate over the issue. According to the SG, the above-mentioned concept would allow the Council to consider and establish new procedures aimed at monitoring and assessing how resolutions are interpreted and implemented. An additional encouraging development occurred outside the UNSC was indicated in the ongoing United Nations Conference on the Arms Trade Treaty, which officially opened in New York on 2 July. The Conference is expected to provide Member States with a precious opportunity to address the human cost of the poorly regulated arms trade and the widespread availability and misuse of weapons. Reference was also made to the April landmark verdict issued by the Special Court for Sierra Leone against Charles Taylor, the former President of Liberia, who was found guilty of aiding and supporting two non-State armed groups in the commission of war crimes and crimes against humanity during the conflict in Sierra Leone. Ban Ki Moon noted that the verdict marked the first conviction of a former Head of State by an international criminal tribunal for planning, aiding and abetting war crimes and crimes against humanity and therefore sent a strong signal that Heads of State will be held accountable for their actions. Furthermore, the importance of the “*human rights due diligence policy on United Nations support to non-United Nations security forces*” was also highlighted. This approach, which is based on the review of the lesson learned from the implementation of the conditionality policy developed by the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in 2009 - applies wherever any United Nations entity is contemplating or providing support to any non-United Nations security force. In accordance with this policy, such support may not be provided where there are substantial grounds for believing that there is a real risk of the receiving forces committing grave violations of international humanitarian, human rights or refugee law and where the relevant authorities fail to take corrective measures. Among the above-mentioned developments, the report also noted that the need for improved recording of casualties in military operations is gaining increased attention. In this connection, the decision of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) to establish a civilian casualty-tracking analysis and response cell was highlighted as a very important step along with the similar mechanism already created by International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan.

### ***Ban Ki Moon's recommendations***

As follow-up to his previous reports on the issue, the SG proposed an articulated recommendations package which aims at a) enhancing compliance with the international law; b) enhancing compliance by non State armed groups; c) increasing the protection of civilians by UN peacekeeping operations and other military operations; d) ensuring humanitarian access; and e) improve accountability. With regard to the need of **enhancing compliance with international law in conflict situations**, the Security Council was urged to increase its use of targeted measures against



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the leadership of parties that perpetrate attacks against or otherwise interfere with health-care facilities, transport and providers or displace civilians in violation of international law; moreover, the Council was suggested to request the establishment of commissions of inquiry in situations involving the large-scale displacement of civilians in violation of international law and/or to refer such situations to the International Criminal Court. While the parties to conflict were asked to refrain from using explosive weapons with a wide-area impact in densely populated areas, Member States were urged to cooperate with all relevant stakeholders in collecting and making available to the United Nations, and other relevant actors, information on harm to civilians from the use of explosive weapons.

With regard to the **non compliance by non State armed groups with the international law**, Member States were asked to refrain from adopting national legislation, policies or other measures that have the effect of inhibiting humanitarian actors in their efforts to engage non-State armed groups for humanitarian purposes, including undertaking activities aimed at promoting respect for international humanitarian law.

In relation to the role played by **UN peacekeeping operation in protecting civilians**, Member States contributing with military and police personnel to protection-mandated missions were encouraged to utilize the Department of Peacekeeping Operations/Department of Field Support protection of civilians training modules prior to deployment. Moreover, the entire International Community was urged to provide peacekeeping operations with adequate resources, “especially air-mobility assets and early warning capabilities”, in order to support more effective rapid reaction in support of the protection of civilians. With regard to **humanitarian access**, parties to conflict were urged not to impede humanitarian activities through physical obstacles such as checkpoints or by withholding and delaying travel permits; the timely issuance by Member States of visas for international humanitarian personnel and simplified procedures for exempting humanitarian goods and workers from fees, duties and taxes was also indicated as a crucial measure to be adopted. Furthermore, parties to conflict were called upon to ensure that humanitarian activities are “*free from political or military interference and that they can be carried out in full compliance with the principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence*”.

### ***The UNSC debate***

After a brief presentation of the report by the SG, the UNSC meeting was opened by the interventions made by Valerie Amos, Emergency Relief Coordinator and Under-Secretary-General (USG) for Humanitarian Affairs and Ivan Simonovic, Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights, who delivered a statement on behalf of the UN Commissioner for Human Rights, the South African Navy Pillay. Mrs. Amos intervention reiterated the concerns expressed by the SG over the situations in Syria, DRC and Afghanistan. The USG made also reference to the very dramatic humanitarian situations erupted in Northern Mali, in Sudan – where continued fighting between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Sudanese People’s Liberation Movement-North, including aerial bombardment of civilian areas by the Sudanese Armed Forces had resulted in a sharp increase in the number of refugees fleeing to South Sudan – and in Yemen, where a Government offensive to regain control of cities in the Abyan Governorate had resulted in civilian deaths and injuries. According to Ms. Amos action was also needed to address the use in populated areas of explosive

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weapons with wide-area effect, the humanitarian impact of which was clear in parts of Syria. She recalled that more than 21,000 civilians were killed or injured by explosive weapons in 2011 and 87 per cent of those deaths and injuries occurred in populated areas, including markets, schools, places of worship and homes. Ms. Amos called on the Council to be more proactive and systematic in calling on all parties, in Syria and elsewhere, to refrain from using explosive weapons in populated areas. ASG Simonovic's intervention focused on the need to allocate appropriate resources - in terms of personnel, helicopters and other military assets - to peace operations whose mandate includes the protection of civilians. Mr. Simonovic also reiterated Ms Pillay's call for the Council to refer the Syria case to the International Criminal Court, "*which would remind actors that they would be held to accountable for their failure to abide by international humanitarian and human rights law*". Delegations from 45 Member States countries participated in the meeting; the situations in Syria, South Sudan, Sudan, Afghanistan, Yemen, and DRC were often referred to as a crisis where the civilian population - especially women and children - continued to suffer from extreme violence and the dramatic eruption of serious humanitarian crises. Delegations from **France and United Kingdom** made extensive reference to the Syrian crisis; they both recalled that the Syrian regime had "*shamefully*" failed in its responsibility to protect Syrian civilians. Whilst adding that the regime had killed around 15,000 Syrian civilians, the UK representative pointed out the need to combat impunity as critical step to ensure the protection of civilians. The statement delivered by the French representative openly accused the "the bloody regime of Bashar al-Assad" of continuing "*to violate its commitments*". According to the French delegation "*massacres in Houleh and Al-Koudeir, following those in Homs and Idlib, proved that the regime had no limits*" The **US delegation at the UN** recalled that protecting civilians was a fundamental responsibility of the international community and a priority for the United States. Ambassador Susan Rice added that the United States engagement on the issue focused on the need to ensure safety and access for humanitarian workers, advance accountability; and strengthen United Nations capacity in protecting civilians. The US administration conveyed to the SG its interest in convening periodical briefing to the Security Council on implementation of resolution 1894 (2009)<sup>2</sup> and an annual briefing on the capacity of current United Nations-mandated peacekeeping and special political missions with respect to their efforts to protect civilians. China and Russia, the other two members of the P5 (the five permanent members of the UNSC) reiterated Beijing and Moscow criticism against the death toll produced by the Libyan conflict and NATO military operation, and condemned, once again, the unilateral interpretation of resolution 1973 by Western countries. Furthermore, the Russian Federation noted that there was no need to "*dream up new instruments for the protection of civilians*": in this sense, efforts to designate new categories of people for protection were indicated as a wrong move which could only weaken the existing regime. **Brazil and India** interventions focused on the need to ensure "*responsibility while protecting*" and therefore

<sup>2</sup> (11 November 2009) focused on compliance with international humanitarian, human rights and refugee law as well as relevant Council decisions, humanitarian access and UN peacekeeping.

<sup>3</sup> United Nations, Security Council, *Letter Addressed from the Permanent Representative of Brazil at the United Nations to the Secretary general*, (9 November 2011).



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joined China and Russia in making explicit references to “*recent actions carried out by some organizations and States*” that had lent “*considerable*” unease about the manner in which the humanitarian imperative had been interpreted. In particular, the Brazilian delegation reiterated its traditional view on “*diplomacy, cooperation and conflict prevention*” as the best ways to ensure the protection of civilians could best be achieved if conflicts were prevented<sup>3</sup>. The intervention made by the delegation of Switzerland was particularly interesting. Speaking on behalf of an inter-regional caucus, the so called “**Group of Friends on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict**” – which includes Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Liechtenstein, Norway, Portugal, United Kingdom and Uruguay) – the Switzerland delegation expressed convinced support for the Secretary-General’s recommendations and noted that consensus around the civilian protection concept had to be rebuilt. The Group added that it was essential to promote a positive perception of humanitarian action and also called for strengthening communications between the Council and troop-contributing countries, as well as improving cooperation among the Council, States and civil society actors on the protection of civilians. The role that could be played by UN Peacekeeping operations in enhancing host countries’ ability to protect civilians by strengthening the rule of law and security institutions was also emphasized. On behalf of the Group, the Swiss delegation also urged the Security Council to make increasing use of its power of inquiry by creating commissions of inquiry or fact-finding missions, and eventually consider a more “institutional” use of the referral to the ICC situations of serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law<sup>4</sup>

### *The way ahead*

Despite the fact that the meeting did not end with the adoption of a resolution or a presidential statement, most of the recommendations presented by the SG seemed to meet a wide consensus within and outside the membership of the UNSC. A clear consensus emerged on the need to promote full humanitarian access and strengthen capacity and resources of UN peacekeeping operations in the implementation of mandates associated with a specific humanitarian dimension. Different views still exist on the issue related to the **SC referral** of more serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law to the International Criminal Court. The reference made by some Member States on the issue of impunity and the inability of Council to ensure adequate follow up to the decision to give the Court the power to investigate those responsible for crimes against humanity and genocide continues to be extremely controversial. However, according to some Member States the work of the Court based on Council referrals was thus not very different in nature from the work of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia and International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda. In this sense, as stated by many delegations, fol-

<sup>4</sup> United Nations Department of Public Information, Security Council: *Secretary-General Describes Appalling Catalogue of Violence Inflicted on Civilians in Conflict, Says ‘We Must Do More to Save Innocent Lives,’ in Security Council Meeting*, in *Security Council Meeting*, Says ‘We Must Do More to Save Innocent Lives,’ in Security Council 6790<sup>th</sup> & 6791<sup>st</sup> Meetings (AM & PM) , 25 June 2012s

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low-up to referrals, in particular regarding cooperation, should, be much higher on the agenda of the Council. In particular, with reference to the arrest warrant of Sudanese President al Bashir - issued by the ICC on the basis of the mandate set by the Council in its resolution 1593 (2005) - new criticism emerged from some Member States of the African Union. These delegations implicitly reiterated their hostility to the indictment and arrest warrant issued by ICC against “*an African Head of state who continues to play a key role in the negotiations between Sudan and South Sudan*”. During the upcoming coming months, the issue of cooperation between Member States and the ICC could be more constructively addressed in the context of a hypothetical working group which could provide a forum for concerted action on all related matters, such as notifications from the Court on non-cooperation.

Similarly controversial is the request made by SG to Member States to avoid the adoption of laws, decrees and directives that “*have the effect of inhibiting humanitarian actors in their efforts to engage non-State armed groups for humanitarian purposes, including to undertake activities aimed at promoting respect for international humanitarian law*”. On this matter, the delegations of Colombia, supported by other countries facing similar situations, expressed serious reservations over the SG report’s proposal that compliance by **non-State armed groups** depended on the existence of direct contacts between non-State armed groups and the United Nations. The representative from Colombia noted that the report’s suggestions collided with Colombia’s policies on the question of eventual peace negotiations: furthermore, he rejected the report’s “sweeping” proposition of more systematic engagement with such groups. According to the Colombian government, any dialogue between the United Nations and illegal armed groups categorized as “terrorist” organizations could be held only with Colombia’s explicit consent.

Nevertheless, over the next few months, some encouraging developments might occur on the issue of **prevention and response to civilian casualties**, deaths or injuries unintentionally caused by peace operations. A remarkable consensus exists on the casualty recording as a precious instrument aimed at clarifying the causes of harm to civilians as well as the actions needed to end such harm and prevent its recurrence. The above-mentioned experience of AMISOM and ISAF could soon inspire UN initiative on this issue with a view to further reflecting on these experiments and ensuring their improvement and possible replication elsewhere. Such mechanisms, apart from being effective means to document incidents that resulted in civilian casualties, could be extremely useful in order to launch investigations, and provide remedies to victims.

Additional developments might occurred with regard to the SG’s intention to review the United Nations experience in commission of inquiry and fact-finding mission processes; these instruments provided the Council with a crucial support in order to assess and verify situations of grave and massive violations of human rights and international humanitarian law. As shown by the case of Guinea Conakry the commissions of inquiries have the potential to contribute to the reconciliation and peacebuilding processes by identifying and bringing to justice perpetrators of the above-mentioned violations.

It is also very likely that the political and military leadership of the UN peacekeeping operations (UN PKOs) will increase their engagement in ensuring full implementation of the **Human Rights Diligence Policy** promoted by the SG. Logistic and military support recently provided by UN PKOs to operations carried out by government security forces in DRC, Rwanda and South Sudan



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raised specific concerns over the possible lack of respect of the diligence policy<sup>5</sup>. It goes without saying that adherence to the human rights due diligence policy is critical not only for preventing violations of human rights and international humanitarian laws and but also for maintaining the legitimacy and credibility of the United Nations as a promoter and defender of human rights.

As it was briefly mentioned earlier, high expectations are also linked to the **UN Conference on Arms Trade Treaty**, which is currently taking place in New York. Within the UN membership and Secretariat there seem to be a dominant view that ineffective treaties on arms trade, along with the wide availability of firearms and explosives, are often the source of the violations committed during the armed conflict. Future treaty provisions clearly stating that weapons could not be transferred when there is a clear risk that they will be used to commit serious violations of international humanitarian and human rights law could represent a very important development in promoting the protection of civilians in armed conflict. However, as negotiations are also expected to cover the full array of conventional weapons, including small arms, and ammunition, the positive outcome of the Conference in terms of an increased protection of civilians - through a new legal instrument - still remains uncertain.

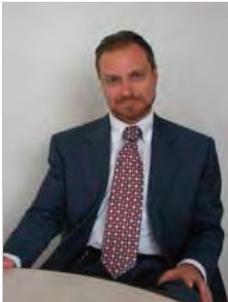
### ***The nexus Protection of civilians and the responsibility to protect***

Nevertheless, more tangible progresses on the issue are likely to be prevented by the current dispute over the relations between the protection of civilian and the emerging principle of the responsibility to protect (R2P). As pointed out by the SG in his report, while the two concepts share some common elements, particularly with regard to prevention and support to national authorities in discharging their responsibilities towards civilians, there are fundamental differences. While the protection of civilians is a legal concept based on international humanitarian, human rights and refugee law, the responsibility to protect is a political concept, set out in the 2005 World Summit Outcome (see General Assembly resolution 60/1). Furthermore, *“there are specific differences in their scope: while the protection of civilians relates to violations of international humanitarian and human rights law in situations of armed conflict, the R2P is limited to violations that constitute war crimes or crimes against humanity or that would be considered acts of genocide or ethnic cleansing. Crimes against humanity, genocide and ethnic cleansing may occur in situations that do not meet the threshold of armed conflict”*. Divisions within the UNSC over the implementation and interpretation of resolution 1973 had the effect to extremely politicize the debate and virtually eliminate the above-mentioned distinctions. Added to the continuing disagreements on the Syrian crisis, this situation seems able to prevent the achievement of more tangible progress in the implementation of legal principle of protection of civilians in armed conflict.

<sup>5</sup> Security Council Report, *Cross-cutting Report on Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict*, n.2, 2012, 31 May 2012, see: [www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/XCutting%20POC%202012.pdf](http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/XCutting%20POC%202012.pdf), latest access 4 July 2012.



## Energy Sector



### **Shale gas: a new transatlantic energy partnership?**

Angelantonio Rosato

*Energy security is especially linked to sources' diversification, while Italy is too dependent on Russian and North-African gas. How/where to find valid alternatives? According to some experts, the solution is based on what Daniel Yergin has called "The Natural Gas Revolution" (chapter 16 of his last book – 'The Quest', Penguin Press, New York, 2011).*

*In other words, the solution for Italy/Europe would be US shale gas transformed in LNG and shipped to the other side of the Atlantic: massive EU imports of LNG from the U.S. in order to substitute Russian and North-African gas. The rationale is that shale gas is abundant in North America, (and possibly in Northern Europe, too, i.e. Poland). That's all folks? Or is there a more complex story beneath the surface?*

#### ***The past, the present and future***

All began thanks to a little shortage of natural gas in Texas, more than 30 years ago. A little shortage and a great man, "George P. Mitchell, a Houston based oil and gas producer, got a problem: his company was going to run short of natural gas, which would put it in a very difficult position - Daniel Yergin recounts in detail this story in 'The Quest', Penguin Press, New York, 2011 - For it was contracted to deliver a substantial amount of natural gas from Texas to feed a pipeline serving Chicago (...) This was in the early 1980s. Three decades later, Mitchell relentless commitment to do something about the problem would transform the North American natural gas market and shake expectations for the global gas market. Indeed, the stubborn conviction of this one man would change America's energy prospects and force recalculations around the world".

What did Mitchell eventually do? He invented an economically viable technique to extract natural gas trapped in hard, concrete-like shale rock. "Gas could certainly be extracted from shale rock – Yergin writes – In fact, it is thought that the very first natural gas well in the United States, in Fredonia, New York, in 1821, drew from a shale formation. The problem was the economics. It was inordinately difficult and thus very expensive to extract gas from shale". And it stayed like that until Mitchell's engineers team, by the end of 1998, "successfully adapted a fracking technique – what is known as LSF or Light Sand Fracking - to break up the shale rock". This was the breakthrough. The success' key was indeed *fracking* - otherwise known as hydraulic fracturing, often shortened hydro-fracking – a technique developed since the 1940s. Hydraulic fracturing consists in injecting under high pressure a mixture of water, sand, and chemicals into shale rocks to release the gas.



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Today result of this fascinating story is that Washington has dramatically changed the outlook for U.S. domestic gas production, that is booming. In 2010, roughly 150 billion cubic meters of gas were produced, and the U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA) has predicted that this number will triple by 2035. Today shale gas is approximately 25% of natural gas supply in U.S.A., and by 2030 it could reach 50%, according to the forecasts. In 2000 it was just 1% of natural gas supply. “North America’s natural gas base, now estimated at 3.000 trillion cubic feet, could provide for current levels of consumption for over a hundred years – plus”,<sup>1</sup> Yergin writes. None of this was in energy forecasts made in the early 2000s, when the prevailing expectation was that U.S. imports of both natural gas and petroleum would rise during the decade rather than fall.

As President Obama said in 2011: “Recent innovations have given us the opportunity to tap larger reserves – perhaps a century’s worth – in the shale under our feet”.<sup>2</sup> And this is true not only for shale gas, indeed.

### *Not only a shale gas revolution*

As a matter of fact, the American energy revolution is not only a shale gas story, but regards oil extraction too. Today, a boom in oil shale production is underway in North Dakota, while thousands of new gas wells have been drilled in Pennsylvania, Texas and Oklahoma. What alchemic secret made this possible? The magic formula is ‘new technologies’. They include breakthroughs in horizontal, highly accurate drilling techniques and the already mentioned development of hydraulic fracturing techniques.

The revolution was possible thanks to a mix of new technology, price signals, favourable state regulatory laws. Last but not least, it occurred because, unlike in most countries, in USA citizens who own land also have owners’ rights to minerals and other products of value beneath the surface. Despite some rising environmental concerns (stronger in Europe than in US, indeed), the economic payback of domestic low-cost gas and oil is so strong to guarantee that the United States will stay the dominant player in the game for many years to come. Besides, the techniques and the safety records will certainly improve. According to Geoffrey Kemp, Corey Johnson and Tim Boersma, authors of a recent study for the Transatlantic Academy on shale gas entitled “The Shale Gas Boom: Why Poland Is Not Ready”: “The real question is not whether shale fuels are good or bad, but whether their production will have a negative impact on the development of more sustainable, cleaner energy sources”.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, urge to be cautious with the above referred estimates. According to the just mentioned Transatlantic Academy fellows: “Earlier this year, the EIA substantially downgraded its earlier predictions for recoverable natural gas reserves in the biggest shale deposit in the United States, the Marcellus shale (from 410 tcf to 141 tcf). In addition, roughly a decade ago, shale gas and the technologies to extract them were a phenomenon only known by a

<sup>1</sup> Daniel Yergin, *The Quest*, Penguin Press, New York, 2011.

<sup>2</sup> President Obama was quoted in: Daniel Yergin, *The Quest*, Penguin Press, New York, 2011.

<sup>3</sup> Geoffrey Kemp, Corey Johnson and Tim Boersma, *The Shale Gas Boom: Why Poland Is Not Ready*, Transatlantic Academy, June 2012.

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few insiders. We have to acknowledge that there are many things about shale gas we still do not know”.<sup>4</sup>Despite these worries, no one could deny the economic consequences of the shale gas boom. In the United States, since July 2008 the natural gas’ prices have dropped considerably. Lower price of natural gas on the market is producing a slow down in industry investments, but is also helping the domestic economy’s recovery.

The effects of the Shale Gas Revolution are not only economic but also social and political: the open question for U.S. policymakers and business executives is: what to do with all this gas? “One obvious option is electricity generation. Natural gas is believed to be cleaner than coal, and nuclear energy has an uncertain future. Both government agencies and academics have estimated that the number of gas-fired electricity plants will rise in the decades ahead, to roughly one-third of the total U.S. electricity production in 2035. In addition, some major chemical industries have recently decided to shift a part of their production process back to the United States, a move prompted by low gas prices. Other options for abundant natural gas are less clear or more controversial. Using natural gas in transport seems a rather distant scenario because of the large infrastructural investments that would be required, while exporting excess gas is being debated by policymakers in Washington, DC as a national security and price issue. To date, only one project has received an unrestricted license to export natural gas, while eight others have been put on hold.”<sup>5</sup>This is the current situation about America, but what about Europe?

### *Effects on Europe*

According to the mentioned Transatlantic Academy fellows: “Despite the many open questions that remain, the effects of U.S. shale gas on European markets are evident. Liquefied natural gas (LNG) from Qatar, Eastern Siberia, and other regions that was intended to find its way to terminals in the United States is now shipped to Europe and Asia. It has had a moderating effect on natural gas spot market prices and has prompted some major consumers to attempt to renegotiate earlier long-term contracts signed with suppliers. This seems to confirm earlier predictions that shale gas production could undermine the leverage or market dominance of traditional major players such as Russia. Yet it is worth mentioning that the share of LNG in Europe is not expected to be more than 20 percent in the decade ahead, indicating that the bulk of natural gas will reach Europe through pipelines that are tied up in long-term contracts. Furthermore, prices are not exclusively determined by the market, but also by infrastructural limitations, available storage facilities, and reverse flow capacity. Even when these restrictions would not apply, it is questionable whether U.S. natural gas could be globally competitive. A study by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 2011 suggests that in a more integrated world gas market, most U.S. shale gas is expected to be more costly to produce than low-cost conventional resources from the Middle East and Rus-

<sup>4</sup> Geoffrey Kemp, Corey Johnson and Tim Boersma, *The Shale Gas Boom: Why Poland Is Not Ready*, Transatlantic Academy, June 2012.

<sup>5</sup> Geoffrey Kemp, Corey Johnson and Tim Boersma, *The Shale Gas Boom: Why Poland Is Not Ready*, Transatlantic Academy, June 2012.

sia.”<sup>6</sup> True but the real question is: will we ever be in a perfect integrated world gas market? In the main time, maybe it would be a good idea not to underestimate the geo-political and geo-economic potentials of the shale gas.

### ***The Poland's dilemma***

What about single European States? As a matter of fact, northern Europe is supposed to contain high reserve of shale gas, i.e. in Poland. Nevertheless the Transatlantic Academy fellows in their recent study underline that: “Not a single molecule of natural gas from shale has been produced in Poland, yet enthusiasm about the potential reserves is widespread. In particular, Polish policy-makers have the explicit desire to extract the reserves that have been mapped, for reasons of lower prices, high rents, and energy independence from Russia. There are however several arguments why future commercial shale gas extraction in Poland may be difficult to achieve. It is unclear how much gas there is in Poland. While in 2011, the EIA estimated that Polish shale formations contained nearly 900 times Poland’s annually gas consumption in technically recoverable reserves (or 5.3 tcm), in 2012 the Polish Geological Institute released figures that were much more moderate (between 346 bcm to 768 bcm). Moreover, private companies that have been active in local exploratory drillings have generated mixed results. Geochemists in the United States and Canada are currently examining these cores in laboratories and have reported that the preliminary findings are promising, but Exxon at an earlier stage declared that the two wells they had drilled were underperforming. Even if shale gas could at some point be extracted, several hurdles would remain. First, the political debate on the European stage seems to have done the Polish case more harm than good until now. This is rooted in deep distrust of Russia in Poland, and also of some of Poland’s European Union partners. Yet despite its complex history vis-à-vis Europe, the reality is that Russia has been a stable supplier of both oil and natural gas to the continent for several decades. To give an example, the often-quoted supply disruptions in 2009 were not felt by consumers in Germany and Poland because Russia was able to bypass Ukraine and increase gas exports through Belarus. The inauguration of the Nord Stream pipeline, linking Russia directly with Germany and bypassing Poland, has also been portrayed as a betrayal of sorts. Yet it is questionable why, if dependence on Russia is the existential threat as is often portrayed, Polish investments in recent years have not aimed to reduce this dependency, by for instance developing the country’s gas market and connecting it to north-western Europe.”<sup>7</sup> The question remain open.

### ***The arguments against Shale Gas & LNG***

In the debate pro and con the Shale Gas, the environmental issue is very important. Especially in Europe environmental concerns and charges against the shale gas are mounting. The main defendant is *Hydraulic Fracturing* (shortly *HydroFracking*). The two most important charges are the

<sup>6</sup> Geoffrey Kemp, Corey Johnson and Tim Boersma, *The Shale Gas Boom: Why Poland Is Not Ready*, Transatlantic Academy, June 2012.

<sup>7</sup> Geoffrey Kemp, Corey Johnson and Tim Boersma, *The Shale Gas Boom: Why Poland Is Not Ready*, Transatlantic Academy, June 2012.

following:

- (1) *The HydroFracking* process would damage the aquifers;
- (2) What to do with the *flow back water*? This is heavily polluted water, used in the *fracking job*.

Other arguments versus the shale gas are mainly geo-economic: first, US shale gas will not be able to reach massively the world markets until 2022, at least, according to the most serious forecasts.

Secondly, it is possible, even probable, that by that date the shale gas from North America will bypass Europe and will be shipped as LNG directly towards Asia (China, India, Japan and others), where the energy demand is booming.

Not to forget that the *liquefied* natural gas must be re-gasified. In order to do this, as we already wrote on these pages, an adequate number of re-gasification plants must be developed, a move which will require much time and investment. In Italy it will especially require to fight and defeat the NIMBY (Not In My Back Yard), a syndrome unfortunately very popular in our country. A recent example is the unilateral withdrawal of British Gas from the Capobianco (Brindisi) regasification terminal project after 11 years of never-ending legal disputes due to local oppositions to the project.<sup>8</sup> It is worth underlying that today in Italy exists only a relevant regasification plant, near Rovigo, but it can satisfy only 10% of Italy's gas needs. Moreover, – the official name of Rovigo regassification plant - is an off-shore structure: it was the only way to overcome the local ecologists' opposition. Not a promising present for a energy future supposedly based on shale gas / LNG.

Besides, the Shale Gas would be an advantage only if acquired on the spot market. Otherwise, another kind of dependency will appear, not much better than the current *pipe-slavery* Europe/Italy is submitted; it could be even worse, because of the risks always connected with transportation by sea.

Unfortunately, the share of LNG exchanged in the gas world spot market is just the 20% of the total liquefied gas (data from the International Gas Union, 2011). The rest (80%) of the LNG is exchanged on the basis of *Take-or-Pay Agreement*, the usual contracts between Italy and Russia, for example. Therefore in this situation shifting from the pipeline to the Shale Gas / LNG by sea would mean much ado about nothing for Italy.

Last but not least, talking about energy *security*, another advantage often invoked by the pipeline advocates is that is very difficult and costly to infringe a *Take-or-Pay Agreement*, usually 25 years long, or even more. For all these reasons today the pipeline would be much more secure than LNG by sea. So far so well, but tomorrow?.

<sup>8</sup> See: *Da 11 anni aspetta i permessi: British gas rinuncia al rigassificatore e lascia Brindisi*, <http://www.ilsole24ore.com/art/economia/2012-03-06/anni-aspetta-permessi-british-084800.shtml?uuid=Ab84Y22E> Sole 24 ore (on line), 06 March 2012.



## Energy Sector

### *Conclusions*

Although wide spreading enthusiasm and hope, North American shale gas transformed in LNG may not be able to reach massively the European shores and the world markets anytime soon. What is worse: once arrived in Europe, American LNG could not find the necessary re-gassification plants to reconvert it in functional gas, especially in Italy. NIMBY (Not In My Back Yard) syndrome is destroying any hope for Italian energy independence, or even just for a modest diversification of gas supply sources. This is very important, urgent and dangerous: Rome could risk to be hanged on the North African gas pipeline and/or the Russian one, soon or later.

A new transatlantic energy partnership based on shale gas is highly desirable for Europe, but still difficult to put into practice, to realize anytime soon. Difficult does not mean impossible. Nevertheless the harsh reality is that the Natural Gas Revolution is just a North American story, thus far. It is still unclear when/if US shale gas could really invade European market, and maybe become a substitute of Russian methane. It is also doubtful if Poland, regardless the more or less large amount of potential shale gas reserves, could become energy independent from Moscow, in the short/medium term. As a matter of fact and despite wishful thinking, Russia could stay as the main Europe gas supplier for many years to come, *ceteris paribus*.

Nevertheless, in theory, a substantial and durable decrease of world energy prices due to mass imports of shale/LNG gas into Europe could undermine Russia's position as Europe main energy supplier, and put Moscow in serious trouble. Just like it happened in the second half of the 80's when oil prices collapsed and consequently USSR did.