

CENTRO SUPERIOR DE ESTUDIOS
DE LA DEFENSA NACIONAL



ANIVERSARIO 1964-2014

Geopolitical overview of conflicts 2013

Spanish
Institute of
Strategic
Studies

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CONTENTS

Chapter one	
How conflicts have evolved	7
Miguel Ángel Ballesteros Martín	
Chapter two	
Mali: security, democracy and development to overcome the conflict	25
Jesús Díez Alcalde	
Chapter three	
Syria: war, sectarianism and chaos	57
Mario Laborie Iglesias	
Chapter four	
Georgia and its separatist territories: beyond the point of no return	95
Manuel de Miguel Ramírez	
Chapter five	
The strait of Hormuz. In the eye of the hurricane	119
Emilio Sánchez de Rojas	
Chapter six	
The fragile Ivorian stability: stranded between the lesser of two evils and open conflict.....	143
Jorge Bolaños Martínez	
Chapter seven	
Kenya: the politicisation of diversity.....	171
Blanca Palacián de Inza	

	<u>Page</u>
Chapter eight	
Conflict and disputes in the Ferghana valley	197
Federico Aznar Fernández-Montesinos	
Chapter nine	
Afghanistan: on the eve of a decisive 2014	227
Francisco José Berenguer Hernández	
Chapter ten	
Development of the conflict in Pakistan. An uncertain future	255
Andrés González Martín	
Chapter eleven	
India. The naxalite insurgency.....	287
María José Caro	
Chapter twelve	
China's inner ring. Strength or weakness?.....	311
Ignacio García Sánchez	
Chapter thirteen	
The ethnic conflicts in Myanmar: Kachin.....	341
María del Mar Hidalgo García	
Chapter fourteen	
Indonesia. The east Papua conflict.....	369
Ignacio García Palomero	
Chapter fifteen	
The Colombian peace process.....	391
Miguel Ángel Serrano Monteavaro	

How conflicts have evolved

Miguel Ángel Ballesteros Martín

Chapter one

Abstract

The emergence of new, multifaceted risks and threats acts as a driver for the proliferation of asymmetric conflicts, and it becomes necessary to examine how these evolve in their various aspects: the Tofflers' social and political paradigms, developments in wars, the features of asymmetric conflicts, trends for capabilities and the strategies for facing up to them. All of this is needed if we are to conduct a proper analysis.

Keywords

Asymmetric conflict, Third wave, Fourth generation wars, capabilities, asymmetric strategies.

Introduction

In effectively approaching the matter of resolving conflicts, it is important to be aware of their nature, characteristics, how they evolve, the trends they take and the geopolitical factors that have a bearing on them. Correct analysis of how they evolve will help us infer what they will be like in the future and what the best strategies are, and will be, to face up to them, all the while taking into account the international situation.

Sociopolitical paradigms and conflicts

In his book *The Third Wave*, Alvin Toffler¹ establishes three sociopolitical and economic phenomena which he calls «waves», featuring the agricultural, industrial and information societies. Such waves do not come in succession but instead often converge, overlap and, on occasions, when none are predominant, clash with each other, giving rise to tensions. In a later book entitled *War and Anti-War*², Alvin and his wife, Heidi Toffler, explain how these waves are mirrored in the polemological causes of wars and the way in which conflicts develop.

The «First Wave» coincides with the agrarian revolution, where military conflicts are fought out by tiny armies comprising peasants and servants mobilized by their master for the time needed to wage war. In Europe and North America this period lasted from antiquity up to the French and American revolutions. According to Alvin Toffler, this first wave has been passed and there are only very few territories where it still prevails, although certain failed or very weak states remain where so-called «warlords» hold sway. The latter represent a phenomenon typical of the Middle Ages in Europe that still survives in countries such as Somalia or Afghanistan. Their presence is inevitable when there is no strong state authority. In the Balkan wars of the 1990s, warlords emerged naturally and devastatingly with the collapse of the Yugoslavian apparatus³.

In Afghanistan or Somalia, which are predominantly rural countries, the First Wave prevails. In them the warlords possess a great capacity for mobilizing armed groups to protect their own interests. Despite scant economic and material resources, they dovetail their fighting with their farming activities. They temporarily band into groups that are poorly-armed yet particularly talented at asymmetric warfare due to their

¹ Toffler, Alvin. *La Tercera Ola (The Third Wave)*, Barcelona, Barcelona: Plaza & Janés Editores, 1995, pp. 20, 21.

² Toffler, Alvin and Heidi. *Las Guerras del Futuro (War and Anti-War)*, Barcelona: Plaza & Janés Editores, 1995.

³ Moran Blanco, Sagrario and Gonzalez Martín, Andrés. *Asymmetry, Warfare and Information*, Madrid: Publ. Dilex S.L., 2009, p. 38.

knowledge of how the land lies, and as they move with their faces concealed among the civilian populace, with a high degree of control over the area and substantial support from the locals, they make the most of any means available to cobble together explosive devices. Their diminished logistical capabilities impose limits on the scale of their operations and how long these last, and they confine their activities to a specific geographical environment, where the combatants rub shoulders with organised crime.

Armed and organized by warlords, these groups are not directly answerable to any state structures, so they can behave more brutally, without taking any heed of international law⁴. This gives them an edge over conventional armies, which are slow to adapt their strategies. The absence of a state presence in regions where warlords hold sway favours this sort of conflict.

The «*Second Wave*» coincides with the first industrial revolution in the 18th and 19th centuries and the second industrial revolution in the 19th and 20th centuries. In the USA and Europe this wave extends to the late 1950s, with the take-off of Information Technology. During the Second Wave states use large armies to defend themselves, sustained by conscription, which was even employed by a few to try and extend their power and influence. Warfare in this period brings large armies face to face, giving rise to numerous casualties. Industrialisation leads to standardisation of weapons and logistical development. This age takes in both of the two great world wars, which saw the theatre of battle spread out further with the arrival on the scene of air-forces. Air-power thus comes into play, which took on special significance at the hands of thinkers such as the Italian, Douhet, the Soviet, Severnsky, or the American, Mitchell. Time would tell that it would be the combination of capabilities on joint operations which would allow military victory to be achieved in clashes. The Arab-Israeli wars provided the testing ground where the blending of air power with armour was tried out successfully.

Today we are witnesses to a new theatre for confrontation, cyberspace, and, much as we saw earlier, there are some who think that this will prove decisive. While it is important, however, it will be just another dimension in the mix, along with land, sea or air, and even space.

Having revolutionized life in Europe, North America and certain other parts of the globe in only a few centuries, this Second Wave continues to expand throughout other parts of the world⁵. At present, a significant

⁴ Jordan, Javier and Calvo, José Luis, *The new face of warfare*. Pamplona: EUNSA University of Navarre, 2005, pp. 24-25.

⁵ Toffler, Alvin. *The Third Wave*, op. cit. p. 25.

portion of the Arab societies in Egypt, Libya, Tunisia and Syria fall within this Second Wave.

The «*Third Wave*» is that of the post-industrial era, which begins in the United States towards the end of the 1950s, when the United States reaches the point where it has more people working in the tertiary (service) sector than in the secondary sector, focussed on industrial production. The Third Wave is characterized by the major strides in technological progress by the United States, which soon feed through to Europe, Japan and the USSR. Technology becomes a multiplier of the power of armies via increasingly sophisticated weapons systems. Conscripted armies give way to professional forces, which are smaller but more effective, allowing brief yet highly efficient interventions compared to the armies typical of the Second Wave. Outer space begins to be used in the Third Wave as a new military theatre restricted to only the major powers. This is about the militarization of space by means of satellites and precision missiles.

With the advent of globalization based on the substantial development of information and communications technologies, a «*Fourth Wave*» emerges, which in military terms gives rise to a fifth sphere of confrontation – cyberspace – which is paradoxically within the reach of both state and non-state players.

Information in real time, which makes it possible to visualize and find out what is happening in any corner of the world, makes societies more aware of violence and conflicts, thereby creating bodies of public opinion which exert an influence on government decisions. In its day, this forced the withdrawal of US troops from Vietnam and was influential in shaping strategy for the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. This is currently conditioning strategies for the Syrian conflict.

Alvin Toffler says that when two or more «waves» come together in a society and none of them is clearly predominant, the image of the future breaks down⁶, meaning that destabilization occurs. After the initial Arab uprisings, which gave rise to the inappropriately termed «Arab springs», there was a clash between two paradigms: the third wave society, into which the populace from the cities fits, being better educated, having access to social networking, and with a pro-Western, secular outlook, and on the other hand the second wave society, which embraces most of the rural population, for whom religion is the mainstay of how they view and regulate social and political life. In countries such as Egypt there is no clear-cut preponderance of one or the other wave, which fuels the type of sociopolitical and economic conflict that could well trigger a civil war.

⁶ *ibid.* p. 27.

If we focus on military changes, we could determine the following kinds of military revolution according to Murray⁷:

The first military revolution occurs with the creation of the nation-state, which although initiated with Machiavelli in the 16th century, became more widespread in the 19th century. In the nation-state the armed forces are responsible for territorial integrity, sovereignty and border protection.

The French revolution achieved the mobilization of the masses, with large-scale people's armies based on recruiting non-professional troops. Fighting was not for the king or a feudal lord and master, but instead for the people, based on the notion of the nation in arms.

The second military revolution is an outcome of the industrial revolution, which allowed great economic growth that in turn facilitated the acquisition of new arms and investments in research into developing technology for military use. In the First World War everything achieved in both the nation-state and industrial revolutions was applied.

In addition to these revolutions, one should add the atomic revolution, which raises the pursuit of war to a political level, where it is politicians who ultimately decide how, when and where to use nuclear weapons, and even directly or indirectly launch them.

Finally there is the Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA), which exploits technological change to create new organisational forms and doctrines to seek out major advantages in warfare⁸.

How wars have evolved

Let us now turn our attention to how wars have evolved. William Lind⁹ proposes classifying wars in modern history into four generations:

First Generation Wars (1GW), which are those that take place during the pre-industrial phase, during the consolidation of the nation-state concept.

Second Generation Wars (2GW) are characterised by the commitment of the whole of society in the war, based on the principles of the French

⁷ Murray, Williamson, *Thinking about Revolutions in Military Affairs*, Joint Force Quarterly, vol. 16, summer, pp. 69-76 quoted by Josep Baqués in the Manual de estudios estratégicos y seguridad internacional (Manual of strategic studies and international security), Madrid, Plaza y Valdés, 2013, p. 126.

⁸ Baqués, Josep: *Manual de estudios estratégicos y seguridad internacional* (Manual of strategic studies and international security) Coor: Javier Jordan, Madrid: Plaza y Valdés, 2013, pp. 121-123.

⁹ LIND, William: *The Changing Face of War: Into the Fourth Generation*, 1989, quoted by Federico Aznar Fernandez-Montesinos in his book. Entender la guerra en el siglo XXI (Understanding war in the 21st century), Madrid: Publ. Complutense, 2010, p. 118.

Revolution. Such wars exploit technological advances from the industrial age and new means of transport which favour the war spreading out into wide geographical regions.

Third Generation Wars (3GW) begin with the appearance on the scene of nuclear weapons and are characterised by using technology.

Lastly, Fourth Generation Wars (4GW) are those which coincide with the age of globalisation, characterised by information and communications technologies. It is an era in which individual values predominate over those of the State. It is an age that suits asymmetric strategies where a party with scant military capabilities can pose the threat of war against a state with large-scale military resources. Most wars going on today can be classified as 4GW.

A variant of 4GW is hybrid warfare, where irregular warfare typical of asymmetric strategies is conducted alongside conventional forms of war. The 2003 Iraq war began conventionally, but it gradually morphed into an asymmetric conflict. This is a trend true today. Any military intervention against a country's armed forces does not end in its defeat, but instead spawns a long and drawn-out asymmetric conflict against the insurgents featuring a high human and economic cost. Many countries opt for a dissuasive strategy in the face of major powers by organising so-called «popular resistance», for which they set up arms caches scattered over the whole territory. Such countries assume the conventional war against the invader to be a lost cause but organise resistance by means of asymmetric warfare, which makes attacks by insurgents easier. The Lebanese government has adopted such a strategy against Israel and sidesteps disarming Hezbollah, which acts as a militia against Israel.

With the appearance of a new scenario for fighting such as cyberspace, cyberwar has emerged, which could be considered to be another variant of 4GW, but which has all the qualities to earn itself its own category: «Fifth Generation War», given the significance that it could achieve, and which might play out in the coming decades.

Mary Kaldor¹⁰ calls such wars, which she places in the post-Cold War age of globalisation, «*new wars*». These are characterized by the increasingly cross-border nature of risks and threats, where domestic and foreign security become blurred and where interdependence among countries is unavoidable due to flows of capital and both natural and human resources.

Certain members of the US military referred to this concept as «*low intensity warfare*», within which they included guerilla activity or terrorism.

¹⁰ Kaldor, Mary: *New and Old Wars: Organised Violence in a Global Era* (Las nuevas guerras. Violencia organizada en la era global). Madrid: Publ. Tusquets, 2001, pp. 15-57.

Martin Shaw describes it as «degenerate war» to describe the ongoing nature of wars overall in the 20th century, though taking account of the decomposition of national structures¹¹.

Kaldor tells us that she uses the term «war» to stress the political nature of this new kind of violence, although new wars imply a blurring of the distinctions among war (usually defined as politically motivated violence between states or organised political groups), organised crime (violence for private reasons, generally for financial gain, practised by private organised groups) and large-scale violations of human rights (violence against individuals practised by states or politically organised groups).

According to Kaldor, organised crime groups, terrorists, wars and wholesale violations of human rights are inseparable. This leads us to asymmetric conflicts where two opponents with sizeable differences in resources come face to face. The weaker side includes among its targets the non-fighting civilian population so as to crush its will and capability for resistance as a means to achieve its political ends. But the differences do not merely lie in the capabilities of one or the other side and in the objectives regarding which each of them acts. The differences also become apparent in the funding and, above all, in the methods and procedures used to wage war. Strategy is not so much based on gaining territory through moving armies forward, as controlling the populace so as to hold sway over the ground.

New wars arise in a context of wearing down the autonomy of the State and, in some cases, breaking this up.

Kaldor holds that there are three characteristics that are the hallmarks of new wars in contrast to others before:

1. A policy of building up identities to develop a national consciousness: such a policy is both local and worldwide, national and cross-border, and uses technologies to disseminate it.
2. They use both guerilla and counter-revolutionary warfare strategies.
3. What Kaldor terms the «new 'globalized' war economy¹²» comes into being.

Current conflicts

In 1974 Andrew Mack coined the phrase «asymmetric conflict» in his book *The Concept of Power and its Uses in Explaining Asymmetric Conflict*¹³.

¹¹ Ibid. pp.16-17.

¹² Ibid. pp. 22-24.

¹³ Mack, A. (1974), *The Concept of Power and its Uses in Explaining Asymmetric Conflict*, Richardson Institute for Conflict and Peace Research, London, 1974. Quoted by Moran,

In 1999 the most significant study was published in which the term asymmetric warfare is mentioned, the *Joint Strategic Review, Asymmetric Approaches to Warfare*.

The objectives of this type of warfare back up the ideas of Clausewitz, as they are not of a military but rather a political nature and are directly linked with laying claim to power, often on the basis of nationalist principles and/or religious beliefs¹⁴. They strive towards and are based on weakness of the State and attempt to undermine its legitimacy and economic political power by using violence as propaganda for their potential. This consists of low-cost wars that do not require vast sums for new weapons systems and, nonetheless, choking off the funding of the groups employing asymmetric strategies and it is a good way to ensure they are defeated. Finally, operational procedure is usually the result of a blend over an extended period of time of guerilla warfare, terrorism, kidnappings and hijackings, revolutionary warfare, mass movements, subversions and insurgency.

The talk is no longer of wars, which, on the other hand, according to the United Nations Charter, have to be declared and are only lawful in the case of legitimate defence, whether individual or collective¹⁵. Now parlance refers to conflicts, and the fact is that the new wars to which Kaldor refers bear no relation to the images of conventional wars to which history would have us accustom ourselves. The greater ambiguity surrounding the word «conflict» is better suited to a society which often has no desire to see the seriousness of the events played out before it.

According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), war is defined as, «*any armed conflict where the military forces of two or more governments take part, or between a government and an armed force from the opposition, and when casualties number at least one thousand fighters*».

According to the SIPRI, there are three types of armed conflict: inter-state, intra-state and against civilians by means of unilateral violence. According to the Heidelberg Institute for Conflict Research, there are currently over fifty conflicts going on, most of which are deadlocked or latent. In the last two years we have witnessed an escalation of violence in areas of the Near East or the Sahel which have a spill-over effect in their geopolitical regions.

S. and Gonzalez Martin, A. in *Asimetría, guerras e información (Asymmetry, Wars and Information)*, Dilex S.L. Madrid, 2009. p. 97.

¹⁴ Kaldor, Mary: *New and Old Wars: Organised Violence in a Global Era*, Op. cit. p. 93.

¹⁵ Article 51 of the United Nations Charter.

In the graph by the Center for Systemic Peace¹⁶ we observe that in the case of armed conflict, where violence prevails, the trend was rising until the end of the Cold War; since then it has been declining. We see also that asymmetric wars predominate (blue line), most of them of an interstate nature, accounting for more than 90% of the total (figure 1.1).

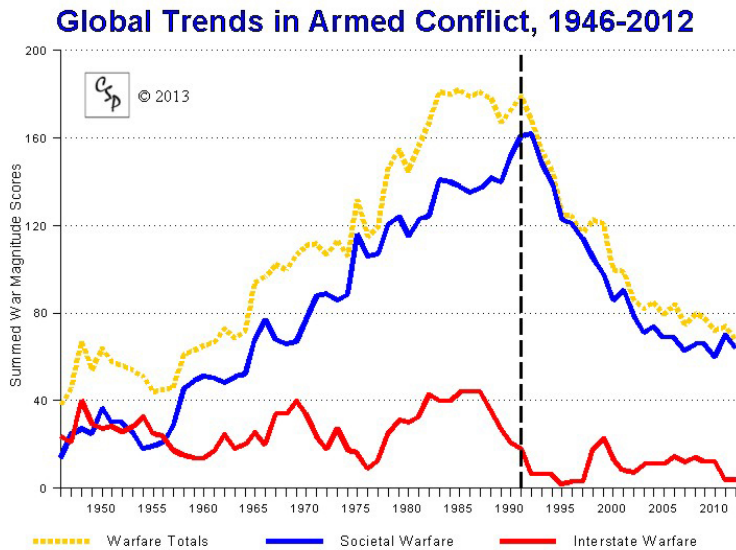


Figura 1.1.jpg

The United Nations was designed to head off war among nations and has been fairly effective in fulfilling its mission, but we cannot say the same with regard to resolving asymmetric conflicts, even though it has a structure which seems to favour integrated missions, as it has a Department of Peace-keeping Operations (DPKO) with its military command and control systems, a Department of Political Affairs (DPA) for political diplomacy and mediation, distributing humanitarian aid or coordinating electoral assistance, an Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) and an Agency for Refugees (ACNUR)¹⁷.

In recent decades, conflicts have evolved very rapidly because non-state players exploit the host of possibilities opened up by technological advances and the many and varied means of transport available, which facilitate movements and flows of people, capital and goods.

¹⁶ Center For Systemic Peace. Global Trends in Armed Conflict, 1946-2010. The table below lists some 324 episodes of armed conflict, including the thirty-two cases going on at the moment, which represents a round-up of all the forms of armed conflict worldwide from 1946 to 2011. (Editor's translation) <http://www.systemicpeace.org/conflict.htm>.

¹⁷ UN <http://www.un.org/es/dpa/> (last consulted 13/9/2013).

How capabilities have evolved

The new conflicts have exposed the shortcomings of certain capabilities in facing up to an asymmetric enemy in a state of constant flux as regards how it pursues its bellicose activities.

Guerilla groups have been a constant factor ever since the Algerian war of independence. They were used in Vietnam, in the Soviet Union's war in Afghanistan, in Iraq, in Afghanistan today and are employed in ongoing conflicts now. Asymmetric players have evolved in their methods, using terrorist attacks, improvised explosive devices (IEDs), or launching rockets, as in the case of Hamas and Hezbollah against Israeli territory. Terrorist attacks have, in any case proliferated against the civilian population, such as in Iraq, Afghanistan, Mali, Israel, Yemen, Pakistan, etc.

On the other hand, those countries which have taken part in one way or another in conflicts have picked up on lessons that should be borne in mind in future operations and in designing new capabilities. In the wars against its Arab neighbours, Israel exploited the lessons learned from the «*Blitzkrieg*» tactic successfully used by the Germans in 1940, throwing large units of armoured forces in against the enemy's weak points and penetrating its lines as far as its rear. Paradoxically, the Yom Kippur war called into question the hitherto exclusive superiority of the twin tank/aircraft approach. These were the last classic wars to draw lessons from.

With regard to Vietnam, in the mid 1950s the US Army sent a group of officers to Fort Benning to study the use of hypothetical airmobile forces, for which they examined the campaigns in Korea, Algeria by the French and Malaysia by the British. This resulted in the field manual FM-57-35, Army Transport Aviation Combat Operations, which would see the birth of a new form of combat where the protagonist is the helicopter. The first air assault units arrived in Vietnam in 1962, giving rise to a new way to wage war where the United States came to deploy the 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile), whose mission it was to make the Cambodia/Vietnam border impassable for the Viet Cong's guerilla groups. It was an asymmetrical war in terms of the methods used and capabilities. This involved using technological and industrial superiority in an asymmetric conflict which favoured military superiority, yet which could not avoid political defeat through the loss of support from US public opinion.

In the Afghanistan war of the 1980s, the helicopter was the key capability, although it showed great vulnerability when the Afghan insurgent forces managed to acquire Stinger missiles with the help of the United States, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia.

In the 2003 Iraq conflict, the combination of Apache attack and Kiowa observation helicopters, tied in with vertical encircling manoeuvres by transport helicopters and the use of precision ordnance and ground-at-

tack aircraft, all helped by battlefield digitalization, gave way to the concept of «Rapid, Decisive Operations» based on the ideas developed by Cdr Ullman in his book «*Shock and Awe*». Which fitted in with the so-called Rumsfeld doctrine.

Operation «*Unified Protector*» to impose a no-fly zone on the Qaddafi regime showed the importance of having a sufficient number of precision missiles and in-flight refuelling aircraft.

The peace missions of recent decades have enhanced the value of regional organisations such as NATO or the EU on different scales to offset the individual capability shortcomings of each country. Europe has, in any case, displayed numerous signs of its serious shortcomings in relation to command and control systems, intelligence resources, strategic transport, in-flight refuelling and guided munitions, at all times taking shelter under the US umbrella, which is shifting its focus of interest towards Asia Pacific at a time of budget crisis, compelling it to give priority to certain regions to the detriment of others.

During ISAF's operations in Afghanistan, the new armoured wheeled vehicles able to withstand IEDs became particularly valuable, as did attack helicopters, Unmanned Air Vehicles (UAVs) used for observation and everything that lends itself to troop protection.

If Vietnam set a greater value on helicopters and Iraq did the same for guided munitions, Afghanistan will go down in history as the conflict which brought out the value of UAVs, also known as «*drones*». These have caused the death of over 2000 jihadists in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Yemen, which is sparking serious debate as to the lawfulness of using them and the controversy will not be easily put to rest. Today's most advanced technology will make it possible to take this even further and leave the machine to take its own decisions by following a series of pre-programmed parameters. Technology has always provided some kind of response to the specific natures of new conflicts and boosts military might.

How strategies have evolved

world and regional leaders have tried to pacify conflicts by facing up to risks and threats by means of new strategies that required new capabilities, both civilian and military, but in all cases reactively. Thus it is that asymmetric enemies – terrorists, insurgents, organised crime, etc. – have always retained the advantage of the initiative, deciding the place, moment and form of fighting. Only Israel has managed to act proactively on certain occasions, although at a high diplomatic and political cost.

Most asymmetric conflicts usually bring together several methods, such as terrorism, insurgency, mass movements, subversion, intimidation,

blackmail and kidnapping and hijackings. The latter is what pirates use in their various guises in regions such as the Somali basin or the Gulf of Guinea.

The aftermath of conflicts, first in Bosnia Herzegovina, then in Kosovo, and above all in Iraq and Afghanistan, have illustrated the difficulties that modern armies experience in seeing through the stabilization phase having arrived at an end, in theory, to the wars there. This is what people have begun to term the peace-building process. In this process, new concepts have been opened up, such as the CIMIC, or Civil-Military Coordination, operations, Effects-Based Operations, and lastly the concept of a Comprehensive Approach, all of which benefit military plans that require painstaking planning and a blend of civilian and military capabilities, not at all easy to achieve without proper training and preparation, and above all mental preparation on the part of all those participating.

In this type of conflict, intelligence has taken on greater importance, to the point of being considered one of the key tools for reaching the desired final state of affairs, bearing in mind that, as Liddell Hart said, one should not confuse military victory with political victory.

States must establish strategies that can bring in results within brief spaces of time and are always marked out in terms of resources, geographical area, and time available to meet the various objectives, for which purposes realistic strategies are required that attain the ultimate states of affairs which have to be defined in totally specific terms that can be evaluated objectively.

In asymmetric conflicts the non-state player is aware that time plays in his favour and he uses it as just one more element in waging war. His objective is to break the will of the countries involved, being aware of the impatience of Western societies, who are used to obtaining quick results, and their low level of resilience in the face of setbacks in such conflicts, where their armies are acting far from their homelands and where public opinion generally accepts this out of a desire of solidarity with the weakest. Societies which often swallow overly simplistic analyses that appear in the media, both broadcast and press, where news reports have to be brief due to production requirements. With the passing of time and the development of networking and the media, information has taken on greater protagonism when it comes to creating the rule of public opinion.

The time factor takes on special relevance in current conflicts. States seek swift results, whereas non-state players try to stretch out the conflict as a form of attrition. There is also the bad habit of not establishing an «Ultimately Desirable State of Affairs» such as might be evaluated quantitatively at any time, and which would require, perforce, greater precision concerning the capabilities required to achieve this in the pre-ordained time.

In most asymmetric conflicts states find themselves facing enemies that are militarily weaker and reject conventional military confrontation, yet which, without subjecting themselves to the legal, territorial and moral restrictions to which the State must adhere, use non-conventional methods to bend the will of their adversary by means of influencing public opinion. The civilian population in the theatres of operations and the public opinions of the opponents become direct or indirect targets of the weaker side. On the other hand, the strongest side finds itself forced to design a strategy capable of counteracting the actions of the non-state groups in relation to the civilian population.

Thus all the tools that allow influence to be exerted on public opinion in the theatre of operations take on particular importance, such as strategic communication, psychological operations and CIMIC work.

By way of example, we can cite that in the 2007-2012 period Operational Command has handled 698 projects – in which some €8,986,926 has been invested – which have been carried out by the troops posted in operational zones in Afghanistan, the Lebanon, Kosovo, Bosnia, Haiti and Djibouti. Of these, 249 were intended to support governability, fifty-seven to step up security, and 392 to help reconstruction.

These swift-impact projects do not interfere with those carried out by national and international development agencies, which are key to stabilisation strategy in any zone, and which, together with diplomatic action, constitute 3D strategy (defence, development and diplomacy). This is what is called the comprehensive approach in NATO and to date it has not proved at all easy to apply with sufficient coordination and effectiveness. CIMIC operations at any rate, which are totally coordinated and integrated into the objectives of the military action, do show a high degree of cost effectiveness. Although the particular cultural, geographical, social, political and military aspects of each conflict make them unique and they should be studied on a case-by-case basis.

Within this geopolitical scenario for conflicts in 2013, the IEEE is tackling fourteen of them.

Lieutenant Colonel Jesús Díez Alcalde tells us how in barely twenty months, and thanks to the unanimous support of the international community, the conflict in Mali has improved noticeably. Within the sphere of security, the regular army has virtually restored the territory to its full extent, while the jihadist groups have been partly neutralized, although they still remain a latent threat to the entire region and outside it. On a political level the reconciliation process is making headway and the principal Tuareg rebel movement, the MNLA, seems willing to negotiate, while, contrary to most forecasts, the population turned out to vote to endorse constitutional order. Now the new president of the Republic, Ibrahim Bou-

bachar Keïta, will have to continue the political process of transition to restore effective democracy and stable peace in Mali.

Lieutenant Colonel Mario Laborie Iglesias, another IIEEE analyst, explains the various factors in the conflict ravaging Syria today, and which, without a doubt, is one of the most bloody going on in the world. According to the United Nations, in the space of over two years since it began, the Syrian civil war has caused over 100,000 deaths, and the numbers of refugees and displaced persons are of the order of millions. And despite its brutal nature, and that all involved agree that there is no military solution to it, none of the parties seem willing to sit down and negotiate a way out of the situation.

To make matters worse, on 21 August there was an attack on the civil population using chemical weapons in Damascus. This war crime could provide a radical change to the dynamics of the conflict. As this book goes to print, Russia, the United States and Syria have reached an agreement on dismantling Syria's chemical weapons arsenal, although this is without going into details of how this is to be carried out. The United States will keep up the pressure via the threat of force and Syria is buying time by cooling down the situation. The uncertainty surrounding the future of this conflict does not invite optimism.

Lieutenant Colonel Manuel de Miguel Ramírez has examined the conflict in Georgia, which reached boiling point in the summer of 2008, in what was called the five-day war. A conflict rooted in many causes deriving from the cluster of ethnic groups forcibly restrained under the yoke and on the border of the erstwhile USSR, which broke out into open conflict in the early 1990s. The conflict remains just under the surface with the presence of Russian troops. A reinvigorated Russia has proved that it can already defend its interests unilaterally within its natural sphere of influence without international players being able to intervene. It has been made abundantly clear to the international community that it is ready to use force to retain hegemony in its areas of strategic interest, which obviously include the energy supply routes that pass through Georgia.

Colonel Emilio Sánchez Rojas analyses the potential conflict around the Strait of Hormuz, a strategic check-point or bottle neck in the Persian Gulf where a large portion of the world's crude oil production is concentrated and where most of the great powers project their might. These characteristics make it a particular hot-spot both in geopolitical terms (resources and communications) and as regards geostrategy (projection of force by the major powers).

Incompatible interests come face to face in the area among regional players such as Iran and Saudi Arabia (Shia Islam vs Sunni Islam), the threat to Israel from the so-called «Shiite Crescent» and the persistent Syrian crisis. Thus the region, and especially the Strait of Hormuz, has become

a particularly volatile area where violent conflict and even war cannot be ruled out.

The analyst Jorge Bolaños Martínez takes us to the conflict in Ivory Coast, where the presidential elections scheduled for 2015 will be a key moment in developments there. Over time there has been some success in redirecting the situation somewhat, since intervention in April 2011 finally gave rise to a move away from the armed conflict that saw confrontation between the forces of Alassane Ouattara, whose victory in the 2010 elections was endorsed by the international community, and those of Laurent Gbagbo, who clung onto the presidency and refused to accept the verdict of the electoral commission. Even though a certain level of stability has been achieved, any incident during the electoral process could mire the country in a fresh round of violence once more. At the moment there are reasons to hold out hope that firm steps towards reconciliation can be taken, as well as to be fearful of a deterioration in matters.

The analyst Blanca Palacian de Inza looks into the problems in Kenya, a country which represents a key piece in the complex jigsaw of countries in Africa's eastern zone. Stability there is vital for it in its own right, for its fragile neighbours, and also for players further afield that benefit from their alliance in counter-terrorist policy, such as Europe or the United States, or their economic interests in the country, such as China. The conflict it experienced following elections in 2007 has not reignited since the elections in March 2013, but its more deep-rooted causes have not been nipped in the bud.

Naval Commander Federico Aznar Fernández-Montesinos analyses an area that is unfamiliar, both due to distance and because it belongs to a different cultural context from Central Asia, all of which makes it no less significant. The implosion of the former USSR bought with it the independence of five such republics, which had been designed in the 1920s in the last century, specifically so that they should be weak. Interdependency among them has given rise to numerous quarrels. Three of them, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Kyrgyzstan are to be found in a valley, the Fergana, a highly religious Muslim region which has been greatly significant historically. The problems arising from the weakness of the State (corruption, drug-trafficking, terrorism...) will be joined by any effects from the withdrawal of Western contingents from Afghanistan and the changeover of certain political elites who have, in one or two cases, been in power since before independence in regimes with an authoritarian political culture.

Lieutenant Colonel Francisco José Berenguer Hernández examines the ever fiery conflict in Afghanistan, where the handover of full responsibility to the Afghan government has practically concluded and a growing number of Afghan units are capable of acting autonomously. It is, how-

ever, the negotiations towards national reconciliation that represent the protagonist in the conflict today. Out of these will emerge the conditions in which the country will find itself. Nevertheless, keeping a core of foreign troops will be essential to ensuring stability. Key to this will be how a government which is more capable than ever will perform and the role played by regional powers in the areas of security and economic considerations. This is especially true of relations with Pakistan, which have been extremely strained in recent months. Furthermore, sustained effort will still be required on the part of the international community to ensure stability and the hope of progress for Afghanistan.

Lieutenant Colonel Andrés González Martín discusses: the replacement of General Musharraf by a civilian government from the ballot box; the vitality of the judiciary; international pressure on account of collusion between the government and certain terrorist groups; the firm response to insurgent forces in the Swat Valley, Waziristan and other districts of FATA; the successes of the military operations «Black Thunderstorm» and «Rah-e-Rast»; the success of the US Armed Forces in Abbottabad, with the elimination of Osama Bin Laden; the death of the Al Qaeda number three, Sheikh Saeed al-Masri as a result of a US attack, the publication of over 90,000 secret documents written between 2004 and 2010 accusing Pakistan of collaborating in secret with the Taliban; the improved economic relations with India and the 2013 elections. All these recent events allow one to believe that the most critical moments in this conflict are just a bad memory of the past.

The analyst María José Caro looks into the conflict which has, since 1967 kept the Naxalite-Maoist insurgency opposed to the Indian government and which over the years has fanned out into a wide band in the central and eastern part of the country, with attacks against the security forces and civilians affecting seventeen states in the country. The Maoist insurgent forces have become the biggest domestic threat, together with cross-border terrorism and the separatist movements in the north-east. The strategy on the part of the Indian government operates on three fronts: the use of force, dialogue and development.

Ship-of-the-line Captain Ignacio García Sánchez, deputy director of the IEEA, sets out for us the problems that exist within what we term «*the Chinese first, or inner, ring*», where China's internal problems are discussed. And we are not only referring to the three that are traditional in the doctrine of the Chinese Communist Party: terrorism, separatism and extremism, but also to the cohesion and harmony of a society of over 1.3 billion inhabitants established within the legitimacy of the regime and its leaders. Besides this, the reunification of Taiwan, the inalienable objective marked out in its constitution, sets it directly against the foremost world power and guarantor of regional stability. These major challenges of its first ring could be the most important stimuli to achieving the great

Chinese dream of peaceful development that makes inroads as regards the aim of an increasingly prosperous society within the purest form of Chinese cultural tradition or, on the other hand, this might unleash the worst nightmares of the historical periods of calamities and clashes, with terror and poverty not only becoming rife in Chinese territory, but also extending throughout the entire region.

The analyst María del Mar Hidalgo García focuses on the ethnic conflicts in Myanmar, which could jeopardise the democratic transition the country is going through and its phase of opening up economically. Among all these, the chapter focusses on the instability following the breaking of the 2010 ceasefire caused by the armed insurgent groups in the state of Kachin, which borders on China. Since that date, the clashes between the army and the KIA (Kachin Independence Army) have been continual and caused a high number of victims, displaced people, internally, and refugees, as well as the halting of energy projects where the chief investor is China.

According to the president, Thein Sein, ending the conflict is a priority, for which reason in the last few months he has stepped up efforts to achieve a peace agreement. This agreement was recently signed and opens the door to political dialogue for the recognition of the rights of ethnic minorities and the stabilization of border areas, which the country needs to achieve economic and social development in line with its wealth of natural resources.

The analyst Ignacio García Palomero contributes with a study of the Papua New Guinea conflict, its relevance, historical background, the situation in the conflict, players and proposals for analysis, paying particular attention to emotional aspects and cultural resistance.

And the analyst Miguel Ángel Serrano Monteavaro looks at the Colombian conflict, which is currently going through a delicate negotiation process between the FARC guerilla group and the government under president Manuel Santos. This is not the first attempt to resolve a conflict which began almost sixty years ago. On this occasion the prospects of achieving specific objectives are better than in times gone by, given that at the negotiating table in Havana there is open discussion of issues that range from agricultural reform and the cessation of hostilities to the integration of guerrillas into civilian life in what seems to be a willingness to achieve understanding between both parties, with extensive international backing for the peace plan.

Mali: security, democracy and development to overcome the conflict

Jesús Díez Alcalde

Chapter two

Abstract

In January 2012, a new separatist uprising in the north of the country, led by Tuareg rebels and supported by jihadist groups settled in the region, became the trigger for a massive security, political and humanitarian crisis in Mali. In just one year, following a military coup in Bamako and the declaration of independence of Azawad, jihadists expelled the Tuareg groups from the northern enclaves, seized power and launched an offensive against Bamako, in January 2013, which was repelled by French military forces.

Today, thanks to determined support from the international community, Malian security forces are being deployed in the north, the terrorist groups have been partially neutralised, and presidential elections have begun to restore constitutional order. In this new political landscape, President Ibrahim Bou-bacar Keita is responsible for completing a complex transition process and moving towards national reconciliation. The key actions needed to achieve this end, and overcome the conflict once and for all, are the increase of security, strengthening of democracy and promotion of development.

Keywords

Mali, conflict, Tuaregs, jihadist groups, democratic elections, Operation Serval, ECOWAS, European Union and United Nations.

Introduction

The Mali conflict erupted in January 2012 in the heart of the Sahel, a region with enormous strategic implications inside and outside Africa. The trigger was a new separatist uprising in the north of the country, led by Tuareg rebels with the unprecedented support of the jihadist groups that had settled in the region. The root causes behind the armed revolt are underlying ancient ethnic rivalries and the frustration of the northern populations (the Tuareg, Arabs and the black African races of the Songhai and Fulani) with centralist power in Bamako, led by the Bambara people since national independence in 1960. On the other hand, the expansion of jihadism in the Malian desert, in a region practically outside state control, the extensive network of organised crime based in the north, which provides enormous financial benefits, and the fall of the Qaddafi regime in 2011, which caused the uncontrolled return of militants and weapons arsenals to Mali, became factors multiplying and aggravating this new conflict.

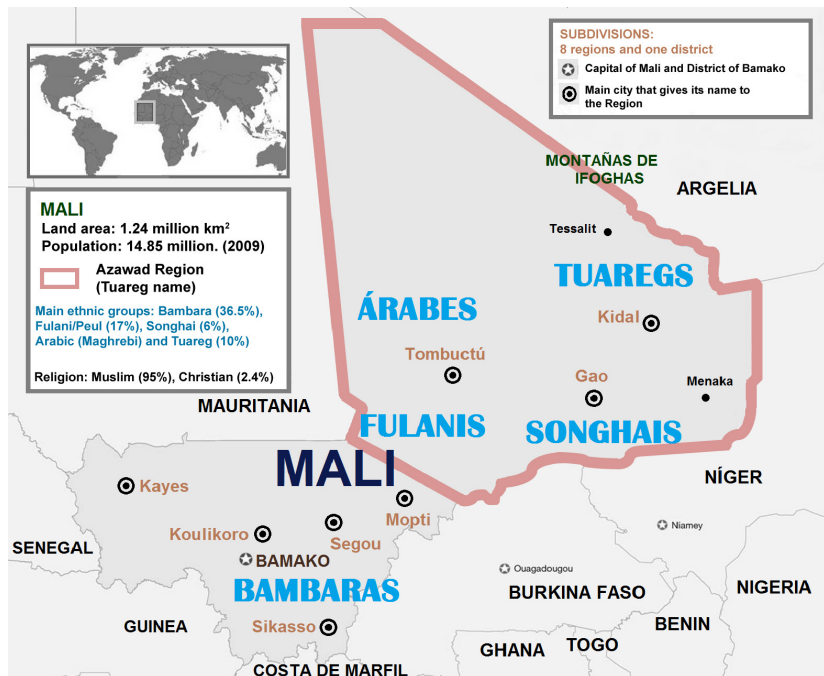
From that point on, Mali spiralled into violence and a crisis of governance without precedent. In March 2012, in Bamako, captain Sanogo dealt a blow to national democracy. A few weeks later, on 6 April 2012, the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNL) declared the independence of Azawad (which occupies two thirds of the national territory) and, in June, radical islamists hijacked the Tuareg revolt, rekindling their Salafist doctrine and imposing *sharia law* by force throughout the northern region. Faced with this alarming situation, Africa and the rest of the international community undertook a political and diplomatic course to agree on military intervention to restore the territorial integrity of the country, while demanding the return of constitutional order. In December, the deployment of an African military operation seemed a viable solution to begin to solve the crisis, but the jihadists took the initiative and, from the north, launched a surprise offensive against Bamako on 9th January 2013.

The forceful and decisive Operation Serval, led by France in support of the Malian forces, averted this attack by the radical Islamist groups, who in just a few weeks were driven from their northern strongholds with hardly an armed skirmish. Although the success of the operation was incontestable, the jihadists responded with terrorist attacks inside and outside the country, while many of them fled to other countries, in particular Libya.¹ The troops from France, Mali and Chad, along with the progressive de-

¹ In addition to the wave of attacks in Malian territory after the start of Operation Serval, which began on 8 February with the first suicide attack in Gao, the jihadists have also committed terrorist acts in neighbouring countries. The bloodiest bombings took place in Algeria on 17 January, with the kidnapping of the gas plant at In Anemas, which left twenty-three hostages and thirty-two terrorists dead following an Algerian military operation; and in Niger, on 23 May, where extremists launched two simultaneous attacks on an army barracks in Agadez and at the Areva uranium mine, in which twen-

ployment of the African force (AFISMA), which was relieved in July by the UN mission (MINUSMA), and the start of the training mission by the European Union (EUTM Mali), managed to improve security and stability in the country, while the political power transition focused on reaching a minimum agreement with the MNLA that would allow a process of national reconciliation and the holding of long-awaited democratic elections.

Against most expectations, the elections were held on schedule, and Ibrahim Boubacar Keita won indisputably – in the second round – following a much higher turnout than occurred in previous elections. With his inauguration as the legitimate president of Mali, on 4 September, Keita now needs to complete, in the shortest time possible, the restoration of political institutions through legislative elections, the resumption of complicated peace talks and, above all, the difficult task of reshaping the country on the basis of effective democracy that is credible for the entire Malian population (map 2.1).



Map 2.1 Designed by the author

All these events, which have caused a huge humanitarian crisis, have taken place in an extremely poor and underdeveloped country, which has large gaps in its state-run structures and, even more significantly, a

ty-two Niger soldiers and a civilian employee were killed. In both cases, the Algerian jihadist Mokhtar Belmokhtar claimed responsibility for the attacks.

clear absence of national identity. Mali, the eighth largest African country in area (1.24 million km²) with a population of 15.8 million inhabitants, is drowning in geopolitical indices that say plenty about its precarious situation (see table at the end of the chapter). Among the most significant figures, its human development index placed it at the bottom of the world list (position 182 in 2012)², over 35% of its population lives on only US\$2 a day, mostly from agriculture, and its literacy rate barely reaches 31% among those over fifteen years of age. Furthermore, the conflict has caused the economy to go into outright recession (-1.2%) while per capita income dropped to US\$694 in 2012.

In the northern region, the economic and social situation is even more dramatic, and is aggravated by the extreme harshness of an inhospitable desert plagued by persistent drought. This is coupled with the sense of historical marginalisation felt by the northern communities, especially the Tuareg, who have never felt themselves to be part of a national project that was inherited from the French colonial period, and who have systematically denounced the contempt and endemic political corruption of Bamako's centralised power.

Following the presidential elections, Mali faces a new and highly complicated transition. The new political leaders must urgently face the enormous and complex challenges of rebuilding a country devastated by a conflict that is still latent: the Malian population, the main victim of the national collapse, will still have to wait a long time to receive any of the benefits from this incipient and rather limited peace, or to begin to believe in the feasibility of a unified and secure country that is progressing towards providing development to all its inhabitants.

Background to the conflict

In the late 19th century, the arrival of France in the Sahel marked the beginning of the dissent by the Tuareg people³, who fought the colonial

² Created by the United Nations Program for Development (UNDP), the Human Development Index (HDI) measures the social and economic development of a country by combining indicators of life expectancy, educational attainment and income. In its 2013 report, the UNDP noted that Mali's HDI, despite showing low human development, has followed a slight upward trend since 1980. Available at http://hdr.undp.org/en/media/HDR2013_ES_Complete%20REV.pdf. Date of query: 16 July 2013.

³ The first Tuareg revolt broke out in northern Mali and Niger between 1916 and 1917, led by Teguidda Karen, head of anti-French Sufi group, Sanussiya. After being quelled harshly by the French forces, the Tuareg people suffered decades of subjugation, while the iron-fisted colonial administration forced them to change their way of life as nomadic livestock herders for a more sedentary and agricultural lifestyle. This made it easier for them to be dominated, but it also made the Tuareg more vulnerable to drought, destroying their crops and causing massive famines.

power to preserve their social habits, their ancient ways of life and control over a vast desert they considered their own. In 1958, at the dawn of Mali's independence, the Tuareg joined the Arabs to demand the establishment of a distinct national entity from De Gaulle, but their hopes were frustrated with the establishment of a unitary and centralised government in Bamako, which ended up in the hands of their rival, the Bambara, the dominant African tribe. As in other African colonies, such as Sudan and Libya, Mali's independence did not take into account the large differences between its peoples, and rather established an artificial nation within the boundaries imposed by the colonial power. From that point on, the new Malian political authorities have been unwilling or have failed to seek common ground to generate a true national identity and, as a result, have increased the sense of frustration and grievance among the northern peoples, especially among the Tuareg and Arab communities.

In view of this approach, it is not surprising that the Tuareg people – whose current population in Mali approaches 500,000 people, being a majority in the north, although this figure represents less than 10% of the total population of the country – has staged successive revolts against the central government. In addition to the honouring of their historical, geographical and social uniqueness, they have demanded equal rights compared to the rest of the Malian population, a greater degree of decentralisation and political autonomy within Mali, and even the foundation of a state organisation that would unite all the Tuareg people scattered around the countries in the region: more numerous in Mali and Niger and with a lesser presence in Algeria, Libya and Burkina Faso.

Between 1962 and 1964 the first major revolt after independence broke out, leading, after a forceful military repression, to the exodus of thousands of Tuareg to neighbouring countries. At the beginning of the 1990s, the Tuareg in Mali and Niger launched a new offensive against their respective governments which was more ferocious and better coordinated. In Mali, coinciding as it did with the establishment of a fledgling democracy, the government of Alpha Oumar Konaré avoided an armed struggle and signed a national agreement with the Tuareg in 1995 which pledged to reintegrate the rebels into the national army or facilitate their return to civilian life. However, the slow pace and lack of results in the process, together with the strongly centralised and repressive policies of President Touré (2002-2012), led to a new revolt in 2007 led by Iyad Ag Ghali, a pragmatic and aristocratic Tuareg who a few years later, in 2011, founded the jihadist militia group, Ansar Dine. The mediation of Algeria allowed the 2009 peace accords to be signed, but these, far from being the solution to the problem⁴, only caused more division among the Tuareg people.

⁴ Following the signing of the peace accords, some factions of the Tuareg movement – in Mali, the most prominent was the Alliance for Tuareg Change in Northern Mali, led

Just two years later, the fall of the Libyan regime became a key factor in encouraging a new armed revolt. The thousands of Tuareg who formed part of the dictator Qaddafi's personal guard (an estimated 8,000) returned to northern Mali, well trained and well armed, where they joined other insurgents and began to organise themselves to take up a common battle against the power of Bamako. In late 2011, Bilal Ag Acherif (secretary general) and Mohamed Ag Najim (head of operations) founded the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA) which, under a secular nationalist ideology, brought together an amalgam of Tuareg armed groups and rebels, including military defectors from the Mali regular army, and formed a force of 9,000 insurgents⁵.

In Bamako, the MNLA denounced the intolerable increase of military units in the region, which the government justified by citing the increasing criminal and jihadist activity, but which the Tuareg considered a clear provocation they would not tolerate. On the morning of 16 January 2012, the Tuareg rebels attacked the army barracks in the town of Menaka in the Kidal region, and set off a new armed rebellion. However, unlike on previous occasions, this time they had the connivance and support of the jihad militias, which at this point wielded extensive power over the northern peoples following developments in the previous decade (Table 2.1).

TABLE 2.1. Main armed groups in the conflict in Mali

Designation	Description/Deployment/ Fighters (estimated)	Target	Led by
National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA)	Secular, mainly Tuareg rebel group. Founded in October 2011 from the merger of the Azawad National Movement (NAM) and the Tuareg Movement of Northern Mali. Regions of Timbuktu, Gao and Kidal. Maximum: 9,000 fighters	Initially, to establish the independent state of Azawad. Currently, to improve the rights of the Tuaregs.	Bilal Ag Acherif and Mohamed Ag Najim (head of operations).

by Hassan Fagaga – did not accept the decisions adopted in Algiers, triggering clashes and internal dissent between Tuareg rebels in both Mali and Niger.

⁵ On its website, the MNLA declares that within its «military organisation coexist the following: rebels from the uprisings of the 1990s (MFUA: Movements and United Fronts of Azawad), of 2006 (MTNM: Northern Mali Tuareg Movement), the fighters newly returned from Libya, volunteers from all the diverse ethnic groups in northern Mali, as well as soldiers and officers who have defected from the Malian army». Available at <http://www.mnlamov.net/english/101-they-are-not-mercenaries.html>. Date of query: 4 June 2013. As for the number of troops, Colonel Intallah Ag Assai, the MNLA leader in Gao, said in June 2012, «We have 9,000 fighters located at all the borders in northern Mali. This way we can repel any attack from outside forces». Available at <http://observers.france24.com/fr/content/20120621-mali-nord-gao-mnla-ansar-dine-chars-arsenal-armes-equipement-capacite-guerre-cedeao>. Date of query: 7 August 2013.

Azawad Arab Movement (MAA)	Secular and nationalist Arab organisation, active in the Timbuktu region, and founded in January 2012. Opposition to the MNLA. Successor to the National Liberation Front of Azawad. 500 fighters	To defend the interests of the Arabs in Mali. It is opposed to independence and the imposition of Sharia law	Ahmad Sidi Muhammad.
Ganda Koy (Lords of the Earth)	Songhai self-defence militia, founded in the 1990s to defend themselves against the Tuareg rebellion. It was reactivated during the current rebellion in the region of Gao and Sevaré. 1,500 fighters	To defend the Songhai people against Tuareg and jihadist violence.	Djibril Moussa Diallo (2013)
Ganda Izo (Children of the Earth)	Self-defence militia which is mostly Fulani. Formed in 2008. Training camps in Mopti and Sevaré. Ad hoc alliance with MOJWA against MNLA. 1,500 fighters	To defend the Fulani people against Tuareg and jihadist violence.	Aliou Maiga (Head of operations. 2012)
Patriotic Resistance Forces.	Merging of six self-defence militias in July 2012 (including Northern Liberation Front, Ganda Koy, Ganda Izo, Alliance of Communities in the Region of Timbuktu).	To fight against jihadists and to free northern Mali	No single declared leader

Main source: IHS Jane's.

The consolidation of the jihadist sanctuary

In the 1990s, the relentless fight by Algeria against terrorism caused an operational decline in the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC), which began to infiltrate and seek refuge in northern Mali. There, the jihadists benefited from the extreme desert terrain, which provided them with protection and mobility, but also from a region which virtually lay beyond the control of state power, where the military, because of its scarce presence or its operational ineffectiveness, hardly posed any kind of obstacle. Also, they soon began to control a huge network of crime, based on the traffic in arms, drugs⁶ and tobacco, which, along

⁶ According to the World Drug Report 2013, prepared by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the movement of drugs through Mali has increased in recent years. Today it is an important drugs trade route from the Gulf of Guinea, with the preferred destination, among other parts of the world, being Europe.<http://www.unodc.org/>

with the kidnapping of Western nationals, gave them enormous profits for their extremist cause. As a result, in 2003 they proclaimed their intention to decentralise and extend jihadism beyond the Algerian territorial limits – without sacrificing their main objective: the Government in Algiers – and moved part of their activity and their main training camps to northern Mali.

In January 2007, this new regional orientation resulted in the conversion of the GSPC into a new arm of Al Qaeda, and it was renamed Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). Under the leadership of the Algerian, Abdelmalek Droukdel, the main leaders of the terrorist organisation, Abuz Zeid and Mokthar Belmokhtar, heads of two important Algerian *Katibas* (operating units), settled in Mali, basically in the region of Timbuktu, and began their proselytising work among a population mired in poverty and underdevelopment, to whom they offered the social assistance that was being denied to them by the State. Despite its long-standing Sufi tradition, many Malians, especially young people, were quick to embrace the Salafist tenets and join the ranks of AQIM, which by then had become an authentic «narco-criminal and terrorist» structure.

In 2011, the collapse of the Libyan regime and the subsequent plundering of its weapons arsenals, as well as benefiting the MNLA, also strengthened the jihadist sanctuary in northern Mali, and led to the radicalisation of its extremist ideology and the progressive imposition by force of *sharia law* among the population. Nevertheless, the most obvious impact of the uncontrolled influx of arms was the founding of new extremist militias which, inspired by AQIM, were eager to disassociate themselves from the absolute power exercised by the Algerian leaders. Thus, in late 2011, two other jihadist groups appeared: the Movement for Oneness and Jihadism in West Africa (MOJWA) with Mauritanian leaders and a large number of Songhai and Fulani extremists in their ranks, and Ansar Dine, made up mostly of Salafist Tuareg.

MOJWA, a body of no more than 500 jihadists led by Hamada Ould Mohamed Kheirou, definitively split from the AQIM as a result of internal rivalries in mid 2011, but also due to its political ideology. Unlike the Algerian extremists, MOJWA supports the spread of jihadism and the imposition of *sharia law* throughout West Africa. Although it acts autonomously, especially in the region of Gao, it still maintains close collaboration with AQIM. In Europe, this terrorist group made its name with the kidnapping of three aid workers, two Spanish and one Italian, from the Algerian camps in Tindouf in October 2011, who were released nine months later after a long and controversial negotiation. With this

deplorable action, MOJWA demonstrated its intention and ability to act outside Malian territory.

Meanwhile, Ansar Dine (Defenders of the Faith), was the last jihadist group to appear on the scene, in January 2012, just before the start of the Tuareg rebellion. It is also closely linked to AQIM, from which it has received ideological indoctrination, terrorist training and financial support⁷. Its founder, Iyad Ag Ghali, is a popular and pragmatic Tuareg leader who went from leading the 2007 uprising to that year becoming the Malian consul in Jeddah (Saudi Arabia), where it seems that he finally embraced the Salafist doctrine. All indications are that his real aspiration was to lead the new Tuareg uprising in 2012, but when he failed to do so he decided to create Ansar Dine. This jihadist group, based in the town of Kidal, has as its main stated objective the imposition of a theocratic Islamist regime in Bamako, an aim which departs radically from the political ideology of the MNLA. Since its inception, the postulates of Ag Ghali were rejected by the religious authorities in the region, and even more so by the charismatic Sufi preacher Cherif Ousmane Haidara, leader of the well-known Sufi organisation of the same name (Ansar Dine), which unites more than two million Malians against the imposition of any religious rigour in political and social life and which, therefore, has very little in common with the jihadist group.

Although to a lesser degree than these three jihadist groups, the presence in northern Mali has also been confirmed of Islamist terrorists from Boko Haram, which has established links with AQIM and which coexists in the Gao area with MOJWA. Many members of this Nigerian group were trained in camps located on Malian soil, from which they return to their country to attack the national government in Abuja and the Christian population. As a result of all this, by early 2012 the jihadist sanctuary was fully consolidated in northern Mali, forming a complex terrorist network which was united through common interests, and even ties of kinship, albeit divided by internal power struggles, which Salafi extremists arriving from Pakistan, Sudan and Somalia also began to join (Table 2.2).

⁷ In a public video issued in May 2012, the AQIM leader, Signé Abdelmalek Droukdel, encouraged Ansar Dine to follow some practical tips to impose sharia law in the occupied lands and to strengthen its ties with global jihadism. He also gave instructions to all jihad groups to guarantee basic services such as health, food, water, electricity, gas and fuel in the enclaves of Timbuktu, Gao and Kidal, as a clear sign of the «social objective» of this organisation in order to gain popular support.

TABLE 2.2. Jihadist groups in Mali.

Designation	Description/ Deployment/Fighters (estimated) ⁽¹⁾	Objective	Led by
Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM)	Sunni in orientation, it was founded in Algeria (2007) and is the successor of the GSPC. It operates in North Africa (Algeria and Mauritania) and the Sahel (northern Mali-Timbuktu and Niger). Maximum: Between 500 and 800. (before France's military intervention).	Global jihad and transnational terrorism. Control of organised crime in the Sahel.	Abdelmalek Droukdel Lieutenants: M. Belmokhtar and Abuz Zeid (died in 2013).
Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MOJWA)	Splintered from AQIM in mid-2011 due to differences with Algerian leaders. Brings together Maghrebi jihadists with black African races such as Songhai and Fulani. Operates in Algeria, Mauritania and Niger. Location in Mali: Gao region. No Does not exceed 500	Extension of jihadism and the imposition of sharia law in West Africa	Hamada kheirou/ Ahmed Ould Amer
Ansar Dine	Salafist jihadist group, mostly Tuareg. Founded in January 2012. It is spread over the regions of Timbuktu, Gao and Kidal. Unknown (hundreds)	To create an Islamic theocracy in Mali with the imposition of sharia law	Iyad Ag Ghali.
Al-Muqaaoon bil-Dumaa (Those who sign in blood)	Partial split from AQIM in December 2012. Attacks in Algeria (In Anemas), Niger and Mali. Unknown (100-200)	Shares objective with AQIM: global jihad and mainly regional action.	Mokhtar Belmokhtar. Now associated with MOJWA

1 The estimated figures for fighters are from prior to the start of the French operation in January 2013.

Main source: IHS Jane's.

2012: Chaos settles in mali

in January 2012, rebels from the MNLA and jihadists from Ansar Dine, who had formed an ad hoc alliance to fight together for the independence of Azawad, launched several attacks against military positions in the towns of Menaka, Aghelhoc and Tessalit, in the Kidal region, which were

followed by attacks on other towns in the regions of Gao and Timbuktu. Within a few short weeks, the conflict spread across the north of the country; AQIM and MOJWA also participated in the battle together with the Tuareg rebels, and the military units, despite some sporadic and meagre victories, were becoming increasingly ineffective in facing this level of violence, so that more forces and weapons were demanded from Bamako. Given the ineffectiveness of the army, the rebel militias continued their bloody offensive and, in early March, already controlled or threatened the main airports and towns. While the power of the Tuareg rebels advanced in the region of Azawad, the regular forces abandoned their outposts, retreating southward or fleeing to neighbouring countries such as Mauritania, Algeria and Niger.

Under the pretext of drawing more attention to the dramatic situation in the north of the country, which was already out of control, Captain Amadou Haya Sanogo led a coup in Bamako on 22 March, ousted President Amadou Toumani Touré, suspended the constitution, and established a military junta led by the National Committee for the Restoration of Democracy and the State. This military assault on political power was rejected by the entire international community, which demanded the immediate return of civilian authorities to the government, and did nothing to help curb the jihadist and rebel offensive which was continuing to make progress in the northern region.

At the head of the military junta, Captain Sanogo urged the MNLA leaders to «cease hostilities and come to the negotiating table as soon as possible»⁸, but they, far from agreeing to his demands, took advantage of the political chaos to take over the cities of Gao, Kidal and Timbuktu. On 6 April 2012, through a statement signed by its secretary general, Billal Ag Acherif⁹, the MNLA declared the independence of Azawad based on, «the recognition of existing borders with neighbouring states and their inviolability, in total adherence to the United Nations Charter, and with the commitment to adopt a democratic constitution and create conditions for lasting peace» in the region. This was a unilateral declaration of independence that was unanimously rejected inside and outside Mali, which certified the total collapse of the country as the result of a crisis whose resolution appeared increasingly more difficult to overcome.

After months of armed struggle, northern Mali, which represents two thirds of the country's land area, was plunged into violence and chaos,

⁸ Mali coup chief for talks with Tuareg, Aljazeera, 27/03/12. Available at <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/africa/2012/03/2012326222039697526.html>. Date of query: 3 August 2013.

⁹ Déclaration D'Indépendance de L'Azawad (Declaration of Independence of Azawad), 6 April 2012. Available at <http://www.webcitation.org/6AGfVdHe0>. Date of query: 27 July 2013.

and, even more alarmingly, into a serious humanitarian crisis that forced hundreds of thousands of people to leave their homes and seek refuge in southern Mali or in neighbouring countries.¹⁰ However, the bloodiest phase of the conflict was still to come: the jihadists openly clashed with the MNLA and, after taking Gao on 26 June, took control of the main towns.

From that point on, they showed their most violent side with the harsh imposition of *sharia law* in all the occupied towns, the establishment of Islamic Courts and the destruction of the shrines of Timbuktu. This was a clear shift towards Salafist rigour which earned the tacit support of the leadership of Al Qaeda and amplified the «clarion call» to the Sahel for thousands of foreign jihadists. In late 2012, more than 6,000 radical Islamists had turned northern Mali, due to its size, into the world's largest jihadist sanctuary. This was a serious terrorist threat to the security of the entire region and beyond that definitively set off all the alarms within the international community and revived its commitment to reach a consensual solution to the conflict in Mali.

International reaction to the crisis

Within the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)¹¹, which is made up of fifteen African nations from this subregion, the alliance between the Tuareg and the jihadists, and the high level of violence, sounded a warning that the new armed uprising in Mali was more severe than any that had preceded it. Immediately, this institution offered its support to the government in Bamako, while at the same time presenting itself to the international community as the main actor in managing this conflict which had emerged within a member state, and also with the aim of finding an «African solution to an African problem». After the military coup in March, ECOWAS demanded that Captain Sanogo's military junta

¹⁰ In March 2013, the number of refugees from the conflict in Mali was 175,412. As for internally displaced people, estimated at over 400,000, some 260,665 are located in the IDP camps. After the expulsion of the jihadist groups, there was a gradual return (still insignificant) to their places of origin in the north. Data taken from the detailed document *The Mali migration crisis at a glance* by the International Organization for Migration, March 2013. Available at http://www.iom.int/files/live/sites/iom/files/Country/docs/Mali_Migration_Crisis_2013.pdf. Date of query: 16 June 2013.

¹¹ In 1975, Burkina Faso, Benin, Ivory Coast, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra and Togo ratified the founding treaty of ECOWAS, being joined a year later by Cape Verde. In 2000, Mauritania left the organisation. The history, organisation and evolution of ECOWAS, and its role in resolving the Mali crisis, are included in IEEA Paper 11/2013, of 13 February 2013, by Díez Alcalde, J: What is ECOWAS? Strengths and weaknesses to address the conflict in Mali. Available at: http://www.ieea.es/Galerias/fichero/docs_analisis/2013/DIEEEA11-2013_CEDEAO_Mali_FortalezayDebilidades_JDA_.pdf. Date of query: 18 June 2013.

should return power to the civilian authorities, while imposing diplomatic and economic sanctions on Mali, and ordering its suspension from the organisation.

In a few weeks, on 12 April, the pressure exerted by ECOWAS was crucial in the establishment of a transitional government in Bamako, under the leadership of President Dioncounda Traoré and Prime Minister Modibo Diarra. However, the military's interference remained evident, and increased the power vacuum and the inability to resolve the crisis. On 20 August, in an attempt to consolidate civil power, Diarra announced the formation of a National Unity Government and forcefully defended foreign military intervention, which stirred up the military junta. Months later, on 10th December, the forced removal of Diarra further aggravated the enormous crisis of governance and, although he was released a day later by Sissoko, it revealed to the international community that military intervention was practically unavoidable.

As the political crisis deepened, the criminal and terrorist militias of AQIM, MOJWA and Ansar Dine took over absolute power in the north, thus turning the Malian crisis into a global threat to international peace and security. ECOWAS, having dismissed the option to deploy its own Reserve Forces (formerly called ECOMOG¹²) as unfeasible, lobbied the African Union and the United Nations regarding the need to deploy a military operation led by the organisation itself¹³, but which would require foreign financial and military support. At the same time, it urged the transitional authorities in Bamako to begin an inclusive dialogue with the Tuareg, as long as the latter renounced the armed struggle and any claims to sovereignty. With the mediation of the President of Burkina Faso, Blaise Compaoré, and strong support from Algeria, several meetings were held between representatives of the government, the MNLA and Ansar Dine, but they were all concluded without agreement and with increasingly acrimonious positions.

United Nations takes the initiative

At the United Nations, the international determination to redirect the conflict was evident in the High Level Meeting on the Sahel. At the confe-

¹² The Ceasefire Monitoring Groups (ECOMOG) are national structures, made up of modular reserves (civilian and military) and prepared for deployment in any scenario, within ECOWAS, and with different missions. These forces have been deployed, with questionable effectiveness, in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea Bissau and Ivory Coast. In 2010, the concept of ECOMOG was replaced by the ECOWAS Reserve Forces, which still have substantial operational shortcomings.

¹³ On 28th September, ECOWAS sent the United Nations a formal request to approve a resolution to authorise the deployment of a subregional force, under Chapter VIII of the UN Charter, which allows the delegation of the m.

rence, held on 26 September, many heads of state and government, including Spanish President Mariano Rajoy, agreed on highlighting the fact that the consolidation of a jihadist sanctuary in the Sahel, as well as the trafficking of drugs, arms and humans prevailing in the area, constituted a grave threat to international peace and security, and had created an unacceptable humanitarian crisis. Nevertheless, despite the severity of the diagnosis, the political solution – based on a credible negotiation process which could return integrity and sovereignty to Mali – prevailed over the possibility of foreign military intervention, which at that point only had the firm support of France and the sub-Saharan African countries.

However, on 12 October, Resolution 2071 of the Security Council of the United Nations opened the door to a possible African military mission and entrusted its planning to ECOWAS. A week later, the organisation approved its strategic concept of the operation, which was endorsed by the African Union and sent to the United Nations. Although the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon denounced serious flaws in the planning of the operation¹⁴, the worsening of the crisis prompted the UN Security Council on 20 December to unanimously approve Resolution 2085, which gave the green light to the African-Led International Support Mission (AFISMA). The mandate for this force, which did not have a maximum authorised size, was organised in two phases. In the first, AFISMA needed to contribute to the operational readiness of the Mali Army, while the second phase, subject to that operational readiness and the progress made in the political process, would provide support to Mali's military units for the recovery of territorial integrity and the neutralisation of the terrorist threat.

Moreover, Resolution 2085 endorsed the European Union initiative to deploy a military mission to assist the government in Bamako with the reorganisation and training of the fragile Malian Army. However, for the European Union the final approval for the deployment of this training mission was conditional on the beginning of a true process of national reconciliation and the holding of democratic elections, which could reinstate the constitutional order.

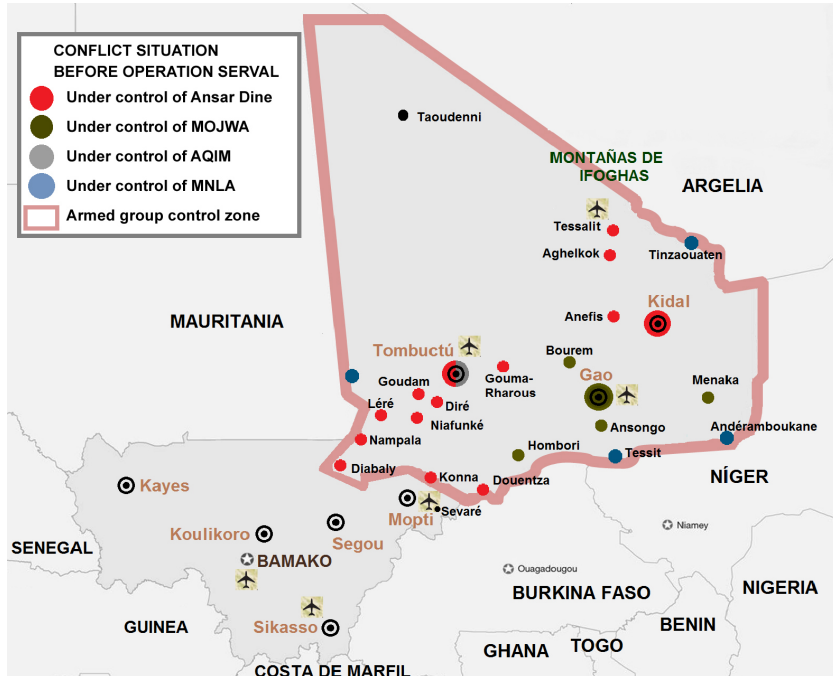
In operational terms, the UN mandate is unusual, especially because it supports – for the first time – an operation in a scenario where jihadism is the biggest threat, but also because of its tight control over military intervention and because it is not involved in its funding, for which ECOWAS was solely responsible. Thus, because of all these limitations, the UN announced that the recovery of the north of the country was not likely to start before September 2013. This was a period of «preparation» the jihadist groups were not willing to concede. Instead, they decided to

¹⁴ Report by the UN Secretary General on the situation in Mali S/2012/894, of 28th November 2012. Available at <http://www.un.org/es/comun/docs/?symbol=s/2012/894>. Date of query: 11 July 2013.

take the initiative and in this way break the decision cycle of the entire international community.

Current situation of the conflict

In early 2013, when the resolution of the crisis was just beginning to take shape, the security situation deteriorated dramatically. On 9 January, a jihadist offensive led by Ansar Dine, with the support of terrorists from MOJWA and AQIM, took the city of Konna, about 680 kilometres from Bamako, forcing the Malian soldiers to retreat south. Three days later, another Islamist column moved west and conquered the city of Diabaly. The jihadists had crossed the «red line», Bamako was ever closer, and they had made clear their threat of spreading Islamist rigour throughout the country. In the face of this attack by the extremists, and the inability to cope with it using regular forces, President Traoré requested urgent assistance from France. On 11 January, President Hollande announced French military intervention in Mali, under the title of Operation Serval, the aim of which was to support the national army in repelling the jihadist brutality and recovering as soon as possible the country's territorial integrity (map 2.2).



Map 2.2 Designed by the author

The air campaign began the French operation: *Gazelle* helicopters attacked the jihadist columns in their chaotic retreat to their strongholds in the north, and *Mirage* and *Rafale* jets harassed the training camps for Islamic terrorists. Two days later, the first French forces, which increased to 800 troops in just four days, fought alongside Malian units deployed in the field to retake the city of Konna. Within a few weeks, more than 4,000 French troops arrived from France and from their detachments deployed permanently in Chad and Ivory Coast, to take part in Operation Serval. In late January, the troops of France and Mali, with the decisive support of 2,250 soldiers from Chad, had retaken Gao, Timbuktu and finally Kidal. In this last city, the MNLA rebels also took part in the fight against their former allies, the jihadist groups, but forbade access by the Malian army, their primary and longest standing enemy. Security was ostensibly improved, but the radical Islamists, far from giving up, started a wave of suicide bombings and planted explosives and mines around the accesses to the cities, which further frightened the population and deepened the humanitarian crisis.

With the taking of Tessalit on 8th February, the fighting focused on the Ifoghas mountains, on the border with Algeria and Niger, where Abu Zeid, one of the AQIM's top leaders and a renowned arms and human trafficker, was killed. MOJWA, finding it easier to blend in with the population, was harassed in the region of Gao, while the Ansar Dine group virtually disappeared from the battle front, and was hit by the splintering away of the Azawad Islamic Movement, led by the influential Tuareg leader, Intala Ag Ataher, which renounced the armed struggle and the Salafist ideology. On 28 March, the Mali Army stated that over 600 terrorists had been killed in combat¹⁵; however, despite this important victory over the jihadist groups, their threat remained very latent. That same day, President Hollande announced the progressive withdrawal of French troops to fall back to a quota of only 1,000 troops, who will remain in Mali at least until the end of 2013.

In addition to neutralising the jihadist threat, Operation Serval accelerated the deployment of the AFISMA forces in a very different strategic environment to the one foreseen in Resolution 2085, and meant it was necessary to go directly to the second phase of the operation: the stabilisation of the north of the country alongside the Malian forces. Since mid-January, military contingents from twelve ECOWAS nations began

¹⁵ In late March, with the north almost recovered, the Mali Army spokesman, Suleimán Maigua, stated that the death toll among the military forces totalled sixty-three from Mali, twenty-six from Chad, five from France, two from Togo and one from Burkina Faso; as against about 600 jihadists killed since the start of Operation Serval. The Mali Army estimates that around 600 Islamists have been killed since January. Abc/EFE, 27 March 2013. Available at <http://www.abc.es/internacional/20130327/abc-balance-guerra-mali-201303271833.html>. Date of query: 9 April 2013.

their deployment to Mali, and moved north to secure the enclaves recovered by French, Malian and Chadian forces. Despite the operational, logistical and financial shortcomings faced by the African troops, their contribution to security in an extremely complex and unstable scenario has been very significant. In late May, according to the report by the UN Secretary General¹⁶, AFISMA had 6,085 troops, who were deployed in the three northern regions, reinforcing the surveillance of the Malian border with Burkina Faso and Mauritania, but who had also become the direct target of suicide attacks¹⁷.

By then the first armed clashes between Tuareg and Arabs in Timbuktu had already begun; the jihadist groups infiltrated the local population or fled to neighbouring countries, and new groups were trained such as the Higher Council for the Unity of Azawad (which both the Islamic Movement of Azawad and the MNLA joined) and the Azawad Arab Movement, which rose from the region of Timbuktu to defend the legitimate rights of the Arab people. Meanwhile, the Malian forces clashed with the MNLA insurgents to regain control in Kidal, while also recovering – with the support of Operation Serval and AFISMA troops – the arms, ammunition and explosives of deposits confiscated from the Islamist militias.

In the political arena, as a tense calm settled in the north of the country, negotiations advanced slowly between the National Commission for Dialogue and Reconciliation and the Tuareg community, represented by the MNLA and the Higher Council for the Unity of Azawad. Finally, on 18 June, in Ouagadougou, the capital of Burkina Faso, the so-called «Preliminary agreement for the presidential elections and inclusive peace negotiations in Mali» was signed, which regulated the immediate cessation of hostilities as well as the return of the national army and the civil administration to Kidal, to be implemented under the supervision of United Nations forces and before the presidential election. Meanwhile, the transitional political authorities undertook to respect the cantonment of the Tuareg rebels in their strongholds in the north and for the new president of Mali, sixty days after the election, to initiate peace talks to determine the administrative status of the northern region and the strategies for its deve-

¹⁶ Report by the Secretary General on the situation in Mali S/2013/338, of 10th June 2013. Available at <http://www.un.org/es/comun/docs/?symbol=S/2013/338>. Date of query: 21 June 2013.

¹⁷ On 12 April, a suicide bomber detonated his explosive device in a market in the town of Kidal, killing four Chadian soldiers; on 4 May, in a complex attack using a car loaded with explosives to the north of Gao, two Malian soldiers were killed, and on 10th May, there was another suicide bombing at the entrance to the camp of the Niger AFISMA contingent in Menaka.

lopment.¹⁸ Although not without its critics¹⁹, this agreement was an important step towards saving the last hurdle in the conflict: the Kidal region.

On the other hand, another key factor in the consolidation of state structures is the avoidance of military interference in the area of political decision, as well as achieving internal cohesion within an army which is still very divided. The promotion of Captain Sanogo to the highest military rank (Lieutenant General), decreed by President Traoré in August 2013, could facilitate both objectives. Not without controversy, this promotion is seen as a subterfuge to facilitate his professional retirement and his definitive separation from political power. In this way, the elected president, Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, who has remained relatively distant from the Military Junta, can start to govern without the hindrance posed by the military and its supporters²⁰.

EUTM Mali: training of Malian forces

The far-reaching reform of the security and defence sector, particularly the restructuring of its ineffective Army, is perhaps the most important and urgent challenge that needs to be tackled by the Malian government. For the moment, although it is fighting against the jihadists alongside French and African troops, its operational levels are clearly insufficient to ensure security throughout the country, especially in the northern territories²¹.

Aware of the huge challenge posed by the stability of Mali, the Foreign Affairs Council of the European Union agreed on 18th February to launch the EUTM Mali mission. Its main objective is to advise the Chief of Defence Staff on the comprehensive reform of the security sector, and to train

¹⁸ Mali reaches an agreement with the Tuareg. Europa Press, 18 June 2013. Available at <http://www.europapress.es/internacional/noticia-gobierno-mali-alcanza-acuerdo-tuaregs-permitira-regreso-ejercito-kidal-20130618140344.html>. Date of query: 19 June 2013.

¹⁹ «In Bamako there is strong opposition to any agreement involving political concessions to the MNLA, which is alleged to have opened the door to Islamist armed groups with their decision to take up arms last year and whose leaders face arrest warrants for war crimes in northern Mali». The EU supports the «crucial» and «historical» agreement in Mali and offers to facilitate their implementation. Europa Press. Brussels, 18 June 2013. Published in: http://www.expansion.com/agencia/europa_press/2013/06/18/20130618203052.html. Date of query: 21 June 2013.

²⁰ The government promotes the captain who led the 2012 coup to the rank of general. Europa Press, 18 August 2013. Available at: <http://www.europapress.es/internacional/noticia-gobierno-asciende-generalato-capitan-lidero-golpe-estado-2012-20130815142135.html#AqZ1CQLxFUOo71Nh>. Date of query: 21 August 2013.

²¹ Díez, J. Ganar la paz para refundar Mali, IEEE Document 25/2013, 17 April 2013. Available at http://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs_analisis/2013/DIEEEA25-2013_GanarPaz_RefundarMali_JDA.pdf. Date of query: 17 August 2013.

four of the eight battalions in the Mali Army, made up of about 7,350 soldiers²², without involving the European Union forces taking part in combat alongside the Malian units under any circumstances. EUTM Mali, with an authorised strength of 550 troops and an initial term of fifteen months, began its deployment in Bamako in early February and, since 2nd April, has been instructing Army battalions at the army camp in Koulikoro, sixty kilometres from the capital.

Resolution 2100: the UN mission relieves AFISMA

On 25 March, the transitional authorities of Mali made a request to the UN Secretary General for the deployment of a peacekeeping operation, which could relieve AFISMA and overcome its huge operational, logistical and financial deficiencies. A month later, on 25 April, the Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 2100/2013²³, under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, authorising the deployment of United Nations Multi-dimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), as well as strong overall support for the political process and for humanitarian assistance in the country.

MINUSMA²⁴, with an initial term of one year, will deploy up to 11,200 military personnel, along with 1,440 police officers. Under the mandate of the Resolution, the mission has to support the political process with a focus on national reconciliation, and to carry out stabilisation tasks relating to security, the protection of civilians and the return of displaced persons, as well as monitoring the upholding of human rights. On the other hand, it must collaborate in the establishment of State authority throughout the country and the holding of free, inclusive and peaceful elections, in order to return constitutional order and democratic institutions to Mali.

In addition to the stabilisation force, the Resolution specifically authorises France «within its area of deployment and with all the means at its disposal» to intervene in support of MINUSMA «whenever it may be under imminent and serious threat», in all cases at the request of the Secretary General. This is a mission which is too diffuse and complicated to put into practice, especially when the terrorist threat remains latent and Operation Serval is still struggling to eradicate it.

On 1 July, MINUSMA began its effective deployment in Mali, although it was practically a transition phase for the AFISMA forces to be converted

²² The International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance 2013*, Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, Philadelphia, 2013.

²³ Security Council Resolution 2100/2103, of 25th April 2013. Available at [http://www.un.org/es/comun/docs/?symbol=S/RES/2100\(2013\)](http://www.un.org/es/comun/docs/?symbol=S/RES/2100(2013)). Date of query: 12 June 2013.

²⁴ Official website of the MINUSMA operation: <http://www.un.org/es/peacekeeping/missions/minusma/>.

into blue helmets. According to the aforementioned report by the Secretary-General²⁵, there are still too many outstanding issues for MINUSMA to adapt itself to the standards of this organisation: from the preparation of the African force, which did not receive any training before being deployed in Mali, to the reception of other international contingents, which will arrive gradually over 2013. However, making up for these many operational shortcomings, especially in aerial, intelligence and logistics support, and increasing the number of troops are still vital to ensuring the effectiveness of this mission, which is set to be the international guarantor of a stable, peaceful and democratic future in Mali.

Presidential elections: return to constitutional order

Under pressure from the international community, which would only reactivate financial aid to Mali after holding democratic elections, the preparation of elections became a frantic race, not without obstacles, for the transitional authorities and for the Malian political parties, while the population was still suffering from the scourge of the violence in the north. On 27 May, after a series of delays in the announcement, President Traoré announced that presidential elections would be held on 28 July and, if necessary, a run-off would take place on 11 August. Once these dates were set, the government in Bamako was intransigent, with strong support from France, in the face of continuous demands from very different fields for the postponement of the elections²⁶.

During the three-week campaign, the 27 presidential candidates called for mass participation in elections and primarily based their speeches on the unity and indivisibility of Mali, and on the need to make progress in national reconciliation to restore stability and security in the country. On the ground, the main obstacles to the holding of credible and representative elections were the precarious levels of security in the north, the instability in the Tuareg stronghold of Kidal, the threats by MOJWA to dynamite the electoral process, and, above all, the difficult task of ensuring the right to vote for the 173,000 refugees outside the country²⁷. As a result, President Traoré did not hesitate to acknowledge that this election would be «imperfect» but was also the only way to provide the country with a legitimate government that could move forward in the restoration

²⁵ Report S/2013/338, op.cit.

²⁶ Malian government discards the plan to postpone the 28 July elections. Agencia Xinhua, 4 July 2013. Available at <http://spanish.peopledaily.com.cn/31618/8310498.html>. Date of query: 8 July 2013.

²⁷ Half of the Malian refugees are not registered on the electoral roll. Agencia EFE, 23 July 2013. Available at http://www.ideal.es/agencias/20130723/mas-actualidad/internacional/mitad-refugiados-mali-estan-inscritos_201307231247.html. Date of query: 28 July 2013.

of an effective democracy. To achieve this objective, he called on the political parties to accept the results emerging from the polls, and managed to achieve an undertaking from MNLA representatives not to hinder the elections in the Kidal region²⁸.

At last, the first round was held on schedule, with a high participation rate (49%) compared to previous elections²⁹, and the results confirmed all predictions: Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, leader of the Assembly for Mali Party (RPM, from its acronym in French), received close to 40% of the vote, while Soumaila Cisee, leader of the Union for the Republic and Democracy, was second with 19.7% of the vote. Far behind, with a meagre 9.4% of support, the candidate from the Association for Democracy in Mali (ADEMA), Dramane Dembelé, lost his chance to take part in the presidential race, despite representing a political alliance that has controlled power since the establishment of democracy in 1992. In the second round, voter turnout was slightly lower, but Keita beat his opponent by a landslide with (77.6%).

This majority support, noted by the government days later, «conferred on him a strong mandate to undertake radical reforms»³⁰ that Mali needs. For its part, the international community unanimously endorsed the victory by Keita in a peaceful and transparent election, which received numerous teams of observers from the European Union³¹, the African Union and ECOWAS, as well as monitoring by the MINUSMA forces to ensure security at the polls.

With this election, the Malian population opted for democracy as the only way out of the serious situation being suffered by the country; it punished the mismanagement by previous governments, and it entrusted the completion of the transition process to Ibrahim Boubacar Keita³² – known among his followers as IBK – who in his long political career has earned

²⁸ Election présidentielle et accords de Ouagadougou. Statement by Mossa Ag Attaher, MNLA spokesman. Available on the website of the Tuareg movement <http://www.mnla-mov.net/>. Date of query: 10 August 2013.

²⁹ In the last presidential election, held in 2007, only 34% of the electorate (6.3 million) exercised its right to vote. In the end, Touré was elected with the support of 1.6 million Malians, just over 10% of the total population. These meagre figures denoted the lack of representativeness of political power in Mali.

³⁰ Ibrahim Boubacar Keita wins Mali presidential run-off. The Guardian, 15th August 2013. Available at <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/aug/15/ibrahim-boubacar-keita-mali-president>. Date of query: 16 August 2013.

³¹ All the information from the Observation Mission of the EU Mali 2013 is available at <http://www.eueom.eu/mali2013>.

³² The report by Leela Jacinto for France 24, published on 5 August 2013, Who is Mali's 'IBK': junta's man or people's president?, presents an interesting profile of the new president of Mali, who she defines as «a strong man, a reformer and a political player», who has won the support of the influential Supreme Islamic Council of Mali and has maintained a careful balancing act with Captain Sanogo. Available at <http://www.france24.com/>

the reputation as an «iron man» in the face of adversity³³. Now, as he recently told Radio France International³⁴, his first priority is to «set up a government that unites Mali with the Malian people. There are problems in this country regarding development, territorial organisation and the distribution of power, [...] what is beyond negotiation is Mali's territorial integrity and sovereignty».

The role of external actors

Certainly, the international organisations have played a key role in the conflict in Mali. From the first decisions in the framework of ECOWAS and the African Union, up to the direct involvement of the European Union and the United Nations, the international community has demonstrated its continued concern and its determination to solve the problem. However, the importance of nations like France, Algeria and the United States, whose role has been very significant, is beyond doubt. In this area, Spain has also deployed a major diplomatic and military effort to help Mali, a country which is situated just 1,000 kilometres from the Spanish coast.

France

France was the leading advocate of international intervention to support the government of Mali, both in the United Nations and within the European Union. Nevertheless, it never showed any intention to lead a military action, not even that of providing French forces to support any offensive to retake the north of the country.³⁵ On the contrary, it always argued that the military operation to eradicate the terrorist and criminal scourge should be backed by the UN and should be eminently African. Despite this initial position, the southward advance of the terrorist attack, its responsibility for the safety of more than 6,000 French citizens living in Mali, along with the protection of its interests in the region, led to the

en/20130801-mali-election-president-ibk-profile-ibrahim-boubacar-keita-cisse%20. Date of query: 7 August 2013.

³³ As prime minister of Mali under President Alpha Konaré, a position he held between 1994 and 2000, he strongly suppressed student demonstrations in Bamako and ended the Tuareg uprising in the negotiation of the 1995 agreements, which began the induction of the Tuareg rebels into the regular army and their reinsertion into civilian life.

³⁴ Exclusive RFI interview with Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, favourite in the Malian presidential elections. RFI, 9th August 2013. Available at <http://www.espanol.rfi.fr/africa/20130809-entrevista-exclusiva-de-rfi-con-ibrahim-boubacar-keita-favorito-de-las-presidenciale>. Date of query: 10 August 2013.

³⁵ Ben Barnier, Hollande says no French troops in Mali offensive. France 24, 12th October 2012. Available at: <http://www.france24.com/en/20121011-france24-exclusive-interview-france-president-francois-hollande-africa-dr-congo>. Date of query: 14 January 2013.

launch of Operation Serval in response to the call for help by the government in Bamako.

While French forces fought on the ground to neutralise the terrorist threat, the Hollande government continued to press at the UN, more and more forcefully, for a peacekeeping mission to take over from AFISMA. Since the adoption of Resolution 2100, France began the withdrawal of its forces, which is expected to be completed in late 2013. Nevertheless, it will surely not hesitate to continue its military effort if security worsens in the region. Thus France has demonstrated to the world its determination to combat the jihadist terrorist threat, and even more so when it grows in the French-speaking African countries, with which it will continue to strengthen its close historical association.

Algeria

For decades, Algeria has been the great mediator in consecutive negotiations by the Tuareg with the Governments of Mali and Niger. On the other hand, it has always been very reluctant to support foreign military intervention, whether African or Western, in its neighbouring countries, as demonstrated during the conflict in Libya in 2011. Also, for decades it has been fighting extremist groups, which it expelled from its territory and which then spread through the Sahel.

For all these reasons, and for its own safety, until the adoption of Resolution 2085, Algeria defended the feasibility of a negotiated solution. In January 2013, the jihadist attack demonstrated to the Algerian authorities that the scenario had changed dangerously, so they were forced to provide political support to the French operation. Since then, it has strengthened surveillance along its border with Mali to prevent the entry of terrorists into its territory.

At present, as the Algerian journalist Abed Charef points out, Algeria «is drowning» and «gives the impression of being trapped by the instability of its regional environment (...). The crisis in Mali has exacerbated the sense of an Algerian siege, while the hot spots are approaching its borders and domestic terrorism remains a threat³⁶». In this regard, it must accept that it cannot be the sole arbiter in a region where the jihadist threat is growing. Surely in the short term it will strengthen its contacts with the new democratic government to regain its political status in the new strategic environment, where the need to neutralise the jihadist and organised crime groups is a primary objective.

³⁶ Charef, A. Argelia y la crisis maliense (Algeria and the Malian crisis). Afkar/Ideas no 37. April, 2013. Available at: <http://www.afkar-ideas.com/2013/04/argelia-y-la-crisis-maliense/>. Date of query: 5 May 2013.

United States

The role of the United States in the crisis in Mali has meant the confirmation of a new foreign policy by the top world power, which focuses on protecting its citizens and interests without engaging in new scenarios, even when this involves eradicating extremist terrorism: the primary threat to American security. Despite this fact, and although it has always maintained that a military solution could only be the culmination of a political process at the United Nations, it defended the French initiative to authorise the deployment of AFISMA. Following the launch of Operation Serval, it supported France with air-to-air refuelling and strategic projection aircraft.

In February 2013, as a direct result of Benghazi attack against the American embassy in September 2012, the U.S. government agreed to establish a permanent military base for *Predator* drones in Niger, from which it monitors the region closely. These intelligence operations are essential for the authorities in Niger and the allied countries deployed in Mali to ensure the safety of their forces and to locate movements by the terrorists. However, it should not be ruled out that the U.S., which does not seem to trust in the operational abilities of the African forces against such a complex enemy (and has not done so from the beginning of the crisis), could make its presence even more visible in the Sahel in the near future.

Spain

Since the beginning of the crisis, Spain has maintained that the situation in Mali posed an immediate threat to Europe and, as a strong ally of France in this crisis, has supported all French initiatives at the United Nations. Furthermore, within the European Union, it has been a great supporter of the EUTM Mali training mission.

With the start of Operation Serval, a Spanish air detachment (made up of a C295 aircraft and 54 military) was sent to Dakar, with the aim of contributing to the strategic projection of the French forces and AFISMA. As regards EUTM Mali, 107 military personnel are currently deployed in the headquarters in Bamako and at the Koulikoro training camp. Therefore, we can say that in this crisis, as a country bordering the African continent and a natural gateway to Europe, Spain has taken a decisive step to position itself as a player committed to security in the Sahel and the Maghreb.

The responsibility taken on by Spain for stability in Mali, due to its clear impact on European security, was again evident in the appearance of the Minister of Defence, Pedro Morenés, before the Defence Committee of the Spanish Parliament on 18 June 2013, «We have a firm commitment to continue to train the Malian armed forces entrusted with creating the

autonomous network of security to substantiate the rights, freedom and tranquillity of the citizens of Mali and, objectively, ours as well»³⁷.

Conclusions and outlook

On 4 September 2013, just as this chapter was being finalised, Ibrahim Boubacar Keita was sworn in as president of the Republic of Mali, and has thus become the person ultimately responsible for addressing the many present and future challenges of this African nation, and to do so with some assurance of success, he will also need to make up for the huge mistakes of the past. During his election campaign, he said on record, repeatedly, that he knew what had to be done: «reunite Mali with the Malian people», and who should do it: «A responsible, protective and strategist state». Now, the key issue is how to achieve it. The formula is easy to state: more security, more democracy and development, but achieving this is a tremendously drawn-out and complicated task.

Security requires the creation of an operational and well-organised Army, and, above all, one that has the required number of troops to handle its missions throughout the country. In addition, the Malian authorities need to demobilise, albeit gradually, the many armed groups in the north. Only in this way can the State ensure that it is the only player holding the monopoly on the use of force in Mali. As for the major security threats, these are, and will remain, those of organised crime and jihadist terrorism. To eradicate them, it will be necessary to take up fighting on the ground, but also to have an efficient intelligence structure in the region: if these global threats are expelled from Mali, they will surely try to find other spaces in which to settle. Therefore, it is necessary to strengthen international cooperation and, in particular, to recover and stimulate Sahel-Maghreb coordination, which so far has been too far removed from the resolution of this conflict.

Meanwhile, democracy needs, firstly, to ensure equal rights for all Malians, and also to establish a new territorial administration to ensure a more equitable and representative distribution of power. Above all, it is essential to move towards national reconciliation, but one which is based on a respect for diversity. Inevitably, the aspirations must be addressed of all Tuareg, not only the MNLA, although they will also have to show their respect for the democratic rules and territorial integrity of Mali. In addition, negotiations need to be more inclusive: all the northern communities must submit their own claims to the Government in Bamako and thus participate in national reconstruction.

³⁷ Appearance by Minister of Defence before Defence Commission, Spanish Parliament, 18 June 2013. In: http://www.defensa.gob.es/Galerias/gabinete/ficheros_docs/2013/18_06_13_Ministro_Congreso_Mali.pdfDate of query: 22 June 2013.

Finally, development requires, among other measures, the implementing of new economic policies which involve better use of foreign economic aid, the building of infrastructure, now virtually non-existent, so as to efficiently exploit the vast natural resources with which, according to all estimates, the country is endowed. But above all, development requires a better distribution of national wealth, and that this should be used to improve the living conditions of a population that today is drowning in poverty and hopelessness.

As for external support, the international missions deployed in Mali need to become the guarantor of stability in the north, and, above all, to ensure that this conflict does not come to a misleading and premature conclusion. It is expected, as was suggested in the Political and Security Committee³⁸ in July, that the European Union will expand its mission with a civilian contingent to also address police training, internal security and justice reform. For its part, MINUSMA will continue to suffer significant operational shortcomings in a scenario that remains highly complex, and its effectiveness will be directly linked to the increased international contingent, which will not reach the ground in the short term. In any case, this UN operation should not become (as has occurred in other scenarios³⁹) a «blank cheque» for Mali and its new government. On the contrary, its presence on the land must be conditional on progress in the full recovery of the constitutional order in the national reconciliation process, and the implementation of policies aimed at encouraging development.

In just twenty months, thanks to massive support from the international community, the MNLA is willing to negotiate and the terrorist groups have been partially neutralised, the security forces have almost recovered territorial integrity, and the population has gone to the polls to endorse the constitutional order. For now, the war in Mali has ended, but there is still a long way to go to secure stable, lasting peace. In the background to this crisis lie decades of rivalry, frustration and poverty, and a lot of time and effort is needed if the achievements are to be consolidated as pillars in the rebuilding of a credible and viable country. The challenge is huge, but Mali is now better able to cope than at any point in the past: it is a unique opportunity that should not be missed.

³⁸ *EU/AFRICA: PSC studies options for police mission in Mali*. Europe Diplomacy & Defence. The Agence Europe Bulletin on CSDP and NATO No. 623, 16 July 2013. Editions de l'AGENCE EUROPE, Bruxelles.

³⁹ Of the fifteen peacekeeping operations and one special political mission (Afghanistan) that the UN is currently deploying, two of them have been running for more than seventy years: India-Pakistan and the Golan Heights; three for more than forty years: Cyprus, Lebanon and Israel-Syria; two were deployed in the 1990s, in Western Sahara and Kosovo, and, lastly, eight have been deployed in the 21st century.

Geopolitical indicators⁴⁰

TABLE 2.4. Table of geopolitical indicators.

TABLE OF GEOPOLITICAL INDICATORS		
Land area	1,240,000 km ²	
Population 2012	14.85 million	
Population growth rate (annual %) 2012	3.0	
Population Composition (% of total) 2012	0-14: 47	
	15-64: 50	
	Over 65: 3	
Ethnic groups	Mande 50% (Bambara, Mankin, Soninke), Fulani/Peul 17%, Voltaic 12%, Songhai 6%, Tuareg and Arabs (Maghrebi) 10%, others 5%	
Religions	Muslim 94.8%, Christian 2.4%, Animist 2%, None 0.5%, Not specified 0.3% (2009 Census)	
Mortality rate (under 5 years/1,000 inhabitants) 2011	176	
Literacy rate, adult total (% of people aged 15 and above) 2010	31	
Working population (% of population over 15 years) 2011	Men: 70	
	Women: 37	
Poverty gap (% of population) 2010	US\$1.50 per day: 16.4	
	US\$2 per day: 35.2	
GDP growth (annual %)	2011: 2.7	2012: - 1,2
GDP per capita (US\$ current prices)	2011: 739	2012: 694
GDP Structure, value added in % 2009	Agriculture: 39%	
	Industry: 21%	
	Services: 40%	
Trade in goods and services (% of GDP) 2011:	Exports: 26	
	Imports: 36	
Military expenditure (% of GDP) 2011	1.8	

Main source: World Bank. Washington.

Available at <http://datos.bancomundial.org>. Date of query: 12th August 2013.

⁴⁰ Source: CIA The World FACTBOOK.

Chronology⁴¹

TABLE 2.3. Timeline of the Republic of Mali and the current conflict.

DATE	EVENT	
1916-1917	Tuareg Revolt: Armed insurrection against the French colonial government, led by Teguidda Kaocen.	
1960	20th June	Independence of the Federation of Mali (Mali -as Sudanese Republic - and Senegal).
1960	22nd September	Independence of the Republic of Mali, following the withdrawal of Senegal. President: Modibo Keita.
1961-1964	Tuareg Revolt: Armed uprising with separatist aspirations. Military repression.	
1968	19th November	Coup d'état. President: Moussa Traoré. Military regime.
1990-1996	Tuareg Revolt: After armed uprising, an agreement that included demobilisation and reintegration of rebels.	
1991	26th March	Coup d'état. President: Amadou Toumani Touré. Establishment of democratic transition.
1992	12th January	Constitutional referendum. Beginning of the establishment of democracy in Mali.
1992	8th June	Following democratic elections, President: Alpha Oumar Konaré.
2002	8th June	Amadou Toumani Touré wins the elections and returns to the presidency.
2007-2009	Tuareg Revolt: Armed uprising. Negotiated ceasefire and declaration of amnesty for rebels.	
CURRENT CONFLICT IN MALI		
2012	17th January	Beginning of Tuareg revolt led by MNLA, with rebel attacks on the Army in Menaka, Aguelhok and Tessalit.
	22nd March	Coup d'état by Captain Sanogo. Removal of President Touré. Military junta government is established.

⁴¹ Own work.

	6th April	The MNLA unilaterally declares independence of the "Azawad State".
	12th April	Dioncounda Traoré sworn in as interim president of Mali, and Cheick Diarra as prime minister.
	27th June	Battle of Gao. MOJWA and Ansar Dine expel MNLA from the city. All northern enclaves held by jihadist groups.
	12th July	With the taking of Kidal and Timbuktu, the power of Ansar Dine in northern Mali is consolidated.
	12th October	UN Security Council adopts Resolution 2071, which entrusts ECOWAS with the planning of an African force.
	10th December	Crisis of Government: Forced resignation of Prime Minister Diarra, replaced (on 11th) by Django Sissoko.
	20th December	UN Security Council adopts Resolution 2085, authorising the deployment of AFISMA.
2013	10th January	Start of offensive by terrorist groups and armed militants moving into southern Mali. Led by Ansar Dine.
	11th January	Beginning of Operation Serval by France to repel jihadist offensive and recover northern enclaves.
	30th January	With the taking of Kidal, troops from Mali, France and Chad conclude the recovery of the northern enclaves.
	18th February	Foreign Affairs Council of the European Union approves launch of EUTM Mali mission.
	2nd April	Commencement of training of Mali Army units in Koulikoro by EUTM Mali.
	18th June	Signing in Burkina Faso of an interim agreement between the Government, the High Council of Azawad and the MNLA.
	25th June	UN Security Council adopts Resolution 2100, authorising the deployment of MINUSMA.
	28th July and 11th August	Presidential elections in Mali (first and second rounds). Ibrahim Boubacar Keita wins the elections.
	10th September	Ibrahim Boubacar Keita is sworn in as President of Mali.

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Syria: war, sectarianism and chaos

Mario Laborie Iglesias

Chapter three

Abstract

Two and a half years after the beginning of the uprising in Syria, the country's situation is going from bad to worse. On top of the growing number of fatalities resulting from the war comes the desperate plight of displaced persons and refugees. Yet there is no sign of a short-term solution to the conflict. This war, in which the regional powers are also indirectly involved, is characterised by sectarianism, radicalisation and brutality. This chapter aims to present the various factors involved in the Syrian conflict so as to provide an understanding of its current situation.

Keywords

Syria, Middle East, Assad, War, Geopolitics, Sectarianism-

Introduction

From the beginning of the popular uprising against the regime of Syrian president Bashar al-Assad, in March 2011 up to July 2013, the United Nations documented more than 100,000 fatalities as a result of the civil war now tearing Syria apart¹. The London-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights assumes that the real number is much greater, since the UN figure probably does not include either government soldiers or opposition militia fighters².

Yet two and a half years after the start of the uprisings in Syria, the indescribable suffering of the Syrian people does not end there. The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) has stated that more than two million people have fled their homes and sought refuge in neighbouring countries. At the same time, more than 4.5 million Syrians are internally displaced³. Life for those remaining in the country is made even more difficult by the destruction of infrastructure and the enormous economic losses. Millions of people face serious shortages of food, fuel, drinking water and shelter, while entire communities live under constant siege and bombardment⁴.

A United Nations report issued in June 2013 summarised the situation by saying, «the conflict in Syria has reached new levels of brutality⁵». This war, in which the regional powers are also indirectly involved, is characterised by sectarianism, radicalisation and brutality. The geopolitical struggles make it ever clearer that the outcome of the conflict will determine the future of the Middle East as a whole.

This chapter, continuing on from the two previous editions of the Geopolitical Overview of Conflicts⁶, summarises the development of the Syrian

¹ «Syria death toll now above 100,000, says UN chief Ban». BBC News. 25 July 2013. Available at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-23455760>.

² Rami Abdul-Rahman, head of the Syrian Observatory, estimates that by March 2013, 120,000 people had already lost their lives as a result of Syria's civil war. «Syria crisis: March was 'conflict's deadliest month'». BBC News. 1 April 2013. Available at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-21995400>. Nadia Massih «More than 82,000 killed in conflict: Observatory». The Daily Star. 13 May 2013. Available online at <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2013/May-13/216855-more-than-82000-killed-in-conflict-observatory.ashx#axzz2jUwUamp7>.

³ «UNHCR and host countries to push for greater international help on Syrian refugees». UNHCR. 4 September 2013. Available at <http://www.unhcr.org/522756779.html>.

⁴ For an insight into the humanitarian situation in Syria, see «Syria Two Years On - The Failure of International Aid so far». Médecins sans Frontières. Press Dossier. March 2013. Available at <http://www.msf-me.org/en/resource/resources-and-publications/special-reports-1/syria-two-years-on-the-failure-of-international-aid-so-far.html>.

⁵ «U.N. panel reports 'new levels of brutality' in Syria conflict». Al-Arabiya. 4 June 2013. Available at <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2013/06/04/U-N-panel-reports-new-levels-of-brutality-in-Syria-conflict.html>.

⁶ Laborie Iglesias, Mario. «The Middle East: Irreversible Change». Included in previous edition of «Geopolitical Overview of Conflicts 2011». IEE (Spanish Institute for Stra-

civil conflict during the period from November 2012 to the beginning of September 2013. At the time of writing, the Western powers are deliberating on a possible military intervention to punish the Syrian regime for the more than probable use of chemical weapons. If such intervention takes place, it will open up a new phase of the war, with unforeseeable consequences. By the time this text is published, some of the considerations and prospects it contains will certainly have been confirmed or invalidated. The reader always has that advantage.

Background to the conflict

For more than forty years the Assad family's regime has kept firm control of Syria's state institutions. This, together with the ability to attract the support of different sectors of civil society, and to make much of the Arab world regard Bashar al-Assad as a stalwart defender of resistance movements against Israel, seemed sufficient arguments for Syria not to be influenced by the so-called «Arab spring».

Contrary to expectations, March 2011 saw some peaceful demonstrations demanding political and social change. But the timid popular protests were violently suppressed by the Syrian security forces, and, far from pacifying the situation, this added fuel to the flames. The resulting spiral of violence led to the current generalised civil conflict.

Since those demonstrations of the spring of 2011 and up until the beginning of September 2013, the civil war has gone through four phases. During the first phase, the imbalance of power between government and opposition forces was overwhelming. The armed forces and the Mukhabarat (Syrian secret police), backed by pro-government militias (the feared shabiha⁷), moved freely around the country carrying out a brutal policy of suppression.

However, by the middle of 2012 the situation was starting to change, entering the second phase of the armed conflict. The arrival of heavy weaponry and explosives, as well as intelligence support provided by outside powers, enabled the opposition to extend the armed uprising through wide areas of the country, especially those with a Sunni majority. The increase in armed activity by the opposition severely curtailed the freedom

tegic Studies). November 2011. Available at http://www.ieee.es/en/Galerias/fichero/OtrasPublicaciones/Internacional/Geopolitical_overview_2011.pdf. Laborie Iglesias, Mario. «Syria: sliding towards chaos». Included in previous edition of «Geopolitical Overview of Conflicts 2012». IEEE (Spanish Institute for Strategic Studies). February 2013. Available at http://www.portalcultura.mde.es/Galerias/publicaciones/fichero/Geopolitical_overview_2012.pdf.

⁷ «Syria unrest: Who are the shabiha?» BBC News. 29 May 2012 Available at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-14482968>.

of action of the army and police, who were forced to give ground and to concentrate their forces on the major centres.

The rebels, who now control more than 70% of Syria's territory, advanced, both in Damascus and in the Northern cities, although they are currently proving incapable of completely controlling any of the country's major centres of population. As well as outside support, the opposition's advances were also helped by greater cooperation among the various factions forming it. According to information from the battlefield, the jihadist-oriented Al-Nusra Front and the units of the Free Syrian Army have coordinated their actions, which would constitute an important operational development⁸.

The third and fourth phases, stagnation and regime offensive respectively, form the core of this chapter and are dealt with in the following sections.

Current situation of the conflict

Characteristics

The war in Syria is currently defined by three basic characteristics: its sectarian nature, the highly fragmented ideologies of the opposition and the influence of the conflict on geopolitical dynamics affecting the Middle East as a whole⁹.

Sectarianism

Sectarian strife pits the Sunni majority (70% of the Syrian population) against the Alawites (11%) and the Christians (10%), although we should not forget the role played by the Druze and Kurdish minorities (2% and 7% respectively).

The Alawites (or Alawis), the minority to which president Bashar al-Assad belongs, appeared in the thirteenth century as a breakaway sect from the Ismaili¹⁰. However, because of their rites they are considered to be

⁸ This proven cooperation at an operational and tactical level is denied, at least officially, at a strategic level by the opposition leaders. Relevant information can be found in «Syria rebels distance themselves from Qaeda Iraq ally». Ahramonline/AFP. 9 April 2013. Available at <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/2/8/68868/World/Region/Syria-rebels-distance-themselves-from-Qaeda-Iraq-a.aspx>.

⁹ Laborie Iglesias, Mario. «Implicaciones regionales de las revueltas árabes» (Regional Implications of the Arab Revolts). Analysis Document of the IEEE (Spanish Institute for Strategic Studies). 27/2013. 8 May 2013. Available (in Spanish only) at http://www.ieee.es/en/Galerias/fichero/docs_analisis/2013/DIEEEA27-2013_ImplicacionesRegionalesRevueltasArabes_MLI.pdf.

¹⁰ Branch of Shi'ism whose members recognise only the first seven Shi'ite imams. The Alawites, unlike more orthodox Muslims, believe in reincarnation, and do not regard ob-

much closer to Iranian Shi'ism than to the rest of the Ismaili¹¹. Despised as non-believers during the nearly 400 years of Ottoman domination in the region, and obliged to pay a special tax, the Alawites took refuge in the poor mountains of the East of Syria, next to the Mediterranean coast. Between 1920 and 1936, France, the colonial power at the time, created a protected autonomous territory in the area. With their expansion in the region, the French encouraged the Alawites to join the Syrian army, and in time they became the predominant group in official circles.

Since 1971, when the current president's late father Hafez Al-Assad came to power, the Alawite community has extended its influence through the state institutions, enabling it to dominate Syrian political life. At decisive historical moments such as the succession of the country's presidency in 2000, the cohesion of the Alawites has been a determining factor in the regime's survival¹².

At present, the Alawite minority¹³ exerts an iron-fisted control of the state security services. To ensure the regime's coherence, Assad has distributed the key institutional positions among his relatives and acolytes. For example, Maher al-Assad, the president's brother, commands the Republican Guard, the main military unit outside the regular army chain of command.

During the first few months of the uprisings there was a veritable wave of desertions among leading figures in the regime, which seemed like a palpable sign that Assad was bound to fall. However, the desertions have practically ceased¹⁴, which together with the public shows of popular pro-government fervour, illustrates the degree of internal cohesion that the Syrian government still retains. This situation demonstrates the Alawites' determination to fight to the bitter end; in the words of presi-

servance of Ramadan or the pilgrimage to Mecca as mandatory. They worship at home or at the tombs of holy men, and do not have a clerical hierarchy.

¹¹ Horrie, Chris; Chippindale, Peter. *What is Islam?* Virgin Books Revised & Updated London, 2007 p. 324

¹² «Syria Under Bashar (II): Domestic Policy Challenges». International Crisis Group. Middle East Report No. 24. 11 February 2004. p. 2. Available at <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/middle-east-north-africa/egypt-syria-lebanon/syria/024-syria-under-bashar-2-domestic-policy-challenges.aspx>

¹³ The Alawites (followers of Ali) are considered a branch of Shi'ism. The main thing setting them apart from other Muslim groups is their manifest identification with aspects of Christian theology, particularly with mystery and resurrection. Horrie; Chippindale. *Op. cit.* 223.

¹⁴ The last significant defection was that of General Muhammad Khallouf on 16 March 2013. Reuters. «Syria Defections Continue As Brigadier General Mohammed Khalouf, 20 Soldiers Abandon Assad». The Huffington Post. 16 March 2013. Available at http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/03/16/syrian-defections-general-soldiers_n_2891532.html

dent Assad himself¹⁵: «There is no option but victory, [...] no to surrender, no to submission».

The majority of Syrian Christians are also still on the government's side, albeit without the fanaticism of the Alawites. Christian minorities in other Arab countries suffer persecution and repression¹⁶, and consequently many of them leave their places of origin¹⁷. Fearful lest this situation be repeated in Syria, Christians see the Assad regime as insurance against any Sunni fundamentalist excesses¹⁸.

Despite this, it is important to point out that some sectors of the Sunni population continue to support Assad. For example the Grand Mufti of Syria, Ahmad Badr al-Din Hassoun, the country's highest Sunni religious authority and very close to the regime, has issued a decree urging young men to enlist in the Syrian army¹⁹.

The position of the Druze minority, with their syncretic faith, clustered in the mountains of Southern Syria – *Jabal al-Druze* – is less clear. The Dru-

¹⁵ Almasry, Steve. «Al-Assad to Western nations: Syrian rebels will turn on you». CNN. 19 April 2013. Available at <http://edition.cnn.com/2013/04/17/world/meast/syria-assad/>

¹⁶ Lozano, Javier. «La inacción y complacencia de la Policía egipcia ante los ataques islamistas a los coptos» (Inaction and complacency of Egypt's police in the face of Islamist attacks on Copts). Libertad Digital. 29 April 2013. Available (in Spanish) at <http://www.libertaddigital.com/internacional/oriente-medio/2013-04-29/la-complacencia-de-la-policia-egipcia-en-los-ataques-islamistas-a-los-coptos-1276488812/> See also: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2315779/Egyptian-police-refuse-protect-Coptic-Christians-gun-machete-attack-mourners-cathedral.html>

¹⁷ The actual number of Christians that have had to leave their countries of origin in the Middle East is the subject of controversy, since it is a political instrument in the hands of groups with opposing views and interests. But, for example, in Iraq it is estimated that of the one and a half million Christians that lived there in 2000 only some 200,000 now remain. Tozman, M.K. «A short overview of the status quo of Christian minorities in Egypt, Iraq, Turkey, Syria and Lebanon». World Watch Monitor. 6 August 2013. Available at <http://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/research/ChristianMinorities>.

¹⁸ At the end of April 2013, two Christian bishops were kidnapped by the opposition in the North of Syria. They were Yohanna Ibrahim, Head of the Orthodox Church in Syria in Aleppo and Boulou Yaziji, leader of the Greek Orthodox Church in Aleppo. Whereas several Muslim clerics have been assassinated during the Syrian war, these two bishops are the most prominent Christian leaders to have been affected by the civil conflict. «Gunmen abduct two bishops in northern Syria». BBC News. 23 April 2013. Available at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-22259631>. The reality indicates the intense pressure exerted on the Christian minority by the opposition and jihadists. On this subject, see Ayeararán, Mikel. «Al Qaida en Siria asalta Malula, símbolo cristiano y cuna del arameo» (Al Qaeda in Syria attacks Maaloula, Christian symbol and birthplace of Aramaic). <http://www.abc.es/internacional/20130905/abci-almusra-pueblo-cristiano-siria-201309052026.html> 5 September 2013. Available (in Spanish) at <http://www.abc.es/internacional/20130905/abci-almusra-pueblo-cristiano-siria-201309052026.html>.

¹⁹ «Mufti: Young men should enlist in Syrian Army». Ynetnews.com. 11 March 2013. Available at <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4355148,00.html>.

ze, who did not support the anti-government demonstrations, maintain a position midway between the regime and the opposition, although the vast majority of the few Druze taking part in the armed conflict are fighting on the side of Assad. However, the way the conflict is developing seems to be nudging the Druze towards a change of attitude. On 16 February 2013 a group of leaders of the community called on Druze soldiers to leave Assad's army, since it «has become a tool of destruction»²⁰. Although some have said that this announcement really meant explicit support for the rebels²¹, given the history of this minority it is quite possible that, depending on how events turn out, its leaders will seek a neutral position²².

More crucial is what is happening in Syrian Kurdistan. Syria's Kurds, Sunni by religion and Persian in language, form the country's biggest ethnic minority. Despite their long-standing antagonism to the Syrian regime, since the outbreak of popular dissent in March 2011 the majority of Kurdish provinces have kept out of armed confrontation. In May 2011 president Assad granted Syrian nationality to more than 100,000 Kurds who had previously been denied it. Since then Assad has showered gestures of support for this ethnic group. And, more significantly, due to the lack of military manpower needed to fight the rebels in the strategic cities of Aleppo, Homs and Damascus, the Damascus government ceded control of the main cities of the north-east to the People's Protection Units (YPG in the Kurdish initials), the armed militia of the Kurdish Democratic Union Party (PYD in the Kurdish initials)²³.

Although there are Kurds in the opposition groups, their main political forces have tried to stay on the sidelines of the sectarian struggle and to consolidate their recently won autonomy. However, at the beginning of 2013, Kurdish militias and Arab rebels fought together against Syrian army forces, to the North of the city of Aleppo, which looked like the start of an alliance against the regime²⁴.

²⁰ Miller, Elhanan. «Syrian Druze call on community members to defect from army». The Times of Israel. 17 February 2013. Available at <http://www.timesofisrael.com/syrian-druze-call-on-community-members-to-defect-from-army/>.

²¹ Dehghanpisheh, Babak. «Syria's Druze minority is shifting its support to the opposition». The Washington Post. 8 February 2013. Available at http://articles.washingtonpost.com/2013-02-08/world/36981210_1_druze-opposition-activists-and-rebel-rebel-fighters.

²² Gambill, Gary C. «Syrian Druze: Toward Defiant Neutrality». March 2013. Foreign Policy Research Institute. Available at <http://www.fpri.org/articles/2013/03/syrian-druze-toward-defiant-neutrality>.

²³ Laborie Iglesias, Mario. «The Kurds and the Syrian Conflict». Analysis Document 52/2012. IIEE (Spanish Institute for Strategic Studies). 27 November 2012. Available (in Spanish) at http://www.iecee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs_analisis/2012/DIEEEA52-2012_KurdosyConflictoSirio_MLI.pdf.

²⁴ Nisman, Daniel. «Have Syria's Kurds Had a Change of Heart?» The Huffington Post. 8 April 2012. Available at <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/daniel-nisman/have-syrias->

But like the other Syrian minorities, the Kurds distrust the Sunni Islamists. And with good reason. Since November 2012, rebel groups have been trying to control certain areas of Syrian Kurdistan. As a result, Kurdish militias are fiercely confronting combatants belonging to the Al-Nusra Front and to Ghuraba al-Sham, both jihadist organisations. These clashes are leading to an exodus of the Kurdish civilian population into Iraqi Kurdistan²⁵. In this regard, we cannot discount Turkish involvement, since Turkey might see it as being in its interests to destabilise the areas dominated by Kurdish nationalists²⁶.

Ideological fragmentation of the opposition

The (mainly Sunni) opposition to the regime is ill-prepared and highly fragmented, both organisationally and in terms of its objectives. Diverse tendencies coexist within it: moderate Islamists, human rights activists, nationalists, and also jihadists and elements with links to Al-Qaeda. Despite outside support, dissent among the different ideologies, together with serious differences between leaders in exile and those remaining in the country, have made it impossible, for the time being, to create a united opposition front²⁷. This fragmentation of the opposition makes it difficult to reach consensus on matters of importance such as the coordination of military strategy or government of the «liberated zones»²⁸.

From a political point of view, the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces, commonly known as the Syrian National Coalition, is the main organisation opposing the Assad regime and the only opposition group recognised as a legitimate representative of the Syrian people by several countries and international organisations. Established in Doha in November 2012 with the backing of a considerable number of Western and Arab countries, the Syrian National Coalition combines various different factions, including the Syrian National Council (SNC)²⁹, the General Committee for the Syrian Revolution and the Local Coordination

kurds-had-a_b_3036931.html.

²⁵ «Syria Kurdish militias battle al Qaeda fighters, driving civilians across border into Iraq». CBS/AP. 20 August 2013. Available at http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-202_162-57599312/.

²⁶ «Turkey's support for Syrian rebels in Kurd killings may backfire». RT. 8 August 2013. Available at <http://rt.com/op-edge/turkey-kurds-rebels-killing-203/>.

²⁷ «Guide to the Syrian opposition». BBC News. 23 April 2013. Available at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-15798218>.

²⁸ Laborie Iglesias, Mario. «La división del apoyo internacional a la oposición siria» (The division of international support for the Syrian opposition). Esglobal. 3 June 2013. Available (in Spanish) at <http://www.esglobal.org/la-division-del-apoyo-internacional-a-la-oposicion-siria>.

²⁹ The SNC is the most important body of the Syrian National Coalition. Created in Istanbul on 24 August 2011, it is believed to be dominated by the Muslim Brotherhood and to receive assistance from Turkey. «The Syrian National Council». Carnegie Middle East Center. 1 January 2012. Available at <http://carnegie-mec.org/publications>.

Committees³⁰. Its purpose is to serve as a moderate organisation channelling international donor aid to the rebels³¹.

Nevertheless, there are clearly internal divisions within the National Coalition. Ahmed Muaz Al-Hatib was elected head of the National Coalition at the Doha meeting, but resigned on 24 March, supposedly in protest at the «indifference» of the international community towards seeking a solution to the conflict³². Behind the rhetoric, however, in reality his resignation was due to frustration with the internal politics of the Syrian opposition and the lack of prospects for reaching a solution to the conflict³³.

At the beginning of 2013, Hatib expressed his willingness to start talks with representatives of the Assad regime on certain conditions: the freeing of 160,000 political prisoners and the issue of new passports with a twoyear extension to their validity for Syrians who have left the country³⁴. This proposal was immediately criticised by other leaders in the National Coalition, who until July 2013 had always refused to sit at the negotiating table with members of the government³⁵. Hatib's successor, Ghassan Hitto, an Islamist, resigned from his post after just four months in office, as a result of his inability to bring the opposition forces together³⁶.

The National Coordination Committee (NCC), established in September 2011, is another of the most significant opposition groups. Led by veteran oppositionist Hussein Abdul Azim, it brings together thirteen par-

³⁰ Sayigh, Yezid. «The Syrian Opposition's Leadership Problem». The Carnegie Endowment». 3 April 2013. Available at <http://carnegieendowment.org/2013/04/03/syrian-opposition-s-leadership-problem/fx6v>.

³¹ Sofer, Ken and Shafroth, Juliana. «The Structure and Organization of the Syrian Opposition». Center for American Progress. 14 May 2013. Available at <http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/security/report/2013/05/14/63221/the-structure-and-organization-of-the-syrian-opposition/>.

³² «Syrian National Coalition leader Moaz al-Khatib resigns». The Guardian. 24 March 2013. Available at <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/mar/24/mouaz-al-khatib-resigns-coalition>.

³³ «Moazal-Khatib:ThepriorityistosaveSyria». AlJazeera. 11 April 2013. Available at <http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/talktojazeera/2013/05/2013510141112681380.html>.

³⁴ «El líder de la Coalición Nacional Siria dispuesto a negociar con representantes de Asad» (Leader of the Syrian National Coalition prepared to negotiate with representatives of Assad) Ria Novosti. 30 January 2013. Available (in Spanish) at <http://sp.ria.ru/international/20130130/156286499.html>.

³⁵ In July, the recently appointed head of the Syrian National Coalition, Ahmad al-Jarba, signalled his readiness to meet with representatives of the Syrian regime, completely reversing his previous stance. Gordon, Michael R. «Syrian Opposition Leader Says He Would Meet Assad Officials». The New York Times. 25 July 2013. Available at http://www.nytimes.com/2013/07/29/world/middleeast/syrian-opposition-leader-says-he-would-meet-assad-officials.html?_r=0.

³⁶ Mourtada, Hania; Barnard, Anne. «Another Leader Quits Post in Syrian Exile Group». The New York Times. 8 July 2013. Available at http://www.nytimes.com/2013/07/09/world/middleeast/syria.html?_r=0.

ties from the Syrian left, three Kurdish parties and some independent activists³⁷. The NCC, which has not joined the National Coalition, has advocated dialogue with the government in the belief that bringing Assad down would plunge the country into chaos. The NCC considers that a political solution is still the most appropriate way to bring an end to the conflict. However, this solution requires certain preparatory steps, which would include a ceasefire under international supervision, the liberation of prisoners, the return of refugees and humanitarian aid to those in need³⁸.

In the military field, in December 2012 the Supreme Military Command (SMC) was set up, with the intention of converting it into the Ministry of Defence of the National Coalition³⁹. Both organisations constitute the international face of the Syrian opposition, although the relationship between them is more nominal than real. Under the command of general Salim Idriss – a former Syrian army general now heading the Free Syrian Army (FSA) – the SMC's main aim is to establish unity of command among the many armed groups and reduce the influence of extremist groups.

Of all the groups in the SMC, the FAS is the most important – it is thought to have approximately 50,000 combatants⁴⁰. As well as the FSA, the SMC includes the Syrian Liberation Front, the Syrian Islamic Front and nine other independent armed groups, which would represent a total force of between 100,000 and 150,000⁴¹. Despite the efforts made and the outside support received, until now the SMC has not succeeded in imposing a coherent military strategy, and has proved incapable of effectively co-ordinating the activities of the various armed groups on the battlefield. The main factor of fragmentation is the divergence of opinion between the military commanders on the ground and the supreme command of the SMC when collaborating with jihadist groups. Whereas the former are said to be promoting the alliance with the radicals, the central SMC command, fearful of losing Western support, remains opposed to this possibility⁴².

³⁷ «Guide to the Syrian opposition». BBC News. Available at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-15798218>. Date checked 6 September 2013.

³⁸ Al-Abed, Tareq. «Syria's Opposition Still Divided. Mistrustful». Al-Monitor. 14 March 2013. Available at <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/politics/2013/03/syrian-opposition-unite.html>.

³⁹ Previously, from late 2011 to early 2012, provincial committees of the FSA were established, and later attempts were made to organise them into the SMC's chain of command.

⁴⁰ O'Bagy, Elizabeth. «The Free Syrian Army». Institute for the Study of War. Middle East Security Report 9. March 2013. Available at <http://www.understandingwar.org/report/free-syrian-army>.

⁴¹ Sofer and Shafroth. Op. cit.

⁴² Sowell, Kirk H. «The Fragmenting FSA». Foreign Policy. 3 September 2013.

However, in addition to the SMC there are numerous armed organisations operating across the country – according to the United Nations there are more than 1,000 armed militias in Syria⁴³ – those with links to Al-Qaeda being the ones that raise the most concerns in the international community. At the beginning of 2013, the members of thirteen radical Islamist groups issued a message on video rejecting the National Coalition and declaring the city of Aleppo an Islamic state⁴⁴. The recent merger of the Al-Nusra Front with the Islamic State of Iraq into a single organisation, the «Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant», has aroused fears among those that have openly declared their support for the Syrian revolution, particularly in the US and allied countries.

The geopolitical dynamics

The Syrian conflict is much more than a civil war, since it is also the strategic chessboard on which a game is being played out among Iran, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Turkey, the stakes being regional hegemony; but in which the US, Russia, Lebanon, Jordan and Israel are also involved. However, it is important to stress that, while outside support to both sides has some basis in sectarian affinity, in reality it is based on the defence of respective geopolitical interests. The implications of this fact for Syria's neighbours are profound⁴⁵. In view of its huge international and regional importance, this aspect is detailed later in the section dedicated to the role of outside players.

The question that arises is what implications would derive from the three characteristics pointed out for the war in Syria: sectarianism, fragmentation of the rebellion and geopolitical repercussions. As is already happening on the ground, the concern is that, as the regime gradually loses control of territory, the country will break up into sectors controlled by rival groups, including a zone controlled by the regime in Damascus or on the Mediterranean coast⁴⁶, backed by Iran, others by Druze and Kurds,

⁴³ Comments of Valerie Amos in «The International Response to Syria's Humanitarian Catastrophe». Middle East Institute. 7 May 2013. Available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zTzCA3BYPng>.

⁴⁴ «Rebels reject the Syrian National Coalition and declare their own Islamic state». RT Actualidad. 20 November 2012. Available (in Spanish) at <http://actualidad.rt.com/actualidad/view/78904-rebeldes-rechazan-coalicion-nacional-siria-declaran-propio-islamico>.

⁴⁵ Laborie Iglesias, Mario. «Implicaciones regionales de las revueltas árabes» (Regional implications of the Arab uprisings). Analysis Document of the IEEA (Spanish Institute for Strategic Studies) 27/2013. 8 May 2013. Available (in Spanish only) at http://www.ieea.es/en/Galerias/fichero/docs_analisis/2013/DIEEEA27-2013_ImplicacionesRegionalesRevueltasArabes_MLI.pdf.

⁴⁶ Badran, Tony. «Alawistan». Foreign Policy. 27 July 2012. Available online at <http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2012/07/27/alawistan>.

and a zone controlled by Al-Qaeda along the border with Iraq⁴⁷. In other words there would be, as so greatly feared, a «Lebanonisation».

The third phase of the civil conflict: stalemate

In a strategy that over time has proven unsustainable, during the first months of the uprising Assad sent his troops around the country from one place to another to suppress it. But as soon as his forces left, the insurrection started again. The rebels have gradually gained in strength, and by using guerilla tactics they have curtailed the government forces' freedom of action such that they can no longer act without risking the loss of lives and equipment. Consequently, Assad has ceded parts of the territory not just to the Kurds but also to the rebels, and has opted to concentrate his units in the main bases, which can be supported and supplied from the air. This measure may also be designed to avoid desertions.

A study carried out by the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) and published in mid March 2013, estimated that at the beginning of the conflict Assad had some 300,000 troops, but that two years later he had only about 50,000⁴⁸. This lack of personnel has led the government to resort to recruiting women⁴⁹.

Thus at the beginning of 2013 the regime's strategy was centred on forming a defensive circle around Damascus, clearing the rebels out from the city of Homs and neighbouring rural areas, and subsequently attacking the pockets of resistance in Aleppo⁵⁰. The city of Homs is of vital strategic importance, since it is the communications hub linking the capital with the coast and the mountains of Latakia and with the north of the country. With many of the rural areas in rebel hands, the war is practically concentrated on these three cities and the road linking them.

In Damascus, fierce fighting extended all along the highway that circles the city. Forces loyal to the regime tried to hold back the rebel advance with intense artillery fire from Mount Qasioun, which overlooks the capital, while the regime's air force intensified its attacks. The loyalist troops were better equipped and well fortified, but the numerical superiority of

⁴⁷ DeYoung, Karen. «Sectarian strife will persist in Syria after Assad's fall, top U.S. intelligence official says». The Washington Post. 11 April 2013. Available at http://articles.washingtonpost.com/2013-04-11/world/38461310_1_chemical-weapons-clapper-jr-opposition.

⁴⁸ «Syrian general, 20 soldiers defect: opposition». Reuters. 16 March 2013. Available at <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/03/16/us-syria-crisis-defections-idUSBRE92F0AC20130316>.

⁴⁹ Sly, Liz and Ramadan, Ahmed. «Syria, pressed by war, deploys all-female units». The Washington Post. 11 March 2013. Available at http://articles.washingtonpost.com/2013-03-11/world/37616955_1_homs-syrian-government-syrian-women

⁵⁰ Souri, Arabi. «Syria's Assad Receives Lebanese Delegation». Syria News. 21 April 2013. Available at <http://www.syrianews.cc/syrias-assad-receives-lebanese-delegation/>.

the diverse Sunni rebel groups was overwhelming; although then as now they were short on heavy munition and armament.

One constant in the conflict is the regime's lack of compunction in using the superior fire power conferred by its control of the skies to have its air force «punish» villages and districts under opposition control. This tactic of the Syrian army seems to be aimed at getting the population to blame the attacks on the presence of the rebels. According to a report by Human Rights Watch⁵¹, the Syrian government has carried out «indiscriminate and sometimes deliberate attacks against civilians». This organisation has documented fifty-nine attacks of this kind, which constitute war crimes. There are also reports of sectarian «cleansing» carried out by the government, precisely in the coastal region, aimed at driving out the Sunni population and ensuring an Alawite majority⁵².

On the other hand, the rebels' improved anti-aircraft capabilities, now with portable missiles, has produced losses in loyalist aviation⁵³, which are difficult to replace, and has also curtailed its combat capability. For fear of being shot down, the regime's aeroplanes and helicopters now have to fly higher, thus losing attack precision. If the government's air superiority were to be severely impaired, this would involve not just losing the ability to attack deep within rebel positions but, more seriously, it would be unable to resupply military installations, such as the Minakh air base near Aleppo, which are besieged and under continuous attack by rebels. At the beginning of the conflict, the Syrian air force consisted of some 400 fixed-wing combat aircraft and an estimated 200 helicopters of various types. Initially, the regime mainly relied on helicopters to provide fire support against the rebels; but when the conflict intensified, practically the entire force became involved.

In this scenario at the beginning of the spring of 2013, neither side was in a position to achieve military victory in the short or medium term. Successes and setbacks followed one another on both sides, suggesting that the situation had reached a stalemate⁵⁴.

⁵¹ «Death from the Skies. Deliberate and Indiscriminate Air Strikes on Civilians». HRW. April 2013. Available at <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2013/04/10/death-skies>.

⁵² «Massacre of civilians by the Syrian regime in a coastal zone». La Vanguardia. 2 May 2013. Available (in Spanish) at <http://www.lavanguardia.com/internacional/20130502/54373104384/masacre-civiles-asesinados-regimen-sirio-zona-costera.html>.

⁵³ «Los rebeldes sirios abaten un helicóptero del régimen» (Syrian rebels shoot down a regime helicopter). La Vanguardia. 14 May 2013. Available (in Spanish) at <http://videos.lavanguardia.com/internacional/20130514/54374088218/los-rebeldes-sirios-abaten-un-helicoptero-del-regimen.html>.

⁵⁴ Laborie Iglesias, Mario. «Siria: consecuencias de una guerra en punto muerto» (Syria: consequences of a war in stalemate). Atenea Digital. 5 March 2013. Available online (in Spanish) at http://www.revistatenea.es/revistatenea/revista/articulos/GestionNoticias_12279_ESP.asp.

The fourth phase of the civil conflict: regime offensive

Under the parameters described above, at the end of the winter Assad realised he could not win the war. Knowing how fragmented the opposition was, he decided to change strategy and go on the attack.

As in the previous phase, the war centred on Damascus, Aleppo and Homs, and the corridor joining these cities to the Mediterranean coast. In these areas, between April and August last, government forces, with massive support from Hezbollah militia fighters, launched several offensives.

Following violent combat, on 6 June the loyalist army retook the city of Qusair, near the Lebanese border. This city is of vital strategic importance because it serves as a communications hub between the Alawite sector and the north of Lebanon, as well as being an essential supply route for the rebels⁵⁵. In this same offensive the cities of Qunaytirah and Daba'a also fell to the regime.

After the fall of Qusair, Assad's army announced the start of «Operation Northern Storm», aimed at taking control of Aleppo⁵⁶, and started bombarding the rebel positions in that city. However, it seems that in fact the government's main efforts are directed at consolidating the centre of the country by completely dominating the region of Homs. This would divide the rebel-held zone and secure vital communications between Damascus and the coast. Aleppo would constitute only a secondary manoeuvre.

At the same time, Assad is aware of the strategic importance of Damascus and knows that the outcome of this battle will affect the rest of the conflict. For that reason, many of the regime's best units are dedicated to defending the capital. In Damascus, the regime's offensive is focused on taking certain districts considered as bastions of the insurgents, such as Qaboun and Barzeh, from which they launch their attacks on the centre⁵⁷.

As for the rebels, in order to force the regime to lower the pressure on Homs and Damascus, the rebels are carrying out attacks on majority Alawite towns in the coastal areas of the Latakia region⁵⁸.

⁵⁵ «Syrian troops take full control of strategic town». Associated Press. 13 May 2013. Available at <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2013/05/13/Syrian-troops-take-full-control-of-strategic-town.html>.

⁵⁶ Klostermayr, M. «Syria: Operation Northern Storm has already begun». Syria News. 11 June 2013. Available at <http://www.syrianews.cc/syria-operation-northern-storm-begun/>.

⁵⁷ El Deeb, Sarah. «Syrian Troops Launch Offensive On Rebel Strongholds Outside Damascus». Huffington Post. 22 June 2013. Available at http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/06/22/syrian-troops-damascus_n_3483602.html.

⁵⁸ Yacoub Oweis, Khaled. «Syrian rebels push into Assad's Alawite mountain stronghold». Reuters. 5 August 2013. Available at <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/08/05/us-syria-crisis-mountain-idUSBRE97410820130805>.

*The Syrian regime's use of chemical weapons:
a crucial strategic error*

In the past few months the regime and the rebels have mutually accused one another of using chemical weapons⁵⁹. The United Nations has repeatedly attempted to deploy independent teams of investigators to obtain evidence of this⁶⁰, but it did not prove possible until August 2013 when UN experts were at last able to enter the country.

From the outset of the conflict the Obama administration has referred to the use of chemical arsenals by Assad as a «red line»⁶¹. For this reason, when on 21 August the most significant incident so far involving chemical weapons occurred⁶², the tension increased exponentially. Even with the definitive results of the United Nations experts' report still awaited – as at the date of writing, 8 September 2013, they have still not been published – the Western countries, with the US at the head, are deliberating the possibility of carrying out a punitive operation.

For the Western world there is no doubt that Assad's regime has used chemical weapons, sarin gas to be precise, against its own people. The point is that a crime against humanity such as that committed in the Damascus district of Ghouta, causing hundreds of deaths according to the US administration⁶³, cannot go unpunished. Therefore, it is necessary to «punish» the people who did it, i.e. strike the Syrian regime. With this idea, president Obama is trying to obtain the necessary internal and external support to proceed with the attack⁶⁴, which due to the block in the

⁵⁹ Barnard, Anne. «Syria and Activists Trade Charges on Chemical Weapons». The New York Times. 19 March 2013 Available at http://www.nytimes.com/2013/03/20/world/middleeast/syria-developments.html?_r=0.

⁶⁰ Lynch, Colum and Hauslohner, Abigail. «U.N. chief urges Syria to allow inspections by chemical weapons experts». The Washington Post. 29 April 2013. Available at http://articles.washingtonpost.com/2013-04-29/world/38887957_1_chemical-weapons-ake-sellstrom-nerve-agent.

⁶¹ «US has a range of military options in Syria». The Times of Israel. 26 April 2013. Available at <http://www.timesofisrael.com/us-has-a-range-of-military-options-in-syria/>.

⁶² «Activistas denuncian un ataque con armas químicas del Ejército en Siria» (Activists condemn attack with chemical weapons by the army in Syria). Europa Press. 21 August 2013. Available (in Spanish) at <http://www.europapress.es/internacional/noticia-siria-activistas-denuncian-ataque-armas-quimicas-parte-ejercito-contra-surburbio-damasco-20130821075740.html>.

⁶³ Richter, Paul. «John Kerry says Syria chemical attack killed at least 1,429 people». LA Times. 30 August 2013. Available at <http://www.latimes.com/world/worldnow/la-fg-wn-kerry-us-syria-chemical-attack-20130830,0,2222419.story#axzz2j7VQXAS>.

⁶⁴ «Obama arranca el apoyo de la mitad del G20, incluida España, a una «fuerte respuesta» en Siria» (Obama wins support from half of G20, including Spain, for «strong response» in Syria) RTVE.es. 6 September 2013. Available (in Spanish) at <http://www.rtve.es/noticias/20130906/obama-mas-solo-ataque-siria-tras-g20-decision-vendra-traves-onu/745269.shtml>.

United Nations Security Council caused by Russia and China, would have to be carried out without a favourable resolution of that body.

However, some important conditions would have to be met in order for this intervention to be successful. For fundamental reasons, and in spite of its own reports of the use of chemical weapons in Syria⁶⁵, in the two and a half years of civil war the US administration has continually hesitated to become involved more actively.

The impossibility of creating a united opposition front, as we have seen, gives rise to the dilemma of whether or not to support the rebels, and if so which faction to support. The regime's collapse would lead to much greater chaos in the country than that now being experienced by Libya, and it could spread to neighbouring countries, with groups linked to Al-Qaeda coming out on top. For this reason, the option being proposed is to conduct a limited campaign of aerial bombardment, but not to bring about regime change as in the well-known cases of Iraq, Afghanistan or Libya. In other words: intervene enough to punish the Syrian government, but without bringing it down.

Moreover, in the international arena, the division between defenders and critics of Assad is very deep. This division stems from the diverging geopolitical interests of the regional powers, which will be dealt with in the next section. Russia, which at least for now is not accepting that Assad was behind the Ghouta attack, opposes any action without UN authorisation, which is unlikely to be forthcoming given Russia's seat on the Security Council. President Putin has signalled his intention of continuing to supply arms to Syria, even if the attack goes ahead⁶⁶.

Another constraint that president Obama will have to face when launching the announced punitive strike is that, given that no vital national interests are at stake and that there is evidently very little appetite for foreign missions, American and European public opinion is against starting a new military campaign – it is estimated that nearly 60% of the US population is opposed to it⁶⁷. Carrying out a military intervention behind civil society's back has highly negative effects on countries' internal stability. At a time like now, of economic crisis and a crisis of values, particularly in Europe,

⁶⁵ Caño, Antonio. «Estados Unidos denuncia por primera vez que Siria ha usado armas químicas» (United States claims for the first time that Syria has used chemical weapons) El País. 25 April 2013. Available (in Spanish) at http://internacional.elpais.com/internacional/2013/04/25/actualidad/1366906705_580451.html.

⁶⁶ Bonet, Pilar. «Putin advierte que seguirá suministrando armas a Siria ante un ataque de EE UU» (Putin warns that he will continue supplying arms to Syria if there is an attack by the US). 6 September 2013. Available (in Spanish) at http://internacional.elpais.com/internacional/2013/09/06/actualidad/1378470175_811941.html.

⁶⁷ Little, Morgan. «Americans oppose U.S. military strikes in Syria, polls find». LA Times. 3 September 2013.

these circumstances have a debilitating effect on nations' necessary internal cohesion⁶⁸. Doubtless all these reasons led president Obama to seek authorisation from the US Congress to carry out the punitive attack on Syria, the result of which is yet to be resolved⁶⁹.

In any case, the use of chemical weapons, whether or not it triggers military intervention by the West, constitutes a strategic error by Assad, which may change the whole course of the war. Drawing the world's attention at a time when military operations were going his way will irreparably hamper attainment of his political objectives, and may even jeopardise relations with the countries that support him⁷⁰.

The role of external actors

As previously mentioned, the war in Syria is much more than a civil conflict. We are already seeing the geopolitical consequences of this conflict in which a large number of regional and international players are defending their interests.

The geopolitical dynamics coalesce around several overlapping struggles, notably the ancient rivalry between Arabs and Persians, antagonism between the autocratic and democratic models, tensions among major world powers and the growing influence of Turkey. This section analyses a few keys to understanding the parts played by outside actors in Syria.

Initiatives for a negotiated solution

The UN Security Council has proved incapable of reaching an international consensus on the Syrian crisis. Repeated attempts by Arab countries and the US to achieve a diplomatic condemnation of the Assad regime have collided head-on with vetoes by Russia and China⁷¹. This stance has

⁶⁸ Laborie Iglesias, Mario. «¿Para qué una intervención militar en Siria?» (Why intervene militarily in Syria?). Atenea Digital. 3 August 2013. Available at http://www.ateneadigital.es/revistaatenea/revista/articulos/GestionNoticias_14593_ESP.asp.

⁶⁹ For some US media, according to the US Constitution the president did not need to seek this approval, since this type of action falls under his direct responsibility. «President Obama turns to Congress to OK strike against Syria». 31 August 2013. Available at <http://www.foxnews.com/politics/2013/08/31/president-obama-says-us-must-act-on-syria/>.

⁷⁰ We should not forget that Iran, which suffered the consequences of these weapons during its war with Iraq, is strongly in favour of a complete prohibition of their use.» Las armas químicas envenenan las relaciones entre Teherán y Damasco» (Chemical weapons poison relations between Tehran and Damascus). EuroNews. 6 September 2013. Available (in Spanish) at <http://es.euronews.com/2013/09/06/las-armas-quimicas-envenenan-las-relaciones-entre-teheran-y-damasco/>.

⁷¹ Alandete, David. «Rusia y China vetan de nuevo la condena a Siria en el Consejo de Seguridad» (Russia and China again veto condemnation of Syria in the Security Coun-

led to the «Libyan model» – foreign military intervention to topple the regime – being rejected as a solution.

Although its resolutions are not binding like those of the Security Council, the UN General Assembly has adopted some resolutions regarding the conflict. Pursuant to resolution A/RES/66/253 of 16 February 2012⁷², that same month the Secretaries General of the UN, Ban Ki-moon, and the Arab League, Nabil Elaraby, announced the appointment of Kofi Annan as special joint envoy to Syria, with the purpose of facilitating a peaceful solution to the conflict. Annan's efforts at mediation bore fruit in June 2012 in Geneva when the Action Group for Syria – formed by China, Russia, the US, France, UK, Turkey, the Arab League, the UN and the European Union – agreed a peace plan providing for a transitional government which would include members of the present regime and of the opposition⁷³.

However, this plan did not produce the hoped-for results, and in view of the escalating violence in Syria and the divisions within the international community, Kofi Annan resigned as special envoy in mid August 2012. In order not to shut the door on a possible negotiated settlement, the Arab League and the UN designated the veteran Algerian diplomat Lakhdar Brahimi to replace Kofi Annan⁷⁴. However, neither Brahimi's mediation nor calls from the General Assembly⁷⁵ have succeeded in bringing an end to the Syrian tragedy, at least for the time being.

Apart from this, on the ground United Nations forces have found themselves directly involved in the war. So far on two separate occasions Syrian rebels have kidnapped Filipino UN peacekeepers belonging to the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force deployed in the Golan Heights⁷⁶. In view of the difficulty of carrying out their tasks, it is highly likely that

cil). El País. 19 August 2012. Available (in Spanish) at http://internacional.elpais.com/internacional/2012/07/19/actualidad/1342710323_436948.html.

⁷² Resolution available at <http://responsibilitytoprotect.org>.

⁷³ Action Group for Syria. Final Communiqué. 30 June 2012. Available at <http://www.un.org/News/dh/infocus/Syria/FinalCommuniqueActionGroupforSyria.pdf>.

⁷⁴ «Lakhdar Brahimi será el nuevo enviado de la ONU a Siria» (Lakhdar Brahimi to be new UN envoy to Syria). El Mundo. 17 August 2012. Available (in Spanish) at: <http://www.elmundo.es/elmundo/2012/08/17/internacional/1345221218.html>.

⁷⁵ On 15 May the UN General Assembly passed a new resolution condemning the escalating use of heavy weapons and indiscriminate bombardment in Syria, as well as violations of international humanitarian law and human rights by the parties involved in the conflict. «Outraged' by rising death toll in Syria, General Assembly demands halt to all violence». UN News Centre. 15 May 2013. Available at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=44916&Cr=syria&Cr1=&Kw1=Syria&Kw2=&Kw3=#.UNYK-XDI2So>.

⁷⁶ «SyrianrebelsfreeU.N.peacekeepersheldinGolan». Reuters. 12 May 2013 Available at <http://in.reuters.com/article/2013/05/12/syria-crisis-peacekeepers-idINDEE94B03O20130512>.

countries taking part in the mission will withdraw their troops⁷⁷, with the consequent increase in risk for the stability of the area. The increased tension in the area could also affect deployment of the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL)⁷⁸.

In these circumstances, any hopes that the war might end are focused on seating the warring parties around the negotiating table as soon as possible. It is in this context that we see the US-Russian agreement to hold an international conference as soon as possible as a follow-on to the one held in Geneva in 2012⁷⁹. However, if the Western military intervention, already referred to, were to go ahead, «Geneva II» would be jeopardised, and with it a possible political solution to the conflict.

A neighbourhood at boiling point

There are growing concerns that the war in Syria will lead to the destabilisation of neighbouring countries. The flow of Syrian refugees seeking refuge in neighbouring countries represents an additional strain for the host countries, whose public services are under pressure, which may lead to internal instability. Moreover, the delicate social and religious equilibriums of these countries may be blown away by the expansion of sectarian confrontation.

Iraq

«If the world does not agree to support a peaceful solution through dialogue... then I see no light at the end of the tunnel [...]. Neither the opposition nor the regime can finish each other off; the most dangerous thing in this process is that if the opposition is victorious, there will be a civil war in Lebanon, divisions in Jordan and a sectarian war in Iraq»⁸⁰.

This warning from Iraqi prime minister Nouri al-Maliki, in line with the threats of Bashar al-Assad, who has said that the fall of his regime would set fire to the region, shows just how closely the future of the neighbouring countries is tied to that of Syria.

⁷⁷ «Philippines eyes Golan peacekeeper pull-out after abductions». BBC World. 10 May 2013. Available at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-22476817>.

⁷⁸ «Spain has a frigate in the Mediterranean which could act to protect troops deployed in Lebanon». Europa Press. 5 September 2013. Available (in Spanish) at <http://www.europapress.es/nacional/noticia-espana-tiene-fragata-mediterraneo-podria-actuar-protoger-tropas-desplegadas-libano-20130905182906.html>.

⁷⁹ «Lavrov Urges Syrian Opposition to Support Geneva Talks». Ria Novosti. 28 May 2013. Available at <http://en.ria.ru/russia/20130528/181377054.html>.

⁸⁰ «Iraq PM warns of Syria crisis spillover». Al Jazeera. 28 February 2013 Available at <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2013/02/201322812730766202.html>.

Since the demographic structure of Iraq, and also that of Lebanon, is very similar to that of Syria, al-Maliki's concern is that the violence will extend beyond boundaries and the unending flow of refugees will exacerbate existing sectarian strife⁸¹. Another danger for Iraq comes from the growing cooperation between Al-Qaeda and the Al-Nusra Front. The two jihadist organisations are said to be sharing training camps, logistics, intelligence and arms in an area near the border between the two countries, which they are trying to turn into a safe area from which to carry out attacks on both countries⁸².

Without doubt, the Syrian conflict complicates the internal Iraqi situation. Following the US forces' exit from the country, sectarian clashes between the Shi'ite majority and the Sunni minority have become the order of the day in Iraq. Half-hearted attempts at reconciliation between communities have not succeeded, since instead of promoting a unified state, Iraqi politicians have used the religious divide as an instrument for their own benefit. One consequence of sectarian tension is that terrorist attacks have become much more frequent throughout the country⁸³.

Lebanon

Although the conflict in Syria is disturbing all its neighbours, Lebanon is without doubt the most affected⁸⁴. Cross-border skirmishes, porous frontiers, weapons, contraband, participation of Sunni radicals against the Syrian regime and Hezbollah militias for it, show that Lebanon is sliding dangerously towards internal strife.

Beirut's official policy is to abstain from taking sides in Syria and avoid the war spreading to the country. However, this policy is ever more difficult to put into practice, since almost every internal matter is linked to the crisis next door, particularly now that the Shi'ite militia Hezbollah has announced that it will support Syria «at every level»⁸⁵. This support by

⁸¹ Arango, Tim. «Rising Violence in Iraq Spurs Fears of New Sectarian War». The New York Times. 24 April 2013. Available at http://www.nytimes.com/2013/04/25/world/middleeast/with-air-attacks-sectarian-strife-intensifies-in-iraq.html?_r=0.

⁸² Abdul-Zahra, Qassim; Hadid, Diaa. «Syrian, Iraqi jihadi groups said to be cooperating». Associated Press. 2 April 2013. Available at <http://news.yahoo.com/syrian-iraqi-jihadi-groups-said-cooperating-202706150.html>.

⁸³ Raheem, Kareem. «Bomb attacks kill more than 70 Shi'ites across Iraq». Reuters. 20 May 2013. Available online en <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/05/20/us-iraq-violence-idUSBRE94I0DU20130520>.

⁸⁴ Dockery, Stephen. «Syria crisis escalating at unprecedented pace, U.N. warns». The Daily Star. 15 March 2013. Available online en <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Local-News/2013/Mar-15/210213-syria-crisis-escalating-at-unprecedented-pace-un-warns.ashx#axzz2jZdloudL>.

⁸⁵ «Hezbollah ayudará a Siria a recuperar los Altos del Golán» (Hezbollah will help Syria regain the Golan Heights) RT Actualidad. 9 May 2013. Available at <http://actuali->

Hezbollah has exacerbated Sunni extremism throughout Lebanon, but especially in Beirut, the Beqaa Valley and the North of the country.

As in Iraq, radicalism and the massive influx of Syrian refugees⁸⁶ are stoking political, economic and social tensions. The Lebanese government, divided and polarised, is proving incapable of confronting the huge challenges. The increasingly profound internal crisis⁸⁷, which led to the resignation of prime minister Muhammad Najib Azmi Mikati in March 2013, together with the strife over the electoral law and the political power that will result from the forthcoming elections, are all subjected to the situation in Syria.

Responsibility for maintaining stability in Lebanon falls to the Lebanese armed forces, but it remains to be seen whether they will be capable of staying neutral and containing outbreaks of violence among factions without attracting sectarian antagonism. In any case, Hezbollah is determined to maintain its pre-eminence in the country, even at the cost of losing ground politically, which could have significant implications for the regular Lebanese army.

Jordan

On 4 April Jordan announced increased security measures along its 370 km border with Syria⁸⁸. Days later, the Jordanian and US governments announced that 200 US military personnel, specialists in intelligence, operations and logistics, would be supporting Jordanian forces with border control. The measure does not mean that Jordan has abandoned its neutrality in the Syrian crisis to support the opposition. In fact, the Jordanian government has reiterated that it was opposed to foreign military intervention in Syria and that it was necessary to open up political avenues to halt the bloodshed⁸⁹.

The arrival of Syrian refugees has put Jordan in a difficult situation. The country is at the limit of its receptive capacity, since it cannot offer services to people fleeing from the war. Moreover, the refugees have started to compete with Jordanians for jobs, which increases social tensions.

dad.rt.com/actualidad/view/94039-hezbola-siria-israel-guerra.

⁸⁶ «Syrian refugees in Lebanon: And still they come». The Economist. 27 March 2013. Available online at <http://www.economist.com/blogs/pomegranate/2013/03/syrian-refugees-lebanon>.

⁸⁷ «Lebanon on edge after government collapses». Jane's Intelligence Weekly. 25 March 2013.

⁸⁸ «JordantightenssecurityalongSyriaborder». Haaretz. 5 April 2013. Available at <http://www.haaretz.com/news/middle-east/jordan-tightens-security-along-syria-border-1.513673>.

⁸⁹ «Jordan says against military intervention in Syria». Al Arabiya. 18 April 2013. Available at <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2013/04/18/Jordan-says-against-military-intervention-in-Syria.html>.

Israel's prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu has publicly voiced his concern that the violence afflicting Syria could spread to his country⁹⁰. Despite the highly volatile situation, Israel has kept a prudent distance from the conflict. So far the Israeli army has confined itself to returning sporadic Syrian artillery fire occurring in the area of the Golan controlled by the IDF.

Although the Syrian regime belongs, together with Iran and Hezbollah, to the so-called «Axis of Resistance» against Israel⁹¹, the Syrian-Israeli border has been quiet for decades. This being so, when the uprising broke out in Syria, Israel might perhaps have preferred Assad to reaffirm his control. However, the way the Syrian civil war has developed shows clearly that this option is no longer possible. A failed or fragmented state would pose certain danger for Israel, which fears the conflict may intensify and groups with links to Al-Qaeda may be strengthened thereby⁹². As elsewhere, the Assad regime is withdrawing its forces from the area in order to strengthen its positions in the main cities that it still controls. Rebel groups have taken advantage of this situation, having already occupied several localities near the border.

Despite the great complexity of the strategic context, the essential danger to Israel derives from how the Syrian civil war will shift the balance of power in the region and in particular the influence of Iran. Saudi efforts to reduce Iran's power in the region thus work in Israel's interests, which are also furthered by the damage being done to Iran's image in the Arab world by its support for Assad⁹³.

The role played by Hezbollah in this context has taken on critical importance for Israel's security. Obviously, it is in Israel's interests that Hezbollah be weakened politically and militarily. Relations between the two sides have been marked by deterrence, and given that neither side is seeking direct confrontation, the Israeli-Lebanese border remains calm, at least for the time being,

The Lebanese militia's growing involvement in the war in Syria⁹⁴ has contrasting implications for Israel. On the one hand, Hezbollah is send-

⁹⁰ The Associated Press. «Netanyahu pledges to build fortified fence along Israel-Syria border». 6 January 2013. Available (in Spanish) at <http://www.haaretz.com/news/middle-east/jordan-tightens-security-along-syria-border-1.513673>.

⁹¹ «Iran asegura que el régimen de Al-Assad es un socio vital contra Israel» (Iran affirms that the Assad regime is a vital partner against Israel). *Europapress.es*. 7 August 2012. Available (in Spanish) at <http://www.europapress.es/internacional/noticia-iran-asegura-regimen-assad-socio-vital-contra-israel-20120807202640.html>.

⁹² Friedman, Ron. «Gantz warns of flare-up on Syrian front». *The Times of Israel*. 23 April 2013. Available at <http://www.inss.org.il/index.aspx?id=4380&page=8>.

⁹³ «Poll: Iran Unpopular in Arab and Muslim World». *The Wilson Center*. 6 August 2013. Available at <http://www.wilsoncenter.org/islamists/article/poll-iran-unpopular-arab-and-muslim-world>.

⁹⁴ Barnard, Anne. «Hezbollah Takes Risks by Fighting Rebels in Syria». *The New York Times*. 7 May 2013. Available at <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/08/world/midd->

ing men and weaponry to fight the Syrian opposition. This weakens both their military power and their political plans for Lebanon, since the Sunni groups have criticised this intervention and openly support the Syrian revolutionaries.

On the other hand, Assad's weakness provides certain advantages to Hezbollah, which would be strengthened by the transfer of advanced weapon systems. Israel's prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu has affirmed that his country has the right to prevent the Syrian regime's weapons falling into the «wrong hands»⁹⁵. It is in this context that we see Israeli air attacks, first on a truck convoy⁹⁶, that was apparently transporting a sophisticated missile system near the border between Syria and Lebanon⁹⁷, and more recently on arms depots in Damascus⁹⁸.

Also in this respect Israeli diplomatic efforts are being made to dissuade Russia from supplying Assad with sophisticated anti-aircraft missiles⁹⁹. In May, Netanyahu met with Russian president Vladimir Putin to try to persuade him not to execute the sale of those missiles; although Russia has announced that it will not cancel the contracts already signed and will proceed to deliver the missiles¹⁰⁰. Furthermore, Russia has delivered latest-generation anti-ship missiles to Syria, demonstrating its strong commitment to the Assad regime¹⁰¹.

leeast/hezbollah-takes-risks-by-fighting-rebels-in-syria.html.

⁹⁵ «Israel ready to act on Syria weapons, warns Netanyahu». BBC News. 18 April 2013. Available at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-22195508>.

⁹⁶ Hubbard, Ben. «Israel Strikes Syria Military Target». 30 January 2013. The Huffington Post. Available at http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/01/30/israel-strikes-syria-military-target_n_2584757.html.

⁹⁷ According to Israeli sources, the convoy was carrying SA-17 Grizzly ground-to-air missiles (Russian-made medium-range anti-aircraft system). The Syrian government denies this version and affirms that what was attacked was a scientific research facility on the outskirts of Damascus. Ravid, Barak and Khour, Jack. «Syrian TV: Israel bombed military site near Damascus». Haaretz 30 January 2013. Available at <http://www.haaretz.com/news/diplomacy-defense/syrian-tv-israel-bombed-military-site-near-damascus.premium-1.500338>.

⁹⁸ Alandete, David. «Siria acusa a Israel de atacar con misiles un centro militar en Damasco» (Syria accuses Israel of missile attack on military centre in Damascus). 6 May 2013. El País. Available (in Spanish) at http://internacional.elpais.com/internacional/2013/05/05/actualidad/1367714929_724425.html.

⁹⁹ They concern latest generation S-300 ground-to-air system with anti-aircraft and anti-missile capability.

¹⁰⁰ «Netanyahu to Putin: 'Your missile sales to Assad could trigger war'». The Times of Israel. 28 May 2013. Available at <http://www.timesofisrael.com/netanyahu-to-putin-your-missile-sales-to-assad-could-trigger-war/>.

¹⁰¹ Gordon, Michael R and Schmitt, Eric. «Russia Sends More Advanced Missiles to Aid Assad in Syria». The New York Times. 16 May 2013. Available at <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/17/world/middleeast/russia-provides-syria-with-advanced-missiles.html>.

The fear that Russian weapons will be transferred to Hezbollah, the wish to weaken Iran – always with its nuclear programme in mind – and its historical alliance with the US, these are the likely reasons for the Israeli government's strong support for Western military intervention against Assad¹⁰².

Turkey

For Turkey the Syrian conflict has a different dimension. Almost from the beginning of the uprising in Syria, Turkey's present prime minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan has maintained a position opposed to Assad, imposing economic sanctions and an arms embargo on the regime, giving shelter to refugees – more than 300,000 it is thought – and political and material support to the rebels.

The possibility of the Syrian conflict spreading to Turkey became reality on 11 May 2013 when two car bombs exploded in the Turkish border town of Reyhanli, leaving fifty-one dead and more than 100 injured. Although the attack seems to have been carried out by a Turkish Marxist group, Erdogan has asserted that the Syrian regime was behind the attacks, which Damascus denies¹⁰³. These incidents ratcheted up tension between the two countries.

For some time now Ankara has been in favour of establishing an air exclusion zone over Syria or creating a safe area for the rebels on Syrian soil. Moreover, the Turkish government has unreservedly supported the opposition Syrian National Council, in which the Muslim Brotherhood constitutes the main force. This position has aligned Turkey with Qatar, while it has differences with Saudi Arabia.

Turkey has positioned itself from the outset at the side of the US in its plan to attack Syria for the use of chemical weapons. Turkey's prime minister Erdogan would even go further than a mere punitive strike, and is apparently seeking to promote the fall of Assad, which in the final analysis would weaken Iran¹⁰⁴.

However, the Kurdish question is undoubtedly the main cause for concern in Ankara. In this regard, which is crucial for its internal politics, Turkey is interested in destabilising the situation in the Kurdish areas in the north

¹⁰² Rudoren, Jodi. «Israeli President Voices Strong Support for Obama's Decision on Syria». The New York Times. 2 September 2013.

¹⁰³ Burch, Jonathon. «Turkey says world must act against Syria after bombings». Reuters. 13 May 2013. Available at <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/05/12/us-syria-crisis-idUSBRE94A05S20130512>.

¹⁰⁴ «What Saudi Arabia and Turkey want in Syria conflict?» Stratfor – The Geopolitical Diary. 6 August 2013.

of Syria bordering Turkey. To that end it is said to be supporting the radical jihadist groups that are trying to gain control of this region¹⁰⁵.

The Syrian regime's allies

One of the main reasons for Assad's resilience is the firm support of his allies. Throughout the more than two years of war, Iran, Hezbollah and Russia have amply demonstrated their willingness to sustain the Syrian regime by both military and diplomatic means.

Iran

Iran and Syria have been strategic allies since the early 1980s when both countries shared antipathy towards Saddam Hussein. In fact, during the Iran-Iraq war, Syria was the only Arab country to align itself with Tehran, giving rise to what would later come to be referred to as the *Shi'ite crescent*. This term, coined by King Abdullah of Jordan in 2004¹⁰⁶, describes the nexus among Iran, Syria and the Lebanese militia Hezbollah. However, its power resides not so much in religion as in its ideology of «anti-Western» and «anti-Israel» resistance¹⁰⁷ – and for this reason the players refer to themselves as the *Axis of Resistance*.

Iran feels it is surrounded by the US and its pro-Western Sunni allies, Saudi Arabia in particular, which, as it sees it, are trying to bring about regime change in the country. Iran's foreign policy, like its nuclear programme, is aimed at counter-acting that threat by seeking international recognition and legitimacy.

Rivalry between Arabs and Persians for regional leadership¹⁰⁸ dates back hundreds of years and in fact constitutes a struggle within Islam between its two major streams: Sunni and Shi'ite. However, the tension between Iran and Saudi Arabia also stems from two other causes. The first has to

¹⁰⁵ «Turkey's support for Syrian rebels in Kurd killings may backfire». Op. cit.

¹⁰⁶ Wright, Robin and Baker, Peter. «Iraq, Jordan See Threat to Election from Iran». The Washington Post. 8 December 2004. Available at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A43980-2004Dec7.html>.

¹⁰⁷ Farmanfarmanian, Roxane. «Redrawing the Middle East map: Iran, Syria and the new Cold War». Aljazeera. 12 November 2012. Available at <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2012/11/2012111311424048459.html>.

¹⁰⁸ For Saudi Arabia, Iran's nuclear programme poses a threat of the first order to its security. According to US diplomatic cables leaked by Wikileaks, in 2008 King Abdullah called on the United States to «cut off the head of the snake» by launching attacks to destroy Iran's nuclear programme. Colvin, Ross. «Cut off head of snake» Saudis told U.S. on Iran». Reuters. 29 November 2010. Available at <http://www.reuters.com/article/2010/11/29/us-wikileaks-iran-saudis-idUSTRE6AS02B20101129>.

do with the conflicting nature of the two regimes. Whereas Tehran seeks to expand the Islamic revolution, Riyadh aims to maintain the *status quo* in the region. The second reason has to do with the very different relations that the two countries have with the West: cooperation in the case of Saudi Arabia, confrontation in that of Iran. This antagonism found its main scenarios in Iraq, Lebanon and Bahrain. The crisis in Syria has given the Saudis an opportunity to extend the confrontation to the territory of Iran's closest ally.

The Iranians claim that the war in Syria is an international conspiracy carried out by the West aimed at trying to break the *Axis of Resistance*. For this reason, Tehran and Damascus downplay the importance of the sectarian conflict and emphasise the struggle against Israel. Thus Iran considers the war in Syria as a struggle to defend the Islamic Republic model against its international enemies: «losing Damascus means losing Tehran»¹⁰⁹. Clearly if Assad falls, Iran's regional position from the geopolitical point of view will be weakened, and a new Sunni government will doubtless distance itself from Tehran.

Based on this view the Iranians will do everything they can to keep Assad in power. Thus the current situation of the conflict has actually increased Iran's support and accentuated its sectarian nature. The presence of Islamic Revolutionary Guards as «advisers»¹¹⁰, and the regular deliveries of weapons, normally via Iraq, constitute an essential resource for the Syrian regime to be able to continue fighting the rebels¹¹¹.

A secondary effect of Iran's greater involvement in Syria is the increase in tension between its authorities and the Al-Qaeda organisation. Western intelligence agencies have reported that Sunni jihadists have used Iranian territory on their way to Afghanistan, as well as finding a safe place to live. However, the fact that they are each supporting opposing sides in Syria has placed constraints on relations; although given their common interests a dramatic split is not expected¹¹².

Hezbollah

The Lebanese Shi'ite militia Hezbollah is the other pillar of the Axis of Resistance. Ever since the uprising began, the Lebanese Shi'ite militia

¹⁰⁹ Wimmen, Heiko. «The Iranian key to the Syrian crisis». openDemocracy. 5 March 2013. Available at <http://www.opendemocracy.net/opensecurity/heiko-wimmen/iranian-key-to-syrian-crisis>.

¹¹⁰ «Iran says it has had forces as 'advisers' in Syria». CNN. 17 September 2012. Available at <http://edition.cnn.com/2012/09/16/world/meast/syria-civil-war/>

¹¹¹ Charbonneau, Louis. «Exclusive: Iran steps up weapons lifeline to Assad. Reuters. 14 March 2013. Available at <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/03/14/us-syria-crisis-iran-idUSBRE92D05U20130314>.

¹¹² Warrick, Joby. «Iran, al-Qaeda relationship is showing cracks, U.S. officials and analysts say». The Washington Post. 12 August 2013. Available at http://articles.washingtonpost.com/2013-03-12/world/37642826_1_qaeda-sulaiman-abu-ghaith-david-s-cohen.

leader Hassan Nasrallah has repeatedly expressed support for Assad¹¹³. For years Syria has been its main sponsor, enabling the organisation to become a military force with undoubted capabilities, as was demonstrated in the war with Israel in 2006.

Like Iran, the Lebanese Shi'ite leaders consider that the war in Syria is a foreign aggression, and they believe that they will be the next target, as shown by the attacks on Lebanese Shi'ites¹¹⁴. For that reason Hezbollah is lending decisive support to the Syrian regime, in perfect synchrony with Iran. Hundreds of its militiamen, converted into the regime's strike force, are fighting in three zones in particular in Syria: in the city of al-Qusayr to the north of the border with Lebanon, around Zabadani close to the eastern border, and in the Damascus district of Sayyidah Zainab, a holy place for Shi'ites¹¹⁵.

But Hezbollah's role in Syria has led to a loss of legitimacy of its political and military position in Lebanon. Its support for the Syrian regime has placed the Shi'ite movement in an untenable situation and has provided the most radical Sunni groups with reasons to challenge its leadership in the land of the cedars¹¹⁶. As a result, Lebanese Salafist movements and parties are in the ascendant, and are very likely to play a greater part in Lebanese political life before long¹¹⁷.

Russia

While Iran and Hezbollah provide military support to Assad, Russia provides him with diplomatic cover on an international scale, as well as supplying essential weapons and spares to enable him to continue fighting. For Moscow, the fall of Assad, an ally and an important trading partner, would diminish its influence in the Middle East. Any new Syrian govern-

¹¹³ Black, Ian. «Hezbollah is helping Assad fight Syria uprising, says Hassan Nasrallah». The Guardian. 20 April 2013. Available at <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/apr/30/hezbollah-syria-uprising-nasrallah>.

¹¹⁴ Hashem, Ali. «Why Hezbollah is fighting in Syria» Al-Monitor. 21 April 2013. Available at <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/04/reasons-hezbollah-fighting-syria.html>.

¹¹⁵ Blanford, Nick. «Enemy at the gates. Hizbullah remains focused on conflict with Israel». Jane's Intelligence Review. 25 February 2013.

¹¹⁶ According to the head of the Military Intelligence Directorate of the Israel Defense Forces, Hezbollah is training 50,000 militiamen to fight the rebels. Barzilai, Yair. «IDF Intelligence Chief: Terror organizations on the rise». 14 March 2013. IDF web. Available at <http://www.idf.il/1283-18532-en/Dover.aspx>.

¹¹⁷ Abdo, Geneive. «The New Sectarianism: The Arab Uprisings and the Rebirth of the Shi'a-Sunni Divide». Brookings Institution. Analysis Paper. Number 29, April 2013. p. 34. Available at <http://www.brookings.edu/research/papers/2013/04/sunni-shia-divide-abdo>.

ment would certainly review its relations with Russia, whose only foreign naval base, lest we forget, is at the Syrian port of Tartus.

Russia, with the support of China, has repeatedly refused to call for Assad to step down, and has blocked any condemnation of his regime on the part of the UN Security Council. On the other hand, Russian diplomacy has sought a negotiated resolution of the conflict through reconciliation between the parties. Russia would apparently be interested in organising the groups wielding power in Syria and that could form part of a solution if Assad goes. In other words, preserving the Syrian regime even if it means a change of president.

However, Moscow's position on Syria is governed by its concept of world order, based on the Security Council's controlling the use of force in international relations and avoiding any foreign military intervention aimed at changing the regime of a sovereign country¹¹⁸. The conflict in Syria constitutes an instrument in the hands of Moscow and Beijing. It seems to be about making Washington pay the highest possible geopolitical price for their support in stabilising the region. This has repercussions in other parts of the world, for example in North Korea, the South China Sea, Central Asia and Afghanistan, where there are diverging interests among the major powers¹¹⁹.

Support for the uprising

The Gulf monarchies

The Arab League, led by Saudi Arabia, has been very active as regards Syria. In November 2011, the organisation suspended Syria's membership, after Damascus rejected a peace plan¹²⁰, and has repeatedly called for president Bashar al-Assad to step down, has worked in the UN for a condemnation of the Syrian regime and has imposed a number of sanctions on it.

Saudi Arabia, which responded to the «Arab spring» in accordance with the interests of the Saudi royal family, gives priority to security, regional equilibrium and maintaining the *status quo* above any other considerations¹²¹. For these reasons, it sponsors any conservative Sunni political

¹¹⁸ Trenin, Dmitri. «The Mythical Alliance. Russia's Syria Policy». Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. February 2013. Available at <http://carnegieendowment.org/2013/02/12/mythical-alliance-russia-s-syria-policy/fflb>.

¹¹⁹ Laborie, op. cit. «Implicaciones regionales de las revueltas árabes» (Regional implications of the Arab uprisings).

¹²⁰ The government of Al-Assad has been replaced in the Arab League by the National Coalition of Syrian Revolution and Opposition Forces.

¹²¹ Al Rasheed, Madawi. «Saudi Arabia: local and regional challenges». Contemporary Arab Affairs. Vol. 6. No. 1. 2013. pp 28-40.

or religious trend, which ultimately stokes radicalism and sectarianism in the region.

Saudi Arabia feels threatened on all sides: in the north by the situation in Syria, in the east by Iraq with its new majority Shi'ite government, in the west by the instability in Bahrain and in the south-east by the fragility of Yemen. From the Saudi point of view, all these threats are of an essentially Iranian nature¹²². In its strategic opposition to the Tehran regime, Riyadh has as its first priority the preservation of its alliance with Washington to ensure its security; although it is using its undoubted financial capacity to gain influence in the region and strengthen its army.

In this context, Saudi support for the Syrian revolution arises from the defence of three fundamental interests: solving the problems with the Saudi Shi'ites who inhabit the coastal region of Qatif, demonstrating its clear involvement in support for Sunnis in any part of the world, and eroding the influence of Iran in both Syria and Lebanon¹²³. For all these reasons, and given that Saudi Arabia lacks the military capacity to intervene directly in Syria, it is providing arms and financing to the Syrian rebels, which would ensure influence on the country in the event that Assad should fall.

One of the Saudi leaders' main worries is that the Islamist movements succeed. This would call into question the belief in the supremacy of the monarchies as a political model for the Arab world. For this reason Riyadh has opposed the Syrian National Council and the National Coalition being controlled by the Muslim Brotherhood.

However, as shown by Qatar, not all the Gulf monarchies follow the Saudi postulates. When Hamad bin Khalifa al Thani, father of the present emir Tamim bin Hamad bin Khalifa al Thani, came to the throne in 1995, he introduced drastic changes in the emirate's foreign policy, and since then it has pursued an independent but pragmatic line.

Since the beginning of the Arab uprisings, and thanks to its involvement in regional affairs, the emirate has won great international prestige. For Qatar, which has the world's third biggest reserves of gas, intervention in Syria is part of an aggressive quest for global recognition. In the past two years this tiny country has spent more than \$3 billion on supporting the Syrian rebellion¹²⁴.

¹²² Al-Labad, Mustafa. «Obama and the silenced crisis in Saudi Arabia». *Al Safir*. 11 March 2013.

¹²³ Al Rasheed, op. cit. p. 3.

¹²⁴ Khalaf, Roula and Fielding Smith, Abigail. «Qatar bankrolls Syrian revolt with cash and arms». *Financial Times*. 16 May 2013. Available at <http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/2/f2d9bbc8-bdbc-11e2-890a-00144feab7de.html#axzz2TYzyWVZt>.

However, Qatar's intervention in Syria has caused divisions among rebel factions. Whereas Saudi Arabia backs secular factions and Salafist groups, the Qataris – together with the Turks – provide support to the Muslim Brotherhood, which is something Riyadh cannot tolerate. As a result in 2012 Qataris and Saudis forged separate alliances with rival rebel groups. This rivalry, which in general has weakened the rebellion against Assad, has on the other hand favoured the jihadist groups¹²⁵. The possibility that they might lose control of the situation is forcing the Saudi government to involve itself much more decisively in the Syrian conflict. Many in the opposition believe that a more active diplomatic role on the part of Saudi Arabia would be much more useful than the one played by Qatar¹²⁶.

The abdication of Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al Thani in favour of his son Tamim, in June 2013, may mean a new twist in Qatari diplomacy¹²⁷. Whilst this change is unlikely to involve a complete rejection of the previous premises, it might well lead to attempts to narrow the differences with the Saudis.

The United States and its European allies

The Americans, together with their European allies, have been calling for a political settlement of the Syrian crisis, while at the same time insisting that any agreement must involve Assad's stepping down. Since the beginning of the uprising the US has put forward numerous initiatives aimed at getting the UN Security Council to condemn the actions of the Syrian regime, but, as already noted, with no success.

As president Obama embarked upon his second term, US foreign policy was conditioned by the state of the economy and the fatigue felt after more than a decade of war in various theatres. If there is one key lesson to be drawn from the events that followed 9/11, it is that it is relatively easy to topple regimes and their armies, but extremely difficult to rebuild them. Thus for the US administration the interventionist model is no longer valid¹²⁸.

¹²⁵ Sanger, David E. «Rebel Arms Flow is Said to Benefit Jihadists in Syria». The New York Times. 14 October 2012. Available at <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/10/15/world/middleeast/jihadists-receiving-most-arms-sent-to-syrian-rebels.html>.

¹²⁶ Hassan, Hassan. «Saudis overtaking Qatar in sponsoring Syrian rebels». The National. 15 May 2013. Available at <http://www.thenational.ae/thenationalconversation/comment/saudis-overtaking-qatar-in-sponsoring-syrian-rebels>.

¹²⁷ Black, Ian. «Emir of Qatar hands power to his son in peaceful transition». The Guardian. 25 June 2013. Available at <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/jun/25/qatar-emir-hands-power-son>.

¹²⁸ Laborie Iglesias, Mario. «Seguridad internacional y crisis». (International security and crisis) Ejército: de tierra español. (Spanish Army) No. 856, 2012, pp. 6-12.

This overarching circumstance has, so far, conditioned US policy with regard to Syria. Unlike the case of Libya, the Americans have always considered that direct military intervention must be the last resort: firstly because of Russian and Chinese opposition in the UN; and secondly and more importantly, as stated by Secretary of Defense «Chuck» Hagel¹²⁹:

«The reality is that this is a complex and difficult situation. [...] The conflict within Syria has developed along dangerous sectarian lines, and the opposition has not yet sufficiently organised itself politically or militarily. [...] We have an obligation and responsibility to think through the consequences of direct US military action in Syria. [...] Intervention could hinder humanitarian relief and embroil the United States in a significant, lengthy and uncertain military commitment [which could have the] unintended consequence of bringing the United States into a broader regional conflict or proxy war.»

Against this background, since the start of the Syrian civil war the Obama administration has been divided¹³⁰ between those in favour of taking a firmer line and supplying arms to the rebels and those that wish to provide only non-lethal resources – communications and personal protection equipment, night glasses and ready meals – training¹³¹ and relief assistance to refugees¹³². This disconnect is reflected in the statements of president Obama himself¹³³, «*I am very concerned about Syria becoming an enclave for extremism, because extremists thrive in chaos, they thrive in failed states, they thrive in power vacuums.*» In other words there is a fear that the weapons supplied will end up in the hands of radical elements. Yet paradoxically, Secretary of State John Kerry has affirmed that the US administration supports the efforts of Middle Eastern states to send arms to the moderate forces of the opposition in Syria¹³⁴.

¹²⁹ Lubold, Gordon. «Situation Report». FP National Security. 18 April 2013. Available at http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2013/04/18/troops_to_jordan_hagel_is_wheels_up_for_the_me_soon_state_s_andrew_shapiro_packs.

¹³⁰ Gordon, Michael R. «Top Obama Officials Differ on Syrian Rebels in Testimony to Congress». The New York Times. 17 April 2013. Available online at <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/04/18/world/middleeast/key-obama-officials-differ-on-syria-in-testimony.html>.

¹³¹ «French, UK and US troops 'training Syrian rebels in Jordan'». Jane's Intelligence Weekly. 11 March 2013.

¹³² Baldor, Lolita C and Cassata, Donna. «U.S. Sending 200 Troops to Jordan from Army Planning Unit to Help Contain Syria Violence, Chuck Hagel Says». The Huffington Post. 17 April 2013. Available online at http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/04/17/us-troops-jordan-army-syria-hagel_n_3102687.html.

¹³³ Alandete, David. «Obama se resiste a armar a los rebeldes en Siria por la «radicalización» de algunos» (Obama reluctant to arm Syrian rebels because of «radicalisation» of some). 22 March 2013. El País. Available online (in Spanish) at http://internacional.elpais.com/internacional/2013/03/22/actualidad/1363966009_841468.html.

¹³⁴ Gordon, Michael R. «Kerry Says U.S. Backs Mideast Efforts to Arm Syrian Rebels». The New York Times. 5 March 2013. Available online at <http://www.nyti->

Given the deadlock in the Syrian conflict, at the beginning of the spring of 2013 the US position seemed to be moving closer to the Russian one. In a press conference held in March, Secretary of State Kerry said, «*The world wants to stop the killing. And we want to be able to see Assad and the Syrian opposition come to the table for the creation of a transitional government according to the framework that was created in Geneva*»¹³⁵. This meant that US policy was definitely shifting towards a political solution that might even include Assad staying on.

But the attack with chemical weapons on 21 August, considered unacceptable by Washington, has led the US administration to set aside this stance of cooperation with Moscow. The impression is that a crime against humanity like the one committed in the Damascus district of Ghouta cannot go unpunished, and that therefore it is necessary to «punish» its perpetrators. In the words of president Obama, «*We cannot accept a world where women and children and innocent civilians are gassed on a terrible scale*»¹³⁶. Thus, in a scenario vividly reminiscent of past military interventions – Kosovo, Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya – the world's major media are echoing the drums of war.

The countries of the European Union have also shown serious differences as to the strategy to be pursued in Syria. Whereas France, the UK and Spain among others have come out in favour of arming the Syrian rebels¹³⁷, the European Union as a whole is opposed to this possibility¹³⁸ – although this stance is expected to be revised in the coming months. We should bear in mind that the European Union is the biggest donor of humanitarian aid to Syria. Up until the beginning of June 2013, the Europeans had given more than €860 million in humanitarian aid, and at the end of that same month they committed to provide an additional €400 million. Furthermore, the European Council has imposed restrictive measures and sanctions on the Syrian government, and in February 2013 it imposed an arms embargo¹³⁹.

mes.com/2013/03/06/world/middleeast/kerry-says-administration-backs-mideast-efforts-to-arm-syrian-rebels.html?_r=0.

¹³⁵ «Remarks With Norwegian Minister of Foreign Affairs Espen Barth Eide After Their Meeting». US. Department of State. 12 August 2013. Available online at <http://www.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2013/03/206018.htm>.

¹³⁶ Madhani, Aamer and others. «White House accuses Syrian regime in chemical attack». USA Today. Available at <http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2013/08/30/kerry-syria-chemical-weapons-obama/2742369/>. Date of query 8 September 2013.

¹³⁷ Ayllón, Luis. «España, partidaria de dar armas de defensa a los rebeldes sirios para proteger a la población» (Spain in favour of giving defensive weapons to the Syrian rebels to protect the population) ABC. 21 May 2013. Available (in Spanish) online at <http://www.abc.es/internacional/20130521/abci-siria-margallo-armas-201305211712.html>.

¹³⁸ Griffiths, Peter; Pawlak, Justyna. «EU rejects Franco-British push to arm Syrian rebels». Reuters. 15 March 2013. Available online at <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/03/15/us-syria-crisis-idUSBRE92E09J20130315>.

¹³⁹ For more on the European Union's stance, please refer to «The European Union and Syria». Fact sheet. 4 June 2013 Available online at <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/>

Following the chemical attack of 21 August, the divisions within the European Union continued. France has said it is entirely ready to take part in a punitive military strike against Assad, while other European nations are more sceptical about the results of such an operation¹⁴⁰. Once again the European Union is showing itself as incapable, at least for now, of reaching a common position.

Conclusions and outlook

The increased radicalisation, sectarianism and brutality on both sides are the results of the civil war's dragging on for so long. This situation has favoured Assad. The rise of Jihadist groups has restricted support received by the rebels from the West, which fears Salafist radicalism more than Assad himself. This situation, together with support from its allies, has enabled the Syrian regime to achieve significant successes on the battlefield, although it is most unlikely that, in normal circumstances, it will be able to return to the pre-war situation.

For their part, the rebels also lack the necessary capabilities to achieve a military victory. The only unifying thread among the various factions is the common desire to be rid of Assad. But if this happened, there would probably be clashes among the various armed groups professing sharply conflicting ideologies. Afghanistan in the 1990s provides a historical example that we should not forget: the power struggles among the Mujahideen brought about the destruction of the country and the subsequent rise to power of the Taliban.

This scenario, plus the real danger of the war spreading to neighbouring countries with the consequent exacerbation of the humanitarian tragedy, seemed to oblige the international powers to seek a negotiated solution with no prior conditions imposed.

However, the crime against humanity of 21 August may mean the start of the final phase of the war. Western military intervention, if it happens, will decisively weaken the combat capacity of the forces loyal to the government. If this happens, Assad's use of chemical weapons will have constituted a monumental strategic error and his regime can be written off. If on the other hand there is no punitive strike, the only other way to end the war will continue to be diplomacy; unless the US, the European countries and the Sunni world all plump decisively for regime change. In any case, there is huge uncertainty.

¹⁴⁰ «NATO Chief Regrets Divisions Over Syria». Defense News. 5 September 2013. Available at <http://www.defensenews.com/article/20130905/DEFREG01/309050008/NATO-Chief-Regrets-Divisions-Over-Syria>.

TIMELINE OF THE CONFLICT		
DATE	EVENTS	
1946	Syrian independence	
1947	Founding of the Ba'ath Party in Syria	
1958	In February, Syria and Egypt merge as the United Arab Republic (UAR) with Gamal Abdel Nasser as its first president. Nasser orders the dissolution of Syrian political parties, including the Ba'ath Party.	
1961	Following a coup d'état, Syria leaves the UAR. The Ba'ath Party becomes the dominant political force.	
1966	Internal coup in the Ba'ath Party. Hafez al-Assad becomes Minister of Defence.	
1967	Six-Day War between Israel on the one hand and Egypt, Syria and Jordan on the other. Israel takes the Golan heights and destroys almost all the Syrian air force.	
1971	Hafez al-Assad is elected president for the first time.	
1973	Yom Kippur War. Defeat of Syria, which fails to retake the Golan.	
1980	Following the Islamic revolution in Iran, uprisings occur in the cities of Aleppo, Homs and Hama. The Muslim Brotherhood tries to assassinate al-Assad.	
1982	Revolt of the Muslim Brotherhood in Hama. Syrian government armed forces quash the insurrection. 20,000 civilians perish at the hands of the Hafez al-Assad's troops.	
1987	Al-Assad sends his army into Lebanon to impose a ceasefire in Beirut.	
2000	Hafez al-Assad dies and is succeeded by his son Bashar.	
2005	Assassination of former Lebanese prime minister Hariri in Beirut. In April, under international pressure, Damascus withdraws its forces from Lebanon.	
2007	Israel carries out an aerial attack on what seem to be Syrian nuclear installations.	
2011	March	Disturbances in the cities of Damascus and Deraa demanding the release of political prisoners. The security forces subdue them with firearms, causing dozens of fatalities. The disturbances spread throughout the country.
	May	In an effort to quash the protests, army combat vehicles enter Deraa, Baniyas, Homs and the suburbs of Damascus. The US and the EU tighten sanctions against the Regime. President Assad announces an amnesty for political prisoners.

¹⁴¹ Source: IEEE

	Oct.	The recently created Syrian National Council affirms the creation of a common front in opposition to the Assad regime. Russia and China veto a UN Security Council resolution condemning Syria.
	Nov.	The Arab League suspends Syria's membership of the organisation.
	Dec.	Syria supports the Arab League initiative to send Arab observers to the country. Suicide attack on a building of the security forces in Damascus, causing 44 deaths. This is the first of a series of similar attacks carried out against the Syrian security forces and military.
2012	Feb.	Russia and China block the draft resolution of the Security Council on Syria. Al-Assad intensifies bombing of Homs and other cities. Secretaries General Ban Ki-moon of the UN and Nabil Elaraby of the Arab League announce the appointment of Kofi Annan as Joint Special Envoy pursuant to a resolution of the General Assembly of the UN A/RES/66/253. Approval by referendum of the reform of the Syrian Constitution eliminating the pre-eminence of the Ba'ath Party in state and society. Western and Arab media consider the reform very inadequate.
	March	The Security Council endorses the peace plan of special envoy Kofi Annan.
	Apr.	The Security Council approves Resolution 2043 as the basis for the United Nations Supervision Mission in Syria (UNSMIS) for an initial period of 90 days.
	May	The UN Security Council unanimously condemns the massacre that occurred in Hula (90 civilians killed), censures the use of heavy artillery against the civilian population and calls for those responsible for the atrocity to be brought to justice.
	June	Turkish combat aircraft shot down by Syrian anti-aircraft defence. Turkey changes the rules of engagement and declares that any approach by Assad's troops towards its borders will be considered a military threat. A NATO meeting expresses its firm support for Turkey.
	July	A bomb attack in Damascus kills three senior members of the Syrian regime's security apparatus, including the president's brother-in-law and the Minister of Defence. Rebels take control of Aleppo, Syria's second city.

Syria: war, sectarianism and chaos

2012	Aug.	Wave of defections from the regime. The UN General Assembly approves a resolution condemning al-Assad. President Barack Obama warns that the use of chemical weapons would provoke a US military intervention. The Arab League and the United Nations appoint Algerian diplomat Lakhdar Brahimi as the new special envoy to Syria following the resignation of Kofi Annan. Al-Assad's forces retake almost all of Aleppo. The UN accuses the government and the opposition of committing war crimes and crimes against humanity.
	Sept.	The Free Syrian Army claims responsibility for two explosions in Damascus.
	Oct.	Increased tension between Syria and Turkey when mortar fire from Syria crosses the common border killing five civilians. Turkey detains an aircraft supposedly carrying Russian weapons to Syria.
	Nov.	Creation in Doha, Qatar, of the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces.
	Dec.	The US, the UK, France, Turkey and the Gulf states recognise the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces as the legitimate representative of the Syrian people.
2013	Jan.	Syria accuses Israel of attacking a military research centre and denies that trucks carrying weaponry to Lebanon were involved.
	Mar.	US and UK promise non-lethal aid to the rebels.
	Apr.	The US demands an investigation into the use of chemical weapons by the Syrian government. Moaz al-Khatib, head of the National Coalition, resigns.
	May	Israel and Syria exchange fire in the Golan.
	June	Syrian pro-government forces supported by Hezbollah take the strategic city of Qusair.
	July	Resignation of Ghassan Hitto, head of the opposition, following his failure to form a government in rebel-held territory.
	Aug.	On 21 August there was an attack with chemical weapons on civilians in a district of Damascus. The US accuses Assad of the attack, which it considers a crime against humanity.
	Sept.	(as at 8 Sept.) President Obama seeks US Congress approval to carry out a punitive strike against Syria. The European allies are divided over this possibility. Preparations for military action begin.

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Georgia and its separatist territories: beyond the point of no return

Manuel de Miguel Ramírez

Chapter four

Abstract

Though basically a separatist conflict, the situation in Georgia also involves other factors: ethnic and cultural, territorial, energy and political considerations, on both a regional and international scale. It is a conflict in which the interests of Georgia, Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Russia are at stake, basically caused by the separatist aspirations of the autonomous regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia and their desire for independence from Georgia, or to join the Russian Federation, not to mention Russia's wish to maintain its hegemony and influence in the region.

Russia's firm intention to assert its authority and supremacy in the Caucasus and its resurgence as a world power, laying claim to the position it feels legitimately corresponds to it on the international scene, provokes an unrestrained desire to punish and teach a lesson to an easily overcome rival, while at the same time issuing a warning to deter other possible dissident states and other world powers. Russia is no longer the defeated, Cold War power, but rather a leading stakeholder in the new international order, and one that will not hesitate to defend its interests, particularly in those areas it considers vital and which fall under its sphere of influence.

Keywords

Georgia, Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Russia, conflict, territory, separatism, energy, hegemony, punishment.

Introduction

The region known as the South Caucasus has traditionally been a focus of strategic interests for different powers. Throughout history, Russia, Iran and Turkey have sought to dominate the area, with other international players recently joining the group, namely the European Union (EU) and the United States of America (USA). Within the scope of this conflict of interests which pervades South Caucasus instability, the case of Georgia deserves special attention.

The real importance of the Georgian conflict, albeit still latent, lies in the implications arising from the identity of the contending parties, given that they represent opposing ways of understanding the world. Ancestral strategies have come up against others based on present-day technological progress; a three-party clash of two worlds, a complex history of interests and revenge, the solution of which satisfies nobody. A situation where the losers are, as always, the displaced, those separated from their lives and their families as a result of fictitious and insurmountable borders.



Figure 4.1

The Spanish dictionary describes the word¹ «chimera» as any idle or wild fantasy which is believed possible, but which is not. This is precisely what

¹ Diccionario de la lengua española © 2005 Espasa-Calpe, second meaning.

the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) was; a chimera, made up of fifteen republics and over one hundred and fifty ethnic groups. A *chimera* that disappeared on 21 December 1991 when all the ex-member states of the USSR, except for Georgia, signed the Alma-Ata Protocol dissolving the union. The image that the Soviet leaders attempted to convey also vanished: that of a Union of Republics, just one big family living in conflict-free harmony.

Indeed, it is the very break-up of the USSR that draws back the veil and reveals a camouflaged reality, an inter-ethnic kaleidoscope, overlapping within artificial frontiers and condemned to be broken into smithereens along with the Berlin Wall, releasing independentist energies that break out in several conflicts such as those of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Nagorno-Karabakh, Chechnya and Georgia.

Background to the conflict

Though basically a separatist conflict, the situation in Georgia also involves other factors: ethnic and cultural, territorial, energy and political considerations, on both a regional and international scale. It is a conflict in which the interests of Georgia, Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Russia are at stake, basically caused by the separatist aspirations of the autonomous regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia and their desire for independence from Georgia, or to join the Russian Federation.

As it is the past that can explain the present, we will analyse the historical background of each of the main players and their relationship with Georgia to see how the conflict arose.

Abkhazia

Three decisive events occurred in the 13th century as regards the identity of Abkhazia: the collapse of the central power of Georgia; the fall of the Ottoman Empire; and the spread of Islam. Abkhazia was a principality until 1810, the year in which it was annexed by the Russian Empire, which failed to exercise outright control over it until 1865.

After the Russian Revolution of 1917 and the creation of the Soviet Union, Abkhazia was briefly incorporated into the Independent Democratic Republic of Georgia, to be later converted, in 1921, into an Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic. Abkhazia and Georgia signed an alliance agreement in 1925. Ten years later, in 1931, it was to become the Abkhaz Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic as a result of Stalin's administrative reorganisation, though that same year it was once again to form part of the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic.

Abkhazia tried to separate itself from Georgia in the 1970s to form part of the Soviet Union as an independent republic. Paradoxically, Moscow launched a cultural and economic development programme to strengthen Abkhaz identity with a view to relieving tensions. This programme covered, among other initiatives, the promoting of education in the Abkhaz language and an increase of Abkhaz representation in the public administration of the region, dominated by Georgia.

In 1989, coinciding with the fall of the Berlin Wall, the Abkhazians tried to make the most of the situation, crying out for progress towards independence; aspirations that were harshly rejected by Zviad Gamsakhurdia, the person that pulled the political strings in Georgia at the time and who was responsible for once again imposing the teaching of Georgian in Abkhaz schools. Decisions of this type led to the outbreak of violent confrontations in Sukhumi, the capital Abkhazia, to the extent that the Supreme Soviet of Abkhazia declared independence from Georgia.

On 9 April 1991, Georgia became the first independent state from the ex-Soviet Union. Immediately on coming into power, its president, Gamsakhurdia, did away with all internal Georgian borders, thus exacerbating not only the nationalist sentiment of the Abkhazians, but also that of the Ossetians and the Armenians in Javakheti in southern Georgia.

In February 1992, the Georgian Parliament restored the 1921 constitution, and in March of that same year civil unrest broke out as a result of the dictatorial course that had been taken by the country's president, Zviad Gamsakhurdia, which ended with him being ousted from power and replaced by the ex-Soviet Minister for Foreign Affairs, Eduard Shevardnadze. The ex-president of the Supreme Soviet of Abkhazia took advantage of this state of upheaval to reignite aspirations to independence, annulling Georgian laws in Abkhazia and restoring the 1925 constitution, thus converting it into an independent republic.

This new declaration of independence saw the dispute take a warlike turn, culminating in the deployment of three thousand Georgian troops on 14 August 1992. These occupied the capital city, Sukhumi, and the country's parliament buildings, which saw the Abkhazian leaders withdraw to Gudauta, where there was a Russian military base. The Abkhazians received modest military aid in the form of the deployment of a parachute regiment that same month, ostensibly to protect the Russian population and military installations in the country, but which ended up expanding the scope of its mission to providing support to the Abkhazians, who had also received military support from the North Caucasus republics, by way of volunteers from the Confederation of Mountain Peoples of the Caucasus.

On 3 September that same year, a ceasefire agreement was signed in Moscow, the aim of which was to guarantee the integrity of Georgian territory. The Abkhazian leaders took part in the negotiations along with rep-

representatives from the Russian and Georgian republics. The ceasefire was broken the following month owing to constant breaches by both parties, but this time around the lack of preparation and want of professionalism of the Georgian army saw the conflict become more complicated and obliged Shevardnadze to request Russian support. An action for which he was to pay dearly. Yeltsin and Shevardnadze signed a bilateral Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Good-Neighbourliness on 3 February 1994, establishing shared surveillance of the Georgian borders and the setting up of Russian military bases in the country. Moreover, Georgia ended up joining the Commonwealth of Independent States. The Abkhazians agreed to sign the formal end of hostilities on 14 May, which gave rise to the Georgian withdrawal from Abkhazia. It is estimated that some 200,000 Georgians left Abkhazia². Three thousand Russian soldiers were deployed there on 15 June belonging to a Commonwealth of Independent States' peace force, within the framework of the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG).

On 14 September, the Abkhazian leaders ordered the expulsion of all Georgians from the new position of force attained and with the tacit consent of Russia. A new constitution was signed on 30 November declaring the independence of Abkhazia, which was not officially recognised internationally. The ethnic cleansing actions continued in April 1998 with the assassination of dozens of Georgians who had remained in the Gali district, without any aggressive response from Georgia.

Presidential elections were held in 2004 to replace Vladislav Ardzinba, who had been in power since 1995. His heir apparent, and the Russian favourite, was the then prime minister, Raul Hajimba. Nevertheless, the Abkhaz Supreme Court ruled that the businessman Sergei Bagapsh had won what had been elections found wanting in transparency, which gave rise to serious confrontations between the followers of both men and saw the parliament building occupied by Hajimba supporters, while those of Bagapsh took over the television channel. In an attempt at conciliation, Ardzinba replaced Hajimba with Kashba, which proved useless given that on 12 December Bagapsh supporters stormed government headquarters causing Khashba to flee, seeing power fall into the hands of their leader. Bagapsh proposed that Hajimba take part in the government by offering him the vice-presidency. This new executive was approved by a 90% majority in the elections held in February 2005, thus bringing an end to the crisis.

Meanwhile, Mikheil Saakashvili won the Georgian presidential elections in January 2004, receiving over 96% of the votes cast. This triumph brought with it a notable rapprochement with the USA at the expense of

² «The State of the World's Refugees 2000: Fifty Years of Humanitarian Action». <http://www.acnur.org/publicaciones/SRM/cap82.htm>.

Russia, a resurgence of nationalism and an increase in the importance of matters related to sovereignty and national unity. The latter resulted in the Georgian army entering Abkhazia in July 2006. On 27 September that same year, the president of Georgia, Mikheil Saakashvili, renamed the area controlled by Georgia as Upper Abkhazia, officially setting up Georgian administration headquarters in the territory.

South Ossetia

The origin of Ossetia dates back to 13th century Iranian migration, though Ossetians identified themselves more with Russian than Georgian culture, a fact further attested to by them freely deciding to join the Russian Empire in 1774. The term 'South Ossetia' first arose in nineteenth-century Russian literature and refers to the mountainous areas in the historically Georgian regions of Racha, Imereti and particularly Shida Kartli, which is home to a large Ossetian population that had emigrated there from the Northern Caucasus.

Georgia, for its part, holds that the historical territory of the Ossetians is North Ossetia and that their arrival as emigrants to the province of Shida Kartli, for them nothing more than an inland Georgian province, is relatively recent.

At the end of the Russian civil war in 1920, during the course of which Georgia had separated from the Russian Empire, North Ossetia was included in the newly formed Mountain Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic, whereas South Ossetia remained as part of Georgian territory. In fact, May 1920 saw the signing of a friendship treaty between Georgia and the Soviet Union according to which South Ossetia was recognised as forming part of Georgia. Nevertheless, in June of that same year, South Ossetia declared its independence from Georgia and became a socialist republic and member of the USSR. Georgia looked on this turn of events as the first attempt at independence by South Ossetia, supported as the latter was by the USSR. Thus, it decided to harshly repress the Ossetian rising with its army, which in turn led the USSR to invade Georgia in 1921, resulting in the setting up of the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic. Stalin later created the South Ossetian Autonomous Oblast in 1922, answering to the Republic of Georgia. The Oblast covered the central part of the southern face of the Transcaucasus Mountains and stretched to the adjacent plains of Kodori, including the city of Tskhinvali, with its majority of Georgian citizens, which became its capital. According to the Georgians, after these events the ethnic composition of the city changed radically, leading them to maintain that South Ossetia was an artificial concept forcibly introduced by the Soviets.

Glasnost encouraged ethnic groups in the 1980s to seek greater cultural independence and political autonomy. As a result of this, self-determination movements sprung up in different parts of the Soviet Union and the

idea of re-uniting with the North Ossetian Autonomous Republic (North Ossetia) took root in South Ossetia. At the same time, aspirations to Georgian independence with anti-communist overtones also grew, leading the government of Georgia to promote the Georgian language in all spheres, to the extent of becoming the co-official language with Russian in South Ossetia. The Ossetians responded by demanding a review of their status, which saw the autonomous Georgian region become a Soviet Socialist Republic.

Lastly, and coinciding with the break-up of the USSR, on 20 September 1990 South Ossetia proclaimed its independence and the creation of the Republic of South Ossetia. Georgia responded on 10 December that same year by abolishing the autonomy of South Ossetia. Hostilities broke out in January 1991 as detachments of the Georgian National Guard entered Tskhinvali to confront Ossetian militia. After months of combat during which Russia provided support to both sides, owing to internal divisions of the Russian government at the time, Boris Yeltsin negotiated a ceasefire. Over 1,800 people had died and thousands had been displaced. The ceasefire led to the signing in Dagomis, a spa on the Russian coast of the Black Sea, of an agreement between Russia and Georgia pursuant to which a peacekeeping force was set up. This was to be made up of Russian, Georgian and Ossetian troops. Nonetheless, the presence of this peacekeeping force failed to prevent the separatist regime from forming armed forces equal in strength to those of Georgia.

The end of the conflict saw South Ossetia separating from Georgia, but without formal recognition, with 40% of its territory inhabited by Georgians and under the control of Georgian authorities, while the rest was governed by independence seeking authorities, who increased their requests to be re-united with North Ossetia and to join the Russian Federation.

On 10 November 1996 presidential elections were held, despite protests from Georgia. Eduard Kokoity was elected as the President of South Ossetia in the elections held on 6 December 2001, winning 53% of the votes. He rejected a Georgian peace initiative in 2005 pursuant to which he offered to declare the separatist territory as an autonomous region of Georgia. A referendum was held on 12 November 2006, registering a voter turnout of 91%. It resulted in the practically unanimous decision to opt for independence from Georgia and union with North Ossetia and Russia. Presidential elections were held on the same day, which saw Kokoity re-elected with 96% of the votes.

As of that year, the troubled relations between Russia and Georgia produced a rise of tension in South Ossetia. Georgia accused Russia of provoking the conflict in South Ossetia and of exploiting the Ossetian regime in its own interests.

Georgia

Present-day Georgia, the bridge linking south-eastern Europe with Asia, was probably the home to the first political groups in the 7th century BC that could be identified with the proto-Georgian tribes, such as the kingdom of Colchis. The region was occupied at the end of the 4th century BC by Alexander the Great, while during the early Christian era it was subject to repeated invasions by Romans, Persians, Byzantines and Arabs. The latter first raided the region in the 7th century, persisting in their attempts to convert Georgia to Islam.

Georgia was unified for the first time into the Sakartvelo kingdom in the 11th century by the Bagratid dynasty of Armenia, backed by the Church, the nobility and merchants. Indeed, Sakartvelo is the name used by Georgians to officially refer to their country. The stability achieved was interrupted in the following century by Genghis Khan's invading Mongol armies. Later, in the 15th century, the region was divided into three Bagratid kingdoms, in which continuous conflicts arose with Persians and Turks.

In 1801, Russia annexed one of these three kingdoms in violation of the Treaty of Georgievsk and by the end of the 19th century the whole of Georgia was under Russian occupation. After the Russian Revolution in 1917, Georgia attained its independence on 26 May 1918 under the Mensheviks. It was invaded in 1921 by the Bolsheviks, to finally become the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic on 25 February that same year. After forming part of the Transcaucasian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic it became part of the ex-USSR in 1936 as a federated republic.

It was during the Stalinist regime that Georgians were subject to the persecution instigated by their compatriot. In 1972, Eduard A. Shevardnadze (ex-Minister for Foreign Affairs of the USSR) became Secretary General of the Communist Party of Georgia and carried out an important purge aimed at doing away with official corruption which was rife at the time. Nevertheless, in spite of the Soviet centralised policy, Georgians never lost their strong sense of national identity, attested to in 1978 when mass protests were organised to claim higher status for the Georgian language and greater independence. This increasing cultural nationalism was further strengthened in the mid 1980s and summarised in a slogan coined by the Georgians: «language, land, religion».

The protest organised in Tbilisi on 9 April 1989 was harshly repressed, which only served to radicalise the nationalist movement and eventually led to the official proclamation of independence by the Supreme Georgian Soviet on 9 April 1991. Now a presidential state, Georgia became governed by the ex-dissident, Zviad K. Gamsakhurdia, who achieved an overwhelming majority of 87% of the votes in the elections held on 31 May that same year. Nevertheless, the new state remained unstable.

Moreover, the separatist intentions of two of its territories (Abkhazia and South Ossetia) generated strong internal opposition against the new president, who was accused of exercising his power in a dictatorial fashion. This strong tension finally led to confrontations in which over one hundred people lost their lives. Gamsakhurdia was obliged to abandon the territory in January 1992. Shevardnadze was elected president of the Council of State in October that same year. Gamsakhurdia committed suicide in December 1993 after the failure of his armed rebellion. February 1994 saw Shevardnadze sign an agreement with Yeltsin ensuring the presence of Russian troops on Georgian soil. In 2004, Shevardnadze left power under pressure from a popular uprising after being accused of electoral fraud.

Mikheil Saakashvili won the presidential elections held in January 2004 by an overwhelming majority. Saakashvili's election win brought with it, as stated above, a notable rapprochement with the USA at Russia's expense. In May 2004, South Ossetia held parliamentary elections, but they were not recognised by the Tbilisi government, which increased the tension between the parties and resulted in military confrontations in August 2004. Georgia agreed the dismantling in its territory of four military bases with Russia in January 2005. This operation was to be completed in 2008.

In January 2006, a series of explosions damaged a gas pipeline and electricity power line causing the cutting off of the power supply between Russia and Georgia for several days in the middle of winter. The Georgian government accused Russia of being behind these incidents.

In May 2006, the president of Georgia threatened to leave the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) with a view to seeking closer ties with the West. In November 2006, a referendum in South Ossetia concerning the declaration of independence was backed by 99% of the voters.

At the NATO summit held in Bucharest in April 2008, the joining of Georgia and the Ukraine was discussed, along with the installation of ground based interceptor missiles on Polish soil and an advance radar station in the Czech Republic with a range 5,000 km.

After increasing tensions war broke out on 7 August 2008.

The 2008 Conflict

The armed conflict that took place in Georgia in 2008, known as the five-day war, was caused by a series of factors and further exacerbated by an amalgam of errors, the origins of which are to be found in history. The roots of the conflict are to be found in the accumulation of ethnic groups that were forcibly restricted under the yoke of the ex-USSR frontier, which

led to the outbreak of war in the early 1990s and which surfaced again in 2008. Moreover, there is nothing to suggest that it will not do so again.

Profound causes

The numerous factors that contribute to any war do not necessarily mean that it is not possible to establish the order of priority that lead to a conflict in the light of the importance that some of these had in the gestation period. As regards the Georgian conflict, it is clear that the failure of its ethnic borders to coincide with its geographical ones is the first on the list. These ethnic problems are the result of political frontiers arising from territorial conquests and dynastic treaties, marking out countries by groups of cross-national population in which ethnic balance is not taken into account. Indeed, the only aim is the control of heterogeneous communities by the dominant ethnic group, generally by abusive means, which inevitably degenerates into inter-ethnic hatred, the main cause of this conflict.

One of the reasons for the multi-ethnic nature of Georgia is its geographical situation, lying as it does in the Caucasus region. Historically, this has been the frontier of big empires, such as the Russian, Ottoman and Persian ones, thus converting the Caucasus into a place of transit for peoples and cultures that have left their mark throughout the ages.

In addition to serving as a place of transit, its topography is characterised by high mountain ranges and isolated, badly communicated valleys, which greatly facilitate the fact that settlers have managed to keep their identity and even strengthen it with the passing of time due to the lack of contaminating influences from without.

This has given rise to a Caucasus made up of different peoples, constrained rather than integrated by four political frontiers that lead to the inevitable asymmetric conflict, in which the ethnic minority struggles for survival, while the dominant one seeks to maintain itself, or extend its influence in the territory it considers to legally belong to it.

In the particular Georgian, Abkhazian and Ossetian case, the ethnic differences have become increasingly more pronounced over the last century. As far as Georgia and Abkhazia are concerned, even though both are populated by communities of Christian Orthodox origins and even though there are Abkhazians who are Sunni Muslims, their historical relations have been characterised by confrontation and isolation from one another. This is readily attested to by the persecution suffered by the people of Georgian origin living in Abkhazia in 1992. Such was the repression suffered in the two years following the armed conflict that it was estimated that Abkhazia had been ethnically cleansed of Georgians. Calculations

suggest that some 200,000 people were driven out, many of whom are still living as refugees in temporary settlements in Georgia.

South Ossetia and Georgia is a different case, even though there has traditionally been an artificial mixture of ethnic groups that share the same Christian Orthodox religion; in 1989, 66% were Ossetians and 29% Georgians. The development of events has led to the Ossetians wanting to join their northern brothers, in spite of the fact that the majority of them are Sunni Muslims, thus increasing Georgia's interest in keeping control over its territory.

When seeking to uncover the profound causes of this conflict, Russia's desire to maintain its hegemony and ability to influence in the region must not be overlooked. Russia was not happy at Georgia electing a declared anti-Russian in 1990, Gamsakhurdia, who was succeeded by Shevardnadze. The latter turned out to be even worse given that he used his relations and skills as the Soviet ex-Minister for Foreign Affairs to push for a closer relationship with the West, at the expense of Russian relations. Consequently, in 1992 Georgia joined the North Atlantic Cooperation Council and signed an agreement of Association and Cooperation with the European Union. It later signed up to the Partnership for Peace programme in 1994 and concluded this westernisation process at the end of the 1990s by openly expressing its intention to join NATO. Shevardnadze was succeeded in 2003 by Saakashvili, who was even more pro-West in his tendencies, believing he had found a loyal ally in the USA. Indeed, he explicitly thanked the USA in his investiture speech for the support given. This aid, however, was not provided disinterestedly, as America was intruding upon Russian hegemony in its sphere of influence, one of the goals of its foreign policy based on offensive realism theories, while at the same time positioning itself in a Caucasian country a mere hundred kilometres away from Iran.

Georgia's westernisation aspirations directly clashed with Russia's firm intention to assert its authority and supremacy in the Caucasus region and its resurgence as a world power, demanding the position it legitimately believed corresponded to it on the international scene. Russia's misgivings were substantiated by U.S. and NATO actions. In fact, Bulgaria, Slovakia, Slovenia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Romania joined the organisation in 2004, and even the EU had been showing interest in the region with a view to increasing its influence there. Given that a finite space is in question, this meant that someone would have to lose out, namely Russia in this particular case. Faced with this interference in what it considered to be its particular sphere of influence, Russia's priority was to keep old rivals like the USA out of the area, as well as competing organisations such as the EU and even those it considered to be threatening such as NATO.

All of these misgivings reached their height with the NATO summit in Bucharest in April 2008, only a few months before the conflict was to break out. The Russian president, Vladimir Putin, was invited to the summit, at which he expressed not only his rejection of the deployment of missiles and radars in Poland and the Czech Republic, which he considered to be a direct threat to Russia's deterrent power, but also his outright opposition to the possibility of the Ukraine and Georgia joining the Alliance. Indeed, even today and in spite of the conflict, Georgia's joining the Alliance is still a bone of contention, given that NATO has repeated in its new Strategic Concept, which came out of the Lisbon summit, the desire that Georgia become a member state.

Immediate causes

The origin of these causes is none other than the unfolding of events related to the profound causes analysed above. This process of development means that a series of events at a particular moment in time come together, the circumstances and repercussions of which lead inevitably to war.

The main events of this type that can be pointed to in this conflict are as follows:

The Revolution of the Roses in 2003, which saw Mikheil Saakashvili come to power, whose main political thrust involves the westernisation of Georgia.

The holding of the NATO summit in Bucharest in April 2008, which among other things, brought to the fore the issues between Russia and America. Indeed, it was America that proposed Georgia and the Ukraine as candidates to join NATO, in spite of the reservations shown by countries such as Spain at the time, based on the internal situation in both countries. At this summit it was also decided, as has been pointed out above, to install an advance radar station in the Czech Republic and to deploy ground based interceptor missiles in Poland. Vladimir Putin compared the international threat of this new missile crisis to the Cuban Missile Crisis.

On 17 February 2008, Kosovo declared its independence, which to date has been recognised by seventy-three UN members, among them the USA. This declaration spurred South Ossetia to declare its independence internationally.

In May 2005 the oil pipeline connecting Baku, Tbilisi and Ceyhan (BTC) was opened. It is the second longest in the world and is capable of supplying the West with one million barrels of Azeri oil a day from the Caspian sea to the Mediterranean, without passing through Russian territory.

Likewise promoted by the USA, the Baku, Tbilisi and Erzurum gas pipeline was added in parallel, which carries natural gas directly to Europe

through Turkey, thus avoiding Russian energy control. In the energy connection joining the Caspian and Black Seas, the geostrategic position of Abkhazia over the latter is extremely important for Russia, Georgia, and by the same token, for the West.

Aforementioned events led Russia to a situation before which it could not remain indifferent, the ongoing expansion of NATO towards eastern countries was seen not so much as an attempt to isolate it, but rather to corner it in. Naturally, it felt threatened.

Russia had to avoid Georgia joining NATO at all costs, as well as any other pro-Atlantic European structures. Georgia's intention to sign up to these structures attested to a clear pro-West preference and an anti-Russian stance, all of which was interpreted by the latter as a challenge to its hegemony in the Caucasus, giving rise to an unrestrained desire to punish and teach a lesson to an easily overcome rival, while at the same time enabling it to send a dissuasive message to other possible dissident states and the rest of the world powers. Russia is no longer the defeated, Cold War power, but rather a leading stakeholder in the new international order, and one that will not hesitate to defend its interests, particularly in those areas it considers vital and which fall under its sphere of influence.

Superficial causes or triggers

Whether or not a conflict occurs depends on the importance of the structural causes or those in play at a particular moment in time. Superficial causes or particular trigger events are nothing more than the spark or excuse that lead to armed operations.

The statements made by one and the other side prior to the outbreak of hostilities are a clear example of these types of causes. Accordingly, it is worthwhile highlighting Putin's statement about the Republican John McCain's presidential candidature to the effect of «how good a little war would do him» and the accusation that it was this that led President Saakashvili of Georgia to take South Ossetia and Abkhazia by force, the excuse being to gain a march on an imminent Russian invasion, which had been in the planning for some time and the main aim of which was to bring down the Georgian government.

An increase in attacks and confrontations in both separatist regions can be highlighted as specific events leading to the armed response. In March 2008 South Ossetia sent a letter to Russia, the UN and the EU requesting recognition of its independence. Georgia responded with a power-sharing agreement, which was rejected by Ossetia. A Georgian drone was brought down by the Russian air force on Abkhazian soil. Russia reinforced the peace-keeping contingent, established direct relations with Abkhazia and Ossetia and practically suspended existing ones with Georgia. Finally, on

7 August, Georgian forces launched a night attack on Tskhinvali, the capital of South Ossetia, openly setting off hostilities.

The conflict: The Five-Day War

Georgia's military operation against South Ossetia began exactly at 02:45 on 8 August 2008. According to Georgia's President Saakashvili, the aim of the attack was to oblige South Ossetia to cease hostilities and propose negotiations to be mediated by Russia, with whose favour Saakashvili expected to count on, in principle. Exactly the opposite happened. Reinforcements began to arrive in South Ossetia from North Ossetia. Russian aviation intervened, not only backing up forces but also entering into combat near South Ossetia's capital city, Tskhinvali, as well as bombing targets inside Georgian territory. The intensification of Russian air force operations and the strengthening of Russian troops led to Georgia withdrawing its troops.

That same 8 August, Georgia began to consider itself the victim and the aggrieved party, appealing to international institutions and seeking their help. An extraordinary meeting of the UN Security Council was called at Russia's request, but failed to reach agreement. Both the EU and the USA confined themselves to calling for the withdrawal of Russian troops and the establishing of top-level diplomatic contacts. Georgia naïvely fell into the claws of the giant Russian bear.

Early on 9 August the South Ossetian capital was already controlled by Russian troops. Moreover, Russian aerial operations not only targeted Ossetian and Georgian territory, but began to attack Georgian objectives in Abkhazia. Allied to these actions were those taken by Abkhaz separatists who made the most of the situation to attack Georgian forces that had been deployed in the Kodori valley.

Faced with this state of affairs, the Georgian command withdrew its troops from Tskhinvali and approved a Declaration of a State of War in Georgia and announced general mobilisation. This led to the withdrawal of 2,000 Georgian troops deployed in Iraq. The first international mediators, Matthew Bryza from the US Department of State and Peter Semnbey, Special Representative of the EU, arrived in Tbilisi in the afternoon of 9 August.

August 10 saw a blockading of Georgia's sea coast by the Russian navy. Moreover, the Russians reinforced their peacekeeping forces in Abkhazia, which led to the abandoning of the Kodori valley by the Georgians and coincided with its withdrawal from South Ossetia. This withdrawal was presented by the Georgian government as a unilateral decision to facilitate a ceasefire that came about that same day. The USA, France and the United Kingdom condemned Russian intervention at the fourth extraordinary meeting of the UN Council of Security and requested a return to the situation as it stood before the outbreak of hostilities. This request was

not only rejected outright by Putin, but saw him order his troops to cross the Georgian border.

The international response focused exclusively on diplomatic actions, with Swedish and Ukraine foreign ministers, the president of the EU Council of Europe and the president of the OSCE arriving in Tbilisi on 11 August in an attempt to negotiate an immediate ceasefire. Russia opposed this initiative, expecting to negotiate from a more favourable military position, which it managed to achieve the following day when its troops occupied the city of Gori, lying sixty km from the capital, and the port of Poti, among other strategic points. On 12 August, President Medvedev announced the end of military operations and Russia's willingness to enter into negotiations. That same day, the French president, Sarkozy – France held the EU Presidency at the time – went to Russia to present a ceasefire agreement that had already been accepted by the Georgians, which Russia also accepted.

At an extraordinary meeting of the Council of Europe on 13 August, the EU backed the French proposal, which was later sent on to the UN Security Council. This proposal was based on six points: no recourse to the use of force, definitive cessation of hostilities, free access to humanitarian aid, withdrawal of armed forces, albeit allowing Russia to deploy peacekeeping forces to adopt the required security measures until the establishment of a security mechanism and the opening of negotiations to deal with the security and stability of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

Russia completed its withdrawal of troops from Georgia on 22 August, though a contingent was kept in a buffer zone between Georgia and the separatist territories. Four days later the Russian parliament recognised the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. On 9 October Russia completed the military withdrawal from the buffer zone established in Georgia, to be relieved by EU observers under the auspices of the European Union Monitoring Mission (EUMM), which is made up of two hundred, unarmed civil observers.

Current situation of the conflict

Georgia opened its doors officially in 2012 by holding a Plácido Domingo concert in the coastal city of Batumi. In 2013, this celebration was held in the capital Tbilisi, also consisting of a concert, this time around by the rapper, Bera Ivanishvili, who is the son of a popular millionaire and current prime minister of Georgia, Bidzina Ivanishvili. This contrast attests to the turnabout that took place in the country after the elections of 1 October 2012.

Aside from the purely anecdotal matter of the concert, the new year stood out for another reason. For the first time not only one person officially

welcomed in the new year, but two: first Prime Minister Ivanishvili and a minute later, President Saakashvili. What is significant about this is that there is a similar precedent to be found in New Year's Eve of 1993 during the civil war, when two leaders welcomed in the new year at the same time: President Gamsakhurdia from Grozny and Eduard Shevardnadze from the frontier city of Sokhumi. This analogy reflects the tense situation in Georgia in 2013, a year to be marked by the decisive presidential election to be held in October, which has been preceded by the parliamentary elections of 2012.

The coalition party, the Georgian Dream led by Ivanishvili, who is the wealthiest man in Georgia, beat the National Union Movement led by Saakashvili, who is currently Georgia's president. On 25 October 2012, the Georgian parliament, with the backing of eighty-eight of its members and opposed by fifty-four of them³, formed a government with Ivanishvili as prime minister, his ministers coming from the six coalition parties that go to make up the Georgian Dream party. This coalition, which has remained intact thus far, shares a common goal: namely, the desire to overthrow Saakashvili. It is expected that after the presidential elections to be held in October 2013, the coalition will break up as a result of the different parliamentary interests it represents, akin to what happened after the orange revolution in the Ukraine.

Georgia is suffering from what can be called «regime fatigue», something which serves to polarise its political division even more. The recent showing of videos documenting horrors and abuses at Georgian prisons and the social unrest of a population afflicted by an unemployment level that has 40% of its labour force on the dole – a situation that is particularly crude as regards its youth, 75%⁴ of whom are jobless – caused protests in the capital and increased the already existing doubts as to Saakashvili's commitment to democracy. Moreover, there are more than a few who blame him for the disaster of the war as the architect of a provocation. Whether thought out, or not, his order to attack South Ossetia afforded Russia with the pretext it needed to show its willingness to attack its sphere of influence with impunity. If the re-integration of South Ossetia and Abkhazia had been the president's main commitment to his people, his goal is now further away than ever.

The role of external actors

South Ossetia is facing an uncertain future. It is a relatively small region, with a population of only 80,000 and a geography characterised by its extreme isolation, thus preventing it from creating an independent state.

³ <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/georgia/politics.htm>.

⁴ http://www.georgiatoday.ge/article_details.php.

Neither is it considering the alternative of forming part of the Russian Federation, something which President Putin himself has categorically discarded. This condemns it in the short- and medium-term to maintaining itself as a sort of Russian protectorate, while at the same time converting it into a bargaining item when it comes to possible exchanges and concessions in favour of Russian interests.

Abkhazia is a bigger region. It has a population of 216,000⁵ (only half of whom are Abkhazians, with the other half being split equally into Russians, Armenians and Georgians) and an enviable coastline, lying as it does on the shores of the Black Sea. Its position has changed, moving from a complete recognition of its independence to its attempt at becoming an associate member of the Russian Federation, a petition that has not been accepted in order to avoid any further tensioning of the situation with Georgia.

In spite of the UN and the EU insisting that Abkhazia remain as part of Georgia, the Abkhazians are uncompromising in their rejection of Georgia.

The Spanish position with respect to this conflict falls in line with its policy, as witnessed in its decision not to recognise the independence of Kosovo, which has led it to reject any recognition of the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. In accordance with its pro-European policy, it is participating in the EU monitoring mission, focusing its aid on the recovery process in Georgia by way of several house building projects in the port city of Poti, where Spanish Civil Guards have been deployed.

Conclusions and outlook

the figures available for the conflict are far from accurate. According to UNHCR⁶, there would be about one hundred thousand refugees displaced in Georgian territory and thirty thousand displaced to North Ossetia. It is estimated that 2,000 Ossetian civilians, 350 Georgians, 180 of whom were soldiers and seventy Russian soldiers were killed. Extensive material damage must be added to the humanitarian disaster, particularly to vital infrastructures.

Beyond the human and material damage, by converting a separatist conflict into an international one, the Georgian conflict caused a break in the process of transforming the rules that govern international relations, by virtue of which the old balance of power by means of spheres of influence, proper to the Cold War, was being replaced by another based on integration and international law. Indeed, this conflict cannot be taken as over yet, given that Georgia continues to consider Abkhazia and West Ossetia

⁵ <http://www.abjasia.org.ve/abjasia-poblacion.html>.

⁶ <http://www.unhcr.org/4a2fd52412d.html>.

as regions that belong to its territory. In fact, since the end of the conflict it still refers to them as «territories occupied by the Russian Federation», though it must also be said that the prime minister of Georgia, Bidzina Ivanishvili, in his address on 23 April in Brussels to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), promised to refrain from using force against the separatist republics of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, stating, «Over the past twenty years there were many mistakes made by the Georgian authorities as well as in respect to our brothers Abkhazians and Ossetians. Our goal is not to repeat the same mistakes and not to even think about using force»⁷.

On the other hand, even though Abkhazia and South Ossetia have only been recognised as independent states by Russia, Venezuela, Nicaragua and the Republic of Nauru⁸, the president of South Ossetia up to 2012, Eduard Kokoity, has incessantly claimed the return of other «old Ossetian land» so as to keep the conflict alive and divert Ossetian public opinion away from internal issues relating to the corruption that characterised his time in office, such as the disappearance of ten million Dollars for reconstruction purposes⁹. The problem is worse than may appear at first sight if one considers the fact that on existing express recognition by Russia of the independence of these regions, any action by Georgia against them may be deemed by Russia, a permanent member of the UN Security Council, as an aggression by one state against another, with all that this brings with it.

It could be said that the conflict has not only not been resolved, but that it remains latent with the presence of a reinforced Russia, as well as being seriously conditioned by the actions of the «legitimate» government of Georgia in the «independent» regions, not to mention the US cooperation programmes and its training and manoeuvres in Georgian territory. Russia has already shown its capacity to defend its interests unilaterally within its natural sphere of influence without international stakeholders either being able or wanting to do anything to avoid it, thus sending a clear message to the international community of its willingness to use force to maintain its influence in strategic areas of interest to it, which, of course, includes the energy supply routes that cross Georgia.

Russia, which has felt justified and motivated at all times by the precedent of NATO military intervention in Kosovo, has taken advantage of the situation to send a warning message to the effect that it will not consent to any new challenges. Indeed, the Baltic states and the Ukraine, in particular, have increasingly toned down their turning towards the West. It seems clear that one of the pillars of recovering its position as a leading

⁷ <http://sp.rian.ru/international/20130423/156925892.html>.

⁸ The Republic of Nauru is a state in Micronesia in the South Pacific.

⁹ <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/11/world/europe/turmoil-erupts-in-kremlin-protected-south-ossetia.html?ref=southossetia>.

world power is its nationalist policy, thus it will prefer an unstable Caucasus to a resolution to the conflict, which would bring with it an increase of Western influence in the area, particularly U.S. influence.

Conveying such a message will not come cheaply; on the one hand, world disparagement for an action held internationally to be disproportionate, on the other, Russia's loss of credibility as an impartial mediator. In fact, nobody now considers the Russian troops deployed in Transnistria to be a peacekeeping force, and much less those in Moldavia.

Credibility has also been lost by the West, particularly that of America, when it comes to helping those considered to be its allies against Russia. Clearly it is not enough to declare oneself a democrat and try to turn one's back on Russia in order to enter the Western club and be able to count on it for protection. There are only two ways to counteract the arrogance and ambition of Russia's foreign policy: either to stand up to it directly and assume all the consequences of such an action, or not to provoke it by means of offences and contempt. The EU and the USA especially have done quite the contrary in their relations with Russia, which allied to the manifest inability of the UN to resolve any dispute, means that the Georgian conflict will last in time.

Geopolitical indicators¹⁰

TABLE OF GEOPOLITICAL INDICATORS	
Area	69,700 km ²
GDP	\$27.11 billion
Structure of GDP	Agriculture 8.3%
	Industry 23.7%
	Service 68%
GDP per capita	\$6,000
GDP growth rate	6.5%
Trade relations (Exports):	\$3.324 billion
Trade relations (Imports):	\$6.623 billion
Population	4,555,911
Age composition	0-14 15.4% (men 373,539 / women 327,139)
	15-64 68.5% (men 1,508,987/women 1,609,329)
	Over 65 16.2% (men 293,435/women 443,482)
Population growth rate	-0.33%

¹⁰ Source: CIA The World FACTBOOK.

Georgia and its separatist territories: beyond...

Ethnic groups	Georgians 83.8%, Azerbaijani 6.5%, Armenians 5.7%, Russians 1.5%, other 2.5%
Religion	Christian Orthodox (official) 83.9%, Muslims 9.9%, Armenian Apostolic Church 3.9%, Catholics 0.8%, others 0.8%, none 0.7%
Population literacy rate	99.7%
Population under the threshold of poverty	9.2%
GINI Index	46
Military expenditure % of GDP	1.9%

Chronology¹¹

TIMELINE OF THE CONFLICT	
DATE	EVENTS
1865	Russia declares Abkhazia to be a protectorate, incorporating it into the Russian Empire.
1921	Creation of the Abkhaz Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic and the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic.
1925	The Constitution of Abkhazia and of Georgia 1927, specifying their separated and equal status within the USSR.
1931	Stalin dissolves the Republic of Abkhazia and makes it into an integrated part of Georgia.
1953	Nationalist sentiment is aroused after Stalin's death.
1990	23 August, the Supreme Soviet of Abkhazia declares its independence from Georgia.
1992	The 1925 Constitution is taken up again, demanding equal treatment. Georgia occupies a large part of Abkhazia.
1993	UNOMIG deployment
	Abkhazia breaks the ceasefire. Refugee wave (300,000)
1994	New Constitution. Abkhazia declares its independence
1998	Abkhaz forces enter the Gali district. Killing of hundreds of Georgians.
2004	Georgian Rose Revolution. Shevardnadze leaves power and Saakashvili becomes president.
	Georgia asks to join NATO.
2004	Presidential elections in Abkhazia, Bagapsh wins. Against Russian opinion.
	12 November power-sharing agreement between Bagapsh and Hujimba, the pro-Russian candidate.
2006	The Georgian army enters Abkhazia.

¹¹ Drafted by the author.

2006	Name of the area controlled by Georgia changed to Upper Abkhazia.
	Setting-up of a Georgian government administration headquarters in Abkhazia.
2008	10 August, withdrawal of Georgian troops from Abkhazia.
	26 August. Russian parliament recognises the independence of Abkhazia.
	9 October. Russian troops relieved by the EUMM.
2009	December, presidential elections won by Sergei Bagapsh.
2011	29 May, Bagapsh dies suddenly. 26 August presidential elections, Ankvab wins.

Table 1: Conflict Timeline. – Abkazia.

CONFLICT TIMELINE	
DATE	EVENTS
1922	Stalin converts South Ossetia into the Autonomous Region of the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic.
1989	10 November. The South Ossetian Regional Council proclaims its conversion into an Autonomous Republic.
1990	20 September. Local deputies proclaim the creation of the South Ossetian Democratic Republic.
1990	10 December. The Georgian parliament declares the abolishing of South Ossetia's autonomy.
1991	National Guard detachments enter Tskhinvali and confront Ossetian militia forces signalling the outbreak of war.
1992	19 January. Referendum in which the majority of the people vote in favour of joining Russia.
1992	14 July. Hostilities cease. An agreement is signed in Dagomis.
1996	10 November, presidential elections are held in South Ossetia.
2001	6 December sees Eduard Kokoity named president of the self-proclaimed republic.
2006	12 November Referendum reveals 99% vote in favour of independence from Georgia and union with North Ossetia.
2008	7 August. The Georgian army attacks Tskhinvali, the capital of South Ossetia.
2008	10 August, withdrawal of Georgian troops from South Ossetia.
	26 August. Russian parliament recognises the independence of South Ossetia.
	9 October. Russian troops relieved by the EUMM.
2011	29 November the presidential elections are declared invalid.
2012	9 April. Leonid Tibilov, ex-KGB official, wins the elections.

Table 2: Conflict Timeline. – South Ossetia.

CONFLICT TIMELINE	
DATE	EVENTS
1801	Russia annexes Georgian territory in violation of the Treaty of Georgievsk.
1918	26 May. Georgia achieves its independence.
1921	25 February the country is invaded by the Bolsheviks and becomes the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic.
1936	After having formed part of the Transcaucasian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic it becomes a federated republic of the ex-USSR
1953	Stalin the Georgian and oppressor of his compatriots dies.
1972	Shevardnadze becomes Secretary General of the Communist Party of Georgia.
1989	9 April, protest in Tbilisi is harshly repressed, leading to a radicalisation of the nationalist movement.
1991	9 April. Supreme Soviet officially proclaims independence.
	31 May. Presidential elections. Gamsakhurdia wins.
1993	Gamsakhurdia commits suicide after his armed rebellion fails.
1994	Shevardnadze signs an agreement with Yeltsin, who ensures the presence of Russian troops.
2004	Georgian Rose Revolution. Shevardnadze leaves power and Saakashvili becomes president.
	Georgia asks to join NATO.
2006	The Georgian army enters Abkhazia.
	South Ossetia declares its independence.
	Georgia threatens to leave the Commonwealth of Independent States.
2008	10 August, withdrawal of Georgian troops from Abkhazia and South Ossetia.
	26 August. Russian parliament recognises the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.
	9 October. Russian troops relieved by the EUMM.
2012	1 October Ivanishvili wins parliamentary elections.
2013	October, presidential elections planned to replace Saakashvili.

Table 3: Timeline of the Conflict. – Georgia.

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The strait of Hormuz. In the eye of the hurricane

Emilio Sánchez de Rojas

Chapter five

Abstract

The Persian Gulf is one of those areas on which the interests of world powers are focused – USA, China, Russia, etc., though these interests are not necessarily shared. It is a geopolitical region of prime importance due to, among other factors, the concentration of energy resources and lines of communication to access them.

The Strait of Hormuz is both a key transit area for world energy supplies, as well as a strategic «*choke point*». Notwithstanding, there are two further considerations to be taken into account: the geography of the Strait of Hormuz and the role Iran plays when it comes to managing the Strait pursuant to national and international legislation.

There is a conflict in the Strait of Hormuz which, though non-violent for the time being, has the potential, at least in appearance, to greatly increase in scale. Iran, which feels threatened by the presence of American bases and warships, has been warning for several years now that it would choke the Strait of Hormuz in the event of war or economic sanctions.

Control of the Strait of Hormuz is the key instrument with which Iran could internationalise the conflict. Iran could mistakenly perceive the size and the scope of the «possible area of agreement» and would be willing to wait much longer to get the best possible result in any negotiation.

Keywords

Persian Gulf, Hormuz, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Oman, deterrence, conflict, geopolitical, geostrategy, choke point, energy resources, lines of communication.

Introduction

The Persian Gulf is one of the areas on which the interests of world powers are focused (U.S., China, Russia, etc.) and the interests are not necessarily shared. The three main stakeholders in the region are Iran, hegemonic in intent, Saudi Arabia, its main rival, and Turkey, with its growing intervention in events in Iraq and Syria, justifying itself as defender of the interests of the Sunni communities in both countries. Saudi Arabia has the biggest confirmed reserves of crude oil in the world and an unmatched production capacity, not to mention the fact that it is the world's biggest exporter of crude oil (Figure 5.1).

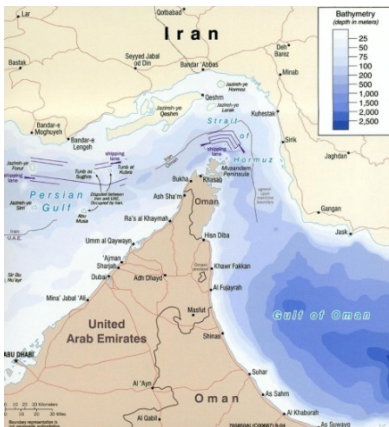


Figure 5.1

Were Saudi production to stop, its over nine million barrels a day would no longer enter the world market, which is the equivalent of the combined production of the United Arab Emirates, Iraq, Kuwait, Oman and Qatar – the total Middle East reserves account for 60% of the world's reserves. Furthermore, Saudi Arabia has the capacity to increase its production to compensate for Iran's, for example. The risk associated with any such production stoppage is such that it would affect the vital interests of powers on a global scale (EU, Japan, China,

Korea, India, and, to a lesser extent, the USA) and other regional powers. On such a scenario, *democratic peace* would be conditioned by the interest in maintaining stability at all costs.

The Strait of Hormuz

The Strait of Hormuz is bordered by Iran, the Musandam Peninsula in Oman and the United Arab Emirates. It is thirty-three km wide and ninety-five km long and the islands of Qeshm, Hormuz and Hengam are to be found there. As a «choke point»,¹ the Strait of Hormuz is much narrower,

¹ Even though the idea of a «choke point» already existed, the term was coined by the English admiral John Fisher (1841-1920), who defined it as (Breverton 2010): «a geographical feature where a fleet is forced to pass on a narrower front, and therefore greatly decreasing its combat power, in order to reach its objective». Fisher himself identified the main *choke points*, ranking the Strait of Hormuz between Oman and Iran at the entrance to the Persian Gulf in first place, followed by the Strait of Malacca between Malaysia and Indonesia.

given that the shipping routes are approximately three km wide in each direction, because the waters are not deep enough across the entire strait to accommodate oil tankers.

It is a geopolitical region of prime importance owing, among other factors, to the concentration of energy resources and the lines of communication to access them (Grygiel 2006, 26). In the case of the Strait of Hormuz with respect to the configuration of these two variables, the strategic consideration is the most important, given that it is the main strategic resource – oil and gas – area in the world, and one with only a single access point.

If geostrategy describes where countries – particularly world and regional powers – focus their efforts by projecting their military might and addressing their diplomatic activity, there is little doubt that the aforementioned strait is of geostrategic interest to Iran and the USA, but equally of interest to other regional powers such as Saudi Arabia and world powers like China, Japan, India and even the EU, whose energy supply depends to a large extent on Persian Gulf production.

Global oil choke points

About half of world oil production is transported by sea. Along all of these routes there are so-called *bottlenecks*, narrow channels, some of which are so narrow that restrictions have to be put in place with respect to the size of the ships that can sail them. These are what are known as energy *choke points*. These are critical areas for global energy security due to the volume of oil and liquefied gas traded through them (Figure 5.2)



Figure 5.2

The strait of Hormuz. In the eye of the hurricane

In 2011, total world oil production amounted to approximately eighty-seven million barrels a day, and more than half of the total was transported by oil tankers over fixed shipping routes. Because of the volume of oil that passes through them, the Strait of Hormuz, the outlet for the Persian Gulf, and the Strait of Malacca, which connects the Indian and Pacific Oceans, are the two most important *choke points* in the world.

The flow through the Strait of Hormuz in 2011 amounted to around 35% of all sea transported oil, in other words, nearly 20% of the oil marketed in the entire world. Over 85% of these crude oil exports were for the Asian market, with Japan, South Korea and China being the main destinations. Moreover, the liquefied natural gas (LNG) exports from Qatar through the Strait of Hormuz must be added to the foregoing, which accounts for nearly 20% of world trade in LNG. (EIA 2012).

Geostrategic choke point

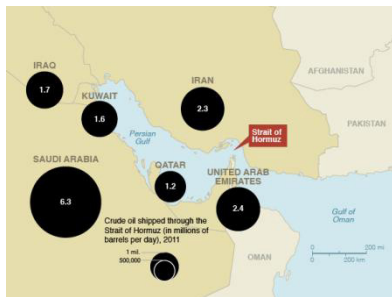


Figure 5.3

As a special area of interest for diplomatic activity and a place to apply the military might of the big powers, the Strait of Hormuz has been a strategic *choke point* for some years now and, as such, it has often been the scene of disputes, sometimes of a violent nature, with numerous threats of closure by the neighbouring countries (Figure 5.3).

Why Hormuz?

'Why?', is the first question that arises whenever undertaking any geopolitical analysis. In this case the reply is immediate: there is a strategic *choke point* located in the centre of a *geopolitical* region of prime importance, and one that is particularly *conflictive*. Obviously, any such claim requires some explanation.

One of the most widely accepted definitions of conflict is that of Mitchell's (1981), who distinguishes three interrelated components whenever studying any conflict: a conflictive *situation*, conflictive *conduct* and conflictive *attitudes and perceptions*. Mitchell defines a conflict *situation* as «any situation in which two or more social entities or «parties» (regardless of how they are defined or structured) perceive that they have mutually incompatible goals» (Mitchell 1981, 17) with goals being understood in this context as «desired future results».

By conflictive *attitudes and perceptions* we mean common patterns of expectations, emotional directions and perceptions that accompany participation in a conflict situation (Mitchell 1981, 28); while we understand conflictive conduct to refer to those actions performed by a party in a conflict situation aimed at the rival party with the intention of provoking that party into abandoning or modifying its goals.

As far as the Strait of Hormuz is concerned, the three factors that identify a conflict apply, thus we can state that there is indeed a conflict which, though non-violent for the time being, has the potential, at least in appearance, to greatly increase in scale.

Background to the conflict

the 1907 Anglo-Russian agreement had contributed to stabilising the region after practically a century of intermittent conflict between both parties. This agreement provided for a Russian sphere of influence in northern Persia, an area in the south-east of British influence and a neutral area to separate both. Russia had an eye on the future annexation of Persia. Great Britain's initial main concern as regards Persia was the military security of India.

However, by 1915 British interest in Persia had changed. Oil was discovered in south-western Persia in 1910. Three years later oil had become the Admiralty's main fuel, replacing coal. The British government bought 51% of the shares in the Anglo-Persian Oil Company on the initiative of Winston Churchill. The company owned oil licences throughout Persia, except for the five northern provinces that were under the Russian sphere of influence. The Constantinople Agreement in 1915 clearly reflects a change in British policy with respect to Persia's importance.

On 9 August 1919, Lord Curzon, the acting Foreign Secretary at the time, circulated a memorandum informing all cabinet members that Great Britain had reached an agreement with Persia which, «...represented the culmination of nine months of negotiations between His Majesty's government and the Persian prime minister *Vossuq al-Dawlah* and two cabinet members». However, American support for the nationalists and the Bolshevik appearance in northern Persia finally put paid to any hope of ratifying the Agreement.

The *Foreign Office's* announcement of the Agreement provided the oil industry and the American Department of State with further proof of the British government's intention to control foreign oil reserves, thus explaining its vehement opposition to the Anglo-Persian Agreement. The Majlis (the Persian parliament) granted the Standard Oil Company from New Jersey the oil licence to the five north Persian provinces. Standard Oil would later use this licence to take part in the oil negoti-

ations about Mesopotamia. What had started as an idea to control the world's as yet unexploited oil reserves developed to the point of becoming a Middle East oil *cartel* shared by British, American and French oil companies.

In an interview given in 2009, Cohen felt that the Middle East and Africa, in particular, had consistently been *shatterbelts*. The Middle East was the first maritime realm where the Soviet Union began its penetration back in 1955 into the *Western ring of containment* (Cohen 2003, 74). The Soviet Union's influence in the Middle East already suffered serious setbacks in the 1980s with Egypt's turning to the West, followed by its ally Iraq as a result of the Iran-Iraq war (1981-1989) in which – who would believe it now – Iraq received substantial aid from the USA, thus leaving Syria as Moscow's main ally in the Middle East. Syria had kept up its alliance with the USSR and Libya since 1980 (Cohen 2003, 84-5).

The Iran hostage crisis was a particularly tense period, which began on 4 November 1979 when the Iranian government that had come out of the revolution took sixty-six American diplomats and citizens as hostages. The crisis lasted for 444 days. President Carter approved a secret rescue mission by special forces, code-named Eagle Claw, which failed. Five members of a C-130 crew and three marines were killed. The bodies were abandoned and some were exhibited in the streets of Tehran in front of TV cameras that broadcast the images around the world. Carter took responsibility for what had happened:

«It was my decision to attempt the rescue operation and my decision to cancel it when problems developed».

Iran threatened to close the Strait of Hormuz during the Iran-Iraq war. Moreover, the Strait was the setting for a military encounter in 1988 between the American Navy and Iran after the USA had attacked Iran during the war. Disputes between Iran and United Arab Emirates in the 1990s for control of several small islands in the Strait of Hormuz provoked new threats of closure. In 1992, Iran took control of the islands, but tensions remained in the region throughout the decade.

Current situation of the conflict

Aforementioned events have led Iraq, Libya, Syria and Iran to being the direct subject – Iraq and Libya – or the indirect one – Syria and Iran – of America's hegemonic penetration to restore the «Western Ring of Containment» that had been broken sixty years ago. The latest resistance shown by Iran and Syria is the objective of the latest American «smart power» employed by President Obama. The policies are the same, but the strategies to achieve the goals have changed. The

geopolitical views of the American president are not far off those of his predecessor, or those of the 1980s, or even of those of Nicholas Spykman, who inspired them.

A series of naval incidents occurred between the USA and Iran in the Strait of Hormuz in December 2007 and in 2008. Iran stated in June 2008 that if it were attacked by the USA it would seal off the strait in an attempt to damage the world's oil markets. The USA responded by saying that any closing of the strait would be taken as an act of war. This increased tensions even more and clearly attested to the worldwide importance of the Strait of Hormuz.

At the end of 2011 and the beginning of 2012, the Iranian Navy and its Marine Revolutionary Guard Corps carried out *Velayat-90* manoeuvres, a series of exercises focusing on closing down the strait. Even though Iran has the capacity, at least temporarily, to upset traffic there, it seems quite unlikely that it would be able to close the strait down for any prolonged period of time.

Likewise, it carried out an exercise in 2012 that covered an extensive area between the Sea of Oman and the north of the Indian Ocean, the goal of which was to «show how prepared the army and naval forces were to defend Iranian shipping routes and its national interests». The exercise consisted of testing missile defence systems, warships and submarines.

After reports appeared in the Israeli press citing a top ranking, ex-member of the National Security Council, who predicted an American attack in the middle of the year, Zbigniew Brzezinski (2013), stated in January 2013 in *The Washington Post* that it was essential

«for the issue of war and peace with Iran to be fully vented, especially with US national interest in mind. Although the president has skilfully avoided the specific commitment to military action by a certain date, the absence of a negotiated agreement with Iran regarding its compliance with the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty will inevitably intensify foreign and extremist domestic clamour for U.S. military action, along or in coordination with Israel».

Brzezinski identifies five potential implications for the United States that require detailed analysis:

- How effective are U.S. military strikes against Iranian nuclear facilities likely to be, with consequences of what endurance and at what human cost to the Iranian people?
- What might be Iran's retaliatory responses against U.S. interests, and with what consequences for regional stability? How damaging could resulting instability be to European and Asian economies?

- Could a U.S. attack be justified as in keeping with international standards and would the U.N. Security Council – particularly China and Russia, given their veto power – be likely to endorse it?
- Since Israel is considered to have a significant nuclear arsenal, how credible is the argument that Iran might attack Israel without first itself acquiring a significant nuclear arsenal, including a survivable second-strike capability, a prospect that is at least some years away?
- Could some alternative U.S. strategic commitment provide a more enduring and less reckless arrangement for neutralising the potential Iranian nuclear threat than a unilateral intention of war in a combustible regional setting?

Estimates suggest that the effect of a limited U.S. attack would only be temporary. Repeated attacks would be more effective, but would increase the number of civilian deaths and would only serve to arouse Iranian nationalism against the U.S. and benefit the regime. As a reprisal, Iran could activate a new guerilla front in western Afghanistan. It could also precipitate explosive violence in Iraq, which in turn might extend throughout the region to Syria, the Lebanon and Jordan.

«Although the U.S. Navy should be able to keep the Strait of Hormuz open, escalating insurance costs for the flow of oil would adversely affect the economies of Europe and Asia. The United States would be widely blamed» (Brzezinski 2013).

What is more, it is also safe to predict that an unauthorised attack by the U.S. against Iran would lead to worldwide outrage. What would happen if the General Assembly were to condemn the U.S.? A question posed by Brzezinski and to which he replies that the result would be unprecedented international isolation. Congress should also bear in mind that our Middle (Cohen 2003, 84-5) East and European friends who advocate U.S. military action against Iran are generally quite reluctant to shed their own blood in any new Middle East conflict.

To make matters worse, the most immediate beneficiary of an ill-considered recourse to war would be Vladimir Putin's Russia, which would be able to charge Europe at will for its oil, while at the same time having a free hand to threaten Georgia and Azerbaijan. Was Meir Dagan, former Director of the Mossad, right when he said that an attack against Iran was «the stupidest thing I have ever heard»?

Geopolitical character of the Strait of Hormuz

The Strait of Hormuz, as we have stated, is a key area for world energy supplies, as well as a strategic *choke point*. Notwithstanding, there are two further considerations to be taken into account: the geogra-

phy of the Strait of Hormuz and the role Iran plays when it comes to managing the Strait pursuant to national and international legislation. Practically all entries to the Persian Gulf – including that of the U.S. Navy – are to be had through Iranian waters, while exits are by way of Omani waters.

Iran allows foreign ships to use its territorial waters in good faith and pursuant to the conditions of transit passage under Part III of the United Nations Conventions on the Law of the Sea, which stipulated that ships are free to navigate through the Strait of Hormuz and similar bodies of water navigating expeditiously and continuously between an open port and the high seas. Even though Tehran routinely applies Sea Law navigating practices, it is not legally bound by them, given that, just like Washington, it signed this international treaty, but has never ratified it (Nazemroaya 2012).

U.S.-Iranian tensions in the Persian Gulf

The Iranian parliament considered re-assessing the use of Iranian waters in the Strait of Hormuz by foreign ships and proposed blocking any warship that attempts to pass through Iranian waters in the strait without prior authorisation. Indeed, this issue is still on the table given that it affects the country's strategic interests and national security (Nazemroaya 2012).

On 30 December 2011, the aircraft carrier, USS John C. Stennis, passed through the area where Iran was carrying out its naval exercises. The commander of Iran's regular forces, General Ayatollah Salehi, warned the USS John C. Stennis, and any other U.S. naval ships not to return to the Persian Gulf when Iran is conducting its exercises, stating that in Iran «we do not have a custom of repeating our warnings. We issue them but once» (FARS 2012). The Pentagon seemed to be playing with fire by ensuring further «scheduled movements» of aircraft carriers in the Gulf, albeit refraining from any announcements of special activities in response to the Iranian threat. «The deployment of U.S. military assets in the Persian Gulf», said the Pentagon, «will continue as it has for decades» (Hafezi 2012).

A little after Iran's warning to Washington, the Pentagon press secretary answered with a statement to the effect that: «No one in this government seeks confrontation [with Iran] over the Strait of Hormuz. It's important to lower the temperature» (Nazemroaya 2012). (Figure 5.4).

«I think we should be very worried because the diplomacy that should accompany this rise in tension seems to be lacking on both sides», said Richard Dalton, former British Ambassador to Iran.



Figura 5.4

«I don't believe either side wants to start a war. I think the Iranians will be aware that if they block the Strait or attack U.S. warships they will be the losers. Nor do I think that the U.S. wants to use its military might other than as a means of pressure. However, in a state of heightened emotion on both sides, we are in a dangerous situation». (Hafezi 2012).

Vice Admiral Kevin J. Cosgriff and Commander Lynn Chow had conspired to murder Gwyneth Todd, a former member of the White House's security personnel, in Bahrain and blame Tehran in order to provoke a war against the Islamic Republic. Cosgriff – backed by a powerful friend and superior, Commander, U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM), Admiral William J. «Fox» Fallon – was eager to start a war with Iran. «We believe this investigation will lead directly to former Vice President Cheney, who we are told gave the order to have *an American death* to blame on Iran and start a war». (Duff 2012).

«There was a feeling that the Navy was back on its heels in dealing with Iran», said an official who wishes to remain anonymous. «There was an intention to be far more aggressive with the Iranians, and a diminished concern about keeping Washington in the loop». Retired Admiral David C. Nichols, second in command at CENTCOM in 2007, recalled in an interview in 2011 that Admiral Fallon «wanted to do a *freedom of navigation* exercise in what Iran calls its territorial waters that we hadn't done in a long time.» Nothing wrong with that, per se, but the problem was that «we didn't understand Iran's perception of what we were doing, and we didn't understand what they were doing and why... that made miscalculations possible.» (Stein 2012)

On a real war scenario against Iran, it is more than likely that U.S. aircraft carriers would operate from outside the Persian Gulf and from the Gulf of Oman and the Arabian Sea. Unless the missile systems Washington is developing in the southern petro-emirates in the Persian Gulf are in service, any big deployment of U.S. warships in the Persian Gulf is quite unlikely. The reasons are bound up with geographical realities and Iran's defensive capacity (Nazemroaya 2012).

U.S. naval forces, which include the navy and the Coast Guard, are superior to all other navies and sea forces in the world today. They have unprecedented high seas capacity, which cannot be met by any other naval power. However, such superiority is not synonymous with invincibility. The U.S. naval forces in the Strait of Hormuz are vulnerable. In spite of their power and resistance to force, the geographical reality in the Strait of Hormuz and the Persian Gulf is literally against U.S. naval power.

The relative narrowness of the Persian Gulf means that it is more of a canal, at least in military and strategic terms. This is precisely where the Iranian army's advanced missile capacities come into play. Iranian missiles and their arsenal of torpedoes would make short work of U.S. naval resources in the Persian Gulf, where they would be constrained. Even small Iranian patrol vessels in the Persian Gulf, which look quite insignificant when compared with the might of an American aircraft carrier or destroyer, represent a threat to U.S. warships. These Iranian patrol boats can launch missiles that would be capable of causing serious and effective damage to, or indeed sink, big U.S. warships. Moreover, they are difficult to detect.

Pentagon war simulations have shown that a war in the Persian Gulf with Iran would be a disaster for the United States and its armed forces. Therefore, Washington's formidable naval power is hindered both by the geographical situation, as it is by Iran's military capacity when it comes to fighting in the Persian Gulf and even in most of the Gulf of Oman. Unless in the open sea, such as the Indian and Pacific Oceans, the U.S. will have to struggle against significantly reduced response times and, what is even more important, it will not be able to fight from a (militarily secure) position of force beyond reach.

A U.S.-Iran cold war

Washington has kept up the offensive against Iran by all the means at its disposal. Tensions concerning the Strait of Hormuz and the Persian Gulf are just one of the fronts in a dangerous, regional cold war being fought on many fronts between Tehran and Washington in the wider Middle East setting. Since 2001, the Pentagon has been restructuring its armed forces to enable it to fight conventional wars against enemies like Iran (Arquilla 2010). Nevertheless, the Pentagon and the U.S. have consistently come

up against the geographical situation and have failed to find a solution to their naval dilemma in the Persian Gulf. Instead of fighting a conventional war, Washington has had to resort to carrying on a secret, economic and diplomatic war against Iran (Nazemroaya 2012).

Iran's strategy in the Strait of Hormuz

Control of the Strait of Hormuz is the key instrument with which Iran could internationalise the conflict.

As a consequence of the failure of the latest negotiations over Iran's nuclear programme, the European ban on the importation of Iranian oil took effect on July 1 2012, and closure of the Strait of Hormuz became an issue again. From the Western viewpoint, Iran could take two approaches (Barzegar 2012):

1. The first, based on a defensive standpoint, perceives Iran's threat to be a bluff, made to assert its power. Iran could close the Strait temporarily, but it lacks the superior military power to continue the closure. From this perspective, Iran would not close the Strait for the following three reasons:
 - a) first, the Iranian economy depends on revenue from oil exported through the Strait.
 - b) Secondly, Iran's action could provoke a harsh military reaction from the United States and its allies, who would then have the necessary pretext to seize control of the Strait and possibly declare it to be an international passage.
 - c) Thirdly, Iran would face the possible negative reactions from other countries with which it has friendly relations (Russia, China, Iraq, Turkey and India) and whose energy security interests would be adversely affected. For instance, Iraq has recently announced that some 1.7 million barrels of its oil transits the Strait and maintains that Iraq should not close that passage.
- 2 The second perspective, based on an offensive standpoint, believes that once Iran perceives that its economic security and other interests are in jeopardy, it would react by closing the Strait. Iran could do this for three reasons:
 - a) first, as an attempt to increase the price of oil, thereby pre-empting any all-out prospective military attack by the West.
 - b) Secondly, the ideological nature of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) responds to the crisis with forceful and harsh military action.
 - c) Thirdly, the securitisation of the region would increase the economic and political vulnerability of the Persian Gulf's Arab countries because they are considered weak points in the West's regional bulwark.

Iran's strategy is actually midway between these two perspectives; while Iran's economic interests dictate that it not close the Strait of Hormuz, it is likely that if Iran's economic security is endangered, it will thus react because Iran's energy exports are directly related to the country's national security and the government's legitimacy. Iran's reaction, according to Kayhan Barzegar, (Iran's Strategy in the Strait of Hormuz. The Diplomat 2012) Director of the Institute for Middle East Strategic Studies Tehran, would be more focused on «defensive deterrence», taking a «measured» reaction when confronting those states which have acted against Iran's interests with sanctions. Iran had previously used this strategy during the «Tanker War» in 1980. In terms of conducting an asymmetric war, Iran is in a much more powerful position for conducting such operations today.

Iran's defensive *deterrence* strategy has three added-value aspects that must be considered (Barzegar 2012):

4. It represents an increase of «relative security» by preserving its economic security and interests. If Iran were not able to export its oil, it is likely that it would not allow other Arab countries in the region – those aligned with the West – export their oil through the Strait of Hormuz.
5. Iran, by acting as a rational state from a position of power and conducting a policy based on regional geopolitical realities, would avoid giving any pretext to the adversarial states that are interested in showing that Iran is not a responsible country that could act against global free trade and international energy security.
6. Iran, which benefits from its advantageous geographical status at the Strait of Hormuz, tries to preserve the regional security of the Persian Gulf. This has been a constant in Iran's defence strategy since the regime of Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi.

By employing a deterrence strategy, Iran would not aim to close the Strait of Hormuz, but take measured actions against those ships that are trading with rival countries and which are crossing the Strait. A «smart control» strategy is a more «soft» and political approach to security than a «hard» and military one. The intensification of military manoeuvres and missile tests by Iran fit in more with a deterrence strategy. Binding the interests of the international community as well as those of regional Arab regimes to the security of the Strait of Hormuz could be a pressure point on the United States and its Western allies and thus a deterrence opportunity for Iran. For example, Iran's inspection of transiting ships would increase oil side-costs such as insurance risk.

U.S. strategy in the Strait of Hormuz

The influential academic, Stephen M. Walt, associated with *defensive realism*, claimed in *Foreign Policy* that American leaders seem to believe that

the constant threatening of Iran and the gradual increasing of economic sanctions will oblige Tehran to give us what we want, or will lead the Iranian people to rising and ousting the clerics, dismantling their nuclear programme and throwing themselves into the arms of a thankful world (Walt 2013). Walt quotes Carl Bildt:

«There is no doubt that sanctions are and should be part of our 'toolbox'. Preferably and primarily decided upon by the Security Council – for reasons of legality as well as efficiency». «But sanctions can only work if they are part of an overall policy where the different instruments are clearly geared towards specified objectives. Sanctions can be part of such a policy. But sanctions must never be a substitute for a policy». «Sometimes I fear that this rather fundamental distinction is lost».

Before the P5 +1 round of negotiations in Almaty, a lot of analysts had urged the U.S. to take a «more for more» stance. Specifically, to offer Iran a bigger reduction of sanctions in exchange for more nuclear concessions by Tehran. For Republicans like Michael Singh (2013) it is now clear that Washington has adopted a «more for less» strategy instead. A bigger reduction in sanctions, it seems, for fewer concessions, not one more, by Iran.

During the 2006 conflict in the Levant, Iran's proxy Hezbollah executed a form of hybrid warfare that combined well-trained conventional forces, unexpected new weapons and tactics, and masterful exploitation of the information environment. Those events in Lebanon demonstrate both Iran's ability and willingness to wage a guerilla war at sea using a mixture of conventional and irregular forms of warfare. A detailed analysis of the hybrid threat currently posed by Iran will reveal that a coalition naval force can defeat Iran, achieve desired objectives, and survive the experience only by selecting a strategy that uses reach and manoeuvre to its operational advantage (Dolan 2012).

A coalition can better achieve its objectives by operating from the North Arabian Sea as opposed to risking operations inside the Persian Gulf. Contrary to this option of remaining outside the Persian Gulf and using the tactical advantages of reach and mobility, the U.S. Navy strategists predominantly contend that transiting the Strait in a time of conflict is a manageable risk.

Political and economic pressures would also be applied to support the option of keeping the Strait open regardless of the level of conflict in the region. These arguments are built, all or in part, on the following assumptions:

- The Iranians cannot afford to shut down the strait.
- A coalition force will be able to keep the strait open through the use of superior force.
- Iran is militarily incapable of shutting down the strait.

Given the rising tensions in the gulf during recent years, many business and professional organizations have considered the possibility of Iran closing the Strait of Hormuz. For the political scientist Eugenio Gholz (*The Strait Dope* 2009) it would be very difficult for Iran to interrupt the oil flow based on his risk-versus-reward assessment obtained to a great extent from the experience of the *second Tanker War period* in 1987, when merchant seamen accepted the risk of attack as part of the cost of doing business. Statistics from 1987 were used to assess the ship loss risks in any possible future conflict, revealing a manageable risk.

Another variable in this line of reasoning is the fact that closing the Strait would cause Iran tremendous economic damage. This argument hinges on the knowledge that Iran is as economically dependent on the flow of commercial traffic as its neighbours. In fact, Iran exported 2.4 million barrels a day through the Strait of Hormuz, which accounts for two thirds of the regime's budget.

Iran needs hydrocarbons to continue to flow through the Strait of Hormuz even more than perhaps any other country. This seems to support those who argue in favour of remaining inside the Persian Gulf. From a military operational-planning perspective, given that Iran will act in a restrained fashion if it is directly challenged in the Strait, it is worth planning to have the coalition forces stay away from Iran's coasts. The alternative will almost certainly ensure some degree of disturbance to this vital trade route, so other factors need to be looked at:

- Hybrid warfare. The lessons to be learned from the new style of hybrid warfare were demonstrated in Lebanon in 2006. Just as Hezbollah did not choose to fight on Israel's terms, it would be naïve to think that Iran will fight on those of the U.S.
- Improved training in Iran. In addition to better hardware, it is wise to assume that the training and skills of Iranian forces have also improved since the late 1980s. The regime has inculcated this generation of youth in a form of warfare known as Alavi, which is a defensive war fighting strategy based on religious and national values using combatants who are psychologically prepared to fight to the death.
- It is foolish to fight against the stronger opponent. Today's «fort» is represented by the lethal A2/AD capabilities proliferating around the world. U.S. military strategy has undergone a significant transformation since the 1990s, when the threats that Anti-Access/Area Denial (A2/AD) strategies can pose to an unhindered passage were first identified.

Iran has done everything in its power to create a hybrid force designed to control the Strait of Hormuz during a possible conflict. This raises a critical question for planning: What course of action will defeat such a threat?

Today's leaders must acknowledge the fact that a «philosophical shift» is needed to defeat the emerging A2/AD threat, which is changing the old rules of the game. An acceptable level of air, space and maritime superiority is required to achieve the objectives. The important question is whether or not it is necessary to enter the strait, or the Persian Gulf, to accomplish the objective.

The answer is 'No', at least to a point determined by the scale of the conflict. In a low- to mid-level conflict, a coalition force can allow Iran temporary control over its coastal waters while conducting long-range coercive strikes that wear down Iran's forces. In a large-scale conflict with Iran, forced access through the strait and even amphibious landings may be required to establish control.

The role of external actors

as we have pointed out in the background to the conflict, the influence of the Soviet Union and later that of Russia already suffered important setbacks back in the 1980s, which got even worse with the penetration of U.S. hegemony in the area, mainly with the Free Iraq operation from March 2003 to December 2011. Syria is now Moscow's main support in the Middle East. Syria has become immersed in a civil war similar to that of Libya, but with the difference that the *Bashar Al-Assad* government has been able to count on Russian and Chinese backing, both permanent member countries of the UN Security Council with a right to veto. Tensions in Syria have been transmitted to the gulf and, therefore, to the Strait of Hormuz.

On the other hand, Russia unlike China does not depend on Persian Gulf oil, thus it maintains friendlier relations with Iran, which brings Iran to the 5+1 negotiating table (the five permanent security UN Security Council members plus Germany). Indeed, the Russian vice-chancellor, Igor Morgulov, has highlighted the fact that Russia believes that «a long-term settlement towards the Iranian nuclear issue should be based on the recognition of Iran's unconditional right to develop its civilian nuclear programme».

The EU position

Europe has not exactly shown a common front either on the war in Syria or with respect to the Iranian nuclear issue, a fact amply attested to by the consistently ambiguous statements made by the EU's High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. France and the United Kingdom have maintained an indisputable common front with the U.S., whereas other countries like Germany are more sceptical, thus

adopting a more balanced stance. Consequently, there is no genuinely independent European strategy being pursued by the EU which, in any event, true to its liberal tradition, is in favour of exhausting all negotiating possibilities about the Iranian nuclear question, before taking any armed action against Iran, which would be the main potential factor triggering the closing of the Strait of Hormuz.

Regional parties

The positions of the countries in the region have been contaminated by the war in Syria. Israel, a nuclear power, would not be in favour of a joint intervention with the U.S. to dismantle any possible, future Iranian nuclear capacity. Iraq indirectly supports Iran, but is more concerned with growing internal problems and the fear of a fragmentation of its country. Gulf monarchies are aligned with the U.S. and fear Iranian nuclear rearming.

This leaves two stakeholders in the Persian Gulf: Turkey and Egypt. Turkey generally supports the U.S. stance, but has no particular interest in directly confronting a neighbour like Iran. Since the coming into power of the Muslim Brotherhood, Egypt has been gradually, albeit steadfastly, recovering relations with Iran, which had been seriously damaged by the attack in 1981 that killed the Egyptian president, Anwar el-Sadat. As far as the Maghreb is concerned, Algeria does not approve of the approach taken by the U.S., Qatar and Saudi Arabia with respect to the war in Syria, thus it would refrain from openly supporting them in any armed conflict, though it would not necessarily line up with Iran.

Whatever the case, a nuclearisation of Iran could lead to the nuclearisation of Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Turkey and possibly other Arab countries. This would then see a containment situation arising similar to that which holds with North Korea in the Sea of Japan.

Conclusions and outlook

Iran could mistakenly perceive the size and the scope of the «possible agreement area» and would be willing to wait much longer to get the best possible result in any negotiation, after having obtained the concession from Washington as regards the Fordow facilities eight years later. This means undoing any possible progress made by sanctions and incentives, thus conveying a false impression of flexibility of the P5 +1 (Singh 2013).

The importance of the Strait of Hormuz for the U.S. and its allies is well known, as is the possibility that Iran might close it down militarily for a significant period of time. Washington has been working with Gulf Cooperation Countries – Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman and the United Arab Emirates – to alter the routes of their pipelines in such a way

as to make it possible to avoid the Strait of Hormuz by channelling the crude oil directly to the Indian Ocean, the Red Sea or the Mediterranean.

The purpose of re-routing the oil is to reduce the importance of the Strait of Hormuz by way of doing away with a strategic weakness that could be used by Iran against Washington and its allies. By the same token, the re-routing could be interpreted as a prerequisite to preparing a war led by the U.S. against Tehran and its allies.

It is no secret that Brzezinski, President Jimmy Carter's advisor during the 1978-79 Iranian revolution and the subsequent American hostage crisis, opposes war with Iran, arguing for a containment strategy as the «least bad» alternative if Iran develops a nuclear weapon. Intermittent negotiations began on 5 April between Iran and the 5+1 group. However, bearing in mind the difficult history between Iran and the international community there is very little likelihood of agreement being reached. Nevertheless, this does not mean that U.S. policy should remain unchanged.

Given current actions, the U.S. risks alienating the Iranian people, which according to the former CIA director, Mike Hayden, are the most pro-American Muslim population «between Marrakesh and Bangladesh.» In Washington, well-informed opinion is changing towards a long-term strategy that seeks to resolve the nuclear issue without jeopardising the goodwill of the Iranian people and replicating the terrible Iraqi experience when harsh sanctions turned out to be a prelude to war. John Kerry would seem to espouse this developing point of view in his New Year's message to the Iranians as Secretary of State (Slavin 2013).

Iran, which feels threatened by the presence of so many American bases and warships, has been warning for several years now that it would choke the Strait of Hormuz in the event of war or economic sanctions. However, in spite of the threats to close down the Strait, if Western countries strengthen sanctions against Iran by imposing an embargo on oil, the Islamic Republic needs the Strait at least as much as its adversaries.

Maintaining the security of the Strait of Hormuz is one of Iran's defensive deterrence strategy priorities in the Persian Gulf. Iran's policy will doubtlessly be measured and rational, bearing in mind the geopolitical reality of the region. The Chief of Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces, General Hassan Firouzabadi, has highlighted the Strait of Hormuz as one of the most important energy transit points in the world, which Iran would not close unless the country's interests were endangered. This declaration shows that Iran perceives the question of the Strait within a global context. Based on this strategy and under the hardest economic conditions, Iran would not close the Strait of Hormuz (Barzegar 2012).

Finally, Iran should only use the deterrence factor of closing the strategic Strait of Hormuz if it is attacked by the United States and its allies. Such

an attack is against the United Nation's Charter, and Iran's reaction to it should be perceived as «legitimate defence».

Only in a large-scale conflict with Iran would access through the Strait be forced and might even require amphibian landings to establish control.

Geopolitical indicators²

TABLE OF GEOPOLITICAL INDICATORS		Iran	Saudi Arabia	Oman
Area		1,531,595 Km ² (18th)	2,149,690 (13th)	309,500 (71st)
Estimated GDP per capita (PPP) 2012		1,016,000 M\$ (18th)	921,700	91.54 billion
Structure GDP/Labour force	Agriculture	11%	2%	1.5%
	Industry	38.4%	66.9%	50.4%
	Services	50.6%	31.1%	48.1%
Estimated GDP per capita 2012 (in \$)		13,300	31,800	29,600
GDP growth rate		-1.9%	6.8%	5%
Unemployment rate		15.5%	10.7%	15%
Trade relations (Exports): M\$		66,370	381,500	48.4300
Trade relations (Imports): M\$		66,970	136,800	23,370
Population 2013		79,853,900	26,939,583	3.154,134.
Urbanization rate		71%	82%	73%
Age composition	0-14	23.8%	28.2%	30.6%
	15-64	71.1	68.7%	66.2%
	Over 65	5.1%	3.1%	3.2%
Population growth rate		1.24%	1.51%	2.06%
Ethnic groups		Persians 61%, Azerbaijani 16%, Kurds 10%, Lurs 6%, Baloch 2%, Arabs 2%, Turks and Turkish tribes 2%, Others 1%	Arabs 90%, Afro-Asians 10%	Arabs, Baloch, Southern Asians

² Source: CIA The World FACTBOOK.

The strait of Hormuz. In the eye of the hurricane

TABLE OF GEOPOLITICAL INDICATORS	Iran	Saudi Arabia	Oman
Religions	Muslims (official) 98% (89% Shia, Sunni 9%), Others (including Zoroastrians, Jews, Christians and Baha'i) 2%	Muslims (official) 100%	Ibadi Muslims (official) 75%, Others (includes Sunni and Shia Muslims and Hindus) 25%
Population literacy rate	77%	86.6%	81.4%
Population below the poverty line	18.7%	ND	ND
Infant mortality rate: Deaths/1,000 surviving	40.02	15.08	14.46
GINI Index	ND	ND	ND
Military expenditure % of GDP.	2.5%	9.1%	11.4%

Chronology³

TIMELINE OF THE CONFLICT	
DATE	EVENTS
1907	Anglo-Russian Agreement. Sharing-out of the areas of influence between both countries.
1910	Oil discovered in south-eastern Persia.
1913	Oil becomes the Admiralty's main fuel.
1915	The British government bought 51% of the shares in the Anglo-Persian Oil Company on the initiative of Winston Churchill. Constantinople Accord.
1919	Lord Curzon's memorandum.
1979-80	Iran hostage crisis.
1980s	Influence if the Soviet Union in the Middle East suffers important setbacks. Iran threatened to close the Strait of Hormuz.
1988	Fighting between the U.S. navy and Iran.
1992	Iran took control of the Strait of Hormuz islands, but tensions remained in the region throughout the decade.
1990s	Disputes between Iran and the United Arab Emirates over control several islands in the Strait of Hormuz.

³ Drafted by the author

2007 and 2008	Naval tensions between the U.S. and Iran.
June 2008	Iran stated that if it were attacked it would seal off the Strait.
December 2011	Velayat-90 manoeuvres.
December 2012	Iranian deterrent exercise in an extensive area of the Sea of Oman and the north of the Indian Ocean.

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The fragile Ivorian stability: stranded between the lesser of two evils and open conflict

Jorge Bolaños Martínez

Chapter six

Abstract

The two civil wars experienced by Ivory Coast in a ten-year period have left a deep social and political division. With antagonisms exacerbated after the 2011 conflict, that confronted Laurent Gbagbo followers with Alassane Ouattara's, the country tries to keep a level of equilibrium, as the beginning of the electoral process for the presidential term is getting closer in 2015. These will be decisive months, in which the small steps towards reconciliation will be measured. And all that before an important international presence, headed by France and the United Nations' mission.

Keywords

Ivory Coast, Alassane Ouattara, Laurent Gbagbo, civil war, ethnic violence, ivoirité, presidential elections, France, United Nations, responsibility to protect.

Introduction

From the beginning of the slave and elephant ivory trade (Costa do Marfim or Côte de Dents were some of its first names) to the present, this former French colony and province of ancient African kingdoms has been immersed in several conflicts, particularly in the two decades after the end of the authoritarian regime set up by Félix Houphouët-Boigny (who is still considered by many to be the nation's founding father). He governed the country from the moment it gained independence, as part of the Democratic Party of Côte d'Ivoire (PDCI). Even though the country enjoyed great prosperity during the first two decades of his term of office, it was during this period that the problems that would culminate in the conflict discussed in this chapter had been brewing, some of them derived from the poor acceptance of immigrants in some regions, the ethnic make-up of the country, and the use of cultural and religious differences for political gain. The Baule (or Baoulé) population – related to the Akan people from Ghana – constitutes one of the largest ethnic groups. Among the sixty ethnic groups spread out throughout Côte d'Ivoire are the Bété, in the south-west, the Dan, in the country's west and centre, and the Voltaic, in the north. Some of the largest originated in neighbouring countries, mainly from Burkina Faso, Mali, Liberia or the Republic of Guinea, together with communities of Mauritanian, Senegalese or Nigerian origin.

The birth of the Baule people and the North-South divide

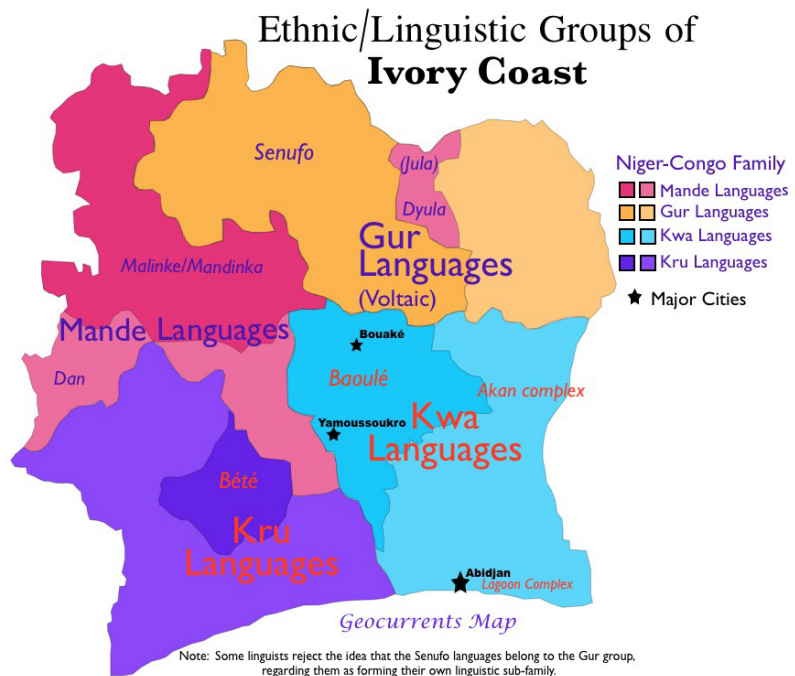
Côte d'Ivoire's ancient history starts with the Muslim expansion from the Middle East; its armies managed to span most of the continent and even reach the Atlantic coast. Several kingdoms coexisted back then; some of the ethnic groups present then are still part of Ivorian society today. Owing to their culture and personality, the Baule are considered one of the main actors in the country's history.

It is said that in the eighteenth century, fleeing the dominion exerted by the Ashanti until she was able to found her own empire in Western Africa, Queen Pokou led her people out of the land of what today is Ghana and into the region delimited by the Rivers Comoé and Bandama, the geographical centre of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire. During the journey, the queen lost her son, who drowned in Lake Senufo. Famous for their valuable sculpture and representations, symbols of their ancestral culture, the Baule were always leery of government structures characterised by the exercise of a strong central power. They won fame for their strong resistance to the French occupation of their territory in the 19th century. They are also deemed to have managed to preserve many of their ancient cultural expressions and some of their old social institutions. In the end,

the old kingdoms were absorbed into the French colonial administration halfway through the nineteenth century.

The country's north – the driest area closest to the Sahel – was settled by mostly Muslim peoples who traded with North Africa. Nowadays, the Muslim population makes up around 38 percent of the total. On the other hand, the animistic people of the south maintained good commercial ties with European traders¹.

Thus, the configuration of the production structure began to take shape, the fertile southern half being exclusively devoted to growing cocoa. Immigrant workers and many northern Ivorians have been employed in the plantations, which are mostly small-sized and family-owned. Côte d'Ivoire exports around 40 percent of the world's cocoa; it is the biggest producer, together with Ghana. Its exports of coffee, gold, diamonds and several minerals are also considerable. The Ivorian economy's reliance on good weather conditions and its exposure to price fluctuations in the commodities markets, coupled with a drop in oil production, makes it less dynamic than that of Nigeria, South Africa or Angola² (Map 6.1)³.



Map 6.1

¹ See <http://www.fragilestates.org/2012/06/06/cote-divoire-ethnic-division/>. Last accessed on 4 August 2013.

² See <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/iv.html>. Last accessed on 8 August 2013.

³ Source: <http://geocurrents.info>

Ivorianness: the particular form of nationalism in Côte d'Ivoire

Perhaps the most distinctive trait of the Côte d'Ivoire conflict is the fervent sense of nationalism which has seized a large portion of the population. It is true that this sentiment has been on the rise in all of Africa. However, in Côte d'Ivoire, as a result of a persistent French influence, it took root very early⁴. Stemming from some of the oldest native peoples in the country, it took on a substantially European bent. This includes some of the latter's most negative and darkest aspects, on which the justification of the rejection of the other, the strange, the alien, is based⁵. This is what Ivorianness turned into when it ceased being a tool for uniting a solid society; it devolved into a tactical pretext for stirring civil unrest.

In the 1990s, it was given legal status⁶ when it was included in the amendments to the Constitution of 1995 and a law restricting the political rights of the children of immigrants was approved. This took place during Bédié's term of office, who prevented Ouattara from standing as a candidate in the presidential elections⁷.

Jihadism at the gates

Another of Côte d'Ivoire's current particularities with regard to the countries in its vicinity is that it has managed to keep its territory free of the international terrorism linked to the network of organisations woven by Al-Qaeda in Western Africa. On this subject, the teaching of Islam in madrasas aimed at the local Muslim population and the Syrian and Lebanese communities in the northern provinces has yet to become a problem or threat. The fact that a Muslim leader has twice been president of the country, together with the rejection of violence by the Christian and animistic populations, have contributed to this. Alassane Ouattara, who belongs to the Malinke people, has been able to channel the feelings of frustration of his followers from a clearly institutional and constructive standpoint. This does not exempt the current president from his responsibility in the crisis or the abuse and persecution of many supporters of Gbagbo and of other political options which oppose his government.

⁴ On the influence of nationalism in Ivorian history, see Marshall-Fratani, Ruth, «The war of «who is who:» autochthony, nationalism and citizenship in the Ivorian crisis.» *African Studies Review*, Vol. 49, No 2. September 2006, pp. 9-43. Summary and access to the full text at http://muse.jhu.edu/login?auth=0&type=summary&url=/journals/african_studies_review/v049/49.2marshall-fratani.html. Last accessed on 15 August 2013.

⁵ See <http://reliefweb.int/report/c/C3%B4te-divoire/government-must-curb-ivory-coasts-xenophobia>. Last accessed on 29 July 2013.

⁶ See http://eeas.europa.eu/eueom/pdf/promoting-and-defending-democracy_en.pdf. Last accessed on 9 August 2013.

⁷ For more information, go to <http://www.conseil-constitutionnel.ci/index.php>.

From the start, Ouattara has been in favour of fighting Al-Qaeda's local branch in Mali⁸.

Hence, no terrorist group has yet risen in Northern Côte d'Ivoire, something which has happened in, for example, Nigeria with Boko Haram, a group which is even capable of destabilising the pillars of the central state's institutional system. In a conflict as complex as the one at hand, however, the irruption of secessionist movements, driven by the more bellicose ethnic groups which are the least supportive of the authorities in Yamoussoukro or those who wish for ethnicity or religion to be the determining factors in the organisation and division of the territory, cannot be ruled out.

There is some concern that the armed groups in the north, the same that rose up in arms to support Ouattara in 2011, will demand more compensation or privileges from the central government, thus reigniting the instability in that region.

On the other hand, France's intervention in Mali has marked Côte d'Ivoire as one of the objectives for the terrorist groups which roam the Sahel.

The importance of the former colonial power's interests, backed by the constant presence of French armed units, has resulted in the first attempts to form jihadist cells whose mission would be to carry out attacks inside the country. In 2013, French intelligence services, in cooperation with Côte d'Ivoire's armed forces, dismantled one of these cells, which was made up of twelve Egyptian activists⁹.

Conversely, the collaboration between both countries is one of the main reasons why jihadist cells have not been able to set up camp in Côte d'Ivoire. Joint antiterrorist operations, the means put at the disposal of the authorities in Yamoussoukro by the French and the ongoing surveillance and intelligence work have allowed Côte d'Ivoire to face up to the threat of international terrorism in better conditions than those neighbouring countries which are living with the consequences of Jihadism.

As long as the possibility of violence and civil strife is kept at bay, the current situation should not suffer significant changes. On the other hand, a return to the state of affairs of the first months of 2011 would open new wounds in the Ivorian state and ratchet up the tension and threat to its security. Under this scenario, radical Islamist organisations in the region would try to take advantage of the situation by instigating the uprising of the Muslim population against the government: either disguised in the robes of sharia, or demanding the sovereignty of those provinces where Islam has a greater presence.

⁸ See <http://www.france24.com/en/20120729-mali-african-leaders-ecowas-military-intervention-al-qaeda-ouattara-un>. Last accessed on 28 July 2013.

⁹ See <http://allafrica.com/stories/201306031522.html>. Last accessed on 9 August 2013.

Background to the conflict

From Françafrique to the Coup

1993 in Côte d'Ivoire was one of those years in which a real, sudden change of era takes place. Without hardly any time to assimilate the political transition, with most of the population unaware of what was happening around it, the death of Houphouët-Boigny also brought about the death of the model which the ancient leader had established decades ago. As happens with all regimes which are excessively tied to the enigmatic charisma of a relevant political figure, the country was left reeling. His followers' feeling of orphanage was offset by as many other countrymen's yearning for change and renewal, together with the surfacing of the longing for power of political leaders, who tussled with each other for position in the succession process.

«*Le vieux*» (Houphouët-Boigny's popular nickname) went from being a person who espoused a visceral rejection of European presence in the continent – which he showed during his first years devoted to defending Côte d'Ivoire's agricultural sector, even as he was a member of the French Communist Party – to becoming one of Paris' staunchest allies in Sub-Saharan Africa. This transformation was possible thanks to a military and political triumph that thrust him into the role of leader of the independence process, which ended on 7 August 1960. Thus, he became the head of state during the initial stage of Côte d'Ivoire's journey as a sovereign state, a position he held for over thirty years. From the moment he came to power in Abidjan – back then, the Republic's sole capital – he sought a confluence of interests with the European power. It was obvious that both parties would benefit from a relationship that developed in an atmosphere of cordiality, in which they gave each other support and exchanged commitments for privileges. He was the first Ivorian Head of State to devise the concept of *Françafrique*, which then lacked the increasingly negative connotations it was saddled with as time went by – associated with the most negative and humiliating aspects of the colonial era¹⁰.

What he had in mind, however, was a community of interests – shaped from both shores – which prevailed over the old dependence and exploitation relationship. Governments – as which indeed happened with the Abidjan government during all those years – had a political and military backing that allowed them to stay in power.

The alliance was sanctioned by the Defence Agreement of 1961, which set the bases for the French military presence. The most important item was the setting up of a military base and the permanent posting of se-

¹⁰ A good example of this can be seen in this website, subtitled «La colonisation continue.» <http://www.stop-francafrique.com/>. Last accessed on 2 August 2013.

veral units¹¹, an agreement which was renewed by Hollande when he assumed the presidency¹².

Hophouët-Boigny thus attained considerable security against any potential outside aggression under the protection of the French forces deployed in Ivorian territory. At the same time, they helped to strengthen his authority – with an important degree of coercion – over the country's dissidents even more.

For its part, the European power was successful in its attempt to make itself indispensable for the new state, something which afforded it a very advantageous strategic position in Africa. This good understanding with France bolstered, by way of a sturdy containment wall, Hophouët-Boigny's authoritarian regime for three decades.

Back then there was not much room left for open and frank disagreement. Likewise, elections were never called and the regular presence of opposition forces in the political arena was never allowed.

Whilst the strong, centripetal grip of power – the required counterpoint for political stability in that type of government – helped to maintain a sense of political unity and social peace, the good export figures postponed the appearance of any sign of tension or violence. The economic activity encouraged the migration of foreign workers to regions where the idea of Ivorianness prevailed: hostility towards people from other parts of Western Africa. In time, their absorption into Ivorian society was used to create conflicts among different sectors of the population.

In short, the quasi-legendary leader passed away before some of the essential mechanisms for democratic coexistence had become consolidated, which would have helped to tackle the social and political problems that took centre stage during the frustrated transition process, insofar as a succession whereby different candidates could seek office in free elections never happened.

After the death of «Papa»

So the year 1993 came to an end with the news of the death of the charismatic leader, the African leader who managed to stay the longest in office from independence. It was during this period that the seeds of the tragedy the country went through at the turn of the century were sown. Exactly when the country should have broken with the most negative and counter-productive faction during the decades of PDCI's domination – the party founded by Hophouët-Boigny – with the start of an opening-up and democratic consolidation phase, following a call for all political sides manoeuvring to win a spot in the public debate. After all, the force which

¹¹ See <http://www.aip.ci/169-uNe-1>. Last accessed on 19 August 2013.

¹² The text can be read at <http://legis.ci/traitescoteivoirefrancedefense.php>. Last accessed on 20 August 2013.

had acted as the sole party for almost forty years had built a broad social network around its own interests.

The first multi-party elections took place in 1990, over which the figure of the long-lived leader cast a long shadow. The only alternative then was Laurent Gbagbo, from the Ivorian Popular Front (FPI). Everything went as planned for the official party, which won 81.68 percent of the popular vote¹³. The octogenarian president agreed to call those elections spurred by requirements from the International Monetary Fund and other multilateral bodies. Also by the growing protests that took to the streets of the main cities.

The disturbances, the first of any significance during the post-colonial era, flared up again in the spring of 1991. Violent government supporters stormed Abidjan's Central University and took reprisals against demonstrators calling for reforms that went beyond mere electoral formalism¹⁴.

The transparency of the process was called into question by the FPI, which denounced the arrest and mistreatment of its grass-roots members, but nothing changed the official result¹⁵. Ivorians did not show great enthusiasm for the coming elections, expressing perhaps the population's scepticism and lack of trust in their representatives. During the parliamentary elections of the same year to choose the members of the first democratic assembly, more than two thirds of the voters chose not to exercise their voting rights¹⁶.

Gbagbo – a historian, a veteran union leader with ties to French socialism, an opponent of Houphouët-Boigny, someone who veered towards populism, according to his detractors – only won 18 percent of the votes on that occasion. He was forced to remain exiled for over a decade, between the seventies and the eighties. It was his first attempt at gaining the presidency, something which he would achieve ten years later.

His rivals in the 1995 elections were Ouattara, the head of the RDR (Rassemblement des Républicains), and the winner, Bédié, the leader of the PDCI. They were political figures who emerged from the previous regime and in some way represented its continuity. In December 1993, they strove to fill in the vacant presidency. The fight was short, thanks to Bédié's decision. Seeing himself as the new strong man, he forced Ouattara – the last premier minister under Houphouët-Boigny – to fall back and, ultimately, to retreat to Burkina Faso. It was an embarrassing flight for the country in that it was motivated by the ban against his candidature in 1995; it was a strict application of Ivorianness, as the requirement that the candidates' parents had to be of Ivorian extraction

¹³ See http://www.ipu.org/parline-f/reports/arc/1075_90.htm. Last accessed on 19 August 2013.

¹⁴ See <http://ld.org/docid/3ae6ac6858.html>. Last accessed on 28 August 2013.

¹⁵ See <http://www.nytimes.com/1990/10/31/world/loser-in-ivory-coast-to-challenge-election.html>. Last accessed on 29 August 2013.

¹⁶ Data taken from http://www.ipu.org/parline-e/reports/arc/2075_90.htm. Last accessed on 29 August 2013.

was imposed. Due to the unpredictable ups and downs of life, in the darkness of tribal enmities, he asked his followers to vote for his old rival in order to oust his nemesis Gbagbo during the second round of the tragic 2010 elections¹⁷.

Here is one more anomaly: the presence of three leaders who have stolen the political limelight for 20 years, a democratic dysfunction which has shattered any hope for peaceful coexistence. Voices have stood up in the two parties behind the coalition government – RDR and PDCI – demanding an opening-up and a greater presence of young leaders who can provide the country with new ideas and solutions. Some have decided to jump ship, setting up their own parties or standing as independent candidates in local and regional elections of 2013¹⁸.

Ouattara, whose Malinke identity places his origins beyond the northern border, in Burkina Faso, is a famous economist who gained professional experience working in international bodies and held an important post at the IMF, a phase which coincided with his exile from 1994 to 1999¹⁹.

Meanwhile, Henry Konan Bédié was trying to harmonise social and institutional development with the country's economic situation, which was very positive during his term of office having recovered from the recession brought about by the fall in the price of cocoa in the 1980s²⁰. Alas, it was not to be. Highly influenced by his predecessor, Bédié tried to maintain an acceptable level of political stability, although the corruption which spread during this term – a noticeable sign of institutional deterioration – made the situation worse and precipitated events. On Christmas Eve 1999, a general, Robert Guéi – also an eternal admirer of Houphouët-Boigny – who had been expelled from the Army in 1997, led a coup d'état that led to Bédié being overthrown (Guéi would die during the disturbances of 2002)²¹. Ouattara, who described what had happened as a democratic revolution by the people, was linked to the military uprising²².

¹⁷ As usual, Think Africa Press has published a good analysis. See Eder, Katrin. «Déjà vu all over again: the Ivory Coast's 2015 elections.» Available at <http://thinkafricapress.com/ivory-coast/deja-vu-all-over-again-ivory-coast-2015-elections-cote-divoire>. Last accessed on 7 August 2013.

¹⁸ See <http://maplecroft.com/portfolio/new-analysis/2013/05/22/cote-divoire-faces-continued-insecurities-2015-polls-approach/>. Last accessed on 19 August 2013.

¹⁹ See <http://www.imf.org/external/np/omd/bios/ado.htm>. Last accessed on 8 August 2013.

²⁰ See Coleman, Jonathan R. (et al). «How policy changes affected cocoa sectors in sub-Saharan Africa.» Policy Research Working Papers, World Bank 129, 1993. Available at http://econ.worldbank.org/external/default/main?pagePK=64165259&theSitePK=477916&piPK=64165421&menuPK=64166093&entityID=000009265_3961004125626. Last accessed on 17 August 2013.

²¹ See <http://www.theguardian.com/news/2002/sep/21/guardianobituaries1>. Last accessed on 8 August 2013.

²² See Kamara, Tom, «Côte d'Ivoire: implications of the 1999 Coup d'Etat.» Writenet Paper 01/2000. Obtained from Centre for Documentation and Research (UNHCR), at <http://>

The uprising was announced in the town of Bété, which was contrary to a government led by either Ouattara or Bédié, who were forbidden to make their candidacies official for the 2000 elections.

The 2000-2002 crisis widened the gap between Gbagbo and Ouattara, differences that came to a head again at the end of 2010.

The First Civil War

A move by the military supporting Gbagbo put an end to Ouattara's presidential aspiration. This was countered by the followers of the Muslim leader when they took up arms in 2002. After the uprising in Abidjan failed, they retreated to the north, and ended up fully controlling that half of the country²³.

The sudden irruption of the northern rebels acted as a warning about the imminent ruin that was about to befall the structure of the State. The national, geographical, religious and ethnic divide was revealed in all its crude reality. After a failed attempt at reconciliation promoted by the authorities in Abidjan, the map was divided with a security line separating the two antagonistic projects²⁴.

The armed rebellion of the Forces Nouvelles left more than 2,000 dead and over one million refugees. The same armed group – whose leaders are now in the International Court of Justice's sights – rose up in arms again to impose Ouattara's controversial victory²⁵.

Before, in 2007, the parties at war had made a first effort to come closer and ease the political tension by means of a peace agreement which was signed that year in the capital of Burkina Faso, Ouagadougou. At that time, some analysts were afraid that peace and unity were still very fragile dreams²⁶.

Thanks to this agreement, the presence of international forces and France's and the UN's involvement in peacekeeping activities, the situation was finally normalised.

www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6a6c74.html. Last accessed on 2 August 2013.

²³ See <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/ivory-coast-2002.htm>. Last accessed on 17 August 2013.

²⁴ For more information on this period, go to <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/past/minuci/background.html>. Last accessed on 18 August 2013.

²⁵ For an analysis of these groups, see Balint-Kurti, Daniel. «Cote d'Ivoire's Forces Nouvelles.» Papers and Reports, Chatham House, 2007. Available at <http://www.chathamhouse.org/publications/papers/view/108628>. Last accessed on 7 August 2013.

²⁶ For an analysis of these groups, see Balint-Kurti, Daniel. «Cote d'Ivoire's Forces Nouvelles.» Papers and Reports, Chatham House, 2007. Available at <http://www.chathamhouse.org/publications/papers/view/108628>. Last accessed on 7 August 2013.

The Second Civil War

A new disagreement over the results; back-and-forth accusations of fraud during the drawing-up of voter lists; the manipulation of the never-ending recount; or the spreading of rumours about the alleged corruption of high-ranking officials of the Electoral Commission, a purportedly independent body. All of these factors made it impossible for progress to be made in the resolution of the conflict that was once again burrowing into Ivorian society. Thus, the country went back to a situation it had experienced in the past.

In November of that year, Alassane Ouattara and Laurent Gbagbo vied for the presidency. Both candidates were the only two remaining options for the second round. A few weeks later, however, the ballot boxes piled up in the attic of national tragedies. All of a sudden, the recount of the ballots was replaced with the counting of the victims. Around 4,000 people lost their life in the streets of Abidjan, Duékoué and other places. In command of his followers Gbagbo tried to stop Ouattara's forces from advancing. The latter was driven by an electoral triumph sanctioned by the international community, whereas the former, obstinate, was unwilling to accept that he was not the person appointed by Ivorians to keep managing public affairs. Gbagbo based his fierce resistance on the Republican Guard, some military groups and the Young Patriots, armed groups which surprised everybody with their ability to prolong the conflict under unfavourable conditions, thereby worsening the serious consequences of the crisis. During a campaign of unfettered violence, the Young Patriots partisans slaughtered hundreds of immigrants²⁷. Several of them have been reported for these crimes to the International Criminal Court, of which Côte d'Ivoire became a member in March 2013. But Ouattara's soldiers did not prove to be more compassionate; brutal, they took it out on the defeated fighters and any citizen suspected of sympathising with the FPI²⁸.

When the UN, France and the rest of the international community endorsed Ouattara's election win, the conflict entered a definitive phase. Making use of their years of experience and a consolidated organisational capacity, the Forces Nouvelles marched towards the south, preparing the final assault to the residence of an already lost recluse who stubbornly refused to leave it.

Gbagbo has tried to strengthen his position by controlling the cocoa- and coffee-producing regions, thus forcing his rival to ban the shipping of these

²⁷ See <http://www.hrw.org/es/news/2011/01/26/c-te-d-ivoire-violence-campaign-security-forces-militias>. Last accessed on 21 August 2013.

²⁸ Of all coverage by international media from Côte d'Ivoire, we would like to draw attention to this piece by the British newspaper *The Guardian*, available at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/apr/02/ivory-coast-abidjan-duekoue-gbagbo>. Last accessed on 8 June 2013.

raw materials from Ivorian ports²⁹. International intervention put an end to the conflict as the rumour that the FPI's leader was considering a negotiated surrender was beginning to spread³⁰. His forces fell back in the face of the advancing enemy army. Protected by the mandate to protect the civil population, French commanders and the UNOCI launched an offensive on the last posts held by the president twice defeated at the polls and in the battlefield.

In the early days of April 2011, combat helicopters bombed the positions of Gbagbo's artillery, his last bastion³¹.

After a siege which lasted one day, Ouattara's forces finally took over power. Nonetheless, the defeated forces found refuge in the country's areas beyond the government's reach along the border with Liberia to the west. There, they took to smuggling and other illicit activities and were supported in their violent actions by allied Liberian militias.

Defending the democracy under threat, a recurring theme in supplementing the mandate of protecting civilians as the basis for a controversial intervention³².

Gbagbo was finally arrested and brought before the ICC accused of crimes against humanity³³. Some of his followers, among them the main political leaders of the FPI, were put in Ivorian prisons. From other countries, his current representatives have not stopped denouncing the torture of the prisoners and the harassment of sympathisers in different regions of the country, the same human rights violations which were committed by Gbagbo's most violent supporters. The atmosphere of tension reached its maximum level of antagonism – where opinions become irreconcilable – and violence intensified in those areas with a greater ethnic mix.

The crisis of 2011 aggravated the problem of refugees and added several tens of thousands to the existing figures. Many of them took refuge in communities of the same ethnic background, language or

²⁹ See Bax, Pauline and Olivier Monnier, «Ivory Coast conflict escalates as Gbagbo seizes cocoa exports,» Bloomberg, 8 Mar 2011. Available at <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2011-03-07/ivory-coast-president-gbagbo-takes-control-of-cocoa-and-coffee-exports.html>. Last accessed on 21 July 2013.

³⁰ See <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/apr/05/ivory-coast-laurent-gbagbo-surrender>. Last accessed on 22 July 2013.

³¹ See <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/africaandindianocean/cotedivoire/8441674/Ivory-Coast-UN-and-French-helicopter-gunships-attack-Laurent-Gbagbo-residence.html>. Last accessed on 22 July 2013.

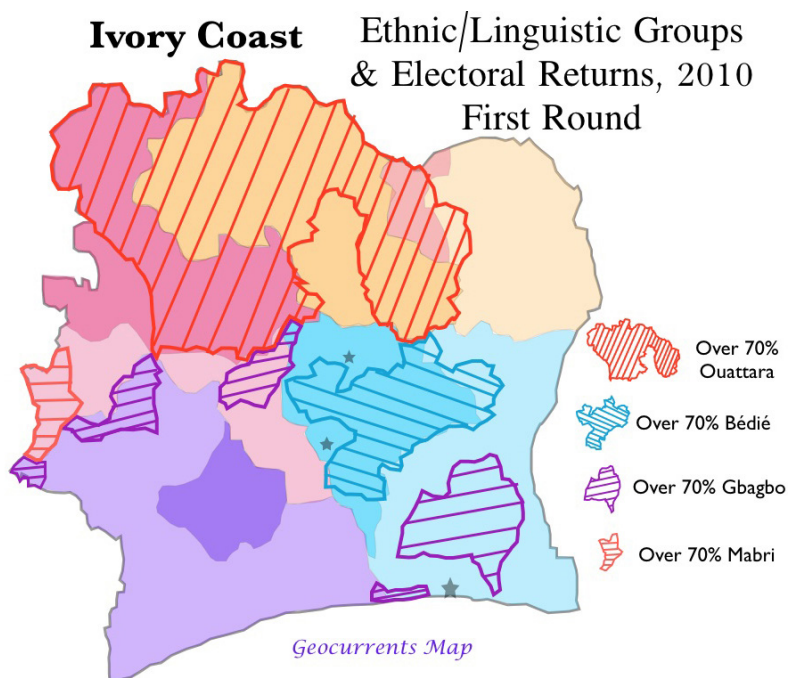
³² See Bassett, Thomas J. and Scott Straus, «Defending Democracy in Côte d'Ivoire,» Foreign Affairs, July-August 2011. Available at <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/67907/thomas-j-bassett-and-scott-straus/defending-democracy-in-cote-divoire> Last accessed 23 July 2013.

³³ Round-the-clock information on the trial of the former Ivorian president at the ICC's website: http://www.icc-cpi.int/en_menus/icc/situations%20and%20cases/situations/icc0211/related%20cases/icc02110111/Pages/icc02110111.aspx. Last accessed on 8 August 2013.

religion in neighbouring countries. The UN estimates that there are almost 50,000 people still in that situation, although it stresses that there have been many cases of successful repatriations in 2013³⁴. These examples stand in stark contrast with the sporadic, unconscionable attacks on refugee camps³⁵.

The captive vote and its motives

There is a debate about whether the captive vote issue which surfaced in the discussed elections can be explained only by the feeling of belonging to a certain ethnic group or sharing the same faith. Some research papers question the «simplified» division into a north faithful to Islam and a south which is predominantly Christian³⁶. Attempts have been made to draw a reliable electoral map in order to help clarify the ultimate causes of the difficult decade Ivorians have lived through since the start of the new century (Maps 6.2 and 6.3)³⁷.



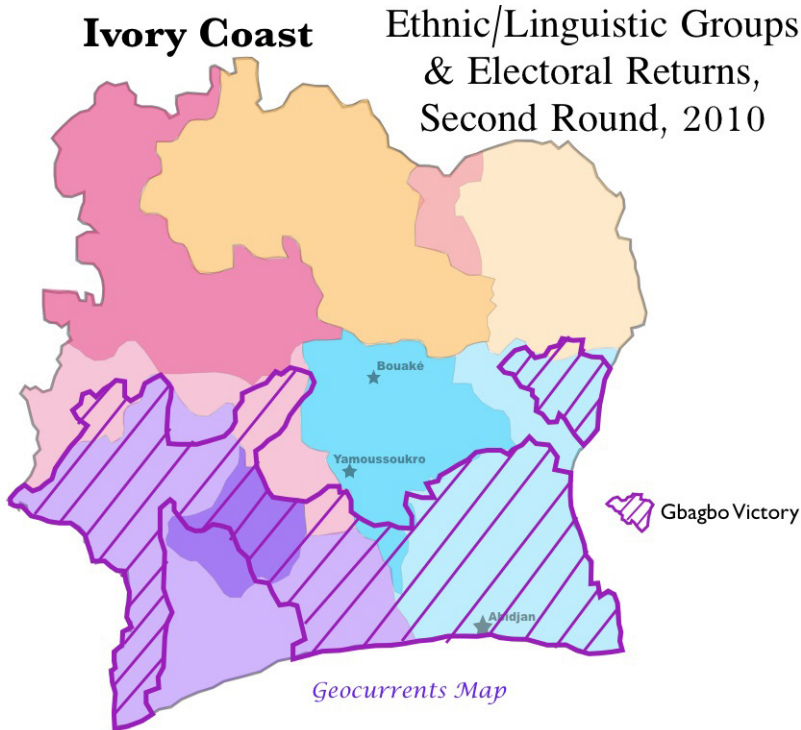
Map 6.2

³⁴ See <http://www.unhcr.org/51f7d5d02.html> Last accessed 2 August 2013.

³⁵ See <http://www.unhcr.org/500e7d349.html> Last accessed 2 August 2013.

³⁶ See <http://www.electoralgeography.com/new/en/countries/c/cote-d-ivoire/cote-divoire-presidential-election-2010.html>. Last accessed on 8 June 2013.

³⁷ Source: <http://geocurrents.info>



Map 6.3

From the data included in this map it can be inferred that the provinces which widely supported any of the two candidates (by more than 70 per cent) showed even more backing in the last presidential elections³⁸.

On the other hand, if we try to draw conclusions from local elections (April 2013) and make a forecast in advance of the 2015 presidential elections, the result is that the likelihood of there being more violence in Côte d'Ivoire has not diminished.

During the voting and recount phases there were incidents in the streets of the main cities: citizens attacked, electoral colleges stormed and ballot boxes forced, something which is not excessively worrying but negative nonetheless.

The opposition decided to boycott the call to vote in new mayors and regional leaders. The FPI wanted to thus express its dissatisfaction with what it considered a weak effort to promote national reconciliation³⁹.

³⁸ <http://geocurrents.info/geopolitics/ethnic-dimensions-of-the-conflict-in-ivory-coast>. Last accessed on 20 August 2013.

³⁹ <http://www.voanews.com/content/ivory-coast-partners-contest-local-elections/1645502.html>. Last accessed on 28 April 2013.

Current situation of the conflict

a piece of information which describes the country's current state of affairs is the absence of noteworthy armed incidents in a reasonable period of time, since the embers of the last war started to die out. A lack of major news is always the best sign that a conflict is cooling off. Nevertheless, there have been isolated events which cast a shadow on the nearest future. There has been news of attacks on population centres, such as the one that took place in 2012 in a hamlet near Abidjan or the one against UNOCI units by the Liberian border. Likewise, several human rights organisations have repeatedly denounced the abuses perpetrated by the armed and state police forces. The harassment of the political opposition and other signs of coercion and violence are common. The establishment of a parallel system of justice is the most troublesome manifestation of institutional fragility⁴⁰.

Despite the fierceness of the Ivorian conflict, recent events leave reasonable room for optimism. An example is the call for dialogue made by President Ouattara. The FPI's initial rejection has softened, particularly after the release from prison of important opposition figures such as Michel Gbagbo. Thus, the unavoidable condition set by this force has been fulfilled: the release of its imprisoned leaders (tens of them have returned to civil life in the past months)⁴¹. Therefore, there are signs that political representatives have a more open attitude and are inclined to find solutions which, in the near future, will allow for coexistence to consolidate and the country to prosper again.

Conversely, the rulings in the trials that are being held in both Ivorian and international courts will have a strong influence on the development of the negotiations⁴², as will the ability of the leaders of the different political forces and armed factions to make their followers comply with future peace or disarmament agreements. On this subject, the composition of the armed forces (Forces Republicaines du Côte d'Ivoire) is one of the most important points, together with the setting in motion of programmes for rebel disarmament and demobilisation. The controversial and complex incorporation of the Forces Nouvelles and other former combatants into the ranks of unified army is still a cause for concern. The failed Ouagadougou agreement is a precedent which is still very fresh⁴³.

⁴⁰ In this regard, see the chapter devoted to Côte d'Ivoire in the Human Rights Watch's World Report 2012. Available at <http://www.hrw.org/world-report-2012/c-te-d-ivoire>. Last accessed on 9 August 2013.

⁴¹ See <http://allafrica.com/view/group/main/main/id/00025877.html>. Last accessed on 29 August 2013.

⁴² See <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=13445&LangID=E>. Last accessed on 7 August 2013.

⁴³ See http://www.ucdp.uu.se/gpdatabase/peace/IVO_20070304.pdf. Last accessed on 7 August 2013.

Hence, analysts and multilateral bodies are observing Côte d'Ivoire's evolution with some hope.

Several UN representatives agree that some progress towards reconciliation has been made.

In one report, from the first quarter of 2013, the Secretary-General of the United Nations praises the steps he has seen during Ouattara's presidency and emphasises the noticeable improvement in the state of safety that prevailed when he was sworn in⁴⁴. Furthermore, Ban Ki-moon lists a series of the biggest threats to pacification. We would like to stress the influence of the presidential and legislative elections of 2015, which can be felt already. The opposition, which was strengthened by the 2013 boycott, demands reforms to open the process and clarify any potential doubt about their fairness and the chances for all candidates to take part in them. For instance, it is likely that the built-up tension will boil over again when the electoral roll is compiled again. Likewise, the people have little trust in the institutions, and it is highly probable that it will worsen if the judiciary does not act with impartiality or the security forces commit new abuses against citizens who express political or ideological hostility towards the government. This sense of disaffection and ill will towards the institutional system has a multiplier effect when violence breaks out again.

With regard to the always controversial distribution of the land, the Parliament recently passed a law⁴⁵ making it easier for immigrants to obtain Ivorian nationality and buttressing the regulation of property by the state.

Coinciding with the 7 August celebration of Independence Day, Doudou Diène, an expert on human rights in Côte d'Ivoire, expressed the need for social catharsis and thereby be able to avoid repeating the events of the recent past⁴⁶.

Nevertheless, it is not easy to attain a collective commitment when some would like to forcibly impose (through military might or institutional coercion) projects based on exclusive feelings of belonging⁴⁷. Therefore, all political, religious and social leaders, who are responsible for embodying that reconciliatory will, must make an additional effort to bring it to fruition by means of specific measures.

⁴⁴ For the full text, go to <http://www.un.org/es/sc/documents/sgreports/2013.shtml>. Last accessed on 11 July 2013.

⁴⁵ See <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/08/23/us-ivorycoast-laws-idUSBRE-97M0Y120130823> Last accessed 23 August 2013.

⁴⁶ See <http://www.un.rg/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=45587&Cr=ivoire&Cr1=>. Last accessed on 07 August 2013.

⁴⁷ On the role of the insurgency's resources, see García Guindo, Miguel, «Insurgencias: la competencia por los recursos como variable explicativa.» Spanish Institute for Strategic Studies. Magazine, No 1, June 2013. Available at: <http://revista.ieee.es/index.php/ieee/article/download/37/34> .

Ivorian political leaders and their role in the coming elections

In this regard, President Ouattara has to juggle a series of significant institutional improvements whilst fostering an atmosphere of sincere political dialogue. In autumn of 2012 he survived with some difficulties a crisis which ended with the resignation of his entire cabinet, apparently due to the difficulties that arose during the parliamentary proceedings to approve a family law (at least that was the official version) by means of which women would have been afforded the same rights as men⁴⁸. Even though his party supported the initiative, the PDCI and those government members outside the discipline of the RDR were adamantly against it⁴⁹.

Well-tested pragmatism, international pressure, and the chance of enjoying another term of office are some of the prerequisites for completing the task, if he manages to lead the country into new phase that breaks away from social and political tension and takes advantage of the opportunities for growth and prosperity which are sprouting in Western Africa, in spite of the adverse circumstances surrounding farm production and bringing down revenue, such as the draught which is behind the falling cocoa exports or the theft and smuggling used by the warlords to finance themselves⁵⁰. Cocoa-growers have also been affected by the government's decision to close plantations near protected jungle areas. They have reported violations of their human rights in the application of the measure⁵¹.

One of the most influential and controversial leaders supporting the current government is Guillaume Soro, the leader of the Forces Nouvelles, who played a leading role when he backed Ouattara during the last chapter of the civil war. Soro has attained an influential position in Ivorian politics, and his loyalties and decisions will be reflected in the longed-for reconciliation. When his militiamen gained control of the north of the country in 2002, he was accused of having committed crimes and abuses against Gbagbo's supporters. Later the Primer Minister in the government of national unity set up, by virtue of the Ouagadougou Accords, this catholic – with ties to France by marriage – as one of the top representatives of the Muslim north.

⁴⁸ See <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/nov/14/ivory-coast-president-dissolves-ouattara>. Last accessed 29 July 2013.

⁴⁹ See Boisvert, Marc-André. «Ivory Coast: it's not just the economy, stupid.» Think Africa Press, 4 Dec 2012. Available at <http://thinkafricapress.com/ivory-coast/government-reshuffle-duncan-ouattara-not-just-economy-gbagbo-trial>. Last accessed on 03 July 2013.

⁵⁰ See <http://online.wsj.com/article/BT-CO-20130430-708879.html>. Last accessed on 29 July 2013.

⁵¹ See <http://reliefweb.int/report/c%3%B4te-divoire/ivory-coast-forest-clearances-threaten-cocoa-exports-human-rights>. Last accessed on 11 August 2013.

In 2007, the plane he was on suffered an attack, from which he walked out unscathed; four of his fellow travellers were not so lucky.

Daniel Kablan Duncan is another of Ouattara's stalwarts. The Finance Minister in Hophouët-Boigny's last cabinet, he holds views which closely mirror the IMF's and the World Bank's recommendations. Even though he represents a past era in Ivorian politics, his pragmatism and his desire to regain high levels of economic growth can be beneficial during the pacification attempts.

On the other side, Gbagbo and his FPI's representatives await the government's measures and statements to justify their refusal or propose further commitments. While the International Court is still considering its verdict on his long sentence, his son Michel has taken on an important role in the FPI's leadership. Before his fellow citizens and the international community he will have to prove with convincing facts – backing up his statements demanding dialogue from the government – that he is willing to negotiate.

If they set out to do it, the political forces could neutralise the armed groups which enter the country through the permeable Liberian border. This goal will not be achieved unless the parties sever their ties to those groups, especially with regard to the funding they obtain from their involvement in criminal activities.

Although he seems to have lost support even in his own party, Bédié's decision to stand for election again in 2015 may re-awaken tension. The people's dissatisfaction with the main political parties will likely result in a fragmentation of the vote during the first round and a high abstention during the final round.

The role of external actors

Unlike other countries in West Africa, such as Nigeria or Angola, Côte d'Ivoire remains on a second tier with regard to the omnipresence of China's investments in Africa, in spite of its imports from that faraway country amounting to 10 percent of the total. Meanwhile, the presence of a large Lebanese community stirred up Israel's interest, which has taken sides during the different political crises.

With regard to Côte d'Ivoire's strategic significance for Spanish interests, it does not differ greatly from what was set out in the chapter on Nigeria and the Gulf of Guinea included in the 2012 edition of the Geopolitical Outlook of Conflicts. The reader is referred to said publication⁵².

⁵² See Bolaños Martínez, Jorge. «Nigeria y el golfo de Guinea: inciertos protagonistas de la inseguridad en África.» In the Spanish Institute for Strategic Studies' 2012

Apart from its particular links to France, Côte d'Ivoire's international relations have been conditioned by the existing tension along its entire border.

France

The 2014 crisis in which Gbagbo's government was involved put an end to a tradition: a rock-solid alliance with Paris. The French Empire's favourite son unleashed, under Gbagbo's orders, an arrogant, violent uprising which was brutally quashed by the European units deployed in the country. Ivorian troops attacked a French military base near the city of Bouaké. In response, the command ordered the destruction of the Ivorian air force, which gave the northern rebels a crucial advantage. In the streets, European soldiers used excessive force to contain the anti-French demonstrations that spread throughout the country, particularly in areas loyal to Gbagbo⁵³.

Several years after the 2004 incidents, France saw it fitting to resume cordial relations with the country which had represented its interests in Africa for decades. In 2008, Nicolas Sarkozy made a statement in this sense, declaring that his country would help to restore stability in Côte d'Ivoire, for which he provided Ouattara with decisive military support. A few weeks after the president from the north was sworn in, Sarkozy travelled to Abidjan to sanction the new era of relations with Côte d'Ivoire.

For his part, President Hollande has maintained the same political line as his predecessor with regard to the former colony where France tried to export its political system. The Malian crisis and the subsequent intervention by French troops reinforce the idea of having allies in a region as complex and determining for European security as Western Africa.

Ghana

If Côte d'Ivoire's relations with its neighbours have been complicated since it gained independence, those with Ghana have been particularly tortuous. They are very similar countries as regards geography and social, ethnic and religious stratification.

Given that the boundaries separating the two major cocoa-producers in the world have been constantly in dispute, the tension between both grew unbearable as a result of the discovery of oilfields in Ghanaian waters but precisely in the border zone. In fact, the reserves straddle the border⁵⁴.

Geopolitical Outlook of Conflicts. Accessible at <http://www.ieee.es/documentos/panorama-de-los-conflictos/>.

⁵³ Sánchez, André, «*Las guerras africanas*,» Monographs, CESEDEN, 2009. Unpublished.

⁵⁴ See <http://www.eia.gov/countries/country-data.cfm?fips=IV>. Last accessed on 29 July 2013.

Such circumstances inevitably require finding a consensual solution to exploit the oil present in those Atlantic waters.

These fields could increase the discrete output of fossil fuels that Côte d'Ivoire has been putting on the international market⁵⁵.

On the other hand, Accra took sides in the Ivorian conflict in favour of Gbagbo and his FPI party, not only by providing material support but also by turning its territory into a safe haven against the action of Ivorian or international justice. A sign of the manifest improvement in the relations between both countries is the fact that Ghanaian authorities arrested and extradited Charles Blé Goudé, Gbagbo's lieutenant, wanted for war crimes and human rights violations during the violent crisis in 2011. Back then Blé Goudé was known as the «Street General» for his harshness and involvement in violent acts as the leader of the Jeunes Patriotes. Likewise, tension regarding the precise location of the border has moved towards a more open and rational dialogue.

After delaying its verdict for several months, Ghana's Supreme Court ratified the victory of President John Dramani Mahama in the 2012 presidential elections. Thus, no substantial changes in the atmosphere of understanding which now reigns in the lands of cocoa are expected to take place.

Liberia

The worst of the Ivorian conflict was seen near the Liberian border. Disagreements about the ownership of farmland and grazing areas; the freedom to roam granted to the warlords who exert their control over the population by coercion.

In the previously mentioned report, the Secretary-General of the United Nations applauds the efforts made by the Ivorian and Lebanese administrations to reverse the situation of widespread violence at the border. Despite its own internal problems, Monrovia sent troops to stop the passage of armed groups and illegal substances. In order to support those initiatives, international forces from the missions deployed by the UN in both countries have patrolled both sides of the border. Consequently, security has somewhat improved, although the situation is still perilously uncertain.

While most Ivorian refugees have been gradually returning to their homes, a large contingent still remains in Liberia. The fear of reprisals, the still fresh memory of recent violence and the land ownership issues delay the decision to return. Therefore, the presence of this people in Li-

⁵⁵ See <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/01/03/oil-ivorycoast-idUSL5E9C33CZ20130103>. Last accessed on 9 August 2013.

berian territory is another determining factor in the bilateral relations. In one of the isolated incidents which have marred the progress made in the diplomatic arena, Ouattara's government claimed that an attack against UN forces in June 2012 was launched from the other side of the border, allegedly by Liberian militias allied with Gbagbo. Seven UN soldiers, eight civilians, and at least one Ivorian soldier died as a result of that armed action⁵⁶.

On the other hand, the recent closing of the borders decreed by the government of Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Liberia's president, is one of the most important steps ever taken to consolidate the good state of neighbourliness⁵⁷.

Burkina Faso

For evident reasons related to the persecution of Burkinabés and their descendants in Côte d'Ivoire – mainly in the southern half – the Ouagadougou government enthusiastically welcomed Ouattara's presidency. The current situation with a president with blood ties to Burkina Faso and the removal of the legal barriers which were imposed on that immigrant minority, the bilateral relations between countries have markedly picked up. Beset by internal problems, with a social movement against his government, President Compaoré has become one of Ouattara's staunchest allies. As long as the FPI does not return to power, no changes in the current situation are anticipated.

United Nations

It was in Côte d'Ivoire where the multilateral body put into practice new policies for protecting the population, which is the victim of violence during crises and armed conflicts: the doctrine known as responsibility to protect.

One of the basic tenets of this doctrine is to use all available means according to the characteristics of each conflict to protect the physical integrity and property of citizens on which the violent vent their anger. Herein lies the distinction between the concepts of human safety and national security.

⁵⁶ See <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/06/09/us-ivorycoast-peacekeepers-idUSBRE8580B220120609>. Last accessed on 29 July 2013.

⁵⁷ Please refer to the agreement signed by both governments and UNMIL and UNOCI representatives a few days after the attack at http://www.mofa.gov.lr/press.php?news_id=574. Last accessed on 29 July 2013.

During the UN Summit of 2005, the member states officially accepted the responsibility-to-protect doctrine⁵⁸. By means of two resolutions approved for that purpose (1674/2006 and 1894/2009), the Security Council ratified its determination to protect civilians in cases of severe crimes against the populations. The UN's resolute intention to make progress in offering the population more guarantees in the event of armed conflict was thus made clearly evident. The criteria which the UN must consider before acting are: the severity of the threat, the principle of proportionality, and the likelihood of success.

In Côte d'Ivoire the responsibility to protect was applied when the intervention in the post-election crisis was approved by means of UN Security Council Resolution 1975 (2011). The document referred to, and condemned, serious violations of human rights by the authorities. Likewise, it reasserted the UN's power to defend the life and assets of the affected citizens⁵⁹.

The UNOCI, the UN's special mission in Côte d'Ivoire, is in charge of applying this set of theoretical principles during its intervention on the ground. This is what happened in the decisive 2011 intervention, which we have talked about several times. The mission was created in 2004 by means of Resolution 1528, of 27 February⁶⁰.

In 2013 the Security Council approved Resolution 2012, which extended by one more year the UNOCI's presence in Côte d'Ivoire. Right now the troops on the ground are being restructured so as to deploy them in the areas where there are more threats⁶¹.

Conclusions and outlook

Starting in the spring of 2011, Côte d'Ivoire managed to slow down the free-fall phase it was immersed in in the social and institutional spheres, a logical consequence nevertheless after the serious conflicts which resulted in the fragility of the State. The relative normality which was achieved when Ouattara was sworn into office prevented the open gap from undermining its institutional system even more. Little by little, the new government managed to bring some stability to the country, from

⁵⁸ For a detailed analysis of its origin, evolution and application, please refer to de Luengo Zarzoso, Marina, «La responsabilidad de proteger en la comunidad internacional y la reforma de los delitos contra la comunidad internacional en el Código Penal: especial referencia al genocidio.» Master's Degree's Dissertation on Security and Defence, UCM/CESEDEN, 2013. Unpublished.

⁵⁹ de Luengo Zarzoso, Marina. Op. Cit. P. 21.

⁶⁰ <http://www.un.org/es/peacekeeping/missions/unoci/>.

⁶¹ See <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2013/sc11082.doc.htm>.

which to view the goals of coexistence, pacification and prosperity as achievable.

However, when the country's actual situation is analysed, the sense of frailty remains. Ouattara's electoral triumph was secured after a fast and decisive international intervention. At the military level, the armed opposition supporting Gbagbo, who was clinging to a denunciation of vote rigging that nobody believed, was crushed. But the surrender of the FPI militias only happened in Abidjan and Yamoussoukro, not in the Bété strongholds. There, nobody was capable of stripping Gbagbo of his heroic aura. The seriousness of some armed incidents which took place after the 2011 conflict has kept Côte d'Ivoire in a state of alert.

Everything depends on the electoral process which will culminate in the holding of presidential elections in 2015. Once the configuration of the roll and other preparations start, there will be some inkling of the actual will of the political leaders and their true capacity for dialogue and collaboration. The calls for dialogue are a good precedent, although they could be relegated to a mere statement of intention if they are not translated into specific actions.

One of the keys to success in the progress towards peace is Ouattara's skill at convincing and leading at this decisive stage inside the country in order to impose the necessary reforms, either of a legal nature or pertaining to the operation of the public administration. In this regard, one of the most serious hurdles is still bringing the legal system in line with fully democratic standards, together with administrative corruption and the abuses of power of which the citizens are victims in any of their manifestations. Improving the guarantees during legal processes would boost Ouattara's credibility. Particularly because the two civil wars have left many pending cases which, if not properly managed, could turn into excuses for a new outbreak of violence. The same is true of the measures applied to eliminate any suspicion that the current government is preventing the opposition from freely participating in the elections or encroaching on the political freedom of its representatives or sympathisers. The boycott to the local elections of 2013 instigated by the FPI and supported by other minor parties is not a reassuring precedent.

Ouattara's government is taking steps in that direction which are being acknowledged by the international community, but it will take time for the positive effects of these reforms, if any, to be felt, and the 2015 elections are not far away now.

If the alliance between Ouattara's and Bédié's forces stands, Gbagbo's FPI will have few chances of returning to power. The acceptance of the results by both parties and their repercussion in the western and other conflictive areas with greater presence of armed factions makes Côte d'Ivoire's future in the medium term even more uncertain.

The international pressure and intervention led by France and the UN may have a relatively effective deterrent effect, especially wherever there is a greater presence of deployed units supported by the state's police forces. At the same time, the conditions placed on the Ivorian government may blur the lines of the conflict's current situation, in particular in the remotest regions where the population's defencelessness is greater. As in the case of Zimbabwe with Robert Mugabe's re-election, among others, a doctrine that prefers a «lesser evil», which sometimes legitimises election frauds and situations in which citizens are left unprotected, tends to prevail. It is true that its practical application can be a starting point for true pacification. However, in many cases the effect is the opposite: to postpone and intensify the outbreak of an inevitable crisis if a more comprehensive approach is not taken. A true effort to adapt, insofar as possible, to the specific circumstances of each society can be an alternative to the doctrines concocted in the labs of multilateral bodies.

All in all, Côte d'Ivoire fluctuates between the recent memory of the two civil wars and the fear of the possible consequences of a tense voting process and a fragile, doubtful, hopeful and uncertain stability which has to be consolidated day by day.

Geopolitical indicators⁶²

TABLE OF GEOPOLITICAL INDICATORS	
Land area	322,463 km ²
Population	22.5 million (2013)
Age structure of the population	0-14 years 38.9% 15-24 years 21% 25-54 years 32.5% 55-64 years 4.4% 65+ years 3.2%
Population growth rate	2% (2013)
Birth rate (per 1,000 inhabitants)	29.83
Death rate (per 1,000 inhabitants)	9.8 (2013)
Child death rate (per 1,000 inhabitants)	61.66
Life expectancy	57.6 years (2011)
Human development index	0.43
Doctors per 1,000 inhabitants	0.14
AIDS prevalence rate	3.4% (2009)
Literacy rate	56.9%
Gross Domestic Product (in billions of US\$)	41.01 (2012)

⁶² Source: CIA The World FACTBOOK.

GDP growth rate (2012)	9.8%
GDP per capita	1,800 dollars (2012)
Breakdown of GDP by productive sector	Agriculture 26.6% Industry 21.8% Services 51.5% (2012)
Percentage of population below the poverty line	42% (2008)
Exports	United States 10% Netherlands 9% Germany 8.4% Nigeria 4.4%
Imports	Nigeria 18,9% France 14.8% China 9.9% India 5.2%
Defence spending (percentage of GDP)	1.5% (2009)

Source: CIA World Facts Book and the World Bank

Chronology⁶³

TIMELINE OF THE CONFLICT	
DATE	EVENTS
1843	French protectorate in the coastal region.
1893	Côte d'Ivoire becomes a French colony.
1904	It becomes part of the Federation of French West Africa.
1960	7th of August: Côte d'Ivoire's independence under the presidency of Félix Houphouët-Boigny.
1961	Signature of the Defensive Treaty with France.
1963	The first constitution of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire is approved.
1970s	It becomes the world's leading cocoa-producer.
1980s	Second half of the 1980s: Economic recession owing to the drop in cocoa prices.
1990	First social unrest. Opposition parties are legalised. Call for elections (presidential and legislative); won by Houphouët-Boigny and the PDCI.
1993	Houphouët-Boigny dies. Henry Konan Bédié becomes the new strong man.

⁶³ Own work.

1995	Constitutional reformation forbidding the sons of immigrants from standing as candidates in the elections. Presidential elections; won by Bédié. Alassana Ouattara's candidature is forbidden; he goes into exile in Burkina Faso.
1999	Coup d'état by General Guéï.
2000	Presidential elections. Guéï proclaims himself the winner but is forced to flee in view of popular protests. Laurent Gbagbo's triumph is acknowledged. October: First fights between Gbagbo's and Ouattara's supporters. The FPI wins the legislative elections.
2001	Several coup attempts fail. March: Attempt at starting a negotiation process between both leaders.
2002-2004	First Civil War. Uprising of rebel groups, which holed up in the north.
2004	Conflict with France, which intervenes militarily. Anti-French protests, suppressed by European soldiers. The country is split between the south (controlled by Gbagbo) and the rebellious north. March: Serious incidents, with several victims, during anti-government rallies. December: The ban against candidates from immigrant parents is abolished. April: The UNOCI (United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire) is deployed.

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Kenya: the politicisation of diversity

Blanca Palacián de Inza

Chapter seven

Abstract

Kenya is an economic and strategic key to the complicated puzzle the countries of eastern Africa make. Being the gateway to the Great Lakes region, Kenya is an element of stability in a very troubled part of the planet. In addition, its work in the fight against terrorism in the region, make it an indispensable player on the international scene. For these reasons, the resurgence of the conflict it endured in 2007, the root causes of which have not been tackled yet, would slow the current economic growth that would not only have an impact on its fragile neighbors like Somalia, Uganda, South Sudan, Rwanda or Burundi, but also for more distant actors that benefit from their partnership in counter terrorism policies such as Europe or the United States, or from their economic interests in the country such as China.

Keywords

Kenya, Somalia, Al-Shabaab, Al-Qaeda, counter-terrorism, China, refugees.

Introduction

Kenya is embarking on a new period in its history, with the approval of a new constitution in 2010 and the presidency of Uhuru Kenyatta, winner of the March 2013 elections. It is nonetheless a delicate time, as the more deep-rooted causes of the ethnic conflict have not been tackled, the most visible effect of which were the violent events following the 2007 elections. Kenya is starting out on a new course on which it will have to do a lot to keep old risks and threats to its security to a minimum, analysis of which is fundamental to understanding the current situation.

Ethnic rivalry

The total population of Kenya, which according to 2013 estimates is over forty-four million¹, comprises over 42 different ethnic groups and none of them represents a majority of the population. Such variety has been and is a source of conflict and most especially when it represents a decisive element in electoral processes, as there is quite a widely-held opinion in the country that the Kenyan leaders benefit those of their own ethnic group to the detriment of others.

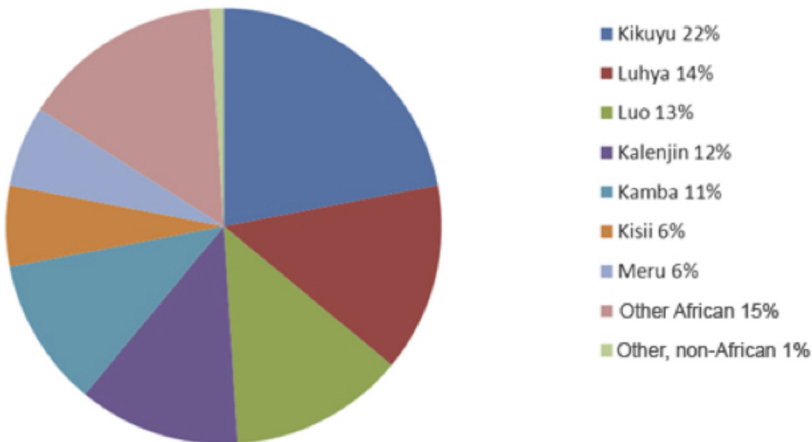


Figure 7.1: Ethnic groups in Kenya. Own material. Source: CIA Factbook

¹ CIA Factbook estimate: 44,037,656.



Figure 7.2: The world situation in Kenya
(Wikipedia)

The most numerous tribes in Kenya are in the main Christian, which is a legacy from the colonial period, although this includes influences from their traditional forms of worship. Among these, the Kikuyu ethnic group has the most representatives, accounting for 22% of the total population. It is established in the areas skirting Mount Kenya, i.e. around Nairobi. Three of the four presidents of Kenya as an independent nation have hailed from this group: Jomo Kenyatta and his son Uhuru, the current president, and Mwai Kibaki. The only one from another ethnic group was Daniel Arap Moi, who was Kalenjin, as is the current Deputy President, William Ruto.

The second most numerous ethnic group in Kenya is the Luhya group. This is a very varied group consisting of 18 tribes, each having its own dialect, who live in the fertile Western Province of Kenya.

Kenya's Luo tribe is part of a larger group, which is established in Uganda, Tanzania, Sudan, Congo and Ethiopia. In Kenya the Luo live in regions close to Lake Victoria, which is why many of them make their livelihoods from fishing. This is the only major tribe that still has not ruled in Kenya, and Raila Odinga, a candidate in the recent March 2013 elections who failed to attain the presidency, belongs to it.

Most of the Kalenjin live in the Great Rift Valley, which is in the western part of Kenya and the eastern part of Uganda. This tribe is well-known for its excellent runners. Of the fifty best times for the marathon, forty have been achieved by members of this tribe².

² Molano, Eduardo S. «Kalenjin: tiranos de largas distancias» (The Kalenjin: the long-distance dictators). ABC. 30/01/2012. At <http://www.abc.es/20120130/deportes/abcp-kalenjin-tiranos-distancia-20120130.html>.

Distribution of ethnic groups

Ethnic groups

- Kikuyu/Meru 22%
- Luhya 14%
- Kalenjin 13%
- Luo 11%
- Kamba 10%
- Kenyan Somali 6%
- Kisii 6%
- Mijikenda 5%
- Turkana 3%
- Maasai 2%
- Others 6%

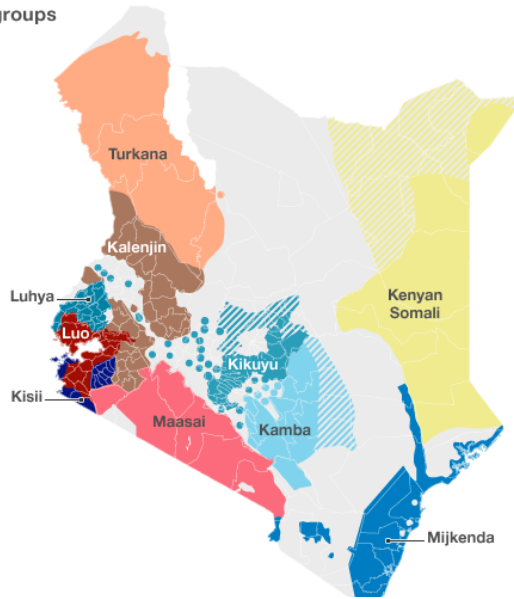


Figure 7.3: Ethnic distribution. Source: Kenyan Embassy to the UN

Economic and financial insecurity

Kenya's economy remains the most significant, diversified and thriving despite the setbacks suffered from the violence after the 2007 elections, the global crisis and the drought which hit the Horn of Africa hard between 2008 and 2011. In spite of this positive trend, the unemployment rate is over forty per cent and per capita income is below 2000 dollars.

This delicate economic situation works in favour of organised crime and/or terrorism and also prompts fear among potential foreign investors. The kidnappings and terrorist attacks in the country have left their mark on tourism and scared off some investors, though not all of them. Certain powers have not been put off, as is the case with China³, which has stepped up its investment efforts, and, mindful of these, certain US companies have not wished to be left behind⁴. The fact is, that despite the insecurity and the risks, Kenya is still the region's transport hub and financial centre and has major development

³ China is Kenya's main import partner of products into the country. According to CIA Factbook estimates, for 2011 it accounted for 15.3% of total imports, these being mainly machinery, motor vehicles, iron and steel, plastics and resins. Of total products imported, a figure was put at some 14.39 billion dollars; the second biggest import partner is India (13.8%), followed by the United Arab Emirates (10.5%), Saudi Arabia (7.3%), South Africa (5.5%) and Japan (4%).

⁴ Blanchard, Lauren. «Kenya: Current Issues and U.S. Policy». Congressional Research Service. 26/02/2013.

projects in the pipeline, such as the construction of Africa's «Silicon Savanna»⁵, in reference to California's Silicon Valley. This is Konza Technology City, sixty kilometres south of Nairobi, which will establish Kenya as the leader in information and communications technologies it has become in recent years.

Another large-scale project with potential to convert Kenya into the giant of Africa is the Lamu corridor⁶, which, if it is completed according to the original plans, will make Kenya indispensable for doing business and investing in the region. The project is intended to reduce reliance on the currently existing corridor between the port of Mombasa and Uganda. This second corridor will connect Lamu Island with South Sudan and Ethiopia⁷. This is a highly ambitious project which will include a port, where a Chinese firm is taking part in its construction⁸, an oil pipeline, a refinery, a new road network, a railway line, two airports, and even the creation of two new cities, in Isiolo and on the coast⁹. Within the context of a project that aims even higher, the corridor will see the creation of the Great Equatorial Land Bridge, which will link up the Indian Ocean with the Atlantic. The potential for economic take-off represented by these projects is huge, both for improving its own export lines, and through serving as a corridor for those of other countries. The main products exported to Europe from Kenya are tea, flowers, coffee and cement, while to the United States these are, above all, items of clothing¹⁰.

A third line of business opening up for Kenya is energy. Despite being a country poor in natural resources, oil exploration activity in recent years

⁵ Fages, Clément. «[Silicon Savannah] Zoom sur Konza City, la Silicon Valley kenyane à 14,5 milliards de dollars». FrenchWeb.fr 21/05/2013. Boris, Jean-Pierre. «Konza, la Silicon city du Kenya». RFI. 29/01/2013.

⁶ The whole project can be consulted at the website www.vision2030.go.ke. Date consulted: August 2013.

⁷ Although the project is known as the Lamu Corridor, its full name is Lamu Port and Lamu Southern Sudan-Ethiopia Transport Corridor (LAPSSET). The ancient city of Lamu is a UNESCO World Heritage Site due to its conservation of Swahili culture. Criticism of this project has focussed on the environmental impact on the entire Lamu Archipelago and the violation of the rights and traditional way of life of the local population.

⁸ Jorgic, Drazen. «Kenya says Chinese firm wins first tender for Lamu port project». Reuters. 11/04/2013.

⁹ On the website <http://www.vision2030.go.ke>, created for the presentation of the Vision 2030 national long-term development plan to industrialize the country, both the Konza city and Lamu Corridor projects can be consulted.

¹⁰ According to CIA Factbook estimates for 2011, Kenya exports the equivalent of almost 6 billion US dollars. The major recipients of these are Uganda (9.9%), Tanzania (9.6%), the Netherlands (8.4%), the United Kingdom (8.1%), the United States (6.2%), Egypt (4.9%) and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (4.2%).

The LAPSSET Corridor Route and The Great Equatorial Land Bridge across Africa



Figure 7.4: The LAMU Corridor and the Great Equatorial Land Bridge.
Source: Government of Kenya

in the province of Turkana by the British company Tullow Oil¹¹ gives reason for optimism in a future where Kenya might become a producer of this asset, which is currently all imported.

With the current situation of steady growth and the future prospects, it is calculated that, in general terms, by 2013 Kenya should have solid GDP growth of 5.4%, which will be 5.5% in 2014¹². The resurgence of the conflict the country went through in 2007 and 2008 (see figure 5 for the impact this had on the economy at the time) would mean a major dampening effect on all these projects and investments which, besides holding back the Kenyan economy, would have a direct impact on its unstable neighbours¹³.

¹¹ Tullow Oil is also involved in prospecting for oil and gas in Ghana, Uganda, Gabon, Ivory Coast, Equatorial Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Senegal, Tanzania, Madagascar, Ethiopia and Namibia.

¹² UNITED NATIONS. Situation et perspectives de l'économie mondiale. Rapport des Nations Unies : L'économie africaine rebondit en dépit d'un ralentissement économique mondial. January 2013. Available at the website www.un.org

¹³ Rolley, Sonia. «Kenya: les dangers de «l'instrumentalisation politique du fait ethnique»». Christian Thibon interview. RFI, 04/03/2013.

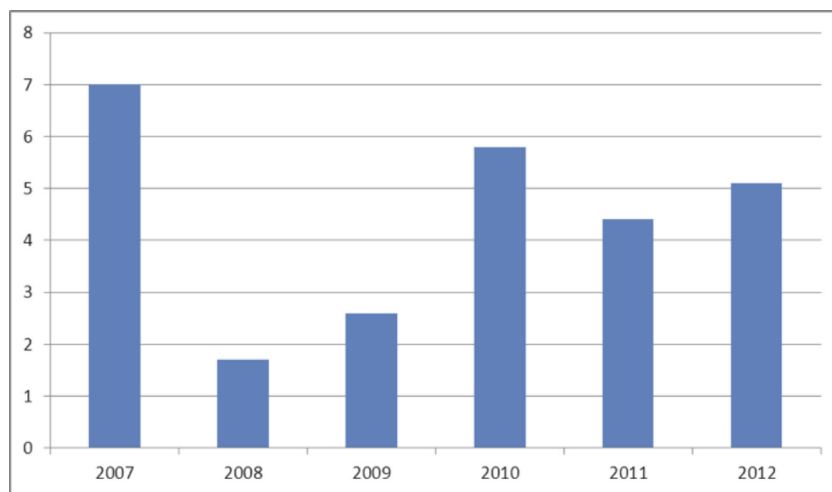


Figure 7.5: Evolution of the rate of growth in GDP (%). Own elaboration. Data: CIA Factbook

Threats to territorial unity

Although the Lamu Corridor project is set to be executed on the coast of Kenya, which is predominantly Muslim, this is an area that has been marginalized from government investment for a matter of decades. The discontent caused by this situation, along with the joblessness and, in particular, the wrongdoing concerning land ownership, has been commented on, fundamentally by the Mombasa Republican Council (the MRC). The members of this movement define it themselves as social and not political and since 1999 have so far peacefully pursued the secession of the coastal strip from the rest of the country. The greatest justification for such a desire for separation, apart from on grounds of poverty and inequality, is the contention that the coastal zone of Kenya was never actually part of the British colony, but was instead only a protectorate, as it simultaneously belonged to the Sultanate of Zanzibar.

Terrorism

As happens in other corners of the world, terrorist groups feed on poverty and hopelessness. It should thus come as no surprise that in this eastern coastal zone terrorist groups related to Al-Qaeda have stepped up recruitment activities among the young¹⁴. Other marginalized areas also lend themselves to terrorist indoctrination, such as the Eastleigh suburb of Nairobi, known as «Little Mogadishu», where thousands of Somalis eke

¹⁴ Ayele, Wossen. «Kenya and its coastal discontents». Al Jazeera, 26/09/2012. On Al Jazeera's website. Date consulted: April 2013.

out an existence and where certain preachers and associations foment unrest¹⁵. Fortunately this phenomenon has not made any progress in the rest of the country.

Terrorism has been a threat to Kenya since when, in the early 1990s, Al-Qaeda established a cell for eastern Africa in territory within its sovereignty. Subsequently, its close ties with the group founded afterwards, Al-Shabaab, has become the greatest threat to the stability of Kenya, other countries in the region, and even the Western powers further afield¹⁶. A clear example of this is the fact that Michael Adebolajo, one of those accused of the murder of a British soldier in May 2013 in London, had been arrested in exactly that zone, being accused of leading an organisation that sought to join forces with Al-Shabaab¹⁷.

But if terrorism is transnational, so is counter-terrorism. Due to its geostrategic position, Kenya is an unquestionably valuable asset in counter-terrorist efforts in the region, both in backing up the work of other countries, and in acting directly against groups of this type. Kenya began its military involvement in Somalia by taking on a key role in the fight against Al-Shabaab since 2011¹⁸. Although no large-scale terrorist incidents have taken place since 2002, with the Al-Qaeda terrorist attack in Mombasa, attacks on civilians, such as the kidnapping of two Spanish women in 2011, or government targets, are commonplace.

Corruption and illegal trafficking

As in other places, terrorist groups use organised crime networks, particularly where illicit trafficking is involved, for which Kenya is also a corridor.

¹⁵ Anzalone, Christopher. «Kenya's Muslim Youth Center and Al-Shabaab's East African Recruitment». Combating Terrorism Center at West Point. October, 2012.

¹⁶ Reinales, Fernando. «Terrorismo yihadista en el Este de África: nexos entre la célula de Al Qaeda en Kenia y al-Shabab en Somalia» (Jihadist terrorism in East Africa: links between the Al-Qaeda cell in Kenya and Al-Shabaab in Somalia). ARI 143/2011. Real Instituto Elcano, October 2011. Available at the website <http://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/>.

¹⁷ The person suspected of killing the British soldier was arrested in Kenya. El Mundo, 26/05/2013.

¹⁸ According to the Report on Terrorism 2012 by the US Department of State, that year was significant in Kenyan anti-terrorist efforts as it showed a firm political willingness to make borders secure, arrest terrorists and cooperate with regional and international efforts in this matter. According to this same report, military operations by Kenya against Al-Shabaab, at first on an independent basis and later on under the aegis of African Union Mission in Somalia, resulted in the capture of the city of Kismayo, a major last stronghold of Al-Shabaab. United States Department of State Publication, Bureau of Counter-terrorism, released May 2013, Country Reports on Terrorism 2012. May 2013.

Asian heroin passes through Kenya bound for Europe and North America, as does methaqualone from India on its way to South Africa, towards where up to 20,000 Somalis and Ethiopians also head who enter Kenya illegally each year. Kenya is the origin, passing place and destination for men, women, boys and girls, who are subjected to forced labour and sexual exploitation, or converted into child soldiers.

Human trafficking is particularly rife in Kenya, and affects both nationals and foreigners, being conducted by means of kidnapping, deception, or simply because the parents sell their children. Although it has an impact on the entire country, the latter form particularly affects the poorer regions, such as the north, where drought often strikes. In these zones many parents force their children into prostitution, which is boosted by the increase in sexual tourism in the country's coastal region. At the RCK, the Refugee Consortium of Kenya, they say that at least fifty girls between ten and fifteen years of age are sold every week to be sexually exploited in the larger cities. It is reckoned that every year trafficking in Kenya affects more than 20,000 boys and girls. They are sold inland to be employed in domestic service, hawking in the street, working in the fields and sexual exploitation. Men, women and girls are sent to the Middle East, other African countries, western Europe and North America, where they work performing domestic chores or manual labour, or, even worse, they are used as slaves in massage businesses and brothels¹⁹.

In the US Department of State Report 2012 on human trafficking²⁰, unlike reports from previous years, it says that, although the Kenyan government is not meeting the minimum standards to wipe out this practice, it is making serious efforts to do so.

Uncontrolled population flows

Owing to its relative stability in such an unsettled zone, Kenya is an extremely important haven, serving a quarter of a million refugees. The Dadaab camp, which has been in existence for over twenty years, is the largest refugee camp in the world, holding half a million people (figure 7.6).

¹⁹ Odhiambo, E. O. S.; Kassilly, J.; Maito, L. T.; Onkware, K., Oboka, W. A. «Kenya's constitution and child trafficking as a security threat», *Journal of Defense Resources Management*, Vol.3, Issue 2 (5), 2012. pp. 80-81.

²⁰ United States Department of State, 2012 Trafficking in Persons Report - Kenya, 19 June 2012. Available at the website of the US Department of State <http://www.state.gov>.

	ORIGIN	DEC 2013
REFUGEES	Ethiopia	12,540
	Somalia	568,060
	Sudan	22,770
	Miscellaneous	23,340
OFFICIAL ASYLUM SEEKERS	Ethiopia	7,610
	Somalia	1,920
	Sudan	13,960
	Miscellaneous	23,590
DISPLACED PERSONS IN COUNTRY	Kenya	280,000

Figure 7.6: Figures on refugees, official asylum seekers and displaced persons forecast by the UNHCR for December 2013 in Kenya. Source: UNHCR

The flood of refugees in Kenya, added to the large number of terrorist acts, sometimes sparks reprisals against the refugee population²¹. The direct outcome of such harassment is that many Somalis are fleeing back towards their country of origin as they sense a climate of xenophobia against them²², or they join the ranks of radical groups within Kenya itself.

Food insecurity

In 2011 the region known as the Horn of Africa was struck by a terrible drought, the worst in sixty years, which hit the north of Kenya, Sudan, South Sudan and Somalia especially hard. The first noticeable consequence was high rates of malnutrition throughout the entire zone. At the time over four million Kenyans needed help. The second result was the shifting population, as they fled starvation. For this reason, although food security has improved considerably in recent years, the situation remains unstable throughout the whole region. In the north of Kenya the situation is in itself delicate, but this is exacerbated by the pressure exerted by a shortage of resources, because many Sudanese and Somalis who fled the drought still live there.

All these risks and threats, both from within and outside, mean that Kenya, though precarious, has become a key player as regards security in the

²¹ Human Rights Watch, *Criminal Reprisals: Kenyan Police and Military Abuses against Ethnic Somalis*, May 2012.

²² Reini, James, «Kenya tensions spark Somali refugee flight», Al Jazeera, 08/02/2013. Available at the website <http://www.aljazeera.com>.

region. Stability in the zone will depend on future economic, political and social development in the country.



Figura 7.7: Recommendations for travel to Kenya. Source: French Foreign Ministry. Crisis Centre. June, 10.2013. Red: strongly discouraged. Orange: discouraged except imperative reason. Yellow: strengthened surveillance. Green: normal surveillance

Background to the conflict

The history of Kenya, considered the cradle of mankind, is a history of fusion with other cultures. Cushitic, Bantu and Nilotic peoples; the Persians and the Arabs; European colonists; Indian workers building the railway; and the waves of refugees from neighbouring countries in conflict are just some examples. The influences have been constant. Their cultural and ethnic diversity, though enormously rich, has been, and is, a source of conflict.

Kenya's colonial period began with competition between the British and the Germans for control over it. In the end Kenya became the second most important colony in the British Empire. In 1895 the British government monopolized influence over what was known as «British East Africa», which in 1920 became the Colony of Kenya, until it gained independence on 12 December 1963.

One year later, in 1964, Jomo Kenyatta, who had led the independence movement and was thus considered by his compatriots to be the founding father of Kenya, became the first president of the Republic of Kenya. He would govern until his death, in 1978²³.

²³ Long periods in power are the trend in Kenya's recent history, which is now embarking on the mandate of the fourth president in its post-colonial history, which spans

Jomo Kenyatta was succeeded by Daniel Arap Moi, who, in 1982, following an attempted coup d'état, brought in a single party regime which was not abolished by parliament until 1991. Despite this, Moi won elections twice more, in 1992 and 1997, but could not run for a third in 2002 due to the restriction on the maximum number of terms in office established by the Kenyan constitution. Uhuru Kenyatta, Jomo's son, was chosen to succeed him as a KANU (Kenya African National Union) candidate. But he did not win the elections; the victor was Mwai Kibaki, who presided over a coalition of opposition parties, and with whom a period began that was plagued with cases of corruption and violent episodes.

In the first four decades of Kenyan independence, the zones where the ethnic communities of the presidents lived, the Kikuyu in the case of Kenyatta and the Kalenjin in that of Moi, and around Mount Kenya in the former case and the Rift Valley in the case of the latter, benefited from sizeable government investment in schools, health services and roads. This dynamic of ethnic favouritism has been, and still is, a source of conflict. Since no single ethnic group represents a sufficiently numerous bloc to win elections on its own, the system requires alliances with other groups, which change according to interests of the moment, as was the case in the recent victorious government comprising the Kikuyu, Uhuru Kenyatta, and the Kalenjin, William Ruto.

The phenomenon of an electoral process being continued by episodes of violence in the streets is nothing new in Kenya's history, even though it has only experienced five democratic elections. On some occasions these violent episodes are fanned by the power groups vying for victory themselves. Impunity and the lack of means to disarm factions, the return of displaced people and resolving the deep-seated roots of unrest (social exclusion, poverty, the division of land, ethnic rivalry, corruption, etc.) have been the customary trend following such events. Thus the elections of 1992, 1997 and 2002 were tarnished by outbreaks of ethnic confrontation, which were boosted by a failure to restore a monopoly on the use of violence by the government in the period after Moi's rule, when non-state violence drew strength²⁴.

In the 2007 elections Kibaki was re-elected by a slim margin over the opposition candidate, Raila Odinga. The belief that there had been fraud sparked two months of rioting, which turned into a serious conflict among ethnic groups, and the post electoral violence was but a symptom of

almost fifty years.

²⁴ Kagwanja, Peter, «Courting genocide: Populism, ethno-nationalism and the informalisation of violence in Kenya's 2008 post-election crisis», *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*. Vol. 27, No.3, July 2009. pp. 366-367.

this²⁵. Although the parties agreed on power-sharing to end the conflict, some analysts classed Kenya in the subsequent period as a democracy at risk²⁶.

The head of the EU electoral mission to Kenya, Alexander Graf Lambsdorff, stated at the time that there was a lack of transparency and that many irregularities had come to light that cast doubt on the result of the process²⁷. Supporters of Raila Odinga, from the Luo ethnic group, took to the streets and clashed with the Kikuyu and Kisii, who were loyal to Kibaki. The security forces reacted with extreme brutality, and members of the communities who supported Odinga were punished harshly. Part of the violence was spontaneous, but investigations pointed to many attacks being planned by politicians from both sides.

To put an end to such acts of violence, two months of negotiations were required, including the mediation of the person who up until 2006 had been secretary general of the United Nations, Kofi Annan, and other African leaders. The final agreement consisted of power-sharing between the two opponents from the elections and intentions to draft a new constitution involving greater power-sharing, thereby attacking one of the causes of the conflict. Mwai Kibaki was appointed president and Raila Odinga prime minister.

The result of these months of violence was over 1,300²⁸ deaths, half a million displaced persons, numerous sex crimes, mutilations and other injuries, thousands of traumatized children and substantial material damage. Another less quantifiable consequence of these clashes was the aggravation of a sense of ethnic identity²⁹, which lives on today as a sign that this particular conflict is only dormant.

Current situation of the conflict

Due to the ethnic clashes following the 2007 elections, the greatest fear of the international community, as well as Kenyans themselves, as regards the elections of 4 March 2013, was the resurgence of such a trage-

²⁵ Barno, Richard, «Kenya: after the crisis, lessons abandoned». African Security Review 17. No. 4. Institute for Security Studies, 2008. p. 176.

²⁶ Diamond, Larry. «The Democratic Rollback: The Resurgence of the Predatory State», Foreign Affairs, March/April 2008.

²⁷ Rice, Xan, «EU observers condemn Kenyan election and call for investigation». The Guardian, 02/01/2008.

²⁸ There is no agreement over the number of fatal victims from those months. The figure of 1,300 dead is the one given by the Kenyan Red Cross. <https://www.kenyared-cross.org>.

²⁹ Barno, Richard, «Kenya: after the crisis, lessons abandoned». African Security Review 17. No. 4. Institute for Security Studies, 2008. p. 173.

dy. From January 2012 up to the date of the election, ethnic violence had already claimed hundreds of lives and over 100,000 people had fled their homes³⁰.

Among the eight candidates who ran for election, the two with a chance of winning the elections were the hitherto deputy prime minister and the prime minister. The former was the Kikuyu Uhuru Kenyatta, in an alliance with the Kalenjin William Ruto³¹, and the second was Raila Odinga, from the Luo ethnic group. Both Kenyatta and Ruto are accused by the International Criminal Court of crimes against humanity committed before the 2007 elections.

Ethnic rivalry, at times prompted from positions of political power, is a factor very much present in the voting of citizens, which provides an indication of the weak sense of national identity of these communities. For this reason, in these elections and in general terms, we can say that Kenyatta won comfortably in the Kikuyu and Kalenjin areas, while Odinga did so too in the Luo and Kamba areas, with Stephen Kalonzo, his number two, being a Kamba.

Although from a strictly non-violence point of view it may be considered that the 2013 elections were a success, the more deeply-rooted causes of conflict in Kenya, of which the post-electoral violence of 2007-2008 were only a taste, remain. Reconciliation commissions were created, which still exist, yet some specialists on the subject maintain that, for one reason or another, the causes were not studied and neither were the changes required to put an end to them³². In the opinion of Mueller³³ these causes are:

- The gradual loss of the monopoly on violence by the State.
- The deliberate weakening of institutions, largely through centralism and the high degree of personalization of power³⁴.
- Political parties with a more ethnic than programme-based substance, with a winner-takes-all attitude to elections.

The new constitution passed in 2010, together with the electoral and political change it espouses, is intended to put an end to this last cause. The constitution this replaces, which dates from 1963, granted a lot of power to the president, who was the head of state and the government and a member

³⁰ Kenya Elections: Interactive Dashboard. Al Jazeera. Available at www.aljazeera.com. Date consulted: March 2013.

³¹ The Kikuyu and the Kalenjin were the two ethnic groups who had the most serious clashes in 2007-2008.

³² In his 2008 article Richard Barno was highly critical of the commissions. Barno, Richard. *Op. cit.* p. 175.

³³ Mueller, Susanne D., «Dying to win: Elections, political violence and institutional decay in Kenya». *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*. Vol. 29. No. 1. January 2011. p. 102.

³⁴ The first president of Kenya, Jomo Kenyatta, ruled for 14 years. After he died, Daniel Arap Moi ruled for twenty-four years, and his successor, Mwai Kibaki ruled for eleven.

of parliament. Nowadays this chamber will have to approve ministers for them to be able to assume such office. The current constitution, approved via referendum with a 67.25% vote in favour, establishes a senate and decentralizes government by distributing power among the regions and districts.

The role of external actors

The conflict which we are examining in Kenya has not spilled over internationally. There are, nonetheless, certain countries which have played, and will play, a decisive role in this new era which is beginning for Kenya.

Although the president and deputy president have cases pending with the International Criminal Court, leaders from all over the world, including from the United States, Germany, the UK, China, Russia, and even the secretary of the United Nations himself, Ban Ki-Moon, have congratulated the winners.

As we have seen, Kenya is an ally of the utmost importance in the war on terrorism in the Horn of Africa, for which reason the international position is by no means straightforward. On the one hand, one cannot turn a blind eye to president Uhuru's responsibility in the events of 2007-2008, but neither is it appropriate to ostracise a president who was elected by his people and turns out to be an indispensable ally with an eye to the security and development of the region.

Somalia

Kenya has borders with five countries with high instability rates: Somalia, Ethiopia, the recently created South Sudan, Uganda and Tanzania. Of all of these the most problematic relations for Kenya, both in the colonial and post-colonial eras, have been with Somalia³⁵.

At present, although having a weak state next door entails numerous risks, the biggest threat is terrorism. The version coming from Somalia has manifested itself in Kenya via terrorist attacks, kidnappings, invasion threats³⁶, and the recruitment of youths in the camps that are crowded with Somali refugees that have settled in Kenya and Kenyans from the most depressed areas, among others.

³⁵ For a deeper insight into relations between Kenya and Somalia see: Chau, Donovan C. «At the Crossroads of Cultures? A Historic and Strategic Examination of Kenya-Somalia Relations». *Journal of the Middle East and Africa*, 1:67-83, 2010. DOI: 10.1080/21520841003689035.

³⁶ In 2009, for example, Al-Shabaab threatened to invade Kenya if the Kenyan security forces and army did not scale down their presence on its borders. These threats have been repeated on other occasions, such as in 2011 after Kenya's show of force following kidnappings of tourists and workers.

«We know how to fight better than you and we have beaten off other invaders. Your attacks on us will lead to the destruction of your skyscrapers and the disappearance of your tourist industry,» said Sheikh Ali Mohamud Rage, a spokesman for Al-Shabaab, in October 2011³⁷.

China

China approaches Africa, like it does the rest of the world, with an essentially economic outlook, rather than a diplomatic or political one. And its economic approach is absolutely breathtaking. From 2007 to 2011, cumulative US direct investment in Kenya was twelve million dollars, while that of China was 230 million dollars³⁸.

Chinese goods are flooding into African markets, with the concerns that this brings for local industry, especially in the textile sector, which is one of Kenya's strong points³⁹.

In 2003 China's vice-minister of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Zhou Wenzhong, made certain statements about Africa that still apply today: «Business is business. We try to separate politics from business... You (the West) have tried to impose a market economy and a multi-party democracy on countries that aren't ready for this⁴⁰».

The Chinese model focusses no heavy investments to build infrastructure, unlike the Western approach, which focusses more on development cooperation via support on government projects⁴¹. Chinese investment in the modernisation of Kenyan roads has thus been positive for the country's general development, which has put China in a strong position to do business in other areas of greater interest, such as oil and minerals⁴². As was to be expected, after the recent elections China congratulated Uhuru

³⁷ Rice, Xan. «Somali Islamists threaten to attack Kenya after military assault». *The Guardian*, 17/10/2011.

³⁸ Report to Congressional Requesters. United States Government Accountability Office. Sub-Saharan Africa. Case Studies of U.S. and Chinese Economic Engagement in Angola, Ghana, and Kenya; a Supplement to GAO-13-1999. February 2013. Available on the web-site www.gao.gov.

³⁹ Although it is not a recent study, Princeton Lyman's presentation is very enlightening regarding the «advantages» which China has in Africa, given that it makes none of the demands in relation to governance, human rights, taxation, etc. that countries in Europe do when investing and trading with that continent. Lyman, Princeton N. «China's Rising Role in Africa». Council on Foreign Relations. Presentation to the US-China Commission. July 21, 2005. Available on the website www.cfr.org.

⁴⁰ Quoted in Lyman, Princeton N., *Op. cit.*

⁴¹ French, Howard. «China in Africa: All Trade and No Political Baggage,» *New York Times*, August 8, 2004.

⁴² Day, Andrew., «Kenya's road to development», Consultancy Africa Intelligence, 16/01/2013.

Kenyatta and continued its policy of non-interference, which it had pursued in previous electoral processes⁴³.

The United States

For these reasons, US assistance to Kenya has in the last decade focussed on improving border control on land and at sea as part of the war on terrorism⁴⁴. US foreign aid to Kenya has swelled to almost one billion dollars a year in the last five years, meaning that it is the biggest recipient of aid from the United States in Africa after Egypt.

Due to its geostrategic importance, Kenya's relations with the United States have involved cooperation ever since the Cold War period. Following the Al-Qaeda terrorist attacks on the US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998, however, this cooperation has taken on a new dimension⁴⁵. Since then Kenya has been on the front line in the international war on terrorism, and particularly since when, in late 2011, it played an active role in the military mission in Somalia against Al-Shabaab.

The United States manages its relations with the Somali government, which was formally recognised by the US government in January, from the embassy in Nairobi, as its embassy in Mogadishu has been closed since 1991.

Unlike the United Kingdom, the interests of the United States in Kenya are not mainly of an economic nature. Kenya does not account for much in the total economy of the United States, although several companies have interests in Nairobi. In recent years US exports to Kenya have in fact declined⁴⁶. Its foremost interests in Kenya are associated with global security problems in the region, such as terrorism and organised crime.

The United Kingdom

The United Kingdom is the country with most interests in Kenya, these being both economic and human. In May 2013 there were some 200,000

⁴³ Kenya and China. The sound of silence: The murky role of one of President Mwai Kibaki's closest new allies. *The Economist*. 07/02/2008.

⁴⁴ Blanchard, Lauren. Op. cit. p.14.

⁴⁵ It participates actively in the US Department of State's Anti-Terrorism Assistance programme (the ATA).

⁴⁶ United States Government Accountability Office. «Report to Congressional Requesters. Sub-Saharan Africa: Case Studies of U.S and Chinese Economic Engagement in Angola, Ghana, and Kenya; a Supplement to GAO-13-199». GAO-13-280SP Sub-Saharan Africa Supplement.

British citizens living in Kenya or who were visiting the country, according to figures from the British government.

British companies are big players in the Kenyan banking industry, and in the tobacco, tea and horticulture sectors too, which are the main export items. For this reason, for the UK the stability of Kenya is of great concern, hence its interest in the security of the region.

Such interests advise caution, as although there had been statements to the effect that contact by the United Kingdom with a leader who was the subject of accusations by the ICC was confined to the bare essentials⁴⁷, the first visit by president Uhuru Kenyatta to a Western country since his election was to London, to meet with prime minister Cameron.

The mediation mission

After the most difficult months of violence following the 2007 elections, the president of Ghana, John Kufuor, as president of the African Union, organised a mediation mission to put an end to the crisis under the direction of former United Nations Secretary Kofi Annan. This was the third initiative after two failed attempts: the first was carried out by the U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Jendayi Frazer, and the second by Kufuor himself.

The mission had the backing of the United Nations and could be considered a success thanks to the role of the international community and its threats to cut off financial support for Kenya if no agreement was reached, as well as the support of the United States and the European Union for Annan's team.

The International Criminal Court

Impunity in Kenya in the face of political corruption and violence has been, and continues to be, the biggest threat to Kenya's long-term stability. Given the lack of response by the national justice system following the post-electoral events of 2007-2008, the International Criminal Court took on protagonism when it began an investigation into events that had occurred. The Waki Commission⁴⁸ delivered a list with the names of the perpetrators to Kofi Annan, a mediator in the conflict, who in turn delivered it to the ICC in July 2009. The ICC confirmed the charges against

⁴⁷ The statements made by Christian Turner, the British High commissioner in Kenya, in February were along these lines. Musau, Nzau. «Diplomats Issue Rare Warning Ahead of Kenyan Polls». Reporting Kenya, 01/03/2013.

⁴⁸ Known by this name because of its president, Philip Waki.

Uhuru Kenyatta and William Ruto, among others, in 2012. Both of them currently have actions against them open under the accusation of crimes against humanity.

Despite these accusations, Kenyans decided to vote for these candidates, who are, after all, Kenya's president and deputy president respectively. During the electoral campaign both of them declared that the accusations were mere set-ups instigated by the United States and the European Union to support the other candidate, Raila Odinga.

It is not possible to predict when the trials will end which, for the time being, are doing nothing except be delayed, but it is possible that they might remain open for the next general elections, which are planned for the year 2018.

Conclusions and outlook

As a document by the International Crisis Group in 2008 concluded⁴⁹, which is perfectly applicable now, the current tense calm in Kenya should not be wrongly interpreted as a return to normality. The prolonged political crisis is deep-rooted and could easily lead to extreme violence again. It is true that major reforms to institutions have been made in the last five years, and that reform of the constitution towards a more inclusive model⁵⁰ augurs a new era for Kenya. But the fact that all the faces are the same as in other times leads one to believe that all is not in readiness. In the words of the journalist, politician and activist, John Githongo: «*the new world is being born, but the old one is yet to die*»⁵¹.

International pressure will remain weak, inasmuch as president Kenyatta, though accused by the ICC of crimes against humanity, has been elected by his people, but above all, to the extent that Kenya is a cornerstone for the security and stability of Europe and the United States. The West needs Kenya more than Kenya needs the west, especially thanks to China's unconditional support.

Because Kenya is not just Kenya. Kenya is also the anti-terrorist operations and the peace-keeping missions in Somalia or south Sudan, the thousands of refugees who remain crammed together in Kenyan camps,

⁴⁹ Crisis Group Africa Report No. 137, 21 February 2008 Page 29 VI. conclusion.

⁵⁰ Monreal, Borja, «Kenia contra sí misma» (Kenya versus itself). Esglobal, 28/02/2013.

⁵¹ «The new world is being born but the old order has not yet died» quoted in Dowden, Richard, «Kenya's election: brave new world or highway to hell?», African Arguments, 29/01/2013. Available at the website <http://africanarguments.org>. Other authors express themselves in the same vein, such as Daniel Branch, who devotes a chapter in his book Kenya: Between Hope and Despair, 1963-2011, to Kenya's more recent history, which he entitles «Nothing Actually Really Changed, 2002-2011».

regional development and the foothold for the long-term stability of Rwanda, Uganda and Burundi. The region's outlook depends on an in-depth solution to the causes of conflict in Kenya: how the land is distributed, the war on the high unemployment rate, the development of democracy and, thus, an end to the use of violence for political designs and the mobilisation of ethnic policy, and control over widespread corruption and impunity.



Figure 7.8: Family of Nairobi.
Source: Daniel Villanueva/Entreculturas

Geopolitical indicators

TABLE OF GEO-POLITICAL INDICATORS ⁵²	
Area 580,367 km ²	
GDP 76.07 billion dollars (2012 est.)	
Structure of GDP	Agriculture 24.2%
	Industry 14.8%
	Services 61% (2012 est.)
GDP per capita 1,800 dollars (2012 est.)	
GDP growth rate 5.1% (2012 est.)	
Trade relations (Exports): 5.942 billion dollars (2012 est.)	
Trade relations (Imports): 14.39 billion dollars (2012 est.)	
Population 44,037,656 (July 2013 est.)	
Age composition	0-14 42.5%
	15-64 54.8%
	Over 65 2.7%
Population growth rate 2.444% (2012 est.)	
Ethnic groups Kikuyu 22%, Luhya 14%, Luo 13%, Kalenjin 12%, Kamba 11%, Kisii 6%, Meru 6%, other African 15%, non African (Asian, European and Arab) 1%	
Religions Christian 82.5% (Protestant 47.4%, Catholic 23.3%, other 11.8%), Muslim 11.1%, Traditional 1.6%, others 1.7%, none 2.4%, not specified 0.7% (according to 2009 census)	
Population literacy rate 87.4%	
Population below the poverty threshold 50% (2000 est.)	
GINI coefficient 42.5 (2008 est.)	
Military spending. Percentage of GDP 2.8% (2006)	

⁵² Source: CIA The World FACTBOOK.

Chronology

TIMELINE OF THE CONFLICT ⁵³	
DATE	EVENTS
1920-1963.	Kenya a British colony.
1964-1978.	Jomo Kenyatta. First president of the Republic of Kenya.
1978-2002.	Daniel Arap Moi. Second president.
1982-1991.	Single party regime.
2002-2007.	Mwai Kibaki. Third president.
2007-2008.	Post-electoral ethnic conflict.
2008-2013.	Government with power-sharing: Mwai Kibaki, president. Raila Odinga, prime minister.
	2010 constitution.
2011.	Kenya begins military involvement in Somalia. Terrible drought in the Horn of Africa.
2012.	The ICC confirms charges against Uhuru Kenyatta and William Ruto.
2013.	Uhuru Kenyatta, accused by the ICC, fourth president of Kenya.

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⁵³ Own compilation.

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Conflict and disputes in the Ferghana valley

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Chapter eight

Abstract

Central Asia is an unknown (but relevant) space because of the geographical and cultural distance. The implosion of the former USSR brought independence for five of the countries, which was designed during the last century to weaken them; interdependences among them are cause of multiples disputes. Three of the countries, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Kyrgyzstan, are in the Ferghana Valley, a very religious Muslim region of historical significance. The problems arising from the weakness of the state (corruption, drug trafficking, terrorism ...) will add to the possible effects of the departure of Western troops from Afghanistan and the replacement of political elites who have ruled since before independence in a political culture of authoritarian regimes in the Russian backyard.

Keywords

Uzbekistan, Central Asia, fundamentalism, Russia, terrorism, corruption, drug trafficking, failed state, Ferghana.

Introduction

When we approach the Islamic world we tend to view it as a uniform, monolithic whole, the quintessence of which is the Arab world. However, it is made up of plural societies; in fact, much more so than their Western equivalents. Conversely, when we study these societies, the typical approach is to take into account their religious facet first and foremost and underrate any other variables (socio-economic, political, demographic...) that are essential to any analysis.

Therefore, the religious sphere takes centre stage and hinders analysis, whilst it becomes a useful tool – sometimes the only one (it seems the world is only explained in terms of what is religious and what is profane) – to articulate all kinds of proposals.

To the Western eye, Central Asia is a vast plateau of steppes and deserts that covers more than four million square kilometres¹; a vague space, distant and unknown², which is neither geographically, culturally nor ethno-linguistically consistent. Bordering on the legendary, it is associated with Alexander the Great, the Silk Road, the Lost Kingdom of Prester John or the Mongol hordes, common places which one must go through.

The group of countries (the Caucasus and Central Asia) that make up the post-Soviet space («*the Near Abroad*,» as the Russians call it) form an arch of instability due to the confluence of a plurality of fault lines that make it an area of miscegenation and transition between cultures which are not very well known in the West, such as the Russian and the Mongol. On top of this, it is an area of geopolitical importance, not only because its nature as a crossroads but also for its reserves of oil, gas and other strategic raw materials.

Thus, the first thing to do is to define what Asia Central means within the context of this paper: the group of Asian countries which lie outside the Caucasus region and originated after the implosion of the Soviet Union, i.e. Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan. In his book «*The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and Its Geostategic Imperatives*,» published in 1998, Brzezinski called it the «*great Eurasian black hole*».

Afghanistan should also be included. In all fairness, Iran, China and even Turkey are part of this space; they exert some influence on and have a cultural presence and unquestionable interests in this area. Indeed,

¹ Martínez Laínez, Fernando. «*El corazón de Asia*,» Revista Española de Defensa, July-August 2009, pp. 71- 77.

² Heathershaw, John, and Megoran, Nick. «*Contesting danger: a new agenda for policy and scholarship on Central Asia*,» International Affairs 87: 3. The Royal Institute of International Affairs, 2011.

some of these territories share a common Turkish cultural root; others, such as Tajikistan – which leans heavily towards Russia – have Persian influences.

This space has historically been populated by three main races, namely: Europeans, Mongolians, and Iranians, whose cross-breeding is the origin of the rest. The mingling of European and Mongols gave rise to the Turks and Tartars; that of Iranians and Mongols, to the Tajiks (meaning «*crowned heads*» in Persian); that of Turks and Mongols, to the Kazakhs and Kyrgyzstanis («*vagabonds*», «*forty tribes*», in Turkish); and that of Turks and Iranians, to Uzbeks (Turkish for «*true men*») ³.

Up to fairly recent times, Kazaks, Kyrgyzstanis and Turkmen were, for the most part, nomadic peoples; nowadays, the region is predominantly rural as four out of the five countries' economies are agriculturally based and comprise 306 million hectares of cultivated land, the most significant crop being cotton ⁴ (in fact, in some of the countries the law envisages that school-age children must leave school and work during the harvest).

There are currently more than sixty-five million Muslims from the former Soviet Union living in the area, mostly Sunnis belonging to two liberal schools of law (*madhabs*): the *Hanafi* and the *Shafi*; however, 75% of the Azerbaijani are Twelver Shia. Around two thirds live in Central Asia and amount to approximately 20% of the population of the old Soviet Union. Traditionally, the most devout peoples have been the Chechen and the Dagestani.

Closer in time, the region is associated with the Anglo-British Great Game ⁵, or Tournament of Shadows, in the words of Count Nesselrode, the head of Russia's official delegation to the Congress of Vienna; this rivalry caused it to split in three. China kept the East and the British Empire the South, whereas the northern region fell in the hands of the Russian Empire, which was anxious to resume the supply of cotton which had been interrupted by the American Civil War while it advanced towards warm seas.

The region is surrounded by four nuclear powers (Russia, China, India, and Pakistan) and by areas as unstable as Afghanistan and the Uyghur Region in China.

Consequently, in what looks like a re-enactment of the Game, other players such as Iran, Turkey, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, the United States and the

³ Hiro, Dilip. *Inside Central Asia*. Overlook Duckworth, London 2007.

⁴ PEYROUSE, Sébastien «*The multiple paradoxes of the agriculture issue in Central Asia*,» *EU. Central Asia Monitoring*. No 6, November 2009.

⁵ The man who coined the term «*Great Game*» was JW Kay in his book «*History of the War in Afghanistan*,» but it was Rudyard Kipling who made it popular thanks to his novel «*Kim*».

European Unions have joined the match (geopolitical and also geoeconomic), thereby giving rise to a complex strategic scenario in which global and regional actors with conflicting interests take part (such as the Irani-Turkish rivalry or the Irani-Saudi rivalry, which was born out of the Islamic Revolution due to an attempt by both countries to expand their areas of influence⁶). Kipling thought the country which was capable of building the best railway network would win the Great Game. Today, it appears that oil pipelines have taken the place of railways⁷.

The Russian presence is the keystone to the balance in the region. Not in vain has it been exercising its control over the region, where many ethnic Russians live, for almost 300 years. Coupled with its experience and language, this means that it has the best information on the area.

Russia is also the preferred destination for the region's emigration (their remittances amounted to 36% of Tajikistan's GDP – one million Tajiks are emigrants and around half a million work in Russia – and 27% of Kyrgyzstan's) and has made important investments and entered into agreements to build gas pipelines for exporting Uzbek and Turkmen gas and to extract gas and oil.⁸ Nevertheless, the Russians do not feel they are being treated with the gratitude they deserve and have mixed feelings.

Every country in the region has its own foreign policy but maintains all types of ties with Russia, Russian being the lingua franca and culture in all of them. Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan want to preserve the balance between the actors in the area (Russia, China and the US), whereas Uzbekistan aspires to be the regional leader and vacillates between siding with Washington (it tried in 2005, but the events in Andijan – the violent repression of rallies in that city left several hundred civilians dead, some say up to 1,700 – warranted the international condemnation of the regime and prevented this) and its strategic alliance with Russia, around which all of them orbit. Russia is the outside mediator in and ultimate determining factor of their policies; meanwhile, they struggle to shrug off its tutelage. The region's network of relations and infrastructures points to Moscow.

Thus, Russian military presence is concentrated in Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. In Kyrgyzstan – a unique case – Russia opened a military based forty km from Bishkek, thereby offsetting the presence of an American base in Manas, which the US set up under its licence to operate in Afghanistan.

⁶ Ahrari, M.E. »*New Great Game in Muslim Central Asia.*» Institute for National Strategic Studies. National Defense University. McNair Paper 47, January 1996.

⁷ Ibidem.

⁸ Martínez Laínez, Fernando. Opus cit.

China's interests in the region lie in the Xinjiang border, given that it attempts to bring this territory's economy in line with rest of the country's and prevent the area's instability from spreading thereto, which in the opinion of some analysts seems to have triggered a case of paranoia in the country's leaders. If this was not enough, China has populations of Huis (Chinese Muslim belonging to the Han ethnic group amounting to about ten million) and groups of Kyrgyz, Tajiks and Mongols with relatives on both sides of the border⁹.

It also sees the region through the lens of its overall policy of resource access and control (in line with the agreements and contracts signed with Turkmenistan in this regard) and is inclined to contain or restrict the military presence of other actors in the area.

China is an actor whose importance is increasing by the minute. This an area of expansion where trade is the spear point; there are also other geopolitical considerations of no less importance (a direct land route to Iran, and reaching the Western world by building a Trans-Asian Railway).

However, the region harbours anti-Chinese feelings, the result of many years of Soviet propaganda. Even so, China gives precedence to its relation with Russia¹⁰, with which it shares a 4000 km-long border.

The US's relations with the area are also complicated insofar as it leaves the country in a quandary as to how to balance its undoubted geostrategic interests and its overall commitment to human rights and a market economy.

Supporting authoritarian regimes as it did in South America during the Cold War is not an attractive option at the global level so its strategic alliances with the countries in the region can only be limited¹¹, something which generates contradictions (as is the case of the «*Silk Road*», which cannot secure funding).¹² Something similar happens in the case of the EU, although without those implications.

Uzbekistan has been smart in playing before the West its card as a corridor for the movement of military supplies to Afghanistan; in compensation for its collaboration, its regime has obtained some «acknowledgement» from and seen an improvement of its relations with the EU and the US. In August 2009, Uzbekistan entered into a military cooperation agreement with the US whereby the latter can ship military supplies to Afghanistan. The prospect of the ISAF's withdrawal from Afghanistan, together with the deterioration of the relations between the US and Pakistan, is the driving force behind the even greater rapprochement between Wash-

⁹ Ahrari, M.E. *Opus Cit.*

¹⁰ Weisbrode, Kenneth «*Central Eurasia: Prize or Quicksand*,» The International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2001. Adelphi Paper 338.

¹¹ Ibidem.

¹² Ibidem.

ington and Tashkent.¹³ Right now they are discussing what to do with the American military equipment in the region after the US exits Afghanistan.

Iran is without question another first-level actor for geographical, historical, cultural and economic reasons, to which the presence of ethnic minorities on both sides of the border has to be added. This requires it to reach a complex equilibrium with each of the countries and with all of them as a whole. The country is indissolubly linked to the Caspian Sea (there are disagreements about how to divide this body of water), from which it thinks it can get through the Western powers' blockade and which it considers to be one of its backyards. On the other hand, these countries rate Iran's strategic situation and the possibility of having access to the southern seas, a way to escape from the Russian Empire.

Tajikistan is the only state to emerge from the old Soviet Union in which a dialect of Farsi is spoken. Its population sees the Persian cultural heritage as its own in spite of a majority being Sunni¹⁴. Iran has been present in its political life in a peacemaking role. Tajikistan approves of the plans to establish a geopolitical and cultural axis between Tehran and Dushanbe via Herat due to its need to overcome Uzbekistan's almost complete blockade which is strangling its economy.¹⁵ However, said cultural proximity represents a challenge in that a cross-border Persian cultural space goes against the official historiographic narrative¹⁶.

Spain's presence in the region is the result of the King of Spain's effort and his excellent relations. Ruy González de Clavijo's ambassadorship to Samarkand in the 15th century was a milestone. Nevertheless, Spanish companies are still finding their footing in the area: MAXAMAM, INDITEC, ACS, Talgo, Repsol, OHL. Uzbekistan has an Embassy in Madrid, headed by Gulnara Karimova, the daughter of the Uzbek president, who has been in power since before the country gained independence. The presence in the country of artists such as Julio Iglesias, football players, and the FC Barcelona's President, Joan Laporta, is worth mentioning, given its incidental but not irrelevant nature (after all, it is a reflection of the way things are done).

Background to the conflict

Central Asia in the 20th century

The Central Asian countries conquered and colonised by Russia (the destinies of the region were governed from Tashkent) in the second half of the 19th century became isolated from the rest of the Islamic world as

¹³ Blank, Stephen. «*The US in Central Asia: Beyond Afghanistan?*» ISN, 2013.

¹⁴ VV.AA. «*Ficha país Uzbekistan.*» Oficina de Información Diplomática. www.maec.es

¹⁵ Ahrari, M.E. *Opus Cit.*

¹⁶ De Pedro, Nicolas «*Asia central y el aislamiento iraní.*» Opinión CIDOB, October 2012.

they stood on the other side of the Iron Curtain, which gradually sealed off the borders. In addition, after the Bolshevik revolution a process of Russification was undertaken to create the new *homo sovieticus*.

At the beginning of the 1920s the *Basmachi* (Uzbek for «bandits»; Uzbeks represent approximately one third of all Muslims from the old USSR) rebellion started to brew in the Ferghana Valley, coinciding with a 62% drop in agricultural output. Operating in guerilla warfare mode, they attacked the Red Army's posts and supplies from the mountains¹⁷.

Later on they were lead by General Enver Pasha, the old Turkish Minister of War, who paradoxically had offered Moscow his services to end the uprising by making a Pan-Islamic and Pan-Turkish proposal. By means of political measures (return of lands given to Russian colonists in the 19th century; policies of respect towards the local culture) and military campaigns, the Soviet regime defeated the movement for good. However, as we will see, these events were decisive in the arbitrary drawing-up of the borders of the new autonomous Soviet republics.¹⁸

The years of Soviet rule changed their social and economic structure to a great extent and greatly damaged the environment. As far as the latter is concerned, the damage was immense, the result of encompassing development, modernisation and destruction in a single act.

Some of the practices that contributed to the degradation of the environment are the following: the diversion of rivers for agricultural purposes, which affected the Aral Sea; the massive use of pesticides for the production of cotton, which lead to the pollution of vast extents of farmland; the construction of chemical and biological facilities and the ill-advised abandonment after independent; and other activities, such as the ones that were carried out in the nuclear testing site of Semipalatinski, in Kazakhstan, or the use of polluted water for human use.

As already mentioned, the Soviet Union made a huge effort to change the cultural identity of the region, going as far as Russifying the names of people; it not only persecuted Islam (even though it tolerated practising in private) but also the cultural model based on that religion.

A sort of «official Islam», similar to Sufism and the *tariqas*, was promoted. Pilgrimages to Mecca were banned; mosques were put in the hands of state institutions which encouraged atheism; border control was intensified in an attempt to isolate towns from their surroundings, coupled with short-term modifications to strengthen the regime.

Ethnic borders were changed and large human masses – entire villages – were forced to move, victims of the punishment after World War II, or in

¹⁷ Hiro, Dilip. Opus cit.

¹⁸ Ibidem.

an effort to stamp out the conflicts arising in the areas where they had settled (Meskhetian Turks, Tartars, Russians, Germans, Chechens...); a vast collectivisation process was undertaken... All of this brought about a true identity crisis which is behind a few of the paradoxes in the current situation and the establishment of important centres of a population – back then partly nomadic – outside the Soviet frontiers.

In the administrative domain, the five aforementioned Soviet Socialist Republics were created by shifting the borders in different occasions, without taking into account economic, ethnic or geographical rationality criteria. Stalin deliberately undermined them through *gerrymandering* so that they could not pose on their own a threat (Pan-Islamic or Pan-Turk) to the central power in the region and to make them interdependent.

Nevertheless, Islam did not play a significant role in the destruction of the old USSR, although it is also true that the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan – one of whose most important command centres was situated in Tashkent – revealed the regime's deficiencies and limitations. Not only that, but it mobilised as part of the occupation army – precisely given their cultural affinity – many of the present citizens of these countries, who thereby warred against nations with which they shared a religion and even a culture. Some of the region's historic radical leaders are former combatants in this war.

The collapse of a USSR incapable of controlling its periphery resulted in an unwanted independence – the opening of some sort of Pandora's box – brought about by the communist nomenklatura itself – the *apparatchik*, who established strong, authoritarian presidential regimes; as is the case of Uzbekistan's president, Islam Karimov, they have been in power ever since. The age of leaders perpetuated by means of elections which cannot be said to have been highly democratic and a hostile attitude towards any other option have prevented any alternatives for change – which could smooth out an eventual transition – from emerging.

All of this made the forms of government heirs to a political culture (old totalitarian formulas applied to new situations, coupled with the will to remain in power at whatever cost¹⁹) which persists even if political transfer and change processes have timidly begun. However, the lack of mechanisms for replacement and of an organised opposition is serious, particularly in view of the age of leaders as charismatic as Karimov; there is no one to take their place. The so-called «*Tulip Revolution*» in Kyrgyzstan – which some have tried to put on a level with the Arab Springs – has not resulted in big changes.

¹⁹ Raisa K. Kadyrova. «*Protection of power in central Asia: using terror as a pretext? A Kyrgyz NGO's vision*» p. 1.

Indeed, the transition from a planned economy to a market economy and the change of values associated with it causes great confusion, even anomie, due to the loss of references, which gives rise to paradoxical behaviours and encourages corruption. Having said that, their economy is far from being a true market economy²⁰.

Thus, as predicted by Brzezinski, the implosion of the USSR created a power vacuum in the area which re-created the conditions of the Great Game.

The Ferghana Valley as the region's geopolitical fulcrum

Without a doubt, one of the geopolitical centres in the region is the Ferghana Valley. It is the birthplace of the legendary King Babur, the founder of the Mughal Empire in India, a country he conquered after the Uzbeks threw him out of his beloved valley, which he missed his whole life, even on his deathbed. It is said he died smelling one of its famous melons. Abu Abbas Ahmadibn Muhammadibn Khatir al-Farghani, a famous 9th-century mathematician, was also born in the valley.

Three countries come together in the Valley: it includes Uzbekistan's three north-eastern provinces, or *oblasts* (Andijan, Ferghana, and Namangan), the three provinces in south-east Kyrgyzstan (Bakten, Jalalabad, and Osh), and Northern Tajikistan. Uzbekistan owns the lowlands, Kyrgyzstan the mountains and Tajikistan the western entry point, with the access roads and rail roads to and from the valley²¹.

The limits of the Ferghana Valley criss-cross from many points of view. To give just one example, which will be explained below: the reservoirs that supply water for Uzbekistan's crops were in Kyrgyzstan; on the other hand, Uzbek cotton was ginned in Kyrgyzstan, whereas the route to ship it out of the valley ran through Tajikistan²².

This valley is a unique area, measuring around 300 km in length and 170 km in width, connecting Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. It is surrounded on three sides by large mountain chains separating each national portion of the valley from the rest of the respective country, for which it is, in spite of its relatively small size, a relevant economic centre (Figure 8.1)²³.

²⁰ For example, in the more authoritarian countries in the region, the prices for cotton are set way below their market value. Children are forced to take part in the harvesting of the crop, which, on the other hand, has ceased to be mechanised since the fall of the Soviet regime (Peyrouse, Sébastien. *Opus cit.*).

²¹ Smith Albion, Adam. «*Ferghana Valley*.» *Jane's intelligence Review*, January 2007.

²² Karaev, Zainiddin «*Water diplomacy in Central Asia*.» *Middle East Review of International Affairs*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (March 2005) p. 2.

²³ Figure 8.1. Location of the valley: Kaynak: <http://www.hgk.msb.gov.tr>. Figure 2. Starr, SF (2011). (2011). *Ferghana Valley - The heart of Central Asia*. New York, London: ME Sharpe.

Conflict and disputes in the Ferghana valley



Figure 8.1

In fact, it is the origin of 25% of Uzbekistan's cotton output, in spite of accounting for only 4.3% of its total surface; 27% of the country's population lives there and five of its ten most important cities are located there. Additionally, it contains 75% of Tajikistan's crop land and houses around 65% of its industrial production.²⁴ In fact, the republics would be willing to exchange and lease territories.

The area is home to approximately fourteen million people, and has very high birth rates; more than half of the population is less than 18 years old. 70% are Uzbeks, 20% are Kyrgyz, and the rest Tajiks. The population density in some parts of the Valley reaches 2,300 inhabitants per square kilometre.²⁵ It is the most populated region in the area²⁶.

The thing is that the populations are intermingled and there are ethnic enclaves. Uzbeks are an important minority in Tajik (31%) and Kyrgyz (27%) areas of a different ethnic origin and social background (rural, clan-based)²⁷. Hence, it holds one fourth of the twenty-nine million Uzbeks, one third of the seven million Tajiks and half of the six million Kyrgyz. On the other hand, there is a high level of inter-ethnic marriages and multilingualism is widespread, which help to defuse tensions.

All the industry on the Tajik side was destroyed during the 1992-1997 Civil War in Tajikistan, and the country plunged into unemployment and poverty. According to its own 2009 statistics, 53% of the population is poor and 17% very poor. The average monthly wage is \$50. The de-industrial-

²⁴ Weisbrode, Kenneth *Opus Cit.*

²⁵ *Ibidem.*

²⁶ Raisa K. Kadyrova. *Opus Cit.*

²⁷ Ahmedova, Fatimakhon and Leitich, Keith A. «Ethnic and Religious Conflict in the Ferghana Valley,» *Journal of Central Asian Studies*, 6:1 (Fall/Winter 2001), p. 2.

isation process has made the country's rural population jump from 63% in the 1980s to 77% in 2009. Furthermore, it has serious energy needs.²⁸

The Kyrgyz part relied on Soviet subsidies for its agriculture and stock-breeding. On the Uzbek side, the poor management of the resources has been disastrous for its agriculture and associated industry. With a population where the majority is under-age, many have been forced to emigrate to Russia or Kazakhstan. The unemployment rate is incomprehensibly high.

The Valley has experienced a profound impoverishment after the collapse of the Soviet model and the disappearance of the industry and due to a lack of economic resources, which has resulted in a marked increase of unemployment (which ranges between 70% and 80% of the population²⁹) and tensions among the different countries. This is compounded by the fact that Tashkent buys Valley products without the returns being at a comparable level.

Current situation of the conflict

The countries in the Valley. Shared problems

The result of the collapse of the Soviet Union is that states which had grown together, interconnected and specialised, from the start took increasingly divergent paths afterwards – which caused an immediate impoverishment and loss of quality of life – looking for their own benefit and thus exacerbating the differences. If Uzbekistan now calls upon Timur (Tamerlane), the Kyrgyz talk of Manas³⁰.

They are opaque states and impenetrable societies as a result of both their culture and the years of control and repression. They all have big problems with corruption (in a 2011 study among 178 countries, Tajikistan came out in 154th place, Kazakhstan in 105th, Kyrgyzstan in 165th and Uzbekistan in 172nd), nepotism, inefficiency, lack of political freedom, drug trafficking, terrorism, environmental degradation and so on which hinder the yet unfinished *state-building* process.

Even though Tajikistan has suffered a civil war which has left half a million dead (other sources talk of «*more than 50,000*»), the implosion of the USSR did not plunge the region into chaos; its effects were postponed right up until the dawn of the second millennium.

²⁸ Matveeva, Anna. «Tajikistan: 'Revolutionary situation or a Resilient state,» *EU. Central Asia Monitoring*. No. 12 - December 2009.

²⁹ Various authors. «Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU),» *Jane's Terrorism and Insurgency Centre*. 21 February 2013.

³⁰ Martínez Laínez, Fernando. *Opus cit.*

The area's source of stability is Uzbekistan. Indeed, Uzbekistan is the strategic fulcrum of the region given its power plant and central location: it borders the other countries but not China or Russia, which allows it to make its decisions with a significant degree of autonomy. In fact, the other countries have levels of consolidation as states which are substantially lower than Uzbekistan's.

The region is home to about sixty-five million people. Uzbekistan has a population of twenty-nine million; Kazakhstan, of sixteen million; Tajikistan, of eight million; Turkmenistan, of six million; and Kyrgyzstan's of six million. The region is expected to accommodate seventy-three million souls by 2025.

The countries are culturally and ethnically diverse. Kyrgyzstan is slightly smaller than Great Britain; more than 90% of its landmass is mountainous and only 12.5% can be farmed³¹. Two thirds of the population is Kyrgyz, approximately 10% are Uzbeks and another 10% Russians. Their societies are very plural, whilst having pre-state social structures – clans, hordes – which weaken them.

Independence entailed the collapse of the economy and soaring unemployment. Central Asia's poverty indices range from 40% and 83%. Almost one quarter of Uzbeks live with less than three dollars a day.³² According to UN data, in 2004, one sixth of Tajikistan's six million people could not support themselves – it is the poorest country in the region. One third of the children who are born do not receive enough food, which affects their development; seventy-two out of every 1,000 children do not live to be five years old. In 2001, after five years of civil war, 83% of Tajiks were below the poverty line³³.

Relations in Central Asia are highly strained as a result of the quarrels among the administrations, given that the geographical distribution does not match the ethnic distribution. Thus, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan are hard to govern from a geographical point of view because they are divided by mountains which cannot be crossed all year long. Their northern and southern portions are isolated from the rest. Some areas can only be accessed from Uzbekistan, but the latter makes it very hard for the former to get to their territory and to use its road and rail links³⁴.

Tajikistan shares a 1,400 km-long border with Afghanistan. The main ethnic minority in the latter is the Tajik (almost 30% of the total pop-

³¹ Uzbekistan has less than 10% of cultivable land. Kazakhstan, 8%; Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, around 6.5%; and Turkmenistan, less than 5%. Peyrouse, Sébastien. *Opus cit.*

³² Various authors. «Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU).» Jane's Terrorism and Insurgency Centre. 21 February 2013.

³³ Raisa K. Kadyrova. *Opus Cit.*

³⁴ Karaev, Zainiddin *Opus Cit.*

ulation). As a result, Tajikistan is the main route for all heroin that enters Russia³⁵.

The Uzbek-Kyrgyz border is 1,295 km long. By the end of 2004 there were still 260 km to be delimited, including the Uzbek enclave of Sokh and the Kyrgyz enclave of Barak. However, the 970 km of the Tajik-Kyrgyz border have not been demarcated yet, an area covering 40,000 ha. The most disputed areas are those which were temporarily transferred and those from which oil is extracted or which have industrial or farm uses. The disturbances of April 2013 in Vorukh³⁶ (a Tajik enclave in Kyrgyzstan), involving the taking of hostages and the abuse of agents on both sides of the border, are an irrefutable expression of this state of affairs.

Every country in the region has an important number of Tajiks and Kyrgyz living outside and of Uzbeks inside; conversely, a significant part of Uzbekistan's population lives outside the country. Tajikistan – which was part of Uzbekistan in the 1920s – believes that it has lost its most important cultural centres (Tajik-speaking), Samarkand (where Karimov was born) and Bukhara, which causes a powerful feeling of inferiority with regard to Uzbekistan. It also feels its survival is no less linked to Uzbekistan's than to being capable of enduring their domestic problems³⁷.

The thing is that the appearance of borders which did not take ethnic peculiarities into account in an area which was considered a singular entity and where people were free to roam broke these countries' geographical unity, particularly in the Valley. Borders which did not exist in the past and now separate those who were united, including families, and make illicit (smuggling) activities which were legal before – in addition to others which have always been illegal (terrorism, drug trafficking...).

Problems are made worse by synergies. Hence, drug trafficking finds a favourable environment in poverty and the proximity to the Afghan production centres as well as in the funding by Islamist organisations with the capacity and means to produce and distribute the drugs. And drug trafficking has a host of other associated criminal behaviours.

This has resulted in administrative restrictions to the movement of people (difficulties in obtaining visas) – ³⁸ some unnecessary and others arbitrary – which have been imposed by authorities which locals view as distant and uninterested in their troubles. This is compounded by the existence of important contradictions among the different legislations,

³⁵ VV.AA. «Ficha país Tayikistán». Oficina de Información Diplomática. www.maec.es.

³⁶ Olimova, Saodat Informe bimensual, May 2013. www.asiacentral.es.

³⁷ Weisbrode, Kenneth. *Opus Cit.*

³⁸ VV.AA. «*Central Asia: Border Disputes and Conflict Potential.*» ICG Asia Report No 33, 4 April 2002.

which opens a way for extortion, bribery, smuggling, etc. and exacerbates inter-ethnic distrust, generating conflicts – some of them violent – in which administration officials have taken part.

The most visible aspect of these tensions has been the destruction of border posts³⁹; also, the death of quite a few citizens from third countries at the hand of people of the same ethnicity (Uzbeks) when attempting to cross the borders illegally.

In 2000 President Karimov set an agenda which explicitly mentioned security was the first priority. In a speech he stated: «*There is only one policy here: security, security, security.*» The year before, militants from the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) had launched an attack from Tajikistan and had penetrated deeply into the Kyrgyz portion of the Ferghana Valley, but did not reach Uzbekistan.

In view of these circumstances, Uzbekistan strengthened the control of its borders by taking measures aimed at restricting movement – even going as far as mining fields, which isolated certain enclaves which up to that point had had freedom of roam. It imprecisely laid mines on the Tajik and Kyrgyz borders from the air; 3,000 mines were thrown per square kilometre in some areas. The mining of the forty-two km of Kyrgyz border inside the Valley was particularly intense.

These mines have caused many victims, mainly Uzbek civilians living in Tajikistan. De-mining efforts since 2004 have eased tensions⁴⁰ but they have not been very effective because there are no accurate maps pinpointing their placement⁴¹.

The security issues have left other relevant issues out of the agenda, and local issues have been pushed aside in favour of other considerations. A perfect example of this was the destruction in 2005 of the bridge over the River Karasu, a strategic infrastructure for the area from the economic point of view in that it allowed goods (Chinese) to go through between Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan; it was rebuilt by the population in clear disregard for President Karimov's regime's policy.⁴² The difficulties to move inside the country should also be mentioned (especially with hazardous goods such as gas).

Uzbekistan's nationalist fear of the development of a Tajik culture associated with separatism makes it present itself in the West as a dam against the expansionism of the Russian and Persian Empires. Although their re-

³⁹ Galina M. Yemelianova «*The Rise of Islam in Muslim Eurasia: Internal Determinants and Potential Consequences,*» China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly, Volume 5, No. 2 (2007) pp. 73-91.

⁴⁰ Kadyrova, Raisa K. *Opus Cit.*

⁴¹ Smith Albion, Adam. *Opus Cit.*

⁴² Ibidem.

lations are not particularly stressed,⁴³ the Kyrgyz think they might end up as a Kazakh protectorate as a result of Uzbek coercion. On the other hand, the Tajiks believe the Uzbeks might regain control the Khanate of Bukhara, annex Khujand and the rest of Tajikistan, and return Gorno-Badakhshan to Afghanistan so as to be incorporated into Badakhshan⁴⁴.

It is also worth mentioning that, as a consequence of those fears, and even before independence – in the Soviet era, there had been anti-Jewish pogroms and, particularly, attacks on Meskhetian Turks, which had been expelled from Georgia by Stalin (the last pogrom in the Ferghana Valley took place in 1989), organised, according to different sources, by the intelligence services of the time. These persecutions are behind these Turks' gradual exit from the country.

These processes became more recurrent and affected other minority or relative minority collectives within the context of the new societies: Uzbeks, Tajiks... Furthermore, other peoples in the area, such as the Germans, the Russians or the own local minorities, returned to their countries (the Germans went back Germany after the Reunification), considerably changing the demographic map.

The events of 2012 in Kyrgyzstan – Osh, Jalalabad and, generally, in the entire southern region (a strategic corridor linking Russia, China and Afghanistan) – are a good example. Back then, the government lost control and the distributions spread nearly throughout the entire country. As a result, several hundred people were left dead, mostly Uzbeks, and around 2,000 houses were destroyed, mainly from Kyrgyz citizens belonging to that ethnicity. What sets this pogrom apart from the one which occurred in 1990 is that this time there were not Russian forces deployed in the area⁴⁵.

The reasons remain unclear but are associated with poverty and an ethnic hatred that easily gives rise to and spreads rumours, certainly coupled with anti-Uzbek nationalist policies. This is compounded by the authorities' unfair treatment at the local level (e.g. ethnically Uzbek Kyrgyz, which are being associated with separatism, have been deliberately excluded from the administration and deprived of media in their own language), something which has generated fear and a feeling of helplessness. In turn, this has driven many to emigrate and even some to join Islamic movements. It could even bring about the intervention of the Uzbek Armed Forces – the most important in the region, which still

⁴³ Jani, Feruza «*Relations between Iran and Central Asia*,» at:<http://enews.fergana-news.com/article.php?id=2520>.

⁴⁴ Weisbrode, Kenneth *Opus Cit*.

⁴⁵ Various authors.«*The pogroms in Kyrgyzstan*,» International Crisis Group Asia Report No 193, 23 August 2010.

have some capacity to go beyond their borders no matter how antiquated they are⁴⁶.

Central Asia is a dry and arid land which, however, has an ancient rural tradition. This is the reason why between the 1960s and 1970s the region was transformed by means of an impressive irrigation system and turned into a vast cotton plantation. However, this emphasis on farm production had devastating consequences: the Amu Darya and Syr Darya rivers, the main tributaries of the Aral Sea, were diverted, causing a major environmental disaster⁴⁷.

Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan mainly export raw materials for processing. Just in 2009, Uzbekistan exported more than four million tonnes of cotton, around 90% of its production.

Moreover, after they gained independence, they were not able to maintain the Soviet system of water distribution and tensions appeared. The growth of the population, the expansion of farmed areas, the increasingly greater degradation of the watering systems, and the failure to move to other types of crop (rice and cotton require a lot of water) have aggravated a problem that adopts the form of a zero-sum game affecting the least favoured social groups in the region⁴⁸.

Hence, the uneven distribution of the water from these rivers has forced Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan to use it as a tool to redress their relations with Uzbekistan in other spheres – as the latter has done with regard to gas. Kyrgyzstan has 40% of the water resources and only uses 7% of the water, leaving the rest to the other countries. This prevents them from using water to generate power in the winter to gain access to it in the summer. There are tensions with Uzbekistan because Tajikistan wants to build a large hydroelectric plant in Rogun⁴⁹.

Additionally, releasing water in the winter to produce power could damage the crops and the irrigation and water storage systems of neighbouring countries. The irrigation systems are extremely inefficient as a result of poor maintenance (around 50% to 70% of the water never reaches its

⁴⁶ VVAA. «*Kyrgyzstan: widening ethnic divisions in the South*,» International Crisis Group. Asia Report No 222, 29 March 2012.

⁴⁷ The non-stop use of surface irrigation lead to the salinisation of the soil ruining 8.6 million acres of land which have had to be put out of production, which then has encouraged the use of chemical additives in an attempt to improve its state, with the resulting increase in pollution. (Various authors, «*Great Game in Muslim Central Asia*» Institute for National Strategic Studies. National Defense University McNair Paper 47, January 1996.)

⁴⁸ VVAA. «*Central Asia: Water and Conflict*,» International Crisis Group. ICG Asia Report No 34, 30 May 2002.

⁴⁹ VVAA. «Ficha país Tayikistán». *Opus Cit*.

destination)⁵⁰. There are few water use agreements and those in place are not observed; if they are, the price of water is inadequate.

The problems of the disputed territories, together with the water question, have resulted in inter-ethnic conflicts and border skirmishes which have been swiftly adorned with ethnic and nationalistic motives leading to violent fights between farmers.

The presence in the area of organisations such as the Collective Security Treaty Organisation – whose charter was signed in 2002 and which draws together, under Russian leadership, many of the old members of the Soviet Union is comparable in structure and scope to NATO – have had a stabilising effect up until now.

The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), headed by Russia and China, brings together the countries with more population and resources and arose to fight the so-called three plagues, a reflection of their shared concerns: extremism, separatism, and terrorism. Conversely, its other purpose is to offset the presence of other actors in the region. It has a permanent anti-terrorist structure head-quartered in Tashkent.

However, Uzbekistan recently quit the Collective Security Treaty and has restricted its involvement in the SCO in an attempt to leave the Russian orbit (in fact, at the end of 2008 it suspended its participation in the Eurasian Economic Community) while it tries to balance its relations again and looks for support from China and the West, something which even in the medium term will be hard to gain⁵¹.

The role of external actors

Regional implications. Terrorism, religion and political persecution

Central Asia is a contradictory and heterogeneous region. For instance, religious fervour varies from area to area and even within the same country; additionally, there are several versions of Islam. This is the result of the survival of a traditional religious culture inside the Soviet Union⁵².

As a result of this dualist regime, in practice, today there is an official Islam fostered and controlled by the government, a softened version of Islam which descends from the mixture of communism and religion of the Soviet era and the local Sufi tradition. There is another Islam which sometimes has fundamentalist overtones and is also a reflection of other problems or the tool that is used to channel them. These ultramontane

⁵⁰ Ahrari, ME. *Opus Cit.*

⁵¹ VV.AA. «Ficha país Uzbekistan». *Opus Cit.*

⁵² Various authors. «Is radical Islam inevitable in Central Asia? Priorities for engagement.» International Crisis Group. Asia Report 72, 22 December 2003.

formulations, some of which originated outside the region, have attempted to fill in the gaps and shortages – among others, the absence of literature – resulting from years of religious repression with doctrine.

The prevention exercised by the area's countries (such as the ban on missionary activities, including those of a Christian nature, the restrictions on studying in foreign countries, or even the restriction of pilgrimages), a heir to the political culture of the past, has been increased from the start as a consequence of the political movements of religious forces that have occurred after the independences and, above all, the Tajik Civil War, which after the country gained independence pitted a government straight out of communism against the forces of the United Islamic Opposition, a group built around a diffuse form of Islam.

In general, Islamists hardly have any influence on the policies of the region's governments, particularly in Uzbekistan, which is deeply secular and centralist and has banned the setting up of parties on ethnic or religious grounds and established strict measures to control religious activities. In Tajikistan the incorporation of the Islamists into the power structures has led to their modulation and moderation.

Nevertheless, the Islamist question must be interpreted from several points of view – not only from a religious standpoint but also from a perspective of social structuring and protest – since it includes local and regional elements, involves *warlords*, and is useful to set out other problems⁵³. Frustration and a lack of expectations create an ideal breeding ground, whereas the religious call acts as a rallying call and allows to articulate dissent. Misery and the lack of prospects can make radicalism look attractive.

Moreover, religion, chronic poverty and dissident persecution (which are also part of their political culture) have created a feedback loop which makes every turn of the screw even more violent⁵⁴. Some analysts, such as Ahmed Rashid,⁵⁵ suggest that these measures may well end up radicalising the moderates, apart from bringing the country to the attention of human rights organisations and preventing countries such as the US from getting too close⁵⁶.

Hence, the Uzbek government is widely criticised for its intransigence with religious practice and the possibility this might push the Muslim population towards radicalism. Women are often fined for wearing the burka. Those who often go to unsupervised mosques are commonly harassed.

⁵³ Ahrari, ME. *Opus Cit.*

⁵⁴ Smith Albion, Adam. *Opus Cit.*

⁵⁵ Skinner, Elizabeth «*Strategic Insight: Russia and Eurasia Enduring Freedom for Central Asia?*» Center for Contemporary Conflict (CCC), 2002.

⁵⁶ Jane's Islamic Affairs Analyst, «Central Asia's Muslim keystone».

With the official pretext of preventing petty thefts, in February 2012 the police installed cameras in the main mosques of the Ferghana region, the country's most conservative in terms of religious practice⁵⁷.

The countries in the region, such as Tajikistan, have become more tolerant, particularly after the US's intervention, but have toughened out their stance against Islamists (e.g. Tajikistan has banned groups such as *Tablighi Jamaat* and does not allow the questioning of American involvement)⁵⁸.

On this subject, we must keep in mind the reactions caused by the assassination in Karasu of one of the country's most important imams, Mohamadrafiq Kamalov⁵⁹. Apparently, he allowed the Hizb ut-Tahrir movement to carry out its activities inside rooms in his mosque in spite of it being a party banned in all Central Asian republics. The authorities admitted that his death was the result of a joint operation between Uzbekistan's and Kyrgyzstan's national security services⁶⁰.

Indeed, the Ferghana Valley is one of the most devout places in Central Asia; Islam has been present there since the 8th century. As we have seen, the Valley resisted Soviet domination in the 1920s. It is worth mentioning that Uzbekistan shares a 137 km border with Afghanistan.

Islamist movements spread throughout Central Asia in the 1980s within the context of the Cold War, coinciding with the Afghan War and under patronage from different countries – mainly from Saudi Arabia, which, taking advantage of the independence processes, sent missionaries from the Middle East to the area; this is why they received the generic name of *Wahhabis*.

Islam thus became an element for channelling the opposition against the current regime. These movements were represented by the Islamic Rebirth Party (*Islamskaia Partiiia Vozrozhdeniia*), whose presence is currently only allowed in Tajikistan.

Other Islamist organisations appeared during the 1990s, such as *Hizb ut-Tahrir*. In Uzbekistan they are treated as terrorists, no matter how much they reject violence. As of 2004, the members of this organisation in Uzbekistan amounted to 4,000 out of 7,000 or 8,000 people in jail for terrorist activities⁶¹.

⁵⁷ VV.AA. «Ficha país Uzbekistan.» *Opus Cit.*

⁵⁸ Matveeva, Anna. *Opus Cit.* ROTAR, Igor. «Kyrgyzstan: imam's killing seen as attack on independent Islam.» *Forum 18.org.*

⁵⁹ Rotar, Igor. «Kyrgyzstan: imam's killing seen as attack on independent Islam.» *Forum 18.org.*

⁶⁰ Alonso, Antonio. «Kirguizistán, 2007: oportunidades y desafíos» UNISCI Discussion Papers, No 13, January 2007.

⁶¹ Various authors. «Uzbekistan heads towards violent regime change.» *Jane's Intelligence Review*, July 2005, pp. 12-19.

Also during the early 1990s, in the Ferghana Valley the *Adolat* (justice) movement – the Uzbek branch of the Islamic Rebirth Party – took control of the Namangan *oblast* and imposed a light form of Islamic government, which lasted until it attacked the official clerical class and questioned Karimov's legitimacy. In 1992, he replaced the governor and the repression started. In 1997 another violent outbreak took place in the Namangan and Andijan *oblasts* when a chief of police was beheaded; this resulted in new repressive measures⁶².

In 1998, during the Tajik Civil War, after the parties reached an agreement (with Russia's blessing) which excluded the Uzbeks (mostly in the Kujand valley), Colonel Mahmud Khudoiberdyev, from the Lakai people, an Uzbek ethnic group, invaded this valley but could not consolidate his positions or take the capital, so he fled to Uzbekistan⁶³.

In 1997, members of *Adolat* – Juma Namangani and Tahir Yuldashev – started the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan in Tajikistan with the aim of overthrowing President Karimov, creating an emirate in Central Asia and restoring Islamic order. Its first base of operations was the Ferghana Valley – where many of its militants are from – in order to destabilise the three countries which meet there⁶⁴.

Uzbekistan has bombed without authorisation Islamist positions in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan and carried out intelligence operations and even kidnappings, as well as joint operations with the Kyrgyz⁶⁵.

The regime's pressure managed to drive out the IMU from Uzbekistan, which meant it had to set up camp in Tajikistan, and from which it operated via Kyrgyzstan. It was also expelled from there, and it moved to Afghanistan. After the occupation of this country by the US and the successive operations which managed to eliminate their leaders several times (its founders and several generations of successors), the IMU must have settled down in Pakistan's tribal area (FATA) with very weakened military capabilities. It appears that the movement has regained its strength in Northern Afghanistan through drug trafficking activities and it has operated again in Tajikistan. It has been estimated that its forces stand as of 2013 at 5,000 fighters⁶⁶.

The IMU has planned its actions with Taliban groups and Al-Qaeda, on which side it has fought. In fact, a group (the Islamic Jihad Union) splin-

⁶² Weisbrode, Kenneth. *Opus Cit.*

⁶³ *Ibidem.*

⁶⁴ VV.AA. «Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU).» Jane's Terrorism and Insurgency Centre. 21 February 2013.

⁶⁵ Weisbrode, Kenneth. *Opus Cit.*

⁶⁶ VV.AA. «Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU).» Jane's Terrorism and Insurgency Centre. 21 February 2013.

tered from the IMU to join Al-Qaeda⁶⁷. Likewise, from their Afghan base, it has established ties with other Jihadist groups, especially Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), with which they even carried out spectacular operations.

Hizb ut-Tahrir is a Pan-Islamic party which has been banned in the three countries even though it has been present there since 1990. Nevertheless, it renounces violence and tries to base its political action on preaching and teaching – partially sharing IMU's goals, while promoting a common Islamic identity at the global scale, as far as its transnational dimension, which is a cohesive factor that distinguishes it from the IMU and brings it closer to populations which reject the dominion of local barons as much as the presence of borders that condition their daily life⁶⁸. Sharing ends with the IMU, however, means violence is just one step away. Some researchers estimated that as of 2007 it could have between 30,000 and 50,000 members, a number which would be even larger if their relatives are deemed sympathisers.

It is a strictly clandestine organisation which behaves as a populist party – a *catch-all party* – that espouses Islam in generic terms as the answer to any problem without putting forward specific solutions. The space of anomie and loss of references which the fall of the USSR left in its wake is an excellent springboard. There, its bases are uneducated youth; 10% are women⁶⁹. The IRP, which is legal in Tajikistan, has more moderate, pro-government positions since it had access to power.

Nonetheless, *Hizb ut-Tahrir* is seen as a greater threat than other groups operating in the Ferghana Valley which are less organised and have fewer forces: *Akramiya*, *Uzun Soqollar (Long Beards)* or *Islam Lashkarlari (Islamic Army)*⁷⁰.

The result of repressive policies which with the religious issue – in general, any form of dissent or protest – has been tackled and which mistake traditionalism for radicalism has thrown the opposition right into the arms of Islamists. On the other hand, the governments, particularly Uzbekistan's, have used the presence of terrorism as a kind of *carte blanche* to deal with any problem while requesting support from the West to escape the Russian orbit.

Conclusions and outlook

Polemological factors are the causes that underlie conflicts. Conflicts are not monistic but multi-causal phenomena. The concurrence of sev-

⁶⁷ Various authors. «Uzbekistan heads towards violent regime change.» *Opus Cit.*

⁶⁸ Galina M. Yemelianova. *Opus Cit.*

⁶⁹ *Ibidem.*

⁷⁰ Alonso, Antonio. *Opus Cit.*

eral of these factors increases the likelihood of conflicts, but does not guarantee they will happen. There is no room for determinism insofar as events which at a given time and in a society have been the cause of conflicts, at another time and in the same society they have not. This does not mean that conflicts are unique phenomena; they are singular, but can be predicted.

Central Asia appears as a distant place bordering on myth, so it is not particularly attractive to Westerners in that the darkness of the Iron Curtain has combined with a cultural intermingling whose components are alien to Western societies. A simultaneously «*transitional and in-transition*» space where a plurality of forces and interests of regional and global actors converge.

The Ferghana Valley is the heart where the area's three central countries (Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan) and their problems meet, which gives rise to arguments with a strong emotional component.

Of course, colonisation is traumatic for those societies which suffer it, but decolonisation is also no less painful. Furthermore, any independence process entails the amputation of a part of the identity, especially if it involves a separation.

The break-up dynamic the region has suffered affects the daily life of many of its inhabitants, who see how a distant power that does not represent them influences and changes their life in a way they see as arbitrary. Within this framework, the relations between Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, with constant border troubles but also many shared elements, are particularly relevant and a cause for concern.

The fact that in the 21st century there is still talk of pogroms, racist disturbances or massacres, such as the one in Andijan, in a country which belongs to some European institutions is especially transcendent, as is the loss of references which the change of axes and values as a result of the end of the Soviet regime brought about. A change in political culture is necessary.

Many of the problems which affect the new states (borders, water management, population, minorities, ethnic groups, the environment...) are very important and require a multidimensional approach that includes political, ethological, economic, social and other components.

Matters such as drugs, which in some areas of the region serve as a currency, are critical, especially when other problems such as rampant corruption, very low public salaries, and wide sectors of the population below the poverty line are taken into consideration. As already mentioned, Uzbekistan has a 137 km-long border with Afghanistan. Taliban groups, warlords and other terrorists have found in drugs an important source

of financing for their activities, which creates an ever more worrying symbiosis.

The departure of American troops from Afghanistan starting in 2014 can become an added element of destabilisation in a Balkanised region and even reach Moscow, from whose orbit – despite China’s entering the Great Game – they can hardly escape. Another question is what will happen with the American equipment used in Afghanistan.

An added danger is the replacement of the septuagenarian Uzbek president, given that there is a dearth of solid political alternatives in the country as a result of repression.

Islam is a statistically indisputable element shaping the identity of the region’s inhabitants – practising or not. Religious issues, however, mask many other problems which consequently cannot surface. In other words, the problem is not religious in nature; in all likelihood, the solution will not be either. An end has to be put to the offences that give rise to terrorism, rather than to terrorism itself. Alternatively, religion – even fundamentalism – must not be turned into a terrorist phenomenon that allows any policy to be justified.

The problem lies less in the strength of terrorists and rather in a lack of governance in countries built to be weak and affected by a myriad fractures which, on the one hand, have been inherited from the past and, on the other, are the result of the modification of the geopolitical scenario and of the centrifugal forces to which they are subjected to.

Geopolitical indicators⁷¹

TABLE OF GEOPOLITICAL INDICATORS		UZBEKISTAN	KIRGUISTAN	TAYIKISTAN
Surface area km ²		447,400	199,951	143,100
GDP (2012) trill US\$		104.7	13.47	7.59
Structure GDP/ Working population	Agriculture	18.5%	20.2%	47.9
	Industry	36.4%	27.3%	10.9
	Services	45.1%	52.5%	41.2
GDP per capita (2012) US\$		3,500	2,400	2,200
GDP growth rate (2012)		8.12%	1%	7.5%

⁷¹ Source: CIA The World Factbook.

Conflict and disputes in the Ferghana valley

TABLE OF GEOPOLITICAL INDICATORS		UZBEKISTAN	KIRGUISTAN	TAYIKISTAN
Unemployment rate		4.8% (official data), plus 20% of underemployed	8.6% (official data)	2.5% (official data)
Trade relations (2012) trill US\$ (Exports):		16.65 Russia 20.9%, Turkey 17.1%, China 14.7%, Kazakhstan 10.3% Bangladesh 8.7%	2,294 Uzbekistan 25.3%, Russia 20.9%, Turkey 17.1%, China 14.7%, Kazakhstan 10.3%, UAE 5.5%, Turkey 4.2%	1,359 Russia 8.3%, Turkey 30.2%, Iran 7%, China 6.7%, South Korea 6.7%, Afghanistan 6%, Italy 5.1%
Trade relations (2012) trill US\$ (Imports):		15.53 Russia 21.4%, South Korea 19.1%, China 15.1, Germany 7.4%, Kazakhstan 5.6%	4,272 China 59.7%, Russia 22.1%, Kazakhstan 5.2%	3,778 China 45.9%, Russia 16.4%, Kazakhstan 6.8%, USA 4.1%
Population (2013)		28,661,637	5,548,042	7,910,41
Urbanisation rate		36%	35%	26%
Age composition	0-14	25.3% (2013)	29.7%	3.4%
	15-64	70.0%	65.4%	63.5%
	+65	4.7%	4.9%	3.2%
Population growth rate		0.94%	0.89%	1.823%
Ethnic groups		Uzbeks 80%, Russians 5.5%, Tajiks 5%, Kazakhs 3%, Karakalpaks 2.5%, Tartars 1.5%, other 2.5% (2010)	Kyrgyz 64.9, Uzbeks 13.8%, Russians 12.5%, Dungans 1.1%, Ukrainians 1%, Uyghur 1%, other 5.7% (1999)	Tajiks 79.9%, Uzbeks 15.3%, Russians 1.1%, 3%, Kyrgyz 1.1%, other 2.6% (2000)
Religions		Muslim 88%, Orthodox 9%, other 3%	Muslim 75%, Orthodox 20%, other 5%	Sunni Muslim 85%, Shia Muslim 5%, other 10% (2003)
Population literacy rate		99.3%	98.7%	99.7%
Percentage of population below the poverty line (2011)		17%	33.7%	39.6

TABLE OF GEOPOLITICAL INDICATORS	UZBEKISTAN	KIRGUISTAN	TAYIKISTAN
Refugees	NIL	5660 Uzbeks (2011)	NIL
Domestic displaced people	3400 (2007)	172,000 Uzbeks as a result of Kyrgyz violence	NIL
Gini coefficient	36.8	33.4	32.6
Military expenditure % of GDP (2010)	3.5%	2.8%	1.5%

Chronology⁷²

TIMELINE OF THE CONFLICT	
DATE	EVENTS
4th Century BC	Alexander crosses the Oxus and occupies Sogdiana and Bactria
5th and 6th Centuries AD	First migrations of Turkish groups towards Central Asia
1220	Genghis Khan conquers Central Asia and founds the Mongol Empire
1370-1405	Tamerlan's empire
1510-1512	Babur is defeated by Shabani Khan, flees Samarkand, and conquers India, founding the Moghul Empire.
1860-1865	The Russians conquer the Khanate of Kokand
1868	The Russians take Samarkand
1876	Annexation of Kokand
1918	Basmachi revolt
1920	The Government of the Steppes becomes the Autonomous Socialist Republic of Kyrgyzstan. Turkmenistan splits into the autonomous socialist republics of Turkmenistan and Karakalpakstan
1924	All administrative entities dissolve and the Central Asia map is redrawn under the theoretical principle of "one ethnicity, one territory". The soviet socialist republics of Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, and the autonomous republics of Tajikistan (inside Uzbekistan), Kyrgyzstan (referred to as Kazakhstan from 1929) and Kara-Kyrgyz (referred to as Kyrgyzstan from 1929), and the autonomous region of Karakalpakstan
1929	Tajikistan becomes a soviet socialist republic.

⁷² Own work.

1936	Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan gain status as soviet socialist republics The Autonomous Republic of Karakalpakstan incorporated into Uzbekistan
1979	Russian intervention in Afghanistan
1990	Inter-ethnic disturbances in Uzbekistan
1991	Independence processes
1992-1999	Tajik Civil War
1997	The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan is formed
2001	Creation of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation
2002	The Collective Security Treaty Organisation is created The US occupies Afghanistan
2005	Andijan massacre
2008	Uzbekistan ceases to be involved in the Eurasian Economic Community
2010	Racist disturbances in Osh and Jalalabad
2013	Uzbekistan ceases to be involved in the Collective Security Treaty Organisation

Source: www.cidob.org.

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Afghanistan: on the eve of a decisive 2014

Francisco José Berenguer Hernández

Chapter nine

Abstract

The 2013 summer campaign was the last one to be conducted with a large number of foreign troops. By the end of this year, less than half will be on Afghan soil. The transfer of full responsibility to the Afghan government continues, while an increasing number of Afghan units are capable of acting autonomously. But in contrast to this positive data, we must take into account the fact that violence is still part of everyday life, the current negotiations are progressing slowly and without tangible results to date, and the economic future of the country is uncertain. Ultimately, the post-2014 scenario is still full of uncertainty.

Keywords

Central Asia, Afghanistan, Taliban, ISAF.

Introduction

Instead of the development of the expected insurgent offensive in summer 2013, at the time of writing these words, it is the country's future beyond 2014 that occupies the analyses, concerns, and forecasts of the countries most directly involved in one way or another in Afghanistan and the rest of the international community.

Although, clearly, the security matters are still of the utmost importance, aspects such as governance and especially those of an economic nature are the foremost of the concerns of the Afghan government and the foreign administrations involved in the present and future of the country.

This chapter attempts to provide an update on the situation of the Asian country, with particular emphasis on the three aforementioned aspects.

Background to the conflict

Given the continuity of this conflict in the series of the *Geopolitical Panorama of Conflicts*, we will limit ourselves to the immediately recent background.

In an irreversible process of transition, there have been recent changes in the pace of this transition and, therefore, the initial concept of gradual transfer of the areas of least insurgent activity has been replaced in successive *tranches* by the transfer of security responsibilities to the ANSF of the most conflictive areas of the south and east of Afghanistan.

Staying with the initial idea, the Afghan forces would have to assume control of the most dangerous areas with a reduced presence of foreign troops, while in this way they are doing so with still considerable support from the outside contingents. This has involved the assumption of risks in full awareness, with such risks being considered less than those offered in the first plan made for the transition process.

Following the signing on 23 April 2012 by Leon Panetta, US Defense Secretary, and President Karzai, of the strategic agreement between both countries, which outlines the Afghan scenario beyond 2014, preventing a situation similar to that experienced in Iraq and which caused the possibly premature exit of all US forces in that country, there is a feeling of greater calm in the international community related to the future of Afghanistan.

This commitment was confirmed during the NATO Chicago Summit in May 2012, at which it made a special statement regarding Afghanistan¹, reaffirming the commitment of the organisation and its constituent countries

¹ http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_87595.htm?selectedLocale=en.

not to abandon Afghanistan to its fate at the end of the transition period on 31 December 2014, at least until 2017. It is very likely that this commitment will, when the time comes, have to be renewed beyond the final date, because it is difficult to imagine that a transition towards a stable, reasonably secure and economically viable country will be achieved in just five years.

Current situation of the conflict

Levels of violence

We should emphasise how the trend observed in the previous year has not only been confirmed but also increased. Thus, we must add the 30% drop in incidents between January and August 2012 in comparison to 2011 to the figures related to the number of security incidents and victims caused, which were considerably better in 2011 than in previous years, while the figure «only» fell by 10% between September and December².

These figures appear to invite optimism, but a more sedate study indicated an increase in violence in the last third of 2012, which according to various analysts may be due to the low level of precipitation – mostly in the form of snow – in this period, thus creating conditions more propitious to insurgency actions than other winters. In the same way, there appears to be a relationship between the number of day labourers employed in the poppy harvest and insurgent activity. A reduced harvest last year logically required less personnel, some of whom increased the high percentage of occupational insurgents seeking a living from this activity. This circumstance would justify the slight increase of 1% in insurgent attacks³ in the harvest period compared to the same period of the previous year. So we have to consider whether the general observed reduction of incidents was solely due to the action of the security forces or if, conversely, they are subject to unpredictable and uncontrollable factors such as weather, or the impact of combating drug trafficking.

Unfortunately, this possible trend appears to be confirming itself at the present time, given that since the start of the year until the middle of February 2013, security incidents increased by 6% compared to the same period in 2012. Therefore, this represents a slight pick-up in violence that, while moderate, threatens to break with the positive trend of the last two years. We will have to wait for autumn this year, once the insurgency's traditional summary offensive has been concluded, to confirm the actual

² Report A/67/778–S/2013/133, of the United Nations General Assembly and the United Nations Security Council, of 5 March 2013.

³ US Defense Department, *Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan*, December 2012.

trend at these delicate times of transfer of security responsibility to the ANSF (figure 9.1)⁴.

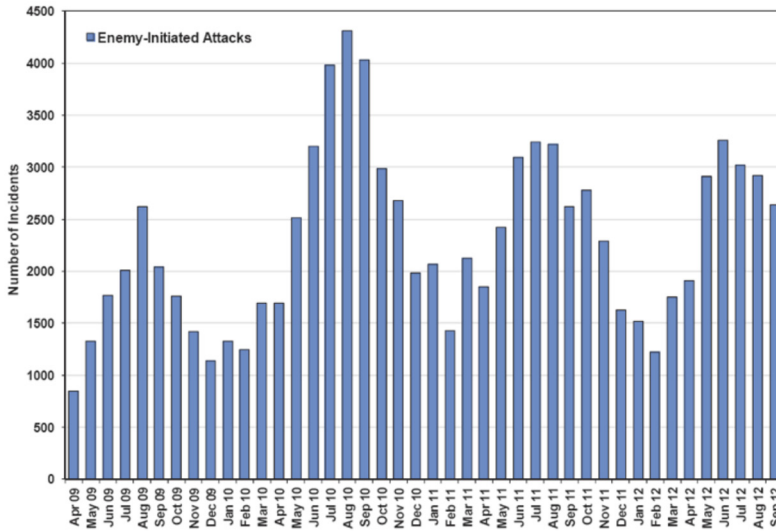


Figure 9.1

But without a doubt the greatest change experienced in the area of security is significant and may be a sign of what to expect both in 2014 and beyond. This change relates to the very considerable reduction of attacks and violent acts in the most populated areas of the country. Except in Kunduz, where there was an increase of just 2%, the other four most heavily populated districts in the country, Kabul, Kandahar, Herat, and Mezar-e-Sharif, experienced a decrease in insurgent attacks of between 13% and 88% in the last year⁵. This data means that the attacks are taking place away from the population centres, in the most isolated rural areas, to the extent that in 2012, 80% of insurgent actions occurred in districts with a population of only 20% of the total Afghan population⁶, and there was even a drastic reduction of activity in Kandahar (62%), a traditional Taliban and insurgency stronghold.

As a result, a recent slight increase in attacks, as already reported, is in contrast with greater isolation of insurgent activity, increasingly confined to rural, poor, and hard-to-reach districts, with an increasingly reduced influence on the Afghan population. Furthermore, as already indicated in previous editions, the attacks are increasingly of poor quality, more indis-

⁴ Monthly number of attacks. US Defense Department, *Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan*, December 2012.

⁵ Ibidem.

⁶ Ibidem.

criminate, and not very effective. This means that the counter-insurgent strategy conducted in recent years, as well as training of the ANSF, is gradually bearing fruit.

Another essential element to be assessed is the number of civilian casualties suffered and the cause of these casualties. The advisory work of the COMISAF⁷ of the *Civilian Casualties Mitigation Team* (CCMT) established at the ISAF HQ⁸, as well as the adoption of these measures in the field through those measures known as *Tactical Driving Directive and Escalation of Force Procedures*, has made it possible to reduce collateral casualties caused by ISAF by nearly 50%. This is mainly due to the more restricted use of air weaponry, which has been primarily responsible for the collateral damage in previous years. The result, which is no doubt very beneficial to the campaign, was that 90% of the casualties suffered by the non-fighting population has come from insurgency actions, which has already reduced the tension between the Afghan government and ISAF, which was very high in relation to this particular point (figure 9.2)⁹.

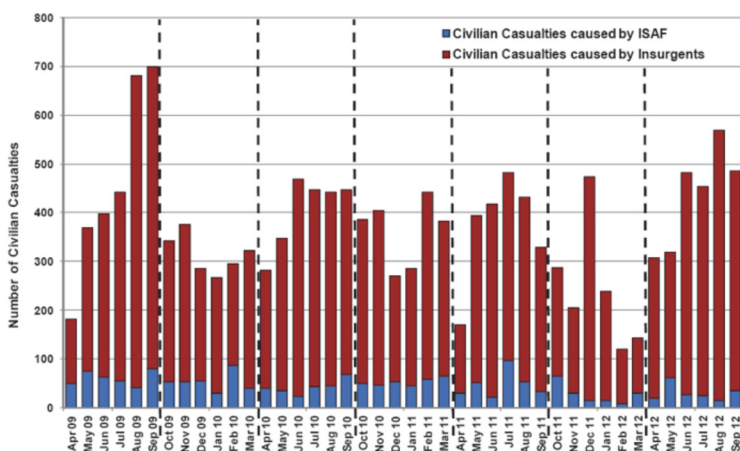


Figure 9.2

Now in full swing, the spring-summer insurgent offensive appears similar to that of the previous year, with attacks using car bombs or suicide bombers in urban centres that, although statistically minor, seek to have a strong media impact. This is an example of the great resilience of the insurgency, which is capable of adapting its methods to maintain its position as a decisive factor in the Afghan situation despite the military setbacks suffered mainly in the last two years.

⁷ ISAF Commander-in-Chief.

⁸ ISAF Headquarters in Kabul.

⁹ Civilian casualty data. US Defense Department, *Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan*, December 2012.

In any case, the final statistics for the current year, after the departure of a substantial portion of foreign troops and the full assumption of responsibilities by the ANSF throughout most of the territory, will be a good indicator of what to expect in a crucial 2014 and following years.

The Coalition

The famous *surge* is now history, as the last of the 33,000 troops who constituted this considerable reinforcement of operations in Afghanistan left the country in September 2012. By the end of the year, just 66,000 US soldiers remained in the country. After signing the strategic agreement with the Afghan government, the strength of the forces to remain in place beyond 2014 has not yet been agreed. This situation also applies to most of the NATO nations that are contributing or who will contribute troops to Afghan stability in the coming years.

In the transition between 2012 and 2013, up to twenty-eight nations belonging to NATO and a further twenty-two countries are keeping a total of 107,042 men in Afghanistan, but clearly the post-2014 scenario will be very different, with much lower figures and a much more reduced presence including in relation to the number of locations. The strength of US forces in theatre will certainly be decisive, as this will set the pattern for all other contributing nations.

In this respect, US commanders believe that eight or nine military bases will be needed in the country for the remaining foreign contingents. Specifically, those in place in Kabul, Bagram, Mazar-i-Sharif, Jalalabad, Gardez, Kandahar, Helmand and Herat are considered to be essential¹⁰. Despite numerous disagreements with the US administration, President Karzai has responded positively to this request, and therefore it seems that the decision regarding these bases will become final in the near future. This announcement apparently settles the discussion regarding the judicial immunity required by the US for its troops in their deployments in foreign territory, although in his address pronounced on 9 May 2013 at the University of Kabul and televised to the entire country¹¹, President Karzai spoke of Afghan interest in granting the use of these bases but not of the delicate matter – in terms of domestic policy – of the judicial immunity of the Americans. We should remember that this was one of the reasons for the rupture that prevented the continued presence of a reduced contingent of US troops in Iraq, as was originally intended.

¹⁰ USA wishes to maintain nine military bases in Afghanistan from 2014, Afp in Kabul, 09/05/2013.

¹¹ Ibidem.

But it is not only the size of the forces remaining in Afghanistan that is the reason for planning and discussion, but also, and more particularly, their composition and function. Although it is insisted that the functions to be carried out by these forces will be to complete the training of the ANSF, support them and provide assistance in the planning and conduct of operations, it is also true that if the circumstances become more complicated than initially expected, which is certainly possible, these forces must be capable of guaranteeing both their own security and the survival of the constitutional regime. For this reason, and given the complexity of the territory, the existence of certain air capabilities, including a certain number of fighter-bombers, seems necessary. However, the future of the Afghan Air Force is still a long way off, and in any case will not materialise before 2016¹².

Air power has been decisive in achieving the objectives and security of the troops. A post-2014 scenario without this capability is inconceivable, as it has proved to be essential and, in many cases, given the inevitable scattering of ground troops, has made the difference in confrontations with the insurgency; in light of the lack of ground transport infrastructures, the times needed to move vehicles from one point to another are considerable, sometimes even over short distances, not to mention the effects of extreme Afghan weather, mines, IEDs, etc. For this reason, US efforts to increase the deployment of their own mortars and artillery and similar Afghan resources do not appear to be sufficient to make up for the loss of air power, which has no geographic limitations and which reaches the «hotspots» in very short time. Disagreements between President Karzai and the US administration due to collateral damage caused by air bombardments should not cause the absence of such decisive capability in a scenario such as the Afghan situation. It is therefore likely, at least during 2015, and depending on how the security situation evolves, that the anti-terrorist force to remain in the country must have offensive air elements sufficient to guarantee the stability of the process.

Meanwhile, and with the same goal, a training programme has just started at the Bagram Air Base for Afghan helicopter pilots, through which members of the US Army's *101st Combat Aviation Brigade* train them in air support tactics¹³, which demonstrates the awareness and concern of the remaining military capabilities in Afghanistan in this important aspect.

In addition, there has been a significant increase in the missions conducted by drones intended for base defence, especially for the bases that frequently suffer harassment, such that they carry out both surveillance and attacks, where necessary, within an extended perimeter defence of

¹² Michaels, Jim. *Loss of US air power a worry in Afghanistan*, USA TODAY, 28 April 2013.

¹³ M. Hall, Kristin. *Afghan pilots learn air assault tactics from 101st*, Associated Press, 19 May 2013.

the base. It is likely that these missions will gradually gain prominence and will become essential after the departure of most of the troops by the end of 2014.

Another element of concern among the allied forces is the difficulty and high cost of transporting the material accumulated in the years of the campaign to national territory. The United States estimate that they will have to transport 35,000 vehicles, 95,000 containers¹⁴ and enormous quantities of all kinds of equipment.

But without a doubt, the heart of the discussion regarding the allied forces is currently focused on the size of the foreign forces that will remain in the country beyond 2014. This discussion not only affects the Afghan government and allied governments, led by the United States, as part of the strategic agreements achieved; it is also receiving full attention in the administrations of our countries. Thus, the voices demanding different numbers and compositions of the force are many, mainly among the Americans.

Opinions range between 13,600 men, which some consider to be essential to prevent Afghanistan descending into chaos in 2015¹⁵, to a bracket between 8,000 and 12,000 troops to be provided jointly by the United States and the other allies, proposed in February 2013 by the former Defense Secretary, Panetta, in Brussels and supported, to some extent, by General Allen¹⁶.

The latter figure, no doubt consistent from an economic point of view and with the general US strategy for withdrawal and reduced leadership, is the subject of hot debate among the US military leaders, such as General Mattis, who believes that this volume of strength would endanger the achievements made in Afghanistan and even the viability of the Afghan government. General Dunford repeated this line at his first appearance before the Senate Armed Forces Committee, just two months after taking over as commander in Kabul¹⁷, believing that a sufficiently «robust» force was essential.

Ultimately, it seems that the commanders on the ground are less optimistic than their political leaders. But in any case, it is clear that a prompt decision must be taken in order to be able to set up the force during 2014, as well as its location, material, etc. In fact, in recent days

¹⁴ Zucchini, David. *Moving mountains of war gear home from Afghanistan*, Los Angeles Times, 13 March 2013.

¹⁵ Litvan, Laura. *McKeon Backs Keeping 13,600 Troops After Trip to Afghanistan*, Bloomberg, 13 March 2013.

¹⁶ *Gen. Allen*, Jim Michaels: *Fewer US troops could do job in Afghanistan*, USA Today, 24 April 2013.

¹⁷ Londoño, Ernesto. *US commander in Afghanistan calls for robust force to remain after 2014*, The Washington Post, 16 April 2013.

Secretary-General Rasmussen announced that a NATO summit would be held, on a date to be arranged, in order to establish the conditions for the withdrawal of troops and the composition of the forces that will remain¹⁸. The future of Afghanistan may depend on the correctness of this decision, at least initially.

As for the Spanish, the defence minister has announced¹⁹ that 70% of Spanish troops will be withdrawn from Afghanistan during 2013, such that over the next year, the figure for our troops there come to no more than 300, mostly concentrated at the Herat Advanced Support Base. It would maintain the command, management, and security of Herat Airport and its Role 2 hospital, which would become part of the post-2014 mission agreed in the aforementioned NATO meeting.

The ANFS

At the end of 2012, ANFS troops were slightly less than expected, according to the report «*The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security*» of the UN Security Council²⁰, as we can see in the following figure (figure 9.3)²¹.

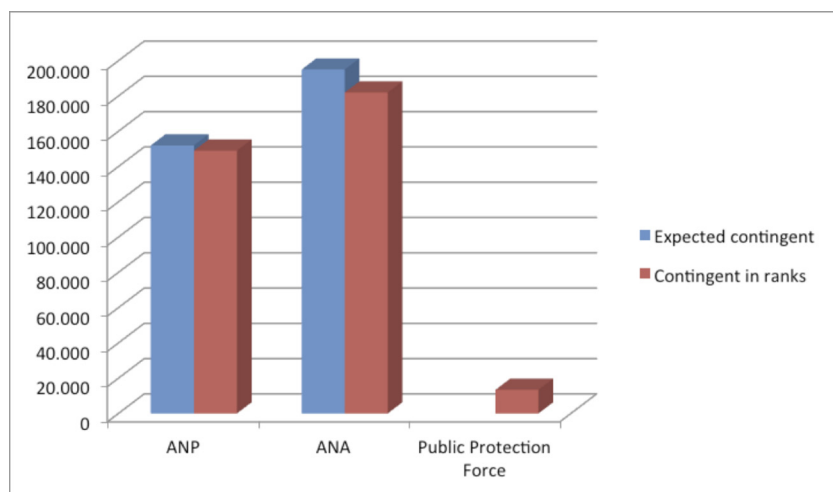


Figura 9.3

¹⁸ Caño, Antonio. *La OTAN decidirá en una cumbre la presencia en Afganistán después de 2014*, El País, 31 May 2013.

¹⁹ González, Miguel. *España retirará este año el 70% de las tropas de Afganistán*, El País, 5 June 2013.

²⁰ Report A/67/778-S/2013/133, of the United Nations General Assembly and the United Nations Security Council, of 5 March 2013.

²¹ (Own work).

As a result, the troop deficit was a mere 4.6%, offset – only to some extent – by the nearly 14,000 members of the Afghan Public Protection Force.

Furthermore, as at 4 February of this year, 2013²², the Local Afghan Police counted 20,105 staff distributed over ninety-five sites, although the programme for expanding these local forces is ongoing. Nevertheless, as already pointed out in previous editions of this publication, the uncertainty arising from this new «institution» is very high, as demonstrated by the fifty-five incidents in 2012, documented by UNAMA, in which these forces were key figures. These incidents caused twenty-four deaths and thirty-eight wounded²³.

Although it is true that they have contributed effectively to the control of some areas of the country, where their presence can be considered positive, there is no guarantee that these militias will not become instruments of local and regional power, which will not necessarily be obedient to the central power in Kabul, in the post-2014 scenario.

However, these figures are, at the moment, suspect, in light of the report by the special Inspector General for the Reconstruction of Afghanistan, John F. Sopko, who questions the figures given by the Pentagon²⁴. According to Sopko, the ANSF would have a deficit of about 20,000 troops compared to the target of 352,000, but more serious is the fact that, instead of being in the final phase of completing the strength objective, they are on the decline, to the extent that in May 2013, they had 4,700 staff less than in the previous year.

Given that the funding of the ANSF contingent considered necessary to assume the security challenges of the country cannot be fulfilled by the meagre Afghan GDP, this will have to be partially supplied by other countries. The Sopko report points to the possibility that corrupt practices are taking place in the management bodies of the ANSF, to the extent that fictitious men are included or maintained in the ranks, with a view to receiving continued external funding corresponding to these positions, which are no longer covered by the corresponding soldiers or police officers. This practice, neither original nor new, is reminiscent of similar practices in European armies in the 17th and 18th centuries, but the fact is that if this practice becomes widespread, particularly beyond 2014, it may seriously undermine the capability of the ANSF.

The traditional problems dragging down the Afghan army and police have clearly not disappeared since the publication of the previous volume one

²² Report A/67/778–S/2013/133, of the United Nations General Assembly and the United Nations Security Council, of 5 March 2013.

²³ Ibidem.

²⁴ H.P. SIA, Richard. *Audit casts doubt on number of Afghan troops US has trained*, Center for Public Integrity, 3 May 2013.

year ago. Thus, desertion, poor education of its members, leadership problems, or poor qualifications of many commanders, as well as the corrupt practices described in previous years are still present. Nevertheless, in the same way, we should emphasise that there are some positive symptoms in how these phenomena are developing, to the extent that we can be sure that the situation of the ANSF is, in general, considerably better than one year ago.

As a consequence of this positive development, along with the results of the intensive training and supervision provided in previous years by the allied forces, the Afghan forces are leading the vast majority of military operations in the country, with positive repercussions such as the maintenance of many enclaves and outposts, mainly in the south and southeast, which until recently the ANSF could not sustain on their own.

In this respect, large-scale operations such as the one known as *Azadi* (Freedom), conducted by *203 Thunder Corp* of the ANA in spring 2013, demonstrates the growing effectiveness of the ANSF. During the operation, which involved twenty or so skirmishes with the insurgency, the Afghan forces even conducted wounded evacuation tasks²⁵, which until recently was exclusively carried out by allied forces. These types of actions enabled General Dunford, ISAF commander, to inform the US Senate on 16 April 2013 of the progress of the Afghan army²⁶, with one army corps, five brigades, and twenty-seven battalions of the ANA capable of operating independently, which is a considerable improvement since December 2012.

Nevertheless, the scaling of capabilities and the effectiveness of the Afghan units is still broad, and therefore there are doubts regarding whether or not the body of the ANSF will achieve a status similar to that of *203 Thunder Corp* by the end of 2014. There are also concerns about the abusive practices and even torture committed by members of the ANSF, which led President Karzai to call on these members in Parliament²⁷ to conduct themselves in a legal and legitimate manner.

In any case, notwithstanding the above, the words of the president in Parliament were accompanied by a second announcement just days later. In this announcement, Karzai made public a circumstance of enormous significance, which no doubt motivated his previous call; this circumstance related to the assumption of full responsibility of security by the ANSF for the whole of Afghan territory²⁸. Consequently, and as confirmed by

²⁵ Quinn, Patrick. *Some hopeful signs out of the Afghan army*, Associated Press, 15 April 2013.

²⁶ Ratnam, Gopal. *More Afghan Troops Operate Independently, Dunford Tells Congress*, Bloomberg News, 16 April 2013.

²⁷ DOZIER, Kimberly. *Karzai calls on Afghan troops to clean up own act*, Associated Press, 6 March 2013.

²⁸ *Afghanistan security forces take control of the entire country*, Dpa, Kabul, 18 June 2013.

the NATO secretary-general, the Alliance will support the ANSF whenever necessary, but will no longer plan or lead operations.

Finally, and representing the main change in relation to previous years, it should be highlighted that, as at 30 September 2012, the rebuilt Afghan Air Force (AAF) reached a personnel figure of 6,224²⁹. These are the first steps for a force that, as previously indicated, is expected to be very important in maintaining the necessary security conditions in the country.

Insurgency and negotiation

The weakening of the insurgency, already clear in 2012, is becoming more pronounced. In the last year, they were incapable of retaking control of areas previously lost, including those traditionally most linked to the Taliban and the insurgency, which is even more significant. In fact, according to ISAF, only the existence of their sanctuaries in the Pakistani tribal areas has prevented them from being entirely defeated³⁰.

The increasingly widespread dissemination of this opinion, the progress of Afghan forces and the proximity of the round of negotiations which should, in principal, be final, have led the insurgency to «show itself» in various actions of greater media impact and substance. This is probably the mechanism that led them to launch an attack on a UN office in Kabul and the nearby police headquarters. The attack included a car bomb, suicide bombers, and armed militia, which was reminiscent of the spectacular actions of summer 2011. Or, in a similar vein, the attack launched on the presidential palace on 25 June 2013, also in Kabul. However, on this occasion, it was an isolated event with intentions that were more propagandistic than «military», with the aim of increasing the perception of insecurity in the various actors in the conflict around the negotiating table.

This option, which has been quite evident for years, is the only one that provides a viable exit scenario for the Afghan conflict. To this end, after many minor preparatory episodes, the Taliban opened an official representative office in Doha, revealing its willingness to negotiate with the Kabul government and the Americans³¹. In this way, they are staging an important turnaround in their policy, since on several occasions in previous years they refused to negotiate with the government of President Karzai, who they labelled a puppet of the Americans, although they did so in a veiled manner, as in the previous year in Kyoto or Paris.

²⁹ US Defense Department, *Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan*, December 2012.

³⁰ Ibidem.

³¹ *The Taliban, 'prepared to negotiate peace' with the Afghan government and USA*, Afp, Kabul, 18 June 2013.

Afterwards, and until very recently, they agreed only to negotiate with the United States, in a clear attempt to provoke dissent in the theoretically essential allies constituted by the US and Afghan administrations. And indeed they proved to have good knowledge of both the idiosyncrasy of their adversaries and the situation that both are facing.

The Americans agreed to this game. A team of US negotiators went to Doha last 19 June. After meeting with Afghan diplomats, and without the presence of the latter, they held a round of discussions with the Taliban representatives, at which they insisted on them cutting ties with Al Qaeda, accepting the political playing field and the Afghan constitution, and ending the violence³². But as was inevitable, the Afghan government expressed its annoyance and dissatisfaction with these «bilateral» contacts without its presence, which it staged in a somewhat theatrical manner, and suspended discussions on security with the Americans on establishing the presence of US troops as of 2015.

In addition, these Afghan-US negotiations have not been characterised by stability and fluidity, as there have been periods of difficulties and even diplomatic confrontation. This includes the confrontation brought about by the statements of President Karzai during the visit of the new US Defense Secretary, Chuck Hagel, on 10 March 2013, in which he accused the US administration, NATO, and ISAF of conniving with the Taliban to convince Afghans of the need for the presence of foreign troops in Afghanistan beyond 2014.

This assertion, in line with a succession of actions that were increasingly and clearly hostile, particularly against the United States, as well as being profoundly surprising, received a strong response from the NATO secretary-general, Rasmussen, who immediately qualified these words as «absolutely ridiculous»³³. The Afghan president appeared to forget at that time the enormous sacrifices made by the United States in his country and their decisive support in his appointment as interim president, only ratified years later in the always controversial Afghan presidential elections.

In any case, it is easy to imagine the turn matters would take in Afghan affairs if the Taliban knew for certain that all foreign troops were abandoning the country at the end of 2014. Even the physical safety of the Afghan president would be compromised, and therefore Karzai's statement is at the very least incomprehensible.

But this attitude is merely a temporary setback – albeit very minor in the end – because President Karzai inevitably will have to negotiate with

³² *Afghanistan suspends discussions on security with the United States*, Reuters, Dubai, 19 June 2013.

³³ Croft, Adrian. *NATO chief says Karzai accusation «absolutely ridiculous»*, Reuters, 18 March 2013.

both the Taliban and foreign troops after 2014. Thus, a few days later, as expected, the Taliban agreed to hold direct, official negotiations with the Afghan government, as expressed by the speaker for the insurgents, Zabiulá Mujahid, which we assume would lead to the start of the process leading to a post-2014 Afghanistan, while the official Afghan response was equally promising, as Karzai announced that they would recognise the aforementioned representation in Qatar and send an official delegation, part of the High Council for Peace. Ultimately, this represents mutual recognition that it is time to lay the foundations that will form the structure of Afghanistan in the coming years. There is simply no other avenue to explore after more than a decade of the current phase in the Afghan conflict.

The future of Afghanistan

It has been a long time since the initial efforts intended to reform the Afghan situation and in some way build a more advanced nation have been abandoned. This was explicitly acknowledged by the chief general of the international forces, Joseph F. Dunford Jr., who set the much more modest objective of adequately preparing the ANSF for the Taliban threat³⁴, without interfering in local economy and policy. In other words, and to paraphrase an old US maxim, Afghanistan for the Afghans, as long as it does not constitute a threat to international security again. But this is a more optimistic point of view than the one adopted by his predecessors, which includes a positive outlook for both the Afghan security forces and the political process that, as of the April elections in 2014, will lead the country to self-government without external interference.

This includes that which relates to the fight against corruption, which until recently was an important pressure point of the group of donating countries, led on repeated occasions by Secretary Clinton, which appear to have taken a back seat while the negotiations have become the main focus of attention.

In fact, it is possibly the hopes placed in this open negotiation process that largely justify this optimism from the ISAF commander. However, we need to see the end result of these negotiations before we can know whether or not this optimism is fully justified, and the result of the elections next spring in which, logically, the moderate elements of the insurgency should participate in the form of a political option.

Ultimately, we need to wait and see where Afghanistan is headed. Nevertheless, some positives can be taken from the fact that the negotia-

³⁴ Rubin, Alissa J. and Rosenberg, Matthew, *Hope Seen for Afghanistan After Coalition Exits*, The New York Times, 6 May 2013.

tions even exist. These negotiations appear to put off the threat of civil war – hopefully permanently – by distributing quotas of power, economic resources, and areas of influence which we hope will be stable. Consequently, the new president coming out of next year's elections will have to focus much of his work on guaranteeing compliance with the aforementioned quotas, using the ANSF as a tool, if necessary, to achieve it.

Naturally, the concessions made to the Taliban's claims, in exchange for them abandoning the use of weapons and integrating into political life, will to a large extent modulate the new Afghan scenario. As already mentioned in previous editions of this publication, everything seems to point to a multi-pole organisation, where the ethnic majorities of each province, district, or even population – in the most remote areas – impose their power, practices, customs, and even their justice, based on a parliamentary and government representation that is difficult to marry up with the results of elections organised based on the universal vote, and in a way unrelated to national tradition. In fact, it will therefore return to a representative democracy, which is indeed based on customary practices, where the president will replace the role played by a king in previous times. In order to maintain the balance and prevent transgressions of the established agreements and distributions, it will have at its disposal ANSF that are stronger and more effective than ever, and will develop a certain political class that is more cosmopolitan and national in nature, which will have come about under the protection of the long-standing presence of foreign troops in the country.

In this way, some aspects of living conditions, treatment of women, access to education, etc. may be different depending on the part of the country, probably with greater uniformity in urban areas, and more substantial differences in rural areas.

In this possible scenario, two future aspects are of particular concern. The first is the situation of those people who have worked for the foreigners since 2001, especially in the areas most favourable to the insurgency and the Taliban, as there is no guarantee that they will not suffer some kind of reprisal.

The second is the already mentioned possible reversal of the achievements obtained for women, again mainly in the aforementioned areas, but also throughout the whole country, which we must not forget is deeply conservative. In fact, even now it can be seen that the treatment of women is worsening in some aspects. For example, the number of women imprisoned for committing «moral crimes» has increased by 50% in recent months, according to Human Rights Watch³⁵, which leads to fears that

³⁵ Rodríguez, Alex. *Jailing of Afghan women for 'moral' crimes is increasing, group says*, Los Angeles Times, 21 May 2013.

the general treatment of women may get worse, including in the area of education.

But perhaps the elements that will mould the Afghan future most decisively are the economy and, in direct connection with this, the role to be played by the regional powers both on the said dimensional scale and in relation to politics and security. The international community, still not satisfied with the government's achievements in the fight against corruption, has softened its approach, rather crudely presented at the donors' conference meeting in Tokyo in July 2012, to the extent that it is now fully aware of the need to continue donating large sums to the country for many more years to come, without prior conditions.

Furthermore, the growing concessions and contracts to foreign companies, preferably in a regional setting, are the greatest source of hope for economic progress, essentially based on the exploitation of natural resources, especially minerals, in the country.

In any case, one year after the previous version of the document, and owing, above all, to the apparently permanent start-up of discussions between the Kabul government and the Taliban, the outlook for the future of Afghanistan is more positive, on the assumption that in order to move away from the possibility of an active and endemic insurgency and even a new civil war, it will be necessary to live with social, political, and judicial situations very different from those stubborn first intentions of 2002, which intended to build a «modern» democratic state, under the rule of law, in the manner that we understand it in the West. We must even admit that this imperfect state of play will continue to demand a certain level of sacrifice from the countries most directly involved in the country, including Spain.

The role of external actors

Iran

Given its influence on the Tajik ethnic group, as well as its religious affinity with the Hazara, it will probably consider it an objective of foreign policy to maintain and even increase that influence in the areas that are still controlled by both ethnic groups. Moreover, it is necessary to ensure that this role is represented by the generation of business volumes that help to alleviate the serious problems of the Iranian economy, resulting from the international sanctions and defective administration.

Consequently, it is in its interest for Afghanistan to be stable, moderate and non-hostile to Shi'ites, where it can enjoy freedom of economic activity in the described areas. This relationship should also favour the Afghan economy, resuming the level of commercial exchanges pre-dating

the current phase of the Afghan conflict, although this will probably not happen with the nation as a whole, but will rather be focused on the Tajik and Hazara areas.

The Ex-Soviet Republics

These states are also interested in a pacified, stable, and moderate Afghanistan, which would help to limit the current Islamic extremism to varying extents within their own borders. In addition, despite recent pipelines used to export both gas and oil directly to China and the West via the Caspian, the old aspiration of finding an outlet to the Indian Ocean for its hydrocarbons via Afghanistan is still attractive, as part of the growing process of enmeshing the pipelines, which is in progress and will continue into the coming decades.

They will also attempt to influence their ethnic-kin Afghanis – especially the Tajiks and Uzbeks – by establishing solid economic links with the areas controlled by these ethnic groups, which in principle should be beneficial on both sides of the borders. It should be remembered that some of these republics will no longer receive the economic benefits provided by the transit of international troops.

However, their weakness in relation to border control leads to suppositions that, together with the corruption generated by cross-border drug trafficking, the situation of these republics with respect to transit routes for Afghan drugs going to Russia and Europe will not change substantially, at least in the short term.

The Russian Federation

As with the ex-Soviet Republics, Russia has a surfeit of reasons to desire a stable Afghanistan that has brought the most extreme Islamism to an end. As such, it believes that the task of the United States and NATO is unfinished and that the current withdrawal is too early and excessive. Especially because, without a definitive resolution to the terrorist problem, many of the conditions remain in place for the perpetuation of organised crime centred around drug trafficking as a way of life for many former insurgents. Following the propagation of Jihadism or the most extreme interpretations of Islam in relation to its territory, Russia's second cause for concern in Afghanistan is the large quantities of drugs of Afghan origin – especially heroin – that arrive in its territory and are consumed by its population.

And the fact remains that they are right. One characteristic detected in the development of various factions of the insurgency in recent times is their switch to Mafia and criminal activities as a way of perpetuating their way of life outside the law and the traditional occupations of the Afghan population.

On a different note, it does not seem that Russian economic involvement in the country necessarily has to be so intensive. The main Russian exports, such as energy and technological and defence equipment, will not be in significant demand in Afghanistan in the near future, and Afghan mineral sources should not be a priority interest for Russia, which is a country that already has a wealth of such resources.

Consequently, it is foreseeable that Russia will be more interested in Afghanistan in terms of collaboration in security matters and the fight against organised crime, rather than in any great economic intervention, where countries such as Iran, China, India, and Pakistan may be more interested and better positioned.

China

The Chinese case is different. There is the same interest as Russia in controlling Islamic extremism and preventing its contagion to Western areas of Muslim tradition, but it clearly wishes to obtain important concessions from the Afghan government to exploit the country's natural resources.

In addition, Chinese pragmatism, which is helping it in its well-known expansion into the African and Ibero-American economies, has an excellent area of action in Afghanistan. Regardless of any political situations or corrupt practices of the Afghan authorities, both the Chinese government and its companies already enjoy advantageous positions in the exploitation of large mineral deposits.³⁶ In addition, Chinese practices in its relations with national governments possessing resources desired by China – basically the entire catalogue – may be very advantageous to the Afghan authorities, both present and future, and therefore it is possible to predict that commercial relations between both countries will substantially increase in the future. Not even the planned distribution of economic quotas and power sharing between the different Afghan ethnic groups and factions, resulting from the current negotiations mentioned on several occasions, are likely to impede these commercial exchanges.

China therefore takes its place as one of the main socio-economic partners of Afghanistan and therefore as an important participant in ensuring the economic viability of the country. This, however, is not the case in security issues, in relation to which the Chinese government maintains its usual distance.

India

India is a country that is expected, along with China, to be one of main supporters for the Afghan government in the economic field. But unlike

³⁶ Baños Bajo, Pedro. El espectro de los minerales estratégicos (I): Afganistán, IEEE. http://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs_marco/2011/DIEEEM03-2011MineralesAfganistan.pdf.

China, it will have a strong political involvement in the form of a strategic alliance with Afghanistan. All of this will take place within the balance (or perhaps more to the point, the lack of balance) of powers in the region. As such, in its traditional confrontation with Pakistan, India is a natural ally of Kabul, as part of Afghanistan's attempt to limit the influence of its Pakistani neighbours, always present in internal Afghan affairs since its independence.

Furthermore, the excellent current relations between India and the United States is beneficial to its influence in the country. We should take into account that, despite the drastic reduction of US forces in Afghanistan as of 2015, the United States will continue to be the Kabul government's main support in matters of security, and one of the most important from an economic point of view. This factor will most likely be beneficial to an Indian presence and detrimental to that of Iran or China, at least in the coming years.

The Western bloc

The ongoing presence of Western civilian and military advisers, the continuation of economic donations and the desire not to see the great sacrifices made in this country quickly evaporate, along with a certain inertia in the already long-standing connection with Afghanistan, will ensure that a Western presence, led by the United States, will endure for a few more years. But the perception drawn from the accumulation of events that have occurred on this scenario in the last two years, lead to suppositions of a likely dilution of Western influence in Afghanistan, to the benefit of the major regional actors.

Furthermore, and as already expressed in the 2012 edition of this same publication, the feeling of tedium in relation to the Afghan issue is great, perhaps now lessened in the public opinions of our nations precisely due to the existence of a timetable for exit from the country now in place.

Therefore, the trend appears to point to a gradual and marked distancing as of 2015. But this does not necessarily have to be seen in a negative light. The introduction of regional powers in a post-negotiation scenario, with an acceptable situation of stability and security, is perfectly capable of ensuring that the main achievement after all these years of the campaign – which was to prevent Afghanistan from being a direct and lethal threat to Western populations and interests – is maintained.

Moreover, the enormous potential mineral wealth in the country³⁷ will no doubt motivate the large Western companies, which will strive to be present in the hypothetical emerging market.

³⁷ Baños Bajo, Pedro. El espectro de los minerales estratégicos (I): Afganistán, IEEE, http://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs_marco/2011/DIEEM03-2011MineralesAfga

Pakistan

Pakistan is undoubtedly the country that has, in the last few decades, had the most decisive influence in Afghanistan, and is expected to be essential, either through action or inaction, in the future of Afghan affairs.

The political change experienced very recently in Pakistan³⁸ provides a diversion pending the establishment of the new authorities, and especially the conduct of its relations both with the Pakistani Taliban and the tribal authorities along the Afghanistan border. However, Pakistani influence on Afghan soil is of a dual nature.

The first of these is the existence of the much-discussed sanctuaries of the Afghan insurgency in Pakistan, under the protection of ethnic, religious, and ideological affinity. The efforts of the Islamabad government in the area have been, are, and will be crucial in regulating the importance of the Afghan insurgent movement.

The second, more recent influence is the return of purely bilateral relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan. This point is one of the main elements of concern in current times. The traditional enmity linked to the Pakistani aspiration to have a decisive influence on Kabul seems not to have diminished over time, albeit always filtered through Indian-Pakistani enmity. Recently, in a meeting between this author and Pakistani military leaders, following the border artillery confrontations between the Afghan and Pakistani armed forces, which will be discussed below, the said officials maintained a posture that tended to lay the blame on India for the tension between both countries, as instigator of the enmity on both sides of the Durand line.

Without looking to assess the correctness of these statements, there is no doubt and it should be emphasised that the political schemes and regional relations are still largely similar to those of previous times.

It is in this context that the serious events of recent months have taken place. The words of General Sher Mohammad Karimi, chief of the ANA, directly accusing Pakistan of controlling the Taliban³⁹ in an interview given to the BBC, sets out the stance of the Afghan government, which believes that border control is «regulated» by Islamabad, to the extent that it permits a greater or lesser influx of insurgents into Afghanistan depending on the state of bilateral relations and as a means to satisfy Pakistani interests in Afghanistan. These are clearly very serious accusations.

nistan.pdf.

³⁸ Requena Del Río, Pilar. *Pakistán, esperanza al borde del abismo*, IEEE, http://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs_opinion/2013/DIEEE056_2013_Pakistan_Esperanza_Borde_Abismo_PRequena.pdf.

³⁹ BBC News Asia, *Afghan army chief: 'Pakistan controls Taliban'*, 3 July 2013.

If this were the case, it would be a very high-risk policy for Pakistan, at a very delicate time from a political and economic point of view in a country that has made major human and material sacrifices in the fight against Islamist extremism within its own borders. The Islamabad government denies these accusations and indicates, quite logically, the porosity of the border and the huge challenge and effort required to control its Afghan border. At the same time, it warns of the need for Pakistan's «legitimate interests» in Afghanistan to be taken into account, which is a relevant message in the context of the negotiations for the Afghan reconciliation currently under way, in which Pakistan is naturally not a participant.

In this context, the high tension presently affecting Afghan-Pakistani relations is a cause for great concern. Although relations are considerably relaxed, they are always affected by a climate of mutual mistrust. This tension has, at times, escalated to the point of triggering artillery exchanges across the border^{40 41}. The worst moments of this relationship led to a somewhat unprecedented event involving President Karzai. In a series of verbal outbursts similar to those already discussed regarding alleged conniving between the Taliban and the United States, President Karzai, recently in the limelight for his increasingly erratic and incomprehensible conduct, urged the Taliban to turn their weapons against the countries who were plotting against Afghan prosperity, instead of destroying their own country, in other words, against Pakistan⁴².

This is an unusual situation, both as a manifestation of hostility towards a country that, for better or for worse, will have a significant role in the country's future, and due to the fact that this call is addressed to his adversaries in the Afghan civil war. Furthermore, in the same respect, Pakistani offers to assist Afghan forces have been ignored, while India strengthens its relations with Kabul, also in the area of security, as was demonstrated by President Karzai's visit to New Delhi⁴³.

However, these words and facts are more measured than appearances would suggest. Karzai is merely warning Pakistan that the game of using extremist militiamen on the other side of the border, in defence of national interests, may go in both directions, given the difficult and unstable internal Pakistani situation. Of course, in any case, these are not signs that promote optimism in future bilateral relations. These relations have been, are, and presumably will be difficult, with episodes of tension that may lead to isolated cross-border confrontations.

⁴⁰ Bakhtarnews, *Pakistan Once Again Began Artillery Attacks On Afghanistan*, 26 March 2013.

⁴¹ Express Tribune, *Afghan artillery shells land in Pakistan*, 30 March 2013.

⁴² Miguélez Monroy, Carlos. *Afghan president urges Taliban to attack country's enemies*, Jane's Intelligence Weekly, 5 July 2013.

⁴³ Shalizi, Hamid. *Afghanistan's Karzai seeks Indian military aid amid tensions with Pakistan*, 19 May 2013.

Conclusions and outlook

More so than the previous year, negotiations for national reconciliation are currently at the forefront of the conflict. The conditions that will govern the Afghan scenario in the coming years will be laid down by these negotiations. Very briefly:

- The irreconcilable remaining members of Al Qaeda and the Taliban are heavily damaged and diminished, and the political option is the next strategy for the Taliban.
- Nevertheless, the balance achieved in the negotiations will be fragile, at least in the beginning, and therefore maintaining a core of foreign – mainly US – troops will be essential for an indefinite number of years.
- The insurgency as a way of life will be replaced by a certain number of Mafia-type networks, which will continue to be a serious risk to the country's security and stability.
- The main aim of these networks will be to maintain and even increase the drug trafficking business in Afghanistan. The increase in opium production over the last year – although slight – shows how this factor will continue to be decisive in the Afghan social, economic, and security situation.
- Training of Afghan civilian and military personnel is as advanced as it possibly can be, although doubts remain about their future conduct once free of all supervision.
- Nevertheless, it should be stressed that the Afghan government is in a better condition than ever to carry out its work adequately.
- It is becoming increasingly clear that the role of the regional powers will be crucial not only on stability but also on the viability of Afghanistan as a State that will not collapse under its fragility and will not become bankrupt in the medium- and long-term future.
- The following paragraph was included in the corresponding 2012 edition of this text, but continues to be entirely valid:

«The most likely end-scenario continues to be similar to the one in place before the start of the war and the expulsion of the king, although with a stronger central government. The involvement of the ethnic groups and warlords, although converted to a political role, will be important, while accepting the higher authority of the president elect who will represent them to the international community. The government will have to use its means to maintain a balance between the various internal actors and to prevent them from exceeding unacceptable limits».

The aforementioned balance is precisely what is being negotiated in Doha at the present time.

- Poppy cultivation will continue to be important, but may lead to greater diversification towards other drugs. Nevertheless, this will be the source of livelihood and business for those sectors of the insurgency that are in full transition into crime organisations.
- Most countries in the region or those that have direct interests with Afghanistan are mainly concerned with the stability of the country and the exploitation of its natural resources through commercial exchanges.
- The case of Pakistan is different and much more complex. It is believed that it has legitimate interests in Afghanistan beyond mere stability or prosperous or favourable commercial relations. This fact, related to the difficult relations of both countries, which have remained since Pakistani independence, the Afghan government has responded to with an intensification of its relations with India and clear reservations regarding the role to be played by Pakistan in its future. All of this points to an uncertain future in bilateral relations, which may become extremely tense, as has been the case in recent months.

In short, in the current phase of the conflict, lasting more than a decade, much progress has been made in the development of the country. But this development has been more in power than in action. It is up to the Afghans, through the national reconciliation process, and future observance of agreements, to ensure that this transition is fulfilled in a manner that will probably be slow but uninterrupted and sustained.

As regards the result of the mission, it should be stressed that the capability of international jihadism has been radically reduced. But the duration of the war and the current economic situation lead to premature suppositions that the situation is irreversible. Additional efforts are necessary, prolonged over time, and perhaps different from those being undertaken at present, to ensure sufficient stability and a hope of progress for Afghanistan.

Geopolitical indicators⁴⁴

TABLE OF GEOPOLITICAL INDICATORS		AFGHANISTAN	SPAIN
Land area		652,230 km ² (41st)	505,370 km ² (52nd)
GDP		\$34.29 billion (109th)	\$1,434 trillion (15th)
Structure GDP/active population	Agriculture	20%	3.3%
	Industry	25.6%	26.4%
	Services	54.4%	70.3%

⁴⁴ Source: CIA The World FACTBOOK.

Afghanistan: on the eve of a decisive 2014

TABLE OF GEOPOLITICAL INDICATORS		AFGHANISTAN	SPAIN
GDP per capita		\$1,100 (216th)	\$31,100 (47th)
GDP growth rate		10.2% (8th)	-1.4% (202nd)
Unemployment rate		35% (184th)	25.1% (175th)
Commercial relations (Exports):		Pakistan 33.1%, India 24.9%, Tajikistan 8.7%, US 5.8%	France 18.2%, Germany 10.4%, Portugal 8.1%, Italy 8.1%, United Kingdom 6.5%
Commercial relations (Imports):		Pakistan 25.8%, US 17.4%, Russia 8.4%, India 5.5%, China 5.4%, Kazakhstan 4.5%, Germany 4.3%	Germany 12.6%, France 11.5%, Italy 6.9%, China 6%, Netherlands 5%, United Kingdom 4.3%, Portugal 4%
Population		31,108,077 (40th)	47,370,542 (28th)
Urbanisation rate		23.5%	77%
Age composition	0-14	42.6%	15.4%
	15-64	54.8%	67.2%
	Over 65	2.5%	17.5%
Population growth rate		2.25% (41st)	0.73% (140)
Ethnic groups		Pashtun 42%, Tajik 27%, Hazara 9%, Uzbek 9%, Aimak 4%, Turkmen 3%, Baloch 2%, others 4%	Mediterranean and Nordic type
Religions		Sunni Muslims 80%, Shi'ite Muslims 19%, others 1%	Roman Catholics 94%, others 6%
Population literacy		28.1% (43.1%h - 12.6%m)	97.7% (98.5%h - 97%m)
Population below the poverty line		36%	21.1%
Refugees			
Internally displaced persons			
GINI index			32 (104th)
Military spending. % of GDP.		10% (3rd)	1.2% (116th)

TIMELINE OF THE CONFLICT	
DATE	EVENTS
14/01/1761	Battle of Panipat. Consolidation of the Durrani dynasty by Ahmed Shah Durrani, father of the Afghan Nation.
1775	Timur Shah Durrani establishes his capital in Kabul.
1833-1842	First Anglo-Afghan War.
1878-1881	Second Anglo-Afghan War.
1919-1921	Third Anglo-Afghan War.
1973	Mohammed Zahir Shah, the last king, leaves Afghanistan.
1979	Soviet invasion begins.
	Assassination of Hafizullah Amin.
1989	Soviet withdrawal and start of the Civil War.
1996	The Taliban capture Kabul.
2001	United States starts aerial bombing of Taliban and Al Qaeda positions. Launch of Operation Enduring Freedom.
	Northern Alliance captures Kabul.
	The United Nations Security Council creates ISAF by means of Resolution 1386.
	Creation of Provisional Authority presided over by Hamid Karzai.
2004	Elections held, in which Karzai is elected President.
2009	President Karzai is re-elected.
	President Obama's speech at West Point. Start of the exit strategy from Afghanistan.
2005-2010	Constant escalation of violence. Continued increase in civilian and military casualties.
2011-2014	Process of transition ("Inteqal"). Political negotiations. Gradual "Afghanisation" of the conflict. Foreseeable decrease in insurgent attacks and in the resulting casualties.
2014-2017?	End of the process of reducing Western military presence in Afghanistan. Maintenance of limited contingents of foreign military forces to support the consolidation of the Afghan ANFS. The length of time these forces and their contingent will remain has not yet been determined.

⁴⁵ (Own work).

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Development of the conflict in Pakistan. An uncertain future

Andrés González Martín

Chapter ten

Abstract

The replacement of General Musharraf by an elected civilian government, the vitality of the judiciary, the international pressure as a result of government collusion with terrorist groups, the resounding answer to the insurgency in Swat, Waziristan and other FATA districts, the success of the Black Thunderstorm and Rah e Rast military operations, the success of the U.S. Armed Forces killing Osama bin Laden in Abbottabad, the death of Al Qaeda's number three, Sheikh Saeed al Masri, following an American attack, the publication of more than 90,000 secret documents produced between 2004 and 2010 accusing Pakistan of secretly collaborating with the Taliban, the improvement in economic relations with India and the 2013 elections are all recent developments that lead us to believe that the most critical moments are a bad memory of the past.

Keywords

Taliban, Al Qaeda, ISI (Inter Services Intelligence), Kashmir, Afghanistan, FATA (Federally Administered Tribal Areas), India, Muslim League, Pakistan Peoples Party, Lashkar e Jhangvi (LeJ), Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT).

Introduction

Pakistan a major threat to the World

Two days after his victory in the presidential election of 2008, Barack Obama convened a meeting with the Director of National Intelligence, Vice Admiral John Michael McConnell, to learn details on the secret operations of U.S. intelligence before swearing his new office and occupying the Oval Office. McConnell, under orders of then President Bush, agreed to meet with the elected candidate to inform him of the situation, but on condition that they only be accompanied by the Head of the CIA Analysis Department, Michael J. Morrell. No other member of the Obama transition team could attend the secret meeting held in the Kluczynski Federal Building, one of the most prominent skyscrapers of Chicago, where Obama had installed his future cabinet¹.

At the meeting, the then Senator was informed that the number one priority of U.S. intelligence and its National Director was Pakistan. Pakistan had been identified as the main threat to the United States. The evaluation made by Vice Admiral Mike McConnell and the Head of CIA Analysis might seem surprising, especially when the United States was sustaining an asymmetric war on two fronts, with the deployment of 161,000 troops in Iraq and 38,000 in Afghanistan.

Despite the long-standing and close relations with the military regime of President Pervez Musharraf, the difficult situation in Baghdad and the growing terrorist violence in Afghanistan meant Pakistan was, in November 2008, the first on a long list of threats to the world's leading power. This position of honour is not easily achieved. If, in the United States of America's opinion, Pakistan is the most important threat, Pakistan suddenly becomes a very important country for the whole world, even if it is far away and almost totally unknown. The immediate danger was not from war zones, but rather the lack of stability of a country of 190 million people, the fifth most highly populated in the world, with over 2,500 km bordering with Afghanistan, home to some of the most dangerous terrorist groups in the world, and a growing anti-Western movement, about one hundred atomic bombs, and a society criss-crossed by deep ethnic, social and economic fissures.

At that time, focusing attention on the Afghan-Pakistani border and Pakistan's instability, putting this issue at the centre of gravity of national security would have somehow meant admitting the wrongfulness of the invasion of Iraq. The energy spent in Iraq had not been used on the main front, diverting the necessary means away from the real problem.

¹ Woodward, Bob. (2010). *Obama's wars*. New York, Simon and Schuster.

An enormous amount of resources were diverted from the necessary national construction of Afghanistan and spent on Iraq.

Moreover, the attack on Iraq in 2003 clearly demonstrated to all stakeholders with interests in Afghanistan, and of course to Musharraf's government, that the United States was not concerned with rebuilding regional order in Central and Southern Asia. The reconstruction of Afghanistan after the victory in 2001 was not going to engage the Americans and their allies sufficiently to configure the whole scenario and generate a new landscape. Invading Iraq was telling Pakistan that she could continue her policy with certain precautions, until the Americans should decide to withdraw from that dark corner of the world. In view of the situation, the Taliban were still an interesting and powerful enough pawn for the Islamabad regime to keep its traditional avenues of collaboration with them open.

Pakistan's prominent place of honour as a threat was not new. After winning his first presidential election, George W. Bush visited the White House in December 2000 and met the outgoing President Clinton, who briefed him on the most serious security problems faced by the United States². Three of the six most serious issues involved Pakistan. Pakistan's ties with the Taliban and Al Qaeda, tensions between India and Pakistan and non-proliferation in the area were present on the agenda of the power transfer.

The U.S. intelligence analysis given to President Bush only added arguments against the decision to invade Iraq before closing the Eastern Front in South Asia. The question, which in principle is difficult to understand, can be explained.

After September 11, Iraq was not the first priority; however, an important sector of the U.S. administration considered that the situation offered a unique window of opportunity to close an old case. Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld, Paul Wolfowitz, Richard Perle and the entire neo-conservative framework had long ago designed a course of action and now they could dress it up with a plan of action to rebuild the entire Middle East, where, by the way, there were many more business opportunities on the horizon. The neo-conservative vision had the great advantage of sounding good and, from a distance, looking consistent at a time of doubt and confusion. On the other hand, it was not too difficult to influence the decisions of a president under great pressure and without a plan on the table. Furthermore, Bush had shown that his knowledge of the outside world was insufficient. During the election campaign of 2000, in an interview with *Glamour* magazine, he mistook «The Taliban» for a female pop group, making

² Clinton, Bill. (2004). *My life*. New York Knopf. The other three pressing security problems were North Korea, the Middle East and Iraq.

Development of the conflict in Pakistan

it clear that he had travelled little and read less³. In these circumstances, it comes as no surprise that he did not know the name of the General who ruled Pakistan at that time⁴.

On the other hand, the U.S. Armed Forces had an aversion to national stabilization and reconstruction missions. During President Clinton's term, at different times and depending on the position of public opinion, the U.S. military had been engaged in complex tasks where not everything consisted of identifying a neat list of objectives and destroying them one after another. The Republicans wanted to end this game. President Bush had said before September 11 that open-ended deployments and loosely-defined missions would be avoided. «I do not think we have to use our troops for so-called nation building, I think we have to use our troops to fight wars and win them»⁵.

In Iraq, and especially in Afghanistan, the Armed Forces were initially to be used to change the regime and rebuild the State. By «changing the regime» we are to understand replacing an enemy by a friend, without necessarily producing a clear commitment to the social, economic, cultural and political transformation required to enable the consolidation of a democratic regime. National reconstruction is a lengthy, expensive process with many political risks and requires long-term commitment by the countries that decide to intervene. The United States did not want to take on this role in Afghanistan and considered it would be sufficient to drive the Taliban from power and install a new government united by one single factor: the fight against the Taliban.

The new distribution of power in Afghanistan was seriously threatening Pakistan's strategic interests, but its inconsistency and instability offered opportunities to those who knew the ground well and were prepared to wait for the right moment. For this reason, the ISI's (Inter Services Intelligence, Pakistan's intelligence agency) ties with the Taliban were not broken off after September 11.

The close ties between Pakistan, its armed forces, intelligence services and the Taliban are well known and well documented. The Taliban are really a Pakistani creation. Ahmed Rashid, a prominent Pakistani

³ Anecdote quoted by the National Journal, May 4 2002.

⁴ Published by BBC News on «Bush Triggers Row over Pakistan Coup» November 5 1999.«The governor of Texas, George W. Bush, has been attacked by his political opponents after appearing to condone the military coup in Pakistan. The Republican Party's presidential frontrunner was unable to name the country's new military ruler, when asked by an interviewer, but said he might bring stability to the country. US Vice President Al Gore, currently the leading Democratic presidential candidate, said Mr Bush's comments were «troubling» and questioned whether he had sufficient knowledge of foreign affairs to lead the country.

⁵ Quoted by Niall Ferguson in the article «The Monarchy of George II», Vanity Fair, September 2004.

journalist and political analyst and a regular contributor to major newspapers and magazines, detailed in his books «*Descent Into Chaos*» and «*The Taliban*» the interplay of interdependencies born on either side of the border and how they have adapted to new situations over time. But, after 11 September, Pakistan's sustained relationship with the Taliban did not result in a U.S. statement to declare Pakistan as a state sponsor of terrorism, nor that the U.S. proposed to take the actions necessary to gradually change the power base in Pakistan and its relations with jihadist terrorism.

The United States and Pakistan are old Cold War allies. Soon after independence, the weakness of the state, internal tensions and especially the conflict with India stimulated political and military interest, mainly within the army, to position itself within the American orbit, becoming a stronghold for containing the progress of Communism in South Asia. The various governments of Pakistan have always tried to seek guarantees of security against India by ensuring a strong alliance with the Americans. However, the various U.S. administrations have not given enough importance to the relevance of the dispute between India and Pakistan. The Kashmir issue especially has been forgotten. American attention has always been remarkably ephemeral, associated with a crisis situation and it has usually lasted only as long as the crisis itself. Interest in the area has depended on the level of stress and when the tension dissipates the United States has quickly looked away, especially after the end of the Cold War. Pakistan sponsored terrorism and insurgency, and Indian repression in Kashmir, particularly strong from 1989 to 2002, were not matters of special interest. However, the dynamics of war, more or less contained, between India and Pakistan is essential to understand the position and evolution of these two countries.

Background to the conflict

The obsession with security and identity

The history of some states has been marked by a series of dramas that have forged a special sensitivity towards issues related to security. Pakistan is not the only one. Moreover, if this special perception of external threats is added to an insufficient development of national identity, a dramatic outcome can be expected and it is difficult not to be carried away by its gestures and actions. Recognising these two aspects from the outset, the obsession with security and the permanent crisis of identity, is essential to understanding political tensions in Pakistan.

Development of the conflict in Pakistan

Pakistan (Figure 10.1)⁶ is a country of over 190 million people, with high rates of population growth, an average age of twenty-two years, with 25%



Figure 10.1

of the population below the poverty line, major shortcomings in infrastructure and a very vulnerable social situation. «More than one-tenth of households have no electricity. A third of the roads are not paved. There are nearly eighty million people with serious food uncertainty. Adult illiteracy is around 44% (and 66% among women). Poverty, according to official figures, has increased from 29.2% in 2004-2005 to 36.1% in 2008-2009, when it affected no fewer than sixty-two million people. Per capita income is still very low: just \$1,046 in 2008-2009»⁷ and the capacity of the State to distribute national wealth is very low. According to data officially recognized by Pakistan, only 768,000 citizens, 0.5 percent of the population, pay tax⁸.

⁶ Pakistan is divided into four provinces, two territories and two areas of Kashmir administered by the country's government. Provinces: Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa or Jaiber Pastunjua (formerly NWFP), Punjab and Sindh. Territories: Islamabad, Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). Areas of Kashmir administered by Pakistan: Azad Kashmir, Gilgit-Baltistan (formerly Northern Areas).

⁷ Bustelo, Pablo. (2010). Pakistan, failed economy? ARI, Real Instituto Elcano.

⁸ Muni, Sukh Deo. (2013). A turbulent Pakistan: India's choice in response. Singapore, ISAS working paper.

Moreover, according to Transparency International's transparency index, Pakistan's budget is minimal, the corruption control index is negative, ranking at 139 out of the 176 states analysed, the Human Development Index ranking is low, ranking at 145 of 187 states, the political freedom index is also negative and freedom of the press is very low. The Pakistani state is weak, according to Foreign Policy Analysis, 2012, and is not only one of the world's sixty failed states but, based on the indicators that measure the extent of their failure, the country ranks 13th among the most unstable. Very few states are more poorly positioned in the fragility index.

However, the benchmarks used to compile such classifications are criticized by those who think that the references for defining failed states are produced in the West. The quality of a state is measured by cultural and political parameters that are alien to the history and reality of the populations analysed. The failed state concept is called into question because of the kind of political culture it reflects. Most of those states marked as failed are also threats to the West, beyond any governance problems they may have. Obviously, political regimes subject to deep changes and in the midst of difficult transitions are shaken by uncertainty and many factors of instability buffet them, but the end result may not necessarily be a failed state. Probably, to avoid a country's becoming a failed state, the political community that faces the task of adapting to modernity must risk being in a position that may lead to failure, but keeping the status quo does not guarantee better results.

In any case, Pakistan is a nuclear power with powerful armed forces, which consume about 20% of government spending, and a hyper-powerful intelligence agency, the ISI. Pakistan recognises it possesses nuclear weapons but there is no official information about the size of its nuclear arsenal; however, it is estimated to possess between seventy and ninety nuclear warheads⁹.

The paradox of an impoverished country with a fragmented society while possessing a powerful army and defence system equipped with nuclear capability is not only a result of the threat posed by India, but also a result of its institutional and political weaknesses. Since independence, the military has seized power directly through military governments or indirectly through puppet governments for half of the country's history.

Since 1947, Pakistan has had four military presidents, Generals Ayub Khan, Yahya Kkhan, Zia Ul-Haq and Pervez Musharraf. Its armed forces have taken part in two open wars against India; one in 1965 and another in 1971 and have also been involved in undeclared wars in 1947 and 1999. Also, in 1971, Pakistan fought a war against Bengali insurgents of

⁹ Norris, Robert S. and Kristensen, Hans M. (2010). «Global Nuclear Weapons Inventories». *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists*, July/August 2010.

Development of the conflict in Pakistan

the then East Pakistan in the so-called Bangladesh liberation war. The Pakistani army's intervention killed at least 300,000 people in the former province of Bengal. But that is not all. Since the beginning of the Soviet invasion in 1979, Pakistan, with the support of the United States, sustained the irregular warfare of the Afghan mujahideen until the withdrawal of the USSR in 1989 and then supported the Pashtuns in the Afghan civil war, and was responsible for the birth and development of the Taliban.

The difficult initial security situation did not improve throughout the nineties. After the Soviet withdrawal, the international community forgot Afghanistan, and the Pakistani government decided to make every effort to impose a sympathetic government in Kabul. Supporting Pashtun tribes and militias either side of the border, an alliance with the Taliban and religious radicalism was the course of action chosen to support Islamabad's influence north of the Durand line.

The Durand line is the border demarcation between Afghanistan and British rule in India imposed by the British authorities on the Emir of Kabul in 1893. No Afghan government has ever accepted this limit because it artificially separates the Pashtun population. The presence of Pashtuns on both sides of the border, confrontation between the warlords, and ethnic rivalry in Afghanistan between Hazaras, Uzbeks, Tajiks and Pashtuns was understood as a fantastic opportunity to influence control of Afghanistan by supporting the northern Pashtuns from south of the line.

The Pakistani army considered this support for the Taliban to be an essential part of their defence strategy, because the country's vital interests required maintaining an allied government in Kabul. The control of Afghanistan provides the strategic depth necessary to address a possibly nuclear conflict with India. After the Soviet withdrawal in 1989, the ISI tried to bring their Afghan friends to power, seeking the support of a loyal government, and one which would keep India out of the area. In the opinion of the military planners, Pakistan had no choice but to support the Pashtuns because its rivals, India, Russia and Iran, supported the other ethnic groups in Afghanistan and because nearly thirty million Pashtuns were living in Pakistan, some 15% of the population.

Of course, supporting the Taliban involved serious risks because of the possible radicalisation of important sectors of society, thus increasing sectarian extremism. However, before September 11, this issue did not seem to be very serious or urgent to deal with. Moreover, this sectarian radicalism was the same that was feeding the terrorist groups and militias operating in Indian Kashmir with the support of the ISI and the army.

On the Eastern border, things were even more complicated because the border disputes over Kashmir confront Pakistan and India directly. In 1998, the two countries conducted nuclear tests, and Pakistan launched five bombs in response to the Indian tests. A year later, in 1999, the situ-

ation in Kashmir became more complicated. The Pakistani army invaded Indian Kashmir. In the Kargil area the two countries fought an undeclared conventional war. The conflict was confined to a small area, but obviously the possibility of a conventional conflict escalating and then followed by a possible leap to a nuclear war was present and, of course, this was not an issue to ignore. Pakistani troops violated the Control Line dividing Kashmir, advancing as far as Kargil, where they were stopped by Indian forces. The initial success resulting from the surprise attack soon became a resounding failure.

Pakistan's intention was to force a crisis that would compel the international community to intervene and, under their aegis, start talks on the future of Kashmir. But nobody gave in to the blackmail and President Clinton made Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif withdraw, forcing a retreat which left Pakistan alone and exposed as the aggressor to all international actors. This undeclared war and its negative consequences fed the differences between Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and Army Chief General Musharraf. It became the origin of the coup that occurred shortly afterwards in October and which placed General Musharraf as the country's Executive Director. It was Musharraf himself who chose the title of Executive Director to identify himself as new supreme chief, a curious formula that he granted himself with the intention of projecting a less aggressive and more modern image than one of yet another general in power.

Later that year, in December 1999, an Indian Airlines plane bound for New Delhi was hijacked with 160 passengers on board. After several landings the plane reached Kandahar, which was under Taliban control. All Pakistani hijackers were members of Harkat ul-Ansar, a group closely linked to the Taliban and Al Qaeda. Harkat ul Ansar had been created in the mid nineties with the help of the ISI to carry out spectacular terrorist attacks. In 1997, the United States had placed the organisation on its list of terrorist groups but the group later changed its name, at the suggestion of Pakistan's secret services, to Harkat ul-Mujahedin. The tension between the two nuclear powers was immediately re-established.

At the end of the twentieth century, the adventurism of General Pervez Musharraf and Pakistan's support for the Taliban and the terrorists of Kashmir made Pakistan a pariah state in the eyes of the international community. At the beginning of this century, the terrorist attacks against the U.S. and the invasion of Afghanistan placed the entire region under the watchful eye of the West.

The U.S. military presence and operations against Taliban insurgents changed the distribution of forces in the area, forcing Pakistan to attempt to reposition itself without changing its strategic objective of controlling Kabul. From the outset, Pakistan was determined to provide all necessary support to the United States. There really was no other choice. In 1993,

Development of the conflict in Pakistan

President Clinton had included Pakistan in the list of states that fomented terrorism because of the ISI's open involvement in the training of Kashmiri terrorists¹⁰. After the attacks on September 11, not to take sides when the superpower's position was «for us or against us» was nothing more and nothing less than to put yourself in the sights of their weapons. During President Bush's two terms, General Musharraf became the United States' man in Islamabad, just as Karzai was in Kabul. The General's work was not easy because he had to show clear support for the United States in a country that strongly resented America and, at the same time, fight his former allies the Taliban, undoing the close support that the military and intelligence services had built up over decades.

When Kabul fell into the hands of the Northern Alliance in late 2001, it was certainly bad news for Pakistani strategists. Pakistan's irrelevance in Afghanistan and India's increasing influence in the country was not an acceptable option and many understood that when the Americans left, the Taliban might yet again become an interesting possibility. On the other hand, many of the people driving radicalism in the FATA (Federally Administered Tribal Areas) and in the North West were military and secret service agents who had changed sides, identifying with the groups that they had launched and forgetting how they had been an instrument within their country's security policy. The state of affairs in Pakistan prevented General Musharraf from directly attacking his former friends.

A quick look at the short history of Pakistan can help us understand the paradox of excessive Pakistani military power in a socially, economically and politically weak nation. One war after another, the permanent presence of political violence, the traumatic loss of East Pakistan, political corruption, the direct promotion of terrorism and radicalism, the habitual military intervention in government and repeated coups feed the obsessions and political frustrations of the Pakistani people, explaining the army's unique role. Pakistan, for all its negative data, has the seventh largest army in the world in number of troops and keeps its military budget outside of parliamentary control for security reasons. From 1965 to 2009, the legislature has not had access to, much less approved, Defence expenditure. The Armed Forces has justified this bizarre situation as a national security requirement. The state of emergency has been established in the country, using the excuse of pressure from the threats, but also because the alternatives are very weak.

The burden of sustaining all-powerful Armed Forces is very high in economic terms, but that is not all. In the last decade, the percentage of defence spending compared to overall state spending was 18%, falling considerably from 2006 onwards when the economic boom ended, but growing again in 2008, up 11%, and in 2009 with a 19% increase. On the

¹⁰ Rashid Ahmed, (2008), «Descenso al caos», Barcelona Ediciones Península.

other hand, defence spending accounting excludes many items, which according to the general criteria used in most other countries should be included in the defence budget. According to IMF data, defence spending in 2011 was 34% higher than declared in the federal budget¹¹. A large budget free from control in a country with many deficits is another indicator of the paranoia surrounding security and identity that affects a great country under great stress.

Historically, the state of Pakistan was not born of a long struggle against British colonization, but is the consequence of the rapid decolonisation of that part of the empire. The drama that blights the new nation's personality and its external relations can be seen in its origins.

In 1947 independence meant leaving behind a peaceful period interspersed with a few signs of violence and entering a most ruthless and cruel war. The birth of the Jewish state of Israel is similar in nature. For some, Pakistan's independence was simply the partition of India, just as Israel's Independence was the partition of Palestine in Arab opinion. In the same way that the Zionists believed the only way to get guarantees for the rights of the Jews was to establish a Jewish state in Palestine, the Muslim League believed the only way to ensure respect for the rights of Muslims in India was to build a Muslim majority state. Zionism is not a religious movement; it is a political movement which defends Jewish identity. In the same way, the proposals of the founder of Pakistan, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, initially had primarily a non-religious, political basis.

On the other hand, since its foundation, the Congress Party had been clearly committed to independence from the United Kingdom, while the Muslim League was a faithful British collaborator almost until the very end. League members thought British rule could better guarantee the rights of Muslims than a completely united state across the whole subcontinent in which the Hindu majority would impose its rules. Pakistan, the land of the pure, was created to guarantee the right of a minority that felt threatened within the framework of an independent British India with a Hindu majority. The identities of the two countries are based on concepts that are hard to reconcile. Pakistan really arises from the fear of India¹². Pakistan initially wanted to be a state for the Muslims of India, not a Muslim state.

¹¹ CIDOB International Yearbook 2012, monograph on Pakistan. Security and Defence Policy Annex.

¹² Mohamed Ali Jinnah, the leader of Pakistani independence, who incidentally had previously been a member of the Indian National Congress, said in an interview with the British government on December 13, 1946: «In the Northwest and North-east areas of India which are our homeland and where we form a majority of 70 percent, we want a separate state for ourselves. There we can live according to our own way of life. The difference between Hindus and Muslims are so basic that there is nothing in life on which we agree». Quoted in Dixit JN «India-Pakistan in war and peace». Routledge, London, 2002.

Development of the conflict in Pakistan

Clearly the diversity of the groups that live together in Pakistan does not make the construction of a national community easy. The country's ethnic map is complex. It includes various groups of races: Pashtun (13.2%), Sindhis (11.7%), Punjabi (52%), Baluchis (4.3%), Muhajir (7.5%). Ethnic diversity is complicated by an even greater cultural differentiation that can be seen in the many languages spoken in the country. The main languages are Punjabi (48%), Sindhi (12%), Siraki (10%), Pashto (10%), Urdu (8%), Baluchi (3%), Hindiko (2%). Regarding language, it is curious to find that in a country with so many languages to choose from, the two official languages, English and Urdu, are foreign.

Urdu is the language of only 8% of Pakistanis, but is taught in schools and is the language of the State, so most people know it to a greater or lesser extent. The Muhajir population has Urdu as a mother tongue. Muhajir means emigrant and indeed they are emigrants. They come from what is now India and settled in Pakistan following partition in 1947, fleeing the persecution that erupted against them in the regions of India where they lived. Urdu, their language, has its origin in the region of Delhi. It is precisely before independence in this community where the idea of the partition of India and the creation of two states was born, which is another curiosity. The architects who designed the independence project were the elites of Muslim communities living in areas where they were a minority and felt threatened by the Hindu majority.

It is also curious that the Muslim League, the party of the independence of Pakistan, was founded in Delhi, the present capital of India, Pakistan's great enemy, and that many of the principal leaders of independence had Urdu as their mother tongue. But their weight within the United Provinces, a region currently in India, did not allow them to claim this land as their own. Thus, the League had to settle for claiming the territories where most of the population was Muslim; however, these were in the far Northwest Frontier or in the Bay of Bengal.

Pakistan's first prime minister was Liaquat Ali Khan, a Muhajir. Ali Khan was certainly not to be the only one, other Muhajir prime ministers of Pakistan include Pervez Musharraf, Shaukat Aziz and Ibrahim Ismail Chunchigar. Initially, and for a long time, state administration was run by this community, because of its superior cultural level and clearer political consciousness. Progressively, educational improvements have allowed other ethnic and linguistic groups to take part in the administration and insist on the relevance of their language in education.

At first, you might think that in Pakistan religion is a factor that unites the country because minorities are not relevant; however, minorities do exist

and they create serious tensions. Christians, Hindus and Ahmadis¹³ each represent two percent of the people of Pakistan. The blasphemy laws are the most stringent in the world and have been used to persecute minorities, especially Ahmadis, whom the constitution declares to be non-Muslims. Incidents occur continually and in the extreme case of the Ahmadis declaring themselves Muslims or praying in a non-Ahmadi mosque they would be declared criminals. In addition to this problem, the diversity of Islam does not favour the apparent unity of belief. 17% of the population is Shiite and tensions with the Sunni majority are continuous. Moreover, not all give the same role to Islam even while agreeing on its centrality. Initially, in the opinion of the leaders of Independence and, more or less clearly in that of the Muslim League and the Pakistan People's Party, Islam was and is a sign of political identity, an element of cultural differentiation on which to build the nation. Thus, religion becomes an ideological factor valuing the cultural manifestation of Islam and its political dimension over its spiritual reality. Many Pakistani leaders have appealed to religion forcefully despite not being religious people. This includes the country's founding fathers, many of the leaders of the Muslim League, the Bhutto family and their followers in the Pakistan People's Party, General Pervez Musharraf and some of the top commanders in the Armed Forces.

The founder of Pakistan and its first president, Ali Jinnah, and its president, prime minister and founder of the Pakistan People's Party, the father of a prime minister and father-in-law of a president, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, both studied in Bombay, in the Cathedral and John Connon School, a Christian school in India, and subsequently completed their education in universities in the United Kingdom and the United States. Benazir Bhutto, daughter of Zulfikar, was educated in Christian schools in Pakistan, the schools of Jesus and Mary in Karachi and Muree, finishing her studies at Harvard and being the first woman to be elected prime minister in a Muslim country. Her husband, Asif Ali Zardari, also studied in a Catholic school, St. Patrick High School in Karachi, an institute of the Society of Jesus, and continued his university education at the London School of Business Studies. Sharif Nawaz, twice prime minister and leader of the Muslim League, attended Saint Anthony High School in Lahore, also a Catholic school. Pervez Musharraf also studied at the Jesuits at St. Patrick High School in Karachi and the Forman Christian College University in Lahore. Many of the officers of the first generation of independence, like General and President Ayub Khan, had passed through Sandhurst. The British and Americans have trained the

¹³ The Ahmadi Movement of Islam was founded by Mirza Ghulam Ahmad in 1889 in India. According to their own opinion, Ahmadis are Muslims and a reform movement within Islam. Ahmadi Muslims clearly distinguish themselves from militant groups and fundamentalist elements and stress the peaceful and tolerant aspects of Islam. However, the vast majority of Muslims consider the Ahmadiyya movement is apostate and heretic and not part of Islam.

Development of the conflict in Pakistan

military elites. This small sample may be sufficient to find that the country's elites are not necessarily educated in the madrasas. Neither the Pakistan People's Party nor the Muslim League were Islamist parties before separation, or are now after it, but may sometimes have tacitly supported the most radical. The Army are not commanded by incompetents, some are religious, some not necessarily so. The relationship between the military and the militants has more to do with the interest in sustaining the resistance of these groups against Indian rule in Kashmir, or against the Karzai government, than with religion. All sides, rulers, military and civilian, know that the political model of the FATA and Northern Provinces is not a valid reference for the whole country.

But it is strange that twenty days before the elections of May 2013, the Chief of Army Staff, General Pervez Kiyani Ashfaq, proclaimed the Islamic identity of Pakistan in the Kakul Military Academy in front of a military formation¹⁴. This statement could be understood as Army support for faith-based political groups or as just a way of reminding people that India is still the number one enemy, despite the current situation on the western border and the problems with terrorist attacks by Islamist radical groups.

Current situation of the conflict

The frustration of an unfinished State

The political and administrative structure of Pakistan, although nominally federal, is based not on the equality of all territories, but on the difference between them. The clear asymmetry of the regions and territories also affects citizens. Of the eight administrative units in the country, three of them, the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), formerly known as the Northern Territories, now the territory of Gilgit Baltistan, and Azad Kashmir, each have their own model of integration into the State. If federation implies equal territories, in Pakistan it is not understood that way because the territorial model is not closed. The asymmetry between the parties is a result of the failure of the federal model to bring together the diversity, complexity, conflict and dissatisfaction of the whole population, where major groups lack enough political consciousness to be part of the Pakistani nation, which on the other hand, is a nation that feels incomplete.

In former Northern Territories, now called Gilgit-Baltistan, following approval by the central government in August 2009 of the Empowerment

¹⁴ Chief of Army Staff (COAS), General Ashfaq Pervez Kiyani, «Let me remind you that Pakistan was created in the name of Islam and Islam can never be taken out of Pakistan. However, Islam should always remain a unifying force. I assure you that regardless of the odds, the Pakistan Army will keep on doing its best towards our common dream for a truly Islamic Republic of Pakistan».

and Self-governance Order, the region's first political priority is to integrate into Pakistan with the same rights as the provinces of Punjab, Baluchistan, Sind or Jaiber Pastunjua, also known as Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and formerly the North West Frontier. The requested change would alter the 1973 constitution currently in force and could harm Pakistan's claims on Kashmir because Gilgit-Baltistan is internationally known as Pakistani Kashmir. FATA and Gilgit-Baltistan share a special situation in that their inhabitants are economically and politically discriminated, although the reasons are different in each Territory. To these unique areas must be added the so-called Azad Kashmir, a small enclave of historic Kashmir. Azad means free and this is the only area of Pakistan where an ethnic Kashmiri population lives, although the Pakistanis integrated it with the former Northern Territories in the area recognized internationally as Pakistani Kashmir for political reasons.

Azad Kashmir, although under the control of the Pakistani government, is not part of the country according to the constitution. This territory has its own president, prime minister, supreme court, legislative power and its own flag. The budget and taxes are governed by the Azad Kashmir Council without the direct intervention of Islamabad. Moreover, neither Gilgit-Baltistan nor Azad Kashmir has parliamentary representation in the National Assembly or the Senate of Pakistan. These peculiar aspects remind us that Pakistan is not a state whose borders are closed, something that creates instability inside and outside the country.

The Federally Administered Tribal Areas are those areas dominated by the Pashtun tribes where the government has failed to enforce the regime of federal law that prevails in the central provinces. In this area justice is imposed by the Council of Elders and the administration does not usually interfere in their affairs. Pakistan has done no more than inherit the system that worked for the duration of the British Empire. The British did not seek dominion or control but to neutralise the belligerence of these tribes in inaccessible areas. Since independence, no one has addressed the incorporation of these Pashtun groups into national life, many of them do not pay taxes, do not vote, do not know or obey the law of the State and do not form part of the Armed Forces.

The current approach to the State's relations with the tribes is not new. Winston Churchill in his first book «*The Story of the Malakand Field Force*» described his experiences as a lieutenant in the British cavalry on the difficult border between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Churchill concluded that the only way to deal with this part of the world was to build a complicated system of relations based on political intrigue, bribery and punitive expeditions¹⁵.

¹⁵ Winston S. Churchill (2004) *The Story of the Malakand Field Force*. Rockville, Wildside Press. «Every influence, every motive, that provokes the spirit of murder among men,

Development of the conflict in Pakistan

This unstable structure is complicated by Pakistan's tragic experience of secessionist movements, which in 1971 led to the independence for East Pakistan, now Bangladesh. The frustration of breaking up the State has failed to influence the power relations between central and provincial powers. Lack of confidence has marked the relationship, often fuelled by strong and violent separatist movements.

In the province of Sindh, the Jeay Sindh Tehrik independence party demands freedom for the Sindh nation oppressed by the central power of the Punjab. Without going as far, the Muttahida Quami Movement, liberal and strongly established in Karachi and across the province, aims to achieve more autonomy for the regions. It has twenty-five representatives in the National Assembly and has been a member of the coalitions that support the central and provincial government. The political weight of the Muttahida Quami Movement and its strong position in favour of secularism have not been enough to sustain good relations with the PPP and the Muslim League, who accuse the Movement of inciting violence in the south. Karachi, the capital of the province, is now a city dominated by the Mafia and where different groups and gangs vie for control of the various neighbourhoods.

In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the Awami National Party, a left-leaning strong presence with thirteen seats in the National Assembly and governor of the province, also calls for more autonomy and more weight for the Pashtun language. Since 2008, it has become the main objective of Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), a political group declared a terrorist by the United States that brings together an important sector of the Pakistani Taliban. The Awami National Party is not a religious party, but is increasingly active in its nationalist claims.

But undoubtedly the biggest problem for national unity is in Baluchistan, which is the largest, poorest and most underdeveloped province in the country. In fact Kalat, one of the Khanates of the present province of Baluchistan, opposed being part of Pakistan from the beginning and was de facto independent until March 1948. Since 1948, military intervention against the movements opposing federal government have occurred one after another. In 1958, the opposition to the establishment of a single province in Eastern Pakistan, with the loss of local power this would involve, provoked an armed uprising that was not resolved until 1969 and that later led to the recognition of Baluchistan as a region within Pakistan. During the seventies, another wave of armed resistance opposed the declaration of martial law in the province and the People's Liberation Front of Baluchistan engaged the armed forces and were finally defeated.

impels these mountaineers to deeds of treachery and violence. The strong aboriginal propensity to kill, inherent in all human beings, has in these valleys been preserved in unexampled strength and vigour».

Currently, the Baloch nationalist parties and movements, such as the Baloch National Party, the Baloch Liberation Army, Baloch Republican Army, the Baloch Liberation Front, the Hazara Democratic Party, the Lashkar e Belochistan and other groups, advocate secessionist agendas in Baluchistan, feeding an insurgency that causes continual violence involving varied actors and backgrounds. This struggle has caused enormous suffering to the Baloch ethnic group in their struggle to assert their identity in the most neglected province of the country. The most important claims of the nationalist groups are related to the domination of the political life of the province by the Punjabi minority, the excesses of the Pakistani police, military and intelligence services, the exploitation of natural resources in the area, the installation of military bases and the construction of the strategic port of Gwadar, which could change the demographics and economy of an important part of Baluchistan.

Attacks by Baloch groups, especially those of the Baloch Liberation Army¹⁶, and the attempted assassination of President Pervez Musharraf in 2005, have caused a strong reaction from the military in the province, starting an escalation of violence which President Zardari and the Supreme Court have sought to mitigate. The excesses committed by both sides have created a climate of violence that will be difficult to overcome. Human rights organizations accuse death squads such as Tehreek e Aman Balchistan and Baloxh Muttahida Diftah Army of committing extra-judicial executions and being responsible for the disappearance of a large number of nationalists¹⁷. Some of these groups may be armed by the Mutahida Mahaz Balochistan political organization with ties to the current government. According to estimates of the NGO, Voice for Baloch Missing Persons, 14,385 people have disappeared since 2005 in Baluchistan and more than 400 bodies of tortured and mutilated people have been found. The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan has acknowledged that during the term of the current government they have recovered more than 450 tortured bodies and more than 1,300 people have

¹⁶ The government of Pakistan says the Baloch Liberation Army is responsible for the deaths of 138 Frontier Corps troops, 89 police officers and 872 civilians during 2012.

¹⁷ «It is alleged that the organization, Tehreek-e-Nefaz-e-Aman Balochistan (TNAB; movement for the restoration of peace in Balochistan), has been formed by secret agencies, particularly by the ISI, to crush the nationalist movement, which is against military intervention in the province and does not allow the people of Balochistan to control their rich natural resources. Tehreek-e-Nefaz-e-Aman Balochistan is said to be the armed wing of Mutahida Mahaz Balochistan (United Front Balochistan), a political party headed by Siraj Raisani, the brother of provincial chief minister Aslam Raisani. The armed wing claims to have support from the custodians of Pakistan to restore peace in Balochistan. The chief minister is also not happy with the misuse of powers by the army and Frontier Corps (FC) in dealing with the law and order situation and his younger brother opted to disassociate himself from his brother's politics». Commission on Human Rights in Asia. <http://www.humanrights.asia/news/ahrc-news/AHRC-STM-005-2012>.

disappeared. Even the Supreme Court of Pakistan, in September 2012, recognizes that there is evidence implicating the Frontier Corps in about a thousand cases of disappearances¹⁸. In April 2012, the president of the Supreme Court of Justice, Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhary, expressed his frustration by noting that the 26,000 police and 50,000 border guards in Baluchistan were unable to avoid constant bloodshed and the cruelty of the brutal murder and torture, noting that, «there is no difference between people and beasts in Baluchistan, where mutilated bodies are discovered every day»¹⁹.

Moreover, the province is increasingly affected by the actions of Taliban groups that attack both the Shiite community and Baloch nationalists. The Talibanisation of part of the territory can be better understood if it is linked to the overall strategy supported by Islamabad for facing different threats it perceives on either side of the border with Afghanistan, using the most active and violent Pashtun tribes as a response mechanism. In a way, Beloch separatism in this area justifies the ISI's alleged support for the Taliban. The State may be interested in sponsoring Sunni radicalism as a counterweight to ethnic-based cultural and political movements. It is surprising to discover the impunity with which the Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ) group attacks the Shia religious minority of Hazara origin, although officially the LeJ is recognized as a terrorist organization by the Pakistani government. The coexistence in the province of Pashtuns and Baluchis is becoming increasingly difficult and Pashunkhawa Milli Awami Party claims the creation of a new, separate Pashtun province in Baluchistan. The possibility of forming a new Pashtun district which, in the future, could be integrated into the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhan and separate from Baluchistan, is becoming increasingly stronger.

Despite the efforts of the present government to promote reconciliation, the spiral of action and reaction has set in, creating an escalation of violence that has not yet been contained. The repression has been strong enough to draw the attention of the U.S. Congress that convened a meeting on human rights abuses in 2012, approving the submission of a bill in the House of Representatives demanding that the United States support the right of self-determination of Balochistan.

The province of Punjab is perceived by the rest of the country as an overbearing region that prevents Pakistan becoming a political community in which citizens can be free and equal. It creates a situation where territories have an asymmetric position administered according to the interests of the Punjab, which acts as internal imperial power that administers the

¹⁸ Roul Animesh, Fight for the rights, Pakistan's Balochistan province, Jane's Intelligence Review, 2012.

¹⁹ Roul Animesh, Fight for the rights, Pakistan's Balochistan province, Jane's Intelligence Review, 2012.

entire country. While others see it as an overbearing region, the Punjab sees herself as a regional martyr for the cause of Pakistan, given over to the mission of building national unity. The tough task of keeping such diversity united means, in the understanding of many of the Punjab's inhabitants, a heavy burden with significant costs in terms of prosperity. Frustration is therefore not exclusive to the periphery but a general syndrome that spans the Pakistani territory. The separatists' strength increases with the dynamics that they instigate and who appropriate the essence of the republic and mould it to their interests. To regain confidence and enable political dialogue and reconciliation between the parties is a difficult task that the government has attempted, with very limited success, and to which the judiciary, with its fight against impunity for extra-judicial killings, has tried to contribute.

A quick look at this border region between India, Central Asia and the Middle East uncovers an amalgam of identities in a constant struggle that have not yet been tamed by the rule of law. Fracture lines appear on all sides in any area under analysis. Obviously, in addition to the above, the social, economic and opportunity gaps are huge. The State is not strong everywhere and its Treasury cannot assume the task of distributing wealth. Currently, there are under a million taxpayers out of a population of 190 million.

The various institutions are also in conflict. The central government, the judiciary, the military and provincial and local governments all struggle to impose their position while the country experiences permanent disorder and high levels of violence. The Supreme Court has ordered the reopening of the corruption cases involving President Zardari and which General Pervez Musharraf had ordered to be closed after the 2007 elections, apparently as a result of the support Benazir Bhutto gave at that time. Despite judicial efforts, the government has refused to allow the reopening of the investigations concerning the millions Zardari may have in Swiss accounts. In April 2012, the Supreme Court accused Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani of condemning the corruption investigations against President Zardari and, a few months later, removed him from the office of Prime Minister and from parliament. The dismissal of a Prime Minister by the judges without the intervention of Parliament was for many an attempted interference by the judiciary in national politics, but eventually Gilani was dismissed and replaced by Raja Pervaiz Ashraf.

Tensions between the armed forces, government and the judiciary are constant. The notorious «Memogate» case only confirms a long tradition of disputes between different branches of government. The «Memogate» case broke as a result of the incursion of the U.S. armed forces into Pakistan to kill Bin Laden in the Abbottabad compound. Apparently, the Pakistan Armed Forces opposed the President's order authorizing the American raid and the civilian authorities feared it might produce a military coup. To counter the possible military response, the government

Development of the conflict in Pakistan

addressed the Americans through Pakistan's ambassador to the U.S. Husain Haqqani, who on behalf of President Zardari asked the American administration for help to reduce the military takeover. Admiral Michael Mullen, then Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, was the recipient of Memorandum (Figure 10.2)²⁰.

During the past 72 hours since a meeting was held between the president, the prime minister and the chief of army staff, there has been a significant deterioration in Pakistan's political atmosphere. Increasingly desperate efforts by the various agencies and factions within the government to find a home – ISI and/or Army, or the civilian government – for assigning blame over the UBL raid now dominate the tug of war between military and civilian sectors. Subsequent tit-for-tat reactions, including outing of the CIA station chief's name in Islamabad by ISI officials, demonstrates a dangerous devolution of the ground situation in Islamabad where no central control appears to be in place.

Civilians cannot withstand much more of the hard pressure being delivered from the Army to succumb to wholesale changes. If civilians are forced from power, Pakistan becomes a sanctuary for UBL's legacy and potentially the platform for far more rapid spread of al Qaeda's brand of fanaticism and terror. A unique window of opportunity exists for the civilians to gain the upper hand over army and intelligence directorates due to their complicity in the UBL matter.

Request your direct intervention in conveying a strong, urgent and direct message to Gen Kayani that delivers Washington's demand for him and Gen Pasha to end their brinkmanship aimed at bringing down the civilian apparatus – that this is a 1971 moment in Pakistan's history. Should you be willing to do so, Washington's political/military backing would result in a revamp of the civilian government that, while weak at the top echelon in terms of strategic direction and implementation (even though mandated by domestic political forces), in a wholesale manner replaces the national security adviser and other national security officials with trusted advisers that include ex-military and civilian leaders favorably viewed by Washington, each of whom have long and historical ties to the US military, political and intelligence communities. Names will be provided to you in a face-to-face meeting with the person delivering this message.

In the event Washington's direct intervention behind the scenes can be secured through your personal communication with Kayani (he will likely listen only to you at this moment) to stand down the Pakistani military-intelligence establishment, the new national security team is prepared, with full backing of the civilian apparatus, to do the following:

1. President of Pakistan will order an independent inquiry into the allegations that Pakistan harbored and offered assistance to UBL and other senior Qaeda operatives. The White House can suggest names of independent investigators to populate the panel, along the lines of the bipartisan 9-11 Commission, for example.
2. The inquiry will be accountable and independent, and result in findings of tangible value to the US government and the American people that identify with exacting detail those elements responsible for harboring and aiding UBL inside and close to the inner ring of influence in Pakistan's Government (civilian, intelligence directorates and military). It is certain that the UBL Commission will result in immediate termination of active service officers in the appropriate government offices and agencies found responsible for complicity in assisting UBL.
3. The new national security team will implement a policy of either handing over those left in the leadership of Al Qaeda or other affiliated terrorist groups who are still on Pakistani soil, including Ayman Al Zawahiri, Mullah Omar and Sirajuddin Haqqani, or giving US military forces a "green light" to conduct the necessary operations to capture or kill them on Pakistani soil. This "carte blanche" guarantee is not without political risks, but should demonstrate the new group's commitment to rooting out bad elements on our soil. This commitment has the backing of the top echelon on the civilian side of our house, and we will insure necessary collateral support.
4. One of the great fears of the military-intelligence establishment is that with your stealth capabilities to enter and exit Pakistani airspace at will, Pakistan's nuclear assets are now legitimate targets. The new national security team is prepared, with full backing of the Pakistani government – initially civilian but eventually all three power centers – to develop an acceptable framework of discipline for the nuclear program. This effort was begun under the previous military regime, with acceptable results. We are prepared to reactivate those ideas and build on them in a way that brings Pakistan's nuclear assets under a more verifiable, transparent regime.
5. The new national security team will eliminate Section S of the ISI charged with maintaining relations to the Taliban, Haqqani network, etc. This will dramatically improve relations with Afghanistan.
6. We are prepared to cooperate fully under the new national security team's guidance with the Indian government on bringing all perpetrators of Pakistani origin to account for the 2008 Mumbai attacks, whether outside government or inside any part of the government, including its intelligence agencies. This includes handing over those against whom sufficient evidence exists of guilt to the Indian security services.

Pakistan faces a decision point of unprecedented importance. We, who believe in democratic governance and building a much better structural relationship in the region with India AND Afghanistan, seek US assistance to help us pigeon-hole the forces lined up against your interests and ours, including containment of certain elements inside our country that require appropriate re-sets and re-tasking in terms of direction and extent of responsibility after the UBL affair.

We submit this memorandum for your consideration collectively as the members of the new national security team who will be inducted by the President of Pakistan with your support in this undertaking.

Figure 10.2

²⁰ Memorandum published by Foreign Policy on November 17 2011. Briefing for Adiral Mullen, Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff.

At first he denied the existence of the document but in November 2011 it was published by Foreign Policy²¹. The memo case has become a major policy issue in Pakistan. The opposition criticises the government for compromising the country's sovereignty in return for U.S. intervention to defuse the military coup. The Pakistan Supreme Court has intervened and investigated the facts and, in June 2012, accused Ambassador Haqqani of treason as proven by the memo. However, the relationship with the president has not been confirmed.

The Supreme Court is not content with acting against the current President, for possible embezzlement in addition to his involvement with political corruption. On April 8 2013 it ordered the former President Musharraf Pervef to appear in court charged with treason for violating the constitution by imposing emergency rule after the coup that brought him to power. Real and virtual coups, political corruption, political and business dynasties with obscure interests, judges under suspicion, indicted presidents, bar associations boycotting court proceedings, presidents of the Supreme Court suspended by the executive, separatist and nationalist movements everywhere, clashes between local, regional and central bodies, political parties attacked by terrorists who murder their candidates, nationalist activists who disappear, the state is in civil war while radical Islamists exploit the situation. However, on May 11 2013 elections were held and, for the first time in the country's history, a government ends its five-year term by opening a democratic electoral process. These elections are certainly only a small step, but when all are disagreements the procedure is the only chance for unity.

The role of external actors

The inventory of groups related to terrorist violence in Pakistan is as long as the stresses that build up in the country, but the scope of their strategies do not always point to local or regional policies in the area. Obviously, Al Qaeda has been identified as an international threat and its potential danger is decreasing, precisely because of the intensity of the campaign against terrorism launched after the September 11. Unfortunately, at the same time Al Qaeda's capacity to act has been reduced, another terrorist group, Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), the army of the pure, has shown its capacity for destabilisation and its willingness to increase its role at regional and global level.

The vision and aspirations of Lashkar-e-Taiba and Al Qaeda are very similar but their goals are different. The LeT has focused its attention on not

²¹ «Contents of the Mullen Memorandum» 17 November 2011, Foreign Policy. Retrieved 30 December 2011. http://www.foreignpolicy.com/files/fp_uploaded_documents/111117_ljaz%20memo%20Foreign%20Policy.PDF.

Development of the conflict in Pakistan

only reconquering Kashmir for Islam, but the whole of India. This group's mission would be to eradicate the geographical discontinuity imposed by the existence of the Indian Union in the Muslim community. In this way, Dar el Islam would stretch from the Atlantic in Morocco to the Pacific in Indonesia. Al Qaeda concentrated on overthrowing the apostate regimes of the Middle East.

Moreover, unlike Al Qaeda in Afghanistan, the LeT is not a foreign organization. The Army of the Pure is a group rooted in Pakistan itself and its political centre is rooted in the Punjab. Another differentiator that enhances the lethal potential of LeT is its complicity with the Pakistan Army and Intelligence Service²². This relationship is not only a link from the past.

If Al Qaeda and the Taliban are a problem on the western border, wherever they live they are identified as enemies by the Americans; the LeT, concentrated on the eastern border, has not so far had the same priority on the international agenda, despite the efforts of the Indian government. This has allowed the Pakistan Intelligence Services to arrange their schedule according to the preferences of their Western allies, focusing their attention on groups and areas that have offered most danger to the security interests of the U.S. and NATO, while maintaining their links with the LeT.

Pakistan's military has continuously deployed 90% of its forces on the eastern border of the country, and this data is enough to define their strategic centre of gravity. Yet most Westerners put the focus on the opposite side, on the Western frontier. The attacks of September 11, the relationship between Al Qaeda and the Taliban, the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan and the subsequent presence of NATO through the ISAF, the fundamentalist danger on the Afghan-Pakistani border and incursions by U.S. forces to punish Pashtun radicals in Pakistani territory, are reasons enough (without being all) to understand our concern for the area.

The border between Afghanistan and Pakistan has always been a dangerous place, but surely few would have imagined that by the end of the twentieth century it could become a major threat to the West. In 2008, Al Qaeda's dynamism sparked an interesting dispute between Bruce Hoffman and Marc Sageman²³. Hoffman was convinced that Al Qaeda had re-

²² «The ISI retained control over LeT operations at the strategic level, but its personnel in the field were susceptible to reverse indoctrination. Many intelligence officers assigned to supervise LeT ended up assisting terrorist attacks that severely vitiated Indo-Pakistani relations. Former members of the Pakistan Army's Special Services Group (SSG) provided training and advice for carrying out mass-casualty assaults in urban areas. Their professional input is believed to have crucially enabled LeT in carrying out its largest operation to date: The Mumbai terrorist attack of 2008». Lashkar-e-Taiba: Local organization, global ambitions. April 2013 Center for Security Studies (CSS), ETH Zurich.

²³ Sciolino, Elaine and Schmitt, Eric. «A not very private feud over terrorism». The New York Times, 8 June 2008.

built their bases in Pakistan while Sageman argued that the main threat comes not from afar, but is here among us, surrounding us all, due to the radicalisation of individuals and local groups that feed from the Internet and live in the West, with emphasis on the danger of sleeper cells in Europe and the United States.

The decisions of the U.S. government in 2009 to increase its military presence in Afghanistan, deploying 21,000 soldiers more than were hitherto committed, and the expenses of the financial year 2010, which represented an increase of funds for military operations in Afghanistan, confirmed that Hoffman's option worried the Obama administration. The leap in terms of budget for operations was really significant, rising from \$47 million in 2009 to \$65 million in 2010²⁴. An increase that not only represented an increase of almost 40% of the funds but also, for the first time, put more dollars in military plans for Afghanistan than in Iraq. The move to Kabul has been accompanied by a Pakistani military redeployment which, since 2009, has increased its presence on the neglected frontier. But once the main American force withdraws, things will have to be done differently.

Since 2009, the U.S. Democratic administration has reshaped relations with Pakistan to review its priorities and preferences. Bush had made President Musharraf his man, and described him as a courageous leader and visionary during Musharraf's visit to Camp David in June 2003. After September 11, the urgency of the war on terror concentrated all American efforts on security issues, generating an interesting opportunity to consolidate the Pakistan Army's position of power. North American relations with Pakistan during these years were mainly military, partly because of its role in the war in Afghanistan and partly because of the close relations between the armed forces of the two countries. This approach has not been completely successful; it certainly has not consolidated a long-term security solution in the region and has not overcome the already old «trust deficit»²⁵, but certainly with the withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2014 their chances of remaining would disappear.

The Enhanced Partnership with Pakistan Act of 2009, passed by Congress in October 2010, authorizes an annual expenditure during 2010-2014 of 1.5 billion dollars in non-military aid to Pakistan. This law has made the most significant change in U.S. foreign aid to Pakistan to date and means a major reorganization of the priorities in the relations of the two countries. The changes introduced by the Enhanced Partnership with Pakistan

²⁴ Scott Tyson, Ann. «*Pentagon budget devotes more to Afghanistan war than to Iraq*». Washington Post, May 8, 2009.

²⁵ In May 2012 Pakistan Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani publicly admitted: «There is a trust deficit between both countries, between two governments... that is the reason we are waiting to work for new terms of engagements and cooperation with the United States». Interview with CNN on May 9 2012.

Development of the conflict in Pakistan

Act are the result of a new strategy for the United States, which, applied elsewhere in the world, means leading from home, giving much more scope and prominence to its allies in tactical and operational issues.

However, Pakistani public opinion continues to show a steady and growing opposition to the United States. The weight of numbers is important and more and more Pakistanis consider the United States to be an enemy, not an ally²⁶. U.S. public opinion does not seem to be happy with a relationship that absorbs so many resources and produces such poor results. Since Pakistan's independence in 1947, the United States has spent 40.0000 million dollars on economic and military aid for Pakistan, 23 billion of which were spent in the past decade to combat terrorism. In return for this generous donation, Pakistanis have decided to commit to nuclear proliferation, the sale of nuclear technology to whoever asks for it, and the financing all kinds of terrorist and radical groups. The conclusion may be clear: whatever the United States does, Pakistan will always be a serious problem. With this background, it is not difficult to foresee a possible breakup of the alliance between the two partners but, despite all the problems, the strategic union between both is hard to undo, although the two partners may hate each other.

For India, Pakistan is a priority matter. Indian strategic analysts are divided into three groups. The first, supported by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, is committed to integration and cooperation on the subcontinent, the second believes that India should take advantage of the weakness of Pakistan to accelerate an arms race that India's enemy cannot follow and the last thinks it best to let Pakistan go its own way and ignore and isolate the country. On the other hand, China accepts Pakistan as a reliable friend, although it is concerned about jihadist groups and their possible influence in the province of Xinjiang.

From Europe in June 2012 Catherine Ashton Alta, Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security, visited Islamabad for talks with Prime Minister Gilani with the aim of initiating a strategic dialogue that would allow the approval of a new plan to replace the five-year commitment that ends in 2013. Through the new plan the Union is attempting to extend mutual relations beyond trade and assistance, increasing the issues on the new agenda, which would include security and the fight against terrorism.

Of course the EU is interested in consolidating democracy in Pakistan, for what it means for the country's stability and security in the region. For this reason the new EU strategy is focusing on strengthening democratic institutions, and directing its aid selectively. Trade and development aid only provide limited support to the development of democracy, but the

²⁶ According to surveys by the Pew Research Centre in 2009, 64% of Pakistanis regarded the United States as an enemy, in 2011 this rose to 69% and in 2012 to 74%.

consistent political commitment of the EU, and technical support aimed at strengthening Pakistan's institutions, may be the most effective long-term bet for developing a democratic political culture in Pakistan. This would change the current EU position, which until now has centred her care on humanitarian aid and development, to a more political commitment with a longer time horizon.

In the past decade, the EU has steadily increased its relations with Pakistan. The EU is Pakistan's largest trading partner with 21% of the country's exports and 17% of its imports in 2011. In the past five years, aid to Pakistan has been directed by the document «European Commission-Pakistan Country Strategy Paper, 2007-2013», which dealt primarily with distributing €425 million allocated by the Union in aid projects for education, the development of human resources, rural development and natural resource management. To all this must be added the €370 million that the EU has spent in Balochistan and Khyber-Pakhtunkwa on humanitarian aid in the last three years. But so far the EU has not focused its support on the country's political development. The new plan gives the EU the possibility of extending its cooperation and banking on investment policies with long-term effects. The issues included in the document that establishes EU relations with Pakistan for the next five years are security, the fight against terrorism, energy, trade, aid, good governance and support for democracy. The plan is clearly designed to allow a shift in a fundamentally economic relationship to a more political one, without this policy involving the EU meddling in internal affairs.

In relation to the problem of sleeper-cell terrorist groups described by Sagemann, the danger could now come from Lashkar-e-Taiba. The LeT now represents the greatest threat to Western interests in South Asia. Its ties to Pakistani intelligence mean it is very difficult to track, while the scope of its operations extends beyond the region, making it a serious problem for global security²⁷. The danger of this organisation would be reduced if it could be isolated from any kind of state sponsorship. For some years, the LeT may have grown precisely because of the need to focus counter-terrorism efforts in Pashtun areas. Even from Pakistan, the links with the LeT have been justified because its support was needed to eliminate the radical militant groups linked to the Taliban. However, this front cannot be neglected and recognising the problem is the first step to addressing it. Some changes may be encouraging.

The forceful response of the Pakistani government to the challenges of Taliban groups in 2009 and the shift of its strength and its doctrine seem to point in the right direction to ensure that the departure of U.S. troops in

²⁷ «The US consider LeT a grave Security threat, since it is perhaps the only jihadist group with the capacity to mount a major transnational terrorist attack». Lashkar-e-Taiba: Local organization, global ambitions. April 2013 Center for Security Studies (CSS), ETH Zurich.

Development of the conflict in Pakistan

2014 will not cause disorder south of the Durand line, although it seems certain that north of the line problems will multiply.

Conclusions and outlook

the replacement of General Musharraf by an elected civil government in 2008 supported in parliament by the Pakistan People's Party, the vitality of the judiciary committed to respect for the law despite the difficulties, the shift in U.S. foreign policy towards Pakistan with President Obama's electoral victory in 2008, the negative impact of the attack in Mumbai that put Pakistan on the brink of war with India, international pressure because of government collusion with terrorist groups, the open defiance of the State by Pakistani Taliban groups who came within 100 kilometres of the capital in 2009, the forceful response to insurgency in the Swat valley, Buner, Dir, Shangla, Waziristan and other FATA districts, the success of the Black Thunderstorm and Rah e Rast military operations, American incursions in Pakistani territory to pursue terrorists, the success of special operations by the U.S. armed forces killing Osama bin Laden in Abbottabad, the death of Al Qaeda's number three, Sheikh Said al Masri, as a result of attack by a U.S. drone, the publishing over 90,000 secret U.S. documents produced between 2004 and 2010 accusing or suggesting Pakistan's secret collaboration with the Taliban, the improvement in economic relations between India and Pakistan and the May 2013 elections are all recent developments that allow to us to believe that many things are moving and Pakistan was able to face and overcome the most critical moments of 2008 and 2009.

At this time, to define Pakistan as a failed state would be a mistake, despite what the indicators may say, first because it is not a failed state, and second because even if it were, it should not be accepted as such. The general consensus of the studies on the crisis of Pakistan recognizes the state's ability to respond to the serious challenges it faces. Analysts do not believe the state in Pakistan will collapse and that radical Islamists will seize power despite the difficulties the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2014 will cause²⁸. Neither is a breach of territorial integrity likely; this could only occur accompanied by decisive outside intervention. There are three forces that are ranged against the gravest dangers: the first is the Armed Forces, then the increasingly active civil society that finds its expression in a surprisingly dynamic free press, and finally the international community that will make every effort to prevent the collapse of Pakistan. Even Pakistan's most obvious adversaries, India and Afghanistan, have their national interest closely linked to stability in Pakistan. Nobody wants Pakistan to explode and no one wants to bank on a direct

²⁸ Sukh Deo Muni, (2013). A turbulent Pakistan: India's choice in response. ISAS Working Paper, National University of Singapore.

intervention by supporting one of the parties competing for control within the country.

Regarding the army, at the beginning of January 2013 the press reported that significant changes had occurred in the military doctrine of the Pakistan Army: the so-called Green Paper incorporated a new chapter on asymmetric warfare. The media, including the BBC, announced this change as the most important since the independence of Pakistan²⁹. The change of doctrine meant a refocus of priorities, shifting interest from the eastern border with India to the western border with Afghanistan, and also containing the discovery that the enemies within are more dangerous than the enemies outside. Recognising that internal threats now pose a greater danger for Pakistan than India does can be considered a success, while Pakistan accepts the urgency of responding to a serious problem affecting her safety, that of her allies, that of her enemies and the world. Insufficient control over militants and some sectors of its intelligence agency (ISI) has placed Pakistan under the scrutiny of the whole world, so much so that many consider the country a sponsor of terrorism, even daring to go as far as to say so³⁰. This strategic repositioning may be very interesting but will probably have many detractors among the most conservative sectors. Pakistan, like any other country, cannot be strong in defending her interests abroad if she is seen to be extremely weak at home and while her image is poor among her allies, who daily lose confidence in an old friend who cannot keep her strategic commitments and has lost political control of her own destiny.

Geopolitical indicators³¹

TABLE OF GEOPOLITICAL INDICATORS		PAKISTAN
Extension in km ²		769,095.
GDP (2012) Billion dollars		514.6.
Structure GDP/Workforce	Agriculture	20%
	Industry	25%
	Services	55%

²⁹ <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/2013/01/08/Pakistans-new-military-doctrine-under-Indian-threats.html>, «The new military doctrine would become ineffective after Taliban re-establish control in Afghanistan, said retired Lt. General Hameed Gul, former chief of Pakistan's premier spy agency Inter Services Intelligence [ISI]. Some military quarters opine that the change in Pakistan army's operational priorities should not be on a permanent basis, but for a specified period and subject to its endorsement from the parliament...».

³⁰ In July 2010 the British Prime Minister suggested that Pakistan was promoting the export of terror.

³¹ Source: CIA The World FACTBOOK.

Development of the conflict in Pakistan

TABLE OF GEOPOLITICAL INDICATORS		PAKISTAN
GDP per capita (2012) \$		2859.
GDP Growth rate (2012)		3.7%
Unemployment rate		7.7%
Business Relations (2012) bill (Exports):		US 15%, UAE 9.7%, Afghanistan 9.5%, China 9.2%, UK 5%, Germany 4.5% (2012 est.)
Business Relations (2012) bill (Imports)		UAE 17.2%, China 15%, Saudi Arabia 11.2%, Kuwait 8.9%, Malaysia 5.4%, Japan 4.3% (2012 est.)
Population 2013		193,238,868.
Urban development ratio		36%
Age composition	0-14	34%
	15-64	62%
	Over 65	4%
Population growth rate		1.52%
Ethnic groups		Punjabi 44.68%, Pashtun (Pathan) 15.42%, Sindhi 14.1%, Sariaki 8.38%, Muhajirs 7.57%, Balochi 3.57%, other 6.28%
Religion		Muslim (official) 96.4% (Sunni 85-90%, Shia 10-15%), other (includes Christian and Hindu) 3.6% (2010 est.)
Population literacy ratio		54.9%
Population below the poverty line (2011)		22.3%
Refugees		2.9 million (1.9 million registered, 1 million undocumented) (Afghanistan) (2013)
Internally displaced people		758,000 (primarily includes IDPs who remain displaced by conflict in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and Khyber-Paktunkwa Province that peaked in 2009) (2013)
GINI Index		30.6.
Military spending % of GDP. (2010)		3.5%

Source: CIA World Factbook

Chronology³²

TIMELINE OF THE CONFLICT	
DATE	EVENTS
1947.	On August 14, Pakistan gains independence from the United Kingdom.
1956.	Approval of the country's first constitution.
1958.	Military coup by General Ayub Khan.
1962.	Approval of the second Constitution.
1965.	War with India.
1968.	General Yahya Khan takes power.
1971.	Independence of Bangladesh.
1972.	Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto replaces the military government.
1973.	Approval of the third Constitution.
1977.	Military coup by General Zia ul-Haq.
1988.	General Zia dies.
1990.	Nawaz Sharif wins the elections.
1993.	Nawaz Sharif ousted as prime minister.
1996.	Bhutto ousted as prime minister.
1996.	Sharif wins the elections again.
1998.	India and Pakistan conduct nuclear tests.
1999.	Military coup by General Pervez Musharraf.
1999.	Undeclared war with India over Kargil incidents.
2000.	Sharif exiled.
2001.	Musharraf becomes a faithful ally of the United States after September 11th.
2001.	Musharraf declared President and dismisses Muhammad Kafir Tarar.
2001.	Musharraf wins a referendum to keep him in power.
2007.	Bhutto is murdered.
2008.	Elections are held; the Pakistan People's Party wins.
2009.	Zardari named president.
2010.	Sheikh Said Al-Masri Al Qaeda's third-in-command killed.
2011.	Death of Osama bin Laden.
2012.	The Supreme Court dismisses Prime Minister Gilani.

³² In-house.

Development of the conflict in Pakistan

2013.	May election victory of Nawaz Sharif.
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Source: Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment South Asia.

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India. The naxalite insurgency

María José Caro

Chapter eleven

Abstract

India's Naxalite-Maoist insurgency is a low-level war waged by Maoists against the Indian government. The insurgency began as a peasant rebellion in the eastern Indian village of Naxalbari in 1967 and has now spread to a wide area in the central and eastern part of the country.

The Maoist insurgency has become the most widespread internal threat to the government, with a number of high-profile attacks against security forces and civilians. The State's failure to provide adequate governance in remote and impoverished regions, the poor quality of the paramilitary response, and a lack of inter-state co-operation mean that the violence is likely to persist.

India's peace and security are currently being challenged by threats from cross-border terrorism, insurgency in north-east areas, and the rise of left-wing extremism in parts of the country. These factors have direct implications not only for the development and prosperity of the affected regions, but also for the general well-being of society. It is therefore necessary to fully and urgently address these issues.

Keywords

India, Naxalites, Communist Party of India (Maoist), CPI-M.

Introduction

The Naxalite insurgency has become the most widespread internal threat to the Indian government. The State's failure to provide adequate governance in remote and poor regions, the poor quality of the paramilitaries' response, and the lack of cooperation between India's affected states means the violence will probably persist. There is also strong separatist feeling in Indian-administered Kashmir and in the north-east. In the north-east, a large variety of insurgent organisations feed off the region's complex tribal make-up and its history of separatist feeling, though the government has been able to keep them largely under control via a mixture of peace processes and open conflict.

Though India faces a wide variety of serious insurgent and terrorist challenges, these are relatively limited when we take into account the country's size and demographic mix. Using a combination of democratic processes, wide deployment of security forces, and occasional use of extra-judicial methods, India has managed to avoid separatist and terrorist groups from presenting a true threat to the country's integrity, but the ability of the Maoist groups to maintain their operations, and the lack of counter-terrorist fighting capacity is a constant concern. The authorities follow a complex strategy against active and latent separatist campaigns, which fluctuates between support, outright suppression, backing rivals and trying to undermine their political base.

In this medium-intensity internal conflict, since 1980 there have been more than 12,420 deaths and in 2011 alone there were about 100,000 displaced persons¹.

This chapter explores the evolution of the Maoist conflict in India and analyses possible strategies to resolve it.

Background to the conflict

The Indian Maoist movement, popularly known as the Naxalite movement, emerged from the wider communist movement in India. The terms Naxal/Naxalism/Naxalite originate from the village of Naxalbari, in the Darjeeling district in the state of West Bengal, from where the brutally repressed Maoist-led peasant uprising of 1967 began. The Naxal uprising was led by Charu Majumdar (chief ideologue), Kanu Sanyal (peasant leader) and Jungel Santhal (tribal chief). However, the move-

¹ According to the IISS, the International Institute for Strategic Studies (Armed Conflict Database), consulted on 19 July 2013.

ment shrank after the death of Charu Majumdar and the arrests of Kanu Sanyal and Jungel Santhal in 1972. Even so, the movement was re-established in 1980 by the People's War Group (PWG) in Andhra Pradesh, and by the Maoist Communist Centre (MCC) in Bihar. The Naxalites are considered to be the most radical groups in Indian communism (figures 11.1 and 11.2)².



Figure 11.1: Copyright. Figure 11.1. Political map of India 2009 www.mapsofindia.com

² Singh, Tej Pratap. The Naxalite Problem. Distilled Magazine, 31 Oct 2012, ref. 10-05-2013.

India. The naxalite insurgency

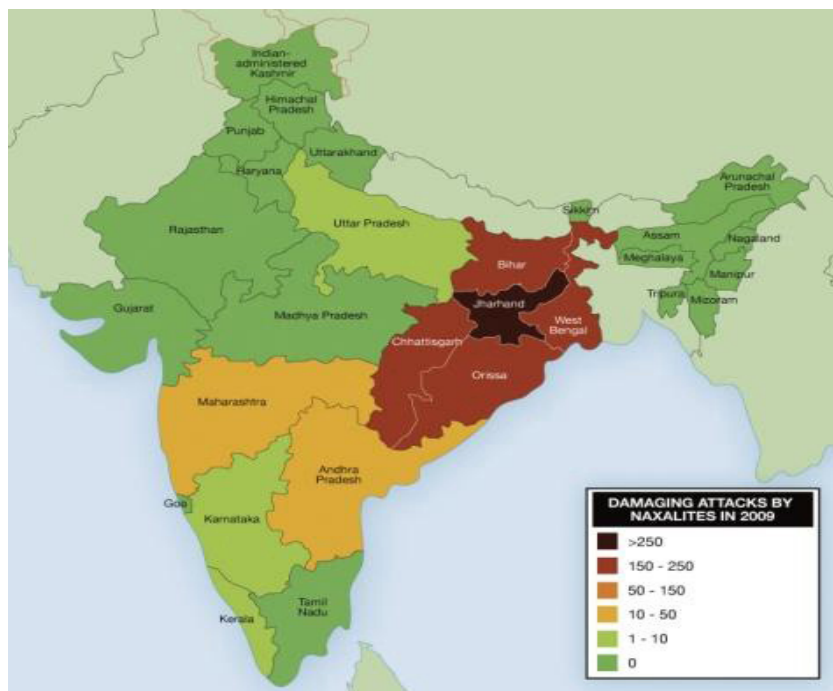


Figure 11.2. Map of distribution by state of CPI-M attacks in 2009. (IHS Jane's 1396331)

Since then the descriptor Naxalite³ has been used to describe a set of armed groups that predominate mainly in the so-called «Red Corridor», a zone that stretches from the foothills of the Himalayas to the southern tip of the country, and which affects up to seventeen⁴ Indian states⁵, including the seven states of Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal, Orissa, Chhattisgarh, Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra, as well as parts of Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka, Assam and Madhya Pradesh. Its northern border is with Nepal and Bhutan, both countries that share a frontier with China, and where Maoist influence has become important. Naxalites have a Maoist vision based on the notion of a peasant guerilla uprising. As well as assassinations, Naxalites carry out attacks on mines, factories and other economic objectives, imposing daily terror on the mentioned states⁶.

³ Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment - South Asia. Security India. 25-Apr-2013.

⁴ Goswami, Namrata. *India's Internal Security Situation, Present Realities and Future Pathways*. IDSA Monograph Series No. 23 September 2013, p. 23.

⁵ See Chidambaram Exhorts Police Chiefs to Reinvent Security System in the Country, September 14, 2009 at <http://www.pib.nic.in/newsite/erelease.aspx?relid=52610>. (Last access 3 July 2013).

⁶ Echeverría Jesús, Carlos. *La India: debilidades de un actor global*, Revista Ejército. [India: weaknesses of a global actor, Army Magazine] No. 830, June 2010, pp. 112-113. 6-12.

The Indian government states that 223 of India's 636 districts are affected, though only a third of them have a significant Maoist presence. The government has given eighty-three districts Security Related Expenditure status, wherein security costs are dealt with at central government level due to the large Maoist presence. New Delhi treats sixty districts as priority areas for the (Integrated Action Plan), which began in 2010 and has assigned about five or six million dollars per year for development projects aimed at gaining the trust of local residents (figure 11.3).

List of 83 districts included under the Security Related Expenditure

Sl. No.	State	Number of Districts	Name of Districts
1.	Andhra Pradesh	16	Warangal, Karimnagar, Adilabad, Khammam, Medak, Nalgonda, Mehboobnagar, Guntur, Prakasam, Anantapur, Kurnool, Vizianagaram, Visakhapatnam, East Godavari, Srikakulam and Nizamabad.
2.	Bihar	15	Aurangabad, Gaya, Jehanabad, Rohtas, Nalanda, Patna, Bhojpur, Kaimur, East Champaran, West Champaran, Sitamarhi, Arwal, Munger, Nawada and Jamui.
3.	Jharkhand	18	Hazaribagh, Lohardagga, Palamu, Chatra, Garhwa, Ranchi, Gumla, Simdega, Latehar, Giridih, Koderma, Bokaro, Dhanbad, East Singhbhum, West Singhbhum, Saraikela-Kharaswan, Khunti and Ramgarh.
4.	Madhya Pradesh	1	Balaghat.
5.	Chhattisgarh	9	Bastar, Bijapur, Dantewada, Kanker, Rajnandgaon, Sarguja, Jashpur, Korea (Baikunthpur), and Narayanpur.
6.	Maharashtra	3	Gadchiroli, Chandrapur and Godia.
7.	Orissa	15	Malkangiri, Ganjam, Koraput, Gajapati, Rayagada, Navrangpur, Mayurbhanj, Sundargarh, Sambalpur, Keonjhar, Jashpur, Deogarh, Kondhamal, Dhenkanal and Nayagarh.
8.	Uttar Pradesh	3	Sonebhadra, Mirzapur and Chandauli.
9.	West Bengal	3	Bankura, Midnapure and Purulia.
	Total	83	

Figure 11.3. Districts under the Security Related Expenditure program. Intellbrief.

India. The naxalite insurgency

Though there are dozens of small Naxalite groups, the greatest security threat comes from the Communist Party of India (Maoist) (CPI-M), formed in 2004 by the union of two leading parties, the People's War Group (PWG⁷) and the Maoist Communist Centre (MCC), plus a small number of minor parties. This was an exceptional moment of coalition in a long history of internal factional fighting and violence between the parties, and which led to an onset of attacks. The group aims to overthrow state governments in their areas of operation, replacing them with communist governments. The CPI-M is trying to achieve this through an asymmetrical insurgency, following the Maoist doctrine of the people's war.

The CPI-M is openly committed to the Maoist strategy of a prolonged war of three stages: development of liberated zones in remote areas; construction of a stable army that can attack the police and establish objectives before advancing on the country's cities; and overthrow of the government. The group also has an extensive socialist agenda based on redistribution of the land, removal of foreign economic and political influence, and concepts of social justice and economic equality.

Both PWG and MCC are outlawed within India. The CPI-M was officially outlawed by the Indian government on 22nd June 2009, as up to then it had only been declared illegal in a small number of states⁸. The CPI-M was also described as «another group of concern» by the US State Department from 2005.

The CPI-M has increasingly used improvised explosive devices (IEDs) as part of its attack strategy. Although their IED technology has not significantly developed over the last ten years, the Maoist rebels have demonstrated their ability to use them to mount devastating ambushes on the security forces. The IED threat has enormously reduced the security forces' mobility, forcing them to abandon their vehicles in areas dominated by the insurgency or to carry out their control patrols along longer routes.

After the government increased the intensity of its counterinsurgency operations at the end of 2009, the Maoists carried out a number of high-profile attacks which brought the government's strategy into serious question. On 15 February 2010, twenty-four paramilitaries were killed in an attack on a West Bengal police compound; on 8 May, seventy-five mem-

⁷ The PWG, officially known as the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) (People's War), or CPI-ML (PW), was founded on 22 April 1980.

⁸ At the start of December 2011, the Indian Ministry of Home Affairs, in response to a parliamentary question, confirmed that a series of organisations – including the Committee for the Release of Political Prisoners (CRPP), the Revolutionary Democratic Front (RDF), the People's Democratic front of India (PDFI) and the Progressive Democratic Students Union (PDSU) – were front organisations for the CPI-M, and that they were active in the capital New Delhi, though the state authorities did not offer specific evidence in support of these allegations.

bers of the Indian police's special forces and a local official were killed in an ambush in the woods of Dantewada, in the state of Chhattisgarh; on 18 May, a bomb on a bus in the same region killed sixteen police and nineteen civilians; on 29 June twenty-six police died an ambush, also in Chhattisgarh. With the government's combined operations in 2011 the number of this type of attacks has reduced, though a daily stream of low-level violence, shootings and assassinations continues.

The number of dead from the conflict fell from 1,108 in 2010, to 602 in 2011, and 368 in 2012. The acute lack of effective governmental structures in the affected areas means that any government progress is still only temporary. This reduction is also due to a more restricted focus on the part of the security forces.

In its current phase, the movement more closely identifies with the grievances of tribal groups (collectively known as the *Adivasi* – roughly translating from the Hindi as «forest dwellers» – who are diverse, indigenous peoples, mainly animists, that have historically existed outside of the social caste system) and rural peasants. It is in these communities that the movement has its electoral base.

While, at the national level, they are a minority⁹ – though numerous – constituting approximately 8% of the population, they are the majority in the forests and hills of eastern and central India. It is there, in the so-called tribal belt, where the Maoists have become most firmly established. The *Adivasi* have not shared the fruits of India's democratic and economic successes. Government legislation and policy have weakened their traditional economic and social structures.

Historically, *Adivasi* society is built around collective use of the region's forests. Increasingly though, by means of legislative instruments such as the Indian Forest Act, the government has enacted greater extensions to those areas of the forest designated as «protected», effectively excluding the *Adivasi* from them.

A large part of the Naxalites' success lies in their wish to use political methods, as well as brutality and force. They have taken advantage of the lack of government in a large part of India's interior, and have received support from some of India's most neglected population sectors, addressing, without fully resolving, the real, local, political and economic grievances that the State has not dealt with. This has created a space for the insurgency the rebels have effectively exploited.

⁹ India's tribal groups or *Adivasi*, according to the 2001 census, account for 8.1% of the country's population, about 83.6 million, classified into 461 different communities. Data from the Tribal Cultural Heritage in India Foundation, at <http://www.indiantribal-heritage.org/?p=2299> from 19/07/2011.

Citing the lack of development and opportunities, and pointing out the corruption, poor government and continued caste discrimination endemic to many of India's rural areas, the Maoists have managed to establish considerable legitimacy, not only among the people, but also among important sectors of India's intellectual classes. Above all, the sudden interest of governmental and business communities in the lucrative mineral reserves that appear to exist in these tribal areas has exacerbated the conflict. The Maoists are able to present themselves as the tribes' protectors in the face of what are, at times, illegal and rapacious actions of large industries that seek to buy land and displace its inhabitants, many of whom lack the means and documentation to protect themselves in legal proceedings. At the same time, the presence of mining and industrial companies provides the Maoists with ample opportunities for extortion. There is no way to determine how much they receive, but it is believed to be considerable, and the group justifies it as a necessary means of financing its operations.

Forms of attack

The Maoists, with their violent attacks against the security forces, the latter of whom often enact reprisals against the local Adivasi population, are able to instigate a cycle of violence which strengthens them in their enclaves. They are also known to unsparingly punish civilians that support the security forces and, in some states, particularly Bihar and Jharkhand, they receive considerable protection from local politicians who count on the Maoists to provide them with votes in the elections.

Maoist documents from 2006-2007 reveal that the organisation is particularly concerned with establishing bases in urban areas. The capture of key leaders, like Kobad Ghandy in New Delhi in September 2009¹⁰, suggests that the Maoists remain active in this regard. Among the urban population, its ideology has less resonance than in the depressed rural regions. Even so, the organisation has gained considerable ideological support from a large number of academics who sympathise with the claims that the Maoists say they represent. The government's tendency to confuse academic sympathy for such grievances with approval of the Maoists' violent tactics has further damaged the State's claim to be seeking a comprehensive solution to the insurgency. This was particularly evident in December 2010 at a court in Chhattisgarh which sentenced Dr Oinayak Sen, a renowned human rights activist and social worker, to life imprisonment, accusing him of conspiring with the Maoists. There was an

¹⁰ According to a news article in the Hindustan Times on 22 September 2009, <http://www.hindustantimes.com/India-news/NewDelhi/Highest-ranking-Maoist-leader-arrested-in-Delhi/Article1-456658.aspx>.

immediate response from human rights organisations which alleged that his real crime had been to criticise the excesses of *Salwa Judum*¹¹.

Although it is believed that the Maoists have limited training and organisation, their advantages in terms of geographical and human intelligence are considerable, and they are able to mount coordinated attacks. Offensives often involve hundreds of members of the popular militia, the largest component of the Maoist armed wing: the People's Liberation Guerrilla Army (PLGA). The PLGA consists of a main force (military and protection platoons) that heads the attack, a secondary force (guerilla brigade) and a base force (the popular militia). Unlike the guerillas, members of the popular militia are simple villagers. As they increase the size of the base forces, the Maoists hope to turn the PLGA into a popular liberation army (People's Liberation Army, PLA). The capacity for armed resistance varies considerably from one state to another. In the region of Dandakaranya, a densely forested part of central India which sprawls across various states, forest areas combine with the presence of the most deprived and rural tribal communities, allowing the Maoists to set up bases far from the reach of security forces.

From 2006, the CPI-M turned towards attacking the infrastructure. There were frequent railway infrastructure attacks between 2007 and 2009. All symbols of state control (including electricity pylons, and rural schools and hospitals) are frequent targets for the Maoists, since they represent the only source of government authority. Despite the frequent friction with mining and industrial projects, attacks against them have been occasional, often to steal explosives or to punish them for not meeting the demands of extortion. They have also caused millions of dollars of losses from damage to equipment in various industrial projects. The greatest threat to development in these areas is not that of direct attacks, but rather in the general deterioration in security, which deters investment where it is so needed.

The CPI-M has also used kidnapping as a way to garner publicity, to advance its demands (particularly for the liberation of imprisoned Maoists), and to discourage the presence of local officials in their areas of influence. In April 2012 they even kidnapped two Italians – a tourist and their guide – in Orissa, this being the first time they have targeted foreign nationals. Both were subsequently freed unharmed after negotiations in which the government had to make concessions to the insurgents.

There are also confrontations with a dissident Maoist faction, the Tratiya Prastuti Committee (TPC), which emerged in 2003, whose members target their erstwhile Maoist companions, with the backing of local police. In

¹¹ Salwa Judum is an armed Adivasi militia fighting against the Maoists, formed by the Chhattisgarh government.

certain areas, particularly parts of Bihar and Jharkhand, Maoist ideology has generated competition for control of land, resources and protection payments.

State and regional response

The apparent failures of India's counterinsurgency are, in part, structural. Constitutionally, security is the responsibility of the states, rather than national government. Given that the insurgency is spread across various states, this has hindered coordination and has been shown to be an advantage to the insurgents. Each of the affected areas has adopted different strategies for dealing with the challenge and there has been little coordination between states, meaning there is little cohesion in policy in order to combat the widespread violence. Until recently there was no consensus on whether the CPI-M should be considered a proscribed organisation, since West Bengal and Jharkhand chose not to outlaw it. This discrepancy was solved when the central government placed the party on the list of prohibited organisations in 2009.

The government of *Andhra Pradesh* has had most success in dealing with the insurgency, though it is assumed that the Maoists have simply crossed the border to neighbouring states where the police are less organised. In 2005, a continuous police offensive was relaunched after the failure of peace talks with the then People's War Group (PWG) in 2004. The operation was led by the *Greyhounds Force*, an elite anti-Maoist police detail in Andhra Pradesh. The members of this elite force were recruited from the Andhra Pradesh police through a competitive selection process. One factor that contributed to the group's tactical success in its fight against the insurgency in Andhra Pradesh was its technological superiority in communications, including satellite telephones and intelligence, provided by the Special Intelligence Branch (SIB).

Another factor was its rapid deployment and adaptability to diverse terrain, in impenetrable forests and even in hostile terrain outside of Andhra Pradesh.

The *Chhattisgarh* government's controversial policy of forming local militias by arming the Adivasi against the Maoists is thought to be an accelerator of the cycle of violence in this state, which is considered to be the deadliest in India. 'Salwa Judum' (which means *purification hunt* in the local Gondi dialect) began as an attempt by powerful actors in the tribal communities to resist the intrusion of Maoists, but it rapidly deteriorated into violent vengeance. It was tried, provisionally and unsuccessfully, on two occasions in the mid 1990s, under different names, and was reintroduced in 2006 with the tacit backing of the state of Chhattisgarh. It

was strongly criticised for violating human rights, including extra-judicial executions, raping hundreds of civilians, burning down villages, and the forced relocation of Adivasi to special camps to isolate them from Naxalite influence. Most of those recruited by Salwa Judum lived miserable lives in these encampments, unable to return home for fear of reprisals.

In July 2011, the Supreme Court outlawed Salwa Judum. By then it had stopped operating under that name, and had given many of its members quasi-official status as *special police officers* (SPOs), and some of them were recruited for a slightly more professional force called the Koya Commandos. Reports of brutal tactics such as the murdering of peasants and the burning of houses continued to emerge. The Chhattisgarh government, which during the legal proceedings denied having acted wrongfully, immediately announced that the police recruiting standards would be lowered in order to be able to absorb ex-members of the militia.

In other states outside of Chhattisgarh vigilante groups have been used. *Andhra Pradesh* experienced a number of attacks by Maoists and sympathisers in mid 2000 by groups calling themselves the Narsa Cobras, the Nallamala Cobras and the Kakatiya Cobras¹². Other states have allowed and often encouraged vigilante groups and the use of *special police officers*. Bihar, Jharkhand (Nagrik Suraksha Samiti), Odisha (Shanthi Sena) and West Bengal have disposed of militias supported by the official and quasi-official government.

Another key region in recent years is Lalgarh in West Bengal – an area which demonstrates the complexity of the political challenge faced by the security forces. On 2 November 2008 an improvised explosive device (IED) almost succeeded in attacking the West Bengal minister's convoy. The Maoists claimed responsibility for the attack, and this prompted a large-scale police operation in villages in the vicinity. The region's tribes accused the police of human rights violations and there were sizeable protests, with more than 30,000 people demonstrating in nearby cities and outside police stations, under the flag of the recently formed People's Committee Against Police Atrocities (PCAPA). Although it had clear links with the Maoist leadership, the PCAPA was a peaceful protest group which attracted considerable support from activists and artists in Calcutta. The police saw it simply as an illegitimate front for the Maoists and they launched Operation Lalgarh in June 2009 to establish their presence in the region. The disillusioned members of the PCAPA adopted increasingly violent tactics and on 28 May 2010, they derailed the Gwaneshwari Express in West Bengal, causing a collision with another train, with 148 passengers killed. The Maoists and the PCAPA denied any responsibility,

¹² These are not to be confused with the Combat Battalion for Resolute Action (CoBRA) that emerged from the CRPF (Central Reserve Police Force) as a specialist anti-Maoist force, from the central government, in 2008.

saying that it was due to rogue elements or a government conspiracy to discredit the movement. Putting aside the details, this episode reflects how Maoist tactics and ideology can spread beyond the CPI-M's central structures, and how the actions of the police can contribute to generating recruitment for the movement.

National response

Despite a series of government-sponsored reports indicating that the Maoist threat is essentially a political problem related to bad governance of the affected areas, New Delhi has effectively treated the insurgency as a security problem, to be dealt with mainly by paramilitary forces and increased cooperation between national agencies and state security forces. From the end of 2009, a series of counterinsurgency operations known as Green Hunt began, emphasising cooperation across state borders, and using about 50,000 extra paramilitaries, in an attempt to overwhelm the affected areas and re-establish governmental control. However, poor training and the geographic spread of some of the affected areas caused significant problems. The region of Bastar in Chhattisgarh, a key Maoist stronghold, covers 39,000 km², of which 60% is dense forest¹³. In the investigation that followed the ambush of 8 May that killed seventy-six police, it was learned that the platoon had refused to carry out full patrols in the dense jungle and had lost a radio, enabling a group of Maoists to follow their trail for several days before carrying out the attack.

These incidents have demonstrated the difficulty of applying a population-centred focus due to the lack of resources and to the clear advantages possessed by an entrenched enemy.

This series of large-scale attacks led to a review of the government's strategy in June 2010, with the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) proposing that the air force be used for surveillance, logistics and evacuation, plus the secondment of high-ranking army personnel in operations to advise the interstate *Unified Commandos*. It also considered plans to create an elite anti-Maoist force, hoping to recreate the success of Andhra Pradesh's *Greyhounds* on a larger scale. Up to now the army has been very reluctant to get involved in a struggle against civilians, and at the end of 2010 it was learned that army top brass were also reluctant to participate in the *Unified Commandos* because they would have to be subordinate to people of lower rank. While many analysts and politicians have advocated for *socio-economic development* being the key to success against the Maoists, the CCS may have realised that financing development could aggravate the situation if it is not combined with improved governance and a reduction in local corruption.

¹³ Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment - South Asia, op. cit.

In 2011, the government was ready to show it was capable of carrying out significant projects instead of poorly organised sweeping operations. Under the Integrated Action Plan (IAP), it approved 384 million dollars for the 2010-11 period and 460 million dollars for 2011-12 for the seventy-eight districts affected by the Maoist violence. It used this money to invest in initiatives such as road construction, irrigation, schools and electrification. The Saranda forest, an important stronghold for the CPI-M in Jharkhand, was a test case for the new development strategy. In July 2011, the security forces launched Operation Monsoon, a one-month offensive which saw the participation of more than sixty companies from the CRPF forces and the Jharkhand police¹⁴. It led to the arrest of thirty-three CPI-M militants, suggesting that the insurgents withdrew to the deepest parts of the forest, crossed the porous borders between the neighbouring states, or hid among the local population. This was followed by attempts to improve governance in the region under the Saranda Development Plan, with forty-nine million dollars allocated by the central government¹⁵. Even so, the magnitude of the task, in one of the country's poorest and most neglected regions, remains enormous. Similar rhetoric and initiatives have been presented many times in the past and, without a simultaneous improvement in local government, critics argue that most of these funds will be lost in corruption and inefficiency.

In some areas the development initiatives have contributed to improving the security forces' local intelligence. The government hopes to focus on more selective operations against the CPI-M's leadership, rather than on random patrols. Increased use of and improved surveillance technology, plus greater intelligence coordination, led to the death or capture of nine of the sixteen members of the Politburo (PB), the CPI-M's highest decision-making body, and of nineteen of the thirty-nine members of the Central Committee (which includes the PB) since 2007. The assassinations of Cherukuri Rajkumar, alias «Azad», the party's spokesman, in August 2010, and Mallojula Koteswara Rao, alias Kishenji, military chief and number three in the movement, in November 2011, were critical blows to the CPI-M. The party faces an important challenge in replacing its captured intellectuals, including those who are able to articulate their cause to the outside world.

However, one of the insurgency's strengths is its decentralised control structure. While the Politburo and the Central committee are responsible for the big strategic decisions, the local area commanders have great freedom when it comes to taking daily tactical decisions. This is a legacy of the insurgency's formative period, when the Naxalites operated as numerous small groups that were highly localised.

¹⁴ Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment - South Asia, op. cit.

¹⁵ Ibid.

On top of the Maoists' organisational flexibility, another source of their strength is easy access to financing. The heart of the CPI-M's operating area is rich in natural resources, enabling the insurgents to apply a lucrative taxation system. Estimates are of more than 300 million dollars per year, coming largely from the mining companies operating in the area¹⁶.

Current situation of the conflict

In 2013 the CPI-M leftist militants are intensifying their attacks against security forces in India's central states¹⁷.

The Naxalites attacked a construction site in the state of Jharkhand on 26th June, causing damage to the buildings and equipment. This was the latest in a series of Naxalite attacks during the month of June, and has contributed to an increase in Naxalite activity in the whole of central and eastern India. The most significant attack occurred on 25 May, when twenty-eight people died in the state of Chhattisgarh after the Naxalites ambushed a convoy transporting the state leader of the Indian National Congress (INC). Among the dead were prominent political leaders, party activists, and security forces personnel. The incident undermined the government's statements on a weakening of the leftist extremists' capabilities, and it led to discussions on a new strategy for dealing with the Naxalites.

In May, the CPI-M carried out a series of attacks, killing at least eleven civilians and members of the security forces in various states in the «Red Corridor» in central and eastern India. These included an attack on a passenger train in Bihar on 13 June, killing three people, and an ambush on the security forces in Chhattisgarh on 21 June, killing one person. On 13 June, Naxalites in Maharashtra killed a vice president of Lloyds Metals, a private steel manufacturing company, and two other people who had gone to negotiate with the Naxalites, who oppose mineral exploitation in the region. The Naxalites also appear to have intensified their extortion activities so, on 19 June, an electrical power station in Chhattisgarh received a note demanding payment of 660,000 dollars in «revolutionary taxes»¹⁸. The majority of these attacks fit the group's three basic objectives – successful elimination of its identified targets; taking weapons from the security forces' dead or wounded, and minimal losses to their own resources.

The constant flow of attacks was a surprise, above all in view of the optimistic official narrative about the security situation improving in the

¹⁶ Spacek, Michael. *Naxalites*. World Politics Review. 22 Feb 2011, p. 2-2. 1p.

¹⁷ Jane's Intelligence Weekly. *Naxalite attacks indicate Indian government's inability to reduce threat*. 28 June 2013.

¹⁸ Ibid.

states affected by the Naxalites. According to the Indian Ministry of Home Affairs, 1707 CPI-M members died in security forces operations between 2003 and 2012. Between 2010 and 2012, 6,849 were arrested and 1,100 surrendered¹⁹. The loss of these personnel translated into a notable reduction in violent incidents. For example, the 2012 figure of 1,412 incidents was the lowest for the last five years. Killings of civilians and security forces also fell to 414 in 2012, in comparison to 611 in 2011. One month before the 25 May attack, an internal evaluation by the Intelligence Bureau (IB) indicated: «If we can maintain the current trend for a period of several months, perhaps we will be able to arrive at a decisive tipping point in favour of the security forces»²⁰.

Officials from the Ministry of Home Affairs explained the recent attacks as CPI-M desperation to rebound from a state of weakness. However, these assessments overlook a strategy that the group may have developed to deal with its operational weakness. In general terms, in 2012 the group managed to reduce its losses to a minimum. The strategy of conserving its leaders and control elements in the face of the security force's operations ensured that they only lost seventy-four leaders in 2012, in comparison to the average annual loss of 172 between 2008 and 2012.

Despite its reduced ability to carry out major attacks, in 2012 the CPI-M maintained its violent profile with 134 smaller attacks against security forces, with its support among tribal communities remaining unscathed. The group lost territory in Jharkhand, but managed to maintain its strongholds in Chhattisgarh, Bihar and Orissa.

There are other indicators of a reordering of priorities in the CPI-M's strategy arising from a radical reorganisation. In the first months of 2013 the group reshaped its leadership in several of its zonal and regional committees. Among the most significant changes was a new head of the Dandakaranya Special Zonal Committee (DSZC). The DSZC is a fundamental strategic unit that supervises operations in the Dandakaranya forest area of 100,000 km² that extends over five states: Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra. Experienced military strategist Ravulu Srinivas (alias Ramanna) replaced Katkam Sudarshan (alias Satyarayan Rao, Kosa), as a member of the group's political committee. The rise of a military strategist rather than a more politically orientated one probably explains the greater escalation of attacks in the region and could also provide us with an idea of the group's future priorities.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

Causes of Naxalism/Maoism

The roots of the Maoist insurgency lie in India's socio-economic conditions²¹. Unless and until these underlying structural causes are dealt with, Maoism cannot be defeated by state repression. For now, it appears that the movement has been quashed, but sooner or later it will reappear and probably with greater vehemence than we have witnessed. In the period after Charu Majumdar it was thought that the movement had come to an end, but at the start of the 1980s it recovered with greater intensity and now covers a large part of India. As current Prime Minister Manmohan Singh stated in 2007, «the Maoist movement constitutes the greatest national security threat to the state of India»²².

Various scourges such as hunger, starvation, malnutrition, disease and premature death provide fertile ground for the growth of leftist extremism. The so-called «Red Corridor», in government jargon, or «Compact Revolutionary Zone» (CRZ) in Maoist language, constitutes the country's poorest and most underdeveloped area. These areas are mostly inhabited by Adivasi (tribal groups) and Dalits (lowest castes), who are among the most marginalised and exploited sectors in Indian society. These two *pariah* groups constitute the Maoist movement's most important support base. In fact, the Maoists explicitly state that they are fighting for them.

The upper caste, known as the landowners, and who also act as money-lenders, along with the state officials such as the Patwaris (village-level administration officials) and forest rangers, have been oppressing the disadvantaged Adivasi and Dalits. Resistance from these groups was always repressed by the privileged classes, with active support from the State, in the name of law and order.

The Red Corridor is a region blighted by hunger. More than 60% of the region's population, including the Adivasi and Dalits, have a Body Mass Index of less than 18.5²³. The criteria established by the World Health Organisation states that a community or region should be classified as affected by famine if more than a third of the population has a BMI below this number. Consequently, if the WHO criteria are applied to the Adivasi and Dalits as a community, and to the Red Corridor as a region, then this classification applies to them. Because of this abysmal poverty in the eastern and central regions of India, the Maoists have found fertile ground for expanding their influence and cultivating their guerrilla area, with the aim of waging war against the Indian state.

²¹ Singh, op. cit.

²² *Country Reports on Terrorism 2011*, July 2012, United States Department of State Publication Bureau of Counter-terrorism, Released April 2012. pp. 133-135.

²³ Singh, op. cit. p. 1.

Military or political solutions

Given that Maoism is a political problem, its solution must also be political. Naxalism was militarily quashed in the 1970s, but its recovery and subsequent spread undoubtedly demonstrate that any military solution will not endure. Only the individual actors change, but the general malaise will remain. Therefore, it is time to deal with the socio-economic roots of the Maoist insurgency. Once the underlying structural causes have been dealt with, the Maoists will be deprived of a favourable environment for exploiting such problems, an environment they need in order to achieve their objective of overthrowing the Indian state by means of a prolonged popular war, replicating the Chinese and Vietnamese revolutions. In these unconventional and asymmetric wars it is not necessarily the most powerful side that wins. Sometimes, in prolonged asymmetric conflicts, weaker sides emerge victorious, as happened in Vietnam, and as is happening in Afghanistan.

Various strategic analysts are, nevertheless, of the firm opinion that unless and until the insurgents have been decisively defeated they will not come to the negotiating table. These analysts argue that if the insurgents are in a strong military position they will have no reason to negotiate while sensing victory.

The strategic analysts cite the examples of Punjab, Tripura and Andhra, where the insurgents were decimated with lethal force. Even so, success in one state is no guarantee that it can be mechanically repeated in other states. If this were the case, then the Combined Battalion for Resolute Action (COBRA) – from the CRPF (Counterinsurgency Force of the Central Reserve Police Force), which was created to fight the Naxalites using the template of the Greyhounds of Andhra – would have been successful in stamping out the Maoists in central India's Dandkarayana region.

Force is undoubtedly necessary, but beyond a certain point it becomes counter-productive. This applies both to the Maoists and to the state Naxalism failed due to the annihilation ideology of Charu Majumdar. Majumdar famously said that «unless and until a person has dipped his hand in the blood of a class enemy, he or she is not a true communist». Some blind followers therefore smeared their hands with the blood of enemies whom they had annihilated. This kind of mindless violence repelled many Indians despite them being sympathetic to the Maoist cause. In the same way, state violence also created repulsion amongst the people. To win, both the Maoists and the state have to be careful in their use of violence, as an insurgency is, after all, a «war of hearts and minds» rather than territory. Whoever wins the hearts and minds of the masses will win the war.

In order to win the people over to the State's side the Indian government is pursuing the US counterinsurgency strategy of clear, hold and build.

This strategy is, however, mechanically applied in the form of heavy deployment of paramilitary forces and area domination patrols in the Maoist regions, aimed at wresting control of these regions from them. The massive surge of troops and their patrolling in the region, intended to make their presence felt, has given the insurgents the chance to execute a new strategy of mobile warfare. Previously they used to target only two to three security personnel in their hit and run guerrilla tactics, but now they are engaging entire companies of security forces consisting of more than seventy security personnel, and fighting them through encircling tactics in face to face battle. After killing the troops the Maoists also snatch their weapons, thus increasing their armoury. This has happened several times in the Maoist dominated regions and is demoralising to both the paramilitary forces and the government.

The way out

The Maoist movement is not a secessionist movement like the North-east or Kashmir insurgencies. And since the Maoists are not separatists, opinions in the government and the armed forces are sharply divided regarding the use of military force against them. The insurgents themselves, however, are of the firm opinion that a military strategy will eventually be used against them and that only by defeating the Indian armed forces can they succeed in their objective of seizing political power. They know this is not an easy task and because of this they speak of a «protracted agrarian armed struggle» against the state, seizing power in the rural areas and eventually encircling the cities. According to them this would force the enemy to surrender, just as happened in China. However, India is not China and the Indian army is not Chiang-Kai-Shek's army.

For the Maoist insurgents the Indian state itself has been responsible for the conflict. The Adivasi and Dalits, who form the core of their movement, have been neglected by the Indian state. In the more than sixty-five years that have passed since India's independence there has been no significant change to the lives of these groups. If they had been brought into the mainstream and made significant stakeholders in India's economic growth, the Maoists would never have gotten the opportunity to exploit the situation to their advantage. «Land to the tillers» has been the old slogan of the Maoists but until now 80% of the land is held by only 20% of the people²⁴. Barring a few exceptions, most land reforms exist only on paper. Through various means, and with the connivance of state officials, many people still hold vast tracts of land. On the other hand, there are large numbers of landless labourers and marginal farmers in rural India.

²⁴ Singh, op. cit. p. 1.

Absentee landlordism has still not been completely abolished. The causes of agrarian unrest have still not been addressed.

The Adivasi have been denied access to forest land and resources, and only in 2006 did the Forest Rights Act give them legal rights over the lands on which they have been living since time immemorial. If the socio-economic problems of Adivasi and other poor sections of Indian society are addressed then Maoism will swiftly lose its appeal among the masses. Just deploying large numbers of security forces and killing the top leadership of the Communist Party of India (Maoist) will not resolve the problem. As long as the structural causes of extremism are not addressed, new leaders will always emerge onto the scene and carry the torch of people's war forward, pledging to overthrow the semi-colonial, semi-feudal Indian State and establish their own type of Democratic Peoples Republic of India.

For peace, both the Maoists and the State have to engage with each other in a sincere way. The Maoists have to give up their armed struggle against the State and the State has to stop its policy of decimating their Central Committee and Politburo. Already government forces have either killed or arrested more than half of the membership of the Politburo, the Central Committee, and the Central Military Commission, the top decision-making bodies of the CPI-M. This strategy might succeed in the short term, but in the long term it is bound to fail as new leadership emerges. The statements of a few Maoist leaders that armed struggle is non-negotiable is also unhelpful to the process of dialogue. If the insurgents are not ready to give up their armed struggle against the State, no state will talk to them as nothing remains to be discussed. In such an event, recourse to violence is the only option left to the State.

If the State cannot decimate the Maoists, the Maoists also cannot smash the Indian state. The idea of victory through protracted armed agrarian struggle is ridiculous because, overall, there is no possibility of overthrowing any state solely through guerrilla warfare. Nepal could therefore be a good example for the Indian Maoists to emulate. If the Nepali Maoist party can contest elections, and form and run government, why should this be impossible for the Indian Maoists? Other radical left leaders took the parliamentary path and won elections in their countries. Now they are successfully running governments in Nepal, Venezuela and several Latin American countries. Dialogue is the only solution to the violence unleashed by both the Maoists and the State. Otherwise it will eventually be innocent civilians who continue to suffer most, guaranteeing that the whole nation pays the price for the insurgency.²⁵

²⁵ Singh, *op. cit.* p. 1.

The role of external actors

India is attempting to consolidate its regional and global role²⁶. On one hand it is trying to smooth out its relations with Pakistan, which is key in the regional context. On the other hand, in recent times India has been strengthening its relations with the USA, as well as its diplomatic dynamism in the BRIC framework. Washington granted India indispensable ally status in November 2009, this being announced during Prime Minister Singh's official visit to the USA. India is considered to be the natural counterweight to the rapidly growing China, so the USA is also strengthening its relations with India in the area of defence, as India increases its defence budget to counteract the presence of China in the Indian Ocean.

Conclusions and outlook

The latest Naxalite attacks²⁷ point to the Indian government's inability to reduce the threat. CPI-M militants are intensifying their attacks against security forces in India's central states.

There has been a series of Naxalite attacks during May and June, contributing to an increase in Naxalite activity throughout central and eastern India, such as the attack on 25 May in which twenty-eight people died when the state leader for the Indian National Congress party was ambushed in Chhattisgarh along with prominent political leaders, party activists, and security forces personnel. This incident contradicted the government's statements about the reduced capabilities of leftist extremists and prompted discussion of a new strategy for dealing with the Naxalites.

The constant flow of attacks was a surprise, above all in view of the optimistic official narrative about the security situation improving in the states affected by the Naxalites.

As a result of the 25 May attacks, Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh emphasised the need to improve the government's current strategy in order to strengthen the State's defensive and offensive capabilities. The Home Affairs minister and the Finance minister questioned the justification for carrying out security forces operations, as well as development activities, and stated that action by the security forces must precede development work.

²⁶ Echeverría Jesús, Carlos. *La India: debilidades de un actor global*, Revista Ejército. [India: weaknesses of a global actor, Army Magazine.] No. 830, June 2010, pp. 112-113. 6-12.

²⁷ Jane's Intelligence Weekly. *Naxalite attacks indicate Indian government's inability to reduce threat*. 28 June 2013.

Even so, the differences between state governments and political parties about how to resolve the problem persist. The central government organised a meeting of different political parties in New Delhi on 5 June in order to agree upon a common vision on Naxalism. The meeting approved a resolution which requires central and state governments to use all resources available to deal with the threat. Even so, the main state ministers, belonging to various parties, issued statements that underline the divided opinion on how to approach the matter, whether that be by military force or a focus on development and negotiation.

Likewise, the government's proclaimed intention to carry out a sustained operation against the Naxalites continues to face serious obstacles with regard to logistics and capabilities. Other problems are derived from insufficient human intelligence (HUMINT) and coordination between state and central forces. Despite the deployment of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs)²⁸ to monitor Naxalite movements and meetings, the lack of reliable HUMINT has caused at least two security forces operations in Chhattisgarh to end in the deaths of civilians that had been confused with Naxalites.

Attacks against local infrastructure projects will increase, as will militant extortion of local companies.

In the coming months, New Delhi's determination to put an end to Naxalism will depend in large part upon its ability to deal with the CPI-M stronghold in the Maad Abujh area of Chhattisgarh, which extends over 10,000 km². The start of the monsoon season, which makes the forested regions of the Maoist enclave uninhabitable, temporarily affecting their ability to carry out violent attacks, may provide the State with some breathing room. However, in the subsequent months a firm offensive by the security forces will be required in order to prevent leftist extremism reaching serious proportions.

Naxalism, while providing some relief to tribes, cannot be a substitute for the established liberal democracy. The government's three-pronged strategy (use of force, dialogue and development)²⁹ for dealing with Naxalism is viable, provided that the mechanism used to implement it abides by the various constraints associated with these strategies and connects them in an integral and coordinated struggle against Naxalism.

²⁸ In India, mine-protected vehicles (MPVs) are widely used by the army and other paramilitary forces for internal security operations in Jammu and Kashmir, and in other places against the Naxalite militants. See Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment – South Asia. Procurement, India. IHS Jane's, 4 June 2013.

²⁹ Priyedarshi, Vinita. *Crafting a Counter-Naxalite Strategy*. Journal of the United Service Institution of India, Vol. CXL, No. 580, April-June 2010.

India. The naxalite insurgency

Taking into account the magnitude of the problem, the conflict's resolution does not lie in use of force or by declaring a zone «troubled». What is needed is an exhaustive analysis of the people's aspirations, and the adoption of measures to progressively deal with this. The Maoists have a series of strategic options for the future.

Combined with other available options, the Maoists are entering semi-urban/urban areas and seeking direct external support for their movement. In 2012 the Maoists made incursions and established links with ultras in new areas such as Assam, Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh. It is clear that the next task for the Maoists is to convert the PLGA into a PLA in order to advance its movement³⁰.

Given its Urban Outlook Plan, it would be wise to objectively analyse the strategic challenges and take measures to resolve the conflict by employing all elements of national power.

What needs to be dealt with are the questions of governance, development, security, empowerment of youth in particular, a psychology of peace, and a planned and systematic management of perception³¹. As this is the greatest challenge to national security, it is the duty of all elements of central and state government, industry, non-governmental organisations, the media, cultural/social groups, and the population to work together, aiming at synergy and harmonisation of effort towards resolving the conflict.

Chronology

CONFLICT TIMELINE	
DATE	EVENTS
1967	The Naxalite insurgency begins with a peasant rebellion in the village of Naxalbari in West Bengal.
1980	Founding of the Communist Party of India Marxist-Leninist, CPI-ML (PWG).
1986	Creation of the elite Greyhounds force in Andhra Pradesh to fight the Naxalites.
2004	Union of the MCC and the PWG to form the CPI-M, Communist Party of India (Maoist).
2009	Outlawing of the CPI-M, Communist Party of India (Maoist).
2006	Reintroduction of Salwa Judum, an Adivasi anti-Maoist armed militia formed by the Chhattisgarh state government.

³⁰ Ahluwalia, V.K. *Strategy and Tactics of the Indian Maoists: An Analysis*, Strategic Analysis. 2012. 36:5, pp. 723-734.

³¹ Ibid.

2009	Indian government's counterinsurgency Operation Green Hunt.
2010	Ambush in the Dantewada hills in the state of Chhattisgarh, killing 75 police.
2011	The government creates the Integral Action Plan, IAP, featuring development projects for the areas affected by Naxalism.
2011	The Supreme Court outlaws Salwa Judum.
2013	Naxalite attacks in India's central states intensify. The National Defence Committee.

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China's inner ring. Strength or weakness?

Ignacio García Sánchez

Chapter twelve

«..., Chinese history features many periods of civil war, interregnum, and chaos. After each collapse, the Chinese state reconstituted itself as if by some immutable law of nature... The famous opening of <The Romance of the Three Kingdoms>, a fourteenth-century epic novel treasured by centuries of Chinese..., evokes this continuous rhythm: <The empire, long-divided, must unite; long united, must divide. Thus it has ever been>. Each period of disunity was viewed as an aberration... The fundamental precepts of Chinese culture endured, tested by the strain of periodic calamity»¹.

Abstract

This chapter deals with China's internal conflict. The State is dominated by ethnic Han – 91.5% of the population – and since 1949 has had a one-party system under the Chinese Communist Party. China is a whole civilization based on a pluri-national reality, and since the 1978 economic reform it has achieved rapid economic and social development. The third largest economy in the world after the European Union and the United States, it has managed to raise more than 600 million people out of poverty, while becoming a geostrategic space vital to global security, stability and growth.

¹ Kissinger, Henry (2011). «*On China*». New York, the Penguin Press. p. 6..

But this geopolitical giant of more than 1.3 billion people is facing major challenges:

- The survival of the system, which is based on legitimacy derived from the revolution, the party's moral superiority, and economic performance, still faces a reality of corruption, nepotism, social inequality and 170 million poor.
- The Tibetan and Uyghur nationalities have a strong religious outlook and considerable geographical marginality, and are torn between cultural uniqueness and homogenisation by the majority Han.
- Reunification with Taiwan – an inalienable objective framed in China's constitution – brings it into direct confrontation with the greatest global power, the USA.

Properly managed, these challenges could become strengths in supporting the Chinese dream of a peaceful and harmonious rise, or, conversely, could constitute the basis of future calamities.

Keywords

Geopolitics, Conflict, China, Taiwan, Xinjiang, Tibet, Uyghur, Tibetan, Chinese Communist Party, Xi Jinping.

Introduction

«Vulnerability to threats is the main driver of China's foreign policy... These threats can be described in four circles. In the First Ring – across the entire territory China administers or claims- the Chinese government believes that domestic political stability is placed at risk by the impact of foreign actors and forces... Along the coast to the east lie maritime territories, large swathes of which Beijing claims but does not control and which are disputed by its neighbors. These territories include islands and adjacent waters in the East China and South China seas. The most significant island is Taiwan, seat of the Republic of China (ROC)... To the far west, dissident in Tibet and Xinjiang receive moral and diplomatic support and sometime material assistance from fellow ethnic communities and sympathetic governments abroad... Although no country is immune from external influences... China is the most penetrated of the big countries... often in ways that the political regime considers detrimental to its own survival.»².

There is no doubt that China and its surrounding area constitute the key geopolitical element of the 21st century's security architecture. In 1989, in the wake of the terrible events in Tiananmen Square, the fall of the Soviet Union, and maximum pressure from Western governments, Deng Xiaoping, architect of the Chinese miracle, set out some instructions³ that we could

² Nathan, Andrew J. and Scobell, Andrew (2012). «China's Search for Security». New York, Columbia University Press. pp. 3-4.

³ As he receded from the scene, Deng decided to buttress his successor by leaving behind a set of maxims for his guidance and that of the next generation of leaders. In issuing these instructions to Communist Party Officials, Deng chose a method from Chinese classical history. The instructions were stark and succinct. Written in classical Chinese poetic style, they embraced two documents: a 24-character instruction and a 12-character explanation restricted to high officials.

The 24-character instruction read: <Observe carefully; secure our position; cope with affairs calmly; hide our capacities and bide our time; be good at maintaining a low profile; and never claim leadership.>

The 12-character policy explanation followed with an even more restricted circulation among the leaders. It read: <Enemy troops are outside the walls. They are stronger than we. We should be mainly on the defensive.>

... Deng could assume that his audience would understand instinctively that their country position had grown precarious, both domestically and even more so internationally. Deng's maxims were, on one level, an evocation of historic China surrounded by potentially hostile forces... Deng sought to rally his people not by appealing... to Chinese nationalism... Instead he invoked its ancient virtues... The deepest challenge... to prepare for the future, when... China's reform was threatened by the consequences of internal turmoil and the pressure of foreign countries... [and] the international community might seek to resist China's march to becoming a dominant power... Deng may well have feared both that China might consume itself in its contemporary crisis and also that its future might depend on whether the leaders of the next generation could gain the perspective needed to recognize the perils of excessive self-confidence.»

view as a legacy for the coming generations of leaders. In these he called for prudence, calm and a reserved attitude in order to maintain a defensive stance which would prioritise the need to strengthen the inner ring. In this regard, the geopolitical weight of Asia's giant has continued to grow and, in this rise, the conflict of various internal, interacting forces remains a factor of special relevance. This is reflected in the recently published Defence White Paper: «... China has an arduous task to safeguard its national unification, territorial integrity and development interests. Some country has strengthened its Asia-Pacific military alliances, expanded its military presence in the region, and frequently makes the situation there tenser.»⁴.

As the National Security Strategy reminds us, «Asia finds itself at the centre of the world's anticipated geopolitical reordering. Some of its large nations – particularly China – are consolidating themselves as poles of influence in the international community, emerging as key elements in the new strategic panorama. The tension points concentrated in Afghanistan, Pakistan, North Korea, or those related to China's territorial claims, affect the whole international community. At the same time, the economic growth of large nations like China or India are factors in favour of stability, with these countries also becoming relevant actors in Africa and Latin America. Spain should encourage the consolidation of Asian security structures and contribute to the insertion of these powers into the global order, in the belief that this will create a more stable framework for the world that emerges from it»⁵.

The Geopolitical Panorama of Conflicts maintains constant attention on Afghanistan and Pakistan, and in its first release it analysed the Korean peninsula conflict. Last year it reviewed the tensions in the South China Sea and, in this edition, it focuses on the fundamentals that must contribute to China's economic role being a factor for stability. Social cohesion and political stability should be the drivers for seeking peaceful solutions that are to be incorporated into a consolidated security architecture. A structure that should encourage diplomatic resolution and mutual agreement when faced with conflict, the latter of which may be on the rise due to, «the threats posed by <the three forces>, namely: terrorism, separatism and extremism, [which] are on the rise... The <Taiwan Independence> separatist forces and their activities [which] are still the biggest threat to the peaceful development of cross-Straits relations.»⁶.

This chapter deals with internal conflict in China – a state dominated by ethnic Han, who make up 91.5% of the population – with 55 other com-

⁴ White Paper on China's Armed Forces: The Diversified Employment of China's Armed Forces (April 2013). Beijing, Information Office of the State Council.

⁵ National Security Strategy 2013: a shared plan. Government Presidency. Spain

⁶ A summary of the Defence White Paper: «The Diversified Employment of China's Armed Forces», April 2013, the full document can be read at the Institute's website www.ieee.es.

munities. These communities are unevenly geographically distributed but are mainly concentrated in five autonomous regions: Guangxi, Inner Mongolia, Ningxia, Tibet and Xinjiang. China, as a pluri-national state civilisation, has embraced within the same political space two systems and three social classes at different stages of development⁷. In this context, and due to the fact that the preamble to China's Constitution⁸ considers it to be an inalienable part of its national identity, we will deal with the case of Taiwan. Thus its National Security Strategy specifies, as vital interests, not only sovereignty, territorial integrity and the Constitution, but also national reunification and social stability⁹. Therefore, we will leave the next edition of *Panorama of Conflicts* to deal with the transnational conflict that the authors of the book cited at the start of this section, located in the second security ring, which comprises up to twenty-two actors, including the United States and ranging from Japan in the east, to Vietnam in the south, India in the south-east and Russia in the north¹⁰.

⁷ García Sánchez, Ignacio. *Geopolitical Panorama of Conflicts 2011: Chapter XII, Korea, the dream of a reunified and denuclearised peninsula* (2011). p. 302. Madrid: Ministry of Defence.

⁸ Constitution Of The People's Republic Of China. Amended on March 14, 2004, at the Second Session of the Tenth National People's Congress: «Taiwan is part of the sacred territory of the People's Republic of China. Achieving the great task of reunification with the motherland is the inviolable obligation of the Chinese people, including our compatriots in Taiwan.»

⁹ García Sánchez, Ignacio. *Analysis of China's Security Strategy*. http://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs_analisis/2011/DIEEEA28-2011AnalisisEstrategiaChinaSeguridadIJGS.pdf

¹⁰ «At the borders, policymakers face a Second Ring of security concerns, involving China's relations with twenty immediately adjacent countries arrayed in a circle... No other country except Russia has as many contiguous neighbors. Numbers aside, China's neighborhood is uniquely complex. The contiguous states include seven of the fifteen largest countries in the world (India, Pakistan, Russia, Japan, the Philippines, Indonesia, and Vietnam – each having a population greater than 89 million); five countries with which China has been at war at some point in the past seventy years (Russia, South Korea, Japan, Vietnam, and India), and at least nine countries with unstable regimes (including North Korea, the Philippines, Myanmar/Burma, Bhutan, Nepal, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan). China has had border disputes since 1949 with every one of its twenty immediate neighbors, although most have been settled by now. Every one of these Second Ring neighbors is a cultural stranger to China, with a gap in most cases larger than that which the U.S., Europe, India, and Russia face with their immediate neighbors... None of the neighboring states perceives that its core national interests are congruent with China's. All the larger neighbors are historical rivals of China, and the smaller ones are wary of Chinese influence... Finally, the Second Ring includes... the U.S. with its Pacific Command headquarters in Honolulu; its giant military base on the Pacific island of Guam (6,000 miles from the continental U.S., but only 2,000 miles from China); its dominating naval presence in the South and East China Seas; its defense relationships of various kind around China's periphery with South Korea, Japan, Taiwan, the Philippines, Vietnam, Thailand, India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Kyrgyzstan; and its economic and political influence all through the Asian region. All in all,

Background to the conflict

«Nineteenth- and twentieth-century foreign imperialism, the Communist revolution, and the recent opening to the outside world have contributed substantially to the shaping of the geopolitical features that have characterized China's historic development as an organized state»¹¹.

In order to understand China's internal ring, which the Chinese professor educated in the United States – Lucian W. Pye – defines as «a civilisation pretending to be a nation-state», we will follow Samuel B. Cohen who, in his cited work, synthetically explains that «the defeat of the United States in the Vietnam War and the collapse of the Soviet Union freed China to enlarge its power base within East Asia, as well as to play an expanded role along the Asia-Pacific Rim and in South and Central Asia. Within a quarter of a century, Beijing has become an acknowledged global power and forged a third geostrategic realm¹² that competes with the Eurasian Continental and Maritime Realms throughout the world...»¹³.

The historical core of China¹⁴ has its historical roots in the Shang Dynasty, which arose in 1800 BC in the province of Henan, crossed by the Yellow River¹⁵ (see graphic 12.1). And as explained by Felipe Fernández-Armesto¹⁶, like all civilisations of its time, China was initially dependent on the mass production of a single type of food, in this case millet, which surprisingly retains its ancestral essence and rudimentary form of living in Taiwan, in the eastern mountainous area¹⁷. Two varieties of this crop originate from China, remains of which are found

China's immediate periphery has a good claim to be the most challenging geopolitical environment in the world for a major power.»

¹¹ Cohen, Saul Bernard. *Geopolitics: the geography of international relations*. Second edition (2009). Maryland, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc..

¹² The three strategic realms according to Chen would be: «the East Asian realm that is dominated by China embraces North Korea and a separate Indochinese geopolitical region that includes Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia; Eurasian Continental... dominated by Russia... stretches like the inside of a half-moon from the Baltic, through Eastern Europe and the Black Sea, Central Asia Mongolia and the Korean Peninsula; the Atlantic and Pacific Trade-Dependent Maritime Realm... dominated by the United States.»

¹³ *Ibid*, p. 253.

¹⁴ «*Historic or Nuclear core*: This is the area in which a state originates and out of which the state-idea has developed. The relationship between the physical environment of the core and the political-cultural system that evolves may become embedded and persist as an important element of national or regional identity and ideology.» *Ibid*, p. 35..

¹⁵ Graphic: Map of Prehistoric Cultures in the Yellow River Valley (2000 B.C.) <http://www.npm.gov.tw/english/exhibition/ejad0801/chart01.htm>

¹⁶ Fernández Armesto, Felipe (2002). «Civilizations: culture, ambition, and the transformation of nature». New York, Simon & Schuster. :p. 212.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, p. 213.

China's inner ring. Strength or weakness?



Graphic 12.1

in archaeological deposits dating from 5000 BC. Both are drought-resistant and tolerant of alkaline soils, and this enabled the first Chinese dynasties to achieve two of the differentiating characteristics of China's development: a high population density and the maintenance of a formidable military force.

Thus the expansion southwards, following the course of the Yangtze River, provided it with the symbol of abundance that remains indissolubly united to China's development – rice – while fusing two agricultural cultures: the coldness and aridity of millet, with the humidity and temperateness of rice¹⁸. This constituted the bases for developing the key elements of its culture: Taoism and Confucianism, particularly the latter. This enabled the «first Emperor» of the Qin dynasty, Qin Shi Huang, to found a centralised, bureaucratic, non-hereditary state from where China gets its name. He was also the precursor of another of China's symbols of cultural superiority, the Great Wall, and became world-renowned for his tomb, guarded by an army of terracotta soldiers. It was a period that lasted only

¹⁸ «...a genuine record of expansion, which spread the culture of the Yellow River Basin to the southern tributaries of the Yangtze... to suppose that imperialism necessarily produced a state of uniform authority throughout what kind of as the area of emerging Chinese culture... The sequence of dynasties – traditionally reckoned at three in the two thousand years or so before the rise of Shih Hang Ti's – perhaps suggests periods of competition between rival states of comparable magnitude, punctuated by unifying conquest. Ultimately, however, China became that rare thing, a civilization roughly continuous – and emotionally identifiable – with a single state.» Ibid, p. 215.

sixteen years, but which, by means of violent campaigns, tripled the area of an imperial China that was expanding territorially and culturally, until reaching its maximum splendour prior to the First Opium War. The year 1840 marks the beginning of a period of degradation and loss of territorial control until proclamation of the Republic in 1912. A Republic to which Taiwan (Republic of China), defeated by the Communist revolution in 1949, sees itself heir, and which in 2012 celebrated its centenary¹⁹.

«Millennia of historic and cultural postures of national egocentrism have led to China's present location perspective - the perspective of China as the <Middle Kingdom>, the center of the world. This perspective evolved from a local to a regional to a global geographic scale. The local sense of space goes back to the period when China was a loose collection of small states that had expanded from the northern part of the country to the Yangtze, and then to the South (1500 to 200 B.C.E.). Their Middle Kingdom was differentiated from those around them by agriculture - the essence of the civilized world. What lay beyond the limits of this sown world was of no consequence because it was peopled by uncivilized nomads - <the Barbarians>.»²⁰.

In this regard, the Chinese ecumene²¹, with more than 700 million inhabitants of Han ethnicity, spread southwards along the whole coastal sector from the Vietnamese border, through Guangdong, Hong Kong and Fujian to Shanghai (see graphic 12.2). From there it follows the course of Yangtze River to its highest part at Chongqing, continuing north-east via Beijing and the northern plain to Shenyang and southern Manchuria. An area of about one million square kilometres (twice the size of Spain), which makes up only 15% of China's

¹⁹ «The ensuing catastrophes are viewed with considerable dismay in contemporary China, as part of an infamous <century of humiliation> that ended only by the reunification of the country under an assertively nationalist form of Communism. At the same time, the era of China's hobbling stand in many ways as a testimony to its remarkable abilities to surmount strains that might break other societies.» Kissinger, Henry (2011). «On China». New York, the Penguin Press. p. 58..

²⁰ Cohen, Saul Bernard. Geopolitics: the geography of international relations. Second edition (2009). Maryland, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc. p. 263..

²¹ «*Ecumenes*: These areas of greatest density of population and economic activity. Ecumenes have traditionally been mapped by their coincidence with dense transportation networks to reflect economic concentration. In today's postindustrial information age, the boundaries for ecumenes can be expanded to include areas that are linked by modern telecommunications, and therefore ecumenes are less tied to transportations clustering. Because the ecumene is the most advanced portion of the state economically, it is usually its most important political area.» Cohen, Saul Bernard. Geopolitics: the geography of international relations. Second edition (2009). Maryland, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc. p. 35.

China's inner ring. Strength or weakness?



Graphic 12.2

total area, and which therefore has one of the greatest population densities on the planet.

Facing Fujian²² province, on the south-east coast, and only 200 kilometres away from Taiwan, with development on both sides that is increasingly dynamic, driven by the new policy of cooperation between the two governments. The island's ecumene is on its western side²³, where the majority of its slightly more than twenty-three million inhabitants live. Its eastern part is very mountainous and has numerous forests. It is inhabited by descendants of Chinese immigrants who settled on the island during the 18th and 19th centuries. Two million nationalists²⁴ joined them after the communist victory of 1949. A democratic society was formed, which had its first transfer of democratic power between parties in the year 2000: from the nationalist party – the Kuomintang – to the progressivist democratic party.

²² The population of Fujian province is of forty million.

²³ «This dense concentration of agricultural and manufacturing activities, as well as its crowded urban centers (Taiwan is over 70 percent urban), constitute Taiwan's ecumene, which functionally is rapidly becoming part of the Chinese mainland ecumene.» *Ibid*, page 271.

²⁴ <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/tw.html>. As of 14 August 2013.

Relations with China have gone through three significant crises²⁵ during which, apparently, the Communist Party's strategy was to attempt to maintain continuous bilateral dialogue with the United States and secure advantages on the global geopolitical scene. At the same time, it would maintain the initial idea that both parties are indissolubly united and that, therefore, only one China exists. Mao's words of 21 October 1975 remain, cited by Kissinger, «It's better for it to be in your hands. And if you were to send it back to me now, I would not want it, because it's not wantable. There are a huge bunch of counter-revolutionaries there. A hundred years hence we will want it [*gesturing with his hand*], and we are going to fight for it.»²⁶.

Another two internal factors for instability are the Uyghur autonomous region of Xinjiang and the autonomous region of Tibet. The two regions are, according to Saul B. Cohen, within the empty zone²⁷, which occupies 80% of the land, with a population of a little more than forty million. As well as Tibet and Xinjiang, the empty zone includes the province of Qinghai, the more westerly areas of the provinces of Sichuan and Gansu, the north of Shaanxi, and the autonomous region of Inner Mongolia.

One of its fundamental characteristics is the influence exerted on it by other nations. Up to eleven different countries share a border with it, with easy access to its power, economic, political and military centres. This element is essential for understanding its relationship with the metropolis.

Xinjiang was the logical expansion of the Han Dynasty (see graphic 12.3), for opening the way to a flourishing trade with Central Asia and the Mediterranean, driven by an increasing population of up to fifty million, via the renowned 'Silk Road' (see graphic 12.4). The region's ties with Beijing suffer from the vi-

²⁵ The first crisis was in August 1954, featuring artillery strikes on the islands of Quemoy (two miles from the port of Xiamen) and Matsu (two miles from Fuzhou); the second in August, in 1958, was of the same nature. The third crisis was politico-economic, 1995, due to Taiwan's president Lee Teng Hui visiting the United States. «Lee incarnated everything Beijing detested in a Taiwanese official. He had grown up during the Japanese colonization of Taiwan, taken a Japanese name, studied in Japan, and served in the Imperial Japanese Army during World War II. Later he had received advanced education in the United States, at Cornell University. Unlike most Nationalist Party OFFICIALS, Lee was a native Taiwanese; he was outspoken about regarding himself as «a Taiwan person first and a Chinese person second», and as a proud and insistent proponent of Taiwan's distinct institutions and historical experiences.» Kissinger, Henry (2011). «On China». New York, the Penguin Press. pp. 152, 172 and 472.

²⁶ Ibid. p. 307.

²⁷ «Empty Areas: These are essentially devoid of population, with little prospect for mass human settlement. Depending on their location and extent, they may provide defensive depth and sites for weapons testing. Some are important as sources of minerals.» Cohen, Saul Bernard. *Geopolitics: the geography of international relations*. Second edition (2009). Maryland, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc. p. 35.

China's inner ring. Strength or weakness?



Gráfico 12.3

cissitudes of the two civilisations that share it: the Chinese and the Islamic²⁸, with formal incorporation into China's administrative system

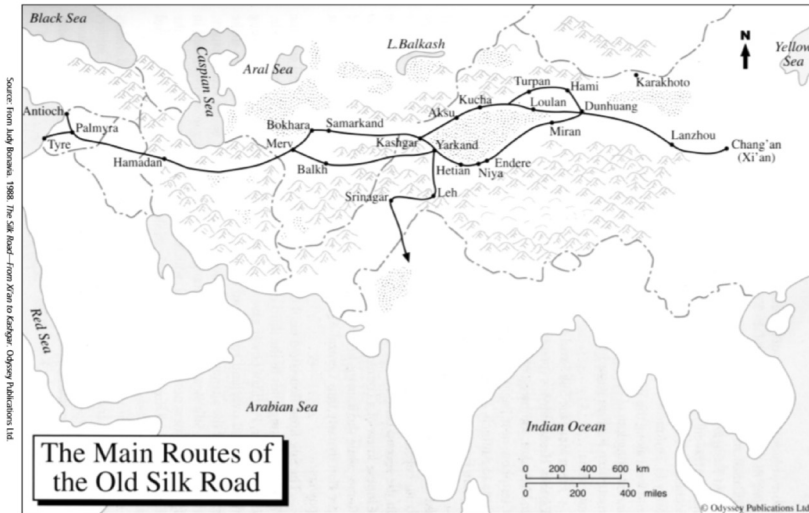


Gráfico 12.4

²⁸ «Sinic... single distinct Chinese civilization dating back at least to 1500 B.C. and perhaps to a thousand years earlier... While Confucianism is a major component of Chinese civilizations, Chinese civilization is more than Confucianism and also transcends China as a political entity. The term «Sinic»... appropriately describes the common culture of China and the Chinese communities...»

Islamic... originating in the Arabian Peninsula in the seventh century A.D., Islam rapidly spread across North Africa and the Iberian Peninsula and also eastward into central Asia, the Subcontinent, and Southeast Asia. As a result, many distinct cultures or subcivilizations exist within Islam, including, Arab, Turkic, Persian, and Malay». Huntington, Samuel P.

only taking place in 1884. Only then did it become a province with its current name, meaning 'new frontier', experiencing a short period of independence – supported by Moscow – from 1944 to 1949, after which the Chinese Communist Party retook control of the region.

Tibet, for its part, also has a close relationship, like Xinjiang, with the flourishing Central Empire, via a policy of marital links. Likewise, these relationships have suffered the vicissitudes of the internal dynamics of the various dynasties and their relations with neighbours, in this case the other Asian giant, India, and its former colonial master, Great Britain Empire.

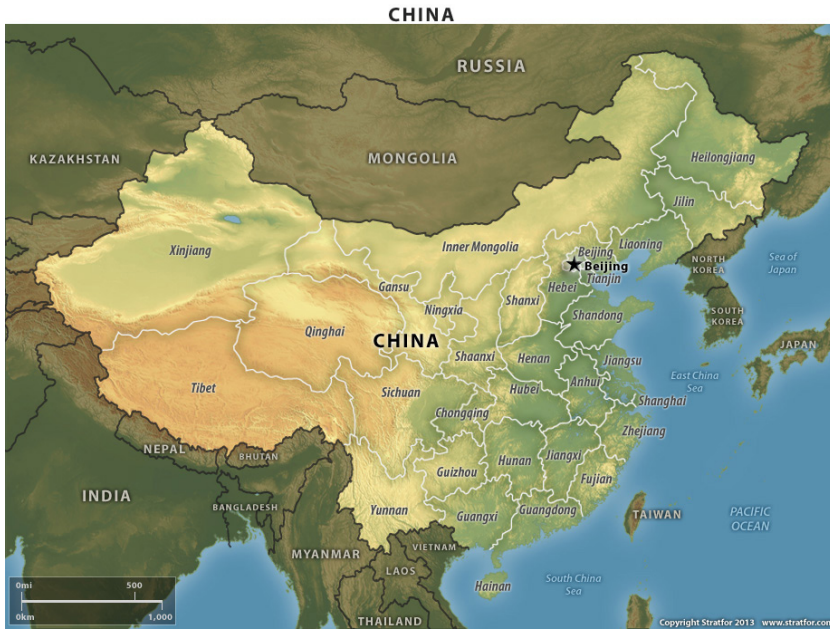
But the region of Tibet has a special characteristic, more pronounced than its neighbour Xinjiang, that of being a much less accessible region,²⁹ being the highest land with an average elevation of more than 4,000 metres. This fact, along with its religious tradition, marks its identity and defines the past and present of its relationship with Beijing.³⁰ It's a relationship that began in the 7th century with the introduction of Buddhism into Tibet by King Songten Gampo via his marriages to two princesses, both Buddhists, the first from the Chinese Tang Dynasty, Wencheng, and the other Nepali, Bhrikuti. It reached its maximum influence from the Mongol dynasty³¹; and is maintained today by the Dalai Lama in exile and over twenty monasteries – there were once more than 600 – with increasing influence and a growing number of monks (see graphic 12.5).

²⁹ «Except along the Chinese borders in the north and the east, these «proto-Tibetans» were also isolated from the outside world». Drisdale, Helena. *A Brief History of Tibet*. (2012). Richmond. History World Ltd.

³⁰ «Pagpa (1235-1280) was a brilliant Buddhist scholar, and while still in his teens so impressed Prince Kublai that in 1254 he was asked to teach him Tibetan Buddhist beliefs. Kublai was entranced, and as a result Tibetan Buddhism, as opposed to Islam and Christianity in which Kublai had also dabbled, became the main religion at the Mongol court.». *Ibid.*

³¹ «This spiritual and temporal relationship between Pagpa and Kublai, spiritual teacher and emperor, priest and patron, Buddhism and military might, bound Tibet and China and became the basis for future relations that survived nearly seven hundred years, until 1950... the notion of Chinese patronage – and therefore overlordship -...» *Ibid.*

China's inner ring. Strength or weakness?



Graphic 12.5

Current situation of the conflict

«At per capita incomes \$10,000, rates of growth slow down. In addition, the Chinese economy faces serious obstacles of transition from inefficient state-owned enterprises growing inequality, massive internal migration, and inadequate social safety net, corruption, and inadequate institutions that could foster political instability. The north and east of the country have outpaced the south and west. Only ten of thirty-one provinces have per capita income above the national average, and underdeveloped provinces include those with higher proportions of minorities, such as a Tibet and Xinjian.»³².

The fifth generation of leaders in the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, elected in its 18th Congress, are following a path that seeks the consolidation of social cohesion and internal strengthening of the country with more balanced growth. For the first time, among the seven members of the Central Committee there is a predominance of humanists and economists, ending a cycle that began with leaders coming from the rural world, and continuing with engineers, scientists and technicians.

³² NYE Jr., Joseph S. *The Future of Power*. (2011). New York. Public Affairs. p. 181.

The motto of the new team in charge, as enunciated by its president Xi Jinping, is: «China's dream, the people's dream»³³, and refocuses on its inner ring. The culmination of this new era, that began after the century of humiliation, broken by the rebirth of national pride in the Maoist revolution, was the miraculous economic transformation and opening up under Deng Xiaoping³⁴, which pulled 600 million Chinese out of poverty and underdevelopment. It is an era in which it is expected that the welfare threshold – deemed to encourage the democratisation of societies 12,000 dollars per capita income – will be exceeded. Conscious of this challenge, the fundamental objective is to strengthen and consolidate the inner ring³⁵.

³³ We are reminded of the famous speech by Martin Luther King, delivered fifty years ago.

³⁴ «At the beginning of the Reform and Opening Up, U.S. Time magazine named Deng Xiaoping the «Man of the Year» [in 1985], with a cover story titled «China's Visionary.» The reason why the world is still reverent towards «the visionary» after more than 30 years is precisely because we relied on hard work to push a country that was on the brink of the national economic collapse onto the track of healthy development. [It is also because we] relied on hard work to change the fate of a quarter of the world's population, to allow the country to prosper, the nation to revitalize, and the people's dream of happiness to become increasingly closer. Comrade Deng Xiaoping once said, [if we] do not work, there is not the slightest [manifestation] of Marxism, [which emphasizes that all wealth and commodities are products of human labor]. By the same token, [if we] do not work, all ideas and dreams will be nothing but an illusory dream.

Empty talk harms the country; hard work leads the nation to prosperity. Looking back at history, when faced with humiliation from foreign powers, the China Dream did not shatter; when faced with poverty during the founding of the New China, the China Dream did not shatter; when faced with setbacks during the journey of struggles, the China Dream did not shatter. The reason why the Chinese nation was able to usher in the dawn of revival after thousands of turns and twists was thanks to generations after generations of painstaking efforts. [The goal is] to have built a comprehensively well-off society by the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Chinese Communist Party and to have constructed a prosperous, strong, democratic, civilized, and harmonious modern socialist country by the 100th anniversary of the founding of the New China. It is on this basis that we achieve the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. This is our party's new target for the established «three-step» strategy. [The original Three Step Development Strategy was announced at the 13th National Congress of the Communist Party of China in 1987. The first step is to double the 1980 GNP and ensure that the people have enough food and clothing. The second step is to quadruple the 1980 GNP by the end of the 20th century. The third step is to increase the per-capita GNP to the level of the medium-developed countries by the mid-21st century]. Today, China is at the critical point of realizing its dream, the primary stage of socialism's basic national conditions. When faced with post-development challenges and numerous obstacles on the road ahead, [it] needs 1.3 billion «doers» persistently working hard. Only when everyone utilizes the spirit and momentum of hard work, does his or her own part well, can the China Dream be beautiful enough and solid enough.» The CEG. English translation of the people's Daily editorial presenting the «China dream» concept Monday April 1st 2013. As of 16 august 2013.

³⁵ «To meet their [our people] desire for a happy life is our mission. It is only hard work that creates all happiness in the world. To fulfill our responsibility, we will rally and lead the whole Party and the people of all ethnic groups in China in making continued efforts to free up our minds, carry out reform and opening up, further release and develop the

China's inner ring. Strength or weakness?

The great challenge is to unite the energies of this colossal nation behind cultural coexistence, what Huntington described as «the commonalities of civilisation». Its development is based on the experience of Singapore³⁶ in the 1990s, wherein an attempt was made to capture the essence of the Singaporean character based on values shared by all the cultures within the philosophical ambit of the teachings of Confucius. Two years of discussions produced the following five points:

- The nation comes before the [ethnic] community, and society comes before oneself;
- The family is the basic unit of society;
- Respect and support of the community for individual effort;
- Consensus instead of contention;
- Religious and racial harmony³⁷.

But in that quest for shared values – in this case positive values, which could be seen as a utopia in the current world – there is greater consensus with regard to opposing negative factors. Currently, the international community supports the Chinese government's struggle against three main enemies: separatism, terrorism and radical extremism, which, according to the Communist Party, oppose the objectives proclaimed in its constitution:

- «Taiwan is part of the sacred territory of the People's Republic of China. It is the inviolable duty of all Chinese people, including our compatriots in Taiwan, to accomplish the great task of reunifying the motherland.»
- «The People's Republic of China is a unitary multi-national State created jointly by the people of all its nationalities. Socialist relations of equality, unity and mutual assistance have been established among the nationalities and will continue to be strengthened. In the struggle to safeguard the unity of the nationalities, it is necessary to combat big-nation chauvinism, mainly Han chauvinism, and to combat local national chauvinism. The State will do its utmost to promote the common prosperity of all the nationalities.»

productive forces, work hard to resolve the difficulties the people face in both work and life, and unwaveringly pursue common prosperity... our Party faces many severe challenges, and there are also many pressing problems within the Party that need to be resolved, particularly corruption, being divorced from the people, going through formalities and bureaucratism caused by some Party officials...» Xi Jinping remarks on the Occasion of Meeting with the Chinese and Foreign Press by Members of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Eighteenth Central Committee of the Communist Party of China. http://www.china.org.cn/china/18th_cpc_congress/2012-11/16/content_27130032.htm As of 16th August 2013.

³⁶ Singapore's population is 77% Chinese, 15% Malaysian and Muslim, and 8% Hindu.

³⁷ Huntington, Samuel P. *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order*. (2003 edition). New York. Simon & Schuster. p. 319..

Thus Taiwan is the great challenge of China's inner ring. While the viability of the Communist Party of China maintaining its leadership and uniting the will of the people around the single-party system will evolve with time, there is currently no sufficiently strong and organised opposition that could propose a change of regime. It appears that neither the people's discontent at the lack of civil liberties, nor the increase in corruption and nepotism³⁸, or the internal struggles within the party as in the case of Bo Xilai³⁹, can provoke events of the seriousness of those in Tiananmen Square, or any kind of revolt similar to that of the Arab Spring, particularly while sustained development is maintained, lifting the masses from the endemic poverty of Chinese society⁴⁰. Nor do the ethnic or religious minorities have the internal capability, or sufficient international support, to challenge the current status quo. A constant media and testimonial pressure is maintained, as is the case with the self-immolations of Buddhist monks, in order to obtain greater openness and respect from the Beijing government for cultural identities and, in turn, greater autonomy.

In the case of Taiwan, however, from the official Chinese point of view, there is, certainly, interference by a foreign power in its domestic affairs. Despite the fact that Taiwan is only recognised by twenty-three countries of little significance (including the Vatican), there are different interpretations of the «one China» principle/policy, according to the Communist Party and the US government.

«The United States has its own <one China> policy (vs. the PRC's <one China> principle) and position on Taiwan's status. Not recognizing the PRC's claim over Taiwan nor Taiwan as a sovereign state, U.S. policy has considered Taiwan's status as unsettled. Since a declaration by President Truman on June 27, 1950, during the Korean War, the United States has supported a

³⁸ In the first week of September, it became known that, for the first time, a member of the Central Committee, Jiang Jiemin, had been removed from office and charged with corruption. http://spanish.xinhuanet.com/china/2013-09/04/c_132689262.htm. As of 4 September 2013.

³⁹ The trial and sentencing of Bo Xilai – ex-secretary of the Communist Party (CPC) in the central district of Chongqing, and leader of the party's leftist wing – to life imprisonment, seems to be the latest episode in a process lasting more than a year and a half, that intends to put an end to the party's internal struggles, in preparation for its 18th Congress. The judgement accepted that the charges against the 64-year-old ex-member of the Politburo – of embezzlement, abuse of power, and accepting bribes – were proven.

⁴⁰ The New York Times. «China Take Aims at Western Ideas». 19 August 2013. «Despite the fact that Mr. Xi is preparing reforms to China's economy in order to deal with more powerful market forces, he has also begun a campaign for «alignment of the masses» in order to assert the party's authority, [<http://www.massline.info/>] going beyond the periodical calls for [strengthening of] discipline. The internal warnings to [Party] elements demonstrate that Mr. Xi's public confidence is accompanied by fear about the party's vulnerability to an economic slowdown, public anger about corruption, and the challenges posed by liberals impatient for political change»..

China's inner ring. Strength or weakness?

future determination of the island's status in a peaceful manner. The United States did not state a stance on the sovereign status of Taiwan in the three U.S.-PRC Joint Communiqués of 1972, 1979, and 1982. The United States simply <acknowledged> the <one China> position of both sides of the Taiwan Strait. Washington has not promised to end arms sales to Taiwan for its self- defense, although the Mutual Defense Treaty of 1954 terminated on December 31, 1979. U.S. policy does not support or oppose Taiwan's independence; U.S. policy takes a neutral position of <non-support> for Taiwan's independence. U.S. policy leaves the Taiwan question to be resolved by the people on both sides of the strait: a <peaceful resolution,> with the assent of Taiwan's people in a democratic manner, and without unilateral changes. In short, U.S. policy focuses on the process of resolution of the Taiwan question, not any set outcome.

The United States has maintained a non-diplomatic relationship with Taiwan after recognition of the PRC in Beijing in 1979. The State Department claims an <unofficial> U.S. relationship with Taiwan, despite official contacts that include arms sales. Congress passed a law that did not describe the relationship as official or unofficial. The Taiwan Relations Act (TRA) of 1979, P.L. 96-8, has governed policy in the absence of a diplomatic relationship or a defense treaty. The TRA stipulates the expectation that the future of Taiwan <will be determined> by peaceful means. The TRA specifies that it is policy, inter alia, to consider any non-peaceful means to determine Taiwan's future <a threat> to the peace and security of the Western Pacific and of <grave concern> to the United States; <to provide Taiwan with arms of a defensive character>; and <to maintain the capacity of the United States to resist any resort to force or other forms of coercion> jeopardizing the security, or social or economic system of Taiwan's people. The TRA provides a congressional role in determining security assistance <necessary to enable Taiwan to maintain a sufficient self- defense capability.> Since 1979, the TRA has had bipartisan support in guiding policy with a firm foundation and flexible framework for the maintenance of the relationship with Taiwan.

In addition to the three Joint communiqués and the TRA, there is a fifth key statement that guides U.S. policy on Taiwan. President Reagan offered <Six Assurances> to Taipei on July 14, 1982, that in negotiating the third Joint Communiqué with the PRC, the United States: (1) has not agreed to set a date for ending arms sales to Taiwan; (2) has not agreed to hold prior consultations with the PRC on arms sales to Taiwan; (3) will not play any mediation role between Taipei and Beijing; (4) has not agreed to revise the Taiwan Relations Act; (5) has not altered its position regarding sovereignty over Taiwan; and (6) will not exert pressure on Taiwan to negotiate with the PRC.»⁴¹.

⁴¹ Congressional Research Service. U.S.-Taiwan Relationship: Overview of Policy Issues. July 23, 2013..

In this context, it is interesting to recall Kissinger's quote from a conversation with ex-president Jiang Zemin in April 2001, in which the latter expressed his concern at the ambiguity of America's position on Taiwan, and which in practice constitutes «an unsinkable aircraft carrier», warning that, «...if a spark flares up, it will be hard to control the emotions of 1.2 billion people». At the same time, he made clear the need to reach a compromise: «It is not clear whether China and the United States can find a common language and resolve the Taiwan question. I have remarked that if Taiwan were not under US protection, we would have been able to liberate it. Therefore, the question is how can we reach a compromise and get a satisfactory solution...».

Thus, the IISS completed an analysis titled «New US military concept marks pivot to sea and air» in May 2012, pointing out that: «Though the region is far from the kind of naval arms race that was seen in early twentieth century Europe, the ASBC⁴², along with the related JOAC⁴³ and US pivot to Asia, will enhance the rivalry between Beijing and Washington in the western Pacific. Whether this encourages further dialogue and transparency from China in order to mitigate tension, or whether it merely inspires a reinvigorated military modernisation process as the People's Liberation Army looks to offset the ASBC, has yet to be determined.».

China's Defence White Paper published in April 2013 with the title «The Diversified Employment of China's Armed Forces», emphasises that: «The «Taiwan independence» separatist forces and their activities are still the biggest threat to the peaceful development of cross-Straits relations». In turn, the Defense Department's annual report to Congress: «Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2013», starts with: «The People's Republic of China (PRC) continues to pursue a long-term, comprehensive military modernization program designed to improve the capacity of its armed forces to fight and win short-duration, high-intensity regional military conflict. Preparing for potential conflict in the Taiwan Strait appears to remain the principal focus and primary driver of China's military investment.».

Thus, in Chapter 5: «Force Modernisation for a contingency in Taiwan», describes how: «Article 8 of the March 2005 «Anti-Secession Law» states that China may use «non-peaceful means» if «secessionist forces ... cause the fact of Taiwan's secession from China;» if «major incidents entailing Taiwan's secession» occur; or, if «possibilities for peaceful reunification» are exhausted». The ambiguity of these 'red lines' preserves China's flexibility. This seems to indicate that we are in a situation of unstable balance.

⁴² ASBC (Air Sea Battle Concept). 12 mayo 2013. Documento del que existe un sumario ejecutivo sin clasificar publicado el 13 de mayo.

⁴³ JOAC (Joint Operational Access Concept). 17 enero 2012. Se puede encontrar el documento con una reseña en la página web del Instituto. www.ieee.es

The role of external actors

«The future of China is closely linked to the future of the world. China consistently carries out an independent foreign policy and adheres to the five principles of mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual non-aggression, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence in developing diplomatic relations and economic and cultural exchanges with other countries. China consistently opposes imperialism, hegemonism and colonialism...»⁴⁴.

That China is a focus of interest for the policies of all nations' governments is an irrefutable reality. To realise this, one only needs to quickly look through the security strategies or defence white papers of any country, or to watch how news on China floods into the main international, regional and even local news agencies, on a daily basis.

If some analysts, particularly from the other side of the Atlantic, think China is obsessed with the United States, I would go so far as to say that the opposite is true. The United States⁴⁵, its surrounding countries, emerging regions such as Latin America and Africa, and of course Europe and the rest of the world, are fundamentally obsessed with China.

China is obsessed with itself, and with how to give direction, structure and hope to a population of such colossal dimensions. In this regard, it expects reciprocity in relation to the five principles set out in its Constitution, which frame how international relations are to be understood, and which began this section.

Thus, as well as the communications media, NGOs and human rights activist groups which closely follow Communist Party activities within its inner ring, the main actors with direct influence on the internal conflict are the twenty-two countries alluded to in the introduction, to which Turkey would have to be added due to its influence on the Uyghur community, which is a Turkish ethnic group.

Regarding the United States, and according to Nathan & Scobell's book, «China's attempt to pursue its interest in global regimes is legitimate, so too is the U.S. interest in making sure that these regimes continue the remarkable evolution they have enjoyed... This is so above all in the case of the human rights regime..., that in the long run bear major consequences

⁴⁴ Preamble of the Constitution of the People's Republic of China. 14 March 2004..

⁴⁵ Two examples of this trend can be seen in the debate generated among their principal thinkers with regard to the rise of China and the decline of North America, as well as the different treatment merited by the relationships between both countries, putting aside the distances between the two processes, during the election of leaders in both countries during 2012.

for the construction of the type of world order that the U.S. has promoted since the time of Franklin Delano Roosevelt. These core American interest do not threaten China's security. In the First Ring, China needs stability in the midst of rapid social and cultural change, ethnic reconciliation with its minorities, and peaceful resolution of the Taiwan issue. Even though the current political system has improved many Chinese citizens' livelihoods, it has failed to achieve these political goals. The U.S. should continue to work for a more stable China in the long run, which means among other things a China that respects its people's human rights.»⁴⁶. In this regard, good sense and proportionality are very important, not only in its own policy of strategic balancing, with strengthening of the Asia- Pacific axis, benefiting from a near future of energy independence but weakened by the budget cuts necessary to reduce its immense fiscal deficit. Also important are policies supporting its allies in the region; policies of moderation and cooperation⁴⁷.

With regard to the countries in the region, it seems that, with the new generation of leaders, we see a drift towards nationalism which is echoed in the analysis document, «Six key factors for understanding the Korean peninsula crisis», citing a speech by Brzezinski on 11 December 2012 during the «US-China Policy Foundation» gala dinner. Brzezinski drew attention to the possibility of the situation sliding towards a «nationalist fervour that would create conflicts in Asia similar to those experienced in Europe during the 20th century for natural resources, territory or national power». He particularly referred to Shinzo Abe, who has a majority in Japan's two parliamentary chambers, for the historical connotations that this brings up. On this the majority of the press vociferously echoed the US Congress report of 1 May 2013, on US-Japan relations, which was updated on 2 August 2013⁴⁸. Taiwan, in particular, uses its links with the old colonising power to destabilise the situation, as in the third crisis, with the position taken by the leader of the main opposition party⁴⁹.

For the European Union, China is its main economic partner in Asia, its principal supplier of imported products, and its second trading partner after the USA. It is following a path of obtaining a bilateral agreement which provides coherence for the negotiations of its member states. An-

⁴⁶ Nathan, Andrew J. and Scobell, Andrew (2012). «China's Search for Security». New York, Columbia University Press. p. 358.

⁴⁷ It is interesting to recall the role it played in past presidential elections in Taiwan. See the Spanish Institute for Strategic Studies' analysis document: «Geopolitical view of the election results. January 2012». pp. 8-10. www.ieee.es.

⁴⁸ Congressional Research Service. Japan-U.S. Relations: Issues for Congress. 2 August 2013. www.crs.gov.

⁴⁹ «The progressive candidate, though making it clear that she was not a supporter of independence, openly criticised the policy of the nationalist president, seeing it as an abandonment of the island's democratic values. Tsai, very close to Japan, views the alliance between the United States and Japan as vital to the island's future.» Spanish Institute for Strategic Studies' analysis document 07/2012: «Geopolitical view of the election results. January 2012». 1 February 2012. p. 8. www.ieee.es.

China's inner ring. Strength or weakness?

nual summits are held, of which this year's will be the 16th. They are organised upon three pillars: political, economic and social.

Naturally, as one of the fundamental elements of its Common Security and Defence Policy, democracy and human rights, as European values, play an important role in these relations. As a significant factor in these relations, Germany enabled the founding of the World Uyghur Congress⁵⁰ on 16 April 2004, in Munich. The Congress has held four general assemblies, two in Munich (2004 and 2006), and one each in Washington (2009) and Tokyo, the latter being the latest, held from 14 to 18 May 2012. Meanwhile, with regard to the Tibetan conflict, and after India recognised Chinese sovereignty over its autonomous region, in 1988, the European Union and Great Britain followed suit in 2008, with France doing so one year later»⁵¹.

Conclusions and outlook

«The Chinese dream after all is the dream of the people. We must realize it by closely depending on the people. We must incessantly bring benefits to the people.

Realizing the great renewal of the Chinese nation is the greatest dream for the Chinese nation in modern history.»⁵².

The inner ring conflict presents an unprecedented challenge to the Chinese people, but above all to the Chinese Communist Party, which is attempting to advance and consolidate an original and unique political pathway. So, based on the roots and history of a pluri-national state civilisation the Party wants to be viewed as immune to the prevailing currents of globalisation.

Undoubtedly, the degree of conflict in its inner ring is one of the fundamental elements in deciding China's future. As underlined by Zbigniew Brzezinski in his «strategic vision»⁵³, when the third Chinese President, Jiang Zemin was asked about China's main domestic problem, he instantly replied with three words: «too many Chinese»⁵⁴.

⁵⁰ <http://www.uyghurcongress.org/en/> Also available in Spanish, though less up-to-date: <http://www.uyghurcongress.org/es/>.

⁵¹ Nathan, Andrew J. and ScobelL, Andrew (2012). «China's Search for Security». New York, Columbia University Press. p. 204.

⁵² Quotes from Xi Jinping. <http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/special/chinesedream/>. As of 18 August 2013.

⁵³ Brzezinski, Zbigniew. Strategic Vision: America and the Crisis of Global Power. (2012) New York. Basic Books. p. 180.

⁵⁴ http://www.stats.gov.cn/english/newsandcomeingevents/t20110428_402722244.htm In its latest census, China's total population was 1,370,536,875. It should be emphasised that this count adds the populations of the thirty-one provinces and autonomous regions of mainland China – having 1,339,724,852 people – to the populations of the special administrative regions of Hong Kong, 7,097,600, and Macao, 553,300; plus

The author views Chiang Kai-shek as a failed attempt to become the Chinese Atatürk, Mao Zedong as «a self-destructive equivalent of Russia's brutal Stalin», and Deng Xiaoping as managing to achieve what Gorbachev could not, and sees two possible pathways for China's future, with both options being outside the traditional models known on the Western historiography⁵⁵.

The peril is a modern, nationalist and aggressive China in which the People's Liberation Army, as the armed wing of the Communist Party, becomes the source of authority and the driving force behind its actions. The least problematic prospect is a «Confucian China», ruled by domestic harmony, «in which unity assured by an authoritarian framework is said to originate from a generalized philosophical consensus, in which leadership emerges through meritocratic selection but not open political contestation, and in which policy is derived from <facts> but is not dogmatized is deeply rooted in China's long past. It is noteworthy that Deng Xiaoping repeatedly cited the phrase <seek truth from facts>, pointedly echoing Confucius.»

It is against this internal harmony, which the Chinese people deems more important than projecting a universal doctrine, where I see the three conflicting points of China's inner ring – Taiwan, Tibet and Xinjiang – playing a fundamental role. The three of them should form what Bernard Cohen calls a «gateway»⁵⁶, offering continuous and stable transit points

the population of Taiwan, with 23,162,123. Looking at mainland China, 91.51% are of Han nationality, with a 5.74% growth since the 2000 census, while the remaining nationalities make up the other 8.49%, with growth of 6.92%. (The one-child policy only applies to ethnic Han). Regarding education, the illiteracy percentage fell by 2.64%, from 6.72% to 4.08%, making a total of 54,656,573. Meanwhile the number of people who have studied at University reached a figure of 119,636,790. This represented an increase from 3.6% in 2000 to 8.9% in 2010. Likewise, the urban population attained a proportion of 49.68% – an increase of 13.46% – and internal mobility increased by 81.03% from that of 2000, to a figure of 261,386,075. These figures continue to increase every year, and in 2011 the urban population exceeded the rural population. It is currently approaching 53%, and it is expected that in 2034 it will reach 75%. However, this trend is very uneven across the whole territory, with the autonomous region of Tibet not reaching 26%, with concomitant annual income of around 26,000 yuan, a little over 4000 dollars. In the World Bank's latest report on China, 150 million people were below the poverty threshold of a daily income of \$1.25.

⁵⁵ In this regard Brzezinski reminds us that Taiwan, with a population of little more than twenty million, and despite full support from the United States, needed sixty years to move from authoritarianism to a democratic governmental model.

⁵⁶ «Gateway states and regions... play a novel role in linking different parts of the world by facilitating the exchange of people, goods, an ideas... The characteristics... vary in detail, but not in the overall context of their strategic economic locations or in the adaptability of their inhabitants to economic opportunities. They are distinct politically and culturally and may often have separate languages or religions, as well as relatively high degrees of education and favorable access to external areas by land or sea... [They] helps to convert former barrier boundaries to borders of accommodation.» Cohen, Saul

China's inner ring. Strength or weakness?

to the rest of the world: Taiwan to the Pacific, the United States and the West; Tibet to the Indian subcontinent and Sub-Saharan Africa; and Xinjiang to central Asia, Eurasia and Europe⁵⁷.

In an increasingly interconnected and interdependent future, the strength of China's inner ring, which is fundamental to following the path of growth, cannot be secured through isolation, censorship, and the maintenance of a police state in which the armed forces play a vital role in internal stability and security, remaining as the Party's army rather than that of the State⁵⁸. China's political and social development must facilitate a practically imperceptible but continuous evolution that enables China's heart to beat strongly and securely, along with the, critical but loyal, support of its people and the backing of the international community.

«The fact that in 2050 China will be, relatively speaking, a middle-aged society, rather like Japan today – where 22% of population is over 75 years of age, and with projections indicating that, mid-century, China will reach 25% – also justifies the hypothesis that a change of this kind [the idea that an increasingly modern and prosperous China will also be more inclined to join the democratic majority] cannot be generated as abruptly as is the case with potentially explosive societies with youthful demographic profiles. In fact, movement of the demographic profile towards middle age, as well as an increased middle class could facilitate a smoother transition towards political pluralism in its normal evolution towards a more refined political culture compatible with China's traditions»⁵⁹.

This vision is fully valid in the case of Taiwan where surveys show, despite a majority desire for independence, an almost unanimous feeling that a future with China is inevitable, with increasing integration of the island into the social, political and economic life of the mainland. In this area, the ambivalent role of the United States and the resurgence of nationalism in the region may transform the current status quo.

Bernard. *Geopolitics: the geography of international relations*. Second edition (2009). Maryland, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc. p. 35.

⁵⁷ In connection with the G-20 meeting held in St Petersburg on 7 September 2013, the Chinese president visited four Central Asian countries, proposing, at Nazarbayev University in Astana, closer cooperation between China and Central Asia in order to build an economic belt around the «Silk Road», uniting the Pacific with the Baltic Sea, and creating a market of more than three billion people, of unprecedented potential. He also called for greater cooperation in the fight against the «Three Evil Forces» of terrorism, extremism and separatism, as well as combating drug trafficking and organised crime. <http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/special/xjp201309/index.htm>.

⁵⁸ For a discussion of the subject read: The National Institute for Defence Studies (NIDS Japan). *China Security Report 2012*. p. 50.

⁵⁹ Brzezinski, Zbigniew. *Strategic Vision: America and the Crisis of Global Power*. (2012) New York. Basic Books. p. 181.

On the other hand, the positions of extremist political and religious minorities, particularly the Uyghurs and Tibetans⁶⁰, could provoke an excessive reaction from Beijing and generate a cycle of violence. Undoubtedly, the foreseeable position of Western governments⁶¹ would create friction that would support the resurgence of the more nationalist and radical factions within the Chinese Communist Party, with a consequent slide towards a more nationalist and aggressive China – the perilous China.

Geopolitical indicators⁶²

TABLE OF GEOPOLITICAL INDICATORS		CHINA	TAIWAN
Land area (world ranking)		9,596,961Km2 (4th)	35,980Km2 (139th)
GDP/Growth		\$12.61 trillion (3rd) / 7.8% (20th)	\$918.3 billion (21st) / 1.3% (153rd)
Structure GDP/Workers	Agriculture	10.1% - 34.8%	2% - 5%
	Industry	45.3% - 29.5%	29.8% - 36.2%
	Services	44.6% - 35.7%	68.2% - 58.8%
GDP per capita		\$9,300 (124th)	\$39,400 (30th)
Unemployment/Poverty		6.5% - 13.4%	4.2% - 1.5%
Trade relations (Exports):		\$2.057 trillion (2nd) US 17.2%, Hong Kong 15.8%, Japan 7.4%, South Korea 4.3%	\$299.8 billion (20th) China 27.1%, Hong Kong 13.2%, US 10.3%, Japan 6.4%, Singapore 4.4%
Trade relations (Imports):		\$1.735 trillion (3rd) Japan 9.8%, South Korea 9.2%, US 7.1%, Germany 5.1%, Australia 4.3%	\$268.8 billion Japan 17.6%, China 16.1%, US 9.5%

⁶⁰ Thus the policies favouring settlement of ethnic Han in the autonomous region of Xinjiang, with economic modernisation of the region (one sign of this policy was the holding of the first working conference of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party in Xinjiang in 2010) must encourage integration, although restrictions of a religious nature cause alienation. Recently http://www.nytimes.com/2013/08/27/world/asia/over-news-of-clash-a-shroud-of-silence-in-xinjiang.html?emc=edit_tnt_20130826&intemail0=y&pagewanted=all – protests due to these restrictions during the month of Ramadan led to clashes, with hundreds killed. In the case of Tibet, the increase in the Han population is much slower, though Tibet's demographic explosion – which in the last five decades increased its population by 140% – extends to the adjacent provinces and must favour progressive integration.

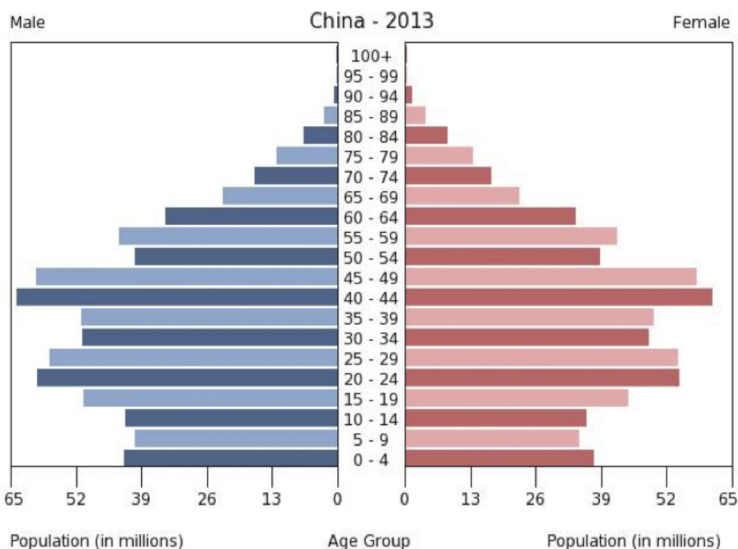
⁶¹ See the latest statement, of 28 August 2013, from High Representative, Catherine Ashton, on the arrest of Doctor Xu Zhiyong and other Chinese activists.

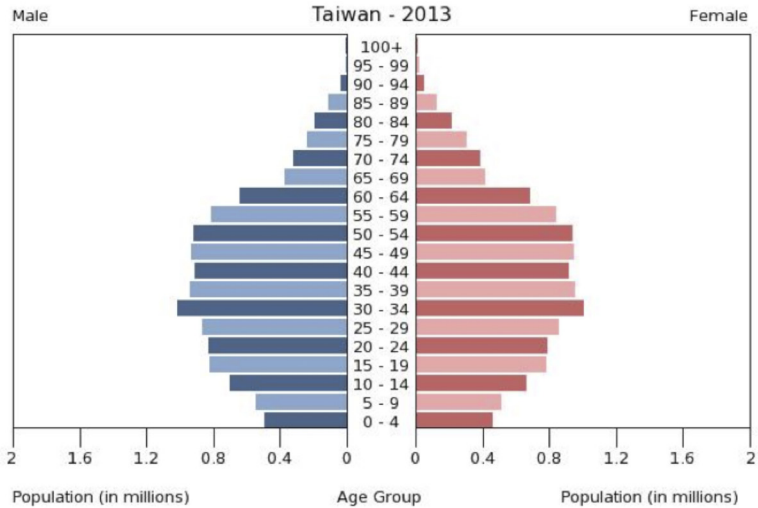
⁶² Source: CIA The World FACTBOOK.

China's inner ring. Strength or weakness?

TABLE OF GEOPOLITICAL INDICATORS	CHINA	TAIWAN
Population/Growth	1,349,585,838 (1st) / 0.46% (154th)	23,299,716 (51st) / 0.27% (170th)
Urbanisation/Growth	50.6% - 2.85%	
Landlines/mobile phones (millions)	285,115 (1st) / 986,253 (1st)	16,907 (17th) / 28,865 (34th)
Internet host/users (millions)	20,602 (5th) / 389 (1st)	6,272 (18th) / 16,147 (24th)
Ethnic groups	Han 91.5%, Zhuang, Manchu, Hui, Miao, Uyghur, Tujia, Yi, Mongol, Tibetan, Buyi, Dong, Yao, Korean, and other nationalities 8.5% (2000 census)	Taiwanese (including Hakka) 84%, mainland Chinese 14%, indigenous 2%
Religions	Daoist (Taoist), Buddhist, Christian 3%-4%, Muslim 1%-2% (officially atheist)	mixture of Buddhist and Taoist 93%, Christian 4.5%, other 2.5%
Literacy rate	95.1%	96.1%
GINI index/Life expectancy	47.4 (29th) / 74.99 (100th)	34.2 (91st) / 79.71 (39th)
Military spending % of GDP.	2.6% (49th)	2.2% (63rd)

Source: CIA World Factbook





Chronology

CONFLICT TIMELINE	
DATE	EVENTS
circa 2070 -1600 BC	Xia Dynasty.
circa 1600-1046 BC	Shang Dynasty.
circa 1046-221 BC	Zhou Dynasty.
circa 1046-771 BC	Western Zhou Dynasty.
770-256 BC	Eastern Zhou Dynasty.
770-476 BC	Spring and Autumn.
475-221 BC	Warring States.
221-206 BC	Qin Dynasty.
202 BC -220	Han Dynasty.
202 BC -8	Western Han.
25-220	Eastern Han.
220-280	Three Kingdoms.
220-265	Wei.
221-263	Shu.
222-280	Wu.
265-420	Jin Dynasty.
265-316	Western Jin Dynasty.
317-420	Eastern Jin Dynasty.
304-439	Sixteen Kingdoms.
386-589	Northern and Southern Dynasties.
386-581	Northern Dynasties.
420-589	Southern Dynasties.

China's inner ring. Strength or weakness?

581-618	Sui Dynasty.
618-907	Tang Dynasty.
907-979	Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms.
960-1276	Song Dynasty.
960-1127	Northern Song Dynasty.
1127-1276	Southern Song Dynasty.
916-1125	Liao Dynasty.
1038-1227	Western Xia Dynasty.
1115-1234	Jin Dynasty.
1254	Kublai and Pagpa. The Mongol court adopts Buddhism.
1271-1368	Yuan Dynasty.
1368-1644	Ming Dynasty.
1644-1911 Qing Dynasty.	1840. First opium war.
	1884. Xinjiang incorporated into the Chinese governmental system.
1912 (1st January)	Proclamation of the Republic of China.
1944-1949	Xinjiang declares its independence supported by Moscow.
1949 (1st October)	Proclamation of the People's Republic of China.
1954	First Taiwan Strait Crisis. US-Taiwan Mutual Defence Treaty up to 1979.
1958	Second Taiwan Strait Crisis.
1959	The Dalai Lama flees to India and forms a Tibetan government in exile.
1972	First US-China communiqué on Taiwan.
1975	Mao's words: "within 100 years we will want to fight for, and we will fight for, Taiwan."
1976. 9th September	Death of Mao Zedong.
1978	Economic reform of China.
1979	Second US-China Communiqué on Taiwan. Recognition of the People's Republic of China in Beijing. Signing of the Taiwan Relations Act.
1982	Third US-China Communiqué on Taiwan and establishment of the six guarantees (Reagan).
1985	Time Magazine names Deng Xiaoping "Man of the Year".
1988	India recognises Chinese sovereignty over the autonomous region of Tibet.
1989	Repression of protests in Tiananmen Square.
1995	Third Taiwan Strait Crisis.

2000	First democratic change of the Taiwanese government.
2004	Founding of the World Uyghur Congress.
2008	The European Union and the United Kingdom recognise China's sovereignty over the autonomous region of Tibet.
2011	The Dalai Lama hands over political power, in exile, to Lobsang Sangay, a legal scholar educated at Harvard.
2012. November	XVIII Congress of the Communist Party of China.
2013. 7th September	Chinese president Xi Jinping proposes closer cooperation between China and Central Asia to build an economic belt around the "Silk Road".

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The ethnic conflicts in Myanmar: Kachin

María del Mar Hidalgo García

Chapter thirteen

Abstract

In the midst of a process of democratic transition, Myanmar also needs to address the conclusion of ethnic conflicts in border regions to provide the stability it needs for economic development. Instability, especially in the states of Kachin and Rakhine, is keeping the international community alert to the ongoing violation of human rights. The latest peace agreement, signed earlier this year between the government and the KIO (Kachin Independence Organisation), expressed a real desire by both parties to end a conflict that has led to a large number of victims and displaced people and which is threatening the energy infrastructures under construction in Kachin State whose principal investor is China.

Keywords

Myanmar, Burma, ethnic conflicts, Kachin, KIO, KIA.

Introduction

Since its independence from Britain in 1948, conflicts between the central government and ethnic minorities, who are demanding autonomy, coupled with the isolation imposed by the military regime, have been the main obstacle to Myanmar, formerly Burma, establishing itself as a democratic state and achieving a level of development which is commensurate with the country's wealth. Today, Myanmar is the poorest country in South-east Asia, with approximately 32% of the population living in poverty¹. However, with the coming to power of Thein Sein, three transitions are taking place in Myanmar²: from an authoritarian military government to a democratic government, from a centralised economy to a market economy and from continuing ethnic tensions both internally and at its borders to a possible and long-awaited period of peace and stabilisation.

Myanmar could be defined as a mosaic of ethnic groups spread over seven Bamar divisions³ and seven ethnic states (Figure 13.1)⁴.

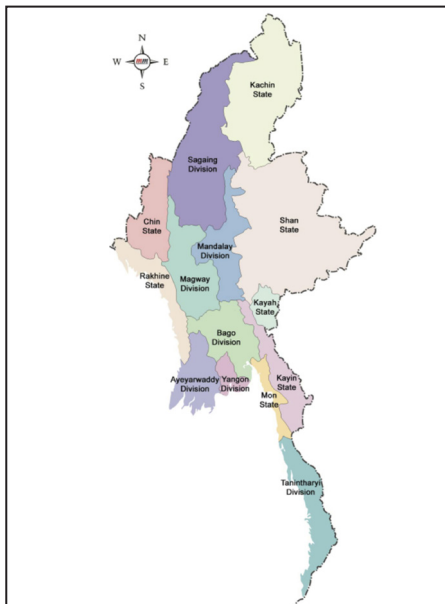


Figure 13.1.

¹ Data from CIA Factbook (www.cia.org). Retrieved on 27 August 2013.

² <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/myanmar/overview>. Updated: April 2013.

³ Sometimes the terms Bamar and Burmese are used interchangeably. However, a distinction should be made here. The term «Bamar» refers to the Bamar people, the majority ethnic group in the country, and the term «Burmese» encompasses the entire population of Myanmar/Burma.

⁴ The seven states are: Rakhine (Arakan), Chin, Kachin, Shan, Kayah (Karenni), Kayah (Karen) and Mon. The seven divisions are: Sagaing, Tanintharyi (Tenasserim), Ayeyarwady (Irrawady), Yangon (Rangoon), Bago (Pegu), Magway, Mandalay.

The country has 135 races, with the Bamar majority representing almost 70% of the population. With Tibetan and Chinese origins, this group has exercised its supremacy over the Karen, Shan, Rakhine, Rohingya, Mon, Chin, Kachin and other minorities in the country, which is a source of ongoing tensions, violent conflicts⁵ and separatist claims. These ethnic groups make up the remaining third of the population. Most of these groups, scattered around the periphery of the country, have been kept away from the centralisation of power. They involve great cultural, linguistic, religious, economic and political diversity; 89% of the people of Myanmar are Buddhist (mostly Theravada), 4% are Christian, another 4% follow Islam, 1% have animist beliefs, and 2% follow other religions, including Mahayana Buddhism, Hinduism and other religions from China (Table 13.1)⁶.

Ethnic group	Proportion	Location
Karen	7%	Karen State in eastern Myanmar near the border with Thailand
Kachin	1.5%	Kachin State in the north, on the border with China
Karenni	0.75%	Karenni state on the border with Thailand
Chin	2.5%	Chin State in western Myanmar on the border with India
Mon	2%	Mon State in southern Myanmar
Rakhine	3.5%	Rakhine State in western Myanmar
Shan	9%	Shan State, on the border with Thailand
Wa	0.16%	Wa region in the north-east of the country, near the border with China
Rohingya	0.15%	Cities in northern Rakhine State, on the border with Bangladesh

Table 13. Ethnic minorities. Source: IRIN-UN.

Myanmar is a country rich in mineral (jade and gold) and energy resources, which are unsustainably mined by outsiders, mainly China, and which offer little economic benefit to the local population (Table 13.1).

⁵ The ethnic conflicts in Myanmar have caused 16,861 deaths, 812,666 refugees and 458,000 internally displaced people. Information from «Armed Conflict Database (IISS). Retrieved on 17 August 2013.

⁶ Based on data from the Myanmar section accessed at www.exteriores.gob.es.

The ethnic conflicts in Myanmar: Kachin

Myanmar Economic Data		
Population:	55,167,330 inhabitants	
GDP	US\$99.93 billion	Ranking: 77
GDP/capita	US\$1,400	Ranking: 204
GDP (sectors):	Agriculture 38.8% Industry 19.3% Services 41.8%	
Exports	US\$8.23 billion	Natural gas, wood, clothing, jade and gems
	Thailand 40.5% India 14.7% China 14.2% Japan 7.4%	
Imports	US\$7.477 billion	Petroleum products, machinery, construction materials, fertiliser, foodstuffs.
	China 37% Thailand 20.2% Singapore 8.7% South Korea 8.7% Japan 8.2% Malaysia 4.6%	

Table 13.2. Myanmar Economic Indicators. Source: CIA Factbook (www.cia.gov).

Of all the ethnic conflicts that have been taking place in the country in recent years, it is necessary to highlight two, due to their violence and duration: the armed conflict in Kachin State and the situation faced by the Rohingya⁷ people in the State of Rakhine/Arakan.

This chapter will focus on the first issue, since the peace agreement between the KIO (Kachin Independence Organisation) and the government in May 2013 has opened the door to the resolution of ethnic conflicts, an essential step towards achieving economic and social development in the country. Furthermore, the geopolitical value of Myanmar is undoubted: it has become a key part of the wrangling between China and the US. Both are interested in a stable Myanmar to continue strengthening their position as economic powers, in particular China, which shares a border with Kachin State.

⁷ The Rohingya are an ethnic minority who profess the Sunni Islam faith. Their approximate number of members is estimated to be around 725,000. Since the Independence of the Union of Burma, they have never been granted citizenship, being regarded as not native to the country. The government of Myanmar on occasion has designated them as «illegal immigrants from Bangladesh». Bangladesh, however, does not recognise their citizenship either. The Rohingya are therefore stateless. They are confined to their villages without official protection, with severe shortages in food, health and education along with the risk of being detained indefinitely. This situation, in addition to being a violation of human rights, is a source of continuing conflict with the Buddhist population of Myanmar.

Myanmar is an overland route which avoids the Strait of Malacca. The stability of the territory is essential in order to be able to carry out the energy and infrastructure projects being undertaken there, mainly by China. As a result, the international community is watching very closely the process of democratic transition that is being led by the President of Myanmar, Thein Sein, and the handling of the resolution of ethnic conflicts in the country. A rapprochement between the government and the armed groups is a priority if the country is to achieve stability. Otherwise, the lack of security could be perpetuated by the presence of the military in the government and by ongoing armed activity.

Background to the conflict

The source of the conflict in Kachin, and in general of the rest of the ethnic conflicts, can be traced back to the post-colonial era that followed independence from Britain in 1948. The new country, called the Union of Burma, was designed, as the name suggests, as a federal union which contemplated the independent nature of certain ethnic groups. These include the Kachin, the Shan and the Chin, since they already possessed this independence before colonisation by the British.

During the colonial period, these groups maintained an autonomous administration and even went as far as confronting the Burmese in their fight against the British. The preference of these groups for supporting the colonial power is the reason why many members of these ethnic groups were converted to Christianity.

In the Panglong Agreement, signed on 12 February 1947, the new state model was adopted that was to be established after independence. This model, drawn up by President Aung San, was based on a voluntary association of ethnic groups for the creation of a Union of Burma, the establishment of a decentralised federal structure, political equality and the right to self-determination for the member states of the Union⁸.

However, the only states that participated in the signing of this agreement were those that had been independently colonised by Britain, which included the aforementioned states of the Chin, the Kachin and the Shan, causing resentment among other ethnic groups that were part of the Kingdom of Burma, such as the Rakhine/Arakan, the Karen and the Mon, who did not see their separatist claims reflected in this agreement.

Thus began a conflict in the construction of the Union of Burma as a state and as a nation, in which the Panglong Agreement moved increasingly away from becoming a reality, especially after the assassination of Aung

⁸ Lian H. Sakhong. «The Dynamics of sixty years of ethnic Armed Conflict in Burma». Analysis Paper no 1. January 2012. Burma Center for Ethnic Studies.

San in 1947. He was succeeded by U Nu, who ruled in the period from 1948 to 1962 and who undertook a process of unification of the State through the establishment of Buddhism as the official religion. In the face of its multi-ethnic, multicultural and multi-religious diversity, the new State was created under the imposition of unification.

This model was not accepted by the various ethnic groups, which constituted about 30% of the population and occupied 60% of the territory. The reaction to the continued failure of the Panglong Agreement moved in two different directions. On the one hand, radical groups were formed who opted for armed rebellion against the central government. Such was the case with the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) and the source of the Chin rebellion that occurred years later.

The other reaction was undertaken by the more moderate groups, led by Sao Shwe Thaik, the first President of the Union of Burma, who organised the so-called Taunggy conference⁹ in 1961, which brought together the Chin, the Kachin and the Shan along with other groups such as the Karen, the Karenni/Kayah, the Mon and the Rakhine/Arakan. The idea that drove this group was the creation of a Union of Burma in line with the constitution that had been set out by the late Aung San to comply with the Panglong Agreement. This movement conceived in Taunggy constituted what would later be known as the «Federal Movement».

This movement called for balanced representation for all ethnic groups in the parliamentary chamber called the «House of Nationalities», regardless of their demographic weighting, as promulgated in the Constitution. However, the reality was that the Burmese dominated the Assembly, due to their larger population. Even adding together all the votes of the other ethnic groups it was not possible to paralyse any decisions made by the government.

The response by U Nu to the holding of the Taunggy Conference was to organise a federal seminar on 24 February 1962 in Yangon which was included as part of the parliamentary activity. The leaders of ethnic minorities were invited to find a peaceful solution to the federalist proposals. However, this rapprochement was never achieved, since at the end of the seminar there was a coup d'état by General Ne Win that ruined any hope of the ethnic groups achieving a federal state.

General Ne Win's state model closely resembled that of U Nu. It looked to unify and homogenise the country. However, unlike U Nu, who had chosen to promulgate Buddhism as the official religion, Ne Win aimed to unify through the language and with the introduction of socialism to the country. In 1974, he promulgated a new constitution in which Burmese was established as the only official language. The Burma Socialist

⁹ Taunggy is the capital of Shan State.

Program Party (BSPP) was founded, led by Ne Win, which happened to be the only legal political party. Thus the state, the military and the party itself increasingly started to converge. General Ne Win became President of the Socialist Republic of the Union of Burma.

The Armed Forces, known as the Tatmadaw, was made a tool of the State to ensure the construction of the State unitary model. Hundreds of military groups were formed all over the country to gain more control over the insurgents who had sprung forth from all the ethnic groups. The aim was to involve the population in order to block financial and logistical support.

Among the most important armed insurgent groups were: Karen National Union (KNU), Kachin Independent Organization (KIO), Shan State Army (SSA), New Mon State Party (NMSP), Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP), Arakan Liberation Party (ALP) and Chin Democracy Party (CDP). In 1975 the Federal National Democratic Front was created, which proved to be the embryonic form of the National Democratic Front (NDF) party, which was created in May 1976 and consisted exclusively of non-Burmese ethnic groups. Slowly, with the support of the Communist Party of Burma (CPB), the insurgent groups began to control Burma's easternmost borders in Kachin State. The three strongest ethnic groups were the KNU, KIO and SSA, which maintained about 5,000 troops in certain positions around the country as if this was a conventional war against General Ne Win's soldiers¹⁰.

The main source of funding for these insurgent groups were the taxes charged on the black market that had been established through the borders of the Union of Burma and which was fostered in large part by the isolationist policy of General Ne Win. The Karen, the Karenni, the Mon and the Shan controlled the eastern borders with Thailand and China, the Kachin controlled the north-eastern border with China, and the Chin controlled the north-western border with India.

Seeing that the insurgents controlled the black market and in order to block their funding, Ne Win decided to withdraw the most valuable banknotes in September 1987. This measure, however, did not produce the expected results because the transactions began to be made in Chinese, Thai and Indian currencies. The big losers were the people themselves, as between 60 and 80% of the money circulating around the country lost its value. This caused violent riots to take place on university campuses in 1988, followed by the declaration of martial law; 8 August 1988 was particularly violent because of the shooting of thousands of protesters in the general strike.

¹⁰ Sakhong, Lian H. «The Dynamics of sixty years of ethnic Armed Conflict in Burma». Analysis Paper no 1. January 2012. Burma Center for Ethnic Studies.

Given that the situation was becoming untenable, the military, with popular support and still under the control of Ne Win, carried out a coup in September of that year. General Saw Maung took charge of a new regime known as the State Law & Order Restoration Council (SLORC).

Shortly after its founding, the SLORC changed the name of Burma to Myanmar in a new attempt to «unify» the country. The constitution of 1947 was abolished and elections were announced that finally took place in May 1990, with victory by the National League for Democracy (NLD), led by Aung San Suu Kyi¹¹, winning 80% of the seats¹². However, the SLORC annulled this result claiming that first it was necessary to pass a new constitution. It took eighteen years from the 1990 elections for a referendum to be held to approve the new constitution in 2008, a period during which various members of the NLD were held in jail or under house arrest. Among them was Aung San Suu Kyi.

While this period of democratic transition was going on, despite the signing of a ceasefire with some armed groups, ethnic tensions did not cease. To the contrary, they started to increase from 2004.

Having become an isolated and impoverished country due to continuing human rights violations, in 2007 the so-called «Saffron Revolution»¹³ took place, in which Buddhist monks rose up against the military government. The cause was the rise in prices which exacerbated the suffering of the population. The monks were put down harshly, prompting criticism from the international community and the tightening of sanctions on the country. The military regime was weakened and was forced to take the path towards democracy.

Under the Constitution of 2008, the military must be represented in the various organs of government¹⁴. Military representation having thus been ensured, elections were held in late 2010 that were neither free nor fair. Aung San Suu Kyi, still under house arrest, was not allowed to participate, so her party decided to boycott the elections. In March 2011

¹¹ The daughter of the assassinated leader, Aung San. She was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1991.

¹² The NLD won 80% of seats, while the NUP (National Unity Party), formerly the BSPP, won 2%. The rest of the seats would have been for parties of the ethnic groups that were represented in the UNLD (United Nationalities League for Democracy) with 16% and by independents (2%).

¹³ The term «saffron» refers to the yellow colour of the robes worn by the Buddhist monks.

¹⁴ The executive power of the State would be under control of the military, while in the legislature it would have 25% reserved representation in the different houses. The positions of Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and Foreign Affairs would be occupied by members of the military. The «National Security and Defence Council» was also created, in which the military would occupy five of the eleven places, apart from that of the President. This guaranteed that a state of emergency could be declared at any time.

a civil government was established, but under military control. The State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) was dissolved and retired General Thein Sein, Prime Minister and confidant of Than Shwe, was appointed President. Since then, Thein Sein has launched a series of measures to drive the country's democratic process, end the ethnic conflicts and achieve social and economic development.

In April 2012, partial elections¹⁵ were held for the two legislative chambers. This time the victory of Aung San Suu Kyi and her party left no doubt about the preference of the people for the democratic project led by the Nobel Peace Prize laureate. They won forty-three seats out of the forty-five seats at stake. In the end, Aung San Suu Kyi took up a seat and was seen as the great hope to end the period of isolation, the ethnic conflicts and the continued violation of human rights.

The peace talks in Kachin State

The Kachin Independence Organisation (KIO) was established in 1961 as a result of the breach of the Panglong Agreement. It soon became one of the largest and best-organised armed groups in opposition to the regime. It held control of Kachin State and northern Shan State.

The group's objective was to use armed struggle as a means to achieve political dialogue and to seek a negotiated solution to recognise the independence of Kachin State. In the early 1990s, the KIO took the initiative, in cooperation with other armed ethnic groups, in establishing political dialogue with the government.

Despite these efforts, and on seeing that there was a position of unity among the other armed groups, the KIO was alone in signing a ceasefire in 1994¹⁶ with the military government, which at that time was in charge of the country, and even participated in the National Convention responsible for drafting the 2008 Constitution.

After the ceasefire, the KIO emerged as an administrative authority operating like a local government while maintaining its own armed forces. However, issues like the lack of transparency, the enrichment of the leaders, corruption and the lack of impact of the exploitation of the State's resources on the welfare of the population, increased domestic unrest.

Just before the holding of elections in 2010, the government forced the KIO's armed wing, the KIA, to become part of the Border Guard Corps in exchange for training and salaries. This decision was not accepted by the

¹⁵ Only forty-eight seats were at stake, 7% of the total.

¹⁶ Other groups, such as the Karen National Union (KNU) and the Shan State Army – South, continued the struggle until January 2012, when they signed the ceasefire.

KIO and the ceasefire was invalidated. The government's response was to ban Kachin political parties and independent candidates from standing for election, to order the closure of the headquarters of the KIO, prevent their funding and apply the term of insurgents to them in all the media¹⁷.

In order to unite positions among the armed groups, in September 2010, supporters of the ceasefire and supporters of the armed struggle created the Committee for the Emergence of a Federal Union (CEFU). This committee consisted of three groups supporting the ceasefire (KIO, NMSP and SSA-N) and three active armed groups (KNU, KNPP, CNF). In February 2011, the CEFU¹⁸ became the UNFC (United Nationalities Federal Council), expanding to twelve council members and with approximately 20,000 followers.

Only three months after taking over the reins of government, Thein Sein had to face the outbreak of violence that began in February 2011 when the KIO/KIA killed a soldier in an area controlled by the group¹⁹. Far from being an isolated incident, it led to the resumption of fighting. Thus, on 9 June 2011, there were clashes between the army and the armed group in Bumsen, a strategic location for the latter group and close to two Chinese-operated power generation dams. That same day, army troops killed and tortured a representative of the KIO. The limit of action set down by each party had been crossed. The armed group responded and clashes occurred over the following months not only in Kachin State but also in northern Shan State.

The peace talks held in June and August of that year between the Kachin local government and the KIO failed to make any headway. Thus began the national dialogue in which the government showed signs of a certain inflexibility towards the making of concessions. Nevertheless, Thein Sein continued with his intentions of reaching a peace agreement.

The cancellation, in September 2011, of the Chinese project to build the Myitstone Dam in Kachin State, a project which was opposed by both the KIO and the inhabitants of the State, could have led to a rapprochement, but was not seen this way by the armed group. Another attempt was made by the President in December 2011, when he proposed the paralysing of the army offensive against the KIO. In March 2012, in light of the fact that their positions were getting no closer, the President changed the head negotiator, choosing the Transport Minister, Aung Min, who met with the

¹⁷ «A changing ethnic landscape: Analysis of Burma's 2010 polls», Transnational Institute/Burma Centrum Nederland, Burma Policy Briefing no 4, December 2010.

¹⁸ The concept of the UNFC is similar to the NDF in 1976, that is, to join forces to counter and react to any attempt to unify the country while ignoring ethnic, religious and cultural diversity.

¹⁹ Burma's new government: governance and prospect for peace in ethnic states, Transnational Institute/Burma Centrum Nederland, Burma Policy Briefing no 6, May 2011.

KIO for the first time on 21 May 2012 in Chiang Rai, Thailand. The ensuing negotiations²⁰ took place in territory controlled by the KIO, which involved a test of the government's interest in reaching an agreement given that the presence of the negotiators in hostile territory endangered their safety.

The location of the negotiations remained one of the key points. The following took place on 30 October in the Chinese city of Ruili, located near the border with Kachin State. This occasion lacked the positive atmosphere of the previous meetings since the topic of discussion was the reorganisation of the army forces and the KIA in Kachin State. Nevertheless, the KIO scorned the effort made by the government, which was even willing to withdraw its troops, and did not send any important representatives.

The armed struggle continued and on 28 December 2012, Myanmar's army carried out an air strike on the headquarters of the KIA situated in Lajayang, ten km from Laiza, which is highly strategic because it is situated on the border with China²¹. This led to a new escalation in the conflict and dashed the President's intentions of avoiding armed actions. This attack was followed by the one made against the KIA base at Hka Ya Bum on 26 January 2013²², this time with artillery. It seemed that the positions of Thein Sein and the military were diverging more and more and there were doubts as to what extent the President had power over the military. His calls for no armed interventions to be made fell on deaf ears. At this point, an actor whose interests were being seriously affected made itself known: China.

Given that attacks were being produced on its borders and that the instability of the area threatened its economic interests, China took on a leading role in the new round of negotiations, urging the government to agree to a ceasefire. In late January 2013 the army ended its offensive in Kachin State and the KIA also declared that it was ready to take the same step. A red line was established between the two sides which proved effective in preventing further clashes.

On 4 February there was a new round of negotiations in the city of Ruili²³, China, which was also attended by representatives of Karen National Union. Negotiations again took a peacemaking course. On 20 February, in the city of Chiang Mai in Thailand, the government representative met with the UNCF, which was made up of armed and unarmed ethnic groups including the KIO. It was clear that the resolution of the conflict in Kachin

²⁰ On 31 May, 1 June and, subsequently, on 21 June.

²¹ <http://www.abc.es/agencias/noticia.asp?noticia=1335833>.

²² <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/jan/27/burmese-take-kachin-outpost>.

²³ <http://www.europapress.es/internacional/noticia-rebeldes-kachin-gobierno-birmano-inician-negociaciones-paz-20130204091619.html>.

was not a local issue but affected all the ethnic groups, even though they had all already reached peace agreements with the government. On this occasion the mediating role of China was occupied by Japan²⁴ at the request of both negotiating parties.

Talks continued in Ruili on 11 and 12 March 2013. China sent Wang Yingfan as an observer and he played an important role in the reaching of an agreement²⁵. For the next round on 6 April, the KIO invited the US, the UK and the UN as observers, which was strongly opposed by China, and the talks were not held. China wanted to make clear that its involvement in the conflict was because its border areas were being affected, in order to prevent the involvement of the international community in the peace negotiations. However, in the round held from 28 to 30 March, China agreed to a UN observer being present, considering that this might be a guarantee that the ceasefire would be reached.

Current situation of the conflict

On 30 May 2013, the government and representatives of the KIO at last signed a peace agreement in the presence of representatives from China, the UN and eight armed groups. It is not a ceasefire but can be considered as such. The agreement consists of seven points:²⁶

- Establishment of a political dialogue.
- Planning of the cessation of hostilities.
- Establishment of monitoring committees.
- Support and resettlement for displaced persons
- Continuing of the dialogue on the positioning of troops.
- Establish a KIO technical team in Myitkyina (Kachin) to facilitate peace negotiations.
- Invite the same number of observers to the next meeting, and allow the presence of others, following agreement by the parties.

The aim of President Thein Sein was for the peace agreement to be extended over the long term. The almost continuous talks in the first months of 2013 have shown that there is strong interest in the cessation of the clashes. However, by June, troops from the Myanmar army and Kachin insurgents had clashed twenty-one times since the signing of the agreement in May, which suggests that, although the agreement is a breakthrough, the conflict is not yet over. For the KIO, trust between the military and the armed group is not only based on dialogue but also has to involve confirmation of what has been agreed. From this perspective, the

²⁴ The intermediary was the group, Nippon Foundation.

²⁵ <http://www.irrawaddy.org/archives/29598>.

²⁶ «A Tentative Peace in Myanmar's Kachin Conflict». Asia Briefing no 140. International Crisis Group.

reorganisation of the military around Kachin State is considered by the KIO, rather than a retreat, to be a ploy to gain time and continue fighting²⁷.

A matter arising out of the conflict and as yet unresolved is the displacement of 100,000 civilians as a result of the conflict. In February and April, respectively, a Red Cross and a UN convoy were allowed to enter areas controlled by the Kachin, which is an important step, albeit a modest one in alleviating the suffering of the population in the border region.

Tomás Ojea Quintana, a UN observer monitoring the situation in Myanmar, was cautious during his visit in mid August in his assessment of the situation in the country despite the great strides being made. For the diplomat, the ending of ethnic and religious conflicts is a priority.

An important factor to consider for the resolution of the conflict is the prevention of the financing of armed groups, which in large part is related to smuggling and drug trafficking.

Myanmar is the second largest opium producer in the world, with an estimated 25% of total world production²⁸. It is also the main source of amphetamines and opiates in South-east Asia. Despite efforts to the contrary by the government, poppy cultivation increased by 17% in 2012²⁹. The largest increase occurred in eastern and northern Shan State and in Kachin State.

Everything seems to indicate that this increase is related to the instability caused by the conflict in Kachin. There are several reasons given by experts³⁰: more income for the local population than what they would receive for other crops, financing of armed ethnic groups and the illicit activities of military groups (People's Militia Forces) located in zones of conflict³¹.

The role of external actors

For some analysts the process of reconciliation between the different ethnic groups must be led from within the government of Myanmar and treated as an internal matter with the involvement of all sectors of society: civil society, the military, representatives from the various religions, the NLD and the leaders of all ethnic groups including their armed branches. There are many who believe that the entry of external agents only complicates the situation because, after the support for pacification,

²⁷ <http://www.rfa.org/english/news/myanmar/kachin-06272013153328.html>.

²⁸ UNODC Report South-East Asia Opium Survey 2012.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ <http://www.mmpeacemonitor.org/conflict/increasing-drug-trade>.

³¹ <http://www.burmaethnicstudies.net/pdf/BCES-BP-No.4.pdf>.

there are no motives other than strictly economic ones derived from the exploitation of the wealth of natural resources in the country.

The presence of outside observers in the round of peace negotiations, conducted in the early months between the government and the KIO, is proof that the main powers and organisations have plenty to say regarding the ending of the ethnic conflicts. Myanmar's geopolitical value is unquestionable.

China

Myanmar and China have always maintained a close relationship³², especially following the 1988 coup³³. This was bolstered by the imposition of economic sanctions by the US and the EU in the period of military rule. In addition, as a state rich in natural (principally jade and gold) and energy resources, Myanmar attracted the interest of outside agents, especially China, leading to the unsustainable exploitation of resources. The population, far from seeing the benefits of this income, saw that it had been dispossessed of its land, forced to work in extreme conditions, which included the exploitation of children, and well outside the reach of any labour laws.

However, with the arrival of Thein Sein following the elections in 2010 and the creation of a «civilian» government, the economic and political dependence between China and Myanmar has been affected by the interest shown by the new President in building a relationship with Western powers.

China cannot throw away its opportunity to continue to be the main partner of Myanmar. And this interest is based on several reasons: natural resources, border trade, the energy infrastructures being built in the country and the fact that Myanmar can be its gateway to the Indian Ocean, bypassing the Strait of Malacca.

All these factors mean that China has taken a special interest in the political transition that is taking place in its neighbouring country and in the resolution of the ethnic conflicts, particularly in Kachin State, with which it shares a border. However, it was not until September 2011, when

³² Some leaders of Myanmar even referred to China as «Paukphaw», which means «blood brother».

³³ The bilateral relationship between the two countries was formalised in 1971. From 1967, the Chinese Communist Party supported the Communist Party of Burma (CPB), which was in conflict with the Myanmar government and which had positioned itself in the border area controlling trade in the area. However, this support was dwindling while relations with the government were strengthened, allowing the Myanmar army to conduct an offensive against the CPB and to regain control of the border areas.

Thein Sein halted construction of the Myitsone dam³⁴ on the Irrawaddy River, that China took an active role in resolving the conflict that it had always considered an internal affair for Myanmar. Moreover, the Kachin, who are mostly Christian, are seen as supporters of the West, specifically the US, so China has opposed the participation of both the US and the UK as observers in their negotiations to reach a peace agreement with the central government. China also opposed putting on record any reference to humanitarian assistance or monitoring of the ceasefire, both of which would entail international intervention in the conflict.

The ceasefire signed in 1994 benefited China because it allowed the exploitation of natural resources in Kachin State and even the seizure of the land abandoned by the displaced people. However, the profits have never been returned to the people of this state and the unrest has worsened to the point where it caused the suspension of the construction of the Myitsone dam.

China has seen its interests threatened: the extension of the conflict on its borders, the massive flow of refugees and, more worryingly, the stoppage of the energy and mining projects it is undertaking in the country³⁵.

Besides the hydropower projects initiated in the country, we should highlight the construction of an oil pipeline and a gas pipeline crossing Myanmar linking Kyaukpyu Port with the Chinese province of Yunnan, projects which show a great commitment by China to changing its supply energy map in order to avoid the Strait of Malacca and shorten the route by 1,200 km.

In late July 2013, China began receiving natural gas from Myanmar through this gas pipeline, which has a capacity of twelve billion cubic metres³⁶. Until now it only received gas from Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. As for the oil pipeline, still under construction, it will have an annual transport capacity of twenty-two million tons. Both projects will provide the government of Myanmar with about US\$1 billion a year for the next three decades³⁷.

³⁴ The Myitsone dam is located forty-two km from Myitkyina, the capital of Kachin state and is one of seven hydroelectric projects that the company China Power Investment Corporation plans to build along the Irrawaddy River. The electricity generated will be sent to the Chinese province of Yunnan, as already occurs from the 600 MW Shweli plant which is the power station with the largest capacity in Myanmar. In contrast to the Myitsone Dam, the other six projects remain under way. For more information see: Toshihiro kudo. China's Policy toward Myanmar: Challenges and Prospects en <http://www.ide.go.jp>.

³⁵ For example, the Letpadaung copper mine.

³⁶ <http://www.thehindu.com/news/international/world/myanmar-pipeline-to-diversify-china-energy-supply/article4966145.ece>.

³⁷ www.idsa.in/idsacomments/ChinasPipelinesinMyanmar_shivananda_100112.

The ethnic conflicts in Myanmar: Kachin

The construction of both projects has sparked protests and conflicts with the people of Myanmar who have not been compensated for the loss of their land³⁸, especially around Kyaukpyu, where the economy is based on agriculture (Figure 13.2)³⁹.



Figure 13.2

In addition to these energy projects, China is also building a parallel railway line⁴⁰ with a length of 810 km, running from the port of Kyaukphyu to Kunming in Yunnan Province, which will allow it to intensify its trade relations with Africa and the Middle East.

Ensuring overland trade is also a strategic interest for China regarding Myanmar. For this reason, it sees the security of its borders as a matter of particular concern. At present, the annual trade in border areas is worth over US\$700 million, with Musa being the main trading point with a value of US\$500 million⁴¹. The latest incidents at the border of Kachin State in

³⁸ For more details: <http://www.earthrights.org/sites/default/files/documents/the-burma-china-pipelines.pdf>.

³⁹ Course of the oil pipeline and gas pipeline from Yunnan Province to the port of Kyaukpyu.

⁴⁰ <http://elevenmyanmar.com/national/2801-activists-criticise-lack-of-transparency-on-china-railway-project>.

⁴¹ [http://www.asianewsnet.net/Myanmar-border-trade-exceeds-US\\$700m-49104.html](http://www.asianewsnet.net/Myanmar-border-trade-exceeds-US$700m-49104.html).

late 2012, in which several shells landed in Chinese territory, highlighted the discomfort among the Chinese people for the «lack of care» shown by the Myanmar government.

Apart from the economic importance it has for the development of the region, the border between the two countries can be considered quite permeable, including human trafficking and drug smuggling. China needs Kachin State to contribute to the economic boom in Yunnan Province and Kachin depends on China if it is to survive away from the central control of Myanmar. On the other hand, since the conflict began, there have been some 100,000 displaced people who are vulnerable to trafficking, especially women and children. China, uncomfortable with this situation, forced the return in August 2011 of around 5,000 displaced people, many of whom, deprived of their lands, now live in refugee camps⁴².

On the other hand, the new era of democracy and openness embarked upon by Thein Sein has led to a rapprochement with the US and the EU, with the subsequent lifting of sanctions and increased investment in the country. This shift has caused more interest on the part of China in accelerating the resolution of the conflict. China wants stability for the energy projects it has undertaken in Myanmar and would not appreciate any intrusion by Western powers, particularly the US, whose geostrategic interest is now focused on the South-east Asia region.

However, despite the need for stability in Myanmar for its own interests, China does not want to play too active a role in the peace negotiations. For one, it has no interest at all in supporting the KIO in its quest for self-determination in Kachin State, thus opposing the government. But at the same time, it continues to provide weapons to the insurgent group, United Wa State Army (UWSA), which controls the border in the north-west of the country⁴³ despite publicly denying this is the case⁴⁴. That is, a double-sided game to show the government that China is the power that will best protect the interests of Myanmar, playing the role of the protective neighbour and investor as it did years ago.

India

India and Myanmar, which share 1,600 km of border, have a mutual interest. India needs to support a state that is in a transition period before it moves closer to another actor which could possibly pose a threat to

⁴² <http://www.acnur.es/noticias/notas-de-prensa/985-acnur-esta-en-contacto-con-los-kachin-expulsados-desde-china>.

⁴³ <http://www.janes.com/article/12159/china-sends-armed-helicopters-to-myanmar-separatists>.

⁴⁴ <http://www.mmmtimes.com/index.php/national-news/6601-china-denies-arms-sale.html>.

The ethnic conflicts in Myanmar: Kachin

Indian security. Myanmar is a bridge to reach South-east Asia and promote economic development in its north-eastern zone where there is scarce investment and industrial growth. To Thein Sein, India is a great ally.

With regard to the conflict in Kachin, India has been caught in a dilemma. On one hand, if it supports the government offensive against the KIA, the armed groups with which this organisation has dealings, like the ULFA⁴⁵ (United Liberation Front of Asom) and the PLA (People's Liberation Army), could step up their own offensives. If supported the Kachin as it did in 1990, this could disturb China and could increase US presence and convert Kachin State into a kind of American satellite⁴⁶.

Now that it seems that the democratic process is taking hold in Myanmar and that the peace negotiations are on track, India is going to focus on its strategic interests. It could become a dominant power in the Indo-Pacific region and increase its weight in ASEAN (Association of South-east Asian Nations). However, it needs to hurry because it is quite a way behind China in this regard.

Its strategic partnership with Myanmar is based on the fight against insurgents on the border between the two countries, their trade relations and the exploitation of the energy resources in the Bay of Bengal. Regarding security and defence, India also has an interest in Myanmar increasing its naval power in the Indian Ocean, offering shipbuilding and the training for its troops at Indian military institutions⁴⁷. India and Myanmar share much of the Bay of Bengal and need to work closer together to combat piracy, drug trafficking, illegal fishing and human trafficking and to ensure commercial traffic in the Indian Ocean.

The fight against drug trafficking and smuggling is also on the agenda between the two countries, since India is a transit country between the two major opium-producing areas: Afghanistan-Pakistan and the triangle formed by Myanmar, Laos and Thailand⁴⁸.

US

Along with China and the EU, the US is one of the major players in the new era of openness in Myanmar⁴⁹. In recent years, South-east Asia has

⁴⁵ http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/india/states/assam/terrorist_outfits/ulfa.htm.

⁴⁶ <http://www.vifindia.org/article/2011/february/17/Kachin-Myanmar-Conflict-Implications-for-India>.

⁴⁷ <http://www.defensenews.com/article/20130730/DEFREG03/307300009/India-Boosts-Defense-Ties-Myanmar>.

⁴⁸ <http://www.icwa.in/pdfs/IBindiamyanmar.pdf>.

⁴⁹ The US has never accepted the name change of the country, which was made without a democratic consultation. All the US documentation still refers to «Burma».

become the focus of American interest. Aware of this fact, Thein Sein has reached out to the Western powers, who, in response, have been lifting trade sanctions in step with the democratic government reforms being put in place.

In July 2012, the Obama administration authorised the export of financial services after nearly fifteen years without investing in the country and in November of the same year authorised the importation of products from Myanmar, except for jade and rubies⁵⁰. From 2013, US citizens are now able to conduct financial transactions with the four largest banks in the country: Asia Green Development Bank, Ayeyarwady Bank, Myanmar Economic Bank and the Myanmar Investment and Commercial Bank⁵¹. It also created a fund of US\$170 million for two years⁵² aimed at issues such as the consolidation of democracy, the pacification of the territory, the observance of human rights, political transparency and food security.

The rapprochement between the two countries has become clear following the visit by Obama in November 2012, the first one ever made by a US president, which was reciprocated in May 2013 by President Thein Sein. The commitments made by both parties include: religious freedom, dialogue with ethnic minorities, humanitarian aid in Rakhine State and in areas of conflict, the establishment of a United Nations office in Myanmar, non-proliferation, observance of human rights, the fight against human trafficking and good governance.

All these changes in relations between Myanmar and the Western powers are opening another stage in the geopolitical competition between the US and China. US support is aimed at establishing a greater presence in the area. China cannot allow Myanmar, which was formerly its protégée state, to now become a US ally. The invitation extended to Myanmar to act as an observer in the Cobra Gold exercise⁵³ in early 2013 has opened the possibility of gradually enhancing the relationship at military level, as the US has already done with Thailand, Japan, South Korea, Singapore and, more recently, Vietnam and India.

With this approach, the US can also influence Myanmar to move away from another of its erstwhile allies, North Korea, and avoid any attempt at nuclear proliferation. The opacity of the military regime sparked rumours about the development of a nuclear programme in Myanmar despite its membership of the NPT. These rumours were

⁵⁰ For more details, refer to <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/35910.htm>.

⁵¹ <http://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/sanctions/Programs/pages/burma.aspx>.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ The Cobra Gold exercise is conducted in Thailand. It is the oldest and largest joint military exercise performed by the US in Asia. The exercise is performed with allies in the region such as Thailand, Singapore and Japan.

founded on photographs and a report signed by inspectors from the IAEA⁵⁴ (International Atomic Energy Agency). Thein Sein is aware of the importance of abandoning any attempt at a nuclear programme if he wants to continue with the reforms and the support of the US and ASEAN. And, indeed, he has committed to this.

The Kachin people are looking hopefully towards any movement by the United States towards the government of Thein Sein. For them, the US is an ally and will not forget that this ethnic group helped them in World War II. It cannot betray them. They need to know that American support for the new government will be conditional on support for ethnic minorities and the recognition of cultural and religious diversity.

The US intends to continue with the restrictions on activities and products which involve human rights abuse or any steps backwards regarding political reforms aimed at promoting democracy. In summer, the ban on importing rubies and jade from Myanmar expired but the US has extended it for another year⁵⁵. The possibility that the US could lift sanctions on these products is a cause of concern for the people of Kachin State. Jade is only obtained in this state but this industry, in addition to violations of human rights and worker's rights, is centralised by the government, which means the profits will not reach the people.

The US, with many geopolitical interests in the area, needs to plan its actions carefully so that both sides, the government and the Kachin people, do not feel offended or betrayed.

The European Union

The main objective of the European Union is to support the democratic government of Thein Sein in fostering the economic and social development of the country, respect for human rights and the resumption of Myanmar's relations with the international community.

Two years after the new government took office, initiating the transition to democracy, the Council of the European Union made public in July 2013 the new framework that will set down priorities in its policy towards Myanmar⁵⁶: the achievement of peace between ethnic groups with special mention of the conflicts taking place in Kachin State and Rakhine State, the consolidation of democracy and respect for human rights, the fostering

⁵⁴ David Santoro, ASEAN's WDM Scorecard. Issues&Insights. Vol. 12, no 3, 2012.

⁵⁵ <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/08/07/us-usa-myanmar-gems-idUSBRE97615L20130807>.

⁵⁶ http://consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/138272.pdf.

of economic development and trade and the promotion of Myanmar's commitment within the international community.

With regard to the trade sanctions⁵⁷ that have been imposed in recent years and which began in 1996, the EU proceeded to lift them in April 2013 for all products except arms. In July, it went a step further in view of the report by the International Labour Organisation which acknowledges that progress has been made in the workers' rights being offered to the people of Myanmar.⁵⁸ The EU has decided to include it again in the system of Trade Preferences⁵⁹ within the «Everything but Arms» category. This system allows developing countries to be offered lower tariffs in order to promote their economic development.

The United Nations

The United Nations has been an observer in the latest rounds of peace talks between the KIO and the government aimed at achieving a ceasefire in Kachin State. Nevertheless, it should be noted that Myanmar's ethnic conflicts have always been considered internal matters that do not affect international security. This position is supported by Russia and China, which can veto any possibility that the issue could be discussed in the Security Council⁶⁰.

The efforts of the UN are focused on two main areas. On the one hand, in political terms it urges the government of Myanmar to continue with the reforms it has undertaken and the observance of human rights, international humanitarian law and workers' rights⁶¹. On the other, it provides humanitarian aid to the displaced people through the various UN agencies.

ASEAN

Myanmar has been a member of ASEAN (Association of South-East Asian Nations) since 1997 but it was not until 2008 when it joined the free trade area (ASEAN Free Trade Area, AFTA)⁶².

⁵⁷ In 2012, Myanmar made exports for a total of EUR 164 million to the EU, which represents 3% of the country's exports and 0.01% of total EU imports (preferably textiles).

⁵⁸ http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-13-695_en.htm.

⁵⁹ The EU had removed Myanmar from the Preferences System.

⁶⁰ <http://www.ipsnoticias.net/2005/10/birmania-asean-pide-accion-al-consejo-de-seguridad/>.

⁶¹ A/RES/67/233 of 8 April.

⁶² ASEAN was established on 8 August 1967. It is currently made up of: Indonesia, the Philippines, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam, Brunei, Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar.

The main goal of ASEAN is to form an economic bloc to strengthen the economic and social development of its members and to promote peace and stability in the region.

Myanmar and ASEAN have a clear dependence on one another. Myanmar needs to be part of ASEAN in order not to become isolated, while ASEAN needs Myanmar to be a member, as the second largest country in South-east Asia, due to its geographical position and its extensive natural resources that could make it the economic engine of the bloc.

Despite the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of its members, in 2004 the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Myanmar Caucus (AIPMC) was established, being made up of a group of parliamentarians from Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, Thailand, Philippines and Cambodia. The purpose of the group was to promote the democratic transition, the observance of human rights and to seek the international support to achieve it. That is, to follow the internal situation in Myanmar closely, since ASEAN's relations with its major partners (the EU and the US) were in danger of breaking down due to the fact that a state where human rights were not observed was a member of the Association. At stake was the very prestige of ASEAN.

ASEAN has a character which is mainly economic, but it also focuses on security through the ASEAN Security Council and the ASEAN Regional Forum. This interdependence between states is based on mutual trust, preventive diplomacy and non-interference in the internal affairs of each state. This has meant that ASEAN has been criticised by the international community when it was perceived that the Association was not being sufficiently resolute on matters occurring within the borders of Myanmar, as occurred in 2008 when Cyclone Nargis devastated the south of the country, causing more than 28,000 deaths, while the military regime refused to allow international aid to enter the country. A year earlier, ASEAN had also failed to intervene in the serious riots that took place in the country.

In 2014, Myanmar will assume the rotating chairmanship of ASEAN. In fact this was due to take place in 2016 but it has exchanged its turn with Laos, not without some criticism. This will be the first time it takes up the position, since for its previous turn, in 2006, it was forced to withdraw because it would have threatened ASEAN's relations with the countries and organisations that had imposed sanctions on Myanmar. The EU threatened to boycott the bilateral dialogue between the two organisations if Myanmar took up the chairmanship⁶³.

⁶³ <http://es.euronews.com/2005/07/27/myanmar-antigua-birmania-renuncia-a-su-turno-en-la-presidencia-de-la-asean-la-asociacion-de-naciones-del-sudeste-asiatico/>.

The following year, 2015, will be a key year for the Association, since it is going to be established as an economic community. Leaving the presidency of the previous year to a country in the midst of a democratic process and with ethnic conflicts as yet unresolved involves certain risks. Myanmar, however, does not want to miss its chance to take its first role as a leading player on the international stage.

During its presidency, Myanmar will need to show its ability in discussing before ASEAN some of the internal problems that are as yet unresolved, such as the case of the Rohingya⁶⁴. Or in how to address its relationship with China and its implications for the stability of the South China Sea⁶⁵.

Conclusions and outlook

Despite the gradual restoration of democracy and the efforts at reconciliation between the different ethnic groups, the situation in Myanmar has not ceased to remain in the spotlight for the international community as a result of the possible continuation of human rights violations and ethnic conflicts, especially the situation in Kachin State and the Rohingya in Rakhine State⁶⁶.

The internal conflict with the Rohingya deserves special attention: Iran is pressing the UN to pass a resolution on the atrocities being committed in Rakhine State⁶⁷. The government also needs to clarify the causes of the outbreak of violence that occurred in the months of June and October 2012⁶⁸ that caused 192 deaths. Even the Euro-Burma Office located in Brussels has warned of the possibility that a case of genocide could occur that is comparable to what took place in Rwanda.

Since the most recent elections, the current government has taken positive steps towards the democratisation of the country, respect for human rights, freedom of the press, the release of political prisoners and the signing of ceasefire agreements with the most active ethnic groups in the country, in which the greatest achievement has been the talks with the Kachin. The peace agreement set down a number of conditions that

⁶⁴ ASEAN also has its own Declaration of Human Rights, meaning that the Rohingya is a particularly important issue due to the situation of stateless persons that characterises this ethnic group.

⁶⁵ Vignesh Ram. Myanmar's ASEAN Challenge in 2014. <http://www.mizzima.com/opinion/contributor/9675-myanmar-s-asean-challenge-in-2014>.

⁶⁶ According to statements by Tomás Ojea Quintana, the UN observer regarding the human rights situation in Myanmar, during his visit to Myanmar in mid August.

⁶⁷ <http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2013/05/18/304086/iran-urges-swift-action-on-myanmar/>.

⁶⁸ Report by the UN Special Envoy, Thomas Ojea Quintana, human rights observer in Myanmar, during his visit in February 2013.

commit the government and the KIO to the continuation of their dialogue. We should also note the progress shown by the government's decision to allow entry into the country of a UN convoy and a Red Cross convoy in Kachin State to assist 100,000 people displaced by the conflict.

Thein Sein is aware that economic and social development is essential for the resolution of the internal ethnic conflicts. For many years the country has been under military rule, with the belief that homogenising the country was the only way to keep Myanmar united. Nevertheless, Thein Sein needs to structure a united country that takes the diversity of the population into account, providing more autonomy for political and economic management to each of the states and ensuring the democratic representation of the different ethnic minorities in the government institutions. He also needs to promote economic development and to ensure that the investments made also benefit the population. If not, the lack of resources will mobilise the population to exacerbate the existing ethnic conflicts, increasing smuggling and drug trafficking, undermining democratic power and opening the doors for the entry of a new military regime.

Thein Sein needs to convince the people that the government will not renege on the peace agreements they have reached. It remains to be seen how far Thein Sein can control the military actions in the border areas. So far it seems that the wind is blowing in his favour, because in July 2013 Thein Sein ordered the dismantling of border force in Rakhine State for alleged corruption charges. From now on border controls will be performed by the police, which may lead to some improvement in the situation⁶⁹.

This route towards progress needs international collaboration. The lifting of sanctions by the US and the EU can contribute greatly to this. Furthermore, involvement by the US and the UK is important for the KIO to ensure that the ethnic conflicts do not slip through the cracks and that the rights of its ethnic minorities remain guaranteed under the new democratic system.

By ensuring security in the country, it will also be possible to develop tourism, which in the future could be one of the main economic sectors in the country. According to the Asian Development Bank, 2.2 million tourists are scheduled to visit Myanmar in 2015, a figure that will double by 2020⁷⁰. These forecasts justify the opening of a second airport in the city of Yangon and are an additional means of boosting the economic development of the region.

⁶⁹ <http://www.europapress.es/internacional/noticia-thein-sein-desmantela-fuerza-fronteriza-acusada-graves-abusos-contra-rohingya-20130715152245.html>.

⁷⁰ http://economia.elpais.com/economia/2013/08/12/agencias/1376297548_125471.html.

An exceptional proponent for change in the current situation in Myanmar is Aung San Suu Kyi, leader of the National League for Democracy (NLD), the daughter of General Aung San, who was a hero in the country's achievement of independence. Now that she holds a seat, much is expected of her, but for the moment many are accusing her of a certain failure to act. Her intention to stand for the presidential elections of 2015 is an additional source of hope for the people.

The presidency of ASEAN in 2014 will be a litmus test. Myanmar will hold a leading role in the global sphere. The Association's prestige is at stake and Myanmar needs to give clear evidence that its democratic process, the fight against human rights violations and the stabilisation of the country are all still on track.

Geopolitical indicators⁷¹

GEOPOLITICAL INDICATORS Myanmar		
Land area	676,578 km ²	
GDP	US\$99.93 billion	Ranking: 77
GDP/capita	US\$1,400	Ranking: 204
GDP Growth Rate:	6.3%	
GDP (sectors):	Agriculture 38.8% Industry 19.3% Services 41.8%	
Exports	US\$8.23 billion	Natural gas, wood, clothing, jade and gems
	Thailand 40.5% India 14.7% China 14.2% Japan 7.4%	
Imports	US\$7.477 billion	Petroleum products, machinery, construction materials, fertiliser, foodstuffs.
	China 37% Thailand 20.2% Singapore 8.7% South Korea 8.7% Japan 8.2% Malaysia 4.6%	
Population:	55,167,330 inhabitants	
Age composition:	0-14: 26.7% 15-64: 68.1% Over 65: 5.2%	
Population growth rate:	1.05%	

⁷¹ Source: CIA The World FACTBOOK.

The ethnic conflicts in Myanmar: Kachin

Ethnic groups:	Burman: 68%, Shan: 9%, Karen: 7%, Rakhine: 4%, Chinese: 3%, Indian: 2%, others: 5%	
Religions:	Buddhists: 89%, Christians: 4%, Muslims: 4%, Animists: 1%, others: 2%	
Literacy rate of the population:		92.7%
Population below the poverty line:		32.7%
Gini Index:		Data not available
Military spending:		4.8%

Source: CIA Factbook (www.cia.gov).

Chronology⁷²

TIMELINE OF THE CONFLICT	
DATE	EVENTS
1947	Signing of Panglong Agreement. Adoption of the Constitution. Aung San is assassinated in July.
1948	Independence from Britain. U Un comes to power.
1961	Foundation of KIO.
1962	Taunggy Conference. Military coup. Gen. Ne Win seizes power. Commencement of the "Burmese Way to Socialism".
1974	A new constitution is promulgated. A one-party system is established with the "Socialist Programme" party led by President Ne Win.
1988	Martial Law. Ne Win leaves the presidency of the country, replaced by General Saw Maung, but remains as party leader.
1989	Burma is now called Myanmar.
1990	Elections. The NLD wins, but the results are declared void.
1991	Nobel Peace Prize awarded to Aung San Suu Kyi.
1994	Signing of the KIA ceasefire.
2006	Moving of the capital to Naypyidaw.
2007	Saffron Revolution.
2008	New Constitution.

⁷² Own work.

2010	Creation of the Committee for the Emergence of a Federal Union (CEFU) Elections.
2011	Thein Sein is appointed President. Cancellation of the Myitsone Dam construction project. Resurgence of KIA violence.
2012	Thein Sein appoints Aung Min as the head negotiator in the peace agreement talks with the KIO.
2013	30th May. Signing of peace agreement with the KIO.

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Indonesia. The east Papua conflict

Ignacio García Palomero

Chapter
fourteen

«Is there anyone wise enough to learn from other people's experience?». Voltaire

Abstract

This discussion paper is a contribution to the study of the conflict in Papua New Guinea, its significance, historical background, current situation, key parties involved and possible study approaches, with particular attention to emotional and cultural resistance aspects.

Keywords

Papua, conflict, analysis of geopolitics, emotions and cultural resistance.

Introduction

The following is an extract from Pilar Requena's¹ interesting opinion piece 7/2011 entitled «Aceh: victory over war and devastation», published in January 2011:

«Aceh has become associated in our minds with the earthquake and ensuing tsunami of 26 December 2004. Located at the epicentre of the disaster, in the far north of the island of Sumatra in Indonesia, the province suffered an enormous tragedy as a result. Of the 230,000 deaths caused by the tidal wave that devastated the coastlines of a dozen countries around the Indian Ocean, over 165,000 occurred in Aceh, which is home to more than four million people. Half a million were left homeless.

Yet little is known of the peace the giant waves brought with them. The tsunami opened the door for the end of the separatist war that Acehese rebels were fighting against the Indonesian central government, a conflict that had been bleeding the region dry for almost three decades. In fact, the tsunami – which merely aggravated the situation in a province already ravished by the conflict – acted as a catalyst for change at a point when peace talks had been deadlocked for some time».

On the face of it, it might appear as though in this age a conflict's significance is only decided by disasters and unexpected events of various kinds. But to understand a conflict's relevance in the globalised world, one must also examine the emotions, identity and culture of every people and every civilisation, as well as their security and development. An analysis of their geographical and political features is also important. This approach is particularly valuable in the study of Papua New Guinea, a country the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs² advises not to travel to under any circumstances due to its poor security situation.

The following are considered Risk Areas (to be avoided): there is a very high degree of insecurity in the capital, Port Moresby, and in Lae, particularly at night. Armed muggings have occurred on the road between Lae and Nadzab airport. A climate of violence is widespread, with increasing numbers of firearms and machetes in civilian hands. Special precautions must be taken on Bougainville island (where some areas are closed to foreign nationals), on the Kokoda trail (where armed muggings of tourists are frequent) and in the South Highlands, Enga and Chimbu regions.

¹ http://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs_opinion/2011/DIEEE007_2011Aceh.pdf.

² <http://www.exteriores.gob.es/Portal/es/ServiciosAlCiudadano/SiViajasAlExtranjero/Paginas/DetalleRecomendacion.aspx?IdP=143>.

The Papua conflict (Figure 14.1)³ is an ethnic, separatist insurgency against Indonesia, chiefly affecting the provinces of Papua and West Papua, in the island of New Guinea. Since the Dutch colonisers moved out in 1963, the Free Papua Movement (in Indonesian, *Organisasi Papua Merdeka*, or OPM) launches low-frequency attacks against government outposts, companies and the civil population. OPM supporters have staged protests and raising ceremonies of the separatist or Papua New Guinea flag, and accuse the Indonesian government of indiscriminate violence and suppressing freedom of expression.



Figure 14.1

As well as a geographical and political border, the region shares an emotional border with Indonesia. Hence, understanding the two peoples (both of which are multicultural) is crucial to grasping the significance of the conflict.

The OPM was formed in 1965, two years after the western half of the island was administratively integrated into Indonesia without consulting with the population. Led by the exiles Elkie Beimei and «Brigadier General» Seth Rumkorem, the group took up arms in 1969 following the territory's definitive formal incorporation into Indonesia. Low-intensity conflict went on until the period of 1976–1978, when violence became extreme, as the OPM had seized control of several regions in the territory, forcing the arrival of Indonesian troops between April and May 1977. The government offensive reduced the OPM to a few hundred rebels in the 1980s. At least 3,500 people died in this period. Subsequently, the OPM managed to reorganise and in the early 2000s violence re-intensified.

Clashes have continued without interruption, as detailed in the section on the current situation of the conflict.

³ New Guinea: Map of 1600.

Information has been obtained from the following databases, as relevant to our context: doctoral theses (Teseo), Spanish Public Council for Scientific Research, Spanish Network of University Libraries and Dialnet. The references relating to the subject of study that are included are mostly papers of an anthropological, linguistic and environmental nature.

Background to the conflict

Archaeological remains have been found in Papua New Guinea dating back to 60,000 BC. These first dwellers, who probably hailed from South East Asia, built a primitive culture based on agriculture.

Hardly any more is known until the Europeans arrived in these islands in the 19th century. It was at that time that these territories were given their current names: Papua derives from a Malay word which describes the characteristic curly hair of Melanesians. New Guinea was the name given by a Spanish explorer, Yñigo Ortiz de Retez, who found the inhabitants reminded him of the people in Guinea, in Africa.

The northern part of the island came under German control in the late 19th century under the name of German New Guinea. During the First World War it was occupied by Australia, which administered the southern part, called Papua or British New Guinea. The two combined territories were named Territory of Papua and New Guinea, or Papua New Guinea for short.

The Indonesian National Revolution of 1945 prompted the Netherlands to transfer sovereignty over the Dutch East Indies to Indonesia, with the exception of the region of Papua New Guinea, which continued under Dutch control until 1963.

During the Cold War, pressure from the Kennedy administration aimed at winning Indonesia's allegiance compelled the Netherlands to hand over the region to the UN, which held it as a protectorate for one year. In that same year, Papua and its surrounding islands became a part of Indonesia under the New York Agreement, after a selective referendum was held among Papua's population.

In 1965 the Free Papua Movement (OPM) was formed, an armed group that seeks Papua's independence from Indonesia by means of a military campaign consisting in indiscriminate attacks against elements representing the Indonesian state in the region of Papua.

The eastern part of the island, for its part, had been colonised by Germany in the north and Britain in the south. It was invaded by the Japanese in the Second World War and finally annexed to Australia in 1949. Years later, in 1975, it achieved peaceful independence. Since that time, the east and west of the island have made efforts to form a common state.

The government of Papua New Guinea has not supported the OPM's activities against the Indonesian government since the 1970s.

An independence revolt that broke out in 1988 caused 20,000 deaths on the island of Bougainville before it was pacified in 1997. The final peace settlement was signed in 2001. Bougainville, which is currently an autonomous region, will hold elections to choose its own president.

The Papua New Guinea conflict is the only armed conflict currently existing in Australasia. The OPM has not ceased its terrorist activities and continues to demand the independence of Papua New Guinea and to voice its repudiation of the Indonesian government's policy.

While the Papuan government rejects the OPM's activities and seeks to engage in dialogue with Indonesia, the OPM disagrees with this approach and is relentless in committing terrorist acts both in the west and in the east of the island. It accuses the Indonesian government of being responsible for the deaths of half a million people, most of them civilians and aborigines.

Indonesia has confronted separatist and sectarian conflicts in several parts of the archipelago apart from Papua, arousing concerns that the country might break up. The government took a hard line against separatist movements after it lost control of East Timor in 1999.

Migration from other parts of Indonesia has increased the number of non-Papuan residents to approximately 40% of the current population in Papua and West Papua. The combined population of the two provinces is 2.4 million, 900,000 of whom are immigrants. Population change is mostly the result of natural migration trends from Indonesia's major urban centres to New Guinea, which is sparsely populated. Some Papuans have voiced concerns that the immigrant population interfere with their traditional lifestyle, the use of the land and economic opportunities.

Although the region is rich in natural resources including gold, copper, natural gas and wood, Papua lags behind other parts of Indonesia in some key development indicators. Poverty is pervasive in Papua, which has the lowest adult literacy rate in Indonesia at 74%.

The region also has a disproportionately high number of HIV/AIDS cases compared with the rest of Indonesia, as well as high rates of child and maternal mortality.

Irian Jaya, the former Dutch New Guinea or West New Guinea, remained under Dutch control after Indonesia's independence in 1949. In December 1961, Sukarno, then president of Indonesia, ordered the «liberation» of WNG. In 1961, Indonesian forces captured WNG in operation Trikora and the region changed its name to Irian Barat. In January 1962, the new US president, John F. Kennedy, considered WNG a potentially dangerous

focal point of the Cold War in South East Asia. As conflict escalated in Vietnam, Kennedy sought to avert a second crisis in the region. He refused to support the Netherlands, a NATO ally, favouring WNG instead.

The US government put pressure on the Netherlands in an agreement signed in August 1962 to transfer WNG to Indonesia in May 1963. A combination of political and military pressure from the Indonesian government and international efforts resulted in the Dutch handover of sovereignty to the UN Temporary Executive Authority. The transfer was supported by a military observer force that oversaw the ceasefire.

In May 1963, full administrative control was given to Indonesia.

Following the enactment of a Free Election Law, the territory, which Indonesians called Irian Barat (West Irian) from 1963 to 1972, was incorporated into the Indonesian republic as its twenty-sixth province. Rich in natural resources, Irian Jaya (Victorious Jaya), as the territory became known in 1972, is the largest and least populated province.

Opposition to Indonesian control has existed since 1963. This opposition takes two forms:

Those who favour a federation with Papua New Guinea, and those who prefer independence as West Papua or West Melanesia. The Free Choice Act of 1969 involved a small, hand-picked group of Papuans who were taught some simple pro-Indonesian phrases in the Indonesian language and then encouraged to say them in front of an audience. It was neither free or a choice, and it certainly did not have the consent of even a substantial minority of the population, much less a majority.

Cultural differences between Indonesia and the indigenous population and complaints about the Javanisation of Irian Jaya exacerbated tensions. The cultural conflict was aggravated by indigenous people's perceptions that they were being left behind economically by a flood of Indonesian immigrants arriving under a central-government-sponsored transmigration programme. The native Irianese also resented the so-called spontaneous immigrants who dominated the informal sectors of urban economies. International critics of Indonesian policy in Irian Jaya accused the central government of waging a demographic genocide of sorts.

Indonesia's efforts to exploit the resources and assimilate the indigenous Papuan and Melanesian populations into the national administration and culture engendered a movement of sporadic armed resistance, which became the beginning of the Free Papua Movement. The emergence of this new movement aroused both interest and concern among the international community. Since the 1960s, the Free Papua Movement (Organisasi Papua Merdeka or OPM), which has its own flag, has waged a low-level but unyielding separatist guerilla campaign. The campaign peaked in the late 1970s with attacks on government outposts.

The OPM became a marginal domestic actor, more visible as an international symbol, but its mere existence justified an intimidating Indonesian military presence in the province, where suspicions about Irianese loyalties led to abuses in the civil-military relationship. The US government claimed that the Free Papua Movement had committed human rights abuses including hostage taking and summary executions, and that it may be targeting US citizens and companies in Irian Jaya Province for hostage taking and sabotage.

In 1996, a group of foreign nationals were taken hostage in Irian Jaya by the Free Papua Movement and subsequently released. In January 1997, the Free Papua Movement took twenty-six people hostage in the village of Mapunduma. Several were released, but eleven Indonesians and foreign nationals were freed after a military operation in May 1997. Two of the Indonesian hostages are believed to have been killed by the OPM during the rescue operation.

Some Free Papua Movement supporters claim that the Indonesian Special Forces (KOMPASSUS) have committed human rights abuses and that the US mining conglomerate Freeport McMoRan has been responsible for environmental abuses in West Papua.

In 1998, after the fall of president Suharto, there were signs that Jakarta was making attempts to improve relations with Guinea. However, negotiations came to an abrupt end in 2001, when army members killed the separatist leader Theys Eluay. When Mr Eluay's killers were convicted in early 2003, the head of the army described them as «heroes».

In 2001, the Indonesian parliament granted special autonomy to Papua, which, along with Aceh, was one of the two areas harbouring high-profile separatist movements in the country. This law devolved to provincial and local authorities all government functions outside of the five national competencies: defence, foreign affairs, religious affairs, justice and monetary/fiscal policy.

Forty years after Indonesia took over the former Dutch colony, tensions in Papua influenced the government's decision to divide the province into two.

Jakarta claimed the division made it easier to administer such a huge area. Some critics, however, say there are other reasons. At present, there is outrage of unprecedented proportions against Jakarta for this effort to divide the province with the almost explicitly stated motivation of weakening the movement for political independence.

On 1 December 2003, separatists in the Indonesian province of Papua commemorated the day of independence, thus defying a government ban on raising their flag. Recent administrative changes imposed by Jakarta increased tensions in the province, and there seems to be no sign that discontent with the Indonesian government is waning. A group of

approximately five hundred separatist supporters raised the Papua independence flag on Monday morning. Despite the government ban on flag-raising ceremonies and a military order to shoot demonstrators, the ceremony was held peacefully. A total of forty-two people were arrested for similar acts of defiance and face life imprisonment. Rebels from the deficiently armed military wing of the independence movement have made a number of small attacks during 2003. Sporadic and low-intensity combats between the government forces and rebels continued with few serious incidents in 2004, although according to analysts military force is unlikely to end the conflict.

On 28 July 2006, the military wing of the OPM, the West Papua National Liberation Army (TPN), decided that after a three-day summit its objectives should be pursued through peaceful means only, and that force would only be used in self-defence. On 31 July that year, the OPM announced a unilateral ceasefire and six of its own members turned themselves over to the Indonesian government. In the southern region of West Papua, the local OPM commanders either discontinued their armed struggle or remained inactive. In return, the Indonesian army announced it would put an end to offensive military actions in Papua. After that, other members of the OPM gave themselves up to the Indonesian authorities.

Despite the intent to use non-violent methods and the surrender of several members, on 12 December 2006 a series of short clashes between alleged OPM rebels and government forces took place in Puncak Jaya Regency, Papua.

The Indonesian government also blamed the OPM for an attack against a member of Brimob in the town of Mulia in Puncak Jaya on 13 December 2006. Following these violent incidents, the Indonesian army demanded the surrender of the OPM. The OPM claimed that some of the attacks attributed to them by the government were actually carried out by the Indonesian army to justify its presence in the region. In December, the military launched sweeping operations, causing an estimated 5,000 people to flee their homes.

In January and August of 2007, Indonesia conducted counterinsurgency military operations in Puncak Jaya, which displaced thousands of people from the Yamo district during the regency, and further operations were allegedly conducted in January 2009, though these have not been confirmed. Up to 16,000 people were displaced in Puncak Jaya and have not returned as of March 2007.

According to the Indonesian police in July 2007, the Papuan separatist movement had become weaker, as only 6% of the Papuan population in Indonesia were active members. The police claims that the OPM has fifty guns and rifles scattered across Papua. In July 2009, several attacks

allegedly launched by OPM rebels occurred near the Freeport McMoran gold and copper mining complex in Papua near the town of Timika.

The Indonesian government and media reported that the Indonesian security forces may also have been involved, seeking to obtain financial profit from the mine.

In 2010 the Special Autonomy Law of 2001 had not been fully implemented in Papua. Implementation was delayed because the regulations were not being applied. In addition, the provincial governments lacked the capacity to take on certain key responsibilities and some central government ministries had to cave in to their authorities. The Special Autonomy Law created the Papuan People's Council (MRP) to protect Papuan culture. The MRP rejected special autonomy, symbolically returning it to the Indonesian authorities. This action has no practical legal effect but it spotlighted the need to intensify dialogue between Papua and Jakarta in order to resolve the region's outstanding disputes.

The government in Jakarta granted local autonomy similar to the autonomy granted to Aceh in 2005 to settle a long-standing insurgency in that region. Nevertheless, there are significant differences between Aceh and Papua. While the 2005 Aceh autonomy agreement empowered the local police force to keep the peace, in Papua national security forces from outside the province enforce internal security, one of the key differences between autonomy in Aceh and the Papua provinces. By 2011 there were over 30,000 national police and military stationed in Papua, who were seen by many as an occupying force. Actions affecting Papua, which includes the Indonesian provinces of Papua and West Papua, are watched closely by the US Department of State, and represent an important aspect of its wider relations with Indonesia. The US recognises and respects Indonesia's territorial integrity within its current borders and does not support or tolerate separatism in Papua or in any other part of the country. At the same time, it strongly supports respect for universal human rights in Indonesia, including the right to peaceful assembly and free expression of political opinions, as well as the fair, non-discriminatory treatment of Papuan ethnic minorities in Indonesia.

In October 2011, the police and military units violently dispersed the participants in the 3rd Papuan People's Congress, a gathering held in Jayapura from 16 to 19 October. Activists showed unlawful separatist symbols and read out a declaration of independence for the «Republic of West Papua» on the last day of the gathering. The police fired into the air and arrested hundreds of people, all of whom were released the following day with the exception of six. Three people were found shot dead in the area. Police sources claimed the police were equipped only with rubber bullets and other non-lethal ammunition. The police beat many of the detainees, and dozens were injured. Six of the leaders of the 3rd Papuan

People's Congress were convicted on charges of treason and possession of weapons, and are currently serving prison sentences of approximately three years.

International NGOs estimated there were more than eighty political prisoners at the end of the year. Most of them were prosecuted for treason and conspiracy, and for actions in connection with the display of unlawful separatist symbols, with many serving long sentences. Government officials publicly stated the display of separatist symbols would not be tolerated. Several Papuan independence activists were in detention or in prison for raising an unlawful separatist flag. Local human rights observers noted that penalties for flag-raising were not always consistently and proportionately applied. They stated that people arrested for political offences often face abuse, including the suspension of necessary medical care. On 16 March 2012, the district court of Jayapura convicted five Papuan independence activists, including Forkorus Yaboisembut and Edison Waromi, to three years' imprisonment for their statements on the independence of the «Republic of West Papua». During the trial, their defence lawyers alleged that police interrogated the accused without legal counsel and beat them while they were in pre-trial detention.

Current situation of the conflict

In 2012, separatist guerillas in Papua killed members of the security forces in several attacks. Suspected Papuan separatists also killed a number of non-Papuan Indonesian migrants in Papua throughout 2012. On 14 June 2012, unidentified members of the security forces in Jayapura, Papua, shot and killed Mako Tabuni, a leader of the National Committee for West Papua (KNPB), which campaigns for self-determination for the provinces of Papua and West Papua.

The circumstances surrounding Tabuni's death remain unclear, with Indonesian National Police (INP) personnel asserting that Tabuni was shot while resisting arrest and human rights advocates stating that he was shot in the back while attempting to run away. Tabuni believed he was the target of a government assassination attempt that claimed the life of the student activist Tejoli Weya on 1 May. Persons unknown shot Weya during a demonstration commemorating the 1963 transfer of Papua and West Papua from the Netherlands to Indonesia.

The remoteness of the area makes it difficult to confirm reports of burned villages and civilian deaths. On 6 June, following an incident in Wamena in which a child was injured in a traffic accident involving two soldiers belonging to the 756 Infantry Battalion who were travelling on a motorcycle, local residents beat the two soldiers, killing Ahmad Sahlan and severely injuring sergeant Parloi Pardede. Subsequently, fifty to 100 members of

the battalion descended on that neighbourhood of Wamena, killing Elinus Yoman, injuring a number of residents, and reportedly burning some eighty-seven houses. At the end of the year, the authorities had not arrested or imposed penalties on any member of the 756 Infantry Battalion for their involvement in the incident. The Indonesian Army claimed that their soldiers were compelled to defend themselves while attempting to recover Sahlan's body.

Much of the violence in Papua and West Papua was linked to the Free Papua Movement (OPM) and security forces' operations against the OPM. For instance, on 23 August the police arrested four alleged OPM members as suspects in the murder of the police officer Yohan Kasimatau in Paniai. In addition to the killings committed by the security forces and the OPM, there were a number of violent incidents, including some murders by persons unknown in Papua and West Papua. Unknown attackers, whom government officials and human rights contacts suspected to be Papuan separatists, killed a small number of non-Papuan migrants.

In February 2013, armed men in Indonesia's Papua province killed eight soldiers in two separate attacks in the region. In the first incident, army officers claim the attackers broke into an army post in Puncak Jaya district, shooting two soldiers and leaving one dead. Hours later, the officers say the same gunmen attacked a group of soldiers walking near the airport, killing seven. Two civilians were shot when soldiers returned fire.

The role of external actors

In 2004, Benny Wenda⁴ started a campaign for the liberation of West Papua in the UK, in principle asking for a referendum on independence to be held with UN support. In 2012, his petitions have extended to an international arrest warrant to be issued for the Indonesian president Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono. This petition has been rejected on two occasions by the competent UN body.

Within this context, the US has systematically encouraged the Indonesian government to work with the indigenous Papuan population to hear their grievances, resolve conflicts peacefully and support development and proper governance in the Papuan provinces. The US believe the full implementation of the Special Autonomy Act for Papua of 2001, which

⁴ Benny Wenda is a West Papuan tribal leader and an international lobbyist for the independence of West Papua from Indonesia. He lives in exile in the United Kingdom. In 2003 he was granted political asylum by the British government following his escape from custody while on trial. He is a leading figure on the international scene for the independence movement of West Papua and has been a special guest in the British Parliament, United Nations and European Parliament as a representative of the Papuan people. <http://www.bennywenda.org/>.

emerged as part of Indonesia's democratic transition, would help to solve long-standing grievances. The US encourage the Indonesian government to work with the Papuan authorities to discuss ways to establish areas of autonomous government, and continue to implement the Special Autonomy provisions, which grant greater authority to Papuans to administer their own affairs.

By the year 2011, US support for Indonesia's strong stand against Papuan separatists put added pressure on the independence movement to find a negotiated settlement. Yet there are concerns that the US is not putting equal pressure on the Indonesian side to resolve the conflict peacefully. During his visit to Indonesia, the US defence secretary, Leon Panetta, reiterated his country's commitment to forge closer ties with Indonesia, and expressed strong support for Indonesia's stance against the separatist movement in the eastern province of Papua. However, the assistant secretary of state, Kurt Campbell, claimed that the tensions in the area would not mean possible human rights violations committed by soldiers in Papua would be ignored.

Regarding the role of the European Union and its relation with Papua, two avenues are currently open for dialogue. Firstly, political dialogue focused on environmental protection, with particular emphasis on climate-change-related issues. Secondly, human rights defence and gender-related problems.

In the area of aid and cooperation for development, the EU has granted financial subsidies through the European Development Fund⁵ (EDF) specifically aimed at rural area development, new housing construction and town planning. A further objective of these subsidies is investment in elementary education, so that it may reach the most remote parts of the region and reduce the illiteracy rate.

Spain's policy of cooperation with the region is determined by the rise of Asia – a historic landmark that is having a decisive influence on our age. As the most populated continent on earth industrialises, builds up economic weight and advances on the road to modernisation, a new stage has started in which Asian countries work with European and North American countries to design global rules.

In the age of globalisation, Spain's political, economic, security and cultural interests are also played out in Asia. The central position that Asia-Pacific is set to take in the near future requires Spain to formulate an active policy with the primary aim of strengthening our presence in the region⁶.

⁵ The Country Strategy Paper for 2008-13 European Development Fund (EDF).
http://eeas.europa.eu/papua_new_guinea/index_en.htm.

⁶ <http://www.exteriores.gob.es/Portal/es/PoliticaExteriorCooperacion/AsiaPacifico/Paginas/Arquitectura>

Lastly, bilateral relations with Indonesia are marked by frank cooperation in trade, technology, military and cultural matters, generating new opportunities for development in industry, manufactures, handicrafts and the hotel sector. Mutual interest is increasing by the day in the area of education, as evidenced by the recent meeting of Indonesian university vice-chancellors with Spanish university lecturers. There is also interest in Spanish sport – specifically football – and art.

Conclusions and outlook

In the Asia-Pacific context, the Papua New Guinea conflict is a theatre of instability in a territory that is striving to overcome the difficulties of the past, borders as tension peripheries and the disposition of Asean and Arf countries to create new settings of stability and development, with Papua New Guinea in the midst of them.

Nonetheless, it is worth calling attention to some manifestations of jihadist terrorism (limitations of space have not allowed us to explore in detail) that give cause for deep concern, particularly in a country like Indonesia, which is witnessing a rising trend in attacks against people of all groups,

Regional.aspx. The main forums in the region are, in alphabetical order:

ADMM: ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting. A forum where defence ministers share views on matters of defence and promote mutual trust.

ADMM+8: It comprises the defence ministers of ASEAN and their counterparts in Australia, South Korea, China, the US, India, Japan, New Zealand and Russia. This forum meets every three years.

Pacific Alliance: Formed in 2011 by Chile, Colombia, Mexico and Peru. Australia, Canada, Costa Rica, Spain, Japan, New Zealand, Panama and Uruguay are observer states. It aims to further economic integration among its members and stimulate trade relations.

APEC (Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation): Formed by twenty-one Asia-Pacific economies to promote economic development and free trade among its members.

ARF (ASEAN Regional Forum): Made up of the ten ASEAN countries plus Australia, Bangladesh, Canada, North Korea, South Korea, China, the US, India, Japan, Mongolia, New Zealand, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Russia, Sri Lanka, East Timor and the EU. It provides a forum where its members can discuss security-related matters and pursue cooperation policies.

ASEAN (Association of South-east Asian Nations): Formed by Brunei, Cambodia, the Philippines, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam. Its General Secretariat is located in Jakarta. ASEAN will become the ASEAN Community on 31 December 2015.

EAS (East Asia Summit): Formed by the ten ASEAN countries plus Australia, South Korea, China, the US (since 2011), India, Japan, New Zealand and Russia (since 2011). It is a forum for strategic dialogue and cooperation.

TPP (Trans-Pacific Partnership): Created by Brunei, Chile, New Zealand and Singapore to establish a free-trade area. Australia, Canada, the US, Mexico, Peru and Vietnam have joined the initiative; Japan is considering involvement and Thailand has shown interest in taking part. The participants aspire to conclude negotiations in October 2013 during the APEC summit to be held in Bali.

including Muslims recently and even the police. This has prompted the government to step up the fighting, with the attendant risk of rekindling the growth of the «gangsters» or free men, who were responsible for indiscriminate killings of the Communist population, their families and relatives, and sectors of the Chinese population.

According to the studies of Javier Gil Pérez (PhD in Political Science) on religious radicalism and security in Indonesia:

«*The key issue here is, why is Islamism emerging so strongly?*»

In the opinion of Graham Fuller and Ian O'Lesser⁷, «Islamists tend to be seen by societies as the only answer to their problems». One key to explaining the reasons for this belief is firstly the failure of the different ideologies and governments representing them. Secondly, the fact that Islamists movements globally have modernised their principles to bring Islamic law into line with minority rights, and civil law has smoothed the way for them to become a consolidated alternative.

Islamist political parties have thus succeeded in presenting themselves primarily as a political alternative for solving the problems that beset society. Furthermore, many of these parties have made a colossal effort to move towards political moderation and particularly to accommodate to their political milieu in order to become a real and – importantly – credible alternative able to lead a country's plurality. This refers chiefly to political parties, but it may also extend to socio-religious groups. While this idea is not entirely clear in my opinion and should be reviewed for each individual country, it is nevertheless true that the entry of Islamists into the political picture has compelled them to adapt their positions to the political and social reality of each country. The price for entering and gaining ground has been the necessity to evolve and moderate politically, and to accommodate to the needs of the population. This adaptation to modernity is a key aspect of the rise of Islamism. One good example is today's AKP⁸, the Justice and Development Party that now rules Turkey.

On the other hand, Exposito argues that the rise of political Islam (referring to Islamism) is mainly due to the failure of secular nationalism to raise the population's living standards and gain political legitimation.

⁷ E. Fuller, Graham and O. Lesser, Ian, *A sense of siege: the geopolitics of Islam and the West*, Westview Press, 1995, pp. 163–166.

⁸ For more information on the AKP, see their website: [web www.akpparti.org.tr](http://web.www.akpparti.org.tr).
E. Fuller, Graham and O. Lesser, Ian, *A sense of siege: the geopolitics of Islam and the West*, Westview Press, 1995, pp. 163–166.

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Fuller, Graham, *The future of political Islam*, Palgrave, Hampshire, 2003, pp. 67–95.

Armstrong, Karen, *El Islam*, Mondadori, 2000, Barcelona, pp. 234–247.

The independence processes⁹ that have occurred in the Muslim world (Algeria, Indonesia, Egypt, Pakistan, etc.) have generally failed to meet the demands and – most importantly – expectations of improvement in the economy, political liberties, etc. On the contrary, the end of colonial rule has not succeeded in raising a substantial mass of the population from poverty and in some cases the situation has worsened or remained relatively unchanged. Thus, the impoverished masses have turned to Islamism.

The governments based on ideologies such as nationalism, capitalism, socialism, etc. have failed in achieving significant economic, social or educational progress in the individual countries.

The failure of the nationalist-secular option has resulted in the emergence of Islamism as an alternative ideology.

After Suharto's thirty-three years in power came to an end, the Indonesian society achieved political freedom, ushering in a new period of uncertain future. The main consequence of the end of the Suharto era was the appearance on Indonesia's political scene – or rather the reappearance – of political Islam and extremely well organised radical movements that aspired to see society and the State itself shaped according to Sharia¹⁰. Throughout Sukarno's dictatorship (1965–1998), and also during Sukarno's rule (1945–1965), political Islam was the object of severe repression and reprisals, preventing a large part of Indonesian society from having a voice in public institutions.

In the years that preceded the Indonesian Republic's declaration of independence of 1945, Indonesia saw a vigorous debate, with the country's intelligentsia at its centre, concerning the legal foundations on which the future Indonesian state should be built. Two clearly differentiated groups emerged with well defined, mutually opposing agendas and objectives. On one side, the Golongan Kebangsaan or nationalist group, led by Sukarno and Mohammed Hatta, and on the other, the Golongan Islam or Islamist group, led by Mohammed Natsir.

This rift in the Muslim's community stemmed from differing views on the role that Islam should play in the country's politics. The two groups reflected the same division currently pervading the Indonesian Muslim community between the formalist and substantive visions¹¹. The former, according to Efendi, is held by, «those that try to use the Sharia as the primary source of law. This implies that the protection of Human Rights, the mechanisms of balance and control of power, independence from the

⁹ Fuller, Graham, *The future of political Islam*, Palgrave, Hampshire, 2003, pp. 67–95.

¹⁰ Various Authors. «The Enemy Within: Islamic Extremists And Their Dreams of a New Caliphate» in: http://www.libforall.org/media/news-stories/expose/JakartaGlobe_The-Enemy-Within.pdf, online on 30 April 2009.

¹¹ Hosen, Nadirsyah, *Sharia and Constitutional reform in Indonesia*, Singapore, Iseas, 2007, p. 225.

judicial system and separation of powers are accepted in agreement with the formal interpretation of the Sharia». The followers of the formalist standpoint therefore deny the possibility that a democratic constitution can be established in Indonesia, on the basis of four arguments¹²: 1) They argued that the contents of the Sharia are immutable, whereas the contents of constitutions are liable to change by the people. Hence, no application of a democratic constitution coming from the people is possible. 2) They defended the divine origin of the Sharia and not of the people. As such, this law of God could not be modified by a human being, and consequently the people were not sovereign and a constitution could not be applied. 3) They rejected the separation between Islam and the State as upheld by constitutionalist standpoints, arguing that the Sharia does not establish a separation between religion and the State. 4) They defended the Sharia's comprehensiveness, in the sense that it covers all aspects of life, unlike the constitution, which they considered incomplete. Their ultimate goal was to establish an Islamic state.

According to Dionisio Llamazares¹³, an Islamic state has four key characteristics:

1. In an Islamic state, political and religious power are joined, with no distinction between them. The executive, the legislative and the judiciary are all subordinate to religious power.
2. Secondly, an Islamic state is not governed by secular law, such as current Spanish law, but Islamic law, i.e. a law predicated on the Koran and the Sunna. A notable aspect of Islamic law is that all legislation is personal. This means that Islamic laws apply to Muslims, not to non-Muslims, who are governed by their own codes. In addition to these personal laws, there are also territorial laws, which apply to all individuals regardless of their religion.
3. Non-Muslims who profess the Jewish or Christian religion have the right to live in the Islamic state subject to two conditions: they are required to pay two taxes (real property and living within the Islamic state) and they are devoid of full legal capacity.
4. Lastly, Islamic states are not democratic or constitutional, although they define themselves as democratic states. There is no separation of powers, political power does not emanate from the people but from God, etc.

The substantive approach, on the other hand, held that, «Sharia should be reinterpreted in the light of democracy and constitutionalism. The substantive approach is predicated on the belief the Sharia should not be viewed as static and final. It can be amended, reformed, modified and

¹² Ibid., pp. 28–58.

¹³ Llamazares, Dionisio, *Derecho eclesiástico del Estado: derecho de la libertad de conciencia*, Universidad Complutense de Madrid, Madrid, 1989, pp. 93–95.

even altered without detracting from its fundamental principles. The substantial approach treats the Sharia's principles and objectives as rules and values that inspire constitutions». Accordingly, its supporters believe the principles of the Koran and the Sunna should accommodate to the democratic principles and therefore be subordinate to them. There were thus marked differences not only in the state form each group defended but also in the value and importance each one attached to the Koran, the Sunna and Islam in absolute terms.

The key dispute between the two groups, which remains unresolved to this day, concerned what the Indonesian state should be like. An Islamic state with the Koran and the Sunna as primary sources of the law, as defended by Golongan Islam, or a constitutional, democratic state where no religion would be upheld as official and people of different creeds would be allowed to practise their faith in a multi-religious Indonesia.

The key issue was whether to establish a constitutional or an Islamic state. It is crucial to accurately define a number of aspects in this respect.

The threats of terrorism and gangsterism of times gone by pose a risk of instability that should be taken very seriously, as do paramilitary organisations. Other sympathetic effects may emerge, spurring separatist activity in Papua, with the processes in Thailand and the Philippines as examples.

But Papua is also worthy of attention as a laboratory and a model for geopolitical analysis, in addition to the geohistorical method, the importance of the geographical environment in relation to cultural creations and political proposals, peoples' search trends, border maintenance and expansion, and resource ownership.

Cultural resistance, a subject we have already addressed in other publications, lies at the core of Papua's internal conflict and its relationship with Indonesia. Therefore, unless we analyse it systematically, empirically and critically, our insight will be limited, among other reasons because the violence, dependence, humiliation and, ultimately, trust and fear, are perceived differently by the individual parties involved.

Geopolitical indicators¹⁴

TABLE OF GEOPOLITICAL INDICATORS	
GDP per capita	1,844.53 USD (2011)
Population	7.167 million (2012)
GDP growth rate	Annual 9.0% (2011)

¹⁴ Source: CIA The World FACTBOOK.

Indonesia. The east Papua conflict

Land area	462,840 km ²
Total population	5,670,544
Population density	11 pop./km ²

Source: worldbank.org

Índice de Desarrollo Humano		Clasificación 156		
Año	Papua Nueva Guinea	Desarrollo humano bajo	Asie de l'Est et Pacifique	Mundo
2012	0.466	0.466	0.683	0.694
2011	0.462	0.464	0.678	0.692
2010	0.458	0.461	0.673	0.690
2009	0.454	0.455	0.664	0.685
2005	0.429	0.424	0.626	0.666
2000	0.415	0.385	0.584	0.639
1995	n.d.	n.d.	0.548	0.618
1990	0.368	0.350	0.502	0.600
1985	n.d.	n.d.	0.466	0.578
1980	0.324	0.315	0.432	0.561

Índice de Desarrollo Humano

[Más información sobre el Índice de Desarrollo Humano](#)

Salud		Esperanza de vida al nacer. (años) 63.1	
Indicador	Valor	Notas	
Gasto público en salud (% del PIB) (%)	2.6		
Tasa de mortalidad de niños menores de cinco años (por cada 1.000 nacidos vivos)	61		
Esperanza de vida al nacer. (años)	63.1		
Índice de salud	0.681		

Educación		Años de educación promedio (años) 3.9	
Indicador	Valor	Notas	
Gasto en educación (% del PIB) (%)	n.d.		
Maestros de primaria capacitados (%)	n.d.		
Tasa de abandono de la enseñanza primaria (% of primary school cohort)	51.6		
Años esperados de instrucción (años)	5.8	1 2	
Tasas de alfabetización de adultos (% de 15 años y mayor)	60.6	3 4	
Años de educación promedio (años)	3.9	5	
Índice de educación	0.318		
Tasa bruta de matriculación (%)	n.d.		

Ingresos		Ingreso nacional bruto (INB) per cápita (Constant 2005 international \$) 2,386	
Indicador	Valor	Notas	
Ingreso nacional bruto (INB) per cápita (Constant 2005 international \$)	2,386		

Fuente: PNUD. <http://hdrstats.undp.org/es/paises/perfiles/PNG.html>

Desigualdad		Índice de Desarrollo Humano, ajustado por la igualdad n.d.	
Indicador	Valor	Notas	
pérdida debida a la desigualdad en la esperanza de vida (Atkinson) (%)	25.2		
pérdida debida a la desigualdad en la distribución de educación (Atkinson) (%)	n.d.		
pérdida debida a la desigualdad en los ingresos (Atkinson) (%)	n.d.		
Índice de educación ajustado por la desigualdad	n.d.		
Índice de esperanza de vida al nacer ajustado por la desigualdad	0.508		
Índice de ingresos ajustado por la desigualdad	n.d.		
Índice de Desarrollo Humano, ajustado por la igualdad	n.d.		

Pobreza		Índice de pobreza multidimensional (%) n.d.	
Indicador	Valor	Notas	
Índice de pobreza multidimensional (%)	n.d.		
Intensidad de la carencia	n.d.		
Pobreza multidimensional, incidencia (% de la población)	n.d.		
Población bajo la línea de pobreza de ingresos (%)	n.d.		

Género		Índice de desigualdad de género 0.617	
Indicador	Valor	Notas	
Población con al menos educación secundaria completa, relación mujer/hombre (Relación tasa de mujeres-tasa de hombres)	0.483		
Tasa de fecundidad entre adolescentes (mujeres de entre 15 y 19 años) (la cantidad de partos por cada 1.000 mujeres entre 15 y 19 años)	66.9		
Tasa de participación en la fuerza de trabajo (Relación tasa de mujeres-tasa de hombres)	0.953		
Índice de desigualdad de género	0.617		
Proporción en escaños en el parlamento: relación mujer/hombre.	0.009		
Tasa de mortalidad maternal (muertes maternas por cada 100.000 nacidos vivos)	230	6 7	

Sostenibilidad		Emisiones per cápita de dióxido de carbono (toneladas) 0.3	
Indicador	Valor	Notas	
Emisiones per cápita de dióxido de carbono (toneladas)	0.3		
Población que vive en tierras degradadas (%)	n.d.		
Variación de la superficie forestal (%)	-8.9		

Demografía		Población, total considerando ambos sexos (en miles) (miles) 7,170.1	
Indicador	Valor	Notas	
Población, total considerando ambos sexos (en miles) (miles)	7,170.1	8	
Población urbana (%) (% de la población)	12.5		
Población, mujeres (en miles) (miles)	3,512.41		
Población, hombres (en miles) (miles)	3,657.70		

Fuente: PNUD. <http://hdrstats.undp.org/es/paises/perfiles/PNG.html>

Chronology¹⁵

TIMELINE OF THE CONFLICT	
1945	Indonesian National Revolution.
1963	The Netherlands lose sovereignty over the region of Papua New Guinea.
1975	End of peaceful independence. The Free Papua movement appears.
1988	Independence revolt on Bougainvillea island.
1996	The OPM starts holding civilians as hostages.

¹⁵ Own work.

1997	Military operation to rescue OPM hostages.
2001	The Indonesian parliament grants special autonomy to Papua and Aceh.
2003	The separatist flag is raised.
2006	The Indonesian army demands the surrender of the OPM.
2011	3rd Papuan People's Congress.
2012	June general election.

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The Colombian peace process

Miguel Ángel Serrano Monteavaro

Chapter fifteen

Abstract

The current President of Colombia, Juan Manuel Santos, resolutely followed, after taking the reins of power, the path of negotiation with the FARC, to give an end to a conflict that has lasted for many years. However, negotiations are being carried out slowly, while the constant armed struggle is still alive.

Keywords

Negotiation, guerilla groups, Colombian government, FARC.

Introduction

Some observers are convinced that the negotiations currently being carried out between the Colombian government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia – People's Army (FARC-EP) – may finally put an end to over forty-eight years of fighting.

Historically and politically, these negotiations constitute a real event, as it is not usual for a government to put itself on an equal footing with a guerrilla group to sign a peace agreement, regardless of its terms, and all this while being the subject of international attention. Among other things, it involves a certain degree of recognition by the State of the subversive forces' political and military belligerence. On the other hand, we can only imagine what might happen if these negotiations failed to succeed; on the one hand, it could lead to an open resumption of the clashes; and, on the other, it could mean that the government was so seriously weakened from a political point of view, both inside and outside the country, that it would have to call new general elections.

The strategy followed in this type of negotiations has already been widely studied. Winning or losing naturally depends on many factors, but negotiations cannot be based on one side winning and the other one losing, as it would involve the surrender of one side, or both sides losing, although what it can involve is one side winning and the other not losing; and, if there are no winners, there should at least be no losers. In short, it is difficult for everyone to feel that they have won, i.e. to please everyone, but the perception that each negotiator may have of the final outcome of the talks, both nationally and internationally, is no less important.

Background to the conflict

Without the need to go back to a historical background originating years before World War II, the breeding ground created by the post-war era and the Cold War brought about the emergence of many movements, especially in Latin America, which, on a background of poverty, social inequality, unfair distribution of land and political corruption, threw themselves into armed fighting. One could initially be confused between peasant protests, dissident political groups and pure and simple banditry.

It is these troubled American waters, which affected the Americans as from the fifth President, James Monroe, that communist agitators, and subsequently the Cuban Castro regime, drank from.

In this way, the Soviet Union and then Cuba sneaked into the backyard of the United States, without the need to resort to direct confrontation, an always dangerous option after Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

The Americans, unskilled in the techniques of political subversion and looking away from an upset social and economic reality (especially in Central America), initially failed to notice what was really going on in a number of countries whose political regimes, not to mention their economies, were virtually in their hands.

This is how the activities of the revolutionary guerillas in Nicaragua and Colombia started, even before Fidel Castro's triumph in Cuba, who were trying to destabilise a country in order to then institute socialism in it.

According to Roy Jenkins, author of the best biography of W. Churchill ever written, if the Premier was obsessed with Stalin's expansionism during the war, his obsession was much greater when the Soviets occupied half of Europe. Apparently, the Allies took Churchill's warnings as another of his well-known «notions».

In the meantime, the Americans were busy with the search for a more or less peaceful coexistence with the Russians, with China already as an emerging power. They did not realise that we were in a full-blown World War III.

Fidel Castro's seizure of power in Cuba suddenly opened the Americans' eyes. But, as we understand it, they then looked towards the wrong side; they insisted from the outset that the countries affected by subversion, communist or otherwise, should take purely military measures, such as applying military intelligence, the introduction of new counterinsurgency techniques, more sophisticated interrogation techniques and the use of new weapons... and the training of American officers in the euphemistically named School of the Americas (the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation, initially located in the Panama Canal Zone, where the hotel Meliá Canal de Panamá now stands). This purely military solution in some cases turned into clearly repressive action.

The agrarian reforms that were so badly needed in some countries, the introduction of universal education, minimum industrialisation, etc., measures that the United States could well have helped strongly establish through the programme of the Alliance for Progress, which they themselves had promoted, were forgotten. The programme was implemented in 1961, which meant that the problems remained, as did the guerilla-based solutions.

The situation was seriously aggravated in the eyes of Americans and of those countries when, in 1978, the Sandinistas attained power in Nicaragua after overthrowing Anastasio Somoza. At that moment, the anti-guerilla fight openly adopted drastic methods such as the organisation of «paramilitary» or self-defence units, the social isolation of towns and districts, and terror in its broadest sense. The guerillas' response did not

take long to arrive, taking the attacks, kidnappings, etc. to cities, with a previously unknown intensity.

Coinciding with the weakening of the Soviet Union as a world power, the American regimes began to lean towards more democratic political styles.

However, a new threat appeared on the horizon: drug trafficking, which had until then been contained within certain limits, became such a frantic activity and with such a high economic volume that it affected the progress of many countries.

Burdened by these problems, some countries took the decision to release their Armed Forces (SAF) onto the street. This measure was, and will always be, very controversial, with strong arguments for and against. Our position on the intervention of the Armed Forces in social problems and problems of public order is in principle a negative one; other procedures can be resorted to first, such as strengthening the social fabric and citizenship education, creating a true national police corps or gendarmerie, an in-depth reform of the judicial and prison system, etc. Only if the stability of the country is in danger, to the point that it could become a failed state, can it, in our opinion, resort to the Armed Forces to resolve problems of street-level subversion. This is on the understanding that, once those difficulties have been resolved, the country in question must immediately return to a normal constitutional situation.

However, in some American countries the constitutional role of the Armed Forces often appears distorted by the reality of their social and political presence. While some presidents seem to insist on the Armed Forces adhering to the mission for which they were created, others are easily swayed toward complacency, trying to get them to resolve their own problems. An example of this is the case of Colombia, whose presidents César Gaviria, Andrés Pastrana and Álvaro Uribe introduced significant reforms regarding the Armed Forces in order to bring them into line with the democratic system.

As if this were not enough, an apparently indiscriminate terrorism also made its appearance on the world stage, coming to the fore with the 9/11 attacks in New York and Washington.

This closed the vicious circle of the guerilla subversion, blind reactions, drug trafficking and terrorism.

The Case of the Republic of Colombia

As mentioned above, the guerilla warfare began in Colombia and Nicaragua before Fidel Castro came to power in Cuba. We must therefore look for its origin elsewhere.

While in the 1930s Augusto C. Sandino kept the Nicaraguan pro-America regime in checkmate, in Colombia the armed conflict between conservatives and liberals flared up once again in 1948, with the conflict known as «Bogotazo», which lasted, with its ups and downs, until the creation of the National Front in 1958.

Around the 1950s, the then President of Colombia Gustavo Rojas Pinilla tried to put an end to armed groups of all kinds. In the face of the repression, some took refuge in the south, in Maquetalia; which is where the FARC seem to have been born. These soon began their activities against the police, the members of the Armed Forces, landowners, cattle-farmers, etc.

The Colombian Communist Party had a lot to do with the birth of this guerilla group, turning it into a more cohesive self-proclaimed Marxist-Leninist force, seeking to create a socialist state.

Later, in 1965, the National Liberation Army (ELN) appeared; in 1967 the People's Liberation Army (EPL); in 1970 the M-19 group; in 1984 the indigenous group «Quintín Lame» (MAQL), and the list goes on.

Today, the FARC, the largest and most defined group, operate mainly in the south and east of the country: in Putumayo, Tolima, Nariño, Cauca, Valle del Cauca, etc., under the theoretical command of Rodrigo Londoño Echeverry, alias «Timoleón Jiménez» and «Timochenco».

It is estimated that the FARC-EP currently have some 18,000 men and women, especially young people, some of whom are armed (and like to pose for the press perfectly uniformed, like the genuine military of any country) and the rest of whom are militia members.

The European Union and other countries, and certainly the United States, categorise the FARC-EP as a terrorist group, regardless of any other consideration.

In parallel with the activities of these groups, other groups then appeared: citizen defence groups such as the United Self-defence Forces of Colombia (AUC), also called the «paramilitaries», organised by landowners and ranchers and even with the strong support of members of the Armed Forces and drug traffickers themselves, who saw their interests jeopardised by the guerilla group's activities and competition.

Little by little, the FARC, as well as other armed groups in Colombia and other American countries, in view of the dramatic increase in drug trafficking and consumption in the world, went on to carry out drug trafficking-related activities for financing purposes.

The problem is that it is now often difficult to distinguish between terrorism, drug trafficking, political subversion and the actions of criminal gangs.

The Colombian peace process

Previous Attempts at Negotiation

Over time, the various Colombian governments have tried to negotiate with the guerilla groups the end of their activities, more or less publicly on some occasions, and secretly on others.

During the presidency of the conservative Belisario Betancur Cuartas, from 1982 to 1986, a number of different agreements were reached; in 1983 the agreements known as the Uribe Agreements were reached with the FARC, and in 1984 the so-called Corinto Agreements were reached with the M-19 armed groups and the People's Liberation Army. The leaders of the Armed Forces, who were not happy with this, promoted the creation of groups of «paramilitaries», and the forces of order and the guerilla groups thus returned to fighting.

Virgilio Barco Vargas, liberal president between 1986 and 1990, managed in the last year of his mandate to establish the bases for the submission of the M-19 group, the «Quintín Lame» movement, and the EPL by granting pardons and the possibility of returning to political life; while the FARC continued fighting. During Barco's mandate, narco-terrorism reached levels never before seen, becoming confused with the guerilla activities and resulting in 78,000 victims, including 250 police officers.

The coming to power of the also liberal César Gaviria Trujillo between 1990 and 1994 led to the final submission of the M-19 group, EPL and the «Quintín Lame» Indigenous Liberation Movement during the Tlaxcala Peace Talks, while narco-terrorism became confused with the guerilla and the «paramilitaries».

Between 1994 and 1998 the Republic had another liberal president, Ernesto Samper Pizano, who was very close to successfully negotiating the disappearance of all the guerilla groups, including the FARC-EP. However, the President, just like other politicians of different ideology, found himself involved in the so-called 8,000 Process on the alleged funding of the election campaign by the Cali cartel. The murder in 1995 of the conservative politician Álvaro Gómez Hurtado touched Samper more seriously, to the extent that, in January of this year 2013, the Colombian Congress started an investigation on the former president regarding that assassination.

The conservatives returned to the presidency of the Republic with Andrés Pastrana Arango in the period from 1998 to 2002. As soon as he had come into power, Pastrana opened well-publicised negotiations with the guerillas, for which purpose he provided for the demilitarisation of some municipalities of Caguán so as to facilitate the talks. Shortly before the end of his presidential mandate, Pastrana broke off the negotiations, considering that he had been betrayed in his good faith by Commander Pedro Antonio Marín, alias «Manuel Marulanda» and «Tiro Fijo». Pastrana also

wanted the support of the United States, both against the guerilla fight and against drug trafficking, to which end he signed Plan Colombia with the Clinton government in 1999.

Álvaro Uribe Vélez, an independent politician, occupied the presidency for two terms, 2002-2006 and 2006-2010, after an ensuing and widely criticised constitutional reform. As soon as he had taken possession of his office, President Uribe announced the implementation of the so-called Democratic Security Policy, which involved a frontal attack on the guerilla groups, at the same time as he achieved the demobilisation of the «par-amilitary» forces, the so-called United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia (AUC). Apparently, in tandem with the adoption of those measures, the government tried to start secret negotiations with the guerillas, something that Uribe hastened to deny on several occasions.

Current situation of the conflict

Juan Manuel Santos Calderón, the current Colombian president since August 2010, from the Social Party of National Unity, had served as Defence Minister in the government of the previous president, Álvaro Uribe. While at the head of the Ministry he organised several actions against the FARC, dealing hard blows to the guerillas. We can therefore say that he did not lack experience in this area. On 4 November 2008, however, he made some controversial statements regarding some extra-judicial executions during his time as minister.

When he rose to power and showed a strong interest in resolving the conflict with the FARC, it is possible that Juan Manuel Santos took into account the peace processes in the region that had culminated in success.

For example, in 1992, after twelve years of war and tens of thousands of victims, and with a history of guerilla fighting going back much further, the President of El Salvador, Alfredo Cristiani, signed a peace agreement with the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front.

And in 1996 it was the Guatemalan President Álvaro Arzú who signed a peace agreement with the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Union after a war that had already lasted thirty-six years, with hundreds of thousands of victims.

It therefore did not take Juan Manuel Santos long to start sending messages and making signs towards the FARC in order to make some kind of contact. And so, between 2010 and 2012 talks multiplied until they culminated in the Agreement that we are going to talk about.

With all the applicable reservations, since the contacts were secret, the chronology of these talks was as follows, according to the newspaper *El Tiempo*, which is very well informed about these vicissitudes – not in vain

was its Director at the time Enrique Santos, brother of the President and now signatory to the Havana Agreement:

- November 2010: President Santos contacted an entrepreneur in the Cauca Valley in order to find a connection with the FARC.
- January 2011: Guillermo León Sáenz («Alfonso Cano»), at the time supreme head of the FARC, approved the secret contacts with the government.
- February - October 2011: President Santos spoke to Raúl Castro to seek his support for future negotiations.
- 4 November 2011: «Alfonso Cano» died in a meeting with the Armed Forces; he was succeeded by Rodrigo Londoño Echeverri («Timochenco» and «Timoleón Jiménez»).
- December 2011 - January 2012: «Timochenco» expressed the FARC's interest in continuing with the contacts.
- January 2012: The first meeting between the government envoy, Alejandro Eder, and the guerilla fighters Rodrigo Granda («Ricardo Téllez») and Jesús Emilio Carvajalino («Andrés París») was held in Río de Oro (César region).
- February 2012: After a meeting in Barines (Venezuela), it was decided to choose Cuba and Norway (the latter is apparently an expert in this kind of negotiation) as guarantors of the talks.
- 23 February 2012: The first meeting was held in Cuba.
- 26 August 2012: The Agreement discussed below was signed.

The document that theoretically opens the peace process in Colombia, entitled «General Agreement for the Termination of the Conflict and the Construction of a Stable and Lasting Peace», was signed on 26 August 2012 in Havana by the representatives of the Government of the Republic of Colombia: Sergio Jaramillo (National Security Advisor) and Frank Pearl (Minister of the Environment); by the Revolutionary Armed Forces - People's Army: Jaime Alberto Parra («Mauricio Jaramillo»), Rodrigo Granda Escobar («Ricardo Téllez»), Jesús Emilio Carvajalino («Andrés París»), Alberto Albán Urbano («Marco León Calarcá»), Orlando Jurado Palomino («Hermes Aguilar») and Sandra García («Sandra Ramírez», who had been the girlfriend of «Manuel Marulanda»); listed as witnesses for the Cuban government are: Carlos Fernández de Cossio and Abel García; for the Norwegian government: Dag Halvor Nylander and Vegar S. Brynildsen; and for the Colombian government: Enrique Santos (former director of the newspaper «El Tiempo» and brother of the President of the Republic), Álvaro Alejandro Eder (Presidential Adviser for Reintegration), Jaime F. Avendaño (official of the Presidency), Lucía Jaramillo Ayerbe and Elena Ambrosi.

The President of the Republic, Juan Manuel Santos Calderón, cautiously made public the existence of the document on the day following that of its signature, and not before, given that the contacts between the two parties

to the negotiations had begun in secret in the month of February, in Cuba, with the participation, as «facilitators», of representatives of the Cuban, Norwegian and Venezuelan governments.

The intermediation of Cuba is interpreted by the Colombian professor Alejo Vargas, in statements made to «El Tiempo» on 4 September 2012, as a recommendation by Raúl Castro and Hugo Chávez to President Santos, given their supposed influence regarding the FARC.

Although they do not appear as signatories, the Agreement acknowledges the governments of Venezuela and Chile as «companions» to the negotiators.

A review of the content of the Agreement shows that we are clearly looking at a military and political negotiation in which the Colombian government risked much more as a country than the FARC did, since the latter could at any time leave the negotiations without any damage to its «prestige». Indeed, the Colombian government has granted the FARC-EP the status of political organisation and not just that of subversive or terrorist group, as could previously be read in the speeches of the respective Colombian governments.

The aim was therefore to openly discuss in the negotiations on an agrarian reform programme access to, and use of, land, social development in the areas of health, education, housing and the eradication of poverty... and also integration (it is understood that this refers to the former guerrilla fighters) in political life, as well as a possible solution to the drug problem (the document specifies «illegal drugs», leaving the door open to a recognition of «lawful» ones and the legalisation of what the FARC's negotiators refer to as the «domestic crops» of marijuana, opium poppies and coca).

As we can see, the content of the document goes far beyond a simple cessation of hostilities, as reflected in the explanatory statement of reasons, which states that peace is «a matter for society as a whole», a process to which other guerrilla groups are invited (although it is not named, this is the Camilista Union-National Liberation Army, led by Nicolás Rodríguez Bautista, «Gabino»), and, later, it urges to achieve «economic development with social justice and in harmony with the environment», as well as «social development with equity and welfare».

The so-called «Agenda» of the Agreement, on its part, deals with six points: the «Comprehensive Agricultural Development Policy», «Political Involvement», the specific measures to provide an «End to the Conflict» (cessation of fighting), the «Solution to the Problem of Illegal Drugs», the «Victims», and the «Implementation, Verification and Endorsement», to finish with «The Rules of Operation» of the respective negotiating delegations.

Chapter 3, «End to the Conflict», speaks of the «Ceasefire and Definitive and Bilateral Cessation of Hostilities», a title that makes one think that, until the other points have been resolved, it will not be possible to achieve true peace, as is currently being demonstrated by the constant clashes between military forces and the guerillas. In other words, the negotiations are being held with weapons in hand.

News of the signing of the Agreement caused immediate controversy, with Álvaro Uribe, the former President, as the champion of the disagreeing faction, on the basis of the following reasons: the FARC should be dealt with according to the Criminal Code rather than any political amnesty; guerilla fighters are not worthy of the confidence of the government; and, finally, negotiation requires a prior and bilateral ceasefire, especially when the guerilla fighters had requested one and it was not accepted by the government.

Meanwhile, the Attorney General and the Colombian Church, through the President of the Bishops' Conference, Cardinal Rubén Salazar, agreed with the start of the negotiations. Belisario Betancur was very conciliatory when, on this occasion, he told the press in October 2012 that these negotiations will lead «neither to Santos winning nor to Uribe losing», thinking perhaps about the next general elections. On the other hand, Ernesto Samper showed his support for Santos, as did Andrés Pastrana, César Gaviria and Belisario Betancur. The political parties without exception showed their support for President Santos. Even greater was the support shown by other countries, such as Brazil, Ecuador, Argentina, Venezuela, and certainly Cuba, the United States, the UK and Spain. As well as the UN, the OAS and the European Union.

Given all of this support, the Colombian government cannot complain of a lack of support in the task it is facing.

In view of the impending start of the negotiations, and in order to quell any rumours, on 4 September 2012 President Santos addressed a speech to the Colombians, of which we have included below a few words that give us a glimpse of the path to be followed.

«After these exploratory talks I am convinced that we are faced with a real opportunity to end for good the internal armed conflict... It will be a difficult journey... Any responsible ruler knows that you can't pass up a chance like this to end the conflict».

He also made it clear to the critics of the negotiation process that, «This Agreement is different because there is no clearance of territories and because there is no cessation of military operations. It is different because the talks will be conducted outside Colombia. It is different because the talks will not have an unlimited amount of time... and, if there is no progress, we will simply not continue».

This speech of President Santos was immediately answered, with a video from Havana, by the head of the FARC, Rodrigo Londoño («Timochenko»), in which, after stating his agreement with the start of the peace negotiations, he made a series of observations that the government must consider very carefully in order to achieve a happy ending.

R. Londoño said that guerilla fighters feel «pestered» by the military harassment, without there being a previous ceasefire or any truce, and that he hoped that they would not be deceived as happened in President Pastrana's times. In summary, «the guerilla's intention is to put an end to the conflict...» but «we do not intend to rise from the table without turning these flags into reality», referring to its own political agenda.

The Progress of the Negotiations

From the outset, President Santos has wanted to differentiate between what it means, on the one hand, to negotiate with an «armed group», which boasts a political agenda and has a certain amount of control over a particular territory, in the classification of International Humanitarian Law (Geneva Convention, 1949, and following Protocols, 1977), and, on the other, a criminal organisation, although it is often difficult to distinguish between the two.

This observation only reflects the serious problem facing the Colombian government, in the words of its President during the inaugural meeting of the National Security Council in February 2011 as a result of the actions of the criminal gangs known as the BACRIM, which have now become the country's greatest threat, parallel to the drug dealers and guerilla groups.

These bands, which infest the entire Colombian territory and have filled the country with crimes, sexual violence, kidnappings, extortion, drug and petrol trafficking, and even forced relocations of people, are composed of a multicoloured mosaic with the remains of the Popular Revolutionary Anti-Terrorist Army of Colombia (ERPAC), the pompous name of the «paramilitary» group that until 2011 operated in the Eastern Plains, of the groups of pure banditry of Los Urabeños, Los Rastrojos, Los Machos, Renacer, etc.

The BACRIM, however, are also involved, where they can, in the local political life, where the government's authority does not reach, which is a true additional problem. The Colombian police suspects that more than 5,000 bandits are operating in some 200 municipalities, at least.

The Colombian government does not want to in any way give the BACRIM the status or recognition of an «armed group», but to crush it under the weight of the Penal Code. Thus, according to some, the benefits available to «armed groups», such as amnesty, reintegration, and more flexible

penalties, cannot apply to the members of the BACRIM. In addition, they will not be persecuted by the Armed Forces but by the police, and their victims may not enjoy the benefits provided by the Law of Victims of 2011.

It goes without saying that the FARC and the BACRIM have collaborated more than once in different misdeeds, on occasion with the drug trafficking organisations themselves. But they have also had clashes, such as the ones that took place in January of this year in Cauca and Antioquia, for control over some gold mines, a new source of funding for both sides, as reported shortly afterwards by Jane's Intelligence Weekly.

With respect to the negotiations between the Colombian government and the FARC, it is somewhat surprising to see the constant armed clashes between the forces of order and the guerillas, which seem to undermine the nature of the talks being held in Havana, although both parties, especially the government, seem not to take this into account.

It is to be hoped, however, that the attempts by President Santos to remove the FARC's political and social base will finally bear fruit without having to give in to the temptation of resuming the dirty war or internationalising the conflict.

This is because, on the one hand, it has been found that the dirty war does not yield any results, since the forces of order and the Armed Forces themselves are affected by a high degree of subversive infiltration – it is worth remembering in this regard that, in 2008, President Uribe replaced three generals and the Military Chief of Staff himself for their slackness in chasing «paramilitaries». And, on the other hand, the internationalisation of the conflict would lead to an inordinate rise in the political status of the FARC, allowing into the fight some countries that may not be so favourable to Colombia's interests; let us recall the problems encountered by Colombia with its neighbours as a result of the more or less direct intervention of the United States in the guerilla fight, or the incursion of the Colombian forces in neighbouring areas.

The demobilisation of the paramilitaries in 2005 and 2006 («submission» in the case of criminal gangs, according to the legal terms used by the Colombian government) under the Justice and Peace Law of 2005, which sought the disarmament and integration of those guerilla fighters, can point the way to be followed now with the FARC. This Law, supplemented by another legal provision, Law 1,424 of 2010, successfully achieved the demobilisation until the end of 2011, according to the Colombian Agency for Reintegration, of over 24,000 combatants of the United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia, the «paramilitary» groups. These high figures of fighters can cause surprise (in any other country they would be a true army), but they are often groups who demobilise, return to the jungle and demobilise again.

And so, finally, on 18 October 2012, Humberto de la Calle, who was chairman of the Colombian Government delegation, and Luciano Marín Arango («Ivan Márquez»), at the head of the FARC-EP delegation, sat down at the table in Oslo. The negotiation itself began on 19 November, already in Havana.

From the date of signature of the Agreement and more frequently once the talks in Havana had begun, a number of announcements have been appearing, under the heading «Talks for the Termination of the Conflict and the Construction of a Stable and Lasting Peace in Colombia», signed by the Colombian Government Delegation and the FARC-EP Delegation, giving an account of the progress of the negotiations.

In addition, these periodic announcements have the original feature of requesting, through forums and a website, citizen participation in the peace process.

But they also reflect the slow progress of the negotiations, although President Santos definitely seems to be using all the means available to him to put an end to this conflict, which began many years ago. For example, it was not until 26 May that the talks in Havana on the first point of the Agreement, the so-called «Comprehensive Agricultural Development Policy», which had begun on 19 November of the previous year, were closed. Thus, still to be negotiated are, for example, issues such as «Political Involvement», the «End of the Conflict», «Drugs», «Verification» etc., which may lengthen the negotiation process to the point of ineffectiveness. And to all this we must add a more serious problem: while the negotiators work in Havana, armed clashes and attacks continue in Colombia, causing countless victims on both sides and among the civilian population. This situation cannot continue in time without, in one way or another, causing the peace process to fail.

The role of external actors

Is Colombia currently a threat to the stability of the region?

It is not the first time that this question has been asked in the most diverse forums. The friction that has even recently affected Colombia's relations with Venezuela and Ecuador because of the military and guerilla activity could cause one to think something along those lines, although the opening of the current peace process between the government and the FARC opens up new prospects of stability. However, we cannot lose sight of the fact that the policy of the American countries has always fluctuated between a «liquid» state and a «gaseous» state, in the terms that define modernity according to Zygmunt Bauman.

On the other hand, the disputes over boundaries that may have existed in the past between Colombia and Costa Rica, Nicaragua and Honduras, for the possession of various islands in Caribbean and Pacific waters now appear to have cooled down.

In any case, Colombia cannot go unnoticed in the international arena, with its extensive mainland territory of 1,141,748 km², plus the archipelago of San Andrés and Providencia in the Caribbean, and the islands of Malpelo, Gorgona and Gorgonilla in the Pacific, which make the country the fourth largest in the southern continent, after Brazil, Argentina and Peru. And with its 46,871,321 inhabitants, it is the most populous country after Brazil and Mexico; its GDP of \$500,576 million and GDP per capita of \$8,127 place Colombia immediately after Brazil, Mexico and Argentina, and in 31st place worldwide; and with a Human Development Index of 0.710 (high), but below the regional average, to the point that 34% of the population live below the poverty line.

From a geopolitical point of view, Colombia is a crossroads between Central America, the Caribbean, the Pacific and the Amazon, with large plains to the east and mountains towards the Pacific, 6,342 km of continental borders with Venezuela, Ecuador, Panama and Brazil, but also sea borders in the Caribbean with Jamaica, Haiti, the Dominican Republic, Venezuela, Honduras, Panama, Nicaragua and Costa Rica, and in the Pacific with Panama, Costa Rica and Ecuador.

Colombia is a major exporter of oil, coal, emeralds, coffee and flowers, through its Caribbean and Pacific ports, in the latter case the very modern port of Buenaventura, in the department of Valle del Cauca, whose capital is Cali, one of the largest drug trafficking centres. And we must not forget that Colombia is planning, together with China, its second most important partner, to build a «Dry Panama Canal», linking together, by means of a 220 km rail link, Aguacate in the Pacific with Arenas and Ceverá in the Caribbean. In addition, it is estimated that, as at 2013, Colombia has 2,417 billion oil barrels, especially in the Magdalena Medio basin, and that its open-cast coal mines in La Guajira are among the largest in the world.

Colombia also exports raw materials, mainly to the United States, followed by the European Union and China, and imports technology, especially from the United States and China; a dependence that Juan Manuel Santos's new government wants to put an end to, broadening the range of its economy. In addition, Colombia is, after Brazil, the world's leading producer of coffee.

Colombia is a member of many international organisations, both in its own area and at global level, but its policy has always been not to seek any central role at international level, trying to resolve its own internal problems first.

However, social inequality can be seen everywhere in Colombia, especially in the marginal areas of large cities and in the country, where the best agricultural crops and cattle wealth are in the hands of landowners.

This problem is compounded by the deficiencies in its tax regime, both regarding the fiscal system and the tax collection mechanisms, which include the lack of a tax culture, which results in deficient public services. Colombia, on the other hand, is noteworthy for its legal certainty as compared with other American countries, which has led the World Bank to recommend to international investors the country's «good climate» for business.

The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) forecasts a growth of 4.3% for Colombia this year, provided that oil and coal exports and prices continue at current levels.

This situation has been understood perfectly well by the United States, which has for a long time been paying special attention to Colombia, and not only because of the relentless traffic of Colombian coca to the north of the continent, which has caused the United States to become the largest consumer of drugs.

The so-called Plan Colombia for Peace; i.e. the Plan for Peace, Prosperity and the Strengthening of the State, signed in 1999 by Bill Clinton and Andrés Pastrana, with a component of strong military assistance, could now be supplemented, in the economic and social areas, with the signing, on 15 May 2012, of a Free-Trade Treaty with the United States, which can lead to Colombia diversifying its exports to other areas that are not exclusively raw materials. On the other hand, President Santos also has his eyes on trade exchanges with the European Union and more specifically with Spain.

It is, however, Cuba, or should we say Castrismo, who is playing a starring role in Colombian affairs, according to international perception. This is not only because Raúl Castro's efforts have helped bring the FARC to the negotiating table but, above all, because the peace talks are being held on Cuban soil, which means that, for months, Cuba has managed to ensure that its role as mediator is kept alive in the embassies and the first pages of all the media, with the ensuing mistrust of other countries, especially the United States.

As if that were not enough, the Summit of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) and the European Union, held in Santiago de Chile last January, resolved to transfer the presidency of the organisation's future activities to the Republic of Cuba, which has virtually become the link between the two continents.

However, the death of Hugo Chávez on 5 March of this year may upset the American scene as a whole. If we start from the idea that Cuba has been

exerting a clear political leadership in some Latin American countries, it is also true that Hugo Chávez's Venezuela has provided invaluable economic assistance to Cuba, mainly by providing it with oil at low prices; and, from what we are now seeing, this dual political and economic assistance between Cuba and Venezuela is going to continue to exist in the future.

On Monday 11 March, Nicolás Maduro, the Acting President of Venezuela, made public his support of the negotiations being held in Havana, a statement that dispelled the mystery of what would be the government's position until the Venezuelan elections; at the same time that it strengthened President Santos's position against a certain pessimism which is widespread among Colombians and also encouraged by Álvaro Uribe's frequent criticism of the Peace Process.

The outcome of the Venezuelan elections of 14 April, which gave the victory to Nicolás Maduro, confirmed that the new President would continue to support the negotiations in Havana.

But the main obstacle that now faces the Peace Process is clearly the Colombian election calendar. Constitutionally, legislative elections should be held in March 2014 and presidential elections should be held in May. This means that the signing of the peace agreement in proper time and form is compromised, because the negotiators have not yet come to an agreement.

On the other hand, and precisely for that reason, Juan Manuel Santos is accused of urging the negotiators to end the process before November (the deadline to submit his candidature), so that he can go to the presidential elections crowned with the glory of a signed peace agreement. As can be seen, both President Santos and the FARC have a difficult dilemma.

Neither has the possibility of the Standing Committee of the Congress being authorised to collect the signature of the peace agreement between the government and the FARC before the elections been envisaged.

These constitutional doubts were cleared up by the President of the Republic himself when he asserted that next year's presidential elections will not be delayed in any event. Humberto de la Calle, on his part, who is chairing the Colombian Government Delegation in Havana, insisted on 1 July that a constituent process would not begin as a result of the peace negotiations.

In order to ease the constitutional problems, on 22 August Santos's government announced a bill (reform of Article 39 of Law 134), whose content had already been leaked, which seeks to call a referendum to submit to the Colombian people the approval of the terms of the peace agreement, coinciding with the elections to Congress in March or, alternatively, with the presidential elections in May, a coincidence which is currently

prohibited by the Constitution. But we must ask under what terms can this law be passed and the question of the referendum be asked if the peace agreement has not yet been signed and its terms are not known? Thus, it was the FARC themselves that expressed their surprise at President Santos's announcement, for which reason they decided to make a «pause» in the Havana negotiations as an expression of their rejection of the popular consultation.

We must also consider the claim of the guerilla fighters who seek to form a political party to stand in the elections, for which purpose they must formalise their intention in advance, as recognised citizens, under Article 122 of the Constitution, in the margin.

On the other hand, the problem of the integration of guerilla fighters in citizen life is not an easy one to solve, whatever the country in question; especially if, as in this case, we are talking about a Colombia where the social and employment difficulties are the order of the day, especially in the country.

In this context, the misgivings that existed on the Colombian Armed Forces' position in relation to the negotiation process were apparently cleared with the presence in Havana of retired generals Jorge Enrique Mora and Oscar Naranjo. For its part, the Colombian Catholic Church had the chance to speak out for peace on Good Friday, 29 March, through the voice of the President of the Bishops' Conference, Cardinal Rubén Salazar Gómez, coinciding with the end of the 7th stage of the talks. Since that date, such statements by the ecclesiastical hierarchy have been frequent.

In addition, on 9 April a March for Peace was held in Bogotá, as part of the National Congress for Peace, organised by the Congress of the Peoples. This was also clearly in favour of peace – not in vain are the indigenous peoples the ones who most suffer the consequences of the conflict. Although Francisco Santos, cousin of the President and presidential candidate for the Democratic Centre in the upcoming elections, spoke publicly against the negotiation process on 13 April.

In addition, on 22 April the Colombian government too had the opportunity to make a statement in Geneva in favour of the end of hostilities, in the course of the Assembly of the United Nations, on the occasion of the Universal Periodic Review of Human Rights, a statement made by the Colombian Vice-President Angelino Garzón.

In this context, 23 April saw the resumption of the negotiations in Havana, the 8th round, after one month of holiday, while the rumour of possible rifts in the guerilla environment was spreading, we do not know whether as a manoeuvre to destabilise the other party to the negotiations.

At this stage of the peace process, on Sunday 26 May it was announced from the Palacio de Convenciones conference centre in Havana that the

Colombian Government and the FARC had closed Point One of the Agreement, which deals with the agrarian reform, with the title «Towards a New Colombian Countryside; Comprehensive Rural Reform». Although the spokesmen for both parties were not too explicit at the time of the announcement, they did state that: «What we have agreed in this agreement will be the start of radical transformations in the rural and agricultural reality, with equity and democracy». But they also hinted that there were still some important details to be ironed out.

These outstanding details were developed in the «First Joint Report of the Table of Negotiations Between the Government of the Republic of Colombia and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia – People’s Army, FARC-EP», published on 2 July, whose section 4 contains the «Description of the Agreement on Point 1, Comprehensive Agricultural Development Policy».

Needless to say, the content of this report is highly positive for two reasons. On the one hand, it is a historic opportunity for the development of the country and the Colombian peasants, so harshly treated for such a long time. And, on the other, it means that the negotiators of Havana have reached a broad consensus in a climate that can only be described as constructive. Although, as the report itself warns, «nothing is agreed until everything is agreed».

Under this warning, on 11 June talks began on the second point, «Political Involvement», stage ten. This stage ended on the 21st of the same month, and a new round began on 1 July.

However, given the political claims that seem to have been shown by the FARC representatives in Havana, it is going to be difficult to reach an agreement on this point, since it obviously affects the constitutional structure of the Colombian State. A negotiation about such matters between the government of a country and a guerilla group involves opening a constituent process which would put the two parties in conflict on an equal footing, something which would obviously be opposed by any legitimate and democratic government, a position that seems to have been taken by Juan Manuel Santos.

The possibility of a constitutional reform, however feasible it might be to retouch the current Constitution of 1991, would have to have the agreement of the opposition, something which is difficult at the moment. Otherwise, it would give it the opportunity to in turn raise an issue of unconstitutionality before the judicial authorities which would open up a State crisis with unforeseeable national and even international consequences, in addition to having to suspend the presidential elections scheduled for next year.

But there have been other obstacles, and thus, while on 25 June the Colombian Minister of Defence, Juan Carlos Pinzón, obtained in Brussels the European Union's support for the peace project, on the same day Francisco Santos, cousin of the President and candidate for the Presidency of the Republic, as mentioned above, declared in Washington, at the Centre for Strategic and International Studies, that the United States was wrong to support the peace process, because President Santos was negotiating on an equal footing with a guerilla group.

On 28 July Álvaro Uribe, for his part, on the day when the negotiations in Havana were resumed, expressed his opinion against the peace process, alluding to the recent death of nineteen soldiers in an ambush in Arauca and Caquetá, in addition to the kidnapping of a former member of the American military.

Meanwhile, the FARC persist in their demand to be involved in Colombian politics, after the necessary constitutional reforms, aspiring to their own space in politics and the media, to which no political party has access in any case. The FARC's claims go as far as contemplating the possibility of asking for a certain number of seats in Congress without first going through the electoral process.

On the other hand, President Santos, for whom Wednesday the 7th marked three years as the head of government, has already begun formal contacts with ELN in order to sign a peace agreement with this guerilla group too.

In addition, the FARC's reply to the content of the Historical Memory Report, alluding to the violations of Human Rights by the Colombian Government, has led President Santos to state that it is necessary for the peace agreement to be signed in November in order to arbitrate the constitutional procedures that will allow the Colombian people to express their opinion.

In view of all of this, peasant protests broke out in Catatumbo and soon spread throughout the country, especially from 19 August. The Colombian Government did not take long to express its suspicion that the FARC and its associates were behind the protests.

We said earlier that the Colombian Armed Forces had expressed their agreement with the peace process, and that some military personnel had even joined the negotiators of Havana, but President Santos unexpectedly announced the replacement of the military leaders since, according to him, they had successfully completed the task entrusted to them. Analysts have interpreted this surprising replacement in several ways, a replacement that on 17 August led to the replacement of general Alejandro Navas by the also general Juan Pablo Rodríguez. It seems that the FARC's political demands, together with former president Uribe's position against the

peace process, caused Santos to place a fully trusted military person at the front of the Armed Forces.

We thus arrive at Monday 19 August, the date of commencement of a new round of negotiations in Havana, with Article 122 of the Colombian Constitution on the table, whose contents would prevent the heads of guerilla groups with blood crimes behind them to present their candidacy to next year's elections.

Since time is undoubtedly running out for the negotiators, it has been decided to hold a Forum on unlawful drugs in Bogota on 24, 25 and 26 September, to make more progress on the Havana negotiators' work on this point of the Agreement signed by the Government and the FARC.

This swaying of the respective positions is typical of any negotiation process, since each of the parties seeks to defend its own position, following game theory, and even more so when it comes to a peace process after many years of fighting, with international expectations exerting further pressure on the negotiators.

At the time of signing these lines, 1 September, I would like to draw attention to one fact that I consider to be highly positive in the pursuit of peace and which I believe to be an essential requirement to effectively end any civil war: the mutual recognition of the victims and damage caused. Thus, on 25 July, President Santos, at a meeting of the Constitutional Court on the Legal Peace Framework, openly acknowledged that during these many years there had been human rights violations by the State. And on 20 August the guerilla chief «Pablo Catatumbo» also acknowledged in a press conference held in Havana the «harshness and the pain caused by our ranks».

Conclusions and outlook

thus, in view of both parties' wish to proceed with their contacts, we must ask a question that was already left open at the start of this paper, and the success of the negotiations depends on the answer, now and looking towards the future: Will there be winners and losers in the negotiation? Will everyone win? Will peace lose?

In this regard, the Peruvian jurist Diego Garcia Sayán, President of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IACHR), in an interview in *El País* on 28 April 2013, stated that the Colombian conflict could be successfully resolved by applying the concept of «transitional justice», based on the following principles: «knowing what happened, principle of truth», «redress to victims» and «the principle of justice».

Without going as far as Calderón de la Barca's principle of «winning and forgiving is winning twice» («*Comedia famosa. Para vencer a amor, querer*

vencerle»), professor Alejo Vargas acknowledged in his usual column in «Red» (2 and 5 May 2013) «that it is not about resolving the armed conflict at any price, because there are certain minimum conditions to achieve it..., while some say that they agree with an agreed solution, others require that structural historical problems be resolved first». He thus also thinks that the principle of «transitional justice» imposes itself as the solution.

This principle is the most complex one to apply when, as in the case of Colombia, there are thousands of opposing forces and the crimes perpetrated have been extremely serious. The wounds of Colombian society are still bleeding. According to the report of the National Centre of Historical Memory, in fifty-four years of conflict there have been over 220,000 documented murders, 117,000 civilians and 40,000 combatants, without counting the missing, the kidnapped and displaced persons.

But it was President Santos himself who precisely publicly announced, on 8 May, that, «the conflict could be resolved within the framework of transitional justice». Although with nuances, the same opinion was expressed on 30 July by Fabrizio Hochschild, Coordinator of the United Nations System in Colombia, following his contacts with several organisations of victims of violence.

Thus, there is still room for hope.

Geopolitical indicators¹

TABLE OF GEOPOLITICAL INDICATORS		COLOMBIA
Area (position in world ranking)		1,138,910 Km ² (26th)
GDP-Growth		\$511,100 million (29th) / 4% (29th)
Structure of GDP Workers	Agriculture	6.5% - 18%
	Industry	37.5% - 13%
	Services	56% - 68%
GDP per capita		\$11,000 (110th)
Unemployment/Poverty		10.4% (112th) – 34.1%
Trade relations (Exports):		\$59,960 million (54th) USA 39.4%, Spain 5.1%, China 4.9%, Netherlands 4.3%
Trade relations (Imports):		\$53,770 million (53rd) USA 30.2%, China 11.5%, Mexico 10.3%, Brazil 5.2%
Population/Growth		45,745,783 (29th) / 1.1% (108th)

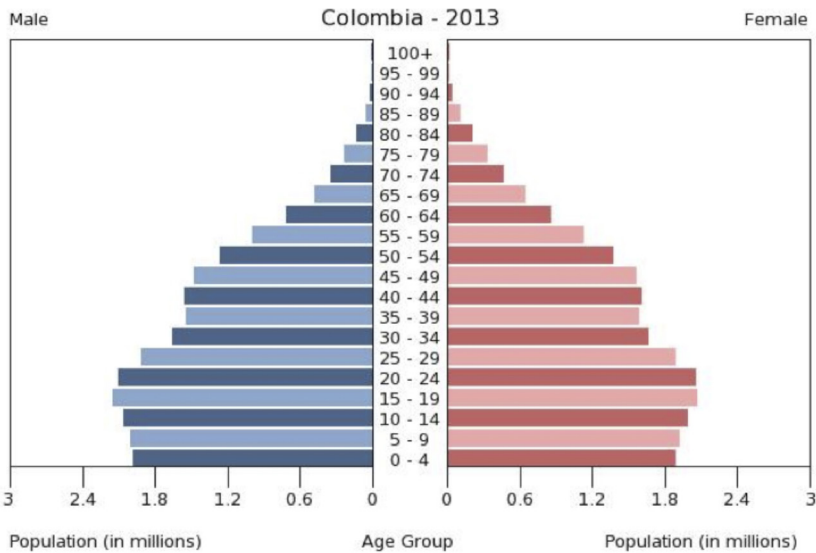
¹ Source: CIA The World FACTBOOK.

The Colombian peace process

Land development/Growth	75%- 1.7%
Landlines/mobile phones (millions)	7.127 (26th) / 46.2 (29th)
Internet host/users (millions)	4.41 (24th) / 22.538 (18th)
Ethnic groups	mestizo 58%, white 20%, mulatto 14%, black 4%, mixed black-Native American 3%, Native American 1%
Religions	Catholic 90%, other 10%
Population literacy rate	93.6%
GINI coefficient/Life expectancy	58.5 (8th) / 75.02 (99th)
Military spending % of GDP	3.8% (27th)

Source: CIA World Facts Book

Chronology²



CHRONOLOGY OF THE NEGOTIATIONS	
DATE	EVENTS
2010	November: President Santos contacts the FARC.
2011	January: The FARC show they are willing to talk with the Colombian Government.
	February - October: President Santos seeks support from Cuba.

² Own work.

2011-2012	December - January: The new FARC chief shows an interest in negotiating.
2012	January: First Government-FARC meeting in person in Rio de Oro, Colombia.
	23 February: Initial contact in Cuba.
	26 August: The representatives of the Colombian Government and of the FARC sign the "General Agreement for the Termination of the Conflict and the Construction of a Stable and Lasting Peace" in Havana.
	19 November: First meeting in Havana between representatives of the Colombian Government and of the FARC to begin negotiations.

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INDEX

Chapter one

How conflicts have evolved	7
Introduction.....	9
Sociopolitical paradigms and conflicts	9
How wars have evolved.....	12
Current conflicts	14
How capabilities have evolved.....	17
How strategies have evolved	18

Chapter two

Mali: security, democracy and development to overcome the conflict	25
Introduction.....	27
Background to the conflict.....	29
Current situation of the conflict	40
The role of external actors	47
Conclusions and outlook	50
Geopolitical indicators	52
Chronology	53
Bibliography.....	55

Chapter three

Syria: war, sectarianism and chaos	57
Introduction.....	59
Background to the conflict.....	60
Current situation of the conflict	61
The role of external actors	74
Conclusions and outlook	90
Chronology.....	91
Bibliography.....	94

Chapter four

Georgia and its separatist territories: beyond the point of no return ..	95
Introduction.....	97
Background to the conflict.....	98
Current situation of the conflict	110
The role of external actors	111
Conclusions and outlook	112
Geopolitical indicators	114
Chronology.....	115
Bibliography.....	117

Chapter five

The strait of Hormuz. In the eye of the hurricane	119
Introduction.....	121
Background to the conflict.....	124
Current situation of the conflict	125
The role of external actors	135

	Page
Conclusions and outlook	136
Geopolitical indicators	138
Chronology	139
Bibliography.....	140
 Chapter six	
The fragile Ivorian stability: stranded between the lesser of two evils and open conflict.....	
	143
Introduction.....	145
Background to the conflict	149
Current situation of the conflict	158
The role of external actors	161
Conclusions and outlook	165
Geopolitical indicators	167
Chronology	168
Bibliography.....	169
 Chapter seven	
Kenya: the politicisation of diversity.....	
	171
Introduction.....	173
Background to the conflict	182
Current situation of the conflict.....	184
The role of external actors	186
Conclusions and outlook	190
Geopolitical indicators	192
Chronology	193
Bibliography.....	193
 Chapter eight	
Conflict and disputes in the Fergana valley	
	197
Introduction.....	199
Background to the conflict	203
Current situation of the conflict	208
The role of external actors	214
Conclusions and outlook	218
Geopolitical indicators	220
Chronology	222
Bibliography.....	223
 Chapter nine	
Afghanistan: on the eve of a decisive 2014	
	227
Introduction.....	229
Background to the conflict	229
Current situation of the conflict	230
The role of external actors	243
Conclusions and outlook	249
Geopolitical indicators	250
Chronology	252
Bibliography.....	253
 Chapter ten	
Development of the conflict in Pakistan. An uncertain future	
	255
Introduction.....	257

	Page
Background to the conflict	260
Current situation of the conflict	269
The role of external actors	276
Conclusions and outlook	281
Geopolitical indicators	282
Chronology	284
Bibliography.....	285

Chapter eleven

India. The naxalite insurgency.....	287
Introduction	289
Background to the conflict	289
Current situation of the conflict	301
The role of external actors	307
Conclusions and outlook	307
Chronology	309
Bibliography.....	310

Chapter twelve

China's inner ring. Strength or weakness?.....	311
Introduction.....	313
Background to the conflict	316
Current situation of the conflict	323
The role of external actors	329
Conclusions and outlook	331
Geopolitical indicators	334
Chronology	336
Bibliography.....	338

Chapter thirteen

The ethnic conflicts in Myanmar: Kachin	341
Introduction.....	343
Background to the conflict	346
Current situation of the conflict	353
The role of external actors	354
ASEAN.....	362
Conclusions and outlook	364
Geopolitical indicators	366
Chronology	367
Bibliography.....	368

Chapter fourteen

Indonesia. The east Papua conflict.....	369
Introduction.....	371
Background to the conflict	373
Current situation of the conflict	379
The role of external actors	380
Conclusions and outlook	382
Geopolitical indicators	386
Chronology	388
Bibliography.....	389

	<u>Page</u>
Chapter fifteen	
The Colombian peace process.....	391
Introduction.....	393
Background to the conflict.....	393
Current situation of the conflict.....	398
The role of external actors	404
Conclusions and outlook	411
Geopolitical indicators.....	412
Chronology.....	413
Bibliography:.....	414