



CENTRO SUPERIOR DE ESTUDIOS
DE LA DEFENSA NACIONAL



ANIVERSARIO 1964-2014

Geopolitical overview of conflicts 2014

Spanish
Institute of
Strategic
Studies

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November 2014

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SPANISH MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

SPANISH OFFICIAL PUBLICATIONS CATALOGUE
<http://publicacionesoficiales.boe.es>

Publishes:



<http://publicaciones.defensa.gob.es/>

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NIPO: 083-14-251-1 (print on demand)

Publication date: november 2014



NIPO: 083-14-250-6 (e-book edition)
ISBN: 978-84-9091-015-3 (e-book edition)

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Ukraine and the new russian geopolitical leadership

Miguel Ángel Ballesteros Martín

Chapter one

Summary:

The history of Ukraine, a country located in Eastern Europe and which achieved independence in 1991 following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, is marked by profound divisions: linguistic, political, and above all, by those produced by the events of the last 100 years. All of these have made it fertile terrain for the hatching of internal conflicts, which these days has become the mindset of its successive governments and its people. In this chapter, an analysis is made of the conflict between Ukraine and the separatist forces of Donetsk and Lugansk, in which Russia plays a leading and decisive role. In addition to studying the strategy of the two warring parties on Ukrainian territory, as well as that of Russia, there will also be a study of the determinant role being carried out by major external actors, especially the U.S., the European Union and NATO. This analysis, which brings together the protagonists and the actors external to the current conflict, will permit us to establish a certain perspective, but keeping in mind that recent events, ongoing at the time of writing of this study, exercise a determining influence on understanding it and on discerning its resolution. We are dealing, thus, with a conflict in permanent evolution, which is conditioning international relations in all areas, and which will undoubtedly continue to do so in the future. For all these reasons, it would be inadvisable to limit the study to the specific tactics of

the confrontations produced on the ground, but rather, to open the prism to carry out a geopolitical analysis, which would allow—as the central objective of this study—drawing medium- and long-term conclusions.

Key Words

Ukraine, Donetsk, Lugansk, proRussians, Novarussia, Putin, Crimea, Russia.

Introduction

Ukraine is a young State, almost new, since the periods of independence have been few and brief. For most of its history, this Eastern European country has been governed by Moscow. With the creation of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) in 1922, Ukraine became one of the Socialist Republics under the custody, from Moscow, of a strongly centralist economy and government. Today, Ukrainians over the age of 23 have been citizens of the USSR, and most men over 41 served as soldiers under the Moscow government.

Following the fall of the Berlin wall on November 10 of 1989, the political and economic system of the USSR shattered, and gave way to the appearance of a number of centrifugal forces which brought about, as a consequence, the independence of most of the republics, among them those which today make up Ukraine. In July of 1990, the Declaration of Ukrainian State Sovereignty was the prelude to the definitive independence aspired to, which would arrive in August of 1991, when it was officially proclaimed by the Parliament, led by Leonid Kravchuk. Months later, on December 2nd, a referendum was held which ratified Ukraine as a sovereign country with 90% of the votes favorable, while Leonid Kravchuk was proclaimed, by free and democratic election of the citizens, the first President of the Republic of Ukraine.

On the other side of the northern border, the fragmentation of the USSR into independent and sovereign Republics provoked a feeling within the Russian people of profound defeat, humiliation and weakness. However, the personalist politics of President Vladimir Putin, based on a strong and even aggressive leadership, as shown in the conflicts in Chechenya, Georgia and Crimea, have given Russians back their pride and above all the hope of recovering those territories which historically were Russian at certain times and which, to a great extent, they still consider to be an essential part of their history.

Although once independence was reached, backed by an overwhelming majority, Ukraine became a unitary State, this has not meant the prevention of its division politically, ethnically, economically and linguistically as well. Thus, the Russian language is the mother tongue in some regions, among which are the Crimean Peninsula and the provinces of Donetsk, Lugansk, Jarkov and Odessa. This is a basic and essential condition for an understanding of the current scenario of confrontation. In the economic field, Ukraine has a very fragile financial system, with a per capita income of \$7,400,¹ compared with the \$18,100 of Russia, on whom she is almost absolutely dependant for energy, as 80% of the gas consumed by Ukraine comes exclusively from Russia.

¹ CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY. The World Fact Book 2014, p. 194. Available at: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/docs/profileguide.html>.

Finally, and of great historic relevance, it should be emphasized that major historic links unite one part of Ukraine with the Russian people. This is a close relationship which Putin has called to mind on a number of occasions, based on the creation in the nineteenth century of a new Empire of the Czars and which was constituted as «Novarussia», including in its makeup, besides the four aforementioned provinces, those of Jerson and Nikolayevska.



Map of Novarussia in 1897.²

With regard to its demographic data, Ukraine today has a population of 44.2 million inhabitants, of whom 14.3 million have Russian as their mother tongue, which represents 29.6% of the total. Within the Russian-speaking group, 56% are of Russian origin, but there are also more than 5.5 million ethnic Ukrainians whose mother tongue is Russian.

With respect to Crimea, the Russian presence is far superior: statistically, 77% of the population have Russian as their mother tongue.³

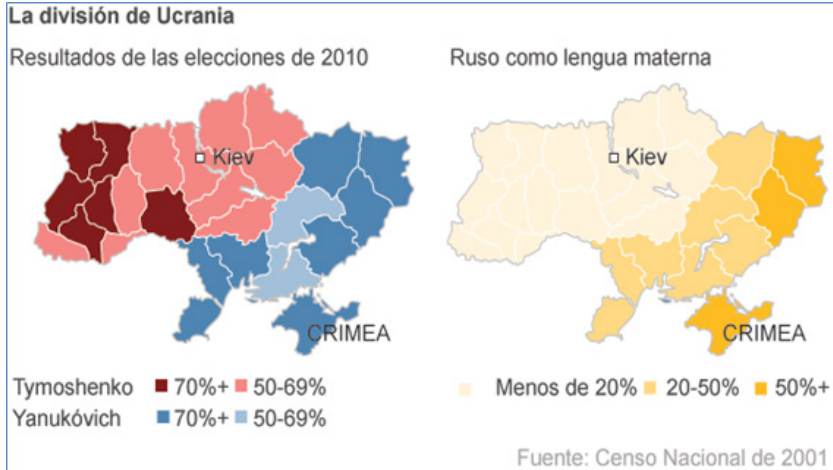
It is important also to present further data with reference to the unique human features of this nation. In the census of 2001, 17.3% of those citizens registered were of Russian background; compared with the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, whose Russian-speaking community is a majority with 58.32% of the population, only 24.32% being Ukrainian; and finally, Tartars represent some 12.1% of the total.

² Wikipedia <http://en.wikipedia.org/wik/Novorossiya>

³ Ucraina.com. <http://www.ucrania.com/Noticias/tabid/54/EntryId/5394/Censo-en-Ucrania-viven-48-milliones-457-mil-persons.aspx>.

Ukraine and the new russian geopolitical leadership

In Ukraine, there is also a notable parallel between the linguistic and ethnic division and the East-West political divide, as seen in the map drawn up following the presidential elections of 2010.



To the centrifugal tendencies of the Russian-speaking populations within Ukrainian territory, there must be added another problem of identity in the Transcarpathian region, where the separatist movement is not of Russian-speaking origin but does additionally weaken the cohesion of Ukraine.

In Transcarpathia or Ruthenia-Subcarpathia, also known by its name in Ukrainian, *Zacarpattia*, a number of noteworthy separatist movements come together. This region once belonged to Hungary, and later to Czechoslovakia, until on June 29 of 1945, when it passed into dependence upon Moscow, which incorporated it into the Soviet Socialist Republic of Ukraine. With Ukraine's declaration of independence in 1991, it became a Ukrainian province called «Óblast Zakarpattia». In all, the region has a population of more than 80% Ukrainian origin, 12% of Hungarian origin, 2.6% of Rumanian origin, 2.5% of Russian origin and a small Ruthenian population, which is highly active politically in favor of independence.⁴

On October 26 of 2008, during the second European Congress of Ruthenian Carpathians held in Mukacheve, the Ruthenian National Movement, led by Dmytro Sydor, approved the creation of a Ruthenian State, for which the Kiev government brought penal charges for separatism against Sydor.⁵

⁴ Census of Carpathia (Ukraine) of 2001. <http://web.archive.org/web/2009043005057/http://ukrcensus.gov.ua/results/general/nationality/zakarpattia/> (Consulted 25-05-2014.)

⁵ «Right-wing Svoboda 'sabotages' Ruthenian Congress in Uzhgorod», KYIVPOST, article of May 1, 2009. <http://www.kyivpost.com/content/ukraine/right-wing-svoboda-sa>

Another cause of instability in Ukraine is the geopolitical-military position it occupies between Russia and NATO, as well as between the former and the European Union in the commercial field. In short, Ukraine represents a key region for both Russia and the EU, a fact which inexorably conditions Ukrainian policy.

Respecting its foreign policy, Ukraine is destined to choose among three options. The first would be to opt for being a buffer State militarily, maintaining a balance between her neighbors regarding trade and economics; the second would consist of establishing a strong military alliance and economic integration with Russia and the Euroasiatic Union; and the third and last would see her integration into NATO and the beginning of a process of preferential economic and trade agreements with the EU⁶, with the objective of membership in the Union.. To these three options must be added the several variants resulting from the coherent combinations that may be created at any given time.

Another indicator of the importance of this geopolitical region becomes evident in the extraordinary interest which Russia demonstrates regarding this area, opposing any approach by Ukraine to NATO and even to the EU. But its military and political interest go further, towards considering the integration under its sovereignty of territories key to its national security strategy, such as in the case of Crimea.

And in its aim to exercise leadership in the region, Russia does not hesitate to displace any other power attempting to influence the area. Such has been the case with the U.S. and even the E.U. in the last two decades.

From the time of Catherine the Great, at the end of the seventeenth century, Russia has attempted to control the Black Sea, from where she sought an exit into the warm seas of the South in order to guarantee the mobility of her fleet throughout the year. This gives great strategic value to the Ukrainian littoral and especially so to the Crimean peninsula, where lies the Sebastopol Naval Base with the Black Sea Fleet, which together with the Baltic, Northern and Pacific Fleets, constitute Russian naval power.

In addition, Ukraine is a country of passage for the Russian oil pipelines which supply Europe and the East with energy, increasing the geopolitical value of the region for both Russia and the EU.

In view of the foregoing, it is not difficult to grasp that the geopolitical tension which Ukraine suffers from is principally caused by the tense relations between the Ukrainian and Russian governments. Thus, each time Kiev approaches the EU and NATO, Russia reacts in an attempt to impede this.

botages-Ruthenian-congress-in-40705.html (consulted 25-05-2014).

⁶ The Agreement of Association between the UE and Ukraine was ratified on September 16 of 2014, to be put into effect in 2016.

Background to the conflict

In November of 2014, the Ukrainian government intended to sign an Agreement of Association and Free Trade with the European Union, which would hamper participation in the EuroAsiatic Union,⁷ as advocated by Russia. With the ratification of this accord, she inclined her policy towards the European side and to the detriment of Russia. President Victor Yanukovich, pressured by Moscow, decided *in extremis* not to sign the agreement, and this refusal sparked demonstrations in the Maidan plaza (Kiev), which became permanent disturbances and as time passed finally degenerated into armed clashes between supporters of President Yanukovich and his opponents.

On January 20th of 2014, known as Black Thursday, more than 60 demonstrators lost their lives in the confrontations. The scale of the violence forced a change in the government, which was shown to be incapable of pacifying the conflict. At last, on February 22 of 2014, President Yanukovich fled into Russia, while the Supreme Rada,⁸ the single-chambered Parliament, named as provisional President Arseny Yatsenyuk. The first decision was to revoke the law of the co-official nature of languages, which greatly inflamed feelings in the Russian-speaking regions. The same day, demonstrators took over the principal institutions of Kiev.

Russian analysis of the events in the Maidan Plaza was reflected in the words of President Putin⁹ before the ambassadors and Permanent Representatives of the Russian Federation: «*All of us in Europe need some type of security network so that the precedents of Irak, Lybia, Syria and, as I must regrettably include in this group, Ukraine, do not act as contagious diseases. This is particularly dangerous in the post-Soviet space, given that these States are not politically and economically consolidated, and do not possess politically stable systems.*»

Paradoxically, the revolts at Maidan have benefitted the Russian and pro-Russian interests in the region, which for some time had awaited an opportunity to become independent of Kiev and to request the protection of Moscow. Exploiting the weakness of the Ukrainian provisional government, on February 27th, the Crimean separatists raised the Rus-

⁷ The EuroAsiatic Union was a project of economic and political union based on the Customs Union of Russia, Kazhakhstan, and Byelorussia, to which were invited other countries such as Ukraine. The creation agreement was signed under Putin's leadership on May 29 of 2014.

⁸ The Supreme Rada is the name given to the Ukrainian Parliament.

⁹ PUTIN, Vladimir, Speech of July 1 of 2014 before Ambassadors and Permanent Representatives of Russia, text from the Russian Embassy in Spain, http://spain.mid.ru/es/noticias/-asset_publiher/VQoWUGohJ7ON/content/speech-of-ambassadors-and-permanent-representatives-of-russia.

sian flag on the buildings of the Presidency and of the Parliament of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea. The following day, armed pro-Russian groups took over the two Crimean airports, and a militia, without identifying badges but well-trained and uniformed, deployed at key points for control of Crimea. The militiamen, who all covered their faces with the same type of high collar to avoid being identified, showed themselves to be a well-trained military group. The license plates of the vehicles were covered, so as to avoid any identification. In the eyes of any military analyst, it was obviously a case of military personnel formed into cohesive and disciplined units, with many months of instruction and training with Russian materiel, and not of civilians transformed into a militia. With the passing of time, and once achieved his objectives, Putin would admit to the participation of Russian military personnel in the insurgent rising of Crimea.

The recovery of the Crimean Peninsula, including the base at Sebastopol, has a great strategic value for Russia. To minimize international reaction, it was important to act quickly, before Europe, self-absorbed in its economic crisis, and the U.S., reorienting its interests toward the Asian Pacific, had time to react. On the other hand, there was a need to exploit the weakness of the provisional government and its lack of legality. Russia provided an immediate response to each event without improvising, as if it formed part of a previously studied plan. Worth special mention is her communications strategy, where the fundamental idea was to emphasize the lack of legitimacy of President Turchinov, since his arrival in power had been due to a coup d'État. On the other hand, she maintained that upon integrating Crimea under her sovereignty, she was attending to the demands of the majority of the Crimean population, just as expressed in a referendum. Given the lack of spokesmen for the separatists of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, the work of communication directed at international public opinion was designed and carried out by Russia. In every field, President Putin had taken the initiative, while the Ukrainian government was thrown off stride by the challenges presented by the separatists.

In light of Ukrainian institutional weakness, the Crimean separatists decided to move forward the referendum on independence and integration into Russia, originally to be held on May 25th, later moved forward to March 30, and finally carried out on March 16th. On March 11th, the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the City of Sebastopol had declared their independence, which was immediately recognized by Russia. This would allow Russia to guarantee the holding of the referendum despite any possible Ukrainian or international obstruction.

The result of the referendum in Crimea was overwhelming: 96.77% voted in favor of annexation into the Russian Federation, with 83.1% participating. In Sebastopol, the result was 95.6% in favor of annexation and par-

ticipation by 89.51%.¹⁰ On March 1st, the provisional Prime Minister of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, the Russian of Moldavian origin, Serguei Aksionov, requested assistance from President Putin in order to «guarantee peace». ¹¹ On the same day, the Council of the Russian Federation authorized the sending of troops to Ukraine, so making clear her determination in this crisis¹² and the fact that it had all been thought out in advance.

Three days after the referendum, the President of Russia, the President of the State Council of Crimea—a Moldavian-born Russian—Vladiiri Konstantinov, Prime Minister Aksionov, and the self-proclaimed Mayor of Sebastopol, Alexei Chaly, signed an interstate agreement on the integration of the Republic of Crimea and the city of Sebastopol into the Federation of Russia.

With respect to Russian public opinion, Putin's victory was also enormous: his popularity rating rose to 80%, when in March of 2012 he had been elected President with 63.6 of the Russian votes.¹³

Current situation of the conflict

On May 25th, Presidential elections took place in Ukraine which, with a 60% turnout, were won by Petro Poroshenko in the first round (54.1% of the votes cast), followed by Julia Timoshenko (13.15%). The parties led by the Euromaidan received scarcely 2% among them all.

Following these electoral results, Poroshenko came into power determined to undertake a number of constitutional reforms, which would reinforce the role of the Presidency of the Republic. Within a few days, he presented a 14-point peace plan. One of those points was the establishment of a ten-kilometer-wide neutralized zone along the Russian border, with the purpose of avoiding the entry of combatants and arms coming out of Russia. Another point demanded the unconditional surrender of the separatists, as a condition for the ending of military operations. With time, he would reduce this demand, and on July 4th, proposed holding conversations with the pro-Russian separatists to set the conditions for a lasting ceasefire, although with the previous condition that hostages be released, and Russian-Ukrainian border control be established.¹⁴

¹⁰ RT, Russian television channel in Spanish (17th March 2014).

¹¹ News item published by Russian network RT at <http://actualidad.rt.com/actualidad/view/121229-crimea-primer-ministro-putin-ayuda-russia>. March 1 2014.

¹² «Russia authorizes sending its army to the entire territory of Ukraine». News agency item published in «El Mundo» March 1, 2014. Available at <http://www.elmundo.es/internacional/2014/03/01/53118b09ca474181578b456c.html>.

¹³ BONET, Pilar. «Dozens of arrests in Russia in protests over electoral fraud.» Article in «El Pais», March 6th, 2014.

¹⁴ EFE News Agency report, July 8th, 2014, Kiev.

The passing of time worked against Ukraine, and in favor of the rebels and of Russia. In this context, it is not surprising that on July 3rd, President Porochenko instigated the naming of a new Defense Minister, Valerei Gueletei, from whom he demanded structural reforms in the Ukrainian Armed Forces in order to accelerate operations. This was the third turnover in the Defense portfolio since February, a clear sign that operations against the separatists were not being successful. Porochenko came to admit that «Operation Anti-terrorist», launched in mid-April of 2014, had revealed the many failings in the logistics systems of the Ukrainian Armed Forces.

Throughout this crisis, Ukraine has tried to avoid any news reports about civilian deaths caused by its troops, a question which could damage its national and international position, giving an excuse to Russia for military intervention, as occurred in Georgia. The rebels, on the other hand, attempted to prolong the conflict in order to achieve direct Russian intervention.

In any case, Russia has already demonstrated in Crimea that she follows a policy of *fait accompli*, and in order to do so is capable of ignoring international law when she feels it necessary. If Putin intends to control Novorussia in the medium to long term, he will set about taking steps to achieve this. The question is: How long does Putin give himself to advance with this strategy? The answer will depend on several factors: on the one hand, on events, and on the other, whether circumstances provide new opportunities for Russia, as happened in Crimea. Meanwhile, Russia charges the Ukrainian Armed Forces with violating international humanitarian law against her own people.



Ukrainian troops reinforced their offensive to recover the rebel territory. The objective was Donetsk, for which the Ukrainian National Council of Security and Defense designed a conventional operation, in which it advanced first towards the east and then towards the south, in the direction of Donetsk, following the cities of Slaviansk, Kramatosk, Avdeyevka, Gorlovka, etc. Specifically, the city of Slaviansk, with 120,000 inhabitants, was the symbol of resistance of the rebels until it was liberated by Ukrainian troops on July 6th, after two months of intense combat. According to Andrei Lisenko,¹⁵ spokesman for the Ukrainian National Council for Security and Defense, the Ukrainian Armed Forces were trying to cut off access to the cities of Donetsk and Lugansk, to keep the rebels from receiving arms and reinforcements. On their part, the pro-Russian rebels based their strategy on gaining time, and defended themselves in the cities while waiting for the Russians to cross the border to give them military support. In view of the advance of the Ukrainian army, Russia found herself obliged to send in troops and materiel to avoid the defeat of the rebels.

At the end of August, the Ukrainian government displayed Russian soldiers captured inside Ukrainian territory some 20 kilometers from the border, and NATO exhibited photos of Russian units inside Ukraine, estimating about 1,000 Russian soldiers. For their part, the rebels admitted to the presence of Russian combatants within their ranks, but not that they were Russian units.

The head of the Donybassyha Popular Militia, Igor Strelkov,¹⁶ better known as Girkin, is a former Russian officer who, by using a distracting manoeuvre, was able to break through the siege of Slaviansk, thus saving 80% of his troops and 90% of his armored vehicles, which he concentrated on the «active defense» of Donetsk. Following the fighting, Strelkov made statements confirming Russian aid: *«The aid arriving from Russia now is what we needed a month ago; at that time it would have allowed us to achieve great successes. Now it barely lets us hold out, but with no possibility of inclining the balance in our favor.»*

For their part, the leaders of the Popular Republic of Lugansk admitted at the beginning of the conflict that their intention was to free the border area of the Russian Federation they wanted to join, so expediting the reception of Russian aid. Meanwhile, the head of the self-proclaimed Popular Republic of Donetsk, Dennis Pushilin, criticized Vladimir Putin on the social network *Twitter* for not having intervened when, according to Pushilin, Putin had given them hope by leading them to believe that he would defend the Russian people of Novarusia.

¹⁵ EFE News Agency Report, 8th July 2014, Kiev.

¹⁶ Interview with Igor Strelkov published on <http://novorusia.su/node/2533>. June 9, 2014 (consulted September 2nd, 2014).

As seen above, some important insurgent leaders are Russian. Outstanding among them is Alexandre Borodai, 41, former Prime Minister of the self-proclaimed Popular Republic of Donetsk, holding a degree in Philosophy from Moscow State university. He arrived in Donetsk after the integration into Russia of Crimea, where he had been an advisor to Sergei Aksyonov, governor of the Republic of Crimea and a Russian of Moldavian origin. Borodai participated in the conflict of Transnistria, which proclaimed itself independent and is controlled by Moscow. With reference to Girkin,¹⁷ he was born in Moscow in 1970, was a colonel in the Russian army and is a specialist in the history of the civil war between the bolsheviks and the White Russians as well as a participant in the two wars of Chechnya and in the Transnistrian conflict. In February of 2014, he was tasked with the formation of popular militias in Crimea.

Returning to the area of operations, it was important for both armed factions to control the ports and airports which facilitate logistics and the movement of troops. Thus, the pro-Russian militia has fought heavy battles for control of the airports at Lugansk and Donetsk. The cease-fire agreements of September 5th were violated in order to attack Ukrainian forces which had holed up inside the Donetsk airport, as well as to mount an onslaught against those defending the city of Mariupol, important for its port, which would make an excellent logistics base.

As the conflict developed, one event of transcendental importance was the downing of a Boeing 777, flight MH-17 of the Malaysian Airlines company, on July 17th 2014. The attack was carried out from an area controlled by the pro-Russian rebels, causing the death of 298 passengers and crew travelling from Amsterdam to Kuala Lumpur. The investigation carried out through analysis of the black box and the remains of the plane confirmed the first hypothesis: the plane had been struck by an intermediate-range missile, probably a SAM-11 («Buk»), and on the basis of this data, it is certain that it was launched from a rebel-controlled zone.

But there is additional evidence as well which points in the same direction. A few days earlier, the pro-Russian insurgents had claimed responsibility for the downing of an Antonov flying at an altitude of 7,000 meters, which means that it could not have been downed by a low-range missile. It would be absurd to suspect the Ukrainian forces of originating the attack, considering that the plane entered over the western border and overflew Ukraine under Ukrainian control until arriving in insurgent territory. The insurgents had no planes at their disposition, so there is no chance they could have confused it with a military plane. Such an error was possible in the case of the insurgents, if the IFF (friend-enemy) radar were not working. In any case, if there is one thing irrefutable, it is the

¹⁷ BONET, Pilar. Crusaders of the Empire, Article in «El País», July 7 2014 available on: http://internacional.elpais.com/internacional/2014/07/19/actualidad/1405805851_923988.html.

damnable and abominable nature of the action: fire was opened on a plane not certainly identified as an enemy and very easily determined to be civil aviation, especially in light of its altitude at 10,000 meters, normally used for commercial flights.

The U.S. and some European nations accused Russia of having provided the missiles to the insurgents, but it should not be forgotten that an anti-air system of this type is very complex to handle, adjust and maintain, which would imply, apart from providing war materiel, the need for Russian cooperation in training personnel or Russian operators.

On September 3rd, President Putin proposed to his Ukrainian counterpart a seven-point plan¹⁸ to stop the bloodshed and achieve peace in Ukraine. This was accepted by Porochenko, without modification and at a time of enormous weakness, since Kiev's troops were losing ground and did not foresee receiving outside reinforcement. The plan proposed the following actions:

1. Paralyse the assault operations of the Armed Forces and the units of the Southeastern Ukrainian Militias in the regions of Donetsk and Lugansk.
2. Withdraw armed Ukrainian units to a distance which would exclude the possibility of artillery attacks and various missile systems used against populated areas.
3. Use international observers to insure that both parties respected the cease-fire and carry out follow-up of the situation in security zone.
4. Exclude the use of combat planes against the civilian population, as well as against populated areas of the conflict zone.
5. Carry out prisoner exchange on an «all for all» basis and with no previous conditions.
6. Open humanitarian corridors to permit movement of refugees and the delivery of humanitarian supplies to the cities and other points in Donbass: the provinces of Donetsk and Lugansk.
7. Make it possible for teams of technicians to arrive at affected locations in Donbass to restore infrastructure.

The fact that President Porochenko accepted this plan, which considerably limited his sovereignty over Donetsk and Lugansk, was a clear indication that he had arrived at the conclusion that Russian military aid to the separatists—as widely revealed in early September—would impede a definitive military victory by the Kiev troops. In the face of this, there realistically only remained a political solution, in spite of the fact that this could only prejudice Ukrainian interests and in contrast, provide broad benefits to Moscow and the rebels.

¹⁸ The Russian leader explained to the press that he had sketched out his plan for a solution to the Ukrainian crisis during the flight to Mongolia.

Economic aspects of the conflict

At the time the revolt in Maidan began, Ukraine was a country on the edge of bankruptcy. To this economic situation, there must be added the expenses of the conflict of Donetsk and Lugansk, which according to Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko cost 70 million Grivnas/day (\$5.6 million). This huge financial crisis obliged the Ukrainian government¹⁹ to ask the Supreme Rada to approve a tax law, budget and fiscal policy carrying a rise in duties to pay the expenses of the conflict.²⁰

The two political parties sustaining the government up to that time, UDAR and Svoboda (Liberty), failed to support the law, alleging that big capital should pay for the conflict. This led to the dissolution of the government coalition and the resignation of Arseni Yatseniuk, who was replaced as Acting Prime Minister by Vladimir Groysman, an independent who until that moment had been Vice Prime Minister.

Thus, the government was left in the minority, obliged to call elections, and with the tax law unapproved, creating a situation which meant, in the words of former Prime Minister Yatseniuk,²¹ «*The laws have not been passed, and there is no money to pay the policeman, the doctor, the teacher. There is no money to buy a single rifle, to fuel a single armored vehicle*». In this economic scenario, the weakness of the Ukrainian government and the lack of funds for the Armed Forces represented a major obstacle for the effort necessary to recover the territories of Donetsk and Lugansk.

The per capita income of Russia triples that of Ukraine, which in itself represents a strong incentive for the Russian-speaking populations to desire their integration into Russia. In July, more than 50,000 Ukrainian refugees had requested political asylum in Russia, while 27,000 had applied for Russian citizenship.

The energy factor as key element

The map below shows the network of gas pipelines coming out of Russia to supply all of Central Europe, as well as those from Algeria and Libya to supply Spain and Italy. However, the two distribution networks do not make up an integrated system since they are interrupted in France.

¹⁹ EFE Agency News Report, July 31st 2014, Kiev.

²⁰ Sergei Sobolov, pro-government Congressman and author of the tax bill. This tax to underwrite the offensive against the rebels represented 1.5% of the monthly salary of fiscal persons. The law is less demanding for those citizens who have an annual income of around 500,000 Grivnas (\$40,000), who would pay 10%, while those who earn 100 million Grivnas (\$8 million) would pay a 25% war tax.

²¹ EFE Agency News Report, 24th July, 2014, Kiev.

Ukraine and the new russian geopolitical leadership

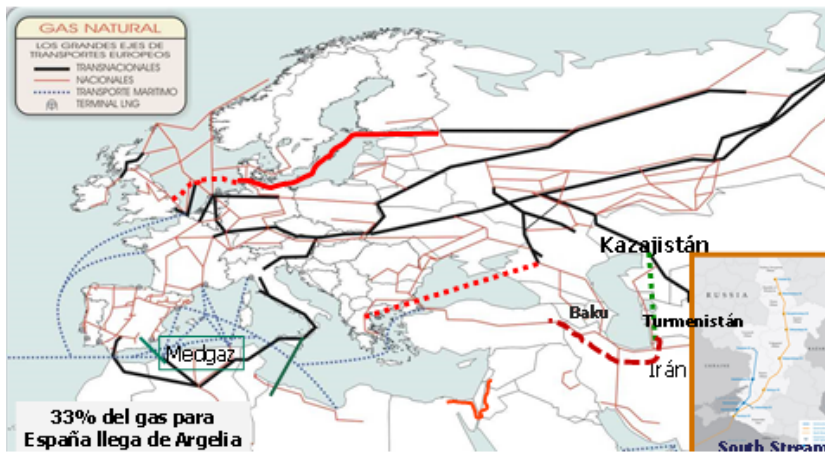
Some 80% of the energy consumed in the EU comes from fossil fuels (petroleum, natural gas and coal). Fifty percent of these come from outside the EU, which is thus highly vulnerable to the cut-off of gas and to price rises due to international crises.



GASEODUCTOS QUE SUMINISTRAN A LA UE

50% de la energía es importada

30% del gas procede de Rusia (36% de las importaciones alemanas, 27% de las de Italia y 23% de las de Francia)



In this energy context, Russia provides 30% of the gas as well as 18% of the petroleum consumed in the European Union. These figures have shown an upward tendency in recent years, increasing European energy dependency with respect to Russia.

Additionally, the gas pipeline network is rigid and creates a client-supplier dependency which at this point limits Europe's freedom of action. Central Europe depends on Russian gas, but Russia also has a great economic dependency on these sales. In light of all this, the Ukrainian crisis throws into relief the importance of the availability of an integrated gas pipeline system originating from the East (Russia) and the South (Algeria and Libya) so that, in this way, Europe may diversify its supply sources, to which must be added re-gasification plants.

Another important aspect in this field are the disagreements over the price of gas between Ukraine and Russia, which have led Gazprom to sue Ukraine before the Tribunal of Arbitration in Stockholm, where she claims payment of a debt of 4.5 billion dollars in outstanding supply bills. Until March of 2014, Russia paid for the use of the base at Sebastopol with a

30% reduction in its gas invoice. At that point, the price of the gas stood at \$268.50 per thousand cubic meters. After the annexation of the Crimea, Gazprom raised the price to \$485, a figure which Ukraine considered excessive.²² This weighs down the Ukrainian economy.

The Russian viewpoint on the price of the gas supplied to Ukraine was left very clear by President Putin²³ when he stated: *«They demand a reduction in the price of our merchandise which has no justification whatever, in spite of which the agreement was signed in 2009, and was complied with in good faith by the partners. But now, as you know, the courts of Kiev have withdrawn the charges against former Prime Minister Julia Timoshenko, who signed this contract. In other words, the judicial power of Kiev itself has recognized that everything has been done not only in accordance with the rules of international law but also with those of Ukrainian law.»*

Since July 16th, Gazprom has begun to apply a pre-payment system to the supply of gas to Ukraine. In June, Vladimir Putin explained before the Russian ambassadors²⁴ that *«Right now, if Ukraine does not pay, it does not receive, or receives through the so-called reversion. We know what this reversion is: it is an artificial reversion. How can gas be carried in both directions through the same pipelines? One need not be a specialist in the gas sector to understand that this is something unreal. They have made shady deals with their partners: basically, they receive our gas and pay some Western partner in Europe who will not receive a complete shipment. We see everything.»*

With all these factors on the table, Russia will undoubtedly continue using gas as a weapon of pressure against Ukraine, even more so as winter approaches, since by then the pressure will be greater and may affect the supply of gas to Europe.

The role of external actors

Russia

Formally, Russia is an external actor in this conflict, and that is the vision thus stating that²⁵ the negotiations for the peaceful solution of the

²² Euronews report of 6-16-2014. Available at <http://es.euronews.com/2014/06/16/Ukraine-no-longer-receives-gas-from.Russia/>.

²³ PUTIN, Vladimir, Conference of Ambassadors and Permanent Representatives of Russia, Russian Embassy in Spain, http://spain.mid.ru/es/noticias/asset_publisher/VQoWUGo-hJ7ON/content/conference-of-ambassadors-and-permanent-representatives-of-Russia.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ PUTIN, statements on the commemoration of the 70th anniversary of the Normandy landings in France. June 6th, EFE Agency, Moscow 7-6-2014.

conflict cannot be between Ukraine and Russia, since «*Russia is not part of the conflict. The parties are the Kiev authorities and those in favor of Federalization in the East.*» However, President Poroshenko²⁶ recognized the importance of Russia in the conflict and in its solution as well, upon indicating that «*A Russian representative will come to Ukraine with whom we will discuss the first steps for the settlement of the situation and the plan which I as President have presented and which foresees a series of steps on the part of the Russian Federation and others on the part of Ukraine.*»

According to Sergey Lavrov,²⁷ Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Washington and some of the European countries made a decision some time ago to isolate Russia. Taking the borders of NATO to Russia would form part of that strategy. Along these same lines, in June of 2014 Vladimir Putin told his Ambassadors and Permanent Representatives²⁸ that «*the events provoked in Ukraine are the concentrated expression of the policy of containment of the early Cold War.*» It should be remembered that the U.S. «*Kennan strategy of containment*», implemented at the beginning of the fifties, consisted of forming alliances with the countries located around Russia or its allies. In this alliance of Ukraine with the UE or, worse yet, its integration into NATO, Putin glimpsed what he supposed would bring the limits of NATO to the borders of Russia, as already occurred in the Balkan countries. He sees this as a kind of siege within a U.S.-NATO strategy of containment, which the Russian government does not seem disposed to accept so easily.

In fact, this Russian charge regarding NATO has been permanent. Putin²⁹ made this clear upon recognizing that «*Our partners have been persuading Russia for the last two decades of their good intentions and their will to build a system of strategic cooperation together. However, parallel to this, again and again they have enlarged NATO and have moved the political-military space they control closer and closer to our borders.*»

With regard to the European Union, the Russian response to its enlargement towards Eastern Europe has been the creation of the Euro-Asiatic Economic Union, the driving forces behind which are Russia, Byelorussia and Khazakhstan.³⁰ In the speech to the ambassadors quoted above, President Putin emphasized that «*In Ukraine, our nationals, the Rus-*

²⁶ News Report, EFE Agency in Moscow, 6-6-2014.

²⁷ LAVROV, Sergey, Interview at the ITAR-TASS Agency on 11-11-2014.

²⁸ PUTIN, Vladimir, Conference of Ambassadors and Permanent Representatives of Russia, Russian Embassy in Spain, http://spain.mid.ru/es/noticias/-asset_publisher/VQoWUGohJ70N/content/conference-of-ambassadors-and-permanent-representatives-of-Russia

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ The Accord for the creation of the Euro-Asiatic Economic Union was signed on May 29th in Astana.

sian people and those of other nationalities, see a threat to their language, their history, their culture and their legitimate rights, guaranteed precisely by the agreements of the European Union. On speaking of Russians and Russian citizens, I am referring to those persons who feel part of what we call in the broadest sense the Russian world, not necessarily the persons whose ethnic origin is Russian, but rather all those who consider themselves Russian.»

With this declaration of intentions, President Putin clearly indicated that populations speaking Russian or of pro-Russian sentiments within countries such as Ukraine, Georgia or Byelorussia, among others, are considered by the Russian authorities as «fellow countrymen», and as such, that their rights must be guaranteed.

In this meeting with the Russian diplomats, Putin also wondered: «*How did our partners expect us to react in the face of the evolution of events in Ukraine? We certainly had no right to leave the citizens of Crimea and Sebastopol abandoned to the fortunes of the radical and nationalist belligerents, we could not allow our access to the Black Sea to be substantially limited, nor a combat with the soldiers and sailors of Crimean land at Sebastopol to intensify, and, in short, NATO troops to arrive at speed and radically modify the balance of power on the Black Sea littoral.*» This remark clearly reflects Putin's outlook: In Crimea, all the circumstances were propitious for Russian intervention, and the question now is, how important is it to Russia to annex the territory they call Novorussia?

In order to answer this question, the first thing that must be said is that the annexation of Novorussia would make possible the integration of Transistria into that territory, which would mean her definitive independence from Moldavia. In this scenario, Ukraine would be weaker and over time would be destined to fall under the control of Moscow. In any case, Russia would be assured of leadership in the region. So, then: To what extent is President Putin willing to involve himself in further conflict with respect to Novorussia? The solution is to be found, once again, in the speech the President gave to the Russian ambassadors³¹: «*our country,*» Putin emphasized, «*will continue defending energetically the rights of Russians, of our fellow countrymen living abroad, and to do so will make use of the entire arsenal of means she possesses: from the political and economic to the right to self-defense covered under the international law of humanitarian operations.*» This comment backed up his statements several days earlier before the referendum³² on self-deter-

³¹ PUTIN, Vladimir, Conference of Ambassadors and Permanent Representatives of Russia, op.cit.

³² The referendum on the political status of Donetsk and Lugansk was held May 11 2014 and the result was 91.78% vote in favor of the independence of the Popular Repu-

mination for Donetsk and Lugansk was held: «*We must do everything to help those people defend their rights and decide their destiny for themselves. For that, we are going to fight.*» Days later, and following the start of the Ukrainian government's anti-terrorist operation against the rebels in the region of Donetsk and Lugansk, the Russian Senate provided the President of the Kremlin with authorization for the use of the Russian Armed Forces on Ukrainian territory in defense of the Russian-speaking population.

All of these comments reflect Russia's aspiration to hold a place of world leadership, on an equal footing with the U.S. and China, as Putin set forth so well in his speech to the ambassadors:³³ «*We have always aspired to be partners who are reliable and who carry things out on a basis of equality. Nonetheless, too often our legitimate interests have been ignored. And with regard to international forums, what will happen from now on? If we are limited to the role of allied observers with neither voice nor vote on key questions of crucial interest to us, these forums will cease to be of interest to us. We are not going to pay, for permission to sit at their side, with our vital interests.*»

With his words, Putin distances himself from diplomatic solutions and prefers those of *fait accompli* which have served him so well in Crimea and Georgia. Following this policy of intervention, Russia has set about varying the number and type of units deployed along the Ukrainian border, with the clear objective of influencing the conflict, giving moral support to the separatists and even providing support for the firing of a number of rocket-launchers against positions of the Ukrainian Army, according to reports from the U.S.³⁴ According to NATO reports, Russia had deployed, at the end of July, approximately 12,000 troops in the immediate vicinity of the border with Ukraine in support of the separatist rebels, a major military contingent which increased to 20,000 military personnel in August, when the troops of Kiev launched an advance on Donetsk.

The presence on the part of Russian military personnel with numerous aircraft, who could support the rebels simply by making the decision to do so, represented a major factor of instability and made Russia a direct protagonist in the conflict, at the same time providing a source of heavy pressure on the Ukrainian forces. In addition, the Russian forces had at their disposition tank units, providing great combat potential; special operations units, capable of infiltrating, acting and withdrawing within and from Ukrainian territory; artillery campaign units to support

blic of Donetsk, and 7.1% NO to independence, with a 74.87% turnout.

³³ PUTIN, Vladimir, Conference of Ambassadors and Permanent Representatives of Russia, op. Cit.

³⁴ EFE Agency News Report, 29/07/2014.

the rebel militia; and finally, anti-aircraft units to act against Ukrainian aircraft and logistics units.

In view of this military deployment by Russia, the Supreme Commander of NATO in Europe, American General Philip Breedlove,³⁵ stated that «*The Russian Army is again concentrating its forces on the eastern side of the border. There are now around eight battalions there. They have the capacity to cross the border in case of need*», adding that «*the support of the Russian Army for the pro-Russian forces is very active.*»

But undoubtedly the greatest support provided by Russia by act or by omission has been the number of Russian Militiamen integrated into the militias of Dombass, not forgetting the arms transferred. In addition, and in order to counter the pressure from the U.S., Russia decided to threaten to break or paralyze the accords on the limitation of nuclear warheads, especially with reference to medium-range missiles. In reaction, the U.S. accused the Russian authorities of failing to comply with their commitments to disarmament, which were agreed upon in the treaty for the elimination of short- and medium-range nuclear missiles (INF). Among other goals, the treaty aims to reduce instability in Europe, since it avoids the threat of rapid attacks on strategic objectives, with barely any time to react. In Rasmussen's³⁶ words, the Treaty «strengthens the security of all of us, including Russia's.» For her part, Russia accuses the American government of having, on repeated occasions, violated the said treaty by placing interceptor missiles within the framework of the antimissile shield, which Moscow considers a threat to its security. Additionally, Moscow feels the U.S. commits many other violations, among which she includes the production of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) which are equipped with arms, as well as the Mark-41 systems, capable of launching medium-range cruise missiles, and which the U.S. wishes to place in Poland and Rumania.

Finally, and in view of the possible integration of Ukraine into NATO, Putin has not hesitated to issue a reminder that Russia is a nuclear nation which is rearming, just as confirmed by the words of the NATO Secretary General³⁷: «*Russian military spending has grown more than 10% in real terms each year for the last five, and in contrast several European allies have cut back their defense spending more than 25% in the same period, and some even more than 40%.*»

³⁵ Gen. Breedlove, declarations made to the STA Agency, 9 July, 2014, during a visit to Slovenia.

³⁶ EFE Agency News Report, 30/07/2014.

³⁷ Remarks by Anders Fogh-Rasmussen at the World Security Forum in Bratislavia, May 15, 2014.

The United States

Initially, the U.S. position was to adopt a relatively low profile with respect to this conflict. This attitude became evident when Russia annexed Crimea. At that time, and in violation of international law, both the European Union and the United States themselves did no more than impose symbolic sanctions against a limited number of persons close to the Russian president. Later, and at the time when confrontation on the ground was increasing, the U.S. increased her sanctions against Russia. However, the important negative repercussions that these economic measures have for the European Union—as collateral damages of this conflict—has caused the field of application of the sanctions to be very limited; which, in the end, has favored President Vladimir Putin's reinforcement of his policy of *fait accompli*.

All these actions have raised grave concern in the countries of the East which are allied to the West; and to tranquilize their state of mind, President Obama has repeatedly guaranteed them his support. Thus, on June 3rd, President Barack Obama announced a \$100 million plan for direct aid to these Eastern European countries, including Moldavia and Georgia. The plan, in addition, foresees the training of the armed forces of the NATO countries which border on Russia. Later, the American government notified Congress of its decision to invest, on the one hand, up to \$19 million in 2015 to train and arm the National Guard of Ukraine, with the aim of increasing its defense capacity; and on the other hand, to contribute \$8 million to reinforcing the Border Guard service of Ukraine.

The European Union

In dealing with the role of the European Union in this crisis, it is necessary to remember that at its origin, and as an «unprovoked cause» of the conflict, stands the demand for exclusivity made by the EU to Ukraine upon signing the agreement on association and free trade. This condition collided head-on with Russia's interests in the area, causing a situation about which Spanish Foreign Minister Garcia-Margallo³⁸ has said, «*The Ukrainian crisis is the most important, or one of the most important, of the crises the European Union has undergone since the fall of the Berlin .wall.*» Regarding its position on the peace process, the EU has supported the initiative of President Poroshenko, based on the principle of respect for international legality and which

³⁸ GARCIA-MARGALLO, José Manuel, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Spain, remarks before the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Congress of Deputies, July 31st, 2014.

backs the right of Ukraine to maintain its unity and territorial integrity as well as to decide its destiny.

The EU has maintained from the beginning of the conflict the need for a diplomatic solution and for this reason has tried to counter the strength of the Russian initiatives by means of economic sanctions which have gone from lesser to greater and have been approved in four phases. Of special significance were those adopted in the third phase: the Official Diary of the EU³⁹ published a series of economic sanctions against Russia, taking effect on July 31st, and which envisage the prohibition of the purchase or sale of bonds issued by Russian State banks.⁴⁰ The package also includes an embargo on the import and export of arms and military materiel but only for «new contracts», thus excluding the two Mistral airplane carriers built by France for Russia, the contract for which was signed in 2010.

In the field of arms trade, the EU exports arms to Russia valued at 300 million Euros a year, while Russian imports come to a total of 3,200,000,000 Euros. The EU exports goods of dual use worth 20,000,000,000 Euros a year, destined for both military ends as well as civilian use, but only those for final military use are sanctioned. It must be kept in mind that the countries formerly members of the Warsaw Pact and which now are members of the EU, are equipped with arms systems of Russian origin, and those materials require supplies and spare parts which must be purchased from Russia. For this reason, such transactions have been excluded from the European sanctioning process against Russia.

On the other hand, the sanctions do include a prohibition against exporting «certain equipment and technology related to energy which will be governed by a previous authorization» on the part of the member States. With this measure, they commit themselves to deny export licenses for «new contracts» when these are related to «the exploration and production of petroleum in deep waters and in shale deposits, and petroleum exploration in the Arctic.» This measure is of major economic impact, since the export of technology to Russia for non-conventional gas and petroleum projects represents some 150 million Euros a year, although it should be remembered that gas projects are excluded.

³⁹ Official Diary of the EU, July 31st 2014, indicating that «The Council has adopted restrictive measures by the EU in light of the actions by Russia which destabilize the situation in the east of Ukraine. This decision legalizes the agreement reached by the Committee of Permanent Representatives on Tuesday, July 29th», according to a statement released by the EU.

⁴⁰ During 2013, Russian banks with a majority of Russian State capital raised 7.5 million Euros from the EU, of the 15.8 million in bonds issued by Russian public institutions.

Within this sphere, the European Commission has defended the legality of the package of economic sanctions that the EU has approved against Russia in the sectors of finance, arms and sensitive technologies for the petroleum sector. In its report, it emphasizes that all of these are compatible with the World Trade Organization (WTO), with the objective of avoiding the success of a possible Russian suit against these measures.

Regarding the sectors affected by the sanctions, it is obvious that the EU has tried to apply sanctions on those materials where Russia's dependence on Europe is much greater than the reverse. For this reason, the gas sector has not been included in the sanctions, since the majority of European nations depend on Russian gas; but in contrast, materials related to petroleum exploitation have been included.

This whole package of sanctions has a validity of one year, although it may be reviewed within a period of three months. After the cease-fire agreement of September 5th, European authorities could re-think these sanctions and remove them if the cease-fire holds. This relative laxity in the application of the sanctions demonstrates once again that many EU nations prioritize the safeguarding of their own interests above those which are common to all. This circumstance, together with the lack of a true Common Policy on Security and Defense and clear leadership, has relegated the EU to a secondary role in a conflict at the doors of its own territory.

And all of this is in spite of the fact that on July 7th of 2014, the European Parliament approved, by a vote of 497 in favor, 121 against and 21 abstentions, a resolution soliciting the imposition by the EU of an embargo on arms to Russia, and preparation of new sanctions in the economic, financial and energy sectors, for destabilizing the east of Ukraine, measures which were immediately contested by Russia, which decreed a prohibition on the import of food products coming from the EU countries applying the boycott. This has caused problems in many sectors, including the Spanish fruit and vegetable market.

Finally, and in the military sphere, on July 22nd 2014 the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the EU approved the establishment of a mission of Security Sector Reform (SSR) at the petition of the Ukrainian authorities. This mission, for an initial period of two years, falls within the framework of the Common Policy on Security and Defense, with the aim, in the words of Catherine Ashton, «to contribute to the reinforcement of the State of Law in Ukraine, in favor of all Ukrainian citizens throughout the country.» Its headquarters will be in Kiev, although with representation in the different Ukrainian regions. The initial budget will be of 2,680,000 Euros for the deployment phase of the mission,

with a termination deadline of 30th November of 2014. For their part, Germany, Denmark and Poland⁴¹ announced an agreement to reinforce the preparation of the general multinational headquarters of the Northeast created in 1999 in Szczecin, Poland, and have invited other allies to participate.

The Atlantic Alliance

The Alliance has at no time considered military support to Ukraine, since this country is not a member of NATO and as such, article 5 of the Treaty of Washington is not applicable. In spite of this fact, neither can the Alliance look the other way, as this would mean abandoning Ukraine to its fate, at the same time giving wings to Russia so that she may forcibly intervene in all the territories which once were a part of the USSR. In the case of the Baltic countries, obviously the situation is very different, for they are members of NATO, and as such, article 5 would be applied.

Within NATO, there is a widely divergent perception of the Ukrainian conflict among the 28 member countries. On the one hand, the Baltic countries and Poland, who perceive it as a true menace and consider that the solution requires a combination of political, economic and military responses, including among them the deployment of forces on their territory; on the other hand, the European countries of the South and West, which consider that this conflict is a risk to European stability, but discard any short-term military response; and finally, the U.S. position: she does not wish to withdraw from leadership of the area, but neither is she disposed to commit herself further than the Europeans themselves, from whom she is requiring greater involvement. To this panorama may be added other considerations, such as that of the German government, which does not consider it advisable to increase the permanent military presence of the Alliance in Eastern Europe and so attend to the petitions of Poland and the Baltic counties.⁴²

On June 6th of 2014, the Associate Secretary General of NATO, Alexander Vershbow⁴³, charged Russia with attempting «*to recreate a sphere of influence*» over the former Soviet Republics, upon limiting their sovereignty after changing the borders «*through the use of force*» in Ukraine, following her annexation of Crimea. During the Cold War, the USSR personified for NATO the image of its enemy, to be kept at a certain distance through a war of mutual dissuasion, both conventional and nuclear. Both blocs sought obsessively to ensure that their missile launchers provided

⁴¹ EUROPA PRESS News Agency report, June 3rd 2014, Brussels.

⁴² EFE News Agency report, July 29th 2014.

⁴³ Europe Press Agency news report, June 6th 2014.

thrust over a long enough distance to ensure that they would have time to launch theirs. That was dissuasion, which continues to be important for Russia even though the Cold War has ended.

Therefore, it is not surprising that the Moscow government has as an objective of its National Security Strategy of 2010 preventing NATO from arriving on its borders. This was demonstrated when the three Baltic countries entered NATO, and now she seems unwilling to sit back and rest in the face of the possible entrance of Ukraine into NATO. The North Atlantic Council did invite Ukraine to form part of the Alliance, in response to the Ukrainian government of Julia Timochenko, which provoked a protest by Russia since she has always considered that extending the borders of NATO to her territory was unacceptable.

At NATO headquarters, top authorities, civilian as well as military, have commented on this conflict. Thus, the American General and SACEUR Philip Breedlove,⁴⁴ made it clear to the news agency STA, that NATO supports dialogue and a political solution to the Ukrainian crisis, since «the member countries of NATO have agreed that there will be no military mission if Russia crosses the border with Ukraine.» For General Breedlove, «the new challenge for NATO is how to adapt this Alliance, which in the last 14 years has viewed Russia as a partner, to a situation in which Russia no longer behaves like one, and resorts to a kind of hybrid war.»

For his part, the Associate Secretary General of NATO, Alexander Vershbow⁴⁵ admitted on June 6th that this conflict has obliged the Allies «to go back to the beginning» and concentrate more on the kind of collective defense dealt with in Article 5 of the Treaty, providing military reinforcement for a better dissuasion in the eastern European countries. Finally, the Secretary General of NATO⁴⁶ made it clear that the Alliance would do more in the future to cooperate with Ukraine, although requests for equipment, or aid with intelligence, are decisions at a bilateral level: «*There is a difference between being or not being a member of NATO. Collective defense under Article 5 of the Treaty is only applied to member nations.*»

At the recent Wales Summit, held the 4th and 5th of September, NATO denounced the new spheres of influence imposed by Russia. At this transcendental meeting, NATO⁴⁷ demonstrated its concern over the Russian attitude on the Ukraine conflict, and made the decision to approve a rapid

⁴⁴ TSA News Agency report through EFE News Agency June 9th, 2014, Zagreb

⁴⁵ Europa Press News Agency report, June 6, 2014, Brussels

⁴⁶ Statements by Anders Fogh-Rasmussen at the World Security Forum in Bratislavia May 15th, 2014.

⁴⁷ NATO: Statement at the Wales Summit held September 4 and 5, 2014. (paragraphs 5, 6, 7, and 8). Available at NATO.int.

response plan with a set of integrated measures. Among these, outstanding was the creation of a new joint combined force capable of deploying in a few days to respond to challenges, especially on the periphery of the Alliance. This force should include ground, sea and air components, as well as special forces. With it, NATO intends to provide a response to the challenges, present and future, devised by Russia, as well as their political implications.

Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe

This is the only international organization accepted by Russia as an intermediary in peace conversations, and they have acted as inspectors in many areas, especially when dealing with affairs of a humanitarian nature. Their participation in this crisis demonstrates once more that this organization is the most ideal to carry out international arbitration.

The OSCE forms part of the so-called tripartite Contact Group (Ukraine, Russia and the OSCE, as well as representatives of the separatists), and designed a «road map» of its own in order to arrive at an agreement on peace and stability. However, its role was limited to that of observer and arbiter of the accords, but with no capacity for sanctioning those who fail to comply with them.

All in all, and keeping in mind that Russia, as a permanent member, has a veto on the Security Council, the OSCE is the only institution capable, as an international organism, of acting to lead the peace process and provide the necessary guarantees through its observers.

Conclusions and perspectives

The Ukraine crisis is conditioning the place Russia wishes to occupy in the current world order, as well as its relations, both bilateral and multilateral, with the West.

Undoubtedly, we have before us a new paradigm which will determine the international strategic panorama, although we cannot foresee how far-reaching the changes will be. Uncertainty, one of the principal characteristics of the globalized world, also hovers over this conflict.

In this scenario, it is essential to achieve compatibility between the Agreement on Association and Free Trade signed between Ukraine and the European Union, with another similar one between Ukraine and the Euroasiatic Union, as this could on the one hand strengthen the geopolitical position of Ukraine and on the other, favor commercial agreements between the EU and Russia, which now are seriously damaged, as is the stability of Europe.

For the moment, Russia has clearly evinced her interest in recovering her role as a world power and her irrevocable interest in the control of the territory historically united to Russia, as is the case of Novorussia. And with respect to the field of negotiation, it is as well to underline certain aspects with reference to the positions of the three principal actors in the conflict: Ukraine, the pro-Russian insurgents and Russia. Although the latter two act more or less in coordination, all cease-fire agreements have always been established through conversations between Ukraine and Russia, generally held in Byelorussia, with the support of her President, Alexandre Lukashenko. Byelorussia is a Russian ally and maintains good relations with Ukraine, but this does not mean that it fails to watch with concern the Russian expansionist policy respecting territories with Russian-speaking populations. It is also true that in the conversations at the end of July, even the participation of the rebels was dismissed, reinforcing even more the idea that Russia and Ukraine are the true architects of a peaceful resolution to the conflict. In any case, and with a prime mediator's role, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), plays an essential part in the supervision of all agreements.

On the operative plane, and despite the fact that their units were completed by militiamen and security guards, the developments during military operations exposed the operative deficiencies of the Ukranian Armed Forces, but even more importantly, it laid bare the moral quandary for national troops who must fight against their own fellow countrymen; circumstances which have marked the development of the conflict.

In addition, when the offensive of the Kiev forces seemed close to achieving their victory and entering into Donetsk, Russia increased her aid to the separatists, sending troops into Ukrainian territory, making it clear that she would not permit their military defeat.

So far, all the circumstances and parameters, of widely differing nature, conditioning the development of the conflict have herein been presented; it only remains to reflect on its pacification and the return to a certain normalcy, permitting the settlement of future relations between the two countries.

In this context, the position that Ukraine adopts is fundamental, especially with respect to the separatists who gave battle to the Kiev government, with the unquestionable support of Russia.

All seems to indicate that President Poroshenko, in view of the way a conflict which caused more than 2,500⁴⁸ dead has evolved, is con-

⁴⁸ Statements to the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navi Pillay, on August 29th 2014. <http://www.lavanguardia.com/internacional/20140829/54414108591/the-U.N.-sets-figure-of-2,593-deaths-in-ukraine-conflict.html>.

vinced that it is preferable to seek a negotiated agreement than a military victory over the separatists, something which Moscow does not appear to consider. For this reason, Kiev's attitude respecting the enemies of national unity has evolved: at the beginning, it characterized them as terrorists, only to end by accepting the rebel leaders as valid negotiating partners with no restrictions. In the agreement signed with Putin last September, the conditions of the agreement seem highly favorable to the separatists; for they stipulate the withdrawal of the Ukrainian troops from Donetsk and Lugansk, without demanding the disarming of the militia; which implies the loss of the greater part of the national sovereignty of Kiev.

However, it remains to be seen what shape the future structure of the Ukrainian State will take, especially with regard to its degree of decentralization, as well as the role to be played by the separatists and Russia herself in the negotiation of a new State constitution. For the moment, the Ukrainian President has stated that self-government will be granted for three years to Donetsk and Lugansk, as well as the immediate celebration of regional elections. All these concessions emphasize that the Ukrainian President is seeking a peaceful and negotiated way out of the conflict, even at the risk of seeing the separatists continue to increase their demands. Following three years of self-government, without a guaranteed disarming of the rebels and with the support of Russia, it would be unlikely for these regions to accept a process of recentralization; on the contrary, they may try to intensify the process of independence.

The European Union, for its part, should reflect, calmly and in depth, on its performance in this crisis, and even more, on its future relations with Russia and Ukraine. Spanish Foreign Minister García-Margallo⁴⁹ underlined the need «to decide whether we want Russia to be a partner or a strategic adversary», the first of which would oblige Russia to respect international legality and, in consequence, the territorial integrity of Ukraine. It is in the interests of the European Union and of Russia itself to find a status which would permit understanding and the development of mutual confidence, and in order to do so, Russia must avoid the temptation to embark on strategies of recovery of the territories which made up the former USSR. In the interest of all the parties concerned, Ukraine should be the last example of any expansionist policy between Sovereign and independent States, because the consequences, as in this case, are always unforeseeable.

⁴⁹ GARCIA-MARGALLO, Jose Manuel. Remarks before the Commission on Foreign Affairs of the Congress of Deputies, July 31, 2014.

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TABLE OF GEOPOLITICAL INDICATORS	
Extension 603.550 Km ²	
GNP: 3,374,000 mill. \$ (2013 estimated)	
Structure GNP	Agriculture 9.9%
	Industry 29.6%
	Services 60.5%
GNP per capita 7,400 \$	
Growth Rate GNP 0.4%	
Commercial Relations	
(Exports): Russia 25.6%, Turkey 5.4%, Egypt 4.2% (2012)	
Commercial Relations	
(Imports): Russia 32.4%, China 9.3%, Germany 8%, Byelorrusia 6%, Poland 4.2% (2012)	
Population 44,291,413 (July 2014 estimated)	
Age distribution	0-14 14%
	15-64 70.1%
	Over 65 15.6%
Growth Rate of the Population -0,64%	
Ethnic group: Ukranians 77.8%, Russians 17.3%, Byelorrusians 0.6%, Moldavians 0.5%, Tartars Crimeans 0.5%, Bulgarians 0.4%, Hungarians 0.3%, Rumanians 0.3%, Poles 0.3%, Jews 0.2%, others 1.8% (2001, estimated)	
Orthodox Religions 66.6%, Catholics 8-10%, Jews 1%	
Literacy rate of the population 99.7%	
Population below poverty level 24.1%	
GINI Index 25.6 (2010)	
Number of Internet users 7.77 million	
Military spending % of GNP 2.77	

SOURCE: CIA The World FACTBOOK

CHRONOLOGY OF THE CONFLICT	
CHAPTER I	UKRAINE AND THE NEW RUSSIAN GEOPOLITICAL LEADERSHIP
DATE	EVENTS
November of 2013	Date set for the signing of the Agreement on Association and Free Trade between the EU and Ukraine, whose president decided in the end not to sign.
2 November 2013	First organized pro-EU demonstrations.
20 February 2014	So-called "Black Thursday", more than 60 demonstrators and police died.
22 February 2014	Demonstrators take over principal institutions headquartered in Kiev.
27 February 2014	Crimean separatists raise the Russian flag over buildings of Council of Ministers and of Parliament of Crimean Autonomous Republic
28 February	Groups of armed pro-Russians take over Crimea's two airports and troops without I.D. badges, but well-trained and uniformed deploy at key points of Crimea.
6 March	Sebastopol unilaterally declares itself a federal territory of the Russian Federation.
11 March	Authorities of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea declare independence with the name of the Republic of Crimea.
15 March	U.N. Security Council attempts to pass a resolution declaring invalid the referendum next day in Crimea, but Russia vetoes it and China abstains.
16 March	Referendum in Crimea and Sebastopol on integration into Russian Federation with 96.77%.
17 March	Vladimir Putin signs a decree on the 17th recognizing the independence of Crimea.
28 March	U.N. General Assembly passes non-binding resolution favoring the territorial integrity of Ukraine and against the Russian annexation of Crimea.

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28 March	U.N. General Assembly passes non-binding resolution favoring the territorial integrity of Ukraine and against the Russian annexation of Crimea.
11 May	Referendum on independence in Donetsk and Lugansk through 2279 electoral colleges.
25 May	Presidential elections in Ukraine won on first round by Poroshenko.
5 July	Ukrainian Armed Forces force rebels out of Sloviansk, symbol of the rising and scene of harsh combat. Head of Ukrainian Joint Chiefs of Staff, Viktor Muzhenko, announces taking Nikolayevka, one of 6 historic regions of Novorossiia.
12 July	EU lengthens list of sanctioned persons, blocking accounts and prohibiting entrance into the Union of 11 separatist leaders of Donetsk and Lugansk.
17 July	A Malaysia Airlines Boeing 777 is downed over pro-Russian insurgent-controlled territory in the province of Donetsk. The plane carried 298 civilians from 11 countries, travelling from Amsterdam to Kuala Lumpur.
22 July	U.E. adopts the second phase of sanctions including economic, trade and energy measures.
30 July	Ukrainian government troops take over control of Avdeyevka, 35,000 inhabitants, located 10 km. north of Donetsk and principal bastion of pro-Russian separatist militias before reaching Donetsk.
31 July	EU approves third phase of economic sanctions against Russia.
29 August	Russian troops enter Ukraine.
3 September	Ukrainian-Russian cease-fire agreement.
12 September	EU approves new series of sanctions against Russia.

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Al Qaeda and jihadism

Federico Aznar Fernández-Montesinos

Chapter two

Summary

Al Qaeda, a Salafist, jihadist organization, has experienced profound deterioration due to the measures taken directly against it. As a consequence, the group has gradually been diluted until becoming a nebula of jihadist groups, with a franchised system, where individuals carry on uncoordinated actions of dubious military usefulness. Still, its success has been in being able to survive at all, and in becoming a brand, a symbol, of a leaderless jihad.

Key words

Al-Qaeda, Salafism, jihadism, terrorism, insurgency.

Introduction

The West is an indefinite geographic place, and Islam a religion. The two have now met on a sea too wide to unite them, but not wide enough to separate them, thus breaking down an age-old situation of mutual disregard. The first shock took place halfway through the 19th century with the trauma of colonization; and the second, no less important, halfway through the 20th century, when decolonization confronted both parties with their own lack of preparation. The third, even more acute, was provided by the mass communication media, which transformed the encounter of different societies into a clash without mediators, between homes equipped with significantly dissimilar economic capacities, with all the resulting feelings of grievance and injustice.

The world has folded upon itself. Globalization has been the great phenomenon of the turn of the century; it entails a growing speed of contacts between North and South, but also between East and West, blurring distances and eliminating processes and transition phases, a fact that magnifies differences and makes them more blatant.

It reproduces thus an encounter that follows Hegelian dynamics -thesis, antithesis, synthesis- whose acceleration triggers a kinetic collision, or perhaps something felt to be like it. It must be absolutely clear that globalization is not by any means a peaceful phenomenon, but rather the opposite. It represents a process of rationalization exercised on the strongest culture, together with many other sub-processes of the same nature, and the elimination of the culturally weakest.

In this sense, Al Qaeda is branded as one of the leaders of a reactionary movement (antithesis), opposing not only Western culture but mainly, other and different Islamic varieties of the same creed that serves it as inspiration. The East-West encounter has been decisive for its creation.

All of this is the natural result of the diversity of a religion practiced by a number of people that ranges between 1,200 and 1,500 million, together with a local culture, and a lack of both hierarchy and doctrinal unity; globalization has made tangible the differences existing among the Islam practiced by the various Muslim communities.

The fact is that Islam is diverse (*ijtilaf*), not only due to the existence of different legitimate approaches to religious belief, but also through the preponderance of preaching (*dawa*) over doctrine, which provides it with a considerable capacity of adaptation that explains its extraordinary dissemination.

Therefore, the approach, the analysis of the process, must be done bearing in mind two basic considerations. The first is that, notwithstanding

the fact that references can have a theological nature, or be presented as such, the keys of the proposal, its goals, are inherently political.

The second consideration is that global terrorism as such cannot really exist, given that, as a fiction of power (the same as power itself), it demands a framework for its projection; and global space is not constituted, because globalization has not concluded. In practical terms, global terrorism cannot exist, since thus far a genuine global agenda is not feasible, due to the fact that global space is not sufficiently integrated, and still less is it structured.

What is viable, however, is a terrorism of local dimension, coordinated to obtain a synergistic effect at a global level, and consequently, submitted to strong centrifugal and centripetal tensions resulting from divergent interests, not only at a local level, but also globally.

Background to the conflict

Historical background

Modern Salafism was born in the sixties in Saudi Arabia under the tutelage of its leaders as an instrument for the fight against Nasserism and Arabic socialism; many Islamic scholars from neighboring countries, sheltered in Saudi Arabia, became integrated in it. The fusion of their thinking with Wahhabism created a powerful catalyst that revitalized and invigorated groups which, later on, would acquire life of their own and become difficult to control.¹

This way, Saudi leaders tried to influence and manage the Muslim world through the role of their country as site of the Muslim holy places, and also simultaneously, to gain legitimacy before their people presenting themselves as champions of Islam. By doing so, they solved at the same time geo-political and legitimacy problems, even at the expense of putting great stress on the political movement they had created by placing it in a permanent dilemma between submitting to power or becoming Islam's vanguard; a challenge overcome by no few of them.

The invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 caused a nine-year conflict which coincided in time with the peace agreements between Israel and Egypt, the Islamic Revolution in Shiite Iran, and the Iran-Iraq war. That is to say, it happened in a period of great upheaval and geo-political realignment in the Middle East.

In this context, one of the first to use the term *salafist jihadism* to speak about himself and his own ideas was Abu Muhammad Al Maqdisi who,

¹ Meijer, Roel (Coord). *Globalsalafism*. Hurst and Company, London, 2009.

in 1984, during his stay in Afghanistan, published his work «*Abraham's Community*» («*Millet Ibrahim*»), in which he advocates a more radical and intransigent Islam and incorporates internationalist and anti-Western elements.

The word Al Qaeda, inscribed in the Salafist tendency, has an unclear origin; it seems to stem from the term «*qafayn-dal*» which refers to a base or foundation that would be used by Arabic jihadists to fight against the Soviets. For other authors, however, incidentally or not, it refers to a file or data base of financial or jihadist operations used by Ben Laden during the Soviet conflict.

When the Soviet conflict ended, the organization did not demobilize, but stayed in that area to support the Taliban in the scenario of inner turmoil that followed Soviet defeat. What is clearer is that the first references to this term only date back to 1988, and even more clearly from 1996 onward. Hence, Al Qaeda would have been born in Pakistan (Peshawar) sometime between 1988 and 1996 as a network of networks.

It would probably have been an evolution of the organization «*Maktab-al-Jidmat*» (MAK), established by the Palestinian Abdullah Yusuff Azzam, at that time Professor at the University of Jeddah as promoter of an idea of global jihad that was capable of mobilizing more than 20,000 volunteers from some twenty countries. All these activities were initially carried out with direct support from the Pakistani services and direct or indirect support from North American services.²

At the beginning of the 1980s, Ben Laden would join, providing the movement with financial and political support. Furthermore, after the assassination of Azzam, in circumstances still murky and attributed by some to Ben Laden himself, he would take control and modify its political course; the ideological void resulting from the death of its first leader would be filled by Ayman al-Zawahiri, who made a clear commitment to the jihadist Salafist line of thought.³

In 1991, Ben Laden distanced himself definitively from the Saudi monarchy after the permission given for the deployment of North American troops in the country, in the context of the First Gulf Conflict, basing his stance on a famous *fatwa* by Abdul Aziz bin Abdullah bin Baz (a notable Salafist conservative mullah who would be named in 1992 Great Mufti, interpreter of the law, of Saudi Arabia). Ben Laden accused the regime of turning the country into a North American colony.

² Umbreen, Javaid and Nighat, Noureen. «An Insight into the Philosophical Dynamics of AlQaeda». *Journal of Political Studies* 2002, Vol. 20, Issue 2, 2013, 201—218.

³ Ibid.

In 1994, after losing his Saudi nationality, Ben Laden took refuge in Sudan, and in 1995⁴ he would be blamed for a terrorist attack in his homeland that would bring him media attention. In 1996, he was forced to leave the country and settled down in Afghanistan, where the Taliban had taken over power. On 7 August 1998, the terrorist attacks against the North American Embassies in Tanzania and Kenya took place, resulting in more than two hundred dead and four thousand wounded, placing the organization at the forefront of media attention.

AlQaeda's commitment in Afghanistan provoked multiple doctrinal problems, due to the peculiar Taliban interpretation of Islam that hindered the organization's aim for purity. All these barriers were overcome, in the opinion of as relevant a figure as Mustafa Setmariam, for the sake of operational effectiveness.

AlQaeda's terrorist activities have developed under a pattern in which every wave is followed by a withdrawal, as fitting with a conflict's dialectical nature. Those waves, it is true, have shortened their cycle, increasing thus their recurrence.

The first would span the period from its creation until the conquering of Afghanistan, its peak being the 9/11 terrorist attacks. The second wave was linked to the invasion of Iraq in 2003, its high point having been the terrible attacks in Madrid and London, ending in Iraq between 2007 and 2008; a wave with a more diffuse organization, as a consequence of the measures taken by the West, and which leaves action partly up to individual initiative. A third wave, in Seth Jones opinion⁵, would have begun with an uprising in the Arabian peninsula and ended with Ben Laden's death, being characterized, according to Sageman, by a considerable growth in the number of independent cells of terrorists by imitation, operating outside terrorist training infrastructures.

In any case, the 9/11 attacks placed AlQaeda in the forefront of attention around the world, achieving global visibility and turning the organization into an attraction for many people discontent with the current state of affairs, especially in the Muslim world, providing the organization with a relevance not in accord with its real military capabilities. It would provide an outlet channeling the frustration and hate of significant sectors of the population. Its actions made its political goals seem viable, and consequently, it was interpreted as a danger for the West, which increased its military budget.

However, its presence had been concentrated and consolidated considerably in Afghanistan, making the organization tangible. It had become strong, perhaps too strong, offering thus a target to attack.

⁴ A car bomb exploded in a Saudi National Guard training center in Riyadh killing six people, four of them Americans, and wounding sixty.

⁵ Jones, Seth., «A Persistent Threat: The Evolution of al Qa'ida and Other Salafi Jihadists.» RAND Corporation working paper 2014.

The Madrid and London terrorist attacks, as important as they were, did not manage to reach the global relevance that 9/11 did, and as a result, the organization gradually lost initiative and visibility; the world stock exchange indexes fell for years after the attacks in the USA, several months after the tragedy in Madrid and only days after London; the markets, since then and generally speaking, pay little attention to its actions. In fact, since then it hasn't been able successfully to carry out any other attack of such magnitude in the West. And the attempts to force a civil war in Iraq between Sunnis and Shiites, to benefit from the chaos the conflict would bring to the organization, became a source of serious questioning as well as a political encumbrance that caused their rejection by that same population they had gone there to support.

In any case, Ben Laden's death in 2011 was the nadir of its decline, as a result, to a considerable extent, of the confrontation with the West. The organization fragmented, not only in response to the pressure of the international community, but also from the need to adapt to the diverse scenarios in which it operates, from the dissimilarity in goals, and even from the necessity to satisfy individualist leaderships (witness the cases of Abu Bakr Al Bagdhadi, and of the ISIS).

Religious Foundations

Doctrine is a key element in any terrorist organization, because it provides definition and justification. Using Robespierre's famous words, it is the quality without which terror would make no sense. As a matter of fact, the lack of a sound doctrine was identified in the 1980s and 1990s as a factor of weakness in Al-Qaeda.

Jenkins declared that terrorists want many people watching but not too many people dead. He would later redefine this theory to fit an organization such as Al-Qaeda, whose actions seem to aim at both things simultaneously.

There is one subject of prime importance, simple but essential: Al-Qaeda is a Sunni, jihadist Salafist organization, but that does not make all other organizations of this nature a part of Al-Qaeda, no matter how much they empathize with it.

This said, we must emphasize the closeness of Al-Qaeda to Salafism and, more specifically, to what has come to be called jihadist Salafism, understanding by such its predilection for armed struggle more than purely religious preaching. But as we will see, neither does this make every Salafist a jihadist.

The fact is that, due to its origins, Salafism is not a single movement, but a nebula of movements, one of those which occasionally arise, and

into which AlQaeda conveniently settles. Furthermore, it usually happens that religious language is used to make political proposals that cannot be questioned; even more, the rhetoric of violent groups has been able to make a long philosophical tradition its own through simple messages. In this sense, Salafist language is a political one, whose simplicity represents a genuine rebuttal of globalization.⁶

The word Salafism--an idea born almost at the same time as Islam--, comes from the term *Salaf al-Salif*, the Pious Ancestors, which refers to the *Rashidun*, the four Perfect Caliphs, successors of the Prophet (Abu Bakr, Omar, Utmán, and Ali), and in more general terms, to the three generations they belong to, considered more perfect for their proximity to the Prophet and whose conduct Moslems attempt to imitate.

According to Wiktorowics⁷, Salafists can be classified into three large groups: scholars, politicians, and jihadists, united by a common creed and separated by the interpretation of the world where they have to operate. And since there are common goals among the different Salafist groups, the problem then lies in the means to be applied in each case.

Thus Salafism is not a group, but a combination of groups that breaks down as a consequence of internal debate centered on two ideas: violence and the relationship with political power. Therefore, if on one side it represents passivity, clarity and universality, on the other, it also entails activism, rigidity, fragmentation, political dissolution, and localism.

Scholarly Salafism (*salafiyya al ilmiyya*) advocates resignation facing an imperfect power, as long as this remains within tolerable limits. All this leads to an apolitical stance and to activities centered on the reform of traditions, which is why radicals call them contemptuously «*ulemas for menstruation and the complications of childbirth.*» Political Salafism incorporates hybrid formulas to the extent that it combines the Salafist creed and the political practices of the Moslem Brotherhood, who are considered as innovators, and weak in doctrinal matters, something very negative in Islam. Nevertheless, their conduct is very similar to the one shown by political parties of the traditional Islamic sort. The *salafiya yihadiya* promotes rebellion and its actions combine theological with operational factors, purism with pragmatism.

Salafist jihadism gives violence a doctrinal basis and procures a link with religious belief. There are authors who identify three branches that contribute to the configuration of Salafi jihadist thought: the first is based on Egyptian radical fundamentalist thinking (Qutb, Fadl). Another branch is neo-Wahabbist, nourished by scholars from Saudi Arabia who would

⁶ Meijer, Roel, Op.Cit. p. 286.

⁷ Wiktorowics, Quintan, «Anatomy of the Salafi Movement,» Studies in conflicts and terrorism, num. 29 no. 3 (April-May 2006).

include Ibn Baz and his followers, creators of the *al Shawa* movement (who in 1979 took over the mosque in Mecca). A third branch would be the Palestinian, with Abdala Azzam, Omar Abu Qatada and Aby Muhammad al-Maqdisi.⁸

Conceptually, and quoting al-Suri, AlQaeda contains fundamentalist elements, outstanding among which are Mawdudi's *hakimiyya* (God's sovereignty in every aspect of life), and elements from the legal and political doctrine of Salafism of Ibn Taymiyya, specifically the principle of *al-wala wa al-bara*, which will be mentioned again below; some elements of the political and judicial traditions of Wahabbism and the ideas proper to the Moslem Brotherhood might also be added.⁹

Al-Maqdisi, another ideologist in the group, would contribute the concept of *tawhid* (the unity, the confluence of everything around God) to the idea of *yihad takfiri* (*takfir* is excommunication; the name *takfiri* is rejected by these groups, since its meaning, «*the excommunicators*», has a mocking tone). As a consequence, Takfirism has broadened its limits to reach not only infidels of all kinds (including Christians and Jews, usually excluded) but, furthermore, all those Muslims who fail to follow their doctrine. Abu Qatada al-Filistini goes beyond that and subordinates preaching and political action to a jihad addressed first against the closest enemy. And it goes even further in its contempt for human reason. Salafism is faith-based¹⁰, in the sense that it places faith above reason and even above reality.

In fact, all that violence increases through the autonomy that its agents enjoy, and the initiative obtained as a result of applying the principle that «*the mujaheddin on the ground knows best how to act*», which is a transposition of the idea that Allah knows best and grants religious legitimacy to the operational level.

Salafism strives to purify (*tasfiyya*) and standardize doctrine (which is contrary to the traditional theory of diversity, the *ijtilaf*, and as such, holds great potential for conflict within Islam), which obviously will have its reflection in the first steps for the construction of an envisioned Islamic State; it condemns the practice of an Islam which it holds to be Westernized and rational, while considering any movements of renewal as doctri-

⁸ Meijer, Roel, Op.Cit.

⁹ Bryanjar, Lia. «Destructive Doctrinarians» in Meijer, Roel. *Globalsalafism*. Hurst & Company, London, 2009, p. 286.

¹⁰ Facts are accepted without seeking explanations, nor attempting to rationalize them. It is not possible to approach God through reason, but through faith; reason is taken to be inessential if not irrelevant. It is the «*Credo quia absurdum*» of Tertulian which would be recovered by Al-Ghazali who in his work «*Talafut al-falasma*» («*The incoherence of the philosophers*») emphasizes that reason must yield before Revelation («*bi la keif*», as it stands).

nally weak, and formalist in their emphasis on practice at the expense of their calling for doctrinal purity.

It promotes the inclusion of the rules in their entirety, since *Sharia* does not depend on society. Therefore, to reject one part of it is to reject it all. This is nothing less than apostasy, the worst crime a Muslim can commit. Islam is only fully possible if the state applies *Sharia* entirely, as otherwise, what exists is *yahiliyya* (the earlier polytheistic state, existing before Islam arrived).

The feeling of belonging to a community is the central axis of its discourse, an inside-outside separation: «*believers are friends of each other, they order what is established and forbid what is reprehensible*» (9,71). The doctrine *al-wala wal-bara*, which divides the world between believers and non-believers, between good and evil, establishing links of brotherhood on one side and separation on the other, brings with itself sectarianism, even among Moslems themselves. This idea is reinforced by the concept of *Hisba*, based on the Koranic verse «*you are the best community man has ever had, you promote the good, forbid the evil, and believe in God*» (3,110).

This had been traditionally delegated on an authority, the *mutashib*. And as the hadiz says, it is *per se* a call to action: «*if one of you sees something illicit, he should stop it with his hand; if he cannot, then with his tongue, and if not, with his heart, and this is the weakest level of Faith (Iman)*». ¹¹ Authorities traditionally acted with «*the hand*», the wise men (*alim*) with the word and the people with their hearts. Revolutionary action consists in handing authority over to the common people and fragmenting it (in the sense proposed by Foucault, and that Sageman would take up again when speaking of «*a leaderless jihad*»), and this would result in highly revolutionary potential.

However, its purism has not been able to elude the debates of today and has been in fact sequestered by other struggles: anti-imperialism, sectarianism, identity politics. Thus, jihadist Salafism has gradually distanced itself from 19th century Salafism, taking over its terminology and combining a stark analysis of reality with revolutionary activism and Western ideas and strategies. ¹² This is to say that jihadists become Westernized when fighting the West, and the war ends up becoming a space for exchange, encounters, and knowledge of each other.

While Salafism rejects reality in the name of purity, jihadist Salafism strives to change it, turning the creed (*'aqida*) into whatever is necessary, until

¹¹ An Nawawi. The most select of the Garden of the Just. Moslem Community of Spain, Motril 2005, p. 98.

¹² Caestien Maestro, Ignacio. «Salafist Currents: religious puritanism, proselytism and militance» in Strategy Notebook 163. Islamisms in evolution. Spanish Institute for Strategic Studies, 2013.

it fits completely with the concept of jihad according to Taqi ad-Din Ahmed Ibn Taymiyya; and even more, it incorporates fundamentalist thinkers, as we have seen, with the goal of putting down roots and benefitting from the most traditional Islamic thinking.

Salafists consider themselves to be simply Muslims who fulfill their duty. Salafism excludes not only differences, but also the different, including non-Salafist Moslems, and them, especially. This would only validate Freud's theory that big conflicts are not caused by big differences but by small ones: they are not so much interreligious as intra-religious. This would explain the great number of Muslim casualties.

Theologically, they justify their behavior appealing to a defensive jihad, which implies an individual obligation for all Moslems. The appeal of radicals to the faith of the faithful and to their commitments is the most compulsive of their arguments, especially if it is to have an impact on a society that calls for activism.

One of the most outstanding features of Salafism is its anti-Shiism, of Wahabbi roots. In fact, an intellectual debate has existed in AlQaeda on this point between two groups: one formed by Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi and Abu Baseir al-Tartusi, as against al-Zarqawi's doctrine in favor of a limitless violence against them. This theory seems to have prospered in its time, but currently it has been reconsidered by some in the central authority. Nevertheless, in its famous letter, AlQaeda pronounces itself openly against Shiism.

Thus, Sunnis accuse Shiites of being heretical, because they believe that Ali enjoys a divine status. Furthermore, the doctrine of the infallibility of the Imams places them, they believe, at the same level as the Prophet Muhammad, to the point where his character as the seal of the prophets is questioned; Shiism, for Wahabbis, presents the Koran as imperfect, because it can only be correctly interpreted by Imams. Among this group's most popular beliefs, one which stands out, is the belief that it is illicit for Shiites to kill Sunnis,¹³ while accusing them of being the fifth column for the West in the Islamic world and remembering, opportunistically, such events as the support they provided to the Mongols for the razing of Baghdad.

What is more, the rejection by the Shi'ites of the succession to the Prophet (they considered Ali should have been the successor), is a death blow for the doctrine of Salafism, which sees the basis of its religious precepts questioned: the Haddissids, due to the fact that their transmitters (the rest of the Rachidun and their entourage) at the time acted disloyally regarding the Prophet's legitimate successor (the Imam Ali), are consequently disqualified, as is their testimony, and this challenges the

¹³ BAR. M, Samuel. «Sunnis and Shiites-Between Rapprochement and Conflict».

fundamental Salafist credo, established and handed down, regarding the generations closest to the Prophet.

Current situation of the conflict

Javier Jordán¹⁴ echoing the debate between Bruce Hoffman and Marc Sageman about the importance of central Al Qaeda headquarters on the direct and effective control of terrorist actions in the West, uses the analysis of 85 terrorist incidents to simultaneously prove both experts correct. It would depend on which dimension of the phenomenon gets more attention (the central body or independent cells), because their approaches are complementary and show the organization's capacity for adaptation, survival, and regeneration.

His conclusion is that we are facing a dynamic phenomenon led by an organization that has suffered a severe erosion. Al Qaeda and the North-African organizations that share its precepts have lost strength, but at the same time the surge of new players, operating autonomously or together with Al Qaeda, contribute to the fact that the terrorist threat is very much alive.

Conflict zones, and especially, to date, the ACPAK, have proven to be excellent training grounds, which shows the relevance of large organizations in the global scenario and their preponderance over a leaderless jihad, so that their decline would also signal the decline of the jihadist phenomenon itself.

Therefore, it would be of interest to perform a double analysis: first at a global, and then at a local scale.

Global Approach to Local Terrorism. Al Qaeda as an Organization

An analysis of Al Qaeda's activity would be impossible without understanding this group structurally, in spite of all the problems and disinformation generated by the inherent secrecy of the terrorist group.

In this sense, Sageman¹⁵ talks about a leaderless jihad in which the personal ties prevail over any formal structure, popularizing the «*bunch of guys*» concept used when referring to informal groups which, after constituting themselves, carry out attacks inspired by the guidelines coming from the central nucleus, which in most cases (though not in all), lacks operative control over them.

¹⁴ Jordán, Javier. «An empirical contribution to the theoretical debate on the organizational nature of jihadist terrorism in Western Europe.» *Spanish Political Science Review*. Nº 28, March 2012, pp. 87-106.

¹⁵ Sageman, Marc. *Leaderless Jihad*. University of Pennsylvania, 2007.

After 9/11, Al Qaeda has experienced a noticeable reduction in its command and control structures, due to the deterioration caused by military interaction. This has resulted in levels of decentralization which make the coordination of the network difficult, seriously affects its operational capacity, and constitutes a real strategic weakness, as the conflicts between the various branches of the organization in Syria show.

Circumstances have transformed Al Qaeda from a hierarchic organization to a polymorphic hybrid in the middle of a semi-franchised nebula. It is, then, a very diverse and heterogeneous group whose concerted action is presumably complicated and difficult.

As aforementioned, the central nucleus stands greatly weakened and its operational capacities constrained as a result of direct military action against them; it is included in the AFPAK and moves in the mythical Jurasan region. This nucleus would shine a light, through grandiose speeches and major terrorist attacks, on the path to follow, performing the function of caliphs for the whole system, but showing as well weak coordination.

To all this we should add a group of organizations that have sworn fidelity (the traditional Islamic formula of *bei'a*) to their leader, located in Syria (Jabhat al-Nusrah, with links as from 2012), Somalia (al Shabaab, whose links date back to 2012), Yemen (Al Qaeda in the Arabic Peninsula, established in 2009), and North Africa (Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, with ties dating back to 2006). Regarding their activity, between 2007 and 2013, ISIS (linked with Al Qaeda until 2014) represents 43%, al Shabaab 25%, Jabhat al Nusrah 21%, and AQPA 10%.

Reference must also be made to a panoply of organizations who, without having established formal ties, work in the same direction, although they may disagree on methodology and leadership; this arrangement lets them pursue their own goals and act jointly in those fields in which their interests converge. They range from Boko Haram in Subsaharan Africa to Imarat Kavkaz in the Caucasus, to the Uzbek IMU, Harakat Ansar, and the battalions of Ziyad al-Jarrat.

In this way, Al Qaeda is attempting to achieve a «*global*» caliphate that in reality incorporates all Muslims and the lands they once occupied, while other groups try to achieve the same goal in specific geographical areas or regions, as a prior step in the direction Al Qaeda has pointed out, the general tendency of the different movements being to establish borders coinciding with the corresponding territorial demarcation of their nations. For example, ISIS's goal is to destroy the borders fixed by the Sykes-Picot agreements that defined the current territorial configuration of the Middle East. The actual differences between groups, as indicted above, are not religious but political, oriented around the means and strategies to be used to carry out their actions: the location and dimensions of the caliphate, its global or non-global nature, the degree of priority to be gi-

ven to actions against the West, the policy towards the Shiites, Marabouts and Sufis, and the level of strictness to be used in applying Islamic law in those areas under their authority.

Finally, a number of individual players and inspirational networks should be added to this group, who represent a strategy of doubtful political and military utility but very profitable media-wise.

In fact, it should be noted that the process of dissolution has ended by making the franchises more visible than the central body, and has buried the organization in a mire of jihadist organizations that, without being as visible as, and having the past of the original group, try to benefit by somehow establishing ties with it. AlQaeda would therefore serve as a symbol, an icon to which all of them turn, and its victory (such as Bin Laden simply hiding for 10 years) would be the simple fact of having resisted; and that is no small feat.¹⁶

Local Approach to Global Terrorism. The Franchise System and its Inspiration

In this field, Al Qaeda's principal accomplishment would have been the ability to popularize the use of the word «*jihadist*», which serves as a family name and common denominator for a number of different local movements, giving them a certain essential structure and generating synergies at a global level. A new word attempts to describe an equally new phenomenon.

The goal has been a call for the generalization of this type of movement that, according to Seth Jones, went from 3 in 1988 to 31 in 2010, and 49 in 2013, after the «*Arab Springs*». This implies a sort of «*alqaedism*»¹⁷ built from a system that ties franchising to legitimization to the mutual benefit of both. The number of activists underwent an equally significant increase.

In fact, between 2010 and 2013, the number of groups has grown by 58%, especially in the Middle East and North Africa -- and more so in Libya (transformed into a sort of sanctuary after the fall of Ghaddafi), Egypt (in the Sinai region) and the Sahel territory made up of Algeria, Libya, Mali, Nigeria, and Mauritania.

In 2013, half of the world's jihadists were to be found in the Syrian conflict, and they carried out around two thirds of their global actions: Jabhat

¹⁶ Velasco Tuduri, Santiago. AlQaeda. Origin, Evolution and its presence in the world today» in Strategy Notebook 163. Islamisms in Revolution. Spanish Institute for Strategic Studies, 2013.

¹⁷ Bergen, Peter; Hoffman, Bruce; Haley, Michael. Jihadist Terrorism: A threat assessment.» Bipartisan Center, September 2013.

al-Nusrah (2,000 - 6,000), ISIS (1,000 - 5,000), Suqour al-Sham (2,000 - 5,000), Ahrar al-Sham (10,000 - 15,000), Liwa al-Islam (5,000 - 10,000), and Liwa al-Tawhid (5,000 - 10,000).¹⁸

The reasons for this extraordinary diffusion are to be found, firstly, in the ability to take over local conflicts by transforming their key arguments into jihadist parameters, which at the same time has enabled the making of synergetic coordination. However, such changes have not managed to solve those conflicts, since they are not fictions or inventions, but very real conflicts.

To this must be added the turbulent scenario which appeared in the Islamic world after the so called «*Arab Springs*», which have generated great turmoil in the area, weakened the State even further, and increased social volatility; there are more than a few Muslim societies that find themselves splintered as a consequence of their partial transformation upon interacting with the West. This fracturing appears mainly between the middle and upper classes that are closest to the West, the urban working class, and the traditional rural societies. Furthermore, regional conflicts (Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, Syria...) have contributed to the military training of fanatics, while events such as Mursi's fall may have generated a wave of disappointment among Islamists whose goal was to achieve power by democratic means. This is, according to Giles Kepel, re-Islamization from the bottom up. The sectarian conflict between Shiites and Sunnis in Syria and Iraq is a new call made, it is true, in a different key.

In any case, the truth is that the presence of Al Qaeda and its affiliates has passed from eight theaters of operation in 2008 to 16 nowadays, some being a continuation of the former process, some new, others the consequence of a certain resurgence, others of expansion. The result is that Al Qaeda, its affiliates and related groups can be found in the South of Asia, South-East Asia, Afghanistan-Pakistan, Algeria, Indonesia, Iraq, Lebanon, Libya, Mali, Mauritania, Niger-Nigeria, the Philippines, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, and Yemen.¹⁹

Still, and in spite of this expansion process and the serious effort carried out in this field (Ben Laden himself²⁰ believed that 90% of preparation for battle was related to communication), it is true that the organization's levels of acceptance in the Islamic world have fallen noticeably, as a consequence not only of its prolonged use of violence but of its inability to solve the conflicts it chooses to get involved in.

Proof of its efforts and dynamic character are jihadist electronic publications like «*Inspire*», a magazine with an attractive layout and a good

¹⁸ Jones, Seth. Op. Cit.

¹⁹ Bergen et. al. Op. Cit.

²⁰ Ben Laden, Osama, in Lawrence, Bruce. Messages to the world. Foca Editions, Madrid 2007.

readership in the radical community, combining narrative, tactics and politics. This way it spreads political orientation, makes an approximation to reality and justifies its acts, spreading at the same time homemade terrorist techniques, so «*giving weapons to the people*» and promoting anarchy.

However, AlQaeda's propaganda apparatus, As-Sahab, has seen its influence wane, in spite of its efforts, because its subsidiaries have created their own communication channels and their spokesmen have been eliminated.

According to reports from the 2012 Pew Research Center's Global Attitudes Project, popular support for movements such as the Taliban, the Haqqani network or Laskar-e-Taiyba among the Pakistani population has fallen to levels lower than 22%; even more, it has a negative evaluation for more than 50% in the case of AlQaeda and Tehreek-e-Taliban for Pakistanis (Afghan Taliban are negatively seen by 45% of the population and Laskar-e-Taiyba by 37%); the criticism is even harsher among those who declare themselves strict Moslems. These parameters reproduce themselves in other scenarios. It is not a trivial question, but it is a key issue, because the Moslem population is precisely the goal and objective of the struggle.

The cause can be found in the jihadist organizations' lack of adaptation to the social and cultural framework within which they operate, and their inability to bring about its true transformation in terms appropriate to the Islam they advocate. Local populations do not feel satisfied by the preaching of Salafists, feeling that the Islam the Salafists actually practice is not the real one; and the organization's narrow-mindedness in making concessions that could help to achieve cohesion and cultural affinity, bringing different movements together in a single body, does not precisely help.

All this, together with their aforementioned incapacity to solve the conflict they benefit from²¹ explains the geographic encapsulation, the isolation they experience, in spite of the initial expectations which arise in local populations upon their deployment. In the case of Bosnia in the 1990s, Giles Kepel had already pointed out how, because of the lack of cultural affinity, the goal of taking over the conflict had not been achieved, and he predicted, for the long term, the same results in future scenarios.

Not dealing with the real causes, but only transforming them, makes success empty of meaning, because the problems persist, with the resulting weariness of the native population. The franchising system has succeeded partly in mitigating this problem, by adapting to the framework in which they operate, but the local-global synergistic fit is far from being accomplished in spite of a certain alignment having been achieved.

²¹ Castien Maestro, Ignacio. Op. Cit.

Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula may have learned from the mistakes made in the past by other affiliates providing services (as done by other religious groups without links with Al-Qaeda, like Hitzbula, as a way of earning legitimacy) to the Yemeni population, even changing its name (and acting as «*Ansar al Sharia*») to show their attachment to Islamic law. It all belongs to the logic of adaptation to the environment which is typical of the war.

The media impact brought about by the so-called individual actors (lone wolves) adds in this context a bonus of visibility that benefits the group as a whole and gives its fighters a glimmer of hope. In the end, as Clausewitz reminds us, war is an activity of the spirit.

Examining the phenomenon of individual actors

People do not become radical by themselves. It is seldom that the so-called «*lone wolf*» appears as an isolated factor, independent of a social collective or a support group; and when one does, it is usually a case of a psychopath. The narratives, in this case Salafist, are essential in the process of radicalization, since they are the axis of disagreement, around which the radicalized group structures itself.

Such groups don't necessarily practice violence or support it for that matter, but they incorporate a contradiction to the extent that they approve and sympathize with it. Some subgroups with a strong ideological component and with their own dynamics split from them and enter into an extremist, almost schizoid spiral, in their demand for purity: they are the radicals. But that doesn't make the radicals terrorists either. They support violence, and can carry out some illegal acts, but do not necessarily practice it. It is the next qualitative leap forward, momentous and transcendental, unforced, resulting from a continuous development, which transforms them into terrorists, usually under the guidance of those who have already spilled blood, that is to say, entities belonging to the local franchise.

The problem in fighting radical groups is that they are constituted around moral imperatives. And in the West, morality is a space in which the state has no jurisdiction as long as moral rules do not materialize in the form of illegal activity. Therefore, repression has to be limited, it neither should nor can be preemptive. Even more so, these groups can carry on a life totally independent of the state they belong to, for they abide by its laws; the problem is that their moral demands separate them from the society which has received them.

We can infer from all this that the operational approach against this kind of terrorist should be to act against the whole group and not only with police and repressive measures (although these also), but at a pedagogical level as well, oriented towards putting an end to the narrative that legitimizes it. It is easier, and statistically more effective, to reduce the size of potential groups than to go after individuals who are already radicalized.

The local-global link means that the *Umma*, the great imaginary space of universal confines, is constructed from the mosque, on the basis of rejection of any Western values; but it is also possible within the framework of the net's virtual space. Internet has made possible the emergence of an Islamic space that fits in with the *deterritorialized* nature of their political aspirations and permits fusion of souls, fragmentation, interchange, brainstorming and indoctrination.

It is all about taking the fight to the West's own terrain, through those who customarily live in them, thus solving logistical and terrorist training problems, while hindering any security measures, fracturing the community and forcing its members to take a stance.

It is no longer a case of big, complex terrorist attacks aimed at attracting the media (of which there are many on record that resulted in failure, sometimes even with the death of the perpetrators due to lack of training). It is about simpler acts, like hit and run accidents, stabbings....acts with high emotional impact, accessible, carried out by inspired people, split from the group and, therefore, extremely difficult for the police to control. Individual initiative is then given free reign and examples are produced of people who, from within their own daily activities, can act at the service of religion. Yet again, an inspiration for the group.

Often enough the acts are carried out by people with identity definition problems (second-generation emigrants, as were the culprits of the London 2005 attempts; converts; people integrated in a counter-culture...), people who fail to truly fit into the society that received them, or to identify with, or be themselves a part of, that society.

As Fanon²² notes, for these people violence presents itself as a sort of liberating activity, a permanent commitment with one of the cultures which coincide in their lives. Abdenabid Kunja, one of the terrorists who killed himself in Leganés, said in a farewell letter to his children: *«I cannot abide to live this life as someone weak and humiliated in the eyes of the infidels»*.

What seem to be the latest acts of jihadist violence in Boston (committed by the Tsarnaev brothers with pressure cookers), London (running over a man and slitting his throat) and Paris (stabbing) come from a terrorism pattern that has chosen to confront the West by reducing the role of its nucleus--decimated by an efficient international persecution--and lead the way to be followed by the members of the community, so that they are the ones who, appropriately oriented, perpetrate the attacks with all the means at their disposal.

It is a case of terrorism of the anarchistic and individualistic sort with which AlQaeda is trying to overcome the increasingly diminishing num-

²² Fanon, Fritz. *The damned of the Earth*. Economic Culture Fund of Spain, 2007.

ber of jihadist attacks in the West and its even more increasingly diminishing effectiveness, which has succeeded in removing the organization from the media.

This fragmentation of terrorism shows the vulnerability of those societies that suffer from it. It generates uncertainty, it fractures the community, makes the religious context a necessary reference, causing a rift between believers and spreading mistrust towards Moslems, with the hope that overreaction on the part of the State or the society unites once and for all the Moslems living within it.

It has now been years since the first signs of this pattern of action towards «*targets of opportunity*» were detected in the North of Africa with tourists; the methodology also included hit and run killings, stabbings and even an attempt to bomb a bus with a butane gas canister. The West has seen the precedent of the stabbings of Theo van Gogh in 2004, of the British Parliament member Stephen Timms in 2010 or the shooting murders by Arid Uka in 2010 and Mohammed Merah in 2011 (this last one being especially repulsive, because among the 7 casualties there were three Jewish children). The case of the lone wolves does not only include AlQaeda members, and we should not forget this, as in the case of the Norwegian Breivik.

The role of external actors: regional implications

If there is one thing absolutely clear from the results of the surveys periodically issued by CIS (Sociological Investigation Center) under the auspices of IEEE (Spanish Institute for Strategic Studies), it is that Spanish society does not perceive the existence of a threat to National Security, with all the implications this has for budget considerations. However, facts are stubborn, and Spain is precisely the country that suffered, in March 11, 2004, the greatest terrorist attack in Western Europe in the last 50 years: an attack at the very least inspired, if not directed, precisely by AlQaeda. For some part of the population it was a one-time event, a consequence of a specific situation. But the only certain fact is that it happened, and that since then more and more jihadist cells appear, even though they are rapidly broken up by effective police and intelligence action.

In 2006 the strategic alliance between the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat and AlQaeda served as a base for the creation of AlQaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, which transports the organization to the strategic environment of our country and poses a direct, stable and credible threat against National Security, carried out by individuals with long experience of insurgency and terrorist activity.

We should not forget that Algeria, a country bordering Spain, has experienced since the beginning of the 1990s a great many violent acts that have caused around 200,000 dead; it is thus hardly surprising that some

of the most significant authors of 3/11 were Algerian. Recent events in Libya have turned a country located in the middle of the Mediterranean into a semi-failed state, provoking a domino effect over Mali and destabilizing significant portions of the Sahel.

The same kind of caution should be shown with those Spanish citizens -according to several sources they could be around one hundred- who have travelled to the Syrian conflict, as well as others, such as members of jihadist groups.

In any case, AlQaeda is a group with an eminently incorrigible character, committed to the recovery of the territories that once, for some time, belonged to Islam. That is why Al Andalus, Ceuta and Melilla are places of reference in the public jihadist rhetoric.

Al Andalus is a term with mythical connotations, since its fall marks, according to many, the beginning of the decadence of the Moslem world. The cities of Ceuta and Melilla, both with similar features, are located in Africa, and that is a fact that adds a plus of nationalism to their speech, which in some way reinforces their legitimacy as Islamic fighters in the eyes of their followers.

The December 2012 attack by the jihadi group «*Al Morbitun*», belonging to the jihadist nebula allied to AlQaeda and led by Moktar Belmokhtar, against the gas facilities in Tingatourine, is the expression of this potential threat, which resulted in a major reduction of gas supply to our country, thus endangering its energy security and showing its strategic vulnerability. It is not a minor problem, and it demands Spain's commitment to the stability of its strategic environment.

Nonetheless, neither should the threat be overstated. Real power is not determined by its capacity for destruction, but by a potential of construction that, it should be noted, an organization such as AlQaeda does not possess, least of all in a society like ours. Certainly its actions can disrupt public life, which is not a trivial or minor consideration, but by no means does it hold elements for a greater threat than this, unless the group was to deploy weapons of mass destruction.

In order to undermine their threat, which is not only real, but has now also materialized and caused great damage, it will be necessary to reach a commitment, with the countries that are part of our strategic environment, to their security and development, as well as the acquisition of the means required to prevent the threat from taking shape again, thus avoiding strategic surprise.

Furthermore, Spain is a significant member of international society. This makes the country especially responsible, as happens in any neighborhood association. It must contribute to its security and support. It is a mandatory solidarity.

Conclusions and perspective

Conclusions

AlQaeda's evolution into high levels of decentralization is an expression of the significant loss of operational capacity experienced, at least in the West. Its main success has been surviving after the considerable direct pressure it has undergone.

Moreover, AlQaeda has become nowadays a symbol, because of its past, because it has succeeded in challenging the first world power. Its achievement has been twofold: to invigorate the jihadist movement, popularizing the term to the point that it is not unreal to talk about the existence of a «*leaderless jihad*»; and to increase noticeably the number of this type of movements, generating with it a sort of «*AlQaedism*» based on all kinds of associations and franchises.

Nevertheless, there is an evident lack of connection between AlQaeda's agenda and its real «*military*» capacities, between its objectives and the means at its disposal to accomplish them. It develops its performance simultaneously in a double dimension, combining at one and the same time terrorism and insurgency.

It does so by trying in the first place to become Islam's representative, which entails the validation of its religious outlook. The result is a horizontal violence --in the form of insurgency or terrorism, depending on the case--whose goal is transforming society; and a vertical violence, of the terrorist sort, that aims for the same goals, and which is directed against the West and therefore against local political leaders, considered as its representatives because they do not fully apply Islamic law.

This second vertical level of action serves to place AlQaeda at the forefront of Islam, undermine and discredit its political enemies and contribute to victory on the first horizontal level, which is truly the concept where its religious and political outlook lies.

The double dimension of terrorism shows itself in the current AlQaeda strategy, which tries from within the Islamic world to benefit from the situation of social and institutional weakness produced by «*Arab Springs*», while on the outside expresses its commitment through the use of the so called «*lone wolves*». At the same time, all this translates at a local level to the use of violence for real operational goals and to an insurgency directed against established power, while at a global level the use is mainly instrumental and media oriented.

The debates between confronting the «*close enemy*» or the «*distant enemy*» fundamentally define those selection strategies followed to choose a nucleus and its subsidiaries. In practical terms, the actions on

the «*distant enemy*» have been clearly reduced to testimonial operations or the participation of individual actors (lone wolves). The local dimension predominates clearly and decisively over the global one. However, violence directed against Moslems themselves has been identified as a strategic vulnerability due to its overuse.

This said, it must be pointed out that global terrorism has not been able to root itself fully at a local level; the fitting process has encountered multiple difficulties. Different peoples don't feel the Islamic principles that AlQaeda sustains as their own, not even at a regional level. AlQaeda's failure in the Islamic Mahgreb when trying to represent a pan-Maghreb identity may be good evidence of this.

Moreover, the existence of a terrorism classified as global makes possible the existence of a global anti-terrorist policy, which at the same time reinforces the global policies of those States that fight such phenomena. Therefore, the magnification of this kind of terrorism can even result, in a certain sense and at a given time, in an advantage for the West.

In any case, the bid of these organizations for individual, limited and unconnected actions while they hardly draw any attention in the media (compared with what they enjoyed before), far from activating the Muslim community in the West, may deactivate it even more. And according to Mao's logic, it could even immunize it against future actions, given the fact that neither in 2001, nor, even less, now, can it find the objective conditions required for a movement of this sort to succeed in the Islamic World at a global or even local level.

Certainly, to prevent the actions of the radicals is difficult, and it will inevitably require a pedagogical approach that neutralizes their narrative and avoids as much as possible the transit of radicalized members of the group to the position of activists. But to definitively wipe out an organization like AlQaeda, acting as it does with a franchised system, is complicated. There will always be someone left to use its name.

Predictions

In order to make a prediction we should first find those elements that will determine the future, those events that will shape it, in a world more and more complex and interdependent. Trying to do this with a terrorist group is not only risky, but even reckless, because it implies claiming to know the future of a collective that prides itself on its initiative, secrecy, originality and power to surprise the audience. Any analysis must be done, at any case, in dialectical form: that is, taking the future as a tendency deduced from the logic of action-reaction.

In this context, relations between Islam and the West are a key factor. And they are unlikely to improve, no matter how much they intensify, because each party works in a different cultural area, increasing contradictions and problems as well as the perception of injustice, the result of a growing economic unbalance very difficult to solve. These are the problems associated with an unavoidable approach and encounter.

It seems then that the organization will continue to exist. It is a hydra which can be contained, but is extremely difficult to liquidate. It will also continue serving as a reference in the popular imagination. Its image will be the totem of a nebula of jihadist groups, the light high on the mountain, but its operational capacity will remain minimal and stable. Its survival is the only important thing. It transcends its own military capacities. As Lao Tse said, «to remain weak equals strength.»

The local level of the fight, insurgency, will continue to be crucial. Meanwhile, terrorism will be the prevailing intercultural form of violence thanks to its high-profile character and also because it pays benefits at a local level. But terrorism is not decisive, and that is the reason why jihadist organizations will maintain their efforts to acquire weapons of mass destruction. It is a difficult task, but essential for succeeding against the West.

In this context, it is absolutely necessary to control the cash flow that finances extreme radicalism from outside, as a means of avoiding the creation of terrorist economies that will make its existence possible. And it is equally necessary to adopt all measures necessary to avoid the proliferation of and accessibility to such technologies.

The local-global link of Islamist actions will improve, and that will make their activities at a local level more synergistic at a global level. However, the conflicts in which the organization thrives are unlikely to be solved, because their real causes tend not to be dealt with, but rather replaced by others.

In the long term this will gradually provoke weariness in the native peoples whose worries lie in their daily lives, and who see how an unpleasant situation prolongs itself without being solved. All this at the same time that their concept of religion and the world is disregarded, if not scorned and flatly proscribed. That is why it is possible to foresee the emergence of conflicts of this kind between jihadists and local populations.

A stark analysis of reality would tell us that terrorism is an instrument of collective action, a tool (illegitimate) for politics, in which personal imprint has its place but cannot become the main core of every activity if it wants to advance and not remain a zero sum game; the operational side of terrorism cannot substitute for political direction, and politics cannot refrain from playing a role only to enable the organization's survival.

In the operational field, Von Moltke has pointed out, in the context of the Franco-Prussian war, that the result of «*giving arms to the people*» was a guarantee of failure, added to unnecessary bloodshed. The vanguard of society, which is what every terrorist organization tries to represent, has taken a step back in Al Qaeda's case so that the community goes on alone; this would not seem to have much future, albeit a single and determined man can still do a great deal of damage.

To predict Al Qaeda's future also requires addressing the situation of State and social fragility that the Islamic world generally experiences nowadays.

Therefore, jihadist groups will probably have to adapt even more to native populations in terms of values, assuming in those regions the functions that would normally be provided by the State and satisfying the social demands made on them; in other words, they will have to replace the State.

The card the West holds to confront the problem posed by Al Qaeda and its cohort of associated jihadist movements is to deactivate Islamic movements by promoting their integration into the state and trivializing them, in the sense that Oliver Roy suggests.

The institutionalization of Islamism would imply its withdrawal from the revolutionary road and its conformation in the State/Nation logic, as well as the setting aside of transnational ideological references in favor of national interests. Experience thus far indicates that such an event would bring with it a weakening of its ideological role; its activity, in practical terms, becoming limited to a *re-Islamization* of customs and Law disassociated from any other aspiration. In other words: *Islamization* from the top downwards.²³ Any other approach would cause its collapse and replacement as happened in Egypt, because if Westernization has had its limits, «*Easternization*» has its own.

The coming to power of radicals can also force them to come to terms with the contradictions between their own creed and the need to meet the real demands of the population and accept its religious concepts. These countries cannot live without the West in a world that has folded in upon itself; nobody can become an island, not even by free will.

The key to all problems lies in strengthening the state so that it can adapt itself better to the society it is built upon, while satisfying its demands and finding a future for its citizens, as radicalization is avoided, first with pedagogy, and with police action as a support.

Every river flows into the sea, but the sea is never filled.

²³ ROY, Oliver. *Islam Globalized*. Bellaterra Editions, 2003.

CHRONOLOGY OF THE CONFLICT	
Chapter II AL QAEDA AND JIHADISM	
DATE	EVENTS
1979	Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Creation of Maktab al-Khidamat (MAK)
1988	Creation of Al Qaeda
1989	Abdullah Azzam's death
1990	First Gulf War. North American troops stationed in the Arabian Peninsula
1993	First attack on World Trade Center
1995	Attacks against the Saudi National Guard (4 North American dead) in Riyadh
1998	Simultaneous attacks against US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. 301 dead and 3,000 wounded.
2000	Attack on a US Navy ship Attack against destroyer USS Cole in the Yemeni port of Aden, with 17 sailors dead and 38 wounded.
2001	Four simultaneous suicide attacks, against the Twin Towers in New York leaving them absolutely destroyed; the Pentagon in Washington; and an aircraft that crashed in Pennsylvania, with a total of over 3,000 casualties.
2001	Invasion of Afghanistan
2002	202 people dead, most of them tourists, and 352 wounded by a car bomb in Bali Double terrorists attack in Mombasa, Kenya. Sixteen people dead, between them 3 Israelis, and 80 wounded by a car bomb in an Israeli-owned hotel
2003	A powerful bomb in Jakarta causes the death of 13 people. Invasion of Iraq. Attack on UN headquarters in Baghdad: 24 dead. 27 dead and 450 wounded in Istanbul in two bombing attacks on the British General Consulate and the offices of the British bank HSBC.
2004	Attacks in Madrid: 192 dead and 1,400 wounded
2005	Bombs in metro stations and buses in London: 40 dead, 700 wounded
2006	Al Zarkawi's death
2007	Al Qaeda carries out a double attack in Algeria. 70 dead.
2010	At least 74 people dead and several dozens more wounded in two bombing attacks by the Somali Islamic organization Al Shabaab, tied to Al Qaeda, in Kampala, the capital of Uganda Starting of the Arab Springs
2011	Bin Laden's death. Al Zawahiri becomes new Al Qaeda leader.
2012	Civil War in Syria.
2013	Attacks by Al Shabaab against the West Gate in Nairobi: 71 dead and 200 wounded.

Moldova and Transnistria: a frozen conflict in the heart of Europe

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Chapter three

Summary

The conflict between Moldova and its separatist region of Transnistria has remained «frozen» ever since the ceasefire agreement of 1992, and remains without resolution despite countless international initiatives to that end. This year, the crisis in Ukraine and the signing of the Association Agreement between Moldova and the EU have reactivated tension, as Transnistria's desires for independence and union with Russia may be increased.

Key words

Moldova, Transnistria, Russia, Romania, European Union.

Introduction

The bridge over the River Dniester in the Moldovan town of Gura Bucului, which carries the road joining the capital Chisinau with Odessa on the Black Sea, was destroyed during the 1992 war, which pitted Moldova against its separatist region of Transnistria. The European Union (EU) funded its reconstruction in 2001, in the hope of nurturing contacts and commerce between the two banks. Nevertheless, the bridge remains closed to traffic to this day and access for pedestrians is often restricted, with the installation of border checkpoints.

That bridge symbolizes the quintessential Eastern European *frozen conflict* situation as, even though there have been no armed clashes since the ceasefire was signed in 1992, the international community has not been able to force an agreement between the two sides despite the involvement of a large number of players. Unfortunately, the end of the conflict has appeared to be in sight many times, but opportunities were lost one after another, and the current escalation of tension in the Post-Soviet area does not allow us to be optimistic about the future.

Background to the conflict

Historical reasons for the division of Moldova

It is essential to refer to History, as many of the keys to the conflict are to be found there. In broad terms, the present-day Republic of Moldova (Transnistria included) does not correspond to any known historical entity. Thus, the traditional Principality of Moldova consisted of (see map 1):

- The Republic now known as Bessarabia (excluding Transnistria), between the Rivers Prut (West) and Dniester (East) and the Black Sea coast.
- The current Romanian region of Moldova, between the Carpathians (West) and the River Prut (East).
- Bukovina, to the Northeast, where the capital Suceava once stood.

The Principality, with a mainly Romanian population (Latin Christians of the Orthodox faith), was created when it separated itself from the Magyars in the 13th Century, only to lose its independence at the hands of the Ottoman Empire in the 16th Century. In 1775 the Austro-Hungarian Empire took over Bukovina, in 1812 the Tzarist Empire conquered Bessarabia and the remaining territory joined Wallachia in 1859 to form the first Romanian State, with its capital in Bucharest.

This arrangement was to last until the geo-political earthquake caused in Eastern Europe by World War I. Romania, which had fought against



Map 1: the historical Principality of Moldavia

the Central Powers, received Transylvania and Southern Bukovina (both at the expense of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire) as a reward for being on the winning side, and struggled against the Soviets for control of Bessarabia, until that region became independent of the newly born USSR in 1918 and was incorporated into the Romanian Kingdom.

In 1940, at the height of World War II, the USSR recovered Bessarabia, only to lose it again during the Nazi offensive in 1941, and re-conquered it definitively in 1944. Owing to the Soviet addiction to changing their internal borders, and creating artificial political entities where distinct ethnic groups are obliged to live together (diluting differences beneath the ideological cloak of Marxism), and to some extent to the desire for revenge against a territory classified as traitor, the Kremlin decided that:

- The North of Bessarabia and Bukovina (in pink on map 1) would be incorporated into the Soviet Socialist Republic of Ukraine, to whom the Black Sea coast from Odessa to the Romanian frontier (Budjak on map 1) was also assigned.
- The Soviet Socialist Republic of Moldavia (MSSR) would be created out of the remaining territory between the Prut and Dniester Rivers, and present-day Transnistria (in green and grey stripes on map 1) would be incorporated into it, with a majority of Russian and Ukrainian inhabitants.

- The autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic of Moldavia (MASSR), which existed between the wars, should be divided in two: the above-mentioned Transnistria and the region with a capital in Balta, which was also assigned to Ukraine (in pink and grey stripes on map 1).

Moreover, the local language (called Moldavian, but which to all intents and purposes is Romanian), was discriminated against compared with Russian, and came to be written in the Cyrillic instead of the Latin alphabet. That was the situation at the end of the eighties, when the USSR started to disintegrate and latent conflicts surfaced between its republics.

The military phase of the conflict

Parallel to the efforts of the MSSR to secede from the USSR, protest movements began in regions such as Transnistria and Gagauzia,¹ inhabited by non-Romanian ethnic minorities. That resistance movement was primarily motivated by fear that post-independence Moldova would seek reunification with Romania, as in the 1918-1940 period.²

In fact, on 31st August 1989, the Supreme Soviet of the Republic declared Moldovan to be the official language and decreed the return of Latin characters for the written language, abandoning the Cyrillic alphabet. On 27th April 1990, a tricolor flag was adopted (with the coat of arms of the Principality of Moldova) as well as the Romanian national anthem, and at the end of that year its name changed to the «Republic of Moldova».

In reaction, the Slavs proclaimed the Transnistrian Moldovan Republic (TMR) on 2nd September 1990, even before Moldova declared its independence from the USSR in August 1991.³ The first deaths were produced on

¹ The case of Gagauzia is less well known than that of Transnistria. The Gagauzes are a people of Turkmen origin, who number barely over a quarter of a million (the majority concentrated in the south of Moldova) and whose peculiarity is that, unlike the rest of Turkmen peoples, they are Orthodox Christians. On this issue, see ROPER, Steven D., «Regionalism in Moldova: The Case of Transnistria and Gagauzia», *Regional & Federal Studies*, Vol.11, No.3, 2001, pp.101-122.

² For a study of the factors of controversy in this conflict, see COJOCARU, Natalia, «Nationalism and identity in Transnistria», *The European Journal of Social Science Research*, Vol.19, No.3-4, 2006, pp.261-272; and WATERS Trevor, «Russian peacekeeping in Moldova: Source of stability or neo-imperialist threat?», in MACKINLEY, John y CROSS, Peter, *Regional peacekeepers: The paradox of Russian peacekeeping*, New York: United Nations University, 2003, 133-136.

³ The first leader of the TMR, Igor Smirnov, stated that «the Moldovan Parliament adopted laws that clearly violated the rights of some of its people, discriminating against them. They spoke, moreover, in favor of creating a «Great Romania». All this naturally alarmed our population, because the land beyond the Dniester had never been Romanian land». LAMONT, Neil V., *Territorial dimensions of ethnic conflict: the Moldovan*

3rd December 1990, when the Moldovan police gunned down three civilians trying to break through the blockade on the bridge over the Dniester at Dubasari.⁴

The 1989 census revealed that there were 4.3 million people living in the Moldovan SSR, of whom 2.8 million (64%) were Moldovans, 14% Ukrainians and 13% Russians and the remaining 9% were Gagauzes and other minorities (see map 2).



Map 2: ethnic distribution in the Republic of Moldova

Not all Slavs were concentrated in Transnistria, whose ethnic distribution in 1991 consisted of 40% Moldovans, 28% Ukrainians and 23% Russians.

case, 1995, available at <http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/documents/moldovan/mol-dovan.htm#6>. [Consulted: 06 April 2014].

⁴ INTERNATIONAL CRISIS GROUP, «Moldova: no quick fix», Europe Report, No.147, 12 August 2003, available at <http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/europe/Moldova%20147.pdf> [Consulted: 05 April 2014].

There was also another important economic factor at stake, since this area – with only 12% of the territory and 17% of the population of Moldova, accounted for 35% of its GDP.⁵

March 2nd 1992 is considered to have been the official start of the war, coinciding with Moldova's admission as member of the U.N. Large-scale combat began in May 1992, when Chisinau tried to recover sovereignty over the TMR, using its newly formed militias, combat-trained by Romania. The civil war ended with a secessionist victory, 1,500 dead and 100,000 people displaced from their homes.⁶

As a result of this, Moldova lost control of 4,163 sq. km of its territory, 452 km of its frontier with Ukraine and 600,000 of its inhabitants.⁷

The role of Russia in the military phase of the conflict

As far as Russia's role in the conflict is concerned, the 14th Army, which had been based in the area since 1954, was the main protagonist.⁸ General Yakovlev, its commanding officer in 1991, allowed the Transnistrian militias to access the arsenals under his charge.⁹ His successor, General Netkachev, adopted a more neutral position during the conflict. Nevertheless, his attempts to mediate between Chisinau and Tiraspol (capital of the TMR) were fruitless and the situation escalated into the above-mentioned open military conflict in May 1992.

On 23rd June, at the height of the Moldovan offensive, General Alexander Lebed¹⁰ reached the area with orders to prevent the theft of weapons and

⁵ KING, Charles, «The Benefits of Ethnic War: Understanding Eurasia's Unrecognized States», *World Politics*, No.53, 2001, pp.524-552.

⁶ For a complete analysis of the military dimension of the conflict, see BÁRCENAS, Luis A. and LÓPEZ, José A., *Frozen conflicts of the former Soviet Union*, Madrid: Ministry of Defense, 2011, pp.29-67.

⁷ BLANC ARTEMIR Antonio, *Territorial, interethnic and national conflicts in the States emerging from the former Soviet Union*, Valencia: Tirant lo Blanc, 2004, p 215.

⁸ Russian leaders of the time, immersed in the political transition, lacked both a clear idea of their national security interests and defined rules of conduct towards the ex-Soviet republics. As a result of this, the Russian military, and especially units stationed in these States, were to all intents and purposes left to fend for themselves. SELIVANOVA, Irina F., «Trans-Dnistria», in AZRAEL, Jeremy R. and PAYIN, Emil A.(Ed.), *US and Russia policy-making with respect to the use of force*, RAND Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies, 1995, p.57, available at http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/conf_proceedings/2007/CF129.pdf. [Consulted: 03 April 2014].

⁹ General Yakovlev supported the TMR so openly that he was a member of its Supreme Soviet and accepted the post of Chairman of the Defense Department on 3rd December 1991, the day he was relieved as head of the 14th Army.

¹⁰ For more on the figure of Lebed and his role in Moldavia, see O'MALLEY, Kevin D., *A Russian man on horseback: The rise of General Alexander Lebed*, Chapter 3 «The fighting General: Lebed in Moldova», Monterrey: Naval Postgraduate School, March

evacuate the 14th Army, crossing Ukraine. After assessing the situation, Lebed decided to involve the Russian troops in the ongoing combat, and on 3rd July 1992, a massive artillery attack on the right bank of the Dniester annihilated the Moldovan forces attacking Bendery, putting an end to the military phase of the conflict.¹¹

A statement attributed to Lebed would demonstrate his personal commitment to the Slav cause: *«I am proud that we have helped Transnistria against those Moldovan fascists»*. Another quote attributed to him, however, describes his position (which could be considered that of the Russian Federation) in the following way: *«I told the fanatical separatists of Tiraspol and fascists of Chisinau: either you stop killing each other or I'll fire on all of you with my tanks»*.¹²

On 25th June 1992, the presidents of Russia, Ukraine, Moldova and Romania met together in Moscow to agree on a ceasefire, signed on 21st July¹³.

The forces of both sides would be separated by an interpositional force made up of five Russian battalions, three Moldovan and two from the TMR.

Compliance with the terms of the agreement would be overseen by a «Joint Control Commission» based in Bendery, which had the «Joint Military Command» under it¹⁴.

In April 1995, the 14th Army was renamed as «Russian Forces Task Force», and reduced to 2,600 troops, which, in theory, remained in the area as a peace-keeping force to monitor the 1992 agreement. The biggest problem was the 42,000 tons of military equipment stored in Transnistria from the Soviet era.

1997, available at <http://www.dtic.mil/cgi-bin/GetTRDoc?AD=ADA329373>. [Consulted: 03 April 2014].

¹¹ It appears to be established that Moscow's intention in sending General Lebed to Moldova was not to favor the TMR, but rather to stop the separatist militias looting the arsenal of the 14th Army. OZHIGANOV, Edward, «The Republic of Moldova: Transnistria and the 14th Army», in ARBATOV, Alexei et al., *Managing conflict in the former Soviet Union: Russian and American perspectives*, Boston: Harvard University, 1997, pp.147-148.

¹² HUMPHRIES, Richard, «Transnistria: relic of a bygone era», *The Japan Times* (8.10.2001), available at <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/text/fv20011008a2.html>. [Consulted: 03 April 2014].

¹³ As part of the ceasefire agreement, three commitments were undertaken: to respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Moldova, including Transnistria; future concession of special legal and administrative status to the breakaway region; and the drawing up of a timetable for the withdrawal of Russia's 14th Army. BÁRCENAS, Luis A. Y LÓPEZ, José A., *Óp.cit.*, p.170.

¹⁴ KEMP, Walter, «Bridge over the Dniester: confidence-building measures in Moldova», Issue Brief, International Peace Institute, March 2011, available at http://ipinst.org/media/pdf/publications/ipi_epub_bridge_over_dniestr.pdf. [Consulted: 05 April 2014].

Moscow was not prepared to assume the costs of recovering it and its attempts to sell some of it off to a third party ended in failure. Added to that, the secessionist authorities consider this material as a guarantee of independence and have declared that it belongs to them and that Russia would have to pay to get it back.¹⁵

The initial involvement of the CSCE

As regards the role of the Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) in this crisis, its mission in Moldova began on 25th April 1993, and thus nine months after the end of the military phase of the conflict, in order to facilitate a lasting and comprehensive political settlement on all aspects of the conflict on the left bank of the Dniester in the Republic of Moldova, based on CSCE principles and commitments.

The mandate of the Mission, composed of eight persons, consisted of: facilitating the establishment of a global political framework for undertaking dialogue and negotiations; compiling and providing information about the situation, including the military situation, and investigating specific incidents; fomenting negotiations on the status and withdrawal of foreign troops; providing advice and legal expertise; and initiating a visible CSCE presence in the region.¹⁶

The current state of the conflict

International mediation efforts

As opposed to what happens in other frozen conflicts in the post-Soviet space, in the case of Moldova, there is no hatred between ethnic groups to impede any resolution initiatives. According to a study from 2009, 78.1% of all Moldovans and 56.1% of Transnistrian inhabitants feel that the secession has been detrimental for both parties, as it has prevented them from improving their standard of living. As a whole, 87.4% consider that resolving the conflict is important for the future of Moldova and Transnistria.

As regards their foreign policy stance, 61.7% of all Moldovans and 53.1% of TMR inhabitants had a positive view of the EU, with 68.8% and 46.6% respectively, advocating membership of the Union. As for Russia, 58.5% of right bank inhabitants and 81.7% from the left bank had a positive vi-

¹⁵ KING, Charles, «Eurasia Letter: Moldova with a Russian Face», Foreign Policy, No.97, winter 1994-1995, pp.106-120.

¹⁶ FREIRE, María R., Conflict and security in the former Soviet Union: The role of the OSCE, Burlington: Ashgate, 2003, pp.195-252.

sion. Nevertheless, there are powerful forces within both groups who benefit from maintaining the status quo.¹⁷

There have been constant mediation efforts by various international figures. Thus on 23rd March 1992, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs from Moldova, Russia, Romania and Ukraine adopted a declaration in Helsinki on joint principles for the peaceful resolution of the conflict and agreed to create a mechanism for political consultations to coordinate their efforts. A quadripartite commission was established in April to monitor implementation of an eventual ceasefire, but the military escalation left this mechanism in suspension.

The Transnistria issue was also discussed within the framework of the recently created «Community of Independent States» (CIS), leaving themselves the option of deploying a peacekeeping force in accordance with the «Agreement on

groups of military observers and peacekeeping forces in the CIS», signed in Kiev on 20th March of that year. The Moscow Summit of 6th July agreed on deployment of Russian, Ukrainian, Byelorussian, Romanian and Bulgarian joint forces, if Chisinau requested it (an agreement which became invalid after the ceasefire of 21st July 1992).

After several years of impasse, the first breakthrough was achieved on May 8th 1997, with the signing of the «Memorandum on the basis for normalization of relations between the Republic of Moldova and Transnistria». On 20th March 1998 the so-called «Odessa Agreement» was reached on measures of trust and development of contacts between Moldova and Transnistria¹⁸, outlining ten specific actions:

- To reduce, within two months, the number of troops from Moldova and Transnistria deployed in the safety zone, up to 500 troops apiece.
- To reduce, in coordination with the «Joint Military Command», the number of static controls of the peacekeeping forces and replace them with mobile patrols.
- To receive, within the space of a month, an analysis of the «Joint Control Commission» on compliance with the 1992 ceasefire agreement.
- To draw up a list of proposals, within two months, for reducing the number of border controls between Moldova and Transnistria, in order to facilitate movement of people, goods and services.

¹⁷ KEMP, Walter, Op.cit., pp.2-3.

¹⁸ Agreement on Confidence Measures and Development of Contacts between the Republic of Moldova and Transnistria, Odessa, 20 March 1998, available at <http://www.osce.org/moldova/42310?download=true>. [Consulted: 6 April 2014].

- To make the bridge over the Dniester in the city of Dubossar operational before May, following the security measures established by the Commission.
- To contribute to the rapid withdrawal of military equipment, which remains in storage in Transnistria, with Ukraine's cooperation in facilitating its movement.
- To create, within a month, a working group to draw up a comprehensive program for combatting illegal trafficking of drugs and arms.
- To avoid measures which could lead to a propaganda war, giving objective information about progress of negotiations.
- To set up joint programs to support investment projects, reconstruction of industries and power plants and environmental protection.
- To respect and protect human rights and freedoms, in accordance with international law.

The next significant initiative appeared in November 2003, when Russia introduced the «Kozak Memorandum» (named in honor of its sponsor, Presidential adviser Dimitri Kozak)¹⁹. This marked an important change in the Russian position, since it discarded the concept of sovereign equality between Chisinau and Tiraspol, maintained so far, and proposed instead an asymmetric Federation with broad autonomy for Transnistria.

However, the door stood open for the presence of Russian troops in the area up until 2020, and the powers of veto granted to Tiraspol would allow *de facto* control of Chisinau's major decisions²⁰. For this reason, and on the advice of the West, Moldovan President Vladimir Voronin rejected it, provoking Russian resentment and the clashes during the OSCE Ministerial Summit in Maastricht in December 2003.²¹

Voronin further strained relations with Russia by publishing the «3D Action plan and Strategy for resolution of the Transnistria conflict» on 1st October 2004 (demilitarization, decriminalization and democratization of Transnistria)²², and given the lack of progress in the five-sided negotiations (Moldova, Transnistria, Russia, Ukraine and the OSCE), Moldova

¹⁹ POPESCU, Nicu, «The EU and Transnistria», UNISCI Discussion Papers, No.10, January 2006, p.249, available at <http://revistas.ucm.es/index.php/UNIS/article/view/UNIS0606130247A/28143>. [Consulted: 03 April 2014].

²⁰ POPESCU, Nicu, «The EU in Moldova-Settling conflicts in the neighborhood», EU-ISS Occasional Paper, No.60, October 2005, p.30, available at <http://www.iss.europa.eu/uploads/media/occ60.pdf>. [Consulted: 03 April 2014].

²¹ Eleventh Meeting of the Ministerial Council, Maastricht, 1 & 2 December 2003, available at <http://www.osce.org/mc/40533>. [Consulted: 03 April 2014]. Page 108 of the document carries the communiqué of the delegation from the Russian Federation.

²² BOONSTRA, Jos, «Moldavia, Transnistria and European democracy policies», Commentary FRIDE, available at <http://www.osce.org/mc/40533>. [Consulted: 03 April 2014].

proposed that the EU and USA should be incorporated into the process of negotiations that same year, in a format known as 2+5.

In addition, in October 2005 Brussels approved the EU Border Assistance Mission in the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine (acronym EUBAM), to improve monitoring and control of the movement of goods and people between the two countries, as well as fighting against trafficking of human beings, smuggling of goods and weapons, and corruption.²³

That same year, newly elected Ukrainian President Viktor Yushchenko issued his alternative plan to the «Kozak Memorandum» proposing autonomy for Transnistria, but without federalizing Moldova nor guaranteeing Tiraspol the right to secede if Chisinau were to decide on union with Romania. The Moldovan Parliament adopted Yushchenko's plan and gave it the force of law in 2005, but Transnistria rejected it.

In retaliation, Ukraine decided that it would only import goods from Transnistria if they were processed by the Moldovan customs service. Russia and Transnistria classified this as economic blockade, and Tiraspol responded by holding a referendum on September 17, 2006, in which the yes to independence and future integration with Russia reached 98% (with 78.6% participation).

Political division of Moldova as source of weakness

In Moldova, the «Alliance for European Integration» (AEI) ousted the Communist Party from power in 2009, but it is made up of various groups with weak cohesion: the Liberal-Democratic Party of Prime Minister Lurie Leanca (with 31 seats), the Democratic Party of Parliament Speaker Marian Lupu (with 15 seats), and the Liberal Reform Party of Mihai Ghimpu (with 12 seats).²⁴ The two minority parties have been ganging up against their government partner, and disputes between Prime Minister Vlad Filat and Vlad Palhoniuc (number two in the Democratic Party and the richest person in Moldova) ended with the former being replaced by Leanca (Minister of Foreign Affairs) in May 2013.

On page 108 of the document is the communiqué of the delegation from the Russian Federation.

²³ «Trafficking in human beings and a variety of smuggling (from stolen cars to drugs, weapons, tobacco and alcohol) are two worrying areas of transnational organized crime, from a regional perspective.» WOLFF, Stefan, The Transnistrian issue: moving beyond the status-quo, EU DG for External Policies, October 2012, p.15, available at https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/224472/evidence-stefan-wolff-the-transnistrian-issue.pdf. [Consulted: 08 April 2014].

²⁴ «The Alliance is far from being a stable political bloc united more by a common enemy-the Communists - than by a political agenda and a common vision. «.WOLFF, Stefan, Op.cit., p.8.

The opposition consists of the Communist Party (34 seats) and 9 independent deputies. The Communists ruled between 2001 and 2009, and aimed to regain power, capitalizing on social discontent with the economic situation and with the support of the pro-Russian sectors. To do this, they tried to launch a «velvet revolution» in the summer of 2013, with the aim of overthrowing the government and preventing the signing of the Association Agreement with the EU, scheduled for November of that year.²⁵

In the anti-government demonstrations, Communists denounced the rampant corruption, proposed readjusting budgets to provide greater social protection for the most disadvantaged, and advocated restoration of moral values against Western influence, a goal they have in common with the most traditional sectors of the Orthodox Church.

Paradoxically, it was the Communist Voronin who set the European course, with the approval of the «Action Plan Moldova-EU» in 2004. However, after their move to the opposition, Communists intend to maintain a double foreign vector (EU and Russia) adapting in each case to what is most beneficial. The problem is that the terms of the agreement with the EU are incompatible with further integration into the Customs Union initiated by Russia, which forces them to choose between one or the other.²⁶

Another important issue is the position of the parties regarding a subject that may seem trivial, but actually plays a major role in the conflict: the official name of the language as Moldovan or Romanian.²⁷ The Constitution and most people go for the first option (to consider it a dialectal variation), but intellectual elites advocate the second, since the standardized and cultured version of the language coincides fully with Romanian.

The Constitutional Court addressed the issue in December 2013, stating that the Declaration of Independence of 1991 takes precedence over the Constitution of 1994, and since it declared Romanian the official language of the country, this is the criterion that must prevail. It is interesting to

²⁵ SOCOR, Vladimir, «Russia and the Moldovan Communists' Red October», Eurasia Daily Monitor, Vol.10, No.176, 3 October 2013.

²⁶ Of the six countries in the Eastern Partnership of the EU, Moldova and Georgia have opted for signing the Association Agreement and Free Trade with the Union, Belarus is a founding member of the Customs Union and has not even considered the European way, Azerbaijan has no interest in any of the two options (only wants to increase energy ties), Armenia decided in September 2013 to forego signing the Agreement with the EU and requested entry into the Customs Union, and the situation in Ukraine is well known: renounced signing in November, coup d'état against President Yanukovich in February, and signature of the political part of the agreement with the EU by the new authorities in March.

²⁷ «This controversy permeates political parties, Moldova-Romania relations, policies on the conflict in Transnistria, and Russia's policy towards Moldova», SOCOR, Vladimir, «Language Politics, Party Politics, and Constitutional Court Politics in Moldova», Eurasia Daily Monitor, Vol.11, No.6, 13 January 2014.

note that five of the six members of the Court have dual Romanian-Moldovan nationality. In general, any tendency to *Romanianization* of Moldova encourages separatism.

The role of external actors

The role of the European Union and the Vilnius Summit

The EU has been supporting the process of building mutual trust between Moldova and Transnistria, in particular by financing «United Nations Development Programme» projects, which have promoted cooperation at the level of small border communities in areas such as health, social affairs, or the environment since March 2009.²⁸

The current relationship between Moldova and the EU is based on the Association and Free Trade Agreement, whose approval was made at the Summit, in Vilnius (Lithuania), of the Eastern Partnership on 28th and 29th November 2013. Furthermore, at that same meeting, the Commission confirmed that Moldova had completed the action plan for liberalization of visas, which recommended their abolition, in the Schengen area, for holders of biometric passports.

The agreements are expected to enter into force this year (August being the most likely month for their ratification), in coordination with the legislative elections in November 2014. In this way, the ruling coalition seeks to exploit success and unseat the Communist Party from its status as the most voted-for political force.

At the signing of the Association Agreement in Vilnius, the Moldovan Prime Minister Leanca said that the policy of European integration for Moldova is the direct continuation of its decision in 1991 to become independent of the USSR, adding that this path will become irreversible only when the EU grants it candidate country status, initiating the process towards full membership.

As regards the conflict in Transnistria, Chisinau authorities expect that rapprochement to the EU will increase its attractiveness on the left bank, both to citizens - through the possibilities of travelling to Europe, which offers the new visa policy - and to companies that could benefit from the Free Trade Agreement to enter the Community market.²⁹

²⁸ The actions of this program in Moldova, acronym UNDP, are summarized in the publication *Towards equitable and sustainable development for all 2007-2011*, available at http://www.md.undp.org/content/dam/moldova/docs/Publications/UNDP_MD_MOLDOVA%202012%20book.pdf. [Consulted: 05 April 2014].

²⁹ SOCOR, Vladimir, «Moldovan Government Moves Closer to the European Union at the Vilna Summit», *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Vol.10, No.218, 5 December 2013.

However, this assumed increase in Moldovan soft power over ethnic minorities does not seem to have occurred. The «People's Assembly» of Gagauzia called a referendum on February 2, 2014, to ask that minority if it preferred rapprochement to the EU or the Customs Union promoted by Russia, apart from assessing the possibility of independence from Moldova if it were to unite with Romania.

The result leaves no room for doubt: with over 70% participation, 98.4% of the votes were in favor of integration into the Customs Union, 97.2% against joining the EU, and 98.9% in favor of independence. The Assembly had no powers to call the referendum, but did so despite warnings to the contrary from the central government, using Russian funding.³⁰

All this happened despite statements by EU officials to the effect that the process of association with Moldova should not divide people, but rather provide a basis for social consensus. That is to say, to avoid what was done in Ukraine, which led to the serious incidents known to all: the independence of Crimea and its annexation by Russia.

However, consensus seems further away than ever, as the most recent opinion polls indicate that among ethnic Moldovans, 55% are in favor of European orientation and 28% against, while among ethnic Russians the percentages are 13% and 62% respectively, with ethnic Ukrainians 26% and 57%, and among other ethnic groups 15% and 51%. In general, support for the EU in Moldova is progressively decreasing, while the attraction of Russia is on the increase.³¹

Current relations between Russia and Moldova

At the end of 2012, tension between Chisinau and Moscow rose again when President Nicolae Timofti insisted on the unconditional withdrawal of Russia from Transnistria. In addition, Moldova announced its intention to progress in its rapprochement to the EU and adopt the second and third community «Energy Packages», which prohibit a company from being both a supplier and a distributor via the so called *Gazprom clause*.

In this regard, Russia offered a 30% discount on the price of gas to Moldova, setting the condition that they waive adoption of the aforementioned EU legislative packages. Gazprom holds a de facto monopoly on the supply to southeast Europe and is building the South Stream gas pipeline

³⁰ MINZARARI, Dumitru, «The Gagauz Referendum in Moldova: A Russian Political Weapon?» Eurasia Daily Monitor, Vol.11, No.23, 5 February 2014.

³¹ See INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC POLICIES, Barometer of Public Opinion, November 2013, available at http://www.ipp.md/public/files/Barometru/BOP_11.2013_prima_parte_English.ppt. [Consulted: 06 April 2014]. Note that this survey does not include the opinion of the inhabitants of Transnistria, who are certainly positioned in favor of strengthening ties with Russia.

through the Black Sea to strengthen it, but if the Balkan countries accelerate implementation of Community rules, all that effort will be in vain.

During his visit to Chisinau in September 2013, Russian Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin (also Transnistrian Presidential representative and co-chair of the «Committee on Russia-Moldova Economic Cooperation») warned of the possible consequences for Moldova of the signing of the Association and Free Trade Agreement with the EU. Among the early Rogozin measures are:

- Compulsory review of Russian-Moldovan trade agreements in force, with access restrictions on agricultural products for the Russian market.³²
- Possible consequences for hundreds of thousands of Moldovans working in Russia, which could threaten their continuity in the country.
- Expected cuts in gas supply if government debt is not settled with the mixed capital company Moldovagaz. Rogozin literally declared: «We hope they won't freeze next winter.»
- The permanent loss of Transnistria if the path to European integration continues. The Russian leader expressed this through the metaphor «a Moldova train en route to Europe would lose its Transnistria carriages».

Although the Kremlin has always, at least formally, recognized the territorial integrity of Moldova under its internationally established borders, in practice it always had separate channels of relations with Chisinau and Tiraspol, independently of whether Rogozin was the one responsible for controlling both. In addition, the continued presence of Russian troops in Transnistria represents an obvious denial of Moldova's sovereignty over that region.

Russia's capacity for penalizing Moldova remains considerable, although failure to combine punitive measures (the stick) with incentives for closer ties to Moscow (the carrot), will surely reinforce Chisinau's course towards the EU, even though it will pay a high price for it. The most favorable scenario for Russia would be if the Moldovan people blame their own government for the drawbacks of signing the agreement with the EU, preventing its implementation and improving the expectations of the Communist Party facing the November elections.

For this, the most appropriate pressure period is between July and October, when the bulk of the Moldovan wine harvest and fruit products should be exported to Russia, its largest customer. Besides, an estimated four to five years would be necessary for Moldova to receive gas from Ro-

³² On 2nd September 2013 the Russian inspection agency announced the rejection of a consignment of 28,000 liters of Moldovan wine, supposedly for sanitary deficiencies, while threatening to completely ban the import of that product. This is the main export of Moldova: in 2005 it sold wine to Russia for \$ 235 million (50% market share), while in 2012, total revenues had fallen to \$ 61 million (10-12% market share).

mania, so Chisinau has had to give in to the Russian request not to adopt EU legislation in this area.

As regards emigrants, remittances sent annually to their country amount to over \$1,000,000,000, and are vital for keeping the economy afloat. Almost half of Moldovans in Russia are in an illegal situation, and in recent months some 20,000 have been repatriated or have been barred entry. In 2014 a new agreement on migration between Moscow and Chisinau is due to be signed, and certainly the Kremlin will use it as a bargaining tool.³³

It is estimated that Russia maintains 1,200 troops in Transnistria, guarding the 20,000 tons of military equipment still stored there, in addition to the approximately 400 members of the trilateral peacekeeping force.

The role of the OSCE and the 2 + 5 negotiations

The CSCE was involved from the start in resolving this conflict, through its Mission in Moldova. In fact, the format of the negotiations throughout the 90s included the two conflicting parties (Moldova and the TMR), as well as Russia, Ukraine and the OSCE itself (CSCE, «Conference», changed its name to «Organization» in January 1995).

It was within the framework of the Organization during the Istanbul Summit in 1999, when a timetable was fixed for the departure of the Russian forces from Transnistria, Moldova and Russia agreeing that this would occur within three years. In December 2002, at the Oporto Summit, Russia requested an extension of one year, given the technical difficulties of removing so much military equipment. However, come December 2003, withdrawal was interrupted, in retaliation for the Moldovan rejection of the «Kozak Memorandum».

As from 2004, the negotiating group included the EU and the USA, and was renamed process 2+5 (Moldova / Transnistria /Russia / Ukraine / OSCE + EU / USA.), but in 2005, its activity was interrupted, coinciding with a period of tension between the West and Russia. The process was formally resumed in September 2011, and in April 2012 a new agreement on «Principles and Procedures» was reached and an agenda for the negotiations was established with three areas (socio-economic, humanitarian and legal issues, and human rights) as part of a package deal that includes institutional, political and security issues.

In November 2013, the year's fifth and final round of 2 + 5-format negotiations was held in Kiev (with Ukraine at the head of the OSCE). In statements after the meeting, the then Ukrainian foreign minister Kozhara

³³ SOCOR, Vladimir, «Moldova's European choice vulnerable to Russian economic leverage», Eurasia Daily Monitor, Vol.11, No.34, 21 February 2014.

praised the dynamism of the negotiations, the resumption of direct dialogue between Chisinau and Tiraspol, and practical solutions achieved for the benefit of both populations, such as modification of the Moldovan legislation to facilitate free movement through their territory of Transnistria inhabitants with Russian or Ukrainian passports.³⁴

However, all developments threaten to come to nothing, with the unprecedented crisis in Ukraine caused by the decision of President Yanukovich not to sign the Association Agreement with the EU. The declaration of independence of Crimea and its annexation to Russia has revived tensions in the area as the new leaders in Kiev are restricting the free movement of Russians from Transnistria, and Chisinau leaders are accelerating rapprochement with the EU (and even NATO) fearing that Moscow intends to annex its rebel territory.

This is exactly what the Tiraspol leaders are asking for, appealing to the outcome of the 2006 referendum, to which adhere also the Gagauzes who, as mentioned, held their own inquest about joining Russia.

Conclusions and perspectives

Almost 22 years after the fighting ended in Transnistria it has not been possible to reach a political agreement between Chisinau and Tiraspol. The keys to the conflict studied throughout this chapter can be summarized as follows:

- The administrative borders of the MSSR in the USSR, converted into international borders of the Republic of Moldova, do not respond to historical logic and include pockets of ethnic minorities (Ukrainians, Russians, Gagauzes) who felt threatened after independence.
- Added to the ethnic differences were the interests of the inhabitants of industrial Transnistria (including Moldovans) in maintaining a higher economic status than that of the agricultural regions in the rest of Moldova.
- Although brief and with a limited number of deaths, the military phase of the conflict left deep wounds on both banks of the Dniester, leading to the independent development of two state entities.
- Agreements reached by the five participants (Moldova, Transnistria, Russia, Ukraine, OSCE) during the 90s had few practical results.
- As from Moldovan rejection of the Kozak 2003 plan, positions moved further away from each other to the point where Transnistria voted for independence in 2007.

³⁴ See OSCE Chairperson-in-Office welcomes continued dynamics in 5+2 negotiations, calls for more trust-2011, 25 November 2013, available at <http://www.osce.org/cio/108908>. [Consulted: 05 April 2014].

- Political parties and Moldovan society are now deeply divided along ethnic lines regarding the direction of the country's foreign policy.
- The current Moldovan government has backed the European vector with the signing of the Association Agreement with the EU, alienating not only Transnistria, but also Gagauzia and Communist Party voters.
- The EU has raised the dilemma «*either us or Russia*» for the countries of the Eastern Partnership, which has resulted in a strong polarization, given the economic and social ties that bind them to Moscow.

With regard to future prospects, in 2011 we stated that «*Granting broad autonomy to Transnistria, the official recognition of minority languages and the recognition of their right to self determination (should Chisinau decide someday to cede its sovereignty to Bucharest), appear to be basic resolution settings... Transnistria should assume that it will not achieve international recognition of its independence ... the ethnic grievances they claim have become an excuse to hide the economic motives of secession*».³⁵

That is to say that at that moment there appeared to be a solution very close to that of the «Kozak Memorandum» of 2003, initially accepted by all parties.

The final rejection of Chisinau took eight years, and subsequent progress of the 2 + 5 negotiation process has been overshadowed by the current crisis in Ukraine, which has raised tensions in Eastern Europe to limits unknown since the end of the Cold War.

Moldova, backed by the EU, has aligned itself with the new authorities in Kiev, and intends to ensure that the Association Agreement and Free Trade Agreement come into force in 2014. Brussels considers that this should be a factor of social cohesion and Chisinau expects that the benefits of rapprochement to Europe will attract Transnistria. However, reality is obstinate, and not only is Transnistria further away than ever from Moldova, but Gagauzia also rejects the plan for a new direction in foreign policy and mainly wants to join Russia.

In short, if the EU and Russia had advanced the creation of a common area from Lisbon to Vladivostok, harmonizing the Customs Union promoted by Moscow with ties to the Community, the countries of the Eastern Partnership would not be forced to choose, and could benefit from good neighborly relationships with both entities.

³⁵ RUIZ, Francisco J., «The Transnistria conflict: the way to a negotiated resolution?», IEEE 035/2011 Analysis document, 21 December 2011, available at http://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs_analisis/2011/DIEEEA35-2011ElConflictoDelTransdniester-FJRG.pdf. [Consulted: 09 April 2014].

That scenario is unlikely, so one can only lament missed opportunities and, to paraphrase Evgeny Shevchuk,³⁶ advocate a civilized and peaceful divorce between Moldova and Transnistria, similar to Czechoslovakia in 1993.

Annex i –tables: geopolitical indicators & chronology of the conflict

GEOPOLITICAL INDICATORS					
		Romania	Moldova	Ukraine	Russia
Area		229,890 km ²	32,891 km ²	579,330 km ²	16,377.742 km ²
GDP		183,800 M\$	7,880 M\$	175,500 M\$	2,113,000 M\$
GDP distribution	Agriculture	10.8%	13.8%	9.9%	9.7%
	Industry	37.4%	19.9%	29.6%	27.8%
	Services	51.8%	66.2%	60.5%	62.5%
GDP per capita		8,458 \$	2,200 \$	3,692 \$	14,831 \$
GDP growth index		2%	4%	0.4%	1.3%
Exports		61,240 M\$. Germany (18.9%), Italy (12.3%)	2,310 M\$. Russia (20.8%), Romania (19.8%), Ukraine (5.4%)	71,140 M\$. Russia (25.6%), Turkey (5.4%)	515,000 M\$. The Netherlands (14.6%), Germany (6.8%), China (6.8%)
Imports		69,180 M\$. Germany (17.5%), Italy (11%)	5,420 M\$. Ukraine (17.6%), Romania (16.6%), Russia (8.2%)	87,210 M\$. Russia (32.4%), China (9.3%), Germany (8%)	341,000 M\$. China (16.2%), Germany (12.2%), Ukraine (5.7%)
Population		21,729,000	3,583,000	44,291,000	142,470,000
Age Distribution	0-14	14.6%	17.7%	14%	16.4%
	15-64	70.3%	71.6%	70.4%	70.5%
	Over 65	15.1%	10.7%	15.8%	13.1%
Rate of population growth		-0.29%	-1.02%	-0.64%	-0.03%
Main ethnic groups		Romanians (83.4%), Hungarians (6.1%), Gypsies (3.1%)	Moldovans (78.2%), Ukrainians (8.4%), Russians (5.8%), Gagauzes (4.4%)	Ukrainians (77.8%), Russians (17.3%)	Russians (77.7%), Tatars (3.7%), Ukrainians (1.7%)
Religions		Orthodox (81.9%), Protestants (6.4%), Catholics (4.3%)	Orthodox (98%), Jewish (1.5%)	Orthodox Patriarchate Kiev (50.4%), Moscow Patriarchate (26.1%), Uniate Catholics (8%)	Orthodox (15-20%), Muslims (10-15%)
Population below poverty threshold		22.2%	21.9%	24.1%	11%
GINI Index		33.2	38	28.2	42
Military expenditure. % of GDP		1.29%	0.3%	2.77%	4.47%

³⁶ See «The best for Moldavia and Transnistria is a civilized divorce», Russia Beyond the Headlines (1.4.2014), available at http://es.rbth.com/internacional/2014/04/01/lo_mejor_para_moldavia_y_transdniester_es_un_divorcio_civilizad_38969.html. [Consulted: 09 April 2014].

DATE	EVENT
31 August 1989	The Supreme Soviet of the Moldavian SSR declares Romanian the official language.
27 April 1990	The MSSR is re-named "Republic of Moldova", and adopts the Romanian flag and national anthem.
2 September 1990	Tiraspol proclaims the Soviet Socialist Republic of Transnistria.
3 December 1990	First fatalities from the conflict in the town of Dubasari.
27 August 1991	The Republic of Moldova declares its Independence from the USSR, which for the TMR overrides the 1940 union of the two Banks of the Dniester.
2 March 1992	Start date of the war in Transnistria.
23 June 1992	Arrival of General Lebed in Moldova, commanding the 14th Army.
3 July 1992	The 14th Army attacks Moldovan forces which were attacking Bendery.
21 July 1992	Ceasefire agreement, in force to this day, signed in Moscow.
25 April 1993	Start of OSCE Mission in Moldova.
April 1995	The 14th Army re-named "Russian Forces Task Force".
8 May 1997	"Memorandum on the basis for normalization of relations between the Republic of Moldova and Transnistria.
20 March 1998	"Odessa agreement" on measures of trust and development of contacts between Moldova and Transnistria.
November 1999	Istanbul Summit of OSCE. Russia agrees to withdraw its troops within three years.
November 2003	Russia proposes the "Kozak Memorandum" to resolve the conflict. Moldovan President Voronin rejects him in extremis, on advice from the West. Moscow suspends withdrawal of its troops.
1 October 2004	Voronin presents "3D Action Plan and Strategy for resolving the conflict in Transnistria", rejected by Tiraspol.
October 2005	EU approves its Border Assistance Mission to Moldova and Ukraine (EUBAM).
17 September 2006	Transnistria holds referendum on the future status of the region. 98% of the electorate voted in favor of joining Russia.
5 April 2009-now	The "Alliance for European Integration" (AIE) replaces the Communist Party government after eight years in power.
28-29 November 2013	Moldova signs the Association and Free Trade Agreement with the EU at the Eastern Partnership Summit in Vilnius (Lithuania).

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The arab springs

Santos Castro Fernández

Chapter four

Summary

The so-called «Arab Springs» constitute a long-term political and social transition process, the broadest one since the decolonization, as it spreads from Morocco to the boundaries of the Persian Gulf. It was generated from a moral burst, a citizens' movement that rebelled against predatory, despotic and deaf governments.

The consolidation of the process, if it is ever reached, will depend on the balance between the moderate Islamic parties and movements and the secular associations, with the active or passive complicity of the military power. The blockade imposed by historic autocracies has been destroyed. The future shall not be a repetition of the past.

Given this process, the European Union has not developed a strategy over the long-haul, it has just reacted to catch up with the circumstances, while the United States has shown its lack of trust over the whole the process and some regional powers, such as Saudi Arabia, Turkey, or Iran, have emerged to play a leading role.

Key words

«*Arab Springs*», political and social transition, citizens' movement, moderate Islamism, secularism, military power.

Introduction

For the sake of dignity. A historic process has been launched for the benefit of human dignity. For over three years a deep changing process has been going on in our geopolitical environment, a difficult one with an uncertain outcome.

With a certain sense of poetic euphemism, we have somehow decided to call it the «Arab Springs» and its change impact and transformation process range from Morocco to Yemen and Oman that is from our nearest neighbors on the southern shore of the Mediterranean, a key region for Spain and Europe in general, to the Persian Gulf. Thus, including both the «Maghreb» and the «Mashrek»; this Arab and Islamic universe, so close and so far away, that reaches the borders of the Persian world.

Our intention here has been to offer an approach to this socio political transformation phenomenon, the broadest and deepest one since the independence of those countries that took place during the last century.

The so-called «*Arab Springs*» constitute a long-term historic change. They are a diverse and always unique political transition process that, in the end, will conclude with different significant variations. Given their diversity at origin, their special nature and unique subsequent evolution, we will use the plural as it better suits their complex diversity and their uneven development.

If we set aside the noun «spring» for a moment, and we turn our attention to the adjective »Arab«, we have before us a complex world in which we risk getting lost if we do not take into account a polyhedral reality that includes more than a dozen countries included in our analysis.

We can speak of an Arab nation if we want to express the existence of one common language and culture, which additionally coexist with one deeply-rooted religion, Islam. However, we then have to put the large differences between the societies and nations that constitute such «Arab World» on the same level. In the West, in general, we have not been sensitive to these differences and we have stayed within the limits of a simplified unitary vision.

To be able to get closer to understand this historic fact, we should correct our assessments made on the basis of a Western mindset. At first, during the early months, the «*Arab Springs*» movement was overrated, to the point that it was compared with the Eastern European democratic transition processes following the fall of the Berlin Wall.

Later on, after three years, we have gone to the opposite end, as we now underrate the «*Arab Springs*» and consider them a confused and short-term process, lacking the capacity to transform the Arab-Muslim world, and with an uncertain outcome. In fact, we still do not have the sufficient

perspective to judge the magnitude and final reach of a change that will, without a doubt, prove to be quite stark. We are facing a process of political and social change that could last five, ten or even more years.

Under no circumstances should we approach the analysis of the Arab Spring from the academic Euro-centrism of the studies on bourgeois revolutions of the 18th and 19th centuries. The circumstances and the historic context are much different from those times.

We may summarize the historic reality in which these facts are included in the following way: the disappearance of the Ottoman Empire after the Great War and the redefinition of its dismembered territories under the leadership of the European powers, basically, the United Kingdom and France. The decolonization process that followed, after World War II; the difficulties undergone in the creation process of the Nations-States, and, last but not least, the endemic corruption of despotic, predatory governments, unable to meet the citizens' social needs, and reluctant to develop and modernize their countries.

The debate concerning the political and cultural nature of the «*Arab Springs*» is only beginning and mere preliminary positions have been formulated but, actual events will soon prove them wrong. In particular, the alternative definition of such a massive movement of social and political protest, that considered it as a civic revolt or a political revolution has not found, until now, a precise definition that would allow and encourage us to keep using the beautiful expression «*Arab Springs*» invitingly describing a hopeful start but failing to include the evolution over the time, of the different paths followed, and an undefined future.

They have sometimes been considered «aborted revolutions», but this would be a premature and not very accurate definition. It looks more like a biased point of view even if it is based on the fact that, in the region, we have often seen several frustrated modernization attempts, since the process of independence.

What we have lived through right now is a vigorous moral burst of the multitude, a big citizens' movement meant to oppose the scandalous and unbearable injustice of the depredatory and deaf governments and recover the dignity of individuals. It was never intended as an ideological revolution based on the western model.

All experts have underlined two elements that were preeminent in the development of facts. First of all, the prominence of the youth, a segment that represents the majority of the population in those countries and that lacks future and in the second place the role of the social media. The social communication capacities available, thanks to the last generation technological devices and the satellite television channels in Arabic, have deprived political regimes of their historical information monopoly. The

multiple forms of communications, and mainly the social networks driven by the youth, gave a new dimension to the traditionally called «Arab streets» submissive up until then but rebellious today, thus converting it into a shared political space: the square of democracy, represented by an icon, the Tahrir Square in Cairo.

We now have enough perspective to explain the deep-seated reasons, the social movements underlying such a large historical change. Lluís Bassets offers us an accurate summary, that is shared by most analysts, when he says that there are five key points to explain what happened: «the weight of youngsters in these societies; the economical situation and especially the increase of the cost of the price of food; the dubious succession of autocrats clinging to power during several decades; the new forms of political communication and finally the cycle of the geopolitical changes and of the shift of the world power in the frame of which this revolutionary wave took place».¹

The «Arab Springs» are a long process in the pursuit of a liberty of their own, not a transplant of the western world liberty. They are a search that goes beyond individual autonomy and a better consumerist society with full opportunities for all, the will to find and confirm moral principles that are not copied from the West. They are a search for moral cleanliness for societies that have been dispossessed and humiliated, where corruption and nepotism succeed systemically. As Tahar Ben Jelloun puts it very beautifully: «a page of history that is being written day by day, without previous schedule or premeditation, without traps or tricks.» In the same way in which poets write, following the inspiration of life, when they rebel to attain better days».²

We do not know the evolution of a process that is still consolidating. The most significant example of change of alternatives and paths, and the most important one in the region, is Egypt. Broadly speaking, three stages have already occurred in this country, three constitutions and several government changes. At first, the broad spectrum popular movement was able to overthrow President Mubarak and the natural inheritors of the protest, the Muslim Brotherhood, excluded the rest of the social and political forces after winning free elections, which gave way to a third stage, still not sufficiently defined, the Military coup led by Field Marshal, Al-Sisi, in August 2013.

As a whole, all countries that took part in the «Arab Springs» face an uncertain future. Social turmoil, political uncertainties, a profound economic crisis, the marginality of large population layers, ethnical and religious

¹ Lluís Bassets, *El año de la revolución (The Year of Revolution)*, Taurus, Madrid, 2012, p. 331.

² Tahar Ben Jelloun, *La primavera árabe (The Arab Spring)*, Alianza, Madrid, 2011, p. 49.

clashes, and a fragmentation of leadership are some of the main issues that do not enable us to foresee sociopolitical balance and stability of the region in the near future.

Let us put forward as a general approach that the necessary balance, if ever attained, shall derive from the understanding arising from an agreement between the different parties and associations with an Islamic trend and the secular movement with a liberal trend, with the active or passive complicity of the armed forces. The transition process in which these countries are immersed will face a challenge between Islamism and secularism and the final result shall prove to be democratic, if a balance is reached between both; otherwise, we will witness the renaissance of ancient authoritarian and despotic systems under the appearance of change or cosmetic alterations.

This is because the role that the political Islamism is going to play, with the complicity of the secular laicism together with the position taken by the military power, will constitute the relevant elements of the process, of its hopeful success, or of the possible failure of it all.

Later, the key will be to find ways to improve the life of large population sectors and social groups currently excluded and that have no perspectives to develop a dignified life and to ensure a future for their families.

The key issue in the constitutional design of these States, emerging from the transition process, will be the balance between secular laicism and the moderate Islamism. In other words, an integrating and non discriminative Islamism, like the one implemented by President Mohamed Morsi in Egypt, is required as an element of coexistence.

The core of the problem, as it is happening in the constituent processes we have seen, the Tunisian one with a positive result, consists in finding a balanced solution when dealing with the issue of a confessional or non confessional Country. And this dubious political Islamism has basically two models to look at. Turkey and Iran, considering that what we call political Islamism is, in no way, a monolithic bloc; on the contrary, it entails a large diversity due to the different national histories and to the particular orientations established by its leaders. As Sami Nair puts it: «In reality, the issue of laicism constitutes the Gordian knot of the present and future strategic design».³

After more than three years, the political Islamism has proven to have the final leading role in the transition and institutional consolidation process. It is true that, during the initial stages, due to a lack of information, intellectual inertia, or simply out of a mimetic attitude, international analysts

³ Sami Nair, *La lección tunecina (The Tunisian Lesson)*, Galaxia Gutenberg, Barcelona, 2011, p. 241.

interpreted the facts according to the patterns of the secular European model. It is also true that this unfocused view was due to the fact that during the initial demonstrations the secular laicism was stronger than the voice of the mosques, but this was soon over. At first, the new values that inspired the revolts were: liberty, justice and dignity. These values entail political ethics, not a religious dogma. However, the streets and squares lost prominence and the negotiations started in meeting rooms. This is when the Islamism proved to have a better position to face the political tactical stage, with which it was already familiar, and when its advantage in the electoral organization surfaced.

Islamism did not have a leading role, at the beginning, when overthrowing the dictators was at stake. But, after that first moment, in the phase when provisional governments had to be put in place to start the transition process, the Islamism was the best positioned political actor. In reality, it had been acting before that, implementing social measures in favor of the most disadvantaged urban sectors of society. When the revolts grew stronger, Islamism stayed in the backstage, waiting for the final result. Later on, during the elections, it has used its capacity of attraction, thanks to the consolidated organization established within the social network. After its electoral success, the agenda of the transition processes has been more defined by the political Islamism than by the secularism.

Past the first euphoric moments of the movement's blooming, when the exit of dictators was demanded, it was soon obvious that political Islamism was the only structured, organized trend, with a wide social base, as opposed to the secularism that was consistent but plural, generally fragmented, and often mixing dreams with reality.

We have to add that political Islamism, in general, has been able to adopt more flexible positions, except in the case of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, and has reached, in a wide proportion, the discourse of change and modernity of the popular movement. But, at the same time, it was able to draw religion beyond the limits of private life and personal convictions, and to place it as an inspiration for collective life and within constitutional recognition. The new constitutions will find a balance between secular values and a moderate Islamism within each country, under the thorough gaze of the military power.

The fact is that there is a political and cultural duality underlying the «*Arab Springs*» that complicates the transition process undergone by these societies. This is what Sami Naïr summarizes when he says: "it is a sudden burst occurring in a society that practically, objectively, was secularized in its most basic structures (economy, institutions, dominant culture) but in which the secularization, precisely, due to the dictatorial forms of power, was not mentally registered, except in restricted groups of youngsters focused on the culture of globalization, businessmen, me-

dium classes directly in contact with Western modernity”⁴. These societies are dual and only a few social segments may be considered as secularized, while the large majority lives in a cultural universe led by religion.

Background to the conflict

The centenary of the Great European War and the World War makes us widen the focus of our gaze to include, at least, the last century; not because of the magical figure of the number “100”, but rather because understanding the «*Arab Springs*» needs to be placed in the correct historical perspective, which makes us go back in time at least until that key moment in world history.

The Great War brought four Empires to an end, among which the Ottoman Empire, to which the so-called great European powers referred, from the 18th century, as «the sick man of Europe». Its chronic disease spread in parallel with the hunger of the rest of the European Empires to widen the areas under their influence and their territorial dominions at the expense of the Ottoman Empire. The generous distribution of the territories that formed the Ottoman Empire in favor of the victorious countries took place in Versailles, as far as Germany was concerned, and under the successive treaties for the rest of the defeated countries, in order to design the new map, mainly of Central and Oriental Europe, the Balkans, and the Middle East. The dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire by the French and the British was agreed upon in the treaty of Sèvres that was never ratified, and that was immediately rejected by the Young Turks after the Greek occupation of Smyrna and finally in 1923, after the Turkish Independence War, in the treaty of Lausanne in which the new republican Turkey waived its right to the Arab territories of the old and disappeared Ottoman Empire, in order to concentrate on the construction of a Turkish Republic. Their strategic bet changes radically, it has nothing to do anymore with the leadership of a diverse and widespread empire, but rather with the construction of a newly-designed “Republic”, a “Turkish” Republic without any Caliphate at the summit of the political power.

If we look thoroughly into the events of the last 25 years, after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the disappearance of the USSR, we can see that the wars in the Balkan Peninsula in the 90s, and the current war in Syria and Iraq, take place precisely on the edges, on the Western and Eastern borders of that extinguished Ottoman Empire; with a variation that has also its ultimate origin in the Paris of 1919: Great Britain hands over the leadership to the United States, this means that the interests and the leading role of the, so-called at that time, British Empire, as far as Iraq and

⁴ Sami Nair, *Por qué se rebelan (Why do they rebel?)*, Clave intelectual, Madrid, 2013, p. 190.

the Middle East were concerned, became represented and assumed by the new Empire; the United States of America.

This is the scenario, extending from the Setting Sun of the Maghreb to the Rising Sun of the Mashriq, at the border of the Persian world, where the revolts and the political transition processes that we gather under the warm expression "*Arab Springs*" have taken place. Within the period running from the Great War to our current days, the distribution of influence zones took place as well as the attempt to establish maneuverable friendly monarchies in several countries, the difficult administration of the French mandate in Syria and Lebanon and the British one in Palestine and, after World War II, the decolonization process with the creation of independent states under republican military-like regimes or traditional monarchies. Along this road, the attempt of creating a pan-Arabic political community and the classical inevitable alignment within the schemes of the "Cold War" went astray.

History, culture, and geography operate on a long-term basis and in the end they take their revenge. Many countries, drawn with a ruler on the map out of the remainders of the huge Ottoman Empire that embedded and tolerated a rich mixture of religions, cultures and ethnic identities, were not able to consolidate as stable political regimes. No doubt, the initial design, the distribution by the French and the British, according to their own interests, of the different influence zones, did not make the job easy for the future. Without going into details, I only take this opportunity to remind that the artificial Iraq was created by blending three very different provinces of the old Ottoman Empire, that were until then under different administrations and that were only able to give a false image of a unified country under the iron dictatorship exerted by Saddam Hussein. The problems created by the above mentioned distribution remained and surfaced later, in this case in the form of the claim of liberty and dignity that these people lacked. Meanwhile, and after the decolonization, the West in general and Europe in particular, established and maintained relationships of good friendship and neighborhood with autocratic governments that, under monarchic or republican regimes, were in fact severe dictatorships respected and accepted for their contribution to the "stability and security" of the Maghreb and the Middle East.

This world, which has enjoyed a false stability since the decolonization under authoritarian and despotic regimes that have not undertaken the modernization of society, was questioned in December 2010, when a new stage of change started, and of which we cannot predict its scope and its end. However, let us now go to the beginning of these revolts and let us examine their recent evolution.

The «*Arab Springs*» start on December 17, 2010, when Mohamed Bouazizi immolates by setting fire to himself before the building of the local gover-

nment of Sidi Bouzid, a little town in the middle of Tunisia. He was a young university student that had to quit his studies after the death of his father to take charge of his seven-member family and who, like many others in the Maghreb, turned to be a street vendor of fruits and vegetables. His decision to immolate represents a supreme gesture of protest against the behavior of the local police that, after slapping him and spitting on him, seized his cart accusing him of public disorder.

Mohamed sought a way to die that would be recognized, that would be useful for others and he made it. It could be considered like an irrelevant fact, a trivial event, but his death triggered a massive citizens' protest that started being local and soon national and that, within one month, on the January 15, 2011 caused the downfall of dictator Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, who took refuge in Saudi Arabia after 25 years of despotic power.

His sacrifice was the spark that set fire to a spontaneous revolution in which no party intervened in its beginnings. Not even the active Tunisian syndicate, the UGTT, was present during the first days, even if in the final phase it attempted to find its own place. The Islamists did neither have a leading role, as they were not well organized. The demands were based on democratic and secular issues and did not leave room for the Islamists of Ennahda who decided to wait for a later opportunity, this strategy being later copied by the Moslem Brotherhood in Egypt. Sami Naïr describes the situation precisely through the eyes of a privileged observer and expert: "the slogans of the demonstrators are secular: they claim freedom of expression, of organization, of opinion; political pluralism, respect for human rights, and the end of the police dictatorship; in other words, the respect for their dignity, more than anything else."⁵

It all happens in the context of a serious degradation of the regime, corrupt without limits, colloquially called "the clan of the Ben Ali-Trabelsi".

The contagious effect is immediate, it is represented by tweets that spread throughout the countries of the Arab-Muslim world: "All Arab leaders observe Tunisia with fear, all the Arab citizens observe Tunisia with hope and solidarity". This is the general mood in which the «*Arab Springs*» were born. Finally, there is a collective feeling that freedom can be achieved with a determined citizen mobilization, because what is no longer an inexorable curse is the despotism of the national rulers.

After Tunisia, the following relevant movement happens in Egypt. On January 25, Tahrir Square in Cairo witnesses a large demonstration against the omnipotent president Hosni Mubarak, that is strongly repressed, but the example spreads to other cities of the country.

⁵ Sami Naïr, *Por qué se rebelan (Why do they rebel?)*, Clave intelectual, Madrid, 2013, p. 162.

The so-called "Arab street" that has been historically manipulated by the rulers and has been used according to their own will, has turned into a citizens' movement that claims the right to democratic freedom.

We have to underline that, after the first few days, the Egyptian army, a relevant player throughout the process, values positively the protest movement, considers it legitimate, and announces that it will not use force against demonstrators. Both in Tunisia and in Egypt, the army refuses from the very beginning to use the repressive intervention that is being requested from it.

The movement is fast and unstoppable. The spark that caught fire in Tunisia has spread throughout the abundant flammable material available all around it, and the fire will extend from Morocco to Oman. On February 11, Hosni Mubarak abandons power, he runs away and seeks refuge in his mansion of Sharm El-Sheikh, on the Red Sea; thirty years of dictatorship have come to an end. The militaries seize the power and Field Marshal Tantawi pays his respect to the victims of repression.

In Tahrir square a magical moment unfolded that will remain as a part of History, a moment during which the impossible became real, during which a long yearned for democracy was within a hand's reach and could be felt in everyone's heart. If I may, I would like to insert here a «nokta», a joke that was told in Egypt and that Tahar Ben Jelloun reproduces: Mubarak dies and arrives in Heaven. He is received by his two predecessors, Presidents Anwar El Sadat and Gamal Abdel Nasser. Both ask him: did they shoot you or poison you? Mubarak answers: «I was killed by Facebook!»

In Egypt, the citizens' movement born in a small Tunisian town, acquires another dimension and extends strongly to other countries. The process that was initiated in Tunisia will reach, at different extents, the whole Maghreb, from Morocco to Libya, and the Mashreq, the East, including Egypt, Syria, and Jordan, and, from Yemen to Oman, all of the countries of the Arab Gulf.

We have to point out that Islamism, as such, with its structure and organization has not played a relevant role, neither in Tunisia nor in Egypt. It was never in the front row of the citizens' forceful wave that overthrew the dictators.

The revolt movements, that had a revolutionary touch when it started, were led by a generation of young people, including women, that is mainly urban, educated, without professional horizons, abandoned by its rulers, together with social strata that are well-off economically but marginalized by the corruption of power and that get organized through the social networks through their mobile phones and other digital devices.

The movement acquires a regional dimension; it affects the whole universe included in the Maghreb, the Mashreq and the core of countries forming the Middle East, especially Syria.

The tide grows and expands simultaneously in Manama (Bahrain), Sanaa (Yemen), Cyrenaica (Libya) with protests against Gaddafi. The Algerian government revokes the state of exception under which demonstrations were forbidden since 1991. Even the Sultan of Oman, Qabus Bin Said, carries out a large renewal of the government. On February 27, 2011 demonstrations take place in numerous Arab countries (Jordan, Yemen, Bahrain, Tunisia, Egypt, Syria and Libya) to demand profound political changes.

In only three months, all Arab countries from Morocco in the Atlantic to the Persian Gulf Emirates are, to varying degrees, involved in the tide of citizens' revolt that demand political reforms from their governments.

Two rulers oppose bluntly to their demands: El-Assad in Syria and Gaddafi in Libya.

In Libya, an International coalition led by the United States, the United Kingdom and France, the same countries that had the leading role in relation to the Treaty of Paris after World War I, and that on this occasion included five Arab countries, launched the attack against the regime of Colonel Gaddafi, under Resolution 1973 of the Security Council of the United Nations.

The Libya Contact Group included the UN, The Arab League, NATO, The European Union, the Islamic Confederation of Nations, and the Gulf Cooperation Council. Nevertheless, in the case of the European Union, an important fracture occurred due to the refusal of Germany to take part in the military operation. Germany abandoned its partners, the European Union and the United States, and aligned with the position of Russia and China. It presented itself before the world, not as a NATO member, but rather as an ally, though circumstantially, of the emerging countries.

The civil war in Libya, with the military intervention of an international coalition, brings the regime to an end, but leaves the internal confrontations open. On October 20, 2011, Colonel Gaddafi died summarily executed without trial, a bad omen for the future of the country. It is important to remember that there was no institutionalized power in Libya, just the personal and exclusive power of Colonel Gaddafi. His fall meant the fall of the whole regime because he was never interested in setting state structures; consequently, the ashes that remained after the collapse were local and regional militias, many of them contaminated by radical Islamic groups.

Tribal and sectarian confrontations were also long and complex in Yemen, where in several occasions, President Ali Abd-allah Saleh accep-

ted to hand over power and to start a pacific political transition process. Things did not turn out this way, on the contrary, the country fell into generalized chaos, tribal confrontations, deaths during demonstrations, and even attacks from al-Qaeda against the Yemeni army, in an attempt to seize power. Eventually, on November 23, 2011, the President handed over the power after reaching an agreement with the opposition by which he ensured his own immunity.

One year after the birth of the movement in a modest town of Tunisia, an assessment can be made, and changes that were then unthinkable, can now be contemplated. Four dictators have disappeared: Ben Ali is in exile, Mubarak in jail, Gaddafi was executed, and Saleh is no longer in power.

But other facts are even more relevant. On October 23, the first free elections took place in Tunisia and led to the victory of the Islamist party, Ennahda. Even the conservative monarchies have made moves. The King of Saudi Arabia, Abdullah Ibn Abdulaziz, announces that in the local elections taking place in 2015, women will have the right to elect and be elected. In Morocco, King Mohamed VI, announced profound constitutional changes in reply to the demands of the young people of the 20 February Movement and also anticipated parliament elections.

Current situation of the conflict

The regimes have fallen in the following four countries with various degrees of violence and drama involved in the clashes: Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, and Libya.

Syria continues in a spiral of increasing insecurity, with several intertwining civil wars and a President who has decided to fight desperately to remain in power, in addition to an international blockade led by the great powers that are reconstructing, in a certain way, the strategies of the Cold War. A clear example of this blockade has been staged in an evident manner during the failed Geneva talks. The modest achievement of the Conference has been the commitment of creating a humanitarian passageway for the evacuation of 500 families trapped for more than 18 months in the besieged city of Homs. The only result, in the words of the U.N. mediator Brahimi, is to achieve the fact that «both parties get accustomed to sit in the same room.» More information on the subject may be found in the specific study on Syria, included in this volume.

In Tunisia, we have a successful case that allows us to set forward the path to be followed in other transition processes that remain uncertain. Due to its importance within the Arab world, Egypt is one of the key examples for the rest of the countries involved in the «*Arab Springs*» and, at the same time, its future presents many unknown issues.

After the initial excitement, the situation in virtually all countries involved, has turned into a volatile political instability, with obstructions in the transition process and even counter-revolutionary processes. Overall, the «security» situation implies risks that have become a serious problem in the most fragile countries, such as Yemen, Libya, Syria, or Iraq, making room for the presence of various kinds of jihadist groups.

The Arab monarchies have better endured the movement caused by the revolts and none have been defeated, although it was necessary for Saudi Arabia to intervene in Bahrain to maintain the regime. Monarchies enjoy an added sense of legitimacy for their deep cultural roots and the traditional relationship in Islam of political power and religion, but at the same time, it should be noted that they have proved to be sensitive to some extent and capable, from the outset, of introducing political reforms and adopting social measures in favor of their subjects. In the case of the Gulf monarchies, they have injected enormous financial resources into the society. However, the basic problems remain and the populations of these monarchies shall maintain their expectations and demands for further reforms.

In Morocco, King Mohammed V, keeping his promise, has carried out a constitutional reform, although it wouldn't be possible to consider the text like anything more than a granted charter, in any case, the monarch has put limits to his exorbitant powers by giving more prominence to his Government and to the Parliament. As in other countries, the legislative elections held after the reforms, were won by the moderate Islamists from the Justice and Development Party. The pending issue is precisely the balanced social and economic development of the country and also the in-depth reform of the governance model built around the Palace.

The Saudi Arabian Dynasty started the succession process without taking steps towards an overt generational change so far and it should find a frame of coexistence with its Shia minority accused by the rulers of serving foreign interests. The king was born in 1923 and he appointed an heir born in 1933. The Dynasty is still in the first generation: all kings and crown-princes were sons of the founder of the dynasty. Its intent to remain as a first-level regional power is going through decisive moments.

Possibly, the Emirate of Qatar is the one to have better taken advantage of the "*Arab Springs*" to obtain a better status, even better than the one it already had, on the international stage, as it showed increasing independence from Saudi Arabia and a capacity of leadership that it is ready to use without shame. Not having special internal problems, the Emirate got involved in the civil war in Syria to support the rebels and to participate actively in the dialogue and the mediation, acting as a recognized actor with a regional influence.

Tunisia is a small country, it shows the right path, and it has become today a model of a successful political transition. The country has gone through serious tensions and moments of blockade, but eventually it turned out to be an example in contrast with its neighbors of Libya and Egypt. The most difficult moment occurred in February and July 2013, when two leftist members of parliament, Chokri Belaid and Mohamed Brahmi, were killed by Islamic extremists. Nonetheless, eventually, the approval of the Constitution is the milestone in its road sheet leading to the completion of a democratic transition. Tunisia finally has its first democratic Constitution, fifty-seven years after reaching independence.

It was not an easy task and two long years have elapsed with moments of great tension, but finally a vast agreement has been reached. Initially, the Islamists of Ennahda proposed another text, with little differences with respect to the one of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. The basic foundation of the text was the Sharia, the Islamic law, as a source of law, which means a constitution based on a theocratic model. Concessions were made due to the pressure exerted by the civil society and the Islamists understood that the Tunisian people wanted to evolve towards modernity, to have a fundamental law that separates Religion from the State.

After a long delay, the final steps to approve the Constitution were taken in the Fall of 2013, thanks to the dialogue and understanding reached between the Islamist Party, Ennahda, and the secular parties with the fruitful mediation of the powerful syndicate UGTT. This very important agreement included the resignation of the government headed by an Islamists Ali Laarayedh who was substituted by an independent figure.

The steps taken constitute an understanding platform fit for a 21st- Century society.

The Constitution text guarantees, not only the liberty of religion that also exists in other countries, but also the liberty of conscience and believes, it proclaims equality of the right to believe or not to believe, the possibility to renounce the Islamic Faith and to change religions, and at the same time the equality between woman and man.

The National Constituent Assembly (NCA), in which the moderate Islamist party has obtained 40% of the 217 seats, has set a path of balance and consensus between Islamists and secularists, a keystone for an inclusive and democratic transition.

In spite of the good perspective for the future of Tunisia, the Islamist leader, Rashid Ghanouchi, in a recent interview to the Spanish newspaper «*El País*» (01/22/2014) warned that the process is not free of obstacles and that negative surprises may arise. The main one could be terrorist action. In the mountains of Chaambi, in the West of the country, near the

borders with Algeria, a small group of Jihadists have been resisting army assaults for more than one year.

Egypt went through a revolutionary turmoil without ever reaching the desired stability. The initial success of the revolution and the first free elections that made Morsi reach the presidency ended up with a state coup that was justified by the intolerant and arbitrary way in which the Muslim Brotherhood exerted power.

The process for the drafting of a new Constitution in 2014, the third text in three years, has been extremely limited with very little participation, as political leaders were excluded from any active, or at least consultative, role. It has been drafted by a Commission of Experts that was chosen by the provisional government that was presided by Hazem al Beblawi, a veteran military from the social-democrat party, appointed in July 2013 after the fall of President Morsi. Writing the text faced multiple difficulties, including a debate on what Egypt is, and it also consumed endless hours of controversy between the fifty members of the Commission. The final agreement deserves to be considered because of its exceptionality, as far as constitutional law is concerned: "Egypt is a Nile's gift to the Egyptians, and the Egyptians' gift to humanity".

The constitutional text does not seem to satisfactorily resolve the problems and the malfunctions that afflict Egypt. The Constitution of 2012 does not answer the political and civic demands that were set forth in Tahrir Square and therefore its detractors classified it as Islamist. However, we must recognize that President Mohamed Morsi won two elections: the presidential election that brought him to power and the one that ratified his Islamist Constitution, but he never reached a social consensus. He faced a wide secular opposition, the urban middle classes and most of all, the *de facto* powers: the judicial power and the military power meant to guarantee the country's security.

The text of 2014 reproduces, inversely, the previous and permanent unbalanced powers of the state, imposed by the Muslim Brotherhood.

This Constitution, the last one of this permanent constituent process that lasted more than three years incurs in a new disequilibrium, this time in favor of the *de facto* military power that rules the country, to the point of being qualified by the overthrown Mubarak as "magnificent" and deserving his own favorable vote, if his health condition allowed him. The Constitution has been passed by referendum with the participation of 38% of voters and with a result of 98% of affirmative votes.

The social and political reality prevails; in reality nothing has changed during these years. In 2014, Egypt is as Islamist as it was three years ago, and the military power, after the interim in the government of the Muslim Brotherhood under the presidency of Morsi, has regained power

and influence. We are, in another context, back to the beginning of the Arab Spring. The military power overthrew Mubarak and the same military power, rejuvenated and with a new legitimacy obtained from its role as an arbitrator, is back in power. Actually, in 2014, Egypt is more military than in 2010, because even if the path was circular and went from the deposition of a military born in 1928, General Hosni Mubarak, to the empowerment in 2013 of a military, Field Marshal, Al-Sisi, born in 1954, the military power rejuvenates in one generation.

What has happened, like in all counterrevolutionary processes, is a social polarization that transfers to the exercise of the political power. On one side, the army with the police forces, was able to agglutinate the judicial power, that is very important in Egypt after its professionalization under the British Mandate, and the business sectors, the media, part of the intellectuals and the urban middle class. On the other side, we have the Muslim Brotherhood that has been isolated and marginalized to the point that it was declared illegal. The polarization appears between militia and brotherhood, between the military power and the Muslim Brotherhood organization and structure. This fracture leaves a large portion of urban and professional strata and of young people without means of expression, unsatisfied with the evolution of the events. But the reality of the country is something else. The pro- Abdul Fattah demonstrators, when facing Morsi's supporters, express in the following way: "we represent one people and you represent another one". This expression is reductionist and simplistic, moreover, it ignores the diversity of the Egyptian society.

With this social and political polarization, a Constitution based on agreement like in Tunisia, could never be drafted and approved. The constitutional text establishes that the main source of inspiration of the legislator is the "Islamic Sharia".

In any case, the main novelty of the constitution consists in forbidding the political parties based on religion and the ones of military or quasi-military nature. This eliminates the possibility for the Muslim Brotherhood to exist as a political organization. This outlaws the political organization that has proved to be the largest one in the country. The Armed Forces strengthen themselves and protect their own interests. The military budget is left out of the political control and depends exclusively on the National Defense Council.

Meanwhile, in the streets, there are many strikes involving multiple sectors: the textile industry, the public transportation, the health care and even the police. These are the fields in which Field Marshal Al-Sisi's new regime has to prove its capacity: developing economic sectors, creating jobs, providing opportunities for the youth and consolidating the basic public services.

The role of external players

The transition processes undergone, with different degrees of success, at a national level have had important geopolitical consequences within the Middle East as a whole. This should not be a big surprise, on the contrary, it is the result of the consequences of the importance of the events experienced for more than three years, during which all tensions have been reactivated: the sectarian ones between Shia and Sunna, the ethnic ones between the Arab world and the Persian world, the ones between the different opposed trends within the wide panorama of Sunnism, and what is even more relevant, the clash between autocratic regimes that feel threatened and the emerging democratic movements that are trying to emerge in a region governed during decades, since its independence, by authoritarianism and dictatorship.

The question we should ask ourselves is whether a currently authoritarian and even despotic Arab-Muslim world can evolve towards democracy. The answer is yes, and the example is Tunisia.

However, with all our respect to Egypt's huge importance, the key country in the new geopolitical dimension of the region is Syria, as it has become the main element of the Middle East, with enormous implications for regional powers like Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Iran.

Syria refused to learn any lesson from the processes that occurred in other "*Springs*" countries. Moreover, Syria's President, Bashar Al-Assad, in power since 2000, followed the procedures inherited from his father: tough repression and maintaining the power without concessions.

The "*Arab Springs*" have helped France to gain a renewed implication in the region. Thus, in the case of Libya, France reacted with determination and leadership, maybe because it wanted to make the world forget its absence and how it turned a blind eye to Tunisia. As for the United States, in Libya, it has successfully tested its role of manager from the backstage, thus leaving the front of scene to the most committed European countries which are none other than the old colonial powers.

All the regional powers in the area are taking advantage of the situation to strengthen their positions, create fire walls and restructure their alliances.

Having Syria as its neighbor, Turkey is seizing the opportunity to show its weight in the region and to set influence areas, struggling firmly with the other two powers with a strategic interest in the region: Iran and Saudi Arabia. The Saudi Dynasty is aware of the new game that has started in the Middle East after the agreements reached with Teheran over the pacific use of its nuclear potential. Saudi Arabia acts as a firm barrier against the revolutionary wave, as it showed from intervention in Bahrain, and the

same time it struggles to maintain its position as a regional power. Both Turkey and Saudi Arabia propose their Islamist political models as stable regimes as opposed to possible civil dictatorships.

All along this period of time, the Arab League has taken action and has recovered its leading role. In the case of Libya, it has supported the United Nations Resolution backing the armed intervention that led Gaddafi's regime to an end. It has expelled Syria, a charter member, from the organization due to its reiterated aggressions against the civil population. It has approved a set of economic sanctions against Syria, as the country would not accept international observers meant to protect the civil population, with the favorable vote of Iraq and Lebanon.

Monarchs are the most active representative within the Arab League, as it is the case for the King of Jordan who has repeatedly asked Al-Assad to step down and to allow a pacific transition. In general, the Arab League, with its monarchs on the front line, has tried to avoid revolutionary breaches by encouraging reformist processes to take place without political break up.

However, the geopolitical implications of the «*Arab Springs*» affect the Arab World as a whole, and this produces the modification of extremely important positions. In this regard, the most relevant fact was the agreement reached with Iran in the frame of the Plan of Action for the reorientation of its nuclear program that came into effect on January 20, 2014.

Iran has frozen some of the activities of its nuclear plan, the ones aiming to obtain nuclear weapons in the future, and is only allowed to enrich uranium up to 5% of pureness. In exchange, it has obtained the lifting of the economic sanctions that had condemned the country to international ostracism. The negotiation was held with the five permanent members of the Security Council of the United Nations, plus Germany and the European Union.

After three decades of heavy tension and strong confrontations, the Agreement represents a key rapprochement between Washington and Teheran that affects the balance in the Middle East and is not seen with great calm by Saudi Arabia. Iran is changing and it does not seem to consider in her strategic horizon the possibility of a confrontation with the United States. Moreover, in spite of the fact that it is widely considered that Russia deserves the diplomatic success related to Syria, the truth is that it was Iran that convinced Damascus to destroy its chemical arsenal. This avoided a military intervention of the International Community and an irreversible escalation of the conflict.

In conclusion, both Russia and the United States, each from its own perspective, want to integrate Iran in a new regional security system. Europe is an interested witness but it restricts itself to a supporting role. The

regional powers, such as Turkey and Saudi Arabia, intend to be seen as relevant actors in the area. All this constitutes an example of deep, long-range geopolitical changes that are taking place back-stage of the «*Arab Springs*».

The effects of the «*Arab Springs*» can also be seen in Iraq, especially in relation to the Syrian example. Prime Minister Nuri Al-Maliki, who was sometimes considered as the puppet of Iran, was not able to achieve the national reconciliation and the stability of the country in order to reach its economic recovery and was deposed.

The Iraqi starting point is dramatic as reconstruction and reconciliation have to be carried out from scratch, because Paul Bremer, the American administrator appointed after the fall of Saddam Hussein, destroyed the regime by applying politics that intended to remove all vestiges of Baathism, a strategy similar to the one applied to Germany after its defeat in 1945. He expelled more than a million experienced men. This political purge stands at the roots of the country's extreme vulnerability, as it is subject to the confessional tensions between Sunni and Shia Muslims and the ethnic ones between Arabs and Kurds, all this together with a situation of lack of governance.

The Sunni combats in Iraq have surpassed the national context and it now affects a larger geopolitical scene. To them, the enemy is not only the Iraqi Prime Minister any more, it is the new Shia axis formed by Damascus, Baghdad, and Teheran.

The new Egypt ruled by Field Marshal Al-Sisi turns discretely its eyes towards Russia. This circumstance is evidenced by the new agreement reached for the sale of arms to Egypt, by the visit of the authorities of Cairo to Moscow in order to develop the bilateral cooperation and by the support of President Putin to the candidacy of the Field Marshal to the Presidency of the Republic. Thus, with the applause of citizens who approve regaining Russia's friendship.

We should not forget that the United States and Europe, on one side, and Russia, on the other, are experiencing a dull but deep confrontation, very much like a new «Cold War», and that proves to be especially intense in the crisis of Ukraine.

Beyond showing its support to the «*Arab Springs*» and being glad of the success of the changes and the stability achieved in some countries, the European Union has not designed a long-term strategy and has always moved in the wake of the events. However, it has many reasons to get more deeply implied. The first one is our geographic vicinity, followed by the historic colonial precedents and by the current migratory movements, due to which large communities coming from these countries, have settled in Europe (the Muslim community in Europe amounts to about 13

million people). Europe, the European Union, through its institutions, provides theoretical support to the democratization process and waits for a moderate Islamism to gain a leading role in the political stability and to stop the surge of jihadism. The European Union has experienced a deep feeling of relief to be freed from the fact that it has no more the need, more and more uncomfortable, with a number of dictators that were blocking the transformation and modernization of their societies and that stepped with arrogance on the human rights. However, the European Union has, ahead of it, the enormous task to redesign its politics towards these countries and to create solid and credible cooperation instruments in the frame of a recognized and stable vicinity relationship that would include a solution to the migratory flows.

As for the United States, they show signs of mistrust towards the transition processes and they do not rule out their worries that, in a second phase, the countries involved in the Arab Spring may reconsider their position with regard to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, a major issue for the security and the stability of the Middle East. To them, the position of the Army in Egypt is vital, as it guarantees the peace with Israel. Israel is in the background, it constitutes the final horizon on which the successive images of the «*Arab Springs*» reflect; all in all, it is the core that defines the positions and the commitments of the United States in the region.

Conclusions and perspectives

The process of change boosted by the citizens' mobilizations that we have called the «*Arab Springs*», is still going on, according to its own deep nature, a long-term process demanding political rights, civil liberties and social and political reforms. Its transformation drive, unseen in the Arab-Muslim World, is not over; it is still open, although in many countries it has revealed limits difficult to surmount, for the time being.

The widespread autocracies of the Arab World have proved to be more fragile than expected, but neither the governments arising from long transition processes have been able to consolidate their stability and to undertake deep changes.

We have witnessed a good dialogue and consensus path in Tunisia, no doubt the best example of success, from which we may learn a lot in the future.

On the contrary, we have hopeless cases. Such is the case of Libya that adds up to its internal conflict the lack of State structures, as dictator Gaddafi never wanted to build his power on rational structures, but rather on his manipulation of tribal diversity. The oil control (70% of the GDP) opposes the central Government with the local leaders and the armed militias that are blocking several ports in the country. Neither the Go-

vernment nor the General National Congress holds acknowledged power and the effective control of the country as a whole, while tribal divisions remain. In this context of misrule and fragmentation a constitutional text has to be agreed upon.

The authoritarian monarchies have a long way to go to deepen the feeble reforms they have started, even in Morocco, where an effort has been made and positive steps have been taken, the ruling system still needs to reform the structure existing close to the Palace, to order the ruling system and to complete the reforms related to the status of women and to the family law, and also to allow the economic growth to favor the population as a whole and not only the traditional sectors.

The Saudi monarchy is the one that has felt most uneasy and troubled by the process initiated in the Arab World. Besides its internal renovation it has to face the surge of the Emirate of Qatar that appears like a new regional and very active leadership.

In Egypt, an enormously important country, the 2011 revolution led for the first time in history to the election of a civilian to power. Now, after three years, we have come full circle back to the initial position. The new regime of Field Marshal Al-Sisi has still huge tasks ahead: he needs to integrate those he has excluded claiming that they were terrorists and who represent an important percentage of the population, to unite the society as a whole, to avoid polarization and to establish a currently non-existing social and economic model that he can offer to the population, especially to the urban youth, and all this does not match very well with the Constitution he has implemented.

With an open process going on, in this context of political fragility, of frustrated hopes, the political key issue will be the challenge between Islamism and secularism. If a balance is reached, democracy and stability will prevail. We should not forget, however, that the radical jihadism is still alive and that it will continue to use violence and to represent a threat for the area.

However, nothing will remain the same in the Arab- Muslim World after the «*Arab Springs*». The past is gone for ever. The process that was initiated is still going on and we have now entered a new phase of the always difficult history of that wide part of the world that extends from the Mediterranean to the Persian Gulf and Central Asia.

Nothing has come to an end; on the contrary, everything is open. A new Arab-Muslim World is moving, with hesitant steps, with great mysteries, but the blockade created by the autocratic governments has been destroyed and the future shall not be a repetition of the past, it will be a path to travel in pursuit of dignity.

Chronology of the «arab springs»

- 12/17/2010 Mohamed Bouazizi immolates himself in Sidi Bouzid, Tunisia.
- 01/15/2011 El Abidine Ben Ali is toppled in Tunisia.
- 01/25/2011 Great demonstration in Cairo against President Hosni Mubarak.
- 02/11/2011 Hosni Mubarak forced to step down after 30 years in power.
- 02/27/2011 Revolts spread in Jordan, Yemen, Bahrain, Syria and Libya.
- 03/17/2011 The UN Security Council approves Resolution 1973 on Libya.
- 10/20/2011 Summary execution of Libyan leader, Colonel Gaddafi.
- 10/23/2011 First free elections held in Tunisia.
- 11/12/2011 The Arab League suspends the participation of Syria in the Organization.
- 11/23/2011 Ali Abdallah relinquishes power in Yemen and obtains immunity in exchange.
- 06/17/2012 Election of a civil President, Mohamed Morsi for the first time in Egypt.
- 01/27/2014 The Parliament approves the new Constitution in Tunisia.
- 06/03/2014 In Egypt, field Marshal Al-Sisi is elected President.

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Syria: from civil war to regional conflict

Mario Laborie Iglesias

Chapter five

Summary

Despite the huge humanitarian tragedy that the Syrian civil war is producing, nothing seems to indicate that a negotiated settlement may be forthcoming. The armed violence overflow, that profoundly impacts neighboring countries, now indicates that the Syrian civil war has become a regional conflict, affecting the whole Middle East. This chapter is aimed to present some factors of the Syrian conflict to understand its current situation and evolution.

Key words

Syria, Middle East, Assad, war, geopolitics, sectarianism.

Introduction

The Syrian civil war has gone on for longer than forty months, and as expected, at this time the humanitarian catastrophe has acquired frightening proportions. According to the UN, as of July 2014, the conflict had caused the death of more than 150,000 people and injuries to some 680,000. More than 9.3 million Syrians need help in the interior of the country, including at least 6.5 million displaced persons.¹ In addition, three million people have taken refuge in neighboring countries.² Also, the violation of human rights is common, and there have been reports of war crimes, disappearance, torture or the use of chemical weapons³.

But beyond the dramatic humanitarian consequences, the Syrian conflict has evolved on three levels: internal, regional and international. In the first, victories on the military and diplomatic fields indicate a strengthening of the position of the regime led by President Bashar Al-Assad, in such a way that as of today his overthrow does not seem likely. This situation is explained by the unconditional support provided by his allies and the fragmentation of the rebel opposition.

At the same time, there has been an overflow of armed violence due to the formidable rise of jihadists groups, deeply affecting neighboring countries, especially Lebanon and Iraq. This spread of jihadism indicates that Syria's civil war has become a regional conflict, which affects the whole of the Middle East. The recent, although limited for the time being - according to the information available at the time of completing this contribution - US military intervention in Iraq against Sunni radicals is irrefutable proof of the expansion of hostilities across the region.

Therefore, in an area where the interests of the great powers collide, the implications of this conflagration for global geopolitics can be perceived - perhaps it would be more appropriate to say «global geo-economics» as the question is actually the «*mobilization of the political power to achieve economic goals through a combination of rivalry and cooperation*»⁴—.

¹ UN chief appoints Staffan de Mistura as special envoy for Syria crisis. UN News Centre.10.07.2014.Available at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=48244#.U8pK5XmKC00>

² Syria Regional Refugee Response. The UN Refugee Agency.17.08.2014.Available at <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php>.

³ Council of the United Nations. Report on the independent international commission of inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic.A/HRC/25/65.12.02.2014.

⁴ Grevi, Giovanni. «Goeconomics and global governance». Included in Ana Martinigui and Richard Youngs (eds.).Challenges for European foreign policy in 2012. A geo-economics Europe.2011.FRIDE.Available at http://www.fride.org/descarga/Challenges_for_European_Foreign_Policy_in_2012_Esp.pdf.

On this argument, this chapter, which is a continuation of three previous editions of this Geopolitical panorama of conflicts,⁵ provides a brief explanation of the evolution of the Syrian civil conflict since its inception, explains the major events which took place in the period between September 2013 to September 2014 and points out some trends that may characterize this bloody conflict in the short and medium term.

Background to the conflict

At the beginning of the Arab revolt, few thought the Syrian regime, which had been in power since 1966, would be influenced by the cries of the people, as had already happened in Tunisia, Libya, Egypt and Bahrain. However, contrary to expectations, in March 2011, some peaceful protests took place calling for political and social changes that were harshly suppressed by the Syrian security apparatus. During the following months, the spiral of violence shattered the existing socio-political balance and created a huge humanitarian tragedy.

From those first protests to early September 2013, the civil war went through several phases. At first, the Government forces used their overwhelming superiority and carried out brutal and repressive work throughout the country. However, once foreign support was received, without which Assad would have ended with the riots, allowed the opposition to spread the insurrection over large areas of the country, especially in those where the Sunni population is the majority. Although they did not achieve complete control over any of the large cities of the country, the advance of the opposition forced Government security forces to concede ground and concentrate their forces at the main bases.

In the first quarter of 2013, no party was able to achieve a military victory and the victories and defeats were happening on both sides, which indicated that the situation was at an impasse.⁶

Under these circumstances in the summer of 2013, Assad is aware of the fragmentation of the opposition and decides to change his strategy. Supported by its allies in Hezbollah and by groups of Shiites from Iran, Iraq

⁵ The three editions by the same author are: Laborie Iglesias, Mario. «The Middle East: change without return». Included in VVAA «Geopolitical Overview of conflicts 2011». IEEE.November 2011.«Syria: sliding toward chaos». Included in VVAA «Geopolitical overview of conflicts 2012».IEEE.February 2013.«Syria: war, sectarianism, and chaos». Included in VVAA «Geopolitical overview of conflicts 2013».IEEE.January 2014.All three volumes available at <http://www.ieee.es>.

⁶ Laborie Iglesias, Mario. «Siria: consecuencias de una guerra en punto muerto» (Syria: Consequences of a war at an impasse). One Magazine.05.03.2013.Available at <http://www.onemagazine.es/noticia/12279/Opinion/Siria:-consecuencias-de-una-guerra-en-punto-muerto.html>.

and Yemen, the Government began an offensive with the goal of controlling the road linking Damascus, Aleppo and Homs, and the corridor that connects these towns with the Jordanian border, on the one hand, and the Mediterranean coast, on the other. Thus, after heavy fighting, the loyalist army took back from the rebels the cities of Qusayr, Qunaytirah and Daraa and managed to cut the flow of supplies from Lebanon.

From the very beginning, the war in Syria has been characterized by three deeply interconnected factors: its sectarian nature, the great ideological fragmentation of the opposition and the influence of the conflict over the geopolitical dynamics that affect the Middle East as a whole.

The sectarian struggle faces off the Sunni majority (70% of the Syrian population) - which nourishes the insurgents -with the Alawites (11%) and Christians (10%) - traditional base of the regime - without forgetting the role played by the Druze (2%) and Kurdish (7%) minorities.

The clash between the two major branches of Islam, Shia and Sunni, has brought geopolitical rivalries between Iran, defender of the Alawite Assad regime, and the monarchies of the Gulf and Turkey, which support different rebel Sunni groups. Likewise, the confrontation has meant the activation of existing partnerships at global and regional levels, in favor or against one side or the other. Thus, the diplomatic disputes between Russia and China, on the one hand, and the U.S. and its European allies, on the other hand, have been constant, making it difficult to reach agreements for peaceful conflict management. The following sections explain the evolution of all of these factors in the months prior to September 2014.

Current situation of the conflict

Albeit slowly since the summer of 2013, Assad forces have not stopped gaining ground. In June of that year, the rebels were evicted from the strategic city of Qusayr, on the border with Lebanon, and in April 2014 had been practically expelled from the Qalamoun region, cutting off their lines of supply with that country. And in which was an important victory, early in May of 2014 Assad forces gained control of the city of Homs, once known as the «cradle of the revolution». ⁷ With complete dominion over the region of Homs, the regime has managed to divide the rebel zone and secure vital communications between Damascus and the coast. Also in the capital, the loyalists have gathered in the Centre of Damascus and hold siege around the neighborhood of Yarmouk, former Palestinian refu-

⁷ Makdesi, Marwan. «Assad's forces take Homs, 'capital of Syrian revolt'». Reuters.8.05.2014.Available at <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/05/08/us-syria-crisis-homs-idUSBREA470LX20140508>

gee camp, where hundreds of rebels resist fiercely. In this effort to control the capital, in mid-August 2014, loyalist forces took control of the town of Mleha, two kilometers southeast of Damascus thereby narrowing the chokehold on the periphery neighborhoods still dominated by the rebels.⁸

It would seem that from this moment the main effort of the regime will be aimed, firstly, at consolidating the center of the country and the region of Qalamoun, where some rebel groups still operate.⁹ Once that goal has been achieved, it is most likely that Assad will try to gain complete control of Damascus and strangle the northern city of Aleppo, an area that has been disputed from the beginning of the conflict and that in recent months he has been the target of important battles.¹⁰ If the regime can take that city and, subsequently, conquer the border between the region of Azaz and Turkey, it will have obtained an almost decisive victory, since the rebels' control over other parts of the country does not pose a direct threat to the regime.

It is true that the likelihood that the Government is capable of restoring its authority over the whole territory of the country, which is currently out of their control, seems remote since it does not have the necessary number of troops. However, if the aforementioned trends continue, it is most likely Assad will be able to pacify Syria sufficiently to hold firm in his power. In fact, the leader of Hezbollah, Hassan Nasrallah, said last April that the Syrian regime was no longer at risk of being overthrown.¹¹

Actors and strategies

Despite the enormous complexity of the Syrian conflict, the passage of time has to some extent made clear the actors involved in it, as well as their alliances and strategies.

⁸ Sancha, Natalia. «El Ejército sirio gana terreno en el frente de la periferia de Damasco». (The Syrian army gains territory outside of Damascus)El País.14.08.2014. Available at http://internacional.elpais.com/internacional/2014/08/14/actualidad/1408043583_949810.html.

⁹ It is estimated that there are between 5,000 and 10,000 insurgents in the area avoiding direct combat with Assad's Army and Hezbola . Al-Fakih, Rakan. «Border rebels resist Hezbollah, regime». Daily Star.08.07.2014. Available at <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2014/Jul-08/263005-border-rebels-resist-hezbollah-regime.ashx#axzz386skzakj>.

¹⁰ Abdulrahim, Raja. «Syrian government, rebels clash for future of Aleppo».LA Times.06.03.2014. Available at <http://www.latimes.com/world/middleeast/la-fg-wn-syrian-clashes-in-aleppo-20140306-story.html#ixzz2vGhsXE9X>.

¹¹ Al Arabiya News. «Hezbollah: Assad's regime no longer in danger».07.04.2014. Available at <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2014/04/07/Hezbollah-Assad-s-regime-no-longer-in-danger-.html>.

The following will explain which of the forces that sustain the Assad regime, as well as those fighting against it, without forgetting the Kurdish issue.

The Assad regime and its supporters. Hezbollah.

It is undeniable that the past 12 months have been very good for Bashar Al - Assad, from both the political and the military standpoint.

As described previously, the victories on the battlefield have been continuous due to several factors. First, the regime, unlike the insurgents, has a consistent strategy and maintains an important internal cohesion forged in the extremely harsh conditions they have endured. Second, it retains a significant operational advantage as a result of the strong foreign support received from Iran, Hezbollah, and Russia, the greater firepower of their units and their consistent mastery of the sky. Finally, at a tactical level, the Syrian national army uses brutal methods of attack including chemical agents and explosive barrels - as he has been denounced repeatedly; some of these tactics contradict the principles of international humanitarian law.¹²

The main problem faced by the regime is the lack of people with which to strengthen their forces, which prevents them from sustaining ongoing offensive operations and on several fronts simultaneously, as well as prevents them from keeping the conquered land. Taking into account the troops that it had at the beginning of the conflict - approximately 295,000 - , the casualties it has suffered - around 37,000 - and the high percentage of deserters - up to 130,000- it is estimated that the Syrian regular army now has less than 100 members.¹³

For this reason, the paramilitary forces have become a key asset for the regime. In this sense, the national defense forces (NDF), organization that serves as the «umbrella» for several pro-Government militias and consisting of about sixty thousand volunteers, and constitute a critical force for Assad.¹⁴ Although they have acted as a shock unit in offensive operations, the primary functions of the NDF include occupying land and protecting supply lines and facilities, freeing the regular army and enabling it to carry out major combat operations.

The shortage of infantry forces the loyalists to limit the use of ground forces and to rely on the superiority of artillery and air fire, before attac-

¹² Maurer, Peter. «IHL and humanitarian principles are non-negotiable – Syria is no exception». 15.02.2014. ICRC. Available at <http://www.icrc.org/eng/resources/documents/article/editorial/2014-02-15-syria-maurer-humanitarian-principles.htm>.

¹³ Lister, Charles. *Dynamic Stalemate: Surveying Syria's military Landscape*. Brookings Doha Center. Policy Briefing. May 2014.

¹⁴ Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment - Eastern Mediterranean. 02.07.2014.

king a particular rebel position. Once they have conquered an area, they would usually expel civilians to prevent the opponents from returning. In addition, since the beginning of 2014, the Government has agreed to more than 40 truces with various rebel groups, which has allowed it to improve its control over areas in dispute.¹⁵

Also, the political evolution is favorable to Assad. On July 16, he began a third term as President of the country, which, in theory, will allow him to remain in office until 2021.¹⁶ The electoral process commenced last spring, and it has resulted in the expected re-election of Assad, which has strengthened the regime in the internal political sphere. Despite the ongoing war and the fact that the elections were only held in areas under Government control, the insurgency has been unable to halt the development of the elections. Also, the elections have stressed the failure of Western policy aimed at provoking the fall of the Syrian regime.¹⁷

In the inaugural ceremony, which for security reasons was held in the Parliament situated in the center of the capital, the re-elected Syrian President delivered a defiant speech which promised to recover all of Syria from the hands of Islamist insurgents: «I reiterate my call today to all who were tricked so that they lay down their weapons because we will not stop fighting terrorism and striking it wherever it may be until we can restore security to every corner of Syria.»¹⁸

Similarly, in the international arena the regime appears more confident than months ago. Today the possibility of international military intervention seems completely ruled out, mainly due to two causes. On the one hand, Assad has been able to manage the handing over of its arsenal of chemical weapons with cunning which, as stated by the national director of US intelligence, James Clapper, has strengthened his position.¹⁹

¹⁵ Blanchard, Christopher M., et al. «Armed Conflict in Syria: Overview and U.S. Response». Congressional Research Service. Report RL33487.24.06.2014. Available at <http://fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RL33487.pdf>.

¹⁶ According to the Syrian government Assad achieved 88.7% of votes. «Assad re-elected in wartime election». Al Jazeera.05.06.2014. Available at <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/06/bashar-al-assad-re-elected-syrian-president-20146419457810751.html>.

¹⁷ Sly, Liz; Ramadan, Ahmed.«Syrian election sends powerful signal of Assad's control». The Washington Post.3.06.2014. Available at http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/syrian-election-sends-powerful-signal-of-assads-control/2014/06/03/16876fca-eb2a-11e3-b98c-72cef4a00499_story.html.

¹⁸ English Transcript of the inaugural speech of the third term of Bashar Al-Assad. Op.Cit.

¹⁹ Gordon, Michael R; Mazzetti, Mark.« U.S. Spy Chief Says Assad Has Strengthened His Hold on Power». The New York Times.04.02.2014. Available at http://www.nytimes.com/2014/02/05/world/middleeast/us-representative-to-syrian-opposition-is-retiring.html?ref=world&utm_source=Sail

At the same time, the rise of jihadist groups has deterred potential allies of the rebels from increasing military aid, fearing that it could fall into the wrong hands. Turkey, which controls the main supply routes used by the insurgent, has closed three border posts held by the Islamic State and has designated the Al – Nusra Front a terrorist group.²⁰

So as things stand, Assad is convinced that Western and regional enemies will be forced to deal with him as a bulwark against more radical Sunni insurgents, since *«soon, we will see that Arab, regional and Western countries that supported terrorism, will also have to pay a high price.»*²¹

The progress made by the loyalist forces would not have been possible without the support of the Lebanese Shiite militia Hezbollah, and other groups of the same creed as the Quds force – a special force unit of the guardians of the Iraqi militia or the Iranian – revolution Asaib Ahl al - Haq.

The participation of Hezbollah in the Syrian conflict has evolved since 2011. Their initial military objectives in Syria consisted of saving a regime that was considered a vital ally and distancing the jihadist Sunnis from the borders and Lebanese neighborhoods controlled by Shiites. But, faced with the risk of the collapse of the Government of Damascus, its involvement in the conflict became more intense. Thus, what began as a mere insight into urban fighting has over time, turned into direct combat missions which have expanded over large areas of Syria. In the offensive of Qusayr from 2013, militiamen of Hezbollah carried the weight of the action, while the Syrian army took on a supporting role.²² According to official Israeli sources, in March 2014, between 4,000 and 5,000 Hezbollah militiamen were fighting in Syria.²³

To what extent the unconditional support of the Syrian regime was degrading Hezbollah´s military capacity is a debated topic. On the one hand, the conflict in Syria has helped a new generation of its members to gain precious combat experience,²⁴ which can be used in the future against Israel, its natural enemy, or in Lebanon against rival Sunni organizations.

thru&utm_medium=email&utm_term=%2AMorning%20Brief&utm_campaign=MB%202.5.14&_r=1.

²⁰ The Economist. «Why Bashar Assad is still in charge».07.07.2014. Available at <http://www.economist.com/news/middle-east-and-africa/21603470-rivalry-between-insurgents-helping-him-now-but-may-eventually-undermine-him>.

²¹ English transcript of the inaugural speech of the third term of Bashar Al-Assad. Globalresearch.org.16.07.2014.Op.Cit.

²² Lister, 2014, Op.Cit.

²³ Kershner, Isabel. «Israel watches warily as Hezbollah gains battle skills in Syria». New York Times.10.03.2014. Available at <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/11/world/middleeast/israel-watches-warily-as-hezbollah-gains-battle-skills-in-syria.html>.

²⁴ Hubbardmay, Ben. «Syrian Fighting Gives Hezbollah New but Diffuse Purpose». The New York Times.20.05.2014 Available at <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/05/21/world/middleeast/syrian-fighting-gives-hezbollah-new-but-diffuse-purpose.html>.

But, as its involvement in Syria has increased, its casualties have increased exponentially - since the beginning of the conflict until mid-July, 2014, over 500 militiamen of Hezbollah have lost their lives,²⁵ and the group would have to start relying on inexperienced recruits with little instruction. This need to send new fighters from Lebanon is reinforced by the movement toward Iraq of members of Asaib Ahl Al-Haq, which returned to Iraq to fight the advance of the Islamic State – it is thought that between 20,000 to 30,000 Shiite Iraqis were serving in Syria.²⁶

The situation reduces the ability of Hezbollah to counter Syrian rebels, in their attempt to regain the ground lost along the Lebanese border, and also to maintain security in their Lebanese strongholds, which are constantly hit by the Sunnis. Also, if it wants to avoid opening a second front in southern flank, it will have to limit its desire to take action against Israel, as demonstrated by not acting directly in support of the Palestinians against the Israeli attack on the Gaza Strip carried out during much of the summer of 2014.²⁷

Thus, although currently the strategy of Hassan Nasrallah seems clear, long-term, *«the participation of Hezbollah in Syria is a threat to the movement and is problematic for Lebanon and the Arab world in general. The regional sectarian division has deepened, feeding the extremism it hoped to combat and eroding the legitimacy of the movement among groups that once supported it»*.²⁸

The rebels: between fragmentation and the advance of jihadism

In spite of the support of countries that oppose Assad, the fragmentation of the Syrian political opposition has increased in the last year.

²⁵ Dagher, Sam. «Syria's Allies Are Stretched by Widening War». The Wall Street Journal.14.07.2014. Available at http://online.wsj.com/articles/syrias-allies-are-stretched-by-widening-war-1405383402?mod=fox_australian.

²⁶ Since the US removed its troops from Iraq in December of 2011, Asa'ib Ahl Al-Haq has become one of the most powerful ACTORS in the political and public life in Iraq. The group has a close relationship with Hezbola and maintains links to the supreme leader of Iran, the ayatollah Ali Jamenei. Chulov, Martin. «Controlled by Iran, the deadly militia recruiting Iraq's men to die in Syria». The Guardian.12.03.2014. Available at <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/mar/12/iraq-battle-dead-valley-peace-syria>.

²⁷ On July 7, 2014, the Israeli Defense forces launched Operation «Protective Edge» with the objective of stopping missile attacks from the Gaza strip toward Israeli territory by the Islamist group Hamas. This is the third time Israel attacks Gaza for the same reason, the previous Israeli operations were in 2008 (Molten Lead) and 2012 (Pillar of Defense).

²⁸ International Crisis Group. «Lebanon's Hizbollah Turns Eastward to Syria». Middle East Report N°153 27.05.2014. Available at [http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/Middle%20East%20North%20Africa/Iraq%20Syria%20Lebanon/Lebanon/153-lebanon-s-hizbollah-turns-eastward-to-syria.pdf](http://www.crisisgroup.org/~/media/Files/Middle%20East%20North%20Africa/Iraq%20Syria%20Lebanon/Lebanon/153-lebanon-s-hizbollah-turns-eastward-to-syria.pdf).

Given its undoubted economic power, Saudi Arabia and Qatar have become the two main supporters of the Syrian opposition. However, both Qatari and Saudis have separately formed alliances with rival rebel groups. For this reason, there have been constant disagreements between the various factions, in the heart of the Syrian Opposition Coalition (SOC), the organization which is recognized as the legitimate representative of the Syrian people by several countries and international organizations.²⁹ This division was evident at the beginning of 2014, when the largest opposition bloc in the exile, the National Syrian Council (NSC) - supported by Qatar - withdrew from the SOC in protest at the peace talks in Geneva II because the Government in Damascus had been included.³⁰

This division is also reflected in the Supreme military joint command (SMC), created in December 2012 to establish a unified action between the existing myriad of armed groups and reduce the influence of the more extremists elements --of all those included in the SCM, the Syrian free army is the most important group-. On February 16, 2014, General Salim Idriss was replaced in the leadership of the SMC by general Abdul-Ilah Bashir to Al - Noeimi, closer to the Saudis than his predecessor.³¹ This change has undermined the unity of the SMC, since both Idriss and other local commanders have broken their ties with the SOC. Thus, currently, the SCM is divided equally between supporters of Idriss and Bashi.³²

This uncertainty of the rebels had a direct consequence when, in mid-February, Islamist groups took over SCM arms warehouses, and some of the stolen materials ended up in the hands of followers of Al - Qaeda.³³ This situation can be explained, on the one hand, by the reluctance of the West to provide arms and material to SMC, and on the other, by the US attempt to promote groups of secular and non-sectarian ideology, which would

²⁹ For example, the U.S. government has given the SOC the status of foreign diplomatic mission in the country, which gives it a symbolic push, even though it does not have anywhere near the same diplomatic status as a State. DeYoung, Karen. «Syrian Opposition Coalition offices in U.S. given 'foreign mission' status». The Washington Post.05.05.2014. Available at http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/syrian-opposition-coalition-offices-in-us-given-foreign-mission-status/2014/05/05/3bb31544-d476-11e3-aae8-c2d44bd79778_story.html.

³⁰ Hurriyet Daily News. «Syria's opposition split over peace talks after Iran excluded».21.01.2014. Available at <http://www.hurriyetaidailynews.com/syrias-opposition-split-over-peace-talks-after-iran-excluded.aspx?pagelD=238&nID=61329&NewsCatID=359>.

³¹ McDonnell, Patrick J.; Bulos, Nabih. «Syrian rebel army fires commander many considered ineffective».LA Times. Available at <http://www.latimes.com/world/worldnow/la-fg-wn-syrian-rebels-fire-commander-20140216-story.html>

³² Lister, 2014, Op.Cit.

³³ Hubbard, Ben; Shoumalifeb, Karam. «Top Military Body Against Syria's Assad Is in Chaos, Undermining Fight». The New York Times.23.02.2014. Available at http://www.nytimes.com/2014/02/24/world/middleeast/top-military-body-against-syrias-assad-is-in-chaos-undermining-fight.html?ref=world&_r=0.

include Harakat Hazam.³⁴ About the danger of certain armed groups, separate from the SCM, receive American support, in June 2014, general Bashir warned that it could create «warlords».³⁵

The division of the opponents, both at the political and at the military levels, has facilitated the development of groups of radical Salafi ideology that gradually gained predominance over the moderate factions. Among those Salafi-jihadi groups are: Jaish Al - Islam, the Islamic Front, Ajnad Al - Sham, or Jaish Al - Mujahideen Islamic Union.³⁶ Furthermore, after much hesitation, the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood created, in January 2013, Al Hayat Duru Al - Thawra as its armed wing which today is fighting against the regime in several Syrian provinces.

However, since the spring of 2013, two jihadist groups have attracted the world's attention: the Al - Nusra front and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant³⁷ –also known as the Islamic State or Daesch.

Al - Qaeda in Syria was created in mid-2011, on the basis of jihadists sent to the country by Al - Qaeda from Iraq. There, they were able to increase their combat capability and won autonomy formally becoming a branch of the terrorist organization that Ayman Al - Zawahiri still runs under its current name of Al – Nusra front.

On January 24, 2012, the organization formally announced that its goal was to establish an Islamic State in Syria and a Caliphate in the Great Syria, led by their leader Muhammad Al - Golani. He has given up cooperating with the SMC, pointing out that it is a crime to accept aid from Western countries to topple the Assad regime. His volunteers come from different places in the world: Western Europe, Muslim countries or Central Asia - Chechens mostly.³⁸

Since its founding by Jordanian Abu Musab Al - Zarqawi, Al - Qaeda in Iraq adopted a fundamentalist ideology that, on a religious, doctrinal and political level, considered an anathema anything that is different from the most extreme precepts of Islamic fundamentalism. Its brutal forms of ac-

³⁴ This coalition of militias, which belong to the Syrian Free Army, may have received American arms in the past Spring, according to videos uploaded online. Blanchard et al, 2014, Op.Cit.

³⁵ Afanasieva, Dasha. «U.S. arms could create Syria 'warlords'; rebel commander says». Reuters.09.06.2014. Available at <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/06/09/us-syria-crisis-opposition-idUSKBN0EK1EH20140609>.

³⁶ A broad analysis of the jihadist groups which are acting in Syria. Can be found in: Echeverría Jesús, Carlos. «Grupos terroristas operando en Siria». IEEE Investigation Document 04/2014. Available at http://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs_investig/2014/DIEEEINV04-2014_GruposTerroristasOperandoSiria_CEcheverria.pdf.

³⁷ The Arab name is «Daulat Al Islamiya Al Iraq Wal Bilad Al Sham».

³⁸ Ibrahim, Azeem. The Resurgence of Al-Qaeda in Syria and Iraq. Strategic Studies Institute. Mayo 2014. Available at <http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pubs/display.cfm?pubID=1210>

tion, which include the murder in cold blood of prisoners or civilians, have provided their leader, Abu Bakr Al - Baghdadi, an undeserved notoriety.

In April of 2013, the Group declared itself the «Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant» - also known as Daesh - which in practice meant to expand its traditional scope to include Syria.³⁹ Baghdadi, who had always had a key role in the creation of Al-Nusra, considered Golani should be his subordinate. The intentions of Baghdadi provoked the immediate confrontation with Al-Nusra, and the mediation of Zawahiri failed due to the intransigence of the Islamic State –name which the group adopted in mid-2014– following the order of the leaders of Al-Qaeda. In May of 2013, the Islamic State was expelled from the network so now Al-Nusra is the «official franchise» of Al-Qaeda in Syria.

Although perhaps, the only difference between Daesh and Al-Nusra is the determination of who would lead the jihadist Project in the region, from the moment of the break, there has been violent combat between both organizations in Syria.⁴⁰ And more importantly, for the first time since its appearance over two decades ago, Al-Qaeda is facing a rival jihadist organization with the resources and influence to threaten its status as the flagship movement of global jihadism.⁴¹

In June of 2014, the Islamic State launched an offensive in the central region of Iraq which is mostly Suni, which surprisingly was a complete success and brought attention to the huge weakness of the regular Iraqi army. Weeks later, with captured weapons, it launched a new offensive, this time in Northeastern Syria, against kurdish militia and members of other rebel groups. At the time of press, Baghdadi controls large areas in both countries, including the cities of Raqqa, Hasaka and Dir Zur in Syria or Ramadi, Samarra and Mosul in Iraq, where it has declared a caliphate.⁴²

However, the Syrian government constantly repeats that the terrorism that is sweeping Iraq is the same one that is threatening Syria,⁴³ for the

³⁹ In truth, for jihadists, the term «Levant» refers to the region which extends from the south of Turkey to Egypt and includes: Lebanon, Israel, Palestine, Syria, and Jordan. The objective cited by Baghdadi himself is to restore the Islamic state, or caliphate, in the entire area.

⁴⁰ Echeverría Jesús, Op.Cit, 6.

⁴¹ Hubbard, Ben. «ISIS Threatens Al-Qaeda as Flagship Movement of Extremists». The New York Times.30.06.2014. Available at <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/07/01/world/middleeast/isis-threatens-al-qaeda-as-flagship-movement-of-extremists.html?action=click&contentCollection=Middle%20East&module=RelatedCoverage®ion=Marginalia&pgtype=article>.

⁴² BBC News. «Syria crisis: Islamic State fighters seize Aleppo towns».13.08.2014. Available at <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-28770786>.

⁴³ Al-Manar. «Syria, Iraq Encounter Same Terrorism: Syrian Foreign Ministry».11.06.2014. Available at <http://www.almanar.com.lb/english/adetails.php?eid=155868&frid=23&cid=23&fromval=1&seccati>

moment there have not been any notable combats between the Islamic State and Assad's army as each side has had a different area of influence. But, as the jihadists gain territory in the area of Aleppo, the conflicts between them are certain to become more intense.⁴⁴

In any case, the activity of the Islamic State poses the question of how this group can fight without interruption for months and in areas of operation which are so far apart, but seemingly without losing their operational capacity. Over the next weeks, it will be seen whether the organization is overextended strategically and whether the military intervention recently launched by the US in Iraq, as explained further in the following section, will be able to weaken the capabilities of the Islamic State.

This situation is a reason for unease in the region and in the international community as a whole. In addition, in Syria there are a large number of European jihadists fighting, 51 of them Spanish, and their return to their countries of origin with a radical and extreme military and ideological training, is a threat to the safety of the European Union.⁴⁵

Kurdistan

Since the Treaty of Lausanne came into effect in 1923, the Kurds, of Sunni beliefs and Persian language, have demanded the creation of their own independent State. Historically, this aspiration has been in direct opposition to the interests of countries which exerted their sovereignty over the territory known as Kurdistan. But like other geopolitical issues, the changes that are taking place in the Middle East have intensified the political aspirations of the Kurds. The lack of stability in Iraq and Syria is exacerbating tensions from this issue and at the same time, has opened a window of opportunity on the ancient Kurdish wish.

In Syria, the withdrawal of the regular army has meant in all practicality, that the People's Protection Committees (YPG for its Kurdish initials), the armed militia of the «Democratic Union Party» (PYD for its Kurdish initials) controls the main cities in the northeast of the country. In fact, in mid-November 2013, the PYD announced the independence of the Syrian province of Hassaka, where 70% of the population is of Kurish ethnicity. This declaration enraged the Syrian opponents, headed by the Syrian Opposition Coalition, which qualified the announcement by the PYD as a

⁴⁴ These circumstances seem to confirm the fact that at the end of August, 2014, the Islamic State took control of the Tabqa air base, final bastion of the government in the province of Raqqa. After the siege, 250 soldiers that had been taken prisoner were murdered by the jihadists.

⁴⁵ RTVE. «Interior dice que hay 51 españoles combatiendo como yihadistas». 30.08.2014. Available at <http://www.rtve.es/noticias/20140830/interior-dice-hay-51-espanoles-combatiendo-como-yihadistas/1002460.shtml>.

«hostile act.»⁴⁶ The ambivalent position of the PYD on the issue of supporting the Syrian political opposition is considered a show of caution before the unstoppable rise of radical fundamentalist Sunnism. In addition, it is necessary to consider the interests of Teheran, which would be supporting the aspirations of the PYD in order to ensure a certain degree of control over the border with Turkey and be able to reinforce its interests. To this end, it is necessary to remember that Iran, affirm ally of Damascus, has ceased the repression in its territories of armed Kurdish groups.⁴⁷

In the last few months, the combats between jihadists and «*peshmergas*» –Kurdish combatants– have intensified in the North of Syria. But unlike previous occasions, in this case the Islamic State is taking the initiative by taking advantage of the weaponry captured in neighboring Iraq.⁴⁸

In Turkey, Kurdish separatism, represented by the Kurdish Workers' Party (the PKK for its Kurdish initials), is the main factor contributing to the instability in that country. An agreement reached in 2012 between the authorities in Ankara and the historical leader of the PKK, Abdullah Ocalan –in prison since 1999–, established a ceasefire in the country which is still upheld today, albeit precariously. The Kurdish movement in Turkey has accused the government of Ankara of supporting the groups which are close to Al-Qaeda to the detriment of the Syrian Kurds.⁴⁹ It is necessary to clarify at this point that the PYD is the Syrian branch of the PKK.

As for Iraq, the federal Constitution of 2005 granted broad autonomy to the Kurds that were living in the north of the country. In practice, the control that the government of Bagdad has had over the autonomous Kurdish-Iraqi region over the past few years has been practically non-existent. During this time, the Kurdistan Democratic Party (PDK), led by Masud Barzani, has governed the region, and surprisingly, has established political and economic alliances with Turkey, causing a certain degree of animosity between the PKK and the PYD.

However, in addition to creating a huge humanitarian crisis, the offensive of the Islamic State in Iraq has modified the delicate political balance in the area. This jihadist impulse «*has broken up the country in two (if not*

⁴⁶ Dettmer, Jamie. «Syrian Kurd Self-Rule Declaration Raises Concerns». Voice of America, 15.11.2013. Available at <http://www.voanews.com/content/syrian-kurd-self-rule-declaration-raises-concerns/1791120.html>.

⁴⁷ MCELROY, Damien. «Syria and Iran 'backing Kurdish terrorist group', says Turkey». The Telegraph.03.09.2013. Available at <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/turkey>.

⁴⁸ Al Arabiya. ISIS intensifies offensive against Kurds in Syria.10.07.2014. Available at <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/2014/10/ISIS-intensifies-offensive-against-Kurds-in-Syria.html>

⁴⁹ Wilgenburg, Wladimir van. «Turkish power struggle leaves new questions on Kurdish issue». Al Monitor.04.02.2014. Available at <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2014/02/turkey-power-struggle-reveals-kurdish-questions.html#>.

*three) and created a de facto Kurdish State in the north which now controls about 40% more than the territory recognized by the federal Constitution».*⁵⁰

Faced with the uncontrollable advance of the radical Sunnis and the real danger of genocide against the religious minorities in northern Iraq, at the beginning of August 2014, the President of the United States approved selective air strikes on positions held by the Islamic State in Iraq.⁵¹ This campaign, which has to date been limited to air strikes, is complemented with humanitarian aid operations and the support of military consultants given to the Iraqi armed forces and the Kurdish *peshmergas*.

In this situation, the calls for Kurdish unity have grown stronger in order to face the threat represented by the radical Sunni. However, in spite of the fact that the offensive of the Islamic State has reactivated nationalist sentiment, the divisions between the various factions run deep, as can be seen by the lack of cooperation in the area of the border between Iraq and Syria, which is controlled by the various Kurdish parties.

The way things are, it is not very likely the PDK will answer the call of the PKK-PDY to create a common strategy for the common defense of the Kurdish people. Although the Kurds in Syria have announced they are prepared to negotiate, it is not very feasible that Barzani, will make decisions that may bother the Turkish Prime Minister, Recep Tayip Erdogan.

Furthermore, taking into account the calls in favor of Iraqi unity made by the large powers, especially the U.S., guarantor of their security, and other countries in the region, it is foreseeable that the PDK will attempt to acquire new powers while staying within the confines of the Iraqi Constitution,⁵² at least in name.

Chemical weapons and disarmament

Since the beginning of the conflict, the North American administration designated the use of chemical weapons by the regime as a sort of «red line» that, if crossed, would provoke a retaliation.⁵³

In spite of this warning, there have been frequent accusations that the Syrian government has used this type of weapons of mass destruction

⁵⁰ Jiménez, Laura. «Los kurdos iraquíes se juegan la independencia». Esglobal.03.07.2014. Available at <http://www.esglobal.org/los-kurdos-iraquies-se-juegan-la-independencia/>.

⁵¹ Barnes, Julian E.; Sparshott, Jeffrey; Malas, Nour. «Barack Obama Approves Airstrikes on Iraq, Airdrops Aid». Wall Street Journal.08.08.2014. Available at <http://online.wsj.com/articles/iraqi-militants-seize-christian-villages-1407404503>.

⁵² Recknagel, Charles. «Iraqi Kurds Talk Independence But Move For Stronger Position In Iraq». Radio Free Europe.23.07.2014. Available at <http://www.rferl.org/content/iraqi-kurds-independence-talk-power-play/25459559.html>.

⁵³ «US has a range of military options in Syria». The Times of Israel.26.04.2013. Available at <http://www.timesofisrael.com/>.

against the armed opposition and civil population. On August 21, 2013, the most important incident with chemical weapons during the war took place, and it could have killed hundreds of people.⁵⁴ A report by a team of UN investigators sent to the area stated that sarin- a neurotoxin- had been used on civilians in the Damascus neighborhood of Ghouta, Although the experts were unable to determine who was responsible, all signs pointed to the regime.⁵⁵

Almost immediately, the Obama administration ordered the deployment of air and naval military forces to carry out a punitive action. But in an eleventh hour diplomatic resolution, which allowed the White House to withdraw the threat of attack, Syria agreed to adhere to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). In practice, this would mean the destruction of their warehouses and production facilities, as well as the commitment by the Syrian regime not to use chemical agents as a weapon of war. On the basis of a joint proposal by the U.S. and Russia, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) approved a plan to destroy all the Syrian chemical arsenals and established June 30, 2014 as the execution date⁵⁶. Last June 23, 2014, the OPCW announced that it had supervised the successful removal of the last batch of chemical weapons from the port of Latakia.⁵⁷

However, at the same time that chemical agents were being progressively removed, humanitarian organizations were reporting the use of canisters filled with chloride gas and launched from helicopters on the civilian population.⁵⁸ This fact, if it proves to be true, would prove the difficulty that exists in verifying conclusively that there has been a complete

⁵⁴ «Activistas denuncian un ataque con armas químicas del Ejército en Siria». Europa Press.21/08/2013. Available at <http://www.europapress.es/internacional>.

⁵⁵ United Nations Mission to Investigate Allegations of the Use of Chemical Weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic - Report on the Alleged Use of Chemical Weapons in the Ghouta Area of Damascus on 21 August 2013.13.09.2013. Available at http://www.un.org/disarmament/content/slideshow/Secretary_General_Report_of_CW_Investigation.pdf.

⁵⁶ For further details on this process and the chemical arsenal destroyed please refer to two analyses: Domingo, Juan; Pita, René. «Siria reescribe la convención de armas químicas». Documento de Opinión del IEEE 90/2013.1.10.2013. Available at http://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs_opinion/2013/DIEEE090-2013_Siria_ReescribeConvencionArmasQuimicas_PitayDomingo.pdf; Hidalgo García, María del Mar. «La destrucción de las armas químicas de siria: un compromiso colectivo». Informative document of IEEE 30/2013.04.12.2013. Available at http://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs_informativos/2013/DIEEEI30-2013_DestruccionArmasQuimicasSiria_MMHG.pdf.

⁵⁷ «Announcement to media on last consignment of chemicals leaving Syria». Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. Statement by Ahmet Üzümcü.23.06.2014. Available at <http://www.opcw.org/news/article/announcement-to-media-on-last-consignment-of-chemicals-leaving-syria/>.

⁵⁸ «Syria: Strong Evidence Government Used Chemicals as a Weapon». Human Right Watch.13.05.2014. Available at <http://www.hrw.org/news/2014/05/13/syria-strong-evidence-government-used-chemicals-weapon>.

withdrawal of all chemical agents and strict compliance with the CWC. At the time this was written, the OPCW was carrying out an investigation on this matter.⁵⁹

A boiling neighborhood

The sectarian character of the war in Syria is having destabilizing effects on its Iraqi and Lebanese neighbors who, like in Syria rely on heterogeneous social structures. With the expansion of the conflict, the fragile religious and political balances of these two countries start to blow up.⁶⁰

In Iraq, the fall of Saddam Hussein deepened the already long existing division between Sunnis and Shiites. The embryonic Iraqi democracy brought the Shiite majority of the country to power, severely repressed by the previous regime but that has not been able to create the appropriate institutional counterweights. During the years in office, the Government of Nouri Al-Maliki has understood that any opposition was illegitimate and therefore had to be repressed. Thus, instead of promoting a unified State has used religious disputes as a political instrument in his own favor. Just as throughout the Middle East, *«local political tradition confuses democracy with the abuse of the majority of votes as they use elections as a way of consolidating power instead of sharing it»*.⁶¹

The consequences of this sectarian policy have irritated the Kurds who have traditionally supported Maliki and ignited Sunni spirits. This way, following the exit of the country of US forces, in December 2011, the disputes between Shiites and Sunnis have been a constant. Moreover, the strong influence of Iran on Iraqi public life has not helped avoiding clashes between communities as Gulf monarchies, bastion of Sunnis worldwide, have not neglected the opportunity to harass its geopolitical enemy.

Thus, the offense of the Islamic State in Iraq has to be considered as the logical evolution of the internal battle between two majoritarian creeds of the Islam, fostered by the dynamics of the war in Syria. The result is that the Iraqi current situation is gliding dangerously towards the same destiny and the Syrian: violent social and political fractioning, humanitarian disaster and disintegration of the State. The designation of Haider Al-Abadi, as new Iraqi minister, in place of Maliki, in bid August 2014, has

⁵⁹ «Global chemical weapons watchdog says work in Syria will continue». Reuters. 23.06.2014. Available at <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/06/23/us-syria-crisis-chemicalweapons-idUSKBN0EY11F20140623>.

⁶⁰ Laborie, Mario. «Towards a new order in the Middle East». Included in VVAA. Strategic Overview 2014. Available at http://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/panoramas/panorama_estrategico_2014.pdf.

⁶¹ Haass, Richard N. «The new thirty-years war». El País. 24.07.2014. Available at http://elpais.com/elpais/2014/07/23/opinion/1406117364_070279.html.

to be understood as intent to stop these dynamics⁶² – it is worth highlighting that this replacement has been back both by Iran and by US example of the seriousness of the situation the country is suffering-.

For Assad, circumstances in Iraq have serious effects as Bagdad has been a key ally in its fight against rebels. Jihadists success in Iraq means the breakdown of terrestrial communication networks linking both countries with Iran. But most importantly, Iraqi Shiites forces- the majority of which belong to Asa'ib Ahl Al-Haq- which fought in Syria with the forces of Assad are returning to their country to fight against the jihadist advance.⁶³

Lebanon suffers also the overflow of violence taking place in Syria as the increase of radicalism and the massive arrival of Syrian refugees are nourishing tensions among communities. The scarce Lebanese social services are facing serious difficulties to attend almost the 1.2 million Syrian refugees seeking refuge in the country.⁶⁴

In the political arena, the increasing involvement of Hezbola in the Syrian conflict ballast the creation of a National unity Government, pushing the country to a deep government crisis – focused on the impossibility of Lebanese Parliament to appoint a new president replacing Michel Suleiman, whose mandate ended May 2014.

Since 2006, the militia commanded by Hassan Nasrallah has turned into a key actor of the institutional machinery of the country but its support to the Syrian regime has been translated into the delegitimation of its political and military position and has given reasons to the most radical Sunnis groups to defy his leadership.⁶⁵ As a result thereof, the Lebanese Salafist movements and parties are on the rise backed by Saudi Arabia and the sectarian violence has moved several notches up, in spite of the memories of the civil war that devastated the country for fifteen years, have acted as a retaining wall until now.

Nevertheless, these last months, Lebanon has been repeatedly struck by violent incidents. In an unequivocal proof of the deterioration of the country's situation, last August 2nd, members of the Islamic State, from the Syria, took the Lebanese city of Aarsal, near the Syrian border. The subsequent confrontations with the Lebanese army caused dozens of

⁶² El Confidencial. «Al Maliki renounces in favor of the new prime minister Haider al Abadi».14.08.2014.Available at http://www.elconfidencial.com/ultima-hora-en-vivo/2014-08-14/al-maliki-renuncia-en-favor-del-nuevo-primer-ministro-haider-al-abadi_338701/.

⁶³ Abi-Habib, Maria. «Shiite Militias Decamping From Syria to Fight in Iraq», WSJ.17.06.2014.Available at <http://online.wsj.com/articles/shiite-militias-decamping-from-syria-to-fight-in-iraq-1403051977>.

⁶⁴ Figure of 22.07.2014 obtained from UNHCR-Syria Regional Refugee Response. Available at <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=122>.

⁶⁵ Hubbardmay, 2014, Op.Cit.

deaths and casualties. As declared by the commander in chief of the Lebanese Armed Forces, General Jean Kahwaji, the jihadist rebels planned to turn Lebanon into another Iraq, unleashing a sectarian war between Sunnis and Shiites which would have endangered even the existence of the nation.⁶⁶

As expected, the situation in Syria and Iraq is also affecting Jordan. Apart from the flow of Syrian refugees – more than six hundred thousand, as of July 24 2014⁶⁷–, the security of the Hashemite Kingdom is at stake. The withdrawal of the Iraqi army has left all border crossing points between both countries in the hands of the Islamic State which can be tempted to go one step beyond and enter Jordan.⁶⁸

Nevertheless, in contrast to Lebanon, Syria or Iraq, it seems that in Jordan there is not an environment favorable for the jihadist advance: the king acts as binder of the society and the police have extensive capacity to act. However in addition the country is not fractioned due to religious issues –more than 90% of its population is Sunni- and the support of the US and Saudi Arabia is strong. Therefore, although the jihadist against the country can never be completely ruled out, in view of its rapid expansion throughout the region, it does seem unlikely that Jordan will resemble its neighbors at least for the time being.

The role of external actors

In an area key for the World's energetic supply, the dynamics which characterized the role of external actors in Syria shape mainly around the traditional Turkish-Arab-Persian rivalry and the competence between the main world powers.

In this context, the International community, essential through United Nations, has tried to open a channel for the peaceful resolution of the conflict that to date has failed. This section analyses some of the keys to understand the role of external actors in the current situation in Syria.

Initiatives for a negotiated solution

In more than three years and a half of war, the Security Council of the UN has not been able to agree on any measure aimed to stop conflagration.

⁶⁶ Nakhoul, Samia; Bassam, Laila. «Islamists sought to turn Lebanon into Iraq: army chief». Reuters. 12.08.2014. Available at <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/08/12/us-lebanon-security-arsal-idUSKBN0GCOHY20140812>.

⁶⁷ UNHCR, Syria Regional Refugee Response – Jordan. Available at <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=107>.

⁶⁸ Stratfor. «Jordan Could Be the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant's Next Target». 17.06.2014.

Russia backed by China has blocked several resolution drafts promoted by Western countries to punish Assad regime. Even the attempts to involve the International Criminal Court to investigate and prosecute alleged war crimes or crimes against humanity have been vetoed by Moscow and Beijing.⁶⁹

Thus, International initiatives to achieve a negotiated solution have basically focused on the so called Geneva talks. On February 2012, United Nations and the Arab League agreed to appoint Kofi Annan as Special Envoy to Syria with a view to facilitate a peaceful solution to the conflict. In June 2012 and as a consequence of this diplomatic activity, the Action Group for Syria⁷⁰ agreed in Geneva a peace plan foreseeing a transition government including members of the current regime and of the opposition – Geneva I-. But only a week later, in view of the escalation of violence in the country and the division of the International community it seemed evident that the peace plan agreed was written in soft chalk. The resignation of Kofi Annan as Special Envoy on mid-August 2012 clearly revealed the failure of that round of negotiations.

In August 2012, the UN and the Arab League tried to revitalize the agreed solution to the conflict and appointed Lajdar Brahimi to replace Annan⁷¹. After one year and a half of hectic activity, the Algerian diplomatic veteran succeeded in meeting the parties in one new round of conversations which took place between January and February of 2014 – Geneva II-.

The optimistic perspectives opening the talks immediately faded. While the war became more violent, negotiations failed to move towards the creation of a transition government body, main issue of this round⁷². Assad regime rejected this possibility and defended the «fight against terrorism» as the core issue of the debate. On the other and despite the moderate opposition received an important International support, other groups, amongst which there were the main Islamist militias, rejected the negotiations and expressed their intention to continue fighting as the

⁶⁹ Black, Ian. «Russia and China veto UN move to refer Syria to international criminal court». The Guardian.22.05.2014. Available at <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/may/22/russia-china-veto-un-draft-resolution-refer-syria-international-criminal-court>.

⁷⁰ Formed by China, Russia, US, France, United Kingdom, Turkey, the Arab League, the UN and the European Union. Action Group for Syria. Final Communiqué.30.06.2012. Available at <http://www.un.org/News/>.

⁷¹ «Lakhdar Brahimi will be the new envoy of the UN to Syria». El Mundo.17/08/2012. Available at: <http://www.elmundo.es/elmundo>.

⁷² The agenda of Geneva II opened with four points: 1) violence and terrorism; 2) implementation of a transition government; 3) National institutions; and 4) National reconciliation. Transcript of press conference by Joint Special Representative for Syria (JSRS) Lakhdar Brahimi, Geneva, 11 February 2014. Available at: [http://www.unog.ch/80256EDD006B9C2E/\(httpNewsByYear_en\)/E9C582D61F42569EC1257C7C0053C600?OpenDocument](http://www.unog.ch/80256EDD006B9C2E/(httpNewsByYear_en)/E9C582D61F42569EC1257C7C0053C600?OpenDocument).

future of Syria should «*be crystalized on the ground of heroism and signed with blood on the battlefield, not in empty conferences attended by those who not even represent themselves*». ⁷³

In these circumstances and although the parties agreed to a period of reflection and to resume the peace talks in the future, the failure of the negotiating efforts to end the Syrian conflict compelled Brahimi to resign from his position on mid-May 2014.⁷⁴ On July 10th, the United Nations appointed Staffan de Mistura as new Special Envoy of the UN for Syria,⁷⁵ despite given the current situation of the Syrian conflict the expectations of reaching at least one cease-fire on the initial grounds of the agreements of Geneva are scarce.⁷⁶

Regional powers

Turkey and the Arab monarchies

The three main enemy States of Assad are Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar. Nevertheless, the discrepancies among the governments of these three countries on how to manage the conflict seem increasingly evident. At the beginning of March 2014, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, and Bahrein announced their withdrawal of their ambassadors in Qatar due to the alleged Qatari interferences in domestic issues,⁷⁷ although the reason underlying this decision is in reality, the defense of the divergent interests of the Arab reigning houses. Concerned about the rise of the political Islam represented by the Muslim Brotherhood considered as a threat to their own subsistence, the Saudi government – along with that of the Emirates and Bahrein- favors Syrian opposing groups either Salafist or nationalist. Just like the US, the Saudis back the current leader of the SMC as a way of opposition to Islamists.

⁷³ Holmes, Oliver. «Islamist rebels reject 'hollow' Syria peace talks». Reuters.19.01.2014. Available at <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/01/19/us-syria-crisis-idUSBREA010BZ20140119>.

⁷⁴ «Syria mediator Brahimi announces resignation». Al Jazeera.14.05.2014. Available at <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/05/syria-peace-envoy-brahimi-2014513151918573244.html>.

⁷⁵ «UN chief appoints Staffan de Mistura as special envoy for Syria crisis». UN News Centre.10.07.2014. Available at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=48244#.U8opqXmKC00>.

⁷⁶ By resolution 2139, of 22 February 2014, of the UN Security Council reaffirmed its support to the communiqué of Geneva and claimed that the parties backed its implementation at the same time as they demanded both parties to allow the free access of humanitarian aid. Text in English of the resolution available at <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2014/sc11292.doc.htm>.

⁷⁷ RTVE. «Arabia Saudí, Emiratos y Bahréin retiran a sus embajadores en Catar en una decisión inédita».05.03.2014. Available at <http://www.rtve.es/noticias/20140305/arabia-saudi-emiratos-barein-retiran-embajadores-catar/890406.shtml>.

In turn, from the beginning of the Arab riots, the Qatari government has demonstrated its support to the Muslim Brotherhood as well as to the Hamas Palestine group, gaining the criticism of the rest of the countries of the (GCC).⁷⁸

One of the core aspects of Qatar's foreign policy has been its alliance with Turkey as both countries share interests in their ambition to change the *statu quo* existing in this area. For economic and political reasons, Ankara tries to recreate the sphere of influence the Ottoman Empire had until 1918 and counteract Iran. Meanwhile, Doha calls on the balance of its relations with the regional hegemonic powers, Saudi Arabia and Iran and uses its massive financial proceeds to «buy» influence and ensure its autonomy.⁷⁹

However, these differences have undermined the rebellion against Assad and on the contrary have favored the most radical opposing jihadist groups over which none of these countries seem to have any control.

Iran

The regime of Teheran along with Syria and Hezbola – recently joined also by the Central Government of Iraq- have conformed for lustrums the so-called «Resistance Axis» with a view to expand the Iranian Islamic revolution and boost anti-Western and antisemitic policies. Moreover, given the rivalry with Sunni monarchies of the Gulf, especially Saudi Arabia, for the regional leadership, the regime of Damascus has been the link between Persians and Arabs. These two factors are essential to understand the bow that has traditionally tied Syria and Iran. Indeed, the regime of Assad would never be in the current strong position should it not be for the decisive support of Iran since the beginning of the war. The aid in intelligence and the supply of weapons and fuel have made possible the combat capacity of the Syrian army. But above all, Assad remain in power thanks on the one hand to the deployment of members of the Quds Force to train Alawites militia and coordinate military operations against rebels and, on the other hand, to the political backing of the regional Shiite movement supported by Teheran. Nevertheless, the fact that thousands of Shiite voluntaries worldwide have gone to defend Assad,⁸⁰ has meant an increase of the sectarian nature of the Syria conflict.

⁷⁸ Laborie, 2014, Op.Cit.

⁷⁹ Stratfor. Turkey and Qatar's Shared Regional Interests». Geopolitical Diary.08.01.2013.Available at <http://www.stratfor.com/geopolitical-diary/turkey-and-qatars-shared-regional-interests#axzz38MpwQdRL>.

⁸⁰ Knights, Michael. «Iran's Foreign Legion: The Role of Iraqi Shiite Militias in Syria». The Washington Institute.27.06.2013.

In the last year several notable facts have taken place, which have much to do with the position of Iran both in Syria and the Middle East as a whole. Firstly, the provisional agreement signed in November 2013 between Iran and the P5+1 negotiators – the five countries permanent members of the Security Council plus Germany and that has recently been extended for another four months-, to limit the nuclear program of Iran, has brought the Ayatollah regime back to International arena at the same time as it has reduced its isolation which favored the cause of the *increasing Shiite* as a whole.⁸¹ And secondly, the advance of the jihadist groups in Iraq and Syria, paradoxically, has situated Iranians on the same side as the US.

Despite the suspicions the US-Iran closeness is rising in Israel and Saudi Arabia⁸² – traditional allies of the US in the region- and the many mysteries already existing, there is a possibility that the geopolitical balances in the Middle East may be reorganizing. For the moment, a slight moderation can be seen as observed in the fact that Israel's operation in Gaza against the organization Hamás, lasting most part of the summer,⁸³ has not triggered the reaction of Hezbolá, something that in other circumstances would probably have happened.⁸⁴

International actors

Geopolitical consequences of the war in Syria at an International extent are becoming increasingly evident. This conflict and the transformations undergone by the strategic environment of the Middle East reveal that the World order is increasingly less Western, situation Russia is trying to profit from.

Russia

Throughout the Syrian conflict, Russia has revealed itself as a key actor for Assad's aspirations of remaining in power as Moscow has provided

⁸¹ Laborie, 2014, Op.Cit.

⁸² Satloff, Robert. «Will Israel and the U.S. Break Up over Iran?» The Washington Institute. January/February 2014. Available at <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/will-israel-and-the-u.s.-break-up-over-iran>.

⁸³ For more information regarding the «Protecting Margin» Operation started in July 8th 2014, please refer to RTVE «Conflicto en Gaza» Available at <http://www.rtve.es/noticias/conflicto-gaza/>.

⁸⁴ Only after 19 days of Israel attack in Gaza, Hassan Nasrallah has urged Muslim countries to back the Palestinian Islamist movement. Nevertheless, at least for the moment it has refrained from opening a new front against Israel at the border with Lebanon. Reuters. «Despite Syria rift, Hezbollah pledges full support to Hamas».25.07.2014.Available at <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/07/25/us-mideast-gaza-hezbollah-idUSKBN0FU1UA20140725>.

essential weapons and replacements to prolong the fighting. But even more relevant has been the repeated use of its right to veto in the UN Security Council to block any resolution undermining the Syrian regime. Undoubtedly its fervent defense of the inviolable sovereignty of the States, above any other principle of the relationship between States, has turned into the hallmark of the Russian diplomacy⁸⁵ – insofar as Moscow does not consider that its vital interests are threatened, as in the case of Ukraine-.

With this policy, the Russian President, Vladimir Putin, is trying to maintain its only commercial and military partner in the area – it is worth remembering that the Syrian port of Tartus hosts the only base of the Russian army outside the country – in addition to revealing that Russia is still a great power to take into account and that, if needed, it can counterweight the US hegemony of the world. As the New York Times article says, for Russians and Syrians «*the Syrian war and the dispute for the Crimean peninsula are essentially part of the one and widest battle against North American unilateralism of the post-cold war*».⁸⁶ After all, it is more than likely that Russia will continue strongly supporting the Syrian regime although this may give rise to the rebuff of Western countries and of a great part of the Sunni world.

The US and its European allies

When the first popular protests against the Syrian regime in 2011 started, the US intended the fall of Assad as that possibility was consistent with its vision of the area: supporting peaceful political changes and weakening of the capacity of Iran and Hezbola to attack Israel, its key ally in the area.

But since the Syrian conflict resulted in a violent civil war, Washington and its European allies, have been cautious regarding the policy to implement both to support the rebels and to develop military action as in 2011 to overthrow the Libyan regime of Colonel Gaddafi

Aware of North-American public opinion, he wants to see his country less involved in foreign issue after more than one decade of war in Iraq and Afghanistan⁸⁷, President Obama is trying by all means to not directly in-

⁸⁵ TRENIN, Dmitri. «The Mythical Alliance. Russia's Syria Policy». Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. February 2013. Available at <http://www.ciaonet.org/>.

⁸⁶ Barnard, Anne. «Russian Defiance Is Seen as a Confidence Builder for Syria's Government». The New York Times. 21.03.2014. Available at http://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/22/world/middleeast/russian-defiance-is-seen-as-a-confidence-builder-for-syrias-government.html?_r=0.

⁸⁷ Pew Research Center. 03.12.2013. Available at <http://www.people-press.org/2013/12/03/section-1-americas-global-role/#views-of-international-engagement>

volve itself in regional issues. At the same time, his intents to agreeing on an International response consistent with Syria have clashed with Russian intransigence in the Security Council of the United Nations. Likewise, European allies have revealed a clear lack of disposition to support the use of military force in Syria as they consider that their vital interests are not questioned for the moment.

These circumstances along with the fact that in Syrian scenario it is difficult to put together the appropriate use of the military instruments, explain the American reluctance to attack Assad's forces. In addition, the only reason why Obama would have carried out a military intervention, the chemical weapons program, has been «peacefully» solved.

With respect to the proposal of supplying weapons for rebels to be able to counteract the higher combat capacity to the Syrian army, the progressive advance of the jihadist groups, gives reasons to fear that those weapons may end up in inappropriate hands. Therefore, despite continuous announces⁸⁸, it seems that they are only providing «non-lethal» devices although there is information regarding the existence of a «modest» program to train opposing groups considered as «more moderate».⁸⁹

In this context, the US and European countries focus their efforts on underpinning the stability of Syria's neighbors basically through humanitarian aid for refugees and the coordination of intelligence material.

None the less, nowadays the main Western priority is to stop the progress of organizations near AlQaeda and above all, of the Islamic State both in Syria and in Iraq. Given that the change of the regime in Syria is a minor problem, ironically, this issue puts Obama and Assad – with their allies Iran and Hezbola- together in the same «trench» against Jihadism.⁹⁰

There is no doubt that the Islamic State represents a direct threat for Western world in general and for the US in particular. The organization relies on the necessary human and financial resources to strike vital European and US interests as well as to destabilize the friendly countries of the region. For this reason, it would be normal that the US increased its presence in Iraq and it cannot be ruled out that it may keep using the

⁸⁸ In a recent speech given by Obama in the Military Academy of West Point, the President showed his wish to support the armed opposition in Syria. Entous, Adam. «Obama Close to Authorizing Military Training of Syrian Rebels».WSJ.27.05.2014.Available at http://online.wsj.com/news/article_email/SB10001424052702304811904579587.

⁸⁹ Entous, Adam; Barnes, Julian E. «Pentagon Envisions 'Small' Training Program for Syria Opposition».WSJ.16.07.2014. Available at <http://online.wsj.com/articles/pentagon-envisions-small-training-program-for-syria-opposition-1405520641?tesla=y&mg=reno64-wsj&url=http://online.wsj.com/article/SB100014240527023>.

⁹⁰ Rogin, Josh. «Obama Admin Debates Whether Assad Really Must Go». The Daily Beast.07.03.2014.Available at <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2014/07/03/iraq-crisis-pushes-u-s-closer-to-assad-the-dictator-it-said-must-go.html>.

same procedures as in Yemen: selective attacks with drones, covert operations and counselling of security forces. In turn, European countries normally adjust their actions, outside community institutions – the European Union is still missing – limiting their support to the US to what is purely imperative.

Conclusions

The regime of Assad and his allies, Iran and Hezbollah, is better positioned today than in the past months as seen by its military and diplomatic achievements. Moreover, the lack of capacity of the opposition to act as one has created the ideal conditions for the establishment of radical Islamist organizations that, over time, have gained more power than the moderate factions, which raises the alarms of the countries supporting the rebellion. In particular, the Islamic State is surmised for the future as one of the key parts of the conflict. Therefore, the survival of the Syrian regime seems secured at least on the short and medium term and under no circumstance, it seems to be any opportunity whatsoever for peace.

It is already long ago that the Syrian war was a «simple» internal conflict. The incorporation of new actors and factors along with the overflow of violence, reaching already neighbor countries, depict a panorama where conflagration has acquired its current regional format. Conflicts in Syria, Lebanon and Iraq are so interrelated that it is no longer possible to discern an independent solution for some of them.

At the same time, the current geopolitical derivations the regional conflict –considering what happens in the region as a whole- may have on the International relations at a regional or global level are beyond dispute.

On the one hand, the return of Iran to the International diplomatic arena is focused on the good perspectives existing to reach an agreement on its nuclear program. Of succeeding, the consequences of this agreement can redesign the balances of power in the Middle East. The US and Iran have found themselves in the same side in Iraq where both countries try to support the Government of Baghdad against Sunni rebels. Although the reaction of the rich Gulf monarchies remains a mystery as with their incalculable financial resources they oppose to Teheran gaining influence. Likewise, the Middle East is once more a board where the interests of the great powers clash. Russia and China try to make the most of the apparent US slide and the European apathy in the region.

The failure of International diplomatic initiatives is due to the ambition of adopting policies conflicting with the complex reality of this situation.

Maybe, instead of trying to end with the war in Syria – which in any case seems long and violent- with partial measures and, most times, utopic, maybe it would much better to succeed in pragmatically managing the strategic environment.

Chronology

1946	Independence of Syria.	
1947	Creation of the Baath party in Syria.	
1958	In February, Syria and Egypt joined the Arab Republic United (ARU), with Gamal Abdel Nasser as the first President. Nasser ordered the dissolution of Syrian political parties including the Baath.	
1961	After a coup, Syria leaves the RAU. The Baath has become the dominant political force.	
1966	Internal coup in the Baath. Hafez Al - Assad becomes Defense Minister.	
1967	The six-day war that pits Israel against Egypt, Syria and Jordan. Israel takes the Golan and destroys virtually all of Syria's air force.	
1971	Hafez Al-Assad is elected president for the first time.	
1973	Yom Kippur War. Syria is defeated and does not manage to reconquer Golan.	
1980	After the Islamic revolution in Iran, riots break out in the cities of Alepo, Homs and Hama. The Muslim Brotherhood try to assassinate Assad.	
1982	Muslim Brotherhood riots in Hama. Military forces of the Syrian regime squash the insurrection. 20,000 civilians die at the hands of Hafez Al-Assad's troops.	
1987	Syria sends its army to Lebanon to impose a ceasefire in Beirut.	
2000	Hafez Al-Assad dies and is succeeded in power by his son, Bashar.	
2005	The former Lebanese prime minister Hariri is murdered in Beirut. In April, under the international pressure, Damascus removes its troops from Lebanon.	
2007	Israel carries out an air strike against what seem to be Syrian nuclear sites.	
2011	Mar	Riots in the cities of Damascus and Deraa demanding the freedom of political prisoners. Security forces hold it off with fire arms and cause dozens of deaths. The riots spread around the country.
	May	In an effort to stifle the protests, tanks enter Deraa, Banias, Homs and the suburbs of Damascus. The United States and the European Union toughen sanctions against the Regime. President Assad announces an amnesty for political prisoners.
	Oct	The recently created Syrian National Council affirmed the creation of a common front in opposition of Assad's Regime. Veto by Russia and China in the UN Security Council of a resolution condemning Syria.
	Nov	The Arab League suspends Syria's membership in the organization.
	Dec	Syria supports the initiative of the Arab League to send Arab observers to the country. Suicide bombing against a security forces building in Damascus, with 44 dead. This is the first in a series of similar attacks against the Syrian military and security forces.

Syria: from civil war to regional conflict

2012	Feb	Russia and China block the proposed resolution of the Security Council on Syria. Assad intensifies the bombing of Homs and other cities. The Secretary General of the UN, Ban Ki-Moon, and the President of the Arab League, Nabil Elaraby, announce the designation of Kofi Annan as Special Joint Envoy according to the reputation of the General Assembly of the UN A/RES/66/253. The amendment to the Syrian Constitution which eliminates the primacy of the Baath Party over the State and society is approved by referendum. Both western and Arab media consider the reform to be insufficient.
	Mar	The Security Council endorses the peace plan proposed by special envoy Kofi Annan.
	Abr	The Security Council approves resolution 2043 as a basis for the United Nations Mission for the Supervision of Syria (UNSMIS) for an initial period of 90 days.
	May	The UN Security Council unanimously condemns the massacre in Hula (90 civilian deaths) condemns the use of heavy artillery against civilians and demands the persons responsible for the atrocity be brought to Justice.
	June	A Turkish combat plane is downed by Syrian anti-air defenses. Turkey changes the rules of engagement and declares that an approximation by Assad's troops to its borders will be considered a military threat. A meeting of NATO expresses its firm support of Turkey.
	July	A bombing in Damascus kills three commanders of the regime, including the President's brother-in-law and the Minister of Defense. The rebels take over Aleppo, the second largest city in Syria.
	Aug	Wave of desertions among the ranks of the regime. The UN General Assembly approves a resolution condemning Assad. President Barack Obama warns that the use of chemical weapons would provoke American military intervention in the crisis. The Arab League and the United Nations designate the Algerian diplomat Lakhdar Brahimi as the new special envoy to Syria after the resignation of Kofi Annan. Assad's troops retake Aleppo almost entirely. The UN accuses the government and the opposition of war crimes and crimes against humanity.
	Sep	The Free Syrian Army takes responsibility for two explosions in Damascus.
	Oct	Tensions rise between Syria and Turkey when mortar fire coming from Syria crosses the border killing five civilians. Turkey stops a plane reportedly carrying Russian weapons to Syria.
	Nov	Creation in Doha (Qatar) of the national coalition of the Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces.
	Dec	United States, United Kingdom, France, Turkey, and the countries of the Gulf recognize the National Coalition of the Revolutionary Forces and Syrian opposition as the legitimate representative of the Syrian people.
	Jan	Syria accuses Israel of attacking a military research center but denies that they were trucks with weaponry bound for the Lebanon.
2013	Mar	United States and United Kingdom promise non-lethal aid to the rebels.
	Apr	The United States requests an investigation on the use of chemical weapons by the Syrian Government. The head of the National Coalition, Moaz Al-Khatib, resigns.
	May	Israel and Syria exchange fire in the Golan.
	June	Syrian pro-Government forces, supported by Hezbollah, take the strategic city of Qasr.
	July	Resignation of Ghassan Hitto, leader of the opposition, due to his inability to form a Government in rebel territory.

2013	Aug	On the 21st, there is an attack with chemical weapons on civilians in a suburb of Damascus. The U.S. accuses Assad of the attack, which is considered a crime against humanity.
	Sept	President Obama seeks the approval of the US Congress to carry out an attack against Syria. European allies are divided about this possibility. Preparations for military action commence. UN inspectors report that there was an attack with chemical weapons in the Damascus neighborhood of Guouta causing 300 deaths but not say who is responsible.
	Oct	President Assad allows international inspectors to begin to destroy chemical weapons from Syria on the basis of an agreement between the United States and Russia in the heart of the CAQ. An American attack is ruled out.
	Dec	Islamist rebels seize some of the Free Syrian Army bases.
2014	Jan/ Feb	Geneva II talks fail.
	Feb	On February 16, general Salim Idriss was replaced in the leadership of the SMC by general Abdul-Ilah Bashir to Al - Noeimi,
	Mar	The Syrian army and Hezbollah forces capture Yabroud, the last rebel stronghold near the Lebanese border.
	May	Assad's forces take the city of Homs "the cradle of the revolution".
	Jun	Complete removal of the chemical arsenals of the regime. Offensive by the Islamic State in Iraq. The Iraqi regular army retreats. The Islamic State announces the creation of a Caliphate.
	Jul	On July 10, the United Nations appoint Staffan de Mistura as the new special envoy of the UN for Syria, following the resignation of Lakhdar Brahimi. On the 16th Bashar Al - Assad takes possession of the office of President for the third time and gives a defiant speech, promising to recover all of Syria from the hands of the rebels.
	Aug	President Barack Obama announces a limited military intervention against the Islamic army in northern Iraq to end the possibility of a genocide. The U.S. bombards positions of the Islamic State in Kurdistan. The Pentagon studies the possibility of extending its actions against the EI to Syrian soil.

Peace processes in Liberia and Sierra Leone: From optimism to ebola

Jorge Bolaños Martínez

Chapter six

Summary

Compared with other post-conflict situations in Africa, the peace process in Sierra Leone and Liberia has been praised by the international community for achieving a level of social and political stability that allows more ambitious expectations to be harbored regarding the future of both countries. Nevertheless, the recent outbreak of Ebola has introduced a new element of uncertainty for the immediate future of the country, in matters also closely related to the development and result of the electoral processes, such as justice reforms, governance and economic growth.

Key words

Liberia, Sierra Leone, West Africa, armed conflict, Charles Taylor, United Nations, peace process, stability, Ebola.

Introduction

Liberia and Sierra Leone are two countries which the international community, led by the United Nations, view as examples of Africa's aspirations for stabilization through the various missions undertaken on the continent by the multilateral organization. In the case of the former, constituted in the mid-nineteenth century, precisely on a territory which whetted the appetite of European colonizers, the positive evolution of this peace process also benefitted other countries in the area, like Liberia itself or the Ivory Coast, thanks – among other factors – to the deployment of international forces on the border.

Indeed, the country is managing to heal, with some success, wounds left by two periods of civil war, from 1989-1996 and 1999-2003 - the last episode so far.

Nevertheless, one cannot gloss over the tense situations which featured protest movements opposed to the Monrovia government, chaired this term by Helen Johnson Sirleaf, Head of State since the first elections after the post-conflict in 2006.

The same can be said of Sierra Leone, despite the fact that not so many incidents are being recorded beyond the North-Eastern border, and not because of the Ebola outbreak. In Sierra Leone, businessman Ernest Koroma was able to remedy the situation after snatching State power from leaders who had taken part in the internal conflict. However, political division of the country between a South-East hostile to Koroma and a North-East related to the current President could sow the seeds of clashes if tension is heightened during the prevalence of the disease.

The Ebola crisis that erupted in 2014 revived the alert on the situation in Liberia and Sierra Leone, just when the forecasts were more optimistic and their evolution on the road to democracy and stability appeared more favourable, having left behind the civil wars which had such devastating effects in both countries and with the initiation of two separate peace processes, designed and implemented by the United Nations.

The risks that spread the Ebola virus are related to the reconstruction of political stability that we mentioned above. In Liberia, the Senate elections originally planned for the month of December 2014, have suffered a postponement.

It is clear that the polling stations would become a new source of transmission of the disease, and that a population in a state of panic over the rapid spread of the virus is not in the best position to choo-



se their representatives¹ But also the delay could be used against the current political model. Similarly, new episodes of confrontation or social polarization could open the way to a feeling of distrust, which, as I write these pages, is creeping into important sectors of the population, in a region where trust in leaders is not exactly a value that is listed too high in the political debate. It is not difficult to infer that in a situation like this, there is more likelihood of social crises occurring and affecting the institutional system, which despite its shortcomings, has been settling down over the years of post-conflict.

¹ See this press report, among others: <http://www.liberianobserver.com/politics/senate-endorses-election-postponement>. Last visited 6 September 2014.



If the task of formulating forecasts and analyzing the future is always complex, it is even more so in the present circumstances, when the fragility that remained hidden behind the curtains of international intervention starts to emerge; and then the subsequent uncertainty, always the most uncomfortable fellow traveller in this kind of scenario.

With the first cases reported in December 2013, in an area of Guinea near the border with Liberia, the Ebola virus multiplied, spreading through Liberia, Sierra Leone and Nigeria. As I write these pages, the death toll due to Ebola already exceeds 2,000 people², in the most virulent outbreak of the disease since it was first identified in the Democratic Republic of Congo in 1976.³ As we shall see, the situation described is more intense

² Over 1,800 in the count published on 4 September, available at http://www.who.int/csr/don/2014_09_04_ebola/en. Last visited 9 September 2014.

³ Refer to the information page of the WHO at <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs103/en>. Last visited 9 September 2014.



in Liberia. There, the opposition to President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf has challenged government measures against the Ebola outbreak, registering violent street clashes between protesters and police units.

The picturesque, vibrant and politically active neighborhood of West Point was the scene of some of the most violent clashes with the police, resulting in some fatalities.⁴

Apart from following the same path towards reconciliation, Liberia and Sierra Leone share hundreds of miles of border, several ethnic groups

⁴ See New York Times report on this, at <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/21/world/africa/ebola-outbreak-liberia-quarantine.html?> . Last visited 22 August 2014.

with significant presence in the two countries and co-existence with a large contingent of refugees from armed conflicts in the neighborhood: Liberian refugees fled to Sierra Leone and thousands of Ivoirians who sought refuge across the Liberian border.

In terms of the economic situation, Liberians and Sierra Leoneans depend largely on their mineral (iron, gold, diamonds) and agricultural resources.



Background to the conflict

As for Liberia, its 165 year-long history has been marked by a permanent contradiction: the interests, beliefs and ideas of the North American colonizers (the love of liberty brought us here is the country's official motto) which arrived in Liberia in the nineteenth century, displacing those of the native population, who were soon subdued by the minority of 'outsiders'. It was in the 80's that the first governor, who was not a direct descendant of freed slaves, took over through a coup. In 1847, his ancestors proclaimed

med the independence of the current state, thus ending the organic link that bound it to the United States and the Colonization Society that had sponsored it.

They also brought with them a form of government and institutions, fashioned after those left behind, thousands of miles across the sea. That forced deportation, the desire to be and act like Americans in Liberia, was with time one of the causes of the conflict that arose in the last two decades of the twentieth century.

Liberia became known as 'the Lone Star' for the white one that appears in the top corner of its national flag. This symbol is in fact the most representative icon of the Whig rash of Liberian Americans. They actually founded the Liberian True Whig Party (Authentic Whig Party of Liberia), who ruled the country for over 130 years, restricting the voting rights of the indigenous population. That regime corresponded to an inbred social organization in which there was little interaction between the colonizers and the original Liberian population. The model of large plantations imported from the US complemented family inbreeding, without the 'newcomers' mixing with Liberians.

Only in the mid-twentieth century, thanks to the initiative of President William Tubman (1943-1971), was there a slight rapprochement between the two communities, and attempts made to boost economic growth to incorporate the indigenous population.⁵ But the mild reforms did not lead to significant changes. Women and 'indigenous' owners voted for the first time in 1951, which also marked the beginning of large-scale mining in the country.

The ruling elite always expressed support for the West, siding with the Allies in both world wars. In 1942, Monrovia signed an agreement with the United States, which guaranteed the supply of rubber, almost exclusively from Liberian plantations.

On the level of defense and infrastructures, the treaty, sealed by the Monrovia interview between Roosevelt and his counterpart, Barclay, was materialized in the construction of roads to ensure the transportation of rubber crops, as well as an airport and seaport which opened the capital's doors to modern international trade. Excessive rubber crop establishment, shelling from German ships and the presence of allied troops for decades had a considerable impact on the country's economy.

When military action gave way to the Cold War, cooperation between Monrovia and Washington, as well as the American presence in West Africa, its former ward, remained. From there, the CIA directed and conducted several operations to counter growing Soviet influence on the continent.

⁵ See <http://www.blackpast.org/gah/americo-liberians>. Last visited 8 August 2014.

Samuel Doe and the Civil War

The uprising led by Samuel Doe, Petty Officer belonging to the Krahn ethnic minority, marked the beginning of the conflict, which led to the country's bloody civil war. Coming from a rural area in the South-East of the country, he grew up in a poor family, who could not provide him with an education beyond primary school. He entered the army, and was an officer in the Liberian Navy when, leading a group of soldiers, dealt the blow that killed the then president, William Tolbert Jr.⁶ This politician, whose family had belonged to the ruling elite since their arrival in Liberia in the late nineteenth, had succeeded Tubman, when he died, after having been his confidant for over two decades. Although the handover was provided for in the Liberian Constitution, Tolbert was not directly elected by the citizens.

His mandate followed a line of shifting away from the Tubman pro-Western tradition, making approaches by initiating contacts with countries that were members of the Soviet bloc. Paradoxically Doe, a native, was supported by the Reagan administration when he seized power violently.⁷ Doe abolished political parties up until 1985, creating the National Democratic Party of Liberia (NDPL). The elections were probably fraudulent, with the Liberian Action Party claiming victory. Thus the climate of tension that would lead to civil war grew.⁸ Doe had no apparent reasons other than lust for power to take up arms to distribute plots between his family and fellow adventurers.

The first battles took place in 1985, after an armed group opposed to the Samuel Doe government erupted from Sierra Leone. The mutiny was put down, with the army held by the Krahn starting a brutal repression, which introduced an ethnic component. The Mano and Gio peoples in the Nimba region bordering Sierra Leone, bathed by the Mano River were the most persecuted by the followers of Doe.

Four years later, the National Patriotic Front of Liberia arose out of the Americo-Liberian alliance and the Mano and Gio ethnic groups, led by Charles Taylor. In the escalating violence that followed, thousands of people were killed by the NPFL (the Krahn and Mandingo ethnic groups mostly), which also began recruiting child soldiers⁹. The NPFL soon gained followers among those pursued by Samuel Doe, and the two sides

⁶ See <http://www.liberiapastandpresent.org/SamuelKDoe.htm>. Last visited 16 August 2014.

⁷ The story is still remembered of when Reagan, with a strong handshake, proudly introduced him as Chairman Moe of Liberia.

⁸ See the comprehensive history presented by Fred van Kraaig in his online project, «Liberia past and present» quoted in the previous footnote.

⁹ See <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/liberia-1989.htm>. Last visited 11 August 2014.

then competed in cruelty and violence. The attack on Monrovia, ECOMOG intervention and retaliation by Doe's Liberian Armed Forces (AFL) were the bloodiest episodes in this first phase of the war in which the recovery of power by the Americo-Liberians was resolved. A third fighter entered the fray: an armed group affiliated to the Gio population, NPFL off-shoot, and commanded by Prince Johnson, who carried out the murder of Doe in 1990.¹⁰

Moreover, there was overuse of natural resources such as diamonds, rubber or iron, which provided payment for weapons coming from Libya or Burkina Faso, to counter American influence.

After successively failed ceasefires, unity governments which did not rule, and episodes of violence and fighting, there was international intervention, about which we shall speak more later. And then the elections that brought the current President Johnson Sirleaf, 2011 Nobel Peace Prize winner, to power.¹¹

We don't need to insist on describing the state of infrastructures, productive capacity and institutions at the end of the war, when Liberia was under the administration of the United Nations and donor countries.

It was the skeleton of a country that was put on the table of negotiation and signing of the Accra Peace Accords in 2003.¹² From that moment, reconstruction was to begin, with some preliminary and essential conditions: the return of those who had fled the fighting and substantial improvement in their safety. Particularly in the metropolitan area of the capital, Monrovia, which were easily over one million inhabitants at the outbreak of civil war. The outer urban population assumed a prominent position at important moments in the recent history of their country - both during the period that preceded the conflict and during the peace, reconstruction, and stabilization processes. Likewise, in the recovery of entrepreneurship and economic activity, although this also continues to be the focus of social tension.

Sierra Leone

Unlike its neighbor, where the UN decided to actively maintain the mission deployed there, the multilateral organization decided to shut down its Special Mission to Sierra Leone, with the general approval of the agen-

¹⁰ We recommend the report «Meeting the hard man of Liberia», broadcast by the BBC in 2008. Information available at http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/programmes/from_our_own_correspondent/6113682.stm. Last visited 29 July 2014.

¹¹ See http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/2011/johnson_sirleaf-facts.html. Last visited 29 July 2014.

¹² Full text available at http://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/file/resources/collections/peace_agreements/liberia_08182003.pdf. Last visited 9 August 2014.

cies involved. The decision was celebrated in a ceremony praising the reconciliation forged in that country at the end of a conflict that lasted from 1991 to 1999.

Located on the borders of West Africa, and surrounded by intricate vegetation, which also acted as a natural barrier, at times, against the arrival of tribes and expansionary religious movements, its coasts were vulnerable to European vessels. Ever since the arrival of the Portuguese, Pedro da Cintra, in the fifteenth century, ships anchored near what in future would be the city of Freetown, undertook various expeditions, and from 1650, began trafficking slaves from West Africa to plantations in North America.

Freetown was the name given to the settlement that hosted groups of freed slaves, first arriving in 1787, with the protection of the British Navy, a few years before the territory became part of the Empire. Coming from different parts of the continent, those known as 'creo' carried with them the cultural baggage of their hometowns, plus the ordeal of slavery and the move to a land that was not theirs.¹³ As in Liberia, there was some tension between the indigenous ethnic groups (the largest being the Temne in the North, and the Mende in the South) and the ruling elite, both colonial and Creole.

At the end of the third decade of independence, the struggles for power between different rival factions unleashed a fierce struggle that could again only be resolved through international intervention, and had diamonds as an end and a pretext, a sinister ornament for one of the most sordid scenarios in recent African history. All this despite the absence of pre-war ethnic or religious clashes of importance, even though ethnic loyalties prevailed as a determining value, even in the government sphere.

On the other hand, Sierra Leone hosted the first university in West Africa, although its influence (as is the case in European countries) was not enough to overcome the large-scale corruption in public administration. The country came to the point of collapse, with the majority of the population doomed to endure a subsistence economy.¹⁴

In 1991, several coup attempts eventually led to the outbreak of armed conflict. With 50,000 deaths and 2.5 million displaced persons, more than half of the total population showed the serious consequences it had for

¹³ See a brief but complete historical resume of the country on the US Embassy page: <http://freetown.usembassy.gov/history2.html>. Last visited 14 August 2014.

¹⁴ See Lawrence, Michael: «Vertical integration and persistent causes of conflict in Sierra Leone». Centre for International Governance Innovation, October 2012. Available at <http://www.cigionline.org/blogs/rethinking-peacebuilding/vertical-integration-and-persistent-causes-of-conflict-sierra-leone>. Last visited 28 July 2014.

this small country.¹⁵ Political tensions strained the atmosphere while undermining the government's capacity to manage.

The liberal promise of President Joseph Saidu Momoh, maintained as sole party by the All People's Congress (APC), did not turn out to be convincing. In 1992, he was deposed and deported to Guinea, and a provisional military junta installed itself. In the 1996 elections, Alhaji Ahmad Tejan Kabbah was elected President in longed for elections with quite a few democratic guarantees.

A peace deal seemed to stop the conflict with the RUF, who had spent years chasing diamonds in the mountains and senior officials in the streets of Freetown. Meanwhile citizen militias, the army and the RUF itself engaged in relentless hostilities. In this climate, with so many armed groups controlling their share of power and resources, the peace agreement promoted by Kabbah was not viable.

After the participation of Sierra Leonean troops in the ECOMOG forces acting in Liberia, Taylor began providing weapons to rebels in the neighboring country, in order to destabilize the government and become strong in the diamond and arms trade. The Revolutionary United Front, under the command of Foday Sankoh, was one of the militant groups that managed to attract a large proportion of youth from poor areas. The RUF, which had no defined territorial or ethnic support, based its growth on coercion and threatening civilians with weapons.¹⁶

According to data collected by UNAMSIL (Special UN Mission in Sierra Leone) and UNICEF, between 6,000 and 10,000 children were compelled to take up arms, even being recruited by government forces.¹⁷

In 1997 a group of officers overthrew the elected President and formed a Board of Governors which included representatives of the RUF. Obviously, the latter seized all power in Freetown, aggravating the situation in Sierra Leone to the limit. This was the first coup in which the United Nations managed to restore the government to the deposed President, by deploying international forces.¹⁸

The gradual normalization of political life led to the subsequent creation of the Special Court for Sierra Leone, established to prosecute war crimes that had been committed in that country and which would dictate the famous sentence against Taylor.

¹⁵ See http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/sierra_leone.htm. Last visited 28 July 2014.

¹⁶ We recommend again the website on Sierra Leone at www.globalsecurity.org.

¹⁷ See <http://www.unicef.org/slcrisis>. Last visited 27 August 2014.

¹⁸ See www.refworld.org/docid/3df0dba62.html. Last visited 30 July 2014.

Current state of the conflict

In the nineteenth century the coastal regions, that cover both countries, were key to the slave trade and historical events have caused the two countries to evolve, in many aspects, in a similar way. These include the contradiction found between the colonists and freed slaves and the 'indigenous' people, and the later interactions between rebel groups during the civil wars and the international peacekeepers in the post war era.

In Sierra Leone the dissatisfaction with Koroma's government was evident when protests kicked off in the street following a law that was passed in 2013 to give more freedom of opinion and expression. Although it was a law many had been campaigning for, the opposition felt it did not go far enough.¹⁹ Since the end of the civil war there has been a call for greater openness in this area. Various journalists were jailed for expressing their opinions on the country's government, accused of insulting Koroma.²⁰ In Liberia, sceptics argue that a similar law passed in the National Assembly, in force since 2010, has not changed anything in terms of press freedom and expression. In fact, one of the moments that best exemplified the lack of faith most citizens had in the law, was the arrest of Rodney Sieh, editor of Front Page Africa, one of the country's main newspapers.²¹

However, if passing this law avoids more arrests, and at the same time allows unfavourable opinion of the authorities to become more common place, the fears of the opposition will be quelled. It is also an important step towards a stronger democracy.

The after effects of the prolonged civil war continue to be felt in society today and every now and then surface with tensions between the current major political parties. An example of the type of action that can put an end to any stability still being established was the boycott by the Congress for Democratic Change (CDC), lead by Winston Tubman in 2011, during the second round of presidential elections, in which Johnson Sirleaf was finally re-elected. Tubman accused her of trying to create a one-party state. The result of the first round of elections, witnessed by a significant number of international observers, saw a lead of 11 percent for Sirleaf (44 percent as opposed to the 33 that CDC achieved).²²

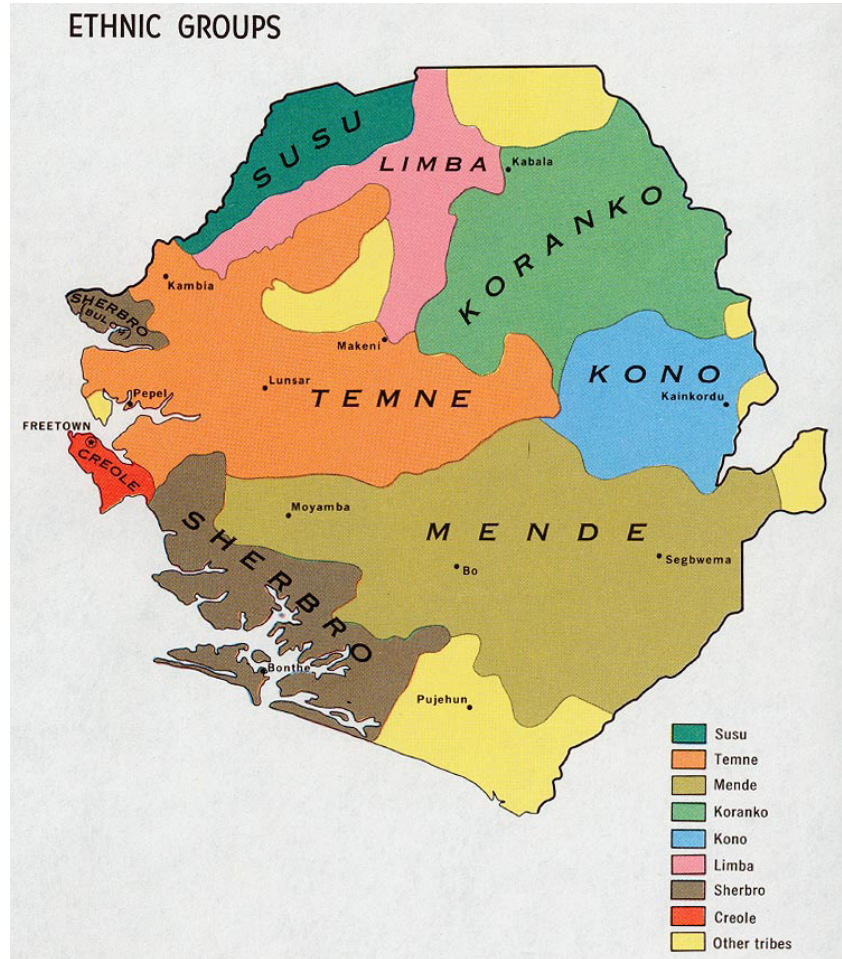
¹⁹ See VRAGOVICH, Amanda: «Sierra Leone: freedom of information is one thing, freedom of speech is another», Think Africa Press, 7 November 2013. Available at <http://thinkafricapress.com/sierra-leone/foi-vs-foe-liberia-press-freedom>. Last visited 9 August 2014.

²⁰ See <http://www.freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-press>. Last visited 11 August 2014.

²¹ Taken ill in prison, he was released by the Justice Minister, but was away from his post for 6 months.

²² Among others, see this article published in The Guardian, at <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/nov/06/liberia-presidential-election-boycott-call>. Last visited 8 August 2014.

Once the armed struggle had ended, all efforts were focused on reducing the great rift between a clearly divided society, although more time is needed to close this definitively, or at least, for it not to threaten the continuity of the State and its most basic social institutions.



The trial of Charles Taylor

The international community is confident that the exemplary sentence passed by the Special Court for Sierra Leone in The Hague against ex President Charles Taylor goes some way to consolidate stability and peace, in a process that was key to the future of Liberia. The former president faces 50 years in prison for aiding and abetting war crimes committed by his loyal forces during the long conflict, the first jail sentence that the

Supreme Court for International Justice has passed against a former president.²³

The court considered that the ex CIA's agent in Africa had abused his position as President of Liberia and his presence on the Committee of Five of ECOWAS in order to defend and promote the war crimes committed in Sierra Leone.

Taylor became the main ally to the Revolutionary United Front and is a model example of a «warlord» who, abusing his power and influence, managed to destabilize a number of countries, confronting governments and armed groups for his own advantage.²⁴ It is important the prisoner is kept away from Liberian territory, to avoid his influence causing any new clashes in the country; as could happen in the Ivory Coast depending on the verdict and final sentence passed against the ex President Laurent Gbagbo.

Sirleaf's role in the reconciliation

At the beginning of this chapter we referred to the re-election, in 2011, of the current President Sirleaf when the leader of the main opposition decided to turn his back on the elections. Although she still enjoys a wide margin of popular support, the percentage of votes fell, and remained below the 40 percent mark.²⁵ Signs of political division relate to the essential question in any reconstruction process following an internal war: the demobilisation of armed groups and the reintegration of former combatants into civilian life. It is essential all is done to resolve these issues, because during a phase of social tension with the presence of armed factions, capable of mobilising themselves and easily obtaining arms, the conflict can flare up again. If we add to this the withdrawal of international contingents that had been present and supported the peace process, there is a high risk of violent episodes occurring.

All the while there is no economic recovery and work cannot be created, the members of armed groups have less incentive to participate in the reconstruction of the country as peaceful citizens.

Regarding disarmament and demobilisation, according to data collected by the United Nations, over 100,000 former combatants have voluntarily

²³ See FERNÁNDEZ TRESGUERRES, José A: «Charles Ghankay Taylor: primer Jefe de Estado condenado por un tribunal penal internacional». Instituto Español de Estudios Estratégicos, Documento Marco nº 17, December 2012. Available at http://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs_marco/2012/DIEEEM17-2012_Juicio_CharlesTaylor_Tresguerres.pdf. Last visited 29 July 2014.

²⁴ See <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/apr/26/charles-taylor-guilty-war-crimes>. Last visited 10 August 2014.

²⁵ See <http://www.necliberia.org/results2011>. Last visited 4 August 2014.

disarmed. However, only half the arms (some 27,000), of those that were calculated to have been in use at the end of the war, have been handed in. Therefore tens of thousands of small arms will continue to be in the hands of ex-fighters, or sold to factions in neighbouring countries.²⁶

There is evidence that something similar happened after the international intervention that ended the civil war in Sierra Leone. A flow of fighters crossed to the other side of the border, to join the armed conflicts that were taking place there. This also occurred when Liberian militants were found to be participating in the Ivory Coast conflict in 2011, using the structure and resources of factions that had decided not to demobilise.

The UN Secretary General has observed a lack of cohesion in the political system, shown by conflicts and tensions arising when choosing leaders and candidates.²⁷ This happened in the Congress for Democratic Change (CDC) set up to promote the presidential nomination of the footballer George Weah. The popularity that he still enjoys, thanks to his participation in the European football elite, has attracted a large number of Liberia's youth to the CDC party, particularly in Monrovia and other cities.²⁸ While we wait to see how he resolves problems at the top, the CDC is at risk of basing their work on one of the traditional vices that has led so many countries into bloody civil war: lack of impartiality and power struggles over the party's identity.

In 2011 the CDC obtained 32 percent of votes, an encouraging result to substitute Sirleaf, who cannot stand for re-election having already served two terms in office. The negative aspect of those elections was the protests and clashes between Weah supporters and police.²⁹ In the meantime, the Governing party endeavoured to name a successor to Sirleaf who could achieve the «united» conviction of once again 'sweeping' aside their opponents in the next presidential elections. Although in 2014 many have left the party, with the resignation of senators and some counties losing important figures.³⁰

While the final date for the Senate elections is still to be announced, initially planned for autumn 2014, some of the first preparatory stages in the electoral calendar had not yet been completed, even before the Ebola outbreak

²⁶ See <http://www.irinnews.org/report/50857/liberia-where-are-the-weapons-is-disarmament-really-working>. Last visited 28 July 2014.

²⁷ See the Secretary General reports 27 and 28 (2014) at http://www.un.org/es/peacebuilding/doc_liberia.shtml. Last visited 20 August 2014.

²⁸ See, among others, this article published by Front Page, at <http://www.frontpageafricaonline.com/index.php/politic/1598-disorder-in-cdc-liberia-s-main-opposition-divided-over-2017>. Last visited 1 August 2014.

²⁹ See <http://www.theliberianjournal.com/index.php?st=news&sbst=details&rid=2378>. Last visited 31 July 2014.

³⁰ See this analysis in the Liberian press at <http://www.gnnliberia.com/articles/2014/07/03/liberia-resignation-overwhelms-unity-party-ahead-2017-elections-senator-momo>. Last visited 10 August 2014.

in the country. In some regions the electoral census had not been finished, a process that should have been completed by April 2014, with scarce financial resources being cited as the official reason behind this.³¹

The development of electoral processes is closely linked to the issue of security, more or less essential depending on how events unfold. There is a difficult balance between decentralisation and the risk of new exacerbated ethnic divisions, also bearing in mind that the territorial structure is organised around the majority ethnic grouping in each area. In the hypothetical event of instability, with violent outbreaks, the security forces have to work in a climate of uncertainty. The United Nations is worried about the persistent violence linked to common crimes, sexual abuse (high incidence of rape) and the active presence of vigilantes.³²

Greater stability in Sierra Leone

Post-conflict stability is more advanced in Liberia's northern neighbour, Sierra Leone. The protests that happened at the beginning of 2014 in the main mining areas were unusual, reviving the strong clashes seen years before between miners and police forces, which resulted in fatalities. The organisation Human Rights Watch highlighted the fact that the rise in mining activity, specifically the extraction of iron, gold and diamonds, is increasing social conflict and cases of human rights violations.³³ Workers complained about being forced to move to purpose built housing in particular areas, as well as demanding better working conditions.

Considering the high level of unemployment and poverty, both very pronounced despite the laws that President Koroma has tried to establish, there are reasons to be optimistic. Although no one can afford to lower their guard, especially regarding the country's political and institutional future.

In terms of modernising the armed forces, the presence of Sierra Leonean units in Somalia has helped to improve the army's image, and at the same time, working alongside the military from other countries has re-enforced their professionalism, gaining them experience in conflict resolution operations.

The 2012 elections, the third since the end of the civil war, were a success.³⁴ President Ernest Koroma still had a lot of support from the popu-

³¹ See «Liberia road to elections 2017», New Africa Magazine, 24 July 2014. Available at <http://newafricanmagazine.com/liberias-road-elections-2017>. Last visited 31 July 2014.

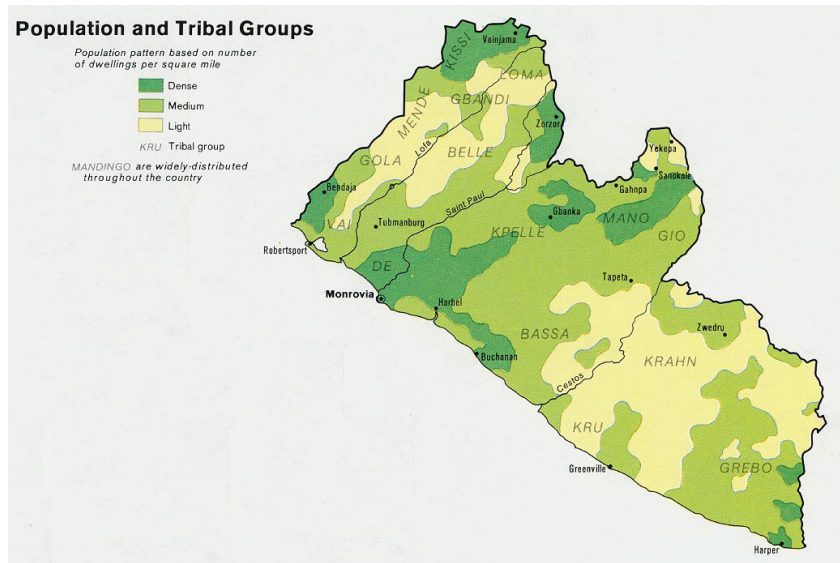
³² UN SECRETARY GENERAL: Reports 27 (February 2014) and 28 (August 2014). Links to the complete text at <http://www.un.org/es/sc/documents/sgreports/2014.shtml>. Last visited 24 August 2014.

³³ See HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH. «Human Rights abuse in Sierra Leone Mining boom», February 2014. Available at <http://www.hrw.org/news/2014/02/19/sierra-leone-mining-boom-brings-rights-abuses>. Last visited 21 August 2014.

³⁴ See http://www.nec-sierraleone.org/Election_Results.html. Last visited 29 July 2014.

lation, enabling him to change the complex laws that then allowed him to remain in office to serve a third term.³⁵

Many of the political parties suffer from problems previously seen in Liberia, mainly concerning internal power struggles for leadership, succession or the control of financial power linked to irregular dealings, as much within the government as in the opposition Popular Party of Sierra Leone. The Anticorruption Commission is kept busy working to resolve these issues. Politically, there is a clear divide in the country, the eastern and southern regions being the most hostile towards Koroma.³⁶



The Ebola crisis

In March 2014, just three months after the first cases of infection were confirmed in Guinea, fear started spreading through the neighbouring countries. When summer arrived, the news was full of headlines and stories about cases of the virus and its spread. Fear soon turned to panic and the critics turned their attention to the actions of the affected governments and on the reaction of the international community faced with the progression of the illness.

Regarding the measures adopted by the authorities, people objected to a rather repressive approach, instead of a strategy to contain the epidemic. Many shared a reproach for the government's indecision and the delay in dealing with the gravity of the outbreak.

³⁵ See the report Sierra Leone Assessment, by Jane's in their series Sentinel Scrutiny Assessments, February 2014.

³⁶ See the Jane's report, Sierra Leone Assessment. Op. Cit.

The establishment of quarantine areas was actually the most controversial. On the one hand it was recommended and applauded by those who defended its efficiency at containing the virus, but on the other hand many questioned the effects on the population confined to these areas.

Due to access roads being closed, many crops were ruined because the products could not be transported to their point of sale. The normal supply of goods was also interrupted, causing serious difficulties for people needing basic essential items. Also some items to do with the illness were affected (disinfectant soap).

In Liberia a curfew was imposed and this decision actually caused more tensions.³⁷ In fact, the disturbances in West Point broke out as the area felt closed in and isolated. Densely populated, the bustling neighbourhood is nestled in a small peninsula, making it feel even more suffocating for its inhabitants if the land access is cut off and people are not allowed to move into other areas of the city. The most optimistic forecasts given by the WHO (at the end of August 2014), state it will be six to nine months before the illness can be controlled. Places like West Point could become a source of instability and conflict, with consequences lasting longer than the Ebola outbreak itself. Actually, during the protests the residents of West Point came under live gunfire from the security forces.³⁸

Closing the borders made the feeling of isolation worse. The cities of Guéckédou (Guinea) and Lofa (Liberia) still have an active supply chain, with transport constantly crossing the river that separates Guinea's large city and the small neighbouring one.

Some sectors have demanded more effective action where health is concerned, especially in terms of preventing the illness where there have not yet been any cases of infection.

The temporary cancellation of a number of air routes, connecting affected countries with Europe was very controversial, and is one of the more extreme examples of the dilemma between the knee jerk reaction to distance oneself from the source of infection and the populations need for humanitarian aid and medical assistance.

The outbreak also brought to light some political-social issues. For example, the health authorities came under criticism for not being more flexible in adapting their actions to rituals and customs, which, in theory, could be catalysts to the spread of the virus. Many were reduced to mere prohibitions and orders, like the recommendation to avoid the popular and common African greeting (shaking of hands).

³⁷ See <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-28862591>.

³⁸ See <http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2014/08/18/why-the-escape-of-numerous-ebola-patients-in-liberias-worst-slum-is-so-terrifying>. Last visited 19 August 2014.

In the meantime Sierra Leone's government decided to make it illegal for families to hide ill patients in their houses, by way of a law punishable by up to two years in prison. The government of Freetown wanted to penalise any rejection and distrust that many citizens felt towards the medical treatment of Ebola.³⁹

Fear of being stigmatised or of reprisals, religious beliefs, rejection of isolation, these are some of the factors that explain why many families affected in these four countries preferred to stay silent and bury their dead next to their homes. In fact it is funeral rituals that have contributed to the spread of the virus. In West Africa the dead bodies of family members are washed before burial.

Some analysts point out the differences they have seen with the Ebola outbreak in Uganda and Sudan in 2000. For the editor of *African Arguments*, the most important stems from the cultural differences between both regions, as well as the speed with which the Kampala authorities contained the illness.⁴⁰

Role of external actors

The United States

1864 officially marks the beginning of diplomatic bilateral relations, after the consolidation of independence. Washington retained a firm intention of intervening in Liberian internal affairs whenever situations of conflict arose.

The descendents of the freed slaves viewed the U.S as their natural ally due to their shared history, whereas on the other side the ocean there was more a feeling of patronage towards the small African country.

The CIA installed their African headquarters in Monrovia. It is abundantly clear that the roots of the Liberian conflict originated in the tense decades of the Cold War, and the strategic moves of the warring factions.⁴¹ Those close diplomatic relations between the U.S and Liberia soured until the peacekeeping process opened the way for the holding of democratic elections. The Liberian-Americans felt abandoned and misused by the U.S,⁴² and a feeling of despair took hold of those leading the country.⁴³ This was especially true considering Reagan's support of Doe, who didn't

³⁹ See <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-28914791>.

⁴⁰ Analysis by Richard Dowden available at <http://africanarguments.org/2014/08/20/ebola-what-west-africa-could-learn-from-uganda>. Last visited 29 August 2014.

⁴¹ See KRAMER, Reed: «Liberia: A Casualty of the Cold War's End». *Africa Notes* 795, Centre for Strategic and International Studies, July 1995. Available from http://csis.org/files/publication/anotes_0795_0.pdf. Last visited 25 August 2014.

⁴² See NEAJAI, Robtel: «The need to retool Liberia relationship with the US», *The Third World Resurgence* n° 257-258, January-February 2012. Available at TWN Twin World Network, last visited 22 August 2012.

⁴³ See <http://media.washingtonpost.com/wp-adv/specialsales/international/spotlight/liberia/article2.html>. Last visited 26 August 2014.

come from American stock. The United States also held a prominent role in the UNMIL, they not only sent aid provisions of forces and equipment, but donated over a billion American dollars.^{44 45}

In 2010 the Monrovia authorities officially regained control of their Armed Forces, after nearly a decade of international intervention in the country. U.S Forces have actively participated in training the Liberian Army, as well as supplying weaponry and ammunition.⁴⁶ Improving the professionalism of the Liberian Army remains a number one priority for the U.S, together with issues of governance, such as increasing transparency within state institutions or the independence of the legal system. Drug trafficking in the region still remains one of the major concerns of the U.S administration.⁴⁷

Sierra Leone

The same prominence that Liberia enjoyed in U.S foreign policy was not attained by Sierra Leone, lacking as they did historical ties. Nonetheless, both countries retain close relations due to the migratory movements of Sierra Leone's population, who partly come from the freed slaves returned to Africa at the end of the XVIII Century. Several tens of thousands of emigrants from this country currently reside in the U.S.

Relations between Freetown and Washington are friendly since the formalising of bilateral ties with independency in 1961, with cooperation and commerce both flourishing. The U.S participated in the prominent international mission in Sierra Leone during its civil war, as well as peace keeping and the rebuilding of its institutions. Most noteworthy is the U.S contribution to the establishment of the Special Court of Sierra Leone, to uphold the law on war crimes and crimes against humanity committed during the country's 11-year-long civil war.

The achievements of Sierra Leone in areas such as political cooperation, support of electoral processes, the increase in citizen participation in political issues and the recovery of human and material capabilities in Sierra Leone's Armed Forces are highlighted by the U.S.⁴⁸

The country's trade flows follow much the same pattern as with Liberia: agricultural products, minerals and metals cross the Atlantic, leaving the country heading West, while chemical supplies, machinery, and transport

⁴⁴ <http://monrovia.usembassy.gov/history.html>.

⁴⁵ <http://monrovia.usembassy.gov/history.html>. Last visited 24 August 2014.

⁴⁶ See <http://www.africom.mil/Newsroom/Article/6526/us-marines-soldiers-and-sailors-join-with-liberian>.

⁴⁷ Documents relating to bilateral relations can be sourced at the following link: <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/6618.htm>. Last visited 24 August 2014.

⁴⁸ See <http://www.africom.mil/newsroom/article/8709/us-army-africa-partners-with-sierra-leone-armed-forces>.

are all imported. In contrast to Liberia, there are no investment treaties nor customs cooperation agreements between the two.⁴⁹

Ecowas

The 1981 treaty signed in Freetown by The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) was aimed at promoting the so-called ECOMOG (the West African peacekeeping mission). It was finally set up in 1990 to intervene in the civil war that threatened to tear Liberia apart. Nigeria provided most of the military and economic resources, though Gambia, Sierra Leone and Ghana also participated. Some 4000 forces were initially deployed to neutralize the numerous armed militias and confront the main cause of the conflict, the guerrilla group NPFL. By the time the operation drew to a close in 1997,⁵⁰ more than 12.000 forces had taken part in the ECOWAS mission in Liberia.⁵¹

Confronted with a full-scale civil war, ECOMOG was mandated to maintain law and peace. By confining ECOMOG to the political and humanitarian sphere, part of the controversy that had always surrounded ECOWAS was resolved. In the Liberian crisis the sub regional organisation acted in common agreement with UNOMIL, the United Nations mission deployed in the country. The arrival of this new player significantly reduced hostilities, with a notable decrease in ethnic killings.

Human rights organisations however point out that ECOMOG never integrated human rights protection and promotion into its activities, thereby undermining its own creditability and ability to bring peace.⁵²

The deployment of ECOWAS was the second occasion in which a regional organisation would send military units to mediate in a conflict. The first was in Chad, on a mission deployed by the African Union.

The last two essential phases of consolidating the rebuilding of Liberia and Sierra Leone involved the economy and the military, the latter with ECOWAS representatives in command of the Liberian Army.

The last phase of this intervention in Liberia coincided with ECOWAS deploying military units in 1997 in the conflict of Sierra Leone. The coup d'état in Freetown saw President Kabbah temporarily ousted from power.

⁴⁹ More information at <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5475.htm>. Last visited 19 August 2014.

⁵⁰ See news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/country_profiles/2364029.stm. Last visited 16 August 2014.

⁵¹ Recommend Ghana's Armed Forces website on ECOMOG, at http://www.gaf.mil.gh/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&layout=blog&id=25&Itemid=59. Last visited 17 August 2014.

⁵² HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH: Waging War to Keep the Peace: The ECOMOG Intervention and Human Rights. Human Rights Reports, June de 1993. Read the whole text at <http://www.hrw.org/reports/1993/liberia/> Last visited 18 August 2014.

He was soon reinstated with the military intervention of ECOWAS and the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL).

The Sierra Leone and Liberia interventions helped ECOWAS learn key lessons that subsequently shaped future military and diplomatic interventions in conflicts in the subregion,⁵³ notwithstanding the obvious and indubitable problems and difficulties that assailed the United Nations and ECOWAS in the Sierra Leonean conflict.⁵⁴

Joint operations between subregional African organisations and the United Nations were improved as a result of ECOWAS intervention, mainly in Sierra Leone, though there is still some way to go.

When news of the Ebola virus outbreak first hit, the initial reaction of the member states was one of panic, with border closures and strict travel bans. The World Health Organisation (WHO) and similar international bodies called for the bans to be lifted, claiming they harmed efforts to contain the deadly virus. Governments began to rectify and reinforce preventative measures in place of decreeing absolute isolation. ECOWAS convened an emergency summit to discuss how to prevent the Ebola virus from spreading and allay public fears.⁵⁵

With the removal of political obstacles, ECOWAS would arguably have the capacity to become an essential player in the resolution of conflicts within its sphere of influence. Political, personal or ethnic rivalry between governments, and a certain mutual distrust towards ECOWAS as a mediator remain the greatest challenges to be faced. These structural weaknesses undermine the cohesion of this sub regional organisation.⁵⁶

The United Nations

These conflicts, stretching over three decades, have witnessed the shift in UN field operations from traditional missions to complex multi-dimensional missions, which, at the same time echo how the nature of the conflicts themselves, has changed. UN peace keeping, originally developed as a

⁵³ See ARTHUR, PETER: «Africa: Lessons for the Future» *Africa Today*, vol. 57, n° 2, winter 2010. Pp. 3-24. Available at http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/africa_today/summary/v057/57.2.arthur.html. Last visited 19 August 2014.

⁵⁴ Some of these disadvantages are analyzed in ENUKA, CHUKA: «United Nations and ECOWAS Joint Intervention in Sierra-Leonean Conflict: An Analysis of the Problems of Peacekeeping, Peacemaking and Peace Enforcement». Summary available at http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2172708. Last visited 17 August 2014.

⁵⁵ See <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-28977134>. Last visited 31 August 2014.

⁵⁶ See DÍEZ ALCALDE, J. «¿Qué es la CEDEAO? Fortalezas y debilidades para enfrentar el conflicto de Mali». Analysis paper 11-2013, Instituto Español de Estudios Estratégicos. Available at http://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs_analisis/2013/DIEEEA11-2013_CEDEAO_Mali_FortalezayDebilidades_JDA_.pdf. Last visited 16 August 2014.

means of dealing with inter-State conflict was increasingly being applied to intra-State conflicts and civil wars.⁵⁷ Liberia y Sierra Leona both experienced this new model of international peace keeping. Mass violence caused by ethnic rivalry, protection of minority population groups persecuted by rivals, security forces at the disposition of the warring factions, weapon supplies financed smuggling and trafficking. Gifra Durall comments «some of these conflicts take place in states that don't have the capacity or will to control and restrain the said groups (...) In the same way, combat does not take place in war zones, but in schools or houses, so that civil victims have ceased to be accidental».⁵⁸

The Security Council created UNOL in 1997 (United Nations Peace-building Support Office in Liberia), to take over from UNOMIL (United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia)⁵⁹. Observers collaborated with ECOWAS and the transitional government in Liberia, in applying the measures established in the peace agreement that ended the civil war.

UNOL remained active until 2004 with the reconciliation of Liberian society, together with the rebuilding of the country and the recovery of the economy as its focal point.

Resolution 1509/2003 of the United Nations ratified the intervention in the conflict with the deployment of an international mission, without taking into account whether the situation of the country would allow the cessation of hostilities. The initiatives detailed in the Peace Agreement signed in Ghana, also in 2003, were applied.⁶⁰ The most urgent tasks were protecting the civil population, offering humanitarian assistance, and avoiding violations of human rights by the warring factions.

The process of modernization, reform and democratization of the Police and Armed Forces were outlined, following the criteria detailed in the Reform of the Security Sector.

Before the UNMIL could even complete its work, the United Nations was already heralding it as an example of what could be achieved through working together for a clear common cause, even when the peace process

⁵⁷ See <http://www.un.org/es/peacekeeping/operations/surge.shtml>. Last visited 9 August 2014.

⁵⁸ See also GIFRA DURALL, J. «20 años de operaciones de paz de Naciones Unidas como instrumento de protección humanitaria», Opinion Document 86 2011, Instituto Español de Estudios Estratégicos. Available at http://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs_opinion/2011/DIEEE086-2011VeinteAnosOperacionesPaz_JuliaGifra.pdf&rct. Last visited 12th August 2014.

⁵⁹ Information at <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/past/unomil.htm>. Last visited 7 August 2014.

⁶⁰ Read the whole text of the treaty at http://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/file/resources/collections/peace_agreements/liberia_08182003.pdf. Last visited 22 August 2014.

seemed very challenging. In 2008, Ban Ki-moon highlighted the Liberian Government's efforts towards peace and the fight against impunity.⁶¹

United Nations recognised, through The 2066/2012 Resolution of the Security Council passed in September 2012, that lasting stability in Liberia would require well functioning, accountable and sustainable government institutions including security and rule of law sectors to avoid a repetition of past violence.⁶² The Resolution encourages the Liberian Government and the UNMIL to address the critical gaps that need to be filled to ensure a smooth transition, promote human rights and reconciliation, assess security challenges, strengthen democratic institutions and extend state authority.

Likewise the document urges transparency and accountability in managing the country's natural resources, and notes with concern the slow progress made on the issue of land ownership. The implementation of core benchmarks for the police force and the implementation of a national security strategy are also essential within the drawdown phase of the UNMIL.

UNMIL's military strength is reduced from seven infantry battalions to four, with related enablers. To date, there is a force 3.750 strong, while police numbers have increased by more than 400, reaching the total of 1.795.

The following year saw the passing of Resolution 2128/2013, on 10th December, which stressed the need to ensure Liberia's borders are effectively controlled.⁶³ Furthermore, gathering measures from various resolutions passed between 2004 and 2010, it reaffirms and renews the restrictions relating to shipments of lethal arms into the country, stating that the Liberian Government has the responsibility of notifying in advance, with details of technical specifications, end user, supplier and itinerary.

UNMIL's lasting presence in the country lent credence to the general perception that international troops will continue to play a fundamental role in the stabilization of the country.

Sierra Leone (UNANSIL)

These letters correspond to the abbreviations of the international mission deployed by the Security Council in the territory of Sierra Leone be-

⁶¹ Read the whole text at <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2008/sgsm11535.doc.htm>. Last visited 24 August 2014.

⁶² Read the whole text on Resolution 2066/2012 at [http://www.un.org/es/comun/docs/?symbol=S/RES/2066\(2012\)](http://www.un.org/es/comun/docs/?symbol=S/RES/2066(2012)). Last visited 8 August 2014.

⁶³ See [http://www.un.org/es/comun/docs/?symbol=S/RES/2128\(2013\)](http://www.un.org/es/comun/docs/?symbol=S/RES/2128(2013)). Last visited 8 August 2014.

tween 1999 and December 31st of 2005.⁶⁴ Based on the Peace Agreement of Lomé, it aimed for the disarmament and demobilization of the various guerillas and future reintegration of their members into civilian life. In August of 2005, following the completion of various successive enlargements of the mission, the Security Council deemed those satisfactory and opted to replace them with UNIOSIL (United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone) in 2006 pursuant to resolution 1620/2005.⁶⁵ This renewed international presence was meant to consolidate peace and promote stability.⁶⁶ In compliance with the United Nations guidelines regarding this type of missions, various programmes designed to modernize the State's security forces as well as those implemented to strengthen electoral processes and democratic institutions, power and the administration of justice account for UNIOSIL's main tasks.

Collaboration with other regional missions was another objective so as to limit weapon and human trafficking in addition to the smuggling of resources vital for the economy at the borders of the country. Finally, in 2008, the Council approved the deployment of UNIPSIL (United Nations Integrated Peace-building Office in Sierra Leone),⁶⁷ pursuant to resolution 1829 2008.⁶⁸ Upon reaching satisfactory levels of stability, the Council looked to normalize and improve institutions and electoral processes. It valued the level of professionalization reached by the armed and police forces that were considered capable of carrying out their functions within a democratic institutional framework.

Nevertheless, the Council warned of the need to remain vigilant in case of any increased social tension and monitoring the compliance of human rights, justice and the rule of law.

The European Union

As analyzed in previous editions of the Geopolitical Overview of Conflicts, the situation in West Africa has been generating growing concern in Brussels for the past few years. The spread of jihadism from the Sahel towards the West, instability or crises that occur in countries that produce hydrocarbons, migratory pressure or the strengthe-

⁶⁴ More information at <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/past/unamsil/facts.html>. Last visited 9 August 2014.

⁶⁵ See <http://www.acnur.org/biblioteca/pdf/3838.pdf?view=1>. Last visited 6 August 2014.

⁶⁶ More information at <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2005/sc8487.doc.htm>. Last visited 8 August 2014.

⁶⁷ <http://unipsil.unmissions.org/Default.aspx?tabid=9613&language=en-US>. Last visited 9 August 2014.

⁶⁸ Can be read by accessing http://unipsil.unmissions.org/portals/unipsil/media/documents/scres/SCRes201829_202008.pdf. Last visited on 8 August 2014.

ning of macro criminal organizations together with high levels of institutional corruption, have become the acquis of the European Union's foreign policy.

Consequently, the EU has launched various initiatives to boost economic and institutional cooperation so as to gain weight in the most sensitive regions of Africa in terms of security. Its presence also aims at counterbalancing the actions of other international actors which economic and political interests in Africa have become evident.

The EU and the government of Freetown therefore decided to sign (the procedure in place to designate programs may eventually be modified) the National Indicative Program that received funding reaching 376 million Euros. The goals of this initiative include sustainable farming and food safety that complement two additional objectives of a more political kind such as the improvement of governance and of the educational sector.⁶⁹

The EU will continue to participate with regards to the implementation of measures concerning the Security Sector Reform thus playing a role in the institutional and political evolution of those countries since the devastating effects of civil wars and the proximity of the Gulf of Guinea and the Sahel are a concern for the security of Europe.

In short, Brussels will support Sierra Leone to help the country enter a phase of comprehensive growth so as to reduce income, employment, educational or political and economic gaps of participation which have impeded any opportunities for development in the last decades.⁷⁰

Cooperation to improve infrastructures and the provision of essential services to citizens is one of the main goals that would contribute to supporting the measures outlined by the Government of Sierra Leone in its so-called Agenda for Change.⁷¹

The EU's foreign policy regarding Liberia is roughly the same as for Sierra Leone. The main programs and objectives are indicated in the Blue Book Europe-Liberia published in 2012⁷² in which Europe's policies in terms of cooperation are criticized arguing that measures implemented are too conceptual and slowly and occasionally not put in practice.

⁶⁹ See http://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/sierra_leone/documents/press_corner/20140820_1_sierra_leone_signed_nip_en.pdf. Last visited 21 August 2014.

⁷⁰ See http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/where/acp/country-cooperation/sierra-leone/sierraleone_en.htm. Last visited on 19 August 2014.

⁷¹ The basic lines are indicated on the following web page http://ec.europa.eu/development/icenter/repository/scanned_sl_csp10_en.pdf. Last visited 20 August 2014.

⁷² The full text can be accessed on the following web page http://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/liberia/documents/page_content/eu_blue_book_en.pdf. Last visited 13 August 2014.

On another hand, the European Union showed its great concern with regards to the expansion of the Ebola virus in those two countries. Its relative proximity to the infection's outbreak and the constant movement of people between the two banks led Brussels to raise the alarm. Europe aligned with local authorities and emergency measures taken to contain the crisis and for this reason, approved a provision of funds to be allocated for this purpose.⁷³

Spain

The main lines of the Spanish foreign policy concerning these two countries do not differ from Brussels'. The geo-strategic interest that led Spain to act in the region of the Gulf of Guinea is stated in the National Security Strategy of the country. As a result of this, in July 2014, the Ministry of Defense announced the deployment of military operations in the Sahel and the Gulf of Guinea carried out jointly with other contingents of the European Union.⁷⁴

Conclusions and perspectives for the future

Reasons for the international community to applaud the progress made throughout the last decade towards establishing peace and stability in these countries are evident. The reconstruction of these two countries -which is still in its initial phase- carried out by the various peace-keeping missions has fulfilled the United Nations' expectations. The demobilization of fighters has allowed the reduction of the presence of armed groups and their impact in both territories with Liberia showing slightly greater signs of violence and civil insecurity.

Since the end of hostilities, elections have taken place successfully meaning that the political situation is more satisfactory than in other post-conflict countries. The ex-President and war lord Taylor, one of the greatest responsible for the extreme violence and cruelty that characterized the Liberian conflict has been condemned by the International Criminal Court.

Despite these positive circumstances, the future of Liberia and Sierra Leone remains uncertain. Risks and threats, more or less dormant, could affect the process of reconciliation.

In Liberia, peace and stability greatly depends on the presence of the international mission currently in place in its territory. The United Na-

⁷³ See http://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/liberia/press_corner/all_news/news/2014/20140815_1_en.htm. Last visited 24 August 2014.

⁷⁴ <http://www.elmundo.es/espana/2014/07/09/53bd7a1f268e3ebe188b4571.html>.

tions will need to set a date to dismantle the UNMIL in a fairly short-term. This is when the citizens of Liberia will recuperate their full powers and become fully in charge of their future. This entails the need to generate capacities to face risks and threats more or less successfully. This is particularly important with regards to the justice administration which will need to adopt values such as impartiality and neutrality. This also means that reforms in the security sector must guarantee professionalism and efficiency. Economic growth will then be attainable which should benefit other vast sectors of the population which face poverty and unemployment and for which illegal trafficking or violence are profitable alternatives.

Likewise, significant efforts to encourage the cohabitation and rapprochement of social sectors that were once opposed will be necessary. Given this particular context, the responsibility of those that will manage the country's transition towards a full self-government is quintessential particularly in Liberia.

Opponents' authoritarian demonstrations and restrictions of rights and freedom in Sierra Leone and Liberia are of great concern. This is particularly evident in the case of the Liberian Armed Forces. Upon completion of the mission of the military personnel sent by the United Nations, the government will face the challenge of enabling its army to continue acting in compliance with parameters established by the international missions and banishing vindictive practices, abuses of power and corruption or the violation of the fundamental rights of citizens. Abuses of power, restricted political freedom and other forms of pressure against those who defend different political ideas will no longer be seen. This may sound too optimistic but the conditions to enable such a situation may well be put in place.

However, this process requires the resolute involvement of opposing forces especially with regards to the definite dismantling of armed groups and the firm intention to banish violence.

The processes to designate new representatives voted by the people are of the utmost importance in post-conflict situations in the sense that these elections may lead to another crisis. Given this possible uncertainty in Liberia, governments and opposition parties should double their efforts to ensure elections take place successfully especially in 2017 when voting for the President.

As seen previously, the populations of Liberia and Sierra Leone will face another threat in the future which is the propagation of the Ebola virus which has reached alarming figures in the region. If Johnson Sirleaf manages to contain the chaos and instability caused by the Ebola outbreak, the country will have progressed greatly. Social tensions will need to be

controlled, the opposition consulted in the decision-making process, the basic needs covered and the economic activity boosted.

The severity of the disease pushes to the background other highly relevant aspects such as constitutional reforms, the will for a credible reform of land ownership or the implementation of a reliable and efficient justice system.

Chronology

Liberia

1943: William Tubman is elected President of the Republic.

1944: Liberia declares war to the Axis powers.

1951: Native owners and women vote for the first time.

1971: Death of William Tubman. William Tolbert Jr. Becomes the new President.

1974: Liberia accepts the help of the Soviet Union for the first time.

1979: An increase in the price of rice causes riots followed by various deaths.

1980: Samuel Doe stages a coup d'État. President Tolbert and various ministers are assassinated.

1985: After permitting the activity of political parties, Doe wins presidential elections that showed no signs of democratic safeguards.

1090: Attack of the newly-founded FPNL led by Charles Taylor against Samule Doe's government.

1990: The CEDEAO sends peacekeeping forces to Liberia. Doe is executed by a breakaway faction of the FPNL.

1991: Failure of a national unity government instigated by the CEDEAO.
- Taylor's forces attack the international African contingent. The CE-DEAO troops manage to defeat the offensive and expel rebels from Monrovia.

1994: A dismantling schedule is established.

1995: Signing of a peace agreement.

1996: New armed groups start to act against Monrovia.

1997: Taylor wins presidential elections which international observers deemed free and fair.

1999: Government crackdown against rebels settled in the north of the country. Border skirmishes involving Guinean military units.

2001: New weapons embargo by the United Nations against Liberia. Taylor is accused of illegal trafficking of diamonds and armament.

2003: Rebel forces are 10 kilometers away from.

- Intensification of combats in July.
- Arrival in August of new forces sent by the CEDEAO.
- Deployment of United Nations personnel in August.

2005: Ellen Johnson Sirleaf is elected as President.

2006: Creation of the Commission for Truth and Reconciliation.

- Accused of war crimes, Taylor is brought before the Special Court for Sierra Leone.

2007: The United Nations' embargo against the exporting of Liberian diamonds is lifted.

2011: Johnson Sirleaf is reelected as President.

2014: Ebola outbreak in Liberia.

Sierra Leone

1961: Proclamation of the country's independence.

1978: Approval of a new constitution that defines Sierra Leone as a single party republic governed by the APC.

1985: Joseph Saidu Momo is appointed as President.

1987: Momo declares a state of economic emergency in the whole of the country.

1991: A civil war instigated by the Revolutionary United Front breaks out.

1992: Momo is overthrown by a coup d'État.

1996: New coup d'État that puts an end to the government of Strasser.

Ahmad Tejan Kabbah is elected President and signs a peace agreement with RUF rebels led by Sankoh.

1997: New coup against Kabbah who is overthrown by a military junta.

Kabbah flees to Guinea.

1998: Nigeria leads CEDEAO troops that manage to reestablish Kabbah's government.

1999: The RFU launches an attack against Freetown, which is defeated by EcoNOG's troops following intense fighting.

Geo-political indicators

		LIBERIA	SIERRA LEONE
Area		11,137 km ²	71,740 Km ²
GDP		1.735 billion Dollars	4.600 billion Dollars
GDP Distribution	Agriculture	76.9%	47.9%
	Industry	5.9%	18.6%
	Services	17.7%	33.6%
GDP per capita		700 Dollars (In 2012)	1,400 Dollars (In 2013)
GDP growth rate		8.3% (In 2012)	13.3% (In 2013)
Population under poverty threshold		80%	70.2%
Exports		China 35.3% USA 15.4% Spain 11.1% Thailand 4.5% Ivory Coast 4.4% Malaysia 4.1% France 4%	China 51.1% Belgium 18.2% Japan 7.7% Turkey 4.8%
Imports		South Korea 26.4% China 24.1% Singapore 23% Japan 15.9%	China 16.5% India 10.2% Republic of South Africa 7.6% USA 6.7% Belgium 4.6%
Population		3,989,703 (In July 2013)	5,743,725 (July 2014)
Rate of urbanization			3.04%
Age distribution	0-14	43.6%	41.9%
	15-24	1.789%	18.8%
	From 25 to 54	31.3%	31.6%
	From 55 to 64	4.3%	3.9%
	Above 65	3%	3.7%
Population growth rate		2.56% (In 2013)	2.33% (In 2012)
Fertility rate (number of births per 1,000 inhabitants)		35.75%	37.4%
Fertility rate (average number of births per woman)		4.92%	4.83%
Mortality rate (deaths per 1,000 inhabitants)		10.12%	11.03%
Child birth rate (deaths per 1,000 inhabitants)		70.93%	73.29%
Life expectancy		57.81 years old	57.39 years old
Literacy rate		60.8%	43.3%
Medical doctors per 1,000 inhabitants		0.001	0.02
Hospital beds per 1,000 inhabitants		0.08	0.4
HIV prevalence rate amongst adults		1.5% (In 2009)	1.5%
Inflation rate		6.9% (In 2012)	11.1% (In 2013)

Source: CIA World Facts Book.

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Central African Republic: an open conflict, a remote peace

Jesús Díez Alcalde

Chapter seven

Summary

On March 24, 2013, the coup carried out by Michel Djotodia at the head of the Seleka coalition opened the most atrocious and turbulent period undergone by the Central African Republic since its independence. The arrival in power of the Selekas, an amalgam of rebel groups with a Moslem majority, unchained a spiral of chaos and violence which sowed the country with blood and desolation. In reaction to such barbarity, the Anti Balaka militias were formed, mostly made up from Christian and animist communities. Within a very few months, clashes between the two factions spread throughout the country, at the same time that the religious aspect, fomented by the political leaders, became the falsified «identity badge» of the conflict. In December, international forces began to deploy in the Central African Republic, but they failed to halt the offensive of hatred and vengeance of the Anti Balaka against all Moslems.

In January of 2014, Djotodia was forced to resign in Yamena (Chad), and the National Assembly elected Catherine Samba-Panza as interim President of the Central African Republic. Since then, she has attempted to set in motion a resolution of the conflict and a political transition, which was to terminate with an electoral process in February of 2015: a clearly unrealistic date. Currently, and thanks to the international military presence, the situation has improved, although security continues to be the

most urgent and challenging priority. In the meantime, the country is now split in two: the Seleka in the northeast and east, from where they threaten secession, and the Anti Balaka in the western enclaves. Within this complicated scenario, the Brazzaville Peace Accord-repeatedly broken-and the new transition government have, for the moment, generated no expectations. Today, the sectarian and religious conflicts continue to rage, and the achievement of peace is a very remote possibility.

Key words

Central African Republic, Seleka, Anti Balaka, Michel Djotodia, Catherine Samba-Panza, Operation Sangaris, MISCA, MINUSCA, EURFOR and RCA.

Introduction

Since its colonial emancipation in 1960, the Central African Republic has been drowning in a long agony which exploded into a violent and uncommon conflict in March of 2013. The motives: for over five decades, and outside the international media spotlights, the colonial-period legacy, the endemic corruption, and the bad governance, together with the ancestral intercommunitary rivalries, have undermined any faint trace of national identity, and made it impossible to gain the confidence of the Central Africans in their national leaders. Now, the country is devastated, adrift and split in two: in their respective territorial strongholds, the two rival factions impose their own law in the face of a total absence of a State. Today, any talk of peace and stability for the country sounds utopian, despite the deployment of international forces; much more so do proposals for the reinstatement of a real and effective democracy which, in any case, has never existed. Definitively, a greater international commitment is necessary: if the true objective is to recover the Central African Republic as a State, the effort must be still broader and more demanding.

In order to understand the current conflict, it is necessary to look back. To speak of Statehood, democracy and good governance in the Central African Republic,—one of the most underdeveloped and poverty-stricken countries on earth—has been and is an impossibility. Coups have set the rhythm of the national presidencies, and therefore of their political dynamics: of the six national Presidencies, until the arrival of Interim President Catherine Samba-Panza in January of 2014, five assumed power by force of arms. As a result, nepotism, corruption and underdevelopment are a malign constant in the evolution of this African country. In addition, her security and police forces have been made the tools of the successive governments, which have basically ignored the effective security of the population. Over time, their political partiality, the continuous internal strife and their progressive inoperability—they are now practically corralled in the Bangui capital—have converted the entire country into a fertile and uncontrolled field for every kind of illicit traffic, and from this many armed groups—domestic or foreign, rebel, criminal or self-defensive—have benefitted, carrying the country into a fathomless abyss.

In spite of this disheartening scenario, the Central African Republic never suffered from a domestic conflict of great magnitude. Although the various communities always fought for their survival, it was necessary for the Seleka rebel alliance—with a wide Moslem majority and led by Michel Djotodia—to wrench power from President Bozize, in March of 2013, setting off a bloody spiral of chaos and violence. It took very little time for resurgence of the old self-defensive militias,

the so-called Anti Balaka—associated in very simplistic fashion with the Christian religion—which arrived en mass in the capital, Bangui, in December of 2014, and began to wreak bloody vengeance on all Moslems.

International, and especially regional, pressure obliged Djotodia to abandon power in January of 2014. Since then, Interim President Catherine Samba-Panza has been attempting to halt the violence and enter the path of restoration of stability and democracy, in addition to promoting and managing foreign support. With this intention, and with nothing in hand with which to confront anarchy, she has been obliged to deposit all responsibility in the French operation Sangaris, the African mission MISCA and the European forces of EUFOR CAR, which, within a very hostile environment, have managed to reduce the clashes in Bangui and in a few other localities of the country. The cease-fire between the Seleka and the Anti Balaka, however, achieved in July of 2014, does not, at least at this time, seem to augur an end to the conflict, least of all when its repercussions on the ground have been almost imperceptible. On the horizon, the deployment of a United Nations operation as of September 2014 and the holding of Presidential Elections in February of 2015—practically unfeasible—stand as the principal goals for the beginning of the restitution of peace and governability in the country.

How much time, and what, is necessary to halt the violence, to reconcile a people devastated by vengeance and hatred, to raise a democracy and advance development, when the country is destroyed? At the background of these questions stands the complex «road map» essential for the resolution of this conflict and the construction of a new Central African Republic. With the objective of finding the answers, this chapter analyses the conflict—from its antecedents up to the current situation—as well as the role played by the international community; and seeks, in the first place, to diagnose the problem facing us and, above all, to take the measure of the effort required for its solution.

Antecedents to the conflict

For nearly seventy years, the present-day Central African Republic was subject to French colonial power. In 1894, France established the territory of Oubangui-Chari, with reference to the two principal rivers which traverse it, which became the new and infamous administrative entity for the Sudanese tribes settled in the region, to which they had arrived fleeing from the fearsome Peuls,¹ and later,

¹ The Peuls -also known as Fulanis, Pulaars, Fulbes or Fulfudes-are an immense nomadic people, Moslem cattle- breeders extending across the entire Sahel, whose origin

from the dominion of slavery. As in so many other colonies, the early arrival of European companies of exploitation—fundamentally of mining and of cotton cultivation—disrupted the tribal social dynamics and co-existence and destroyed the local subsistence economy of the African peoples, which they would never again recover. From 1920 onwards, the establishment of French Equatorial Africa meant that the present-day Central African territory was governed from Brazzaville—currently the capital of the Republic of the Congo—a circumstance which relegated this colony to marginal status and prevented the development of solid structures of Statehood before colonial emancipation. Nonetheless, and despite the extreme harshness of the colonial power and the indelible footprint which it left on the country, nothing improved with the peaceful arrival of national independence, on August 13th, 1960. Since then, the history of the Central African Republic—a land-locked country in the midst of an unstable and turbulent region -has been determined by a disorderly series of despotic and corrupt governments, by the plundering of its vast natural resources, and by the constant proliferation of rebel groups; all of it enveloped by a major lack of social cohesion. A perverse scenario which makes up the background of the current collapse of the country, but which also covers up the deepest and structural causes of a sectarian conflict, fomented from the seats of power, which has now caused thousands of deaths² and nearly a million domestic displaced persons as well as refugees outside the country -512,000 in Bangui alone- according to the United Nations- and has given rise to an enormous humanitarian crisis.³

is traced back to the mingling of black peoples from the Horn of Africa with Arab tribes. In the Central African Republic, as in so many other African countries, the Peuls, without permission, cross the lands of sedentary and agricultural peoples—mostly Christian and animist—during migratory periods, which even today continues to provoke constant inter-communal clashes.

² In a conflict as virulent and turbulent as that of the Central African Republic, it is extremely complicated to estimate the death toll. The United Nations puts the figure at more than ten thousand, but other organizations, present on the ground, such as Doctors Without Frontiers, believe that the number may be far higher. Central African Republic death toll could exceed previous estimates. Reuters, 16/07/14. Available at: <http://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2014/jul/16/central-african-republic-death-toll-msf>.

³ « As of 21st February, 2.5 million people—more than half the population of the country—needed humanitarian aid. Nearly 700,000 Central Africans had been displaced within the borders of the country Over 288,000 were refugees in neighboring countries. Secretary General's Report on the Central African Republic S/2014/142, of 3rd March. Available at <http://www.un.org/es/comun/docs/?symbol=S/2014/142> Date of consultation: 07/06/14.



Map 1 Central African Republic: territorial political structure.

The progressive decadence of State power

After the death in 1959 of Barthélemy Boganda, true architect of independence and founder of the Movement for the Social Evolution of Black Africa (SEBAM), David Dacko took the reins of colonial emancipation and became the first President of the Central African Republic, with the explicit support of France, in 1960. Only one year later, he signed the first agreements on cooperation and defense with the French government, which, although secret, have remained in force practically down to our days. His authoritarian mandate, with the SEBAM as the sole party, was marked by misgovernment and corruption, as well as by a disturbing alliance with Communist China. Within this framework, the hopes of the people for the benefits of the yearned-for independence vanished. Only five years later, Dacko was overthrown by Colonel Jean-Bedel Bokassa, who initiated the coup-oriented dynamic which has marked the political history of this African nation. As an implacable military dictator, and self-proclaimed Emperor in 1977, Bokassa established the few national power structures which still remain today, in addition to initiating the development of a network of infrastructures. Thus, and despite his eccentric and iron-fisted rule, Bokassa achieved major social support within the country, and enjoyed as well the backing of France and of a good deal of the Western world.

Notwithstanding this, the great and intolerable massacre of defenseless citizens—including 200 children—in April of 1979 in the capital, Bangui,⁴ caused the former colonial power to launch Operation Barracuda—the first French military intervention since independence—to overthrow Emperor Bokassa and restore David Dacko to the Presidency, who, with this new opportunity, again failed to stabilize the country. In 1981, a new and bloodless military coup, with the knowledge and consent of France, brought Colonel Andre-Dieudonne Kolingba—a southerner and from the Yakoma ethnic minority—to the national Presidency, with an army stuffed with members of his own ethnic group⁵ and at the exclusive service of his power: a perverse custom which has been maintained to this day. His mandate was marked by tribal clashes and a permanent economic crisis, until the wave of democratization which arrived in Africa in the nineties, together with rising regional pressure, forced him to call the first free and multi-party elections in the Central African Republic.

In 1993, the results made the northerner Ange-Felix Patasse the first and only President who has arrived in power legitimately and democratically in the nation's history; but, in spite of the hopes raised by his election, his government turned out to be disastrous for the Central African Republic. On the one hand, he proved unable to win the favor of the Army, and its necessary re-organization did not come about; on the other hand, he encouraged social disputes enormously, with the sole purpose of controlling and exploiting the natural resources. At the end of 1996, with the country sunken in poverty and on the brink of civil war, the second French intervention was decisive in halting the violence, and in forcing the achievement of the Bangui Accords, which installed a government of national unity, as well as approving the deployment of the Inter-African Mission of Intervention and Vigilance of the Bangui Accords (MISAB). With an entity of nearly 3,000 military personnel from six African countries, this mission initiated the international presence in the Central African Republic, which has remained constant—with different entities, mandates and organization—until the present day (see Annex 8.1:International Missions in the Central African Republic). Despite the fact that this new scenario brought about a certain level of stability, Patasse failed to calm discontent within the national army, which continued its mutinies and claims—among them, payment of salaries—against a weakened and ever more corrupt

⁴ The original reason for these demonstrations was the obligation, imposed by Bokassa, for schoolchildren to wear a photograph of the dictator printed on their uniforms.

⁵ At the end of Kolingba's mandate, in 1993, more than 70% of military personnel were ethnic Yakomas, who only represented 5% of the Central African population. This permanent dynamic, of populating the Army with communities loyal to the President of the moment, has caused weapons to become uncontrolled in the hands of civilians, in addition to undermining the confidence of the population in the arbitrary and ineffective security forces. IHS Jane's. Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment—Central Africa Security, 10/04/13.

government. The dismissal of the Head of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Francois Bozize, was the final trigger behind the forging of a new military coup. With several hundred military allies, Bozize took refuge in Chad—with the connivance of its President Idriss Deby—and from there launched successive assaults on the power of the State, which failed thanks to the external aid of Libya and of rebel Congolese movements. Finally, on March 15th of 2003, he succeeded in overthrowing Patasse and proclaiming himself President of the Central African Republic. The generalized discontent of the population, weary of the despotism and the abysmal governance of Patasse, meant that Bizize was received as a panacea for the Central African misfortunes, but he soon showed that he would do little to support democracy and stability.

After his arrival in power, Bozize dissolved the National Assembly and installed the National Council on Transition; in addition, he postponed until 2005 the promised democratic elections, in which he was finally raised to power, in spite of claims of fraud by the opposition. During his mandate, he also failed to control diamond production⁶, which, far from redounding to the benefit of the national economy, he maintained at the mercy of illegal traffickers, when not at that of his sole benefit. This circle of misgovernance led, from 2006 onwards, to new armed rebellion in the northern and mostly Moslem prefectures, denouncing the political and economic disdain of the Bangui government for this region. Bozize denied the existence of such a feeling and ignored the complaints for too long. As a result, in December of 2008, *in extremis* and in face of the rising threat of an unpredictable civil war, he assented to a broad and inclusive dialogue to calm rebel anxieties, which concluded with the signing of the Global Peace Accord of Libreville (Gabon). This political pact foresaw the installation of a consensus government, the initiation of a process of national reconciliation and the activation of a program of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of the armed militias. Predictably, Bozize failed to comply with any of his commitments, and his blinkered attitude became the perfect excuse for the rebel rising which, in 2013, achieved his overthrow, subsequently submerging the country in the most absolute and violent anarchy.

The armed rebellion and Djotodia's disastrous government

With the background of the failed political accords, the only salvation for the political opposition was to guarantee that the general elections

⁶ The illegal traffic in diamonds has been a constant in the Central African Republic. Despite being, since 2003, a member of the Kimberley Club, 30% of the annual production leaves the country illegally: a lucrative business benefitting all kinds of rebel groups, and even the national government. In May of 2013, the Central African Republic was expelled from the Club for its inability to control the illegal traffic, which was nourishing the armed conflict. Available at Car crash-Political turbulence in the Central African Republic. IHS Jane's, Jane's Intelligence Review, 31/05/13.

planned for 2010 would be more transparent and with this, achieve the «democratic departure» of Bozize from power. But the government, on the pretext that the insecurity existing in a great part of the country prevented the free exercise of the right to vote, put off Presidential and Legislative elections until 2011, and these confirmed the Bozize presidency with 64.4% of the votes on the first round. Once again, the opposition parties gave no credibility to the election results, despite a major presence of international observers; and the refurbished political scene—with a much-strengthened Bozize—exacerbated the demands of the rebel groups, now plotting an armed rising as the only way to achieve their objectives. As on other occasions, President Bozize ignored all signs of alarm, and only international pressure forced him to initiate, at the end of 2011, new negotiations with the political opposition, which, as on countless previous occasions, concluded with no agreement reached.

While political conversations remained stalled, the practical absence of government power and of security forces in the north smoothed the way for the appearance of new insurgent movements, mostly Moslem. Throughout 2012, old and new rebel factions grouped around the Union of Democratic Forces for Reunification—a veteran group which erupted onto the scene during the northern rebellion of 2004 and was now led by Michel Djotodia—and forged a previously unheard of armed coalition which they called Seleka («Alliance», in the official Sango language). And so, departing the prefecture of Haute-Kotto (on the Sudanese border), after occupying and devastating the towns they found in their path, the *Seleka* rebels—initially some 5,000—advanced towards Damara (barely 80 km. from Bangui) where they arrived, in January of 2013, with more than 20,000⁷ proselytes of the insurrection. Among these were hundreds of mercenaries from Sudan and Chad, who only sought to collect tribute for supporting the insurgents, in addition to sacking and plundering everything within their reach. From Damara, and before launching their assault on power, they sent an ultimatum to Bozize: he was to commit himself to complying with everything agreed to in the 2008 accords, to halt the plunder of natural resources—an activity of which, ironically, the rebels were protagonists of record in the northeast of the country—and to relieve the marginalization of the northern regions.

Once again, the capital of Gabon became the scene of renewed peace conversations for the Central African Republic. In January of 2013, the government of Bozize, representatives of the opposition parties and leaders of the Seleka group signed the Libreville Accord, which installed a national coalition government, in which Djotodia occupied the office of vice Prime Minister. But this sharing of power did not calm the disputes between the two leaders. The celebrations of the tenth anniversary of the

⁷ Deiros, T. Central African Republic: The Invention of a Religious Conflict. IEEE, 16/06/14. Available at <http://www.ieee.es/contenido/noticias/2014/06/DIEEEO67-2014.html>.

arrival in power of the President, March 15th were the definitive trigger of the revolt. During his speech, Bozize encouraged young people to «resist Seleka»,⁸ which for the rebels represented proof that the accords had been one more deception. In response, Michel Djotodia declared an end to the cease-fire, ordered the armed coalition to advance on Bangui and, on March 24th, usurped power, with hardly any resistance from the regular army, and in view of the inaction of the French (Operation Boali) and African (MICOPAX) forces deployed in the capital.

In April, after proclaiming himself the first Moslem President of the Central African Republic, Djotodi committed himself, with the signing of the Yamena Declaration⁹, to initiate a period of political transition and to avoid social confrontations; but all he achieved was the outbreak of brutal sectarian violence in Bangui; and within a few months, that anarchy and barbarity spread throughout the country.

Djotodia's decisions—suspension of the Constitution and of the National Assembly—were a precursor to disaster; it was soon evident that, beyond overthrowing Bozize and plundering the natural resources, the Selekas had no governmental program whatsoever, and lacked any hieratical structure or political ideology. Security was their first victim; on the one hand, they ordered their militiamen to integrate into the Central African Armed Forces (FACA), which occasioned numerous desertions on the part of non-Moslems; on the other, they constantly instigated religious conflict, unprecedented in the Central African Republic, which rapidly became the most damaging «identity badge» of the conflict. Within a few days, the brutal Selekas, together with the Chadian and Sudanese mercenaries, sowed the entire country with massive massacres, sacking and destruction, with utter impunity—the judicial system¹⁰ abruptly disappeared—and towards a defenseless population who only found protection in im-

⁸ Vircoulon, T. Failure has many fathers: the coup in the Central African Republic. Think African Press, 28/03/13. Available at: <http://thinkafricapress.com/central-african-republic-failure-has-many-fathers-coup-central-african-republic>. Date of consultation: 08/01/14.

⁹ In the political field, the Djotodia government was a catalogue of foolishness and corruption. Following the signing of the Yamena Declaration, as proof of his «conciliatory will», he kept Bozize's Prime Minister, Nicolas Tiangaye, as head of the Council on National Transition, but the announcement that the Presidential elections would be set back a year, until February of 2016, caused the political opposition to mutiny in the face of the evidence that his true intention was to perpetuate himself, as had previous Central African Presidents, in power. More information: Díez, J. «Chaos and Violence in the Central African Republic, and the reaction of the international community.» IEEE, 22/01/14. Available at http://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs_analisis/2014/DIEEEA05-2014_Caos_RCA_JDA.pdf. Consultation date: 28/06/14.

¹⁰ According to Human Rights Watch (HRW), in January of 2014, when Catherine Samba-Panza assumed the interim Presidency, there was not a single penitentiary open in the entire country, and all courts had ceased to function. During the Djotodia government, there was absolute impunity regarding the serious crimes committed by all the armed factions. Central African Republic: ICC Investigation Needed. HRW, 26/06/14.

provided refugee camps and in religious missions¹¹. Their cruelty had no limits, as the non-governmental organizations and the Catholic churches were also targets of their merciless attacks: «The entire country, region by region,» said the Bishop of Bangassou, the Spaniard Juan Jose Aguirre—«has been sacked as war booty; they have stamped on it, robbed, raped, offended (...) These are the new leaders we have.»¹²

ARMED FORCES OF THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

Since 1993, when the Central African Republic moved into a multiparty system, political and military instability have marked the history of the country. The military, in addition to coups, have organized continuous mutinies, and have undergone a number of reforms. Currently, their reduced numbers (there have never been more than 5,000 troops) and their utter ineffectiveness, together with the scarcity and obsolescence of their material, are the main characteristics of the Armed Forces. In addition, they are barely present outside Bangui. After Samba-Panza's call for a return to ranks in February of 2014, some 3,500 were readmitted.

The **Army** (5,000 troops) is structured in three battalions of Infantry and one armoured battalion. Principal material: AK 47 rifles, Ferret reconnaissance vehicles, Armoured Transport TPK 420 BL and VAB, and RPG 7 grenade-launchers. Their operational capacity is practically absolute.

The **Air Force** is made up of 200 military personnel, with a maximum of 4 planes and 2 helicopters.

The **Navy** does not exist, as this is an inland country, but there are an estimated 9 launches for river patrols.

NATIONAL GUARD

Composed of some 1,800 Guards, whose principal task is the protection and custody of the Presidential Palace and the government buildings. When deployment of the EUROFOR RCA began, the Central African Guards accompanied the European forces on their first patrols.

Table 1. Security and defense forces in the Central African Republic.(Main source: Jane's)

Available at: <http://www.hrw.org/news/2014/06/26/central-african-republic-icc-investigation-needed>. Consultation date: 16/08/14.

¹¹ The two centers of Salesian missions in Bangui (Galabadjá and Damala) came to shelter, at the height of the conflict, more than 65,000 displaced Moslems and Christians—, Father Agustín Cuevas told the author of this analysis, in a conversation they held in August of 2014: «Now, the situation has improved, but more international support is necessary for the population to recover the lost peace. The feeling of hatred and vengeance is very strong, and the violence will not be halted until disarmament of all factions is achieved.»

¹² In his book of testimony, «I am only the voice of my people. A Bishop in Central Africa», (PCC Publishers, Madrid 2014), Bishop Juan Jose Aguirre relates the genesis of the current conflict, and especially, tells of the cruelty of the attacks of both factions on the population, with no distinction by confessions. Currently, in his diocese of Bangassou and thanks to his mediation, a commission of reconciliation has been formed between Christians and Moslems: «This commission has stopped the formation of Anti Balaka groups which went out to assault those Moslems remaining in Bangassou. Quite a few, in comparison with other cities, whence they have fled headlong.» (Conversation with the author of this analysis, 31st/08/14).

Without the protection of national or international forces to shield them, and in response to the rebel attacks, many civilians—in the majority, Christians and animists—joined the former militias of self-defense, born in the 90's to protect the rural population from bandits and from the Peul cattle farmers who were usurping their land. Under the designation «Anti Balaka»—loosely translating to «anti-machete»¹³--and with many deserters from the Armed Forces as their allies, they began their offensives against «every Moslem», who were charged, across the board and unreasoningly, with being accomplices of the Selekas. Within a few months, hatred and vengeance took hold among the population, and this in the face of the passivity, and with the connivance, of the Djotodia government. In the meantime, the international community attempted to agree on a way to stop the virulent outbreak of violence in the central African country, which was beginning to produce alarming symptoms of turning into genocide.

In September of 2013, in light of the serious drift of events and under heavy regional pressure, Djotodia ordered the Seleka coalition to be dissolved and disarmed¹⁴, but many of his former allies, who had never recognized him as President, refused to comply. Since then, the disloyal factions—named as ex-Selekas and re-baptized, in May of 2014, as the Revolutionary Forces¹⁵—began to return to their bastions in the eastern prefectures of the country, at the same time that the Chadians and Sudanese were going back to their countries with their pockets full of blood and booty. In barely seven months, Djotodia's government, now lacking any strength, was presiding over the utter collapse of the State and the most chaotic and violent period in Central African history, although this did not seem to them to be sufficient reason to abandon power.

It was not until December that the spark which finally brought about his resignation was produced, when the Anti Balaka deployed with uncontrolled violence in the capital, drastically reversing the situa-

¹³ Since the appearance of these militias, the communication media have widely spread about that «balaka» is a word from Sango, the local majority language, which may be translated as «machete». However, another opinion holds that the expression «anti AK bullets» refers to the gri gri, or amulets which, hanging around the neck and according to animist beliefs, protects against the AK rifles of the rebels and sackers.

¹⁴ CAR's Djotodia dissolves Seleka rebel group. France 24, 14/09/13. Available at <http://www.france24.com/en/20130913-central-african-republic-djotodia-dissolves-seleka-rebel-group/>. Consultation date: 08/10/13.

¹⁵ Duhem, V. Central Africa: New organization of the Selekas, the hard wing of the commandos. Jeune Afrique, 22/05/14. Available at: <http://www.jeuneafrique.com/Article/ARTJAWEB20140522122737/centrafrique-seleka-crise-centrafricaine-nourredine-adam-crise-centrafricaine-centrafrique-nouvel-organigramme-de-la-seleka-l-ai-le-dure-aux-commandes.html>.

tion—until then dominated by the Selekas—and began their attacks on all Moslems, without exception. In the international and regional environment, there was no longer any doubt but that Djotodia, unable to control this new spiral of violence, must put an end to his appalling mandate, which by now was a clear menace to the entire region. On January 10th, at a meeting of the Economic Community of Central African States in Yamena, his former ally, Chadian President Idriss Deby, forced him to renounce the Presidency, after which he fled to Benin. Only ten days later, on January 20th, the National Assembly of the Central African Republic elected Catherine Samba-Panza, until then Mayor of Bangui, as new Interim President, with the enormous and complicated responsibility of halting the violence, accelerating the reconstruction of the police and security forces and, much more importantly, initiating a process of transition for the establishment of a real democracy throughout the country.

SELEKA COALITION

Coalition of five rebel groups, mostly Moslems, which arose in December of 2012 in the northeast region of the country: **Union of Forces for Regrouping** (Michel Djotodia), **Central African Republic Popular Democratic Front** (Abdoulaye Miskine), **Convention of Patriots for Justice and Peace** (Noureddine Adam), **Patriotic Convention to Save the Country** (Mohamed Dhaffane), and the **Alliance for Rebirth and Reconstruction** (Salvador Edjezekanne). At its peak, formed of 20,000 troops.

Upon arrival in power, the Selekas demonstrated a lack of structure, ideology and initiatives of government and that the leadership of Djotodia was a fiasco. They soon became implacable plunderers of diamonds, gold and ivory throughout the country. Currently, the Seleka coalition has fragmented into a number of rebel groups—also divided by their disagreement over secession. For the moment, their reunification is not considered likely.

ANTI BALAKA MILITIAS

Local self-defense militias which, after the arrival of the Seleka, began to be known as the Anti Balaka. It is not a cohesive group, nor does it have structure of any kind, or a recognized leadership, although there is a certain amount of coordination from the central command at Bangui. Initially, their arms were machetes and rifles, but now they have more sophisticated weapons, like new AK47's and grenade launchers. Their troops are unpredictable, but some sources estimate them to number more than 70,000.

Although they are identified—very simplistically—as a Christian militia, they are much better defined as a mix of non-Moslem rebels, delinquents and plunderers. Specifically, identified under the term Anti Balaka are: local self-defense groups, groups led by military deserters from the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic (FACA), delinquents and plunderers, and supporters of Bozize, which form the most radical group and the best armed.

THE LORD'S RESISTANCE ARMY (LRA)
The Lord's Resistance Army is a terrorist group, of Catholic extremist ideology, which has fought against the government of Uganda since 1986, and is led by the bloodthirsty Joseph Kony. Although it spread throughout the region from the end of the 90's, it has been very active in the Central African Republic since 2008. In 2009, the Uganda Popular Defense Forces, invited by the Bozize government, entered into Central African territory to fight against the terrorists of the LRA. Since 2010, 100 U.S. soldiers have been cooperating on the ground with the forces from Uganda. Currently, and with a band estimated at 2,000 troops, it acts in the easternmost Central African prefectures: Haut-Mbomou and Mbomou.
POPULAR FRONT FOR RECOVERY
A Chadian rebel group which appeared in 1998 led by Baba Ladde, a great opponent of the President of Chad, Idriss Deby. The movement has taken refuge in the Central African Republic (Nana-Gribizi) since its creation, and was very active between 2008 and September of 2011, when it reached a peace agreement with the governments of the two countries. At the end of January of 2012, Chadian and Central African forces launched a joint attack against the Popular Front. In September of 2012, Ladde surrendered in Bangui, whence he returned to Chad. Currently he is the governor of a department of the region of Moyen-Chari (Chad). Despite the disappearance of the Popular Front, many Chadian rebels and mercenaries remain in the Central African Republic.

Tables 2 and 3. Principal non-State actors in the Central African Republic.

The plunder of natural resources

In spite of its vast natural resources, which properly administered would in themselves guarantee national progress, the Central African Republic is among the least developed and most poverty-stricken countries in the world¹⁶. All of its governments have been accomplices and participants—to a greater or lesser degree—in the plunder of the resources; but none of them reached, and in such a short time, the levels of depredation and extortion of Djotodia and his henchmen. The reserves of gold, diamonds and wood extend practically throughout the Central African Republic, but have never been exploited for the benefit of the State and its population, but rather for those holding political power, and above all, the traffickers and armed groups. When they arrived in power, the Selekas already controlled the mines and illicit traffic in the east of the country (Bria and Sam-Ouandja), but—as the *International Crisis Group* states in its report *The Central African Crisis: From*

¹⁶ In 2014, the Index of Human Development, put out by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), situated the Central African Republic in 185th place out of a total of 187 countries. Human Development Report 2014. Available at: <http://hdr.undp.org/en/2014-report/download>.

*Predation to Stabilization*¹⁷: «the expansion of their area of influence was rapid and strategic. In their advance towards the west of the country, the leaders of the coalition immediately set their sights on the principal mining zones.»

And so, the control of the diamonds became a *casus belli*, «who controls the diamonds has the real power», and caused many of the craftsmen of the sector to swell the ranks of the rebel groups: «In one of history's ironies,» the report continues, «in the east, many merchants joined the Selekas to take vengeance for the massive sacking perpetrated by Bozize during Operation Closing Gate in 2008,¹⁸ while in the west, some miners joined the Anti Balaka to get even for the atrocities and the extortion committed by the Selekas.» In addition to the diamonds, the Selekas also enriched themselves through the smuggling of ivory, in connivance with Chadian and Sudanese traffickers, and with the illicit trade in gasoline, which they stole from official stations for resale on the black market. In total, during Djotodia's Presidency, the plunder of resources and illegal trafficking intensified to an alarming extent, the State lost any source of finance and the precarious State economy sank even further: there were no funds to undertake any kind of reform, or to pay those rebels who had raised him to power, nor the military, nor public servants.

The religious pretext aggravates the conflict

From the beginning of the conflict, the communication media have generally emphasized the religious aspect as its principal cause, when in fact this is only a dramatic consequence, fomented from the seat of political power—both Bozize and Djotodia and their followers—and manipulated in their own benefit. This message has permeated into the two rebel factions, the Seleka and the Anti Balaka, who have set themselves up as the «defenders of their religions», and on this pretext, have intensified their attacks on other confessions, now supposedly enemies. «The two bands», remarks journalist Trinidad Deiros,¹⁹ «are defined as the «Moslem alliance» and «Christian militias», respectively, ignoring the fact that their actions obey no religious creed whatsoever, no religious leader or institution has supported them, and in addition the bulk of their actions points above all to a thirst for money and power.»

This is so far true that, from within and without the country, the need is being emphasized to deny religion as the cause of this conflict; although not ignoring the fact that the confessional dimension determines the dynamic of the confrontation, and has already caused enormous social and territorial

¹⁷ The Central African Crisis: From Predation to Stabilization. International Crisis Group, Africa Report n° 219, 17/06/14.

¹⁸ In 2008, the diamond merchants, mostly Moslem, refused to accept the conditions imposed by Bozize in the so-called operation «Closing Gate». In response, and in a single day, the government confiscated all their goods.

¹⁹ Deiros, T. Central African Republic, op. cit.

splintering, which it will be very complicated to repair. It is also true that encouraging the religious nature of the conflict may produce a «call to arms» effect on fundamentalist Islam and on jihadist groups, which according to United Nations reports, may already be present in the Central African Republic. «The international community and the communication media underline the religious dimension of the conflict», President Samba-Panza pointed out. «We look at its real causes (...). Misgovernance, poverty and unequal access to power have provoked the frustration of the children of this country.»²⁰

To restore the tolerance which once characterized the co-existence between the various confessions, the principal religious leaders of the country are also working together. With this in mind, they are visiting many towns and cities to eliminate the idea that this conflict is a war of religion, which has, for the local media, made them recognized promoters of peace.²¹ In March of 2014, the Secretary General of the United Nations, Ban Ki Moon, received the three maximum religious authorities of the Central African Republic: The Catholic Archbishop of Bangui, Monsignor Nzapalainga; the President of the Islamic Council of the Central African Republic, Imam Layam; and the President of the Evangelical Alliance, Reverend Guerekoyame-Gbangou, in order to thank them for their efforts in favor of reconciliation. «Let me be clear», remarked Ban Ki Moon, «religious and ethnic affiliation is being manipulated for political purposes.»²²

Current situation of the conflict

Currently-- thanks in great part to the presence of the international forces— security in the Central African Republic has improved notably, although it is still unstable and at very alarming levels: in Bangui, a «tense calm» reigns, but in the rest of the country, clashes between the two factions occur in which the defenseless population is the principal victim. In another respect, the secessionist claims with which the former Selekas threaten grow ever stronger, while the Anti Balaka dominate practically all of the west and northwest of the country. Thus, the country is now in a state of de facto division, and the presence of State authority outside Bangui is practically nil, or when it does exist, is not respected. In the political field, the situation is marked by

²⁰ Statements by President Samba-Panza to Al Jazeera about the true reasons for the conflict, which must be managed in order to return the country to peace. Samba-Panza: Ending conflict in CAR. Al Jazeera, 16/02/14. Available at: <http://www.aljazeera.com/programs/talktojazeera/2014/02/catherine-samba-panza-ending-conflict-car-2014151128653732.html>.

²¹ CAR's archbishop and imam in peace drive. BBC, 08/07/14. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world/africa-26938341>.

²² Central African Republic: Ban meets religious leaders, urges support for efforts to unite communities. UN News Center, 13/03/14. Available at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=47351#.VAt4vGNqXQ>.

the failed Peace Treaty signed in Brazzaville (Republic of the Congo) at the end of July and by a new transition government, which has not awakened great expectations. In spite of the huge challenges remaining, this scenario little resembles the extreme degree of violence and chaos which the country suffered from after Djotodia grabbed the power of the State, and which intensified enormously following the offensive launched by the Anti Balaka in early December of 2013. It was at that time when the Anti Balaka, who had reorganized in the western region of the country, erupted into the capital, better armed and with a fierce thirst for revenge. In barely a few hours, they took over the most dangerous and densely populated areas of the capital, and began the persecutions and massacres against «everything Moslem», accompanied by sacking of their shops and their homes. The Moslems—to the Anti Balaka, all accomplices of the Selekas—fled from their homes, and only found refuge in churches and mosques, in the dispensaries of aid organizations, or on the outskirts of the airport, held by French forces, into which more than a hundred thousand Central Africans crammed themselves.

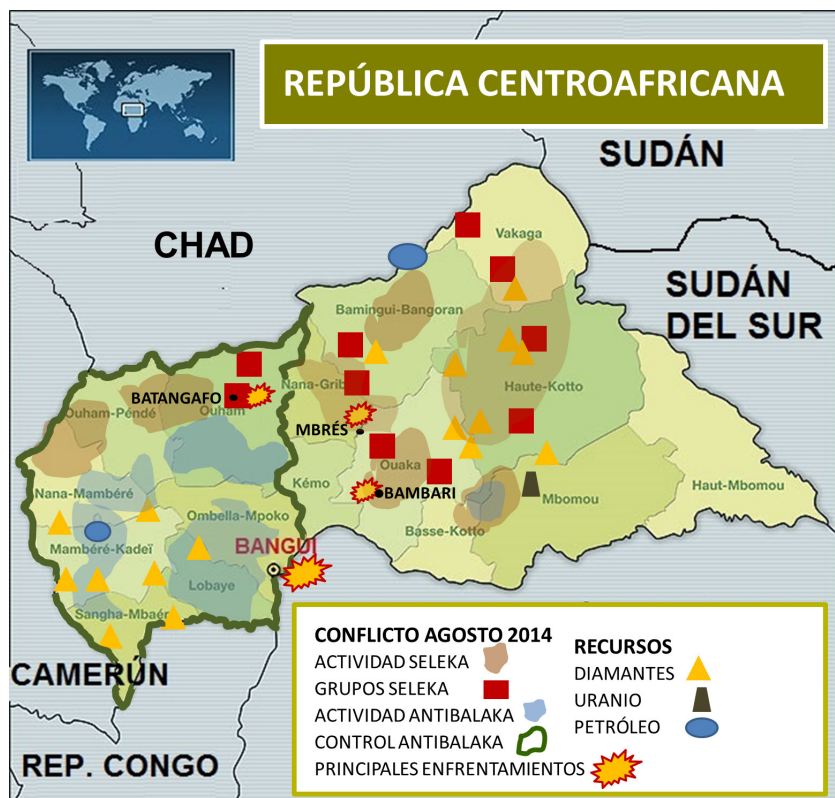
The situation also worsened drastically in the west and northwest, especially in Bouar, Bozoum and Bossangoa, where hostilities among armed groups produced numerous victims and sackings in the months of December and January. In other cities, such as Carnot, Berberati, or Boda—areas of great diamond production—the Moslems found themselves obliged to withdraw into authentic ghettos, where they were at the mercy of the Anti Balaka violence, whose sole and proclaimed objective was to annihilate or expel the entire Islamic minority (some 15%) of the country. All in all, the only way out was the massive and forced flight of some 300,000 Moslems²³—protected by French and African forces—who found refuge in Cameroon and Chad, and in the north-eastern prefectures of the country. This shameful exodus has caused their virtual disappearance from the entire region dominated by the Anti Balaka. In addition, their return, for the moment, is unthinkable. In Bangui, where more than 100,000 Moslems lived before the conflict broke out, barely 3,000 are left, and all of those in the turbulent PK5 neighborhood, which is now defended by Spanish troops.²⁴

From their dominant position in the conflict in the center and west of the country, the Anti Balaka attempted to extend their power towards the east, the absolute fortress territory of the Seleka rebels. At the end of June, Bambari, a locality 380 kilometers to the northeast of Bangui, became the principal focus of the violence and the nerve center of the demarcation line be-

²³ Central African Republic : Siege on Capital's Muslims. Human Rights Watch, 28/03/14. Available at: <http://www.hrw.org/news/2014/03/27/central-african-republic-siege-capital-s-muslims>. Consultation date: 21/05/14.

²⁴ Deiros, T. Spanish elite soldiers to protect Bangui's last Moslems. The Confidential, 02/08/14. Available at: [Http://www.elconfidencial.com/mundo/2014-08-02/soldados-de-elite-espanoles-para-proteger-a-los-ultimos-musulmanes-de-bangui-164955/#](http://www.elconfidencial.com/mundo/2014-08-02/soldados-de-elite-espanoles-para-proteger-a-los-ultimos-musulmanes-de-bangui-164955/#). Consultation date: 13/08/14.

tween the Moslem and Christian zones: a «frontier» which—from south to north—has split the territory of the Central African Republic. Now, the Seleka have settled their central headquarters in the city, making it «the place from which the Moslems do not intend to withdraw.»²⁵ ; facing them, the Anti Balaka, still disposed to take control of the city. All of this occurs in an enclave where, until the beginning of July, peaceful co-existence reigned between Moslems and Christians. In this context of generalized violence, it was a very complicated undertaking for the Peace Agreement, signed the 24th of July and which is analyzed below, to halt the violence. On the contrary, as stated in the report in the September issue of *Crisis Watch* (*International Crisis Group*), armed clashes have taken place in such localities as Batangafo, Mbres, Bangui or Bambari, causing a total of 120 mortal victims.²⁶



Map 2. Current situation of the conflict (drawn up by the author).

²⁵ Parellada, G. Bambari, The Frontier of Vengeance in the Central African Republic. *El País*, 30/06/14. Available at: http://internacional.elpais.com/internacional/2014/06/30/actualidad/1404147606_574775.html. Consultation date: 17/07/14.

²⁶ This report considers that, so far from stabilizing, the situation has deteriorated in the month of August in the Central African Republic. *Crisis Watch* n°. 133. International Crisis Group. 01/09/14. Available at: <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/publication-type/crisiswatch/crisiswatch-database.aspx>

International intervention in the Central African Republic

Originally, the international community did not plan on a military intervention, for many—including France and the United Nations—believed that Djotodia would be able to control the *Seleka* rebels and direct a peaceful national transition; they also trusted that the African forces of MICOPAX—which were reinforced from the bordering countries—would be capable of halting the outbreak of violence. None of this happened, and when the situation worsened alarmingly, France led the military option as the only way to counter the sectarian violence and the humanitarian crisis developing throughout the country. Finally, on December 5th, the United Nations approved Resolution 2127/2013,²⁷ which authorized the deployment of Mission International Support for the Central African Republic under African Leadership (MISCA, in its French acronym), as well as a French military force, whose task was to support the African mission, just as the African Union had requested in November. This double millilitre intervention was to collaborate in the protection of civilians, in the stabilization of the country and in the restoration of State authority throughout the territory, in addition to assuring humanitarian assistance. Under the title «Operation Sangaris», France began her deployment only a single day after the Resolution was approved, involving a total of 1,600 troops—600 were already on the ground, within Operation Boali²⁸—in barely a few hours, thanks to the troops transported from Gabon and Cameroon. For its part, MISCA officially took over from MICROPAX on December 19th, when the violence in Bangui reached its height.²⁹ Currently, MISCA is made up of 6,000 troops, led by General Mikoko, who will be relieved by the blue helmets of MINUSCA as of September 15th; parallel to this, Operation Sangaris is made composed of 2,000 French troops under the command of General Soriano. Both contingents deploy in Bangui, although most of their troops are now located in different regions and cities throughout the entire country. Since their arrival in the Central African Republic, in addition to pacifying the capital, their principal tasks have been to protect the forced exile of Moslems departing the country, as well as the highway which connects the country with Cameroon; and above all, the carrying out of a number of operations of disarmament, both of the *Selekas* and of the *Anti Balakas*.³⁰ However,

²⁷ Resolution 2127 (2013), approved by the Security Council at its 7072nd session, held the 5th of December. Available at: <http://www.un.org/es/comun/docs/?symbol=S/RES/2127%282013%29> Fec.

²⁸ France deployed Operation Boali in 2002, with the objective of lending support to the MICOPAX mission, and providing security for the M'Poko airport. In December of 2013, it was formed of some 250 military personnel, who were reinforced at the end of March to reach a total of 600 troops, from other French detachments in Africa. Available at: <http://www.defense.gouv.fr/operations/centrafrique/operation-boali/l-operation-boali>. Consultation date: 21/07/14.

²⁹ More information at Diez, J. «Chaos and violence in the Central African Republic», op.cit.

³⁰ In March, the first provisional report of the Commission of the African Union on the activities of MISCA reflect with excessive optimism the situation on the ground, and the

and despite the demanding nature of their mission, the two operations have been faced with considerable civilian criticism, which accuses the French and African military personnel of ineffectiveness in protecting them from the attacks of armed groups, and also of failing to maintain their impartiality. Demonstrations in Bangui were especially vehement following the bloody attack on the Cathedral of Fatima, on May 30th, in which 17 people died.³¹

The European effort: EUFOR CAR

The European Union—in light of the calls from the United Nations, the African Union, and the Central African Republic itself—on April 1st launched the military operation EUFOR CAR,³² which had been authorized by the Security Council of the United Nations through Resolution 2134 on January 28th. Their principal mission is to provide temporary support—for a period of six months—to stabilize and give protection to the two most turbulent districts of the capital, Bangui, with the objective of gradually turning the mission over to MINUSCA, in addition to creating conditions facilitating humanitarian aid. Although the process of generating forces was slower than had been anticipated, the European Union force—under the command of French General Pontières—began its deployment as of the middle of April, although it reached its final operative capacity on June 15th. Since then, more than 750 military personnel and gendarmes have achieved—in spite of their limited numbers—the settlement of a «tense calm» in their area of responsibility, although instability is still the predominant reality. For the moment, EUFOR CAR is scheduled to end its mandate on December 15th, although the European Service for Action Abroad of the European Union is analyzing the future European commitment regarding the CAR. In case approval is given, it is foreseeable that it will support reform of the security sector and of the judicial system, as is now taking place in other countries such as Mali or Somalia.

Within this scenario, from the beginning of the planning of the mission, Spain has demonstrated her total commitment to the support of this new European military initiative. Thus, she committed 50 Special Operations military personnel to participation—leading, for the first time, the Special Operations Command of an international mission—and 25 Civil Guards—with tasks of public safety, intelligence and criminal investigation—in addition to 10 other

goals reached by the African force. (Available at: http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2014/172&referer=/english/&Lang=S. Consultation date: 17/06/14). More realistic, regarding the international operations deployed, is report S/2014/142 of the Secretary General of the United Nations, also dated in March. (Available at <http://www.un.org/es/comun/docs/?symbol=S/2014/142>. Consultation date: 21/06/14).

³¹ Parellada, G., and Smith-Park, L. «Protesters lash out at peacekeepers in Central African Republic.» CNN, 30/05/14. Available at: <http://edition.cnn.com/2014/05/30/world/africa/central-african-republic-violence/>. Consultation date: 16/07/14.

³² Official Page: <http://eeas.europa.eu/csdp/missions-and-operations/eufor-car/index.en.htm>.

military members in the general headquarters at Larissa (Greece) and in Bangui. «EUFOR RCA», comments Colonel Martin, head of the Spanish contingent, «has managed, in less than three months, to turn around a situation which was absolutely blocked in Districts 3 and 5, which our operation is centered on. We have given security to the population and put in place the conditions for a return to normality, which is now taking place with the recovery of economic life, of commerce.» The effort, according to Trinidad Deiros, is especially visible in neighborhood PK5: «in this hell where the only hope was flight, the river of deaths halted in June. Although by then the level of violence had already diminished throughout the city, residents of PK5 attribute the end of the atrocities to the dissuasive presence on their streets of the Special Operations soldiers and of the Spanish Civil Guards.³³»

MINUSCA: The United Nations goes into action

With Resolution 2149/2014, approved on April 10th, the Security Council—after months of internal debate—authorized the deployment of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), which has now begun its deployment and which, according to the planned schedule, will assume its responsibilities as of September 15th. Ever since the beginning of the conflict, both the African Union and the Central African Republic itself have requested that the international organization become directly involved in the resolution of the conflict, thus becoming the guarantor of the stabilization of the country in the long term. «The troops on the ground must be reinforced», declared Catherine Samba-Panza shortly after becoming President. «Not only the Central African defense and security forces, but also with the aid of the United Nations through a peace-keeping mission.»³⁴ In achieving this objective, one determinant was the report which in the month of March, was issued by Ban Ki Moon,³⁵ in which he admitted that the deployment of the international security forces—MISCA, Operation Sangaris and EUFOR RCA—were not sufficient: «Coping with the crisis in the Central African Republic demands the adoption of a single and integrated approach, taking the form of deployment of a multidimensional United Nations peacekeeping mission, in which the protection of civilians constitutes its principal priority.» In addition to protecting civilians, with the adoption of «temporary and urgent measures of an exceptional character» to the extent of its capacities and within its zones of deployment, MINUSCA should concentrate on supporting the transition authorities, both in the processes of mediation and reconciliation, as well as in the arrest and trial of those responsible for «war crimes and crimes against

³³ Deiros, T. Spanish elite soldiers to protect last Bangui Moslems, op.cit.

³⁴ Catherine Samba-Panza: Ending conflict in CAR, op.cit.

³⁵ Report of the Secretary General on the Central African Republic, op.cit.

humanity». In the same way, it will collaborate in the implementation of a strategy for the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (the DDR process) of ex-combatants in the reform of the security sector. Both actions are indispensable for the achievement of a settled and lasting peace in the Central African Republic, but it will almost surely be necessary to await their implementation until after the instalment of a democratically elected and stable government. In order to carry out all these missions, MINUSCA will have at its disposition a maximum of 12,000 military personnel and police, whose presence on the ground depends on the contributions of the member nations, which have yet to commit a significant number of forces. For the moment, it is only certain that the greater part of the African troops of MISCA will be incorporated into the United Nations mission³⁶, which is totally insufficient –as has been demonstrated on the ground—to detain the violence, and much less to cope with all the missions of reconstruction of the State which the MINUSCA mandate foresees.

The Brazzaville Peace Agreement and the new transition government

With the mediation of the President of the Republic of the Congo, Denis Sassou Nguesso, the capital at Brazzaville was the site, from the 21st to the 23rd of July, of the Forum for National Reconciliation and Political Dialogue, whose limited goal was to achieve a cessation of hostilities and the acceptance of a process of disarmament by the parties to the conflict. The preliminaries to these conversations did not, however, bode well for their outcome. On the one hand, the previous cease-fire and joint peace declaration, signed in Bangui on July 4th, had produced no effect since, from his headquarters in Bambari, the «General» Joseph Zoundenko—leader of the former Selekas—claimed to have been unaware of the negotiations for a cease-fire on the part of the political wing at Bangui and therefore was not disposed to honor it.³⁷ On the other hand, and an even more determining factor, was the reappearance on the scene of Djotodia, after being re-elected, on July 11th, as leader of the Selekas.³⁸ In addition, many

³⁶ For the moment, nothing indicates that MINUSCA may reach the maximum authorized in the medium term. On August 15th, Barbacar Gaye, Special Representative of the Secretary General and head of MINUSCA, confirmed this point, in addition to declaring that «they had recruited some qualified civilians.» Available at <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2014/sc11527.doc.htm>. Consultation date: 18/08/14

³⁷ Bangui: Cease-fire between Anti Balaka and ex-Selekas, a joint declaration reported for lack of communication. RJDH, 03/07/14. Available at: <http://www.rjdh-rca.net/actualites/actualite/bangui-cessez-le-feu-entre-anti-balaka-et-ex-seleks-une-declaration-commune-reportee-par-manque-de-coordination.html>. Consultation date: 21/07/14.

³⁸ In addition to Djotodia, this faction of the former Selekas recognized Nourredine Adam and Mahamed Dhaffane as « lieutenants » of the coalition. Seleka again names

politicians and rebel groups were claiming that the future of the country should be resolved within the country and not abroad.

With all these antecedents, hopes for the final success of the negotiations were very limited, but there was evidence that the armed groups were ever more fragmented and that their internal leadership was more diffuse; the cynical character of both sides also became evident upon their seeming to claim impunity for the mere fact of attending the peace conversations. In addition, and despite being absolutely off the agenda, Brazzaville became the first international forum where the Selekas presented their secessionist demands,³⁹ which they withdrew *in extremis* in order to be able to reach a minimal pact and sign a cease-fire. Their representative, Mohamed Dhaffane, made clear that he was signing in the name of everyone—including Michel Djotodia and Nouredine Adam, who were not authorized to participate—and underlined that «those who refuse to take the road to peace will sooner or later end up before a judge»; while in representation of the Anti Balaka, the accord was ratified by Patrice Ngaissona, who was—very questionably—the self-proclaimed political coordinator of these militias: «These accords», he declared after the signing, «are the first step towards reconciliation. We will work to achieve peace.»⁴⁰ On the ground, as seen above, the accord did not change the prevailing dynamic of the clashes, which once again demonstrated that peace will not be definitive until all rebels abandon, or are relieved of, their weapons.

On the other hand, in the political field, the Brazzaville Accords had an immediate consequence. Days after the finalization of the negotiations, on August 10th, President Samba-Panza announced the formation of a new transition government,⁴¹ placing at its head the Moslem Mahamat Kamoun as Prime Minister (during 2013, he was a direct advisor to Djotodia), and into which she incorporated three leaders of the Selekas and two of the Anti-Balaka, all with the stated objective of reconciling the warring factions in order to move forward along the «road map» of the political transition. Thus, and as a prime objective, this cabinet would be tasked with initiating inclusive conversations at a national level, and, as well, to implement an indispensable process of rendering accounts. And if both goals are immense,

Djotodia as its leader. Reuters/EP, 14/07/14. Available at:<http://www.europapress.es/internacional/noticia-seleka-vuelve-nombrar-djotodia-lider-20140714075408.htm>. Consultation date : 21/08/14.

³⁹ In Brazzaville, ex-Saleka demand partition of Central Africa. Jeune Afrique, 22/07/14. Available at: http://www.jeuneafrique.com/Article/ARTJAWEB20140722085936/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+jeuneafrique+Politique+%28Jeune+Afrique+Politique%29.

⁴⁰ A tentative ceasefire in CAR. IRIN/UN OCHA, 29/07/14. Available at: <http://www.irinnews.org/report/100416/a-tentative-ceasefire-in-car>. Consultation date: 30/07/14.

⁴¹ Samba Panza names former Seleka advisor as Central African PM. Reuters, 10/08/14. Available at: <http://news.yahoo.com/samba-panza-names-former-seleka-advisor-central-african-151010365.html>. Consultation date: 21/08/14.

the holding of democratic elections, set for February of 2015, is as yet an impossibility, at least if the intention is that these be truly representative, a *condition sine qua non* if the objective is that the population trust the results at the polls. However, this transition government has not, for the moment, raised high hopes; the population does not understand the decision to include leaders of armed groups, and the Selekas have rejected the choice of Prime Minister and have expelled the three Ministers of the rebel coalition, because the coalition had «neither supported nor presented their names», as Nouredine Adam, vicepresident of the Selekas, stated.⁴²

The role of external actors

Although the greatest effort to return peace and stability falls on the military missions currently deployed in the Central African Republic and thus on the international organizations—the United Nations, the African Union, the European Union—as well as on the countries providing the troops, bilateral and regional relations have played a determinant role in the past and present history of the Central African nation.

France: the influence of the former colonial power

Officially, France granted independence to the Central African Republic in 1960, but its influence on the political development of the former colony has been constant. Since then, the support of France for the successive governments has been strongly questioned, within and without the country, although it has also oscillated according to internal events. In March of 2013, when Djotodia launched his offensive against the Bozize government, the attitude of France raised eyebrows: Bozize and his followers attacked the French troops (Operation Boali) for their total passivity in the face of the rebel insurrection, upon which France responded by arguing that she did not wish to interfere with the internal problems of the country.

However, since March of 2013, when violence broke out in Bangui, it is undeniable that France has become the great champion of international intervention: at United Nations headquarters, she backed the decision of the Security Council to deploy the African mission MISCA—with the French support of Operation Sangris—as well as its replacement by the U.N. mission MINUSCA. In addition, its leadership has been a determinant in the European Union's approval of the EUFOR RCA mission, to which it contributes the largest contingent of troops. In the political arena, she also, through her solid alliance with Chad, impelled the resignation

⁴² Seleka expels its members from CAR government. Aljazeera, 01/09/14.<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/africa/2014/09/seleka-expels-members-from-car-government-2014911418854785.html>.

of Djotodia in January of 2014. Currently she is aiding Interim President Samba-Panza to advance in the pacification of the country, and supporting the restoration of constitutional order.

Regional environment and the leading role of Chad

The geographic location of the Central African Republic, surrounded by six nations and immersed in a turbulent regional atmosphere, has been of transcendental influence on its historic development, as well as on the current conflict. Thus, the Central African Republic has become the refuge for thousands of Central Africans fleeing from sectarian violence, but there is a greater exodus into Cameroon and Chad, into which have fled many of those Moslems escaping from Bangui and the prefectures of the West.

Respecting regional problems, these are most important with reference to Chad and the Sudan, with which the Central African country shares its northern border. In spite of having closed border passes and deployed joint forces on occasion, this has always been a high-risk region: a territory free to illegal traffickers, lacking the presence of security forces. This is the cause of the origin there of many of the armed groups which have check-mated the respective governments, provoking, on many occasions, a rise in tension with respect to bilateral relations.

With regard to relations with Chad, her constant interference with the political development of the Central African Republic has mean that a great part of the centroafricans distrust the neighboring country. From the commencement of the organization of the deployment of MICOPAX in 2013, Chad committed itself to the contribution of a major military contingent. However, it has always been suspected that she was defending her own interests, and has only protected the Moslem community. Finally, in April of 2014, she withdrew her troops from MISCA, after these opened fire on a crowd of civilians in Bangui, killing more than 30 civilians. «There are many media which believe that the presence of our troops is a problem, when our only objective is to restore peace and security. If our withdrawal can help, we will withdraw,»⁴³ the Minister of Foreign Affairs Moussa Faki Mahamat then declared.

The United States: the fight against the LRA terrorist group

U.S. relations with the Central African Republic are of minor import, and have only increased after the arrival of the Ugandan terrorist group LRA,

⁴³ Pinto, P. Moussa Faki Mahamat, Chadian minister of Foreign Affairs. RFI, 04/04/14. Available at: <http://www.rfi.fr/emission/20140404-moussa-fki-mahamat-ministre-tchadien-affaires-etrangees/>.

or Lord's Resistance Army, in the easternmost area of the Central African country (Haut-Mbomou). In 2009, given the limitations of the regular Central African regular forces, Bozize authorized the deployment of the Ugandan People's Defense Forces, which were joined, in 2011, by 100 American Special Operations military personnel, whose sole objective was to dismantle the terrorist group and arrest its slippery leader, Joseph Kony. With regard to the current conflict, the U.S. has lent significant support to the African Union mission Operation MISCA, both in the operative field as well as in the strategic projection of the different African contingents deploying in the Central African Republic.

Conclusions and perspectives

Today, an end to the violence continues to be the most urgent and complicated objective in the Central African Republic. For decades, a scenario of enormous discord has been gestating, which has now exploded with unusual virulence and with no end in sight. The deployment of international forces has ostensibly improved the situation; however, more cooperation and determination is necessary for security to reign throughout the country. In order to achieve this, the 12,000 United Nations troops—whose arrival on the ground in the near future seems unlikely—will not be sufficient. It is thus a case of a challenge which the Central African Republic will have to face alone and on a long-term basis: it is still unthinkable to begin the reform of her security and defense forces, which should in themselves be the guarantors of peace and stability in a still-remote future.

In addition, all achievements will be fleeting unless disarming, demobilizing and reintegration is carried out with reference to rebel groups who, for the moment, do not seem disposed to renounce the use of force, nor to respect even the minimal peace accords signed so far.

Nonetheless, the definitive solution to the conflict could never be exclusively military. Therefore, the present transition government should undertake, as soon as possible, a political project of national reconstruction and at the same time, start down the path toward the difficult reconciliation of a people destroyed by hatred and vengeance. On the «road map» stand two obstacles of great transcendence. The first is democratic elections: although their scheduled date is important, much more so is majority participation and broadly representative results. The international community should keep this very much in mind, for it is always preferable to subordinate the electoral process to advances in the political and security fields, and not to a simple time limit. All in all, it is very likely, and even desirable, that these elections take place at a later date than February of 2015.

The second obstacle is the growing secessionist demands of the Selekas. The division of the country—now a de facto reality—with one territory for each religious confession, would be the verification of the fact that it is impossible for Central Africans to co-exist. It would, in addition, set another precedent in Africa, after the division of Sudan in 2011, which could be transferred, to highly pernicious effect, to other current conflict scenes, such as Mali or Nigeria. In order to avoid this, separatist claims must be calmed and the concept promoted among all communities that a united Central African Republic is possible and more beneficial for everyone. Djotodia's announcement of an independent and lay State of «Dar el Kauti»⁴⁴ last August 17th in the Moslem bastion of Birao is not of great transcendence, but does represent an alarm signal which should not be dismissed.

Similarly, until the restoration of true Constitutional order, it is indispensable that first steps be taken to restore the Rule of Law, which cannot consider impunity an option in the face of the serious crimes committed by all factions; and to extend, throughout the territory, the authority of a State which is now far from being significant and efficient. In the economic area, bases should be established permitting the installation of a sustainable financial system, in which the exploitation of the natural resources of the country from the basis of the growth and development of the population. In addition, and as a pre-requisite, the government must pursue and eradicate the illicit traffic in raw materials—the great burden of this country; protect the production zones—currently outside government control—and exercise effective control of the national borders, across which there continues to be uncontrolled transit of rebel groups and mercenaries, arms, and natural resources plundered within the country.

The challenges are major, and the time necessary to achieve peace and consolidate a stable and developed country is long and unpredictable. Since its independence, the Central African Republic has inscribed, in blood and fire, the history of an enormous failure, forged by decades of misgovernance, of corruption and of plunder. Undoubtedly, the international community must cooperate in the resolution of the conflict and in the construction of a new State; but it is the Central African government which must assume, once and for all, that theirs is the responsibility for the return to the population of a future in peace which has always been denied it.

⁴⁴ «Rebels' announcement of separatist state in CAR is bargaining ploy but highlights risk of protracted civil war.» IHS Jane's Intelligence Review, 19/98/14. Available at: <http://www.janes.com/article/42166/rebels-announcemnt-of-separatist-state-in-car-is-bargaining-ploy-but-highlights-risk-of-protracted-civil-war>. Consultation date: 23/08/14.

Geopolitical indicators

TABLE OF GEOPOLITICAL INDICATORS	
Extension	622,984 km ²
Population (estimated 2014)	5,277,959
Annual population growth rate (est. 2014)	2.13%
Population distribution by age (est. 2014) (Average age: 19.4 years old)	0-24: 60% 24-64: 36.4% Over 65: 3.6%
Ethnic groups (%)	Baya: 33, Banda: 27, Mandjia: 13 Sara: 10, Mboum: 7, M'Baka: 4, Yakoma: 4, others: 2
Religions (%) (Animist beliefs and practices have a major influence on the Christian majority)	Indigenous beliefs: 35, Protestants: 25, Catholics: 25, Moslems: 15
Mortality rate (est. 2014) (children under 5/1,000 inhabitants)	92.86
Literacy rate (est. 2014) (people of 15 or more years of age)	56.5%
Poverty threshold 2008 (Data from World Bank)	U.S.\$1.5 per day: 31%
Gross National Product, (GNP), (est. 2013)	\$U.S. 3,336 million (178th in the world)
Annual GNP growth, (est. 2013)	-14.5%
GNP per capita (est. 2013)	\$700 US
GNP Distribution (est. 2013)	Agriculture: 56.6%
	Industry: 14.5%
	Services: 28.9%
Exports (est. 2013): \$138.9 million. Diamonds, wood, cotton and coffee	Belgium (31.7%), China (27.9%) , Democratic Republic Congo (7.8%), Indonesia (5.2%)
Imports (est. 2013): Foodstuffs, textiles, petroleum products, machinery, electrical equipment, vehicles, pharmaceuticals	Holland (20.3%), France (9.7%), Cameroon (9.1%), South Korea (1.9%)
Military spending 2012 (Data, World Bank)	2.8 % of GNP

Principal source: Factbook CIA The World FACTBOOK <https://www.cia.gov/library/ct.html-publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ct.html>

Chronology of the Central African Republic

DATE	EVENT
1894	France establishes colonial territory of Oubangui-Chari
13th August 1960	Independence of the Central African Republic. David Dacko assumes the presidency.
1966	Coup of Colonel Jean-Bédel Bokassa. In 1977, self-proclaimed Emperor for life.
1979	French Intervention: overthrow of Bokassa. France decrees return of Dacko to the Presidency..
1981	Coup of General André Kolingba. In 1991, return to multiparty regime.
1993	Ange-Félix Patassé: First President elected democratically after multiparty elections.
1996	Intervention of France to protect Patassé (May and November); the French remain in the country..
1997	Bangui Accord.
2003	Coup of General François Bozizé. Elections in 2005, Bozizé elected President.
2006	Bozizé admits there is armed rebellion in northeast of the country.
2008	Signing of the Libreville accords between Bozizé government and rebel groups of the north.
2011	Bozizé re-elected President in the Presidential and Legislative elections in January.
2012	Formation of the coalition of rebel groups, of Moslem majority, Seleka, led by Djotodia

CURRENT CONFLICT		
2013	14th of January	Libreville (Gabón) Accords.
	3rd of February	Government of Nacional Unity. Prime Minister Tiangaye. Djotodia Vice Prime Minister.
	24th of March	Coup of Djotodia. Overthrow of Bozizé
	31st of March	New government. Prime Minister Tiangaye.
	3rd of April	Chad: leaders of African Union condemn coup.
	18th of April	Declaration of Yamena (Chad)
	18th of August	Djotodia officially invested Transition President
	9th of September	Djotodia orders dissolution of rebel group Seleka
	5th of December	Anti Balaka militias initiate massive offensive en Bangui
2014	10th of January	Resignation of Djotodia in Chad. Exile in Benín
	20th of January	Catherine Samba-Panza elected Interim President
	25 of January	New Transition Government. Primer Ministro Nzapayeké
	18th of May	Conference of the Seleka in N'Délé
	4 th of July	Bangui Peace Accords.
	11th of July	Assembly in Birao. Djotodia, re-elected leader of the Selekas.
	23rd of July	Brazaville (Rep. Congo) Peace Accords.
	10th of August	New Transition government. Prime Minister Kamoun

International missions in the Central African Republic

MISSION	OBSERVATIONS
Inter-African Vigilance Mission(MISAB) Bangui Accords (1997-1998)	Mission agreed on by Gabon, Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali and Central African Republic. 3,000 military personnel. Restore peace and stability, and proceed to disarm armed groups.
United Nations Mission (UN) in CAR (MINURCA) (1998-2000)	UN Resolution 1159/1998. 1,360 military personnel. Assist the Central African security forces; monitor disarmament process; support holding of elections.
UN Office for Consolidation of Peace in CAR (BONUCA) (2000-2010)	UN Declaration S/PRST/2000/5. 100 civilians and military personnel. Replaces MINURCA. Support consolidation of the peace and national reconciliation, and economic recovery.
Peace-keeping force CEN-SAD (2002)	Mission deployed by the Community of States of Sahara-Sahel. Led by Libya. Military support of President Patassé in face of attacks of the rebels of Bozizé.
Peace-keeping force CEMAC (FOMUC) (2003)	Mission deployed by Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa. 350 military personnel. Replaces CEN-SAD. Support for Patassé until overthrown by Bozizé.
UN Integrated Office for Consolidation of the Peace in CAR (BINUCA) (2010 to date)	UN Declaration S/PRST/2009/53. Replaces BONUCA. Support political transition and humanitarian aid, and foster extension of State authority.
UN Mission Central African Rep. and Chad (MINURCAT) (2007-2010)	UN Resolution 1778/2007. 5,200 military personnel. Create the conditions of security necessary for the return of refugees y persons displaced by Darfur conflict
European Union Force EUFOR TCHAD/ CAR (2007-2009)	EU Joint Action Council 2007/677/CFSP. 3,700 military personnel. Contribute to protection of civilians, refugees and persons displaced by conflict of Darfur, in Chad and CAR.
Peace Consolidation Mission in CAR (MICOPAX) (2008-2013)	Mission of the Multinational Force of the States of Central Africa (FOMAC). 2,700 military personnel and police. Fortify peace and stability, and aid in development.
International Support Mission CAR, African Leadership (MISCA) (Dec. 2013- Sep. 2104)	UN Resolution 2127/2013. 6,000 troops. Replaces MICOPAX. Protect civilians, support process of transition, humanitarian aid, justice, and process of disarmament.
Operación Sangaris (Dic. 2013 to date)	UN Resolution 2127/2013. 2,000 troops. Support MISCA. France has announced her intention to reduce the entity force at an early date.
European Force EUFOR CAR (May 2014 to date)	Launched by the European Union Council on 01 April 2014. 770 military personnel (Spain 85). Aid in restoring stability and security in Bangui, support MISCA, facilitate MINUSCA deployment. Support EU humanitarian projects in CAR
Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission UN CAR (MINUSCA) (deployment scheduled 15 sept. 2014)	Resolution 2149/2014. Maximum authorized: 12,000 troops. Mandate begins: 15th September 2014. Replaces MISCA. Protect civilians, support transition authorities, support disarmament, demobilization and reintegration

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The Democratic Republic of the Congo: a window of opportunity for peace

Blanca Palacián de Inza

Chapter eight

Summary

The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), bears a long history of linked conflicts, crises, political agitation, slaughters and abuses against human rights on its shoulders. Since its independence in 1960, Mobutu Sese Seko's long autocracy and the subsequent two wars have provoked, with the help of foreign interference, the loss of the State's monopoly of the legitimate use of violence. Nevertheless, the regional commitments and the political, economic and military advances achieved thanks to the changes in the course of action of the United Nations Mission open a window of opportunity for peace.

Key words

The Democratic Republic of the Congo, Uganda, Rwanda, FDLR, M23, MONUSCO, FARDC, Intervention Brigade, conflict minerals, child combatants, sexual violence, PSC Framework.

Introduction

The conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRP)¹ is the heir as well as the seed of previous confrontations in the region called «the Great Lakes». This is how the area next to the lakes located in the Great Rift Valley, which belongs to Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, Tanzania, and to the Democratic Republic of Congo is referred to. Others, such as the Division for Eastern and Western Africa of the *Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation*,² include Kenya in this region.

The way the conflict works in this part of the world is quite complex because it involves local players as well as regional and international ones. The result is that these conflicts have tended to spread geographically, moving the epicenter from one country to another, thus inheriting some from each other.

We can, therefore, say that the conflict in the DRC is made up of several conflicts involving different armed groups, from different origins and with different motivations, who are interested in maintaining an unstable situation. This situation allows them to control rich mining areas that provide resources that are valuable in some industries, funding the conflict, thus perpetuating a vicious circle.

Nonetheless, peace is closer than it has ever been since the beginning of the conflict in the 90s. We find ourselves before a window of opportunity that will not always be open.³

The geopolitical significance of the Democratic Republic of the Congo is due to several factors: its geographic location, its size, and its natural riches. Located in the equatorial area of Africa, the Democratic Republic of the Congo is the second largest country in the continent, with a total surface of 2,344,858 km², almost five times the size of Spain. The central area, sixty percent of its territory, is the basin of the Congo River. This river, which covers a wide area from East to West of the country before flowing into the Atlantic Ocean, constitutes, along with the other tributaries flowing throughout the entire country, the main transport route in Central Africa.

The DRC has rich deposits, most of which are located in the East of the country, which, ultimately, is the area with the most violence. These mineral resources are the key elements for the perpetuation of the crisis and

¹ Called Belgian Congo until its Independence in 1960. That year it became Republic of Congo until 1971 when it became Zaire during the autocracy of Mobutu Sese Seko, and, since 1997, it has again become the Democratic Republic of Congo.

² SIDA, «A Strategic Conflict Analysis for the Great Lakes Region», Division for Eastern and Western Africa, March 2004. Available in website: www.sida.se/publications.

³ BAFILEMBA, F., LEZHNEV, S., y PRENDERGAST, J. «Mary Robinson's Next Steps to Help End Congo's Deadly War», Enough Project, May 2013.



instability. This is why they are known as «conflict minerals». This land provides gold, cobalt, tungsten, tin, copper, iron, diamonds, and the most famous in the media lately: coltan. Tantalum, a metal which is extracted from coltan, is highly resistant to heat, and with such electrical properties that make it irreplaceable, for now, in mobile phones, videogame consoles, and all kinds of electronic equipments. It is estimated that most of the world's reserves of coltan are in this Central African country.

The report that the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo submitted to the Security Council (S/2014/42),⁴ states that many armed groups in the eastern part of the DRC have obtained funding from the production and marketing of natural resources. The report refers particularly to the extraction and marketing of gold, because although many of the working mines are located in areas where there is no longer armed violence, this mineral is mixed with other gold extracted from regions where such violence persists. The Group estimates that 98% of the gold

⁴ Final report of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of Congo S/2014/42 to the Security Council. Available on:http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s_2014_42.pdf.

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produced in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is smuggled out of the country, therefore financing armed groups, and is certainly not subject to taxes.

The journey for these minerals starts in any of the hundreds of informal mines which are controlled by local leaders, armed groups, or even by units from the Congolese army⁵. It is estimated that between the latter two, they control 50% of the mines in this area of the country.⁶ Through a string of intermediaries, the minerals continue the journey to Europe, the United States or Asia without having passed any control.⁷ Although the

⁵ The role of the exploitation of natural resources in fuelling and prolonging crises in the Eastern DRC. Research papers. nat-res International Alert, January 2010. P. 30.

⁶ From Mine to Mobile Phone: The Conflict Minerals Supply Chain. The Enough Project, November 10, 2009. P.2.

⁷ Violence against women in Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo: Whose responsibility? Whose complicity? International Trade Union Confederation, 2011. P.9. The Kimberley Process is a joint initiative of governments, industries of the sector and organizations in

DRC and other purchasing countries have their own legislation regarding the control of the mining industry, small-scale artisanal exploitation is not included. It seems it will continue thus as with diamonds,⁸ as long as the controls do not impose liability on large industries.⁹

In the illegal activities of mining, rebel groups as well as military groups constantly abuse the population¹⁰ because the atmosphere of insecurity favors the business. Thus, on the one hand, a population which is the necessary labor force is terrorized, and, on the other, depopulation and chaos are aggravated.¹¹ The then United States Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, already in 2009 pointed out that illegal mining activities which support armed groups, was one of the main causes of violence in Congo.¹²



the civil society, under the auspices of the United Nations, to stop the flow of diamonds of the conflict, which, although it still has a long way to go, is resulting an efficient measure. For further information: PALACIÁN DE INZA, BLANCA. «Los diamantes de conflicto». («The Conflict Diamonds») Defense Spanish Magazine, 2011, n.º. 272. pp. 54-57.

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⁹ 9 Initiatives such as the Project Solutions for Hope by Motorola and AVX, for tantulum, are resulting feasible and successful. Information on: <http://solutions-network.org/site-solutionsforhope/> Consultation date: September 2014.

¹⁰ 10 Global Witness. Congo's minerals trade in the balance. Mayo 2011. P. 9.

¹¹ 11 Father Pierre Cibambo, in charge of Africa, for Caritas Internationalis, confirms that sexual violence is used against women to humiliate and destroy some communities and to occupy their lands. With this strategy, the rebels control and exploit the resources in the wide areas of Kivu. <http://www.caritas.org/activities/emergencies/RapeDestroyingCongo.html>.

¹² 12 GETTLEMAN, JEFFREY. «Clinton Presses Congo on Minerals» 10/08/2009 The New York Times Available at: http://www.nytimes.com/2009/08/11/world/africa/11dipl.html?_r=0.

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The importance of this conflict is based on how it has become deeply entrenched throughout time, on its influence on neighboring countries, and on the tremendous cases of violence it is still causing.

The United Nations Mission for the Stabilization of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, MONUSCO,¹³ is still the mission with the highest annual cost (1,500 million dollars annually), and the one that has the largest number of mobilized troops (over 24,000 in April of 2014¹⁴). This mission has undergone an important change of direction during the first months of 2014 upon seeing its performance strengthened with the creation of the Intervention Brigade-, the first offensive force of the UN, with the new appointments and with the use of unmanned aerial vehicles. This change, which was becoming essential, is nonetheless insufficient. In asymmetrical conflicts, that are internal but which have become globalized, as in this case, where the civilian population is the main victim, and where violence is carried out by many players obtaining and consolidating peace is a long and complicated process. To achieve peace, in a positive sense, in other words, as a struggle against structural violence and not only as a mere state of the absence of war,¹⁵ much more than a military victory is needed. Yet this victory is essential.

Other factors that greatly hinder the end of this conflict are the destabilization that it provokes itself, but also receives from its neighboring countries. Foreign and domestic supporters house armed groups whose ultimate goal is the overthrow of the governments of the countries of origin.

Violence, perpetrated mostly by ordinary and non-ordinary troops,¹⁶ is considered a problem endemic to the country. The civilian population, accused of collaboration by both the rebel groups and by the army, suffers constant violation of their human rights from all sides: sexual violence (particularly against women and girls but also against men and boys¹⁷),

¹³ Its acronym comes from the French MONUSCO: Mission de l'Organisation des Nations Unies pour la stabilisation in RD Congo.

¹⁴ Information taken from MONUSCO's website: <http://monusco.unmissions.org/>.

¹⁵ Ramsbothan, O., Woodhouse, T., & Miall, H. (2012). *Contemporary Conflict resolution*. Cambridge: Polity press.

¹⁶ Harvard Humanitarian Initiative, «Characterizing Sexual Violence in the Democratic Republic of Congo», August 2009. In this study by María Eriksson Baaz and Maria Stern, focused on the perpetrators of sexual violence, the 193 interviews about rape on the part of the army, point to the difference between two types of rape with different ethical acceptance by the perpetrators: random rape to liberate sexual tension, and «wicked» rape related with drug consumption, frustration, and rage, and which has no other purpose than to commit horrible actions. It must be taken into account that the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of Congo were responsible for 40% of sexual violence perpetrated in the first half of 2007. BAAZ, M. E., y STERN, M., «Why do soldiers rape? Masculinity, Violence and Sexuality in the Armed Forces in the Congo (DRC)». *International Studies Quarterly* 53, 2009. P. 497

¹⁷ PERDIGAO, Yovanka. «Invisible Victims: Sexual Violence against Men in the Great Lakes», Think Africa Press, 28/06/2012.

massive murders, systematic torture, compulsory recruitment or forced labor, among others. In many cases, all of this violence overlaps onto the same victim. Therefore, it is not unusual that members of armed groups force a person to work in the mines during the day, and sexually exploit him or her at night.¹⁸

Sexual violence is a general issue in the DRC and its systematic use branded this region of the country as the «world capital of rape»¹⁹ by the then-special representative of the Secretary General for the fight against sexual violence in conflicts, Margot Wallstrom, in 2010. In the decade previous to that date, nearly 200,000 rapes had been reported in the region.²⁰ In spite of the attention from the media, and of the work undertaken by international organizations, the phenomenon doesn't diminish. The statistics gathered by ACNUR in the province of Northern Kivu show an alarming increase of these actions against women and girls during the first semester of 2013.²¹

Bearing in mind that few of these abuses are reported, due to lack of security, fear of the victim to be stigmatized, and to the inaccessibility to many places, the real figure estimated is much higher.

Sexual violence has also been perpetrated by some members of the United Nations. Although news about this kind of abuses by these troops date back to the 90s, the alarm was not raised until 2005, when a report about this issue was published²². Thanks to it, some measures have been taken. Training and the inclusion of women in the contingents have been some of the most important and effective measures.

Background to the conflict

In the clashes in this region, as is common in Africa, we can find causes inherited from the colonial period, which have been perpetuated since then mainly due to economic interests, of other countries, to its industry and to its organizations. Thus, the artificial colonial borders are still

¹⁸ Free the Slaves, «The Congo Report: Slavery in Conflict Minerals». 2011. P. 11.

¹⁹ UN News Centre. «Tackling sexual violence must include prevention, ending impunity—UN official». 27 April 2010. Available at: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=34502#UntxQnmTUVg>.

²⁰ Violence against women in Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo: Whose responsibility? Whose complicity? ITUC, 2011.

²¹ UNHCR, «Sexual violence on the rise in DRC's North Kivu». Briefing Notes, 30 July 2013. <http://www.unhcr.org/51f79a649.html>.

²² United Nations. Report of the Secretary-General's Special Advisor, Prince Zeid Ra'ad Zeid al-Hussein on «A comprehensive strategy to eliminate future sexual exploitation and abuse in United Nations peacekeeping operations» [A/59/710] 24/03/2005 Available at: http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/59/710 Date consulted: April 2014.

provoking rivalries among the different tribes and ethnic groups for the control of a State or a region.

Yet, not only that. Other common causes worth mentioning are:

- the regional nature that the clashes take on which, as Enrique Vega points out, forces the solutions to also take on this nature²³,
- the *identitarianism* of the political options, which in the case of the DRC resulted in the «Zairinization» of the country. In other words, in the development of an exclusion policy that is still nurturing the different guerrilla groups,
- the succession of long term autocratic governments,
- the very high level of foreign interference,
- the abundance of armed groups added to the disappearance of the State apparatus, and
- the greed of locals and foreigners for the vast natural resources.

The last decades in the history of the DRC offer a summary of the preparation and the perpetuation of some of the causes that we have pointed out.

Independence and secession of Katanga

From the very same moment in which the country falls under the presidency of Joseph Kasavubu in 1960, once King Baudouin I had recognized the independence of the Belgian Congo, the ethnic tensions and military revolts were the order of the day. Just one month later, Moïse Tshombé, Governor of the province of Katanga, the richest in the country and, thus, with more Western interests, proclaimed the independence of his province and requested military aid from Belgium.

During this first year, the country turned into the battleground of the two sides of the cold war, supporting one or another government. Due to the gravity of the clashes, to international interference, and in view of the petition from the Congolese Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba, the United Nations Security Council approved the mission for peace maintenance ONUC which was deployed until 1964.²⁴

²³ VEGA FERNÁNDEZ, E., »Los conflictos armados africanos: la confrontación interior«, en «África: ¿un nuevo escenario de confrontación?», «The African armed conflicts: inside confrontation», in «Africa: a new confrontation scenario?», Monographs of the National Defense Studies Center (CESEDEN), n 123. Madrid, Ministry of Defense. Technical General Secretariat. 2011. Pp 28.
Available on: <http://dialnet.unirioja.es/descarga/libro/548251.pdf>. Consultation date: June 2014.

²⁴ For thorough reading regarding the first years of Independence and subsequent conflicts, contextualized in the region, we recommend: VACAS FERNÁNDEZ, F. and PAR-

Mobutu's regime

In 1965, four years after the assassination of Prime Minister Lumumba, elections to parliament were held. Although the coalition led by Tsombé won, the still President of the Republic Kasavubu did not allow him to take office as Prime Minister. At the end of that year, Mobutu Sese Seko proclaimed himself President, thus replacing Kasavubu. Mobutu imposed a bloody military autocracy in the country, renamed Zaire in 1971, which lasted three decades.

After the dissolution of the USSR, Zaire lost its usefulness as guarantor of the containment of communism in the area, so that, while the internal opposition gained strength, the unconditional support from the West disappeared. The economy of the country had reached disaster while Mobutu's accounts had considerably swollen.

The First Congo War (1996-1997) or «war of liberation»

The war in Rwanda (1990-1994) caused a significant exodus of civilian Hutu refugees. They, along with the defeated militias (called *interahamwe*, «those who fight together», who were responsible for the genocide), and the army settled in the region of Kivu, where the conflict continued.

The «Hutu power» took advantage of the refugee camps to organize and train itself with the aim of attacking the governments of Rwanda and Burundi. This opposition caused such concern in these countries that became evident through the events that ensued. Mobutu had supported the Tutsi genocide in Rwanda, therefore the Congolese Tutsis themselves desired his fall. When the Tutsis came into power in Rwanda, the opposition within the DRC became strong thanks to the support from Rwanda, Uganda and Burundi. Uganda's motivation stemmed from the fact that Mobutu protected the Ugandan guerrillas, and even the Sudanese guerrillas who were against the Government of Uganda. This tendency to give refuge to guerrillas that are against the government of a neighboring country is still an element that is present in the region of the Great Lakes.

The outbreak of the conflict was due to Mobutu's decision to expel people of Tutsi origin who lived in Kivu, arguing that they were not from Zaire, despite having lived there for generations. These Tutsis, with the aforementioned international aid, started a rebellion and joined the so-called Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo (AFDL), headed

DO DE SANTAYANA, J. «The Conflict in the Great Lakes». Ministry of Defense, Technical General Secretariat, 2005.

by Laurent-Désiré Kabila, who gathered together all of the opponents to Mobutu's regime.

In a fast military campaign, Kabila's forces took over the power in the country, renamed Democratic Republic of the Congo under the presidency of Kabila.

The Second War of Congo (1998-2003) or African World War

Once Kabila named himself president, suspicion and struggle for power, including an attempt of a coup, provoked a change of alliances.²⁵ The new president turned against his former supporters, from Uganda and from Rwanda, whom he expelled from the country. He then searched for partners of a nationalist nature among the moderate Hutu forces and among his followers from Katanga, his homeland. Due to these changes, the countries in the area became aware of the threat to their influence and military control over the DRC, but also to their internal security and stability. The outcome was that they initiated a mechanism similar to the one that had carried Kabila to power, but this time they made sure they created a more manageable alternative than he had. This alternative was the Rally for Congolese Democracy (RCD²⁶), whose nucleus was formed by former members of the AFDL.

This new phase of the conflict, clearly globalized, has been called «African World War». With an estimate of 5.4 million victims killed²⁷ from 1998 to 2007, it is the conflict that cost more lives in the world since the end of World War II. A direct heir of the genocide perpetrated in Rwanda in 1994, and which caused the death of over half a million Tutsis, it was supported by the troops of this ethnic group from Rwanda and Uganda. Both countries intended to establish a security zone in its Western border, and thus control the Hutu militias established there and, in addition, they were logically interested in the mineral riches in the area.

Given the danger of the imminent collapse of Kabila, the forces from those countries which feared the strength of Uganda and Rwanda sided with him. Angola needed Kabila, now an ally of the Hutu guerrillas and of the Mai Mai guerrillas, to combat the UNITA guerrillas based in the south of the DRC. President Robert Mugabe from Zimbabwe supported Kabila for reasons of personal ambition because he expected that his support would

²⁵ FARRÉS FERNÁNDEZ, G. «La segunda guerra del Congo, rol de los principales actores regionales.» («The Second Congo War, the role of the main regional actors») No-vafrica, 2010. P. 80.

²⁶ RCD is the acronym from the French: Rassemblement congolais pour la démocratie. Since 2003, it is a political party. It participated in the transition government.

²⁷ COGLHAN, B., NGOY, P. et al. «Mortality in the Democratic Republic of Congo: an ongoing crisis», International Rescue Committee, 2008.

be paid with part of the enormous wealth of Kinshasa.²⁸ Sudan, Libya, Chad and Namibia (in support of Angola) also sided with Kabila, although to a lesser extent. In this way, the conflict became totally regionalized. On the other side were the former allies: Uganda and Rwanda, besides Burundi (which had troops deployed in the DRC to combat the Hutu rebels who fought against its army), the Tutsi militias, and two Congolese rebel groups (RCD y MLC²⁹), and, to a lesser extent, the Central African Republic and South Africa.

Although they did not fight for either side, there was a parallel conflict in the two regions of Kivu which, from 1999 to 2007, confronted the *lendu*, who are shepherds, and the *hema*, who are farmers. The clashes soon spread and involved other ethnic groups such as the *ngiti*, generally considered loyal to the *lendu*, and the *gegere*, who supported the *hema*. The combat among these groups resulted in at least 60,000 people dead.

The cease-fire was reached with the Lusaka Agreement of July 10th, 1999, which was signed by the States involved in the conflict and by the two rebel groups. This agreement was the basis for the deployment of the UN peacekeeping operation: MONUC³⁰. Nevertheless, the war continued without much variation because Kabila's government controlled the southwestern half of the country, and the rebels the northeast half. Neither respected the cease-fire.

Kabila's assassination in January of 2001 was the event that changed the bitter situation drastically. His son, Joseph Kabila, succeeded him and from that moment on, some advances took place to implement the Lusaka Agreement, and to abide by the cease-fire during 2001. The peace process ended between 2002 and 2003 with the creation of a transition government led by Joseph Kabila who, in 2006, won the first democratic elections held in the country in 40 years.

THE CNDP (National Congress for the Defense of the People) AND THE M-23

A great section of the country continued to be and still is insecure, particularly the East. There, the ethnic factor takes on an essential role in the provinces of northern Kivu and southern Kivu, with the confrontation of communities considered indigenous of Rwandan or Burundi origin, considered non-native». For the latter, in many cases, the way to gain access

²⁸ For a thorough and clear explanation about the regional participation in this conflict, we recommend reading: FARRÉS FERNÁNDEZ, G. Op. Cit.

²⁹ MLC is the acronym from French: Mouvement de libération du Congo. It has been a political party since 2003. It participated in the transition government.

³⁰ United Nations Mission of Observers for the Congo.

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to the economic system has been to belong to or to support one of the armed groups.

An example of this is the confrontation that the guerilla CNDP (National Congress for the Defense of the People), led by its founder Laurent Nkunda, with the support of Rwanda, that was started in May 2004 by the CNDP. During these years, Nkunda set himself up as a defender of the Tutsi community in the Kivu provinces to protect them from a new genocide that could take place on the part of the Rwandan Hutu rebels from the FDLR (Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda). Nkunda himself is an example of the series of conflicts in the region, as he fought against the Hutus in Rwanda in the 90s, and participated in the revolution that overthrew Mobutu in the then called Zaire. Afterwards, he left the army with his men accusing the government of Joseph Kabila of corruption.

Most of the attacks from this armed group between 2004 and 2008 resulted in the defeat of the Armed Forces of the DRC (FARDC³¹), among other things due to the arms embargo that the country was under since a decade before, but also because the troops were poorly trained and poorly paid, and in many cases they dedicated themselves to looting and smuggling in the region, as we shall see later.



On the 23rd of March, 2009, Nkunda was arrested and the CNDP signed a peace accord by which it would become part of the Congolese Armed Forces. Nevertheless, the conflict didn't end here. In April of 2012, be-

³¹ FARDC: Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo (Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo).

tween 300 and 600 Tutsi combatants, most of them former members of the CNDP, commanded by General Bosco Ntaganda, rebelled against the DRC's government for not having implemented its commitments in accordance with the peace treaty. They established themselves as the so-called 23rd of March Movement (M23), taking their name after the date of the treaty.

On the 20th of November of that year they seized Goma, the capital of the province of northern Kivu and, although at the beginning of December they retreated from Goma, the hostilities did not cease. This was the main reason for the UN to authorize the deployment of an offensive Intervention Brigade which managed to get the armed group to surrender in a few months³².

Current situation of the conflict

On February 24th, 2013 the *Peace Framework*³³ was signed in Addis Ababa among the leaders of Angola, Burundi, the Central African Republic, the Republic of Congo, the DRC, South Sudan, South Africa, Tanzania, Rwanda, Uganda, and Mozambique. The framework follows model 11+4 because, besides these eleven signatories, the UN, the African Union, the International Conference on the Region of the Great Lakes (CIRLG) and the South African Development Community (SADC) acted as guarantors.

This agreement holds the DRC's authorities responsible for the reform of its security forces and of its institutions. The aim of committing so many countries and organizations is essential: to put an end to the interference from other countries in internal conflicts in the region. The military defeat of the different armed groups is not feasible nor does it make sense if the neighboring countries help them to survive and to rearm themselves. This is why signing the Addis Ababa agreements is considered an important achievement towards peace: essential, along with international

³² «Los rebeldes del M23 anuncian el fin de su lucha armada en el Congo» («The M23rebels announce the end of their armed struggle in the Congo»). «El País». 02/11/2013. Available at: http://internacional.elpais.com/internacional/2013/11/05/actualidad/1383642968_110904.html. Consultation date: November 2013. For further reading about the M23, we recommend: IRIN. «RDC: Comprendre le groupe armé M23». 26/06/2012. Available at: <http://www.irinnews.org/fr/report/95733/rdc-comprendre-le-groupe-arm%C3%A9-m23>. Consultation date: December 2013.

PALACIAN DE INZA, B. «¿El fin del M23? Hacia falta enseñar músculo» («The end of the M23? It was necessary to flex muscles»). Analysis Document – Spanish Institute of Strategic Studies- IEEE 52/2013. Available at: http://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs_analisis/2013/DIEEEA52-2013_FinDelM23_BPI.pdf. Consultation date: February 2014.

³³ Available in French at: <https://www.un.org/wcm/webdav/site/undpa/shared/undpa/pdf/PSC%20Framework%20-%20Signed.pdf> Consultation date: February 2014.

pressure to defeat the M23, and they will also be to face the fight against the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR) and the rest of the armed groups that are still active.

Despite the different peace treaties and the presence of United Nations troops to enforce them, the country hasn't come out of the chaos it is immersed in, which incites a continuous struggle among militias that aspire to control the extraction of the resources in the Eastern area. Thus, after Somalia, the DRC is still in second position in the list of failed States.³⁴

In the Global Peace Index 2014³⁵ report, which identifies the peace index in 162 countries, the tendency towards violence, and its economic impact, this country holds position 155. This report highlights the main factors related to society and its security, and to the domestic conflicts for which different armed groups were responsible, to label the DRC as a *barely peaceful* country.

Main armed groups

The armed groups that operate in the DRC are counted in the tens³⁶. Most of them act in the Eastern region of the country, and are of diverse entities, ideologies and origins. According to President Kabila,³⁷ the ones that pose the major threat to the security of the country are the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR), the Alliance of Democratic Forces (ADF), the Resistance Army of the Lord (LRA), and the National Liberation Forces (FNL). Furthermore, the report that the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of Congo submitted to the Security Council in January of 2014³⁸ adds the group called Kata Katanga to this list.

³⁴ On the list in 2012 it was also in second position after Somalia, making its situation worse with regard to 2011, year in which its indicators showed a more positive result coming out of the «alert» area, and being in 4th place after Somalia, Chad, and Sudan. See lists of failed states elaborated by the magazine Foreign Policy and by Fund for Peace. Available at: <http://ffp.statesindex.org> Consultation date: May 2014.

³⁵ Institute for Economics and Peace. «Global Peace Index 2014. Measuring peace and assessing country risks», 2014. Available at: <http://www.visionofhumanity.org/sites/default/files/2014%20Global%20Peace%20Index%20REPORT.pdf> Consultation date: June 2014.

³⁶ For more information on other groups, see:

Democratic Republic of Congo's key armed groups. Agence France-Presse. 17/07/2013 Available at: <http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/news/afp/130717/democratic-republic-congos-key-armed-groups>

DRC: Tough bargaining with armed groups. Irinnews. 18/10/2012. Disponible en: <http://www.irinnews.org/report/96585/drc-tough-bargaining-with-armed-groups> .

³⁷ United States Department of State. Country Reports on Terrorism 2013. 2014. P. 19 Available at: <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/225886.pdf> .

³⁸ United Nations. Final report by the Group of experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo S/2014/42. Op. Cit. P. 3.

Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR³⁹)

It is estimated that the FDLR contingent fluctuates between 2,400 and 4,000⁴⁰ which makes it the largest illegal foreign armed group. Although, according to information supplied by MONUSCO⁴¹, it has a growing number of Congolese members, it is largely formed by members of the government and of the Rwandan army expelled in 1994, as well as by refugees of the same nationality. It currently operates in the East of the DRC and in the province of Katanga, and is the most active group in the country.

Last November 14th, 2013, the United Nations Security Council stressed the importance of neutralizing all of the armed groups.⁴² For now, the top priority is to neutralize the FDLR. The Representative of the Secretary General announced such after 20 years had passed since the Tutsi genocide in Rwanda at the hands of the Hutus which ended the lives of 800,000 Rwandans in 100 days, 20% of this country's population.

When the Rwandan Patriotic Front, composed by Tutsis, took power in Rwanda, many civilian refugees who had nothing to do with the actions, but also members of the Armed Forces and the militias,⁴³ as well as rulers who were responsible for the genocide, were forced to flee: 1,300,000 fled to Zaire (DRC). Those guilty of genocide proclaimed themselves government in exile and began their preparation and training to recover power in their country⁴⁴. This is the origin of the FDLR, currently considered one of the main obstacles to achieve peace in the DRC.

Although the most extreme nucleus of the group is made up of people who took part in the genocide in 1994, currently most of group members are youngsters recruited in the refugee camps that still exist. Their age is considered a positive element when it comes to their possible reintegration into society, as almost all of them are under 30 years old and, thus, were not implicated in the terrible events of 1994.⁴⁵

Even though the official aim of the FDLR is to overthrow the government of Rwanda, it also attacks the Congolese population and has cooperation

³⁹ Acronym in French: Forces Démocratiques de la Libération du Rwanda.

⁴⁰ According to Armed Conflict Database. Consulted in February 2014.

⁴¹ Information from MONUSCO. Available at: <http://monusco.unmissions.org/> Consultation date: March 2014.

⁴² <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=46494&Cr=democratic&Cr1=congo#.UoXOIHmTUVg>.

⁴³ Interahamwe means «those who fight together» in hutu.

⁴⁴ ORTEGA RODRIGUEZ, Maria Paz. «The FDLR as an Obstacle to Peace in the DRC». *Peace Review*. Volume 23, 2011. P. 176.

⁴⁵ «Rwandan Hutu fighters in Congo surrendering in large numbers – UN». Reuters. 11/12/2013. Available at: <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2013/12/11/uk-congo-democratic-rebels-idUKBRE9BA18V20131211> Consultation date: January 2014.

ties with the Mai-Mai militias⁴⁶ and with the Burundi National Liberation Forces. These actions are related, according to Maria Paz Ortega, to the two different lines of discourse they espouse. The first is the official narrative which even includes its name, and intends to cut its links with the ethnic component, and focus on promoting democracy and dialogue with the Rwandans. The second is its internal discourse which, according to this author, is based on a much more radical thought process that is more radical and has an anti-Tutsi motivation. This discourse fits in more with their brutal actions against the Congolese population than with that of a democratic nature, because it was this group that emphasized the use of rape as a weapon of war, as well as other actions such as the burning of schools, churches, health centers or entire towns; the recruitment of children; extortion or assassinations, and a long list of terrible actions. The FDLR is among the groups that have committed more violations to human rights in the provinces of northern Kivu and southern Kivu, in the East of the country.⁴⁷

Alliance of Democratic Forces (ADF)

This is a Ugandan group with an Islamic slant, particularly brutal and based in the Rwenzori Mountains, bordering with Uganda. Its objective is to establish the sharia⁴⁸ in Uganda. It was created around 1998 merging several trends of thought which were discontent with the Ugandan society after Idi Amin was overthrown.⁴⁹ Currently it has around 500 soldiers, although the excessive secrecy around this group leads to doubt its real capacity.

*National Liberation Forces (FNL)*⁵⁰

The FNL is a rebel group native to Burundi, but based in the DRC. Its origin dates back to 1985, as the armed wing of the Party for the Liberation of the Hutu People (PALIPEHUTU)⁵¹ during the civil war in Burundi. This party had been created by Hutu refugees in Tanzania

⁴⁶ A confederation of armed groups that operate in the DRC having a total of 8,500 troops are known as Mai Mai militia. Armed Conflict Database.

⁴⁷ ORTEGA RODRIGUEZ, María Paz. Op. Cit. P. 176.

⁴⁸ The sharia, also called Islamic Law, according to the Koran, is the right way to this religion.

⁴⁹ Idi Amin Dada was the third president of Uganda after a coup and after establishing a military autocracy that lasted from 1971 to 1979. He combined the postulates of the Koran, leftist ideas, anti-occidentalism, and a fierce repression of his adversaries. He was known as «the Kampala butcher» for his cruel and horrific actions, which led him to be accused of genocide by the Court of Justice at the Hague.

⁵⁰ FNL is the French acronym for: Forces nationales de libération.

⁵¹ Known as PALIPEHUTU, its French acronym for: Parti pour la libération du peuple hutu.

some years earlier. They fought in the Second Congo War with the Congolese Armed Forces, against the Burundi Army. Both factions, party and armed wing, which had already split in 1990, signed a peace treaty with the government of Burundi in September, 2006. Most of the FNL joined the national armed forces, but a minority continued the armed struggle establishing its bases in southern Kivu against the Burundi government. Currently, the FNL still has links with the FDLR group.⁵²

The Lord's Resistance Army (LRA)

The LRA was created in 1987 by some members of the Holy Spirit Movement, founded by Alice Lakwena, and of the Ugandan army toppled by President Yoweri Museveni. During almost 25 years, the Lord's Resistance Army, headed by its leader, Joseph Kony, has wreaked havoc in the civilian communities of central Africa, taking the lives of over 12,000 people. What started as a rebellion located in the north of Uganda has become a regional insurgency that now terrorizes the civilian population in the northeast of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in South Sudan and in the east of the Central African Republic.

Between 1994 and 2004, the LRA was located in South Sudan, but after the peace negotiations, the group moved its base to the DRC. They began to settle there at the end of 2005, specifically in the national park of Garamba, in the northwest of the country, which they converted into their headquarters for almost three years. They are still present residually in this park where, according to a report published in June of 2013 by Kasper Agger and Jonathan Hutson,⁵³ they use the poaching of elephants and the high price of ivory to finance themselves. In this report, it is explained how the LRA transports ivory from the DRC to the Central African Republic, where they sell it to Arab businessmen and officers of the Sudanese Armed Forces in exchange for money, food, arms, ammunition, and medical supplies.

Although according to the Report from the Group of Experts on the DRC,⁵⁴ the violent attacks from this group decreased in 2013, and it is estimated that in this country it only has 40 or 50 members, it still fills the population with fear, and is pushing thousands to displace. According to the Government of Uganda «*from the military point of view, the LRA was reduced to a gang of prowlers*». Thus, and as stated in the mentioned report, the

⁵² Information from MONUSCO. Available at: <http://monusco.unmissions.org/>.

⁵³ Agger, K. y Hutson, J., «Kony's Ivory: How Elephant Poaching in Congo Helps Support the Lord's Resistance Army», Enough Project, Satellite Sentinel Project, Invisible Children y The Resolve. June 2013.

⁵⁴ Report S/2012/843, Op. Cit. P. 31.

main crimes committed by the group are pillage and kidnapping people to use them as carriers of the looted goods.

Kata Katanga

According to the Report of the Group of Experts,⁵⁵ Kata Katanga is a decentralized network of armed groups and political movements that officially advocates the secession of the province of Katanga, where it operates shortly since the 2011 elections.

This fight for the independence of the province of Katanga, which started decades ago, relies on the support of some intellectuals and political leaders. The main group operates under the military direction of Kyungu Mutanga (alias Gédéon) although there are several local groups that operate under Kata Katanga's flag, and they seem to do it so. These groups are responsible for the serious abuses against civilians in the rural areas.

Child soldiers

A recent report about child soldiers in the world, that gathers data from the United Nations until 2012, indicates that not only do armed groups recruit minors, but also documented 20 cases of recruitment and the use of children by the DRC Armed Forces.⁵⁶ The «12th Annual Report of the Secretary General of the United Nations to the Security Council about the situation of children and armed conflicts»,⁵⁷ published in May, 2013, confirms the finding and includes, in the list of child recruiters,⁵⁸ nine groups involved in the conflict in the DRC, among them the FDLR, the M23, the Lord's Resistance Army, and the Armed Forces themselves.

⁵⁵ Report S/2012/843, Op. Cit. P. 16.

⁵⁶ VVAA. «Niños y niñas soldados en el mundo». Alboan, Amnistía Internacional, Entreculturas, Fundación El Compromiso y Save the Children. 2014. Disponible en: «Boy and girl soldiers in the world». Alboan. Amnesty International. Entreculturas. Fundación «El Compromiso» («The Commitment») and Save the Children».

http://www.entreculturas.org/publicaciones/estudios_informes/ninos-ninas-soldado-informe-2014

Consultation date: February 2014.

⁵⁷ This list is part of the campaign «name and shame» to be carried out as per Resolution 1379 (2001)

Available at: <http://watchlist.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/CAAC-Annual-Report-2013.pdf> Consultation date: September 2013.

⁵⁸ The United Nations draws up a list of parties in conflict who use and recruit children. The subsequent resolutions 1882 (2009) and 1998 (2011) include in the list those groups which participate in cases of mutilation, death, and sexual violence; and of those which carry out attacks to schools and hospitals, respectively.

*Resurrection of the FARDC (Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo)*⁵⁹

The Democratic Republic of the Congo has the largest army in Central Africa, with an estimated force of 134,250 troops.⁶⁰ Until 2014, all of the reports that referred to these Armed Forces spoke of a poorly paid and equipped army, and with a negative assessment by the population. Upon seeing that the improvement of the security was essential to obtain peace in the region, many programs in the European Union, in the United Nations, and of a bilateral nature, under the leadership of countries such as the United States, France or China, among others, went to great pains for the task. But they all seemed to bear little benefit and suffered from a lack of planning and coordination, in addition to colliding with the internal governance of the country.⁶¹

Furthermore, the different failed integration processes of the members of other armed groups into the Armed Forces brought about the creation of an unruly national army which adopted the characteristics of the rebel groups it integrated. Nevertheless, the reinsertion policy still continues because this is what is intended with the recently defeated M23 group, although this time the idea is to make it more thorough and demanding when the personnel is selected.

In its 2012 report,⁶² the *International Crisis Group Africa* wrote about the spread of illicit activities of the FARDC using the operations against armed groups as an excuse. The report on the DRC by the Congressional Research Service of the United States in 2013 coincided with that idea. It pointed out that the 15,000 people that make up this army are poorly trained, badly paid, and lack food and supplies. These shortages may favor abuse and looting. Furthermore, the report extends this limited capability and the high rate of corruption and illegality to other basic institutions such as the police, the judicial power and other organs related to security.⁶³

⁵⁹ «Resurrection of the FARDC (Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of Congo)?» Title taken from a section in the following article, where the history of this army is thoroughly explained, and the reform stages foreseen: BERGHEZAN, Georges. «FORCES ARMÉES DE RDC : Le chaos institutionnalisés?». (ARMED FORCES OF THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO: An institutionalized chaos? GRIP. 01/01/2014. Available on: <http://www.grip.org/fr/node/1174> Consultation date. February 2014.

⁶⁰ IISS. «The Military Balance 2014». Routledge, 2014. P. 432.

⁶¹ ARIEFF, A. y COEN, T. Op. cit. P. 12. 2012.

⁶² International Crisis Group Africa. «Eastern Congo: Why Stabilisation Failed». Briefing N°91, 4 October 2012.

⁶³ ARIEFF, A. y COEN, T. «Democratic Republic of Congo: Background and US Policy». CRS Report for Congress, R43166. Julio de 2013. P. 12 Available at: <https://www.fas.org/spp/crs/row/R43166.pdf> Consultation date: February 2014.

Matters have not made much progress, although there has been a substantial change: between October and November of 2013, under the surveillance of General Santos de Cruz, and with better training, intelligence, and support, the FARDC behaved more efficiently and with discipline.⁶⁴ The result was confirmed by the work of Armed Forces capable of conducting operations of combined artillery and air support in the fight against the M23. Furthermore, there have been no reports of abuses against human rights in these actions.⁶⁵

The role of external players

Uganda and Rwanda

The report of the United Nations Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo, S/2012/843,⁶⁶ documented violations of the embargo of arms to support the M23 and its allies by the governments of Uganda and Rwanda. Its most recent report S/2013/433,⁶⁷ however, points out that although no signs that the government of Uganda is still providing support were found, it does not mean it is not. However, they have been found in the case of Rwanda.

By supporting the continuity of destabilizing armed groups in its neighboring country, the governments of Uganda and Rwanda would benefit from the extraction and trafficking of such valuable resources as gold, diamonds, coltan or copper. Thus they boost ethnic struggles between Hutus and Tutsies in the Kivu provinces, and between the Hema and the Lendu in the area of Ituri.

Rwanda has accused the Congolese troops and government of collaborating with the FDLR, while the United Nations experts have repeatedly reported the support from Rwanda to the M23. Both governments have denied the accusations.

⁶⁴ In his report to Secretary General Kobler, he spoke along these lines: «The military victories obtained until now have been possible not only because of the robust military commitment of our forces, but through an invigorated action of the Congolese army. In fact, the FARDC have become more efficient and more operative. They have partly improved their discipline, and rationalized their chain of command. They are better equipped and paid more regularly. This has had a decisive impact on the military victory against the M23.» KOBLER, Martin. Op. cit. P. 3.

⁶⁵ IISS. «DRC sets precedents for UN forces». Volume 20. Comment 1. February 2014.

⁶⁶ Report S/2012/843 available at: <http://www.un.org/es/comun/docs/?symbol=S/2012/843> Consultation date: September 2013.

⁶⁷ Report S/2013/433 available at: <http://www.un.org/es/comun/docs/?symbol=S/2013/433> Consultation date: September de 2013.

The United Nations

The UN deployed the United Nations Observer Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) after the signing of the Lusaka Accords in 1999. One year later, it changed its nature from mission of observation to peacekeeping force, with more capacity to act, although it did not change its name.

A new journey started with the elections in 2006, won by Joseph Kabila, which were the first free elections in the country after over four decades of conflicts. Thus, in 2010, after a report from the United Nations Secretary General which affirmed that the DRC had begun a new stage with its transition toward the consolidation of peace, MONUC became the United Nations Mission for the Stabilization of the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUSCO). The change from mission of «observation» to mission of «stabilization» responds to a new concept of operations that intervene more in the domestic life in the territory where they are deployed. Their main objective is to create and maintain a security climate that will allow the development of the rest of the activities towards the consolidation of peace.

By June of 2014, MONUSCO had deployed over 21,000 troops in uniform, almost 1,000 international and 3,000 local civilians, and over 500 UN volunteers.

The Intervention Brigade: from peace-keepers to peace-makers

In November of 2012, only a few months after its creation, the M23 group seized Goma, the capital of the province of northern Kivu. This action was a tough blow for the damaged morale and image of the Congolese Armed Forces and of the United Nations troops. The powerlessness of being unable to repress this action and the subsequent ones, added to years of hard criticism, was the main reason for the General Council of the UN to authorize, in March of 2013, the deployment of the Intervention Brigade.⁶⁸ The authorization was approved through Resolution 2098,⁶⁹ with the declared

⁶⁸ For more information about this Brigade, see: BOLAÑOS, Jorge. «New Brigade of Intervention in the Democratic Republic of the Congo: A step forward by NNUU in the Great Lakes». Information document of the Spanish Institute of Strategic Studies 16/2013. Available at: http://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs_informativos/2013/DIEEEI16-2013_Congo_BrigadaIntervencion_JBM.pdf. PALACIAN DE INZA, Blanca. «¿El fin del M23? Hacia falta enseñar músculo». («The end of M23? It was necessary to flex muscle») Analysis document of the Spanish Institute of Strategic Studies 52/2013. Available on: http://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs_analisis/2013/DIEEEA52-2013_FinDelM23_BPI.pdf

⁶⁹ United Nations Security Council Resolution 2098 (2013). Available at: <http://www.un.org/es/comun/docs/?symbol=S/RES/2098%282013%29> Consultation date: September 2013.

aim to openly combat the M23 and other Congolese and foreign armed groups.⁷⁰This Resolution is particularly important because it is the first United Nations offensive combat force.⁷¹

From the deployment of the ONUC in 1960 until that of this offensive brigade, the UN interventions in the DRC have gradually gained more capability of action, and more involvement in the domestic life. The United Nations forces have even been branded «military tourists» by the Ugandan President Museveni.

The current severity of the United Nations, in addition to the use of surveillance drones, is considered the combination of effective tools to help the Congolese army and for the military to defeat these groups. From a more global analysis, it is possible that we are witnessing the birth of a new type of peace-imposition missions of the United Nations, assuming a more aggressive role in specific areas where the conflict is more deeply entrenched.⁷²

Use of unmanned aerial vehicles

The approval of unmanned aerial vehicles by the Security Council⁷³ was previous to that of the Intervention Brigade, but its first flight did not take place until December of 2013.⁷⁴

⁷⁰ «MONUSCO should have, for an initial period of one year, and within the limits of the maximum allowance authorized of 19,815 troops, exceptionally, and without setting a precedent or without detriment to other principles convened for peace keeping, an integrated «Intervention Brigade», among other things, three infantry battalions, one of artillery, a special force, and a reconnaissance company with general headquarters in Goma, under the direct command of the Commandant of the MONUSCO Forces, with the responsibility of neutralizing armed groups, (...)» United Nations Security Council Resolution 2098 (2013). Available at: <http://www.un.org/es/comun/docs/?symbol=S/RES/2098%282013%29> Consultation date: January 2014.

⁷¹ The Brigade, with a mandate period of one year which is expected to be extended, has 3,069 soldiers from South Africa, Tanzania, and Malawi, and it includes two infantry battalions, one artillery company, and another one of special forces.

⁷² DEEN, Talif. «U.N. Peacekeeping Goes on the Offensive». IPS, 13/11/2013.

⁷³ Through a letter (S/2013/44) dated January 22, 2013 from the President of the Security Council, Masood Khan, to Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon in reply to a missive from the latter (S/2013/43) of December 2012 which stated the need to have this data collection equipment available for surveillance purposes for MONUSCO. These letters are available on: <https://www.un.org/en/sc/documents/letters/2013.shtml>.

⁷⁴ The first drone used by the United Nations in the DRC, which is also the first one used in a mission, in all its history, was a Falco, manufactured by Selex ES, and it started functioning on December 3.

For more information regarding this vehicle and the problems that the United Nations has had for its acquisition: LEE, Caitlin. «UN UAV procurement highlights political, acquisition problems»- IHS Jane's Defence Weekly. 09/12/2013. Available on: <http://www.ja>

The purpose for its use is the prior reconnaissance of the areas before carrying out a military action, but Martin Kobler, chief of the Mission and *Special Representative of the Secretary General* for the DRC, also highlights its obvious nature of dissuading armed groups crossing the borders. These vehicles will also be useful to control trafficking of arms.

If the use of surveillance drones is successful, they are likely to be used in other missions. Nevertheless, the Brigade as well as the use of surveillance drones are measures described by the United Nations as temporary, and specifically for the DRC.

New appointments

During the first semester of 2013, the military and civilian heads for the MONUSCO changed, along with its new discourse being firmer, stronger, and more proactive than reactive. «*We will protect the civilians, and eliminate and neutralize the threats – declared General dos Santos, Commander of the Mission. «We will not wait for the threats to turn against the civilians.*»⁷⁵»

Martin Kobler supported the same idea last January when he declared that the MONUSCO «*was not there to react, but to act.*»⁷⁶

The European Union

Currently, in the framework of the Common Policy for Security and Defense (PCSD), the European Union is involved in the Democratic Republic of the Congo through two missions of expert advice and assistance: EUSED RD Congo, aimed to reform the army since 2005, and EUPOL RD Congo, a civilian mission deployed since 2007 with the purpose of restructuring the police force. Spanish personnel have participated in both missions dedicated to the Reform of the Security Sector, which have between 30 and 40 troops each.

The Security Sector Reform (SSR), is, according to the definition of the Committee for Aid to Development (CAD) of the OECD (Organi-

nes.com/article/28184/un-uav-procurement-highlights-political-acquisition-problems Consultation date: February 2014.

⁷⁵ <http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/peopleandpower/2014/01/congo-general-2014131116336818.html>.

⁷⁶ KOBLER, Martin. «Turning promises into deeds. Statement of SRSG Martin Kobler to the Security Council». 13 January 2014. P.3. «Our position is clear: we are not in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to react, but rather to act, we are not there to deter but to prevent, and we not only keep peace, we must make peace a long-term reality! With the Intervention Brigade and with our unmanned air vehicles all of the armed groups are now conscious that we have the will and the means to take energetic measures at any moment».

zation for Economic Cooperation and Development), the process through which a country strives to «increase its capacity to meet all security needs of its society, compatible with democratic standards and with the accepted principles of governance, transparency, and democracy.»⁷⁷

Thus, the general aim of the EUSEC RD Congo is to support the Congolese authorities in the reconstruction of an army that guarantees security in the country, thus enabling the necessary conditions for economic and social development. This mission works together with MONUSCO and with EUPOL RD Congo so that the tasks performed by the Security Sector Reform are coordinated.

EUPOL RD Congo has police forces, personnel in the area of justice, and human rights experts. Its objective is the restructure of the Congolese police, and its coordination with other sectors of the civilian society. The mission also intends to strengthen the fight against impunity of sexual violence, and the abuses against human rights.

Other missions from the European Union deployed in the DRC were Artemis, in 2003, in the district of Ituri, EUFOR RD Congo, to support MONUC during the elections in the country in 2006, and the civilian mission EUPOL Kinshasa, from 2005 to 2007, to set up an integrated police unit in Kinshasa.

Perspectives for the future

The changes implemented by the United Nations and the government of the DRC, along with the cooperation among different special envoys and the regional accords, are gradually bearing fruit. Positive steps have been taken, which were unthinkable only a few years ago, such as the Addis Ababa accord, or the greater strength shown by the last decision made by the Security Council to provide MONUSCO with an Intervention Brigade. These steps show that the road taken is the right one.

Thus, in Resolution 2147 of the Security Council, where the mandate of the Mission of the United Nations in the DRC is revised, an optimistic tone is seen, and the need to have a clear exit strategy is pointed out,⁷⁸ always keeping in mind the evolution of the context and the enforcement of the peace agreement. Nevertheless, there is still much to be done, and it is a job that consumes human and

⁷⁷ OECD DAC Handbook on Security System Reform (SSR): Supporting Security and Justice (Paris: Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development). 2007. P. 21.

⁷⁸ Resolution of the United Nations Security Council 2147 (2014). Regulation paragraph 3. Available on: [http://www.un.org/es/comun/docs/?symbol=S/RES/2147\(2014\)](http://www.un.org/es/comun/docs/?symbol=S/RES/2147(2014))
Consultation date: September 2014.

economic resources. This is the reason why Resolution 2147 itself contemplates a broad scenario, and establishes three priorities: the protection of the civilian population, the stabilization of the country, and the support to the application of the peace framework of Addis Ababa, which outline the tasks for the immediate future. Monitoring the enforcement of the arms embargo, the support to national and international judicial processes, the involvement of the authorities of the DRC in the reform of the security sector, the consolidation of a civilian structure that can control the mining activities and its trade, the establishment of a Rapid Response Force within the FARDC or the call for an electoral roadmap are some of the measures established in this Resolution.

The consolidation of peace includes a wide range of activities and it is a long process which, as we have seen, begins before the end of the hostilities. In addition it is a costly job, which requires the involvement of local, regional, and international players with a high degree of organization and coordination. The approach to the complex problem of a generalized use of violence cannot be done in a simplistic manner. The end of this scourge will not see the light unless it is by persecuting the crime and its perpetrators. Without solving the crisis of governance, without the recovery of the monopoly of the legitimate use of violence on behalf of the State, without the participation of the victims in the negotiations and reparations, without the empowerment of the communities,⁷⁹ without an education that breaks learned gender patterns, without development, without attention to those child combatants who learned violent behavior through violence, or to those youngsters and adults forced to rape their daughters, sisters or mothers, peace cannot be consolidated.

Unfortunately, the resources dedicated to the consolidation of peace are only a small part of what would be necessary for the success of this task. This is why there is an urgent need to have our society understand that peace and security have long been global, so political commitments may go further than the short-term electoral campaign or the momentary media attention.

⁷⁹ The empowerment of women should be accompanied by measures for men also, of their empowerment and education, in order to reach a win-win environment, thus avoiding the increase of the tension between men and women. The idea is to carry out co-empowerment strategies so that the transformation reaches the entire community. For more information regarding this gender approach to sexual violence, it is recommended to read: *Increasing Security in DR Congo: Gender-Responsive Strategies for Combating Sexual Violence*. Clingendael, June 2011. CRU Policy Brief. Available at: http://www.cd.undp.org/mediafile/20110531_cru_Policybrief_rsmits.pdf.

Geopolitical indicators

TABLE OF GEO POLITICAL	INDICATORS
Area:	2.344.858 Km ²
GDP:	18.560 M\$ (2013 est)
GDP Distribution	Agriculture: 44.3%
	Industry: 21.7%
	Services: 34% (2013 est.)
Per capita GDP	: 400 \$ (2013 est.)
GDP growth rate:	6.2% (2013 est.)
Trade relations (<u>Exports</u>):	9.936 M\$ (2013 est.) China 54.3% Zambia 22.6% Belgium 5.7% (2012)
Trade relations (<u>Imports</u>):): 8.924 M\$ (2013 est.) South Africa 22.3%, China 15.3%, Belgium 8%, Zambia 6.9%, Zimbabwe 5.6%, France 4.9%, Kenya 4.7% (2012)
Population:	77.433.744
Age structure	0-14: 43.1%
Age structure	15-64: 54,3 %
Age structure	Over 65: 2.6%
Population growth rate	: 2.5% (2014 est.)
Ethnic groups:	200 different groups. The Bantu is the largest group.
Religions:	Catholics: 50%, Protestants: 20%, Kimbanguists: 10%, Muslims: 10%, Others: 10%
Literacy rate of the population:	66.8%
Population below poverty threshold:	71% (2006 est.)
GINI coefficient	: N/A
Military expenses. % of GDP	: 1.72% (2012)
Information taken from the CIA Factbook	2014

Chronology of the conflict

CHRONOLOGY OF THE CONFLICT	
DATE	EVENTS
1960, June	Independence of Congo Belgium
1960, July	Tshombé proclaims the Independence of Katanga
1960, July – 1964, June	Deployment of UNOC Mission
1965	Mobutu's coup
1971	Mobutu renames the country as Zaire
1990-1994	War in Rwanda
1996-1997	First War of the Congo
1998-2003	Second War of the Congo
1999	Lusaka Accords
1999-2010	MONUC Mission
2003	Operation Artemis
2005- present	Mission EUSEC RD Congo
2006	Mission EUFOR RD Congo
2007- present	Mission EUPOL RD Congo
2009, March 23	Peace accord with the CNDP
2010- present	MONUSCO Mission
2012	The armed group M23 is created
2012, November	M23 seizes Goma
2013, February 24	Peace Framework. Addis Abeba Accords
2013, March	Resolution 2098 del UNSC authorizing the Intervention Brigade
2013, December	First flight of a United Nations unmanned air vehicle in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Baluchistan: Pakistan's most turbulent reality

Jordi Marsal Muntalà

Chapter nine

Summary

The conflict or conflicts of Baluchistan do not often appear on the pages of the Western media. However, its location as a corridor between the Iranian plateau and the Indian subcontinent, as well as its position on the Arabian Sea in the western Indian Ocean, make it a crossroads on the route between the Straits of Ormuz and those of Malacca, as well as the connection with Central Asia for its coastal ports. The Baluchistan region is divided among three countries (Pakistan, Iran and Afghanistan) and in the first two there is a presence of terrorist groups and insurgents capable of destabilizing the zone. In the case of Pakistan, since its independence in 1947, successive conflicts have taken place, caused by the activities of these groups and often accentuated by the political and military errors of the Islamabad government. In 2003 a new phase of the conflict began which increased in 2005 and remains open. In Iran, although the conflict is less continuous and has more of the characteristics of terrorism than of insurgency, it maintains tension with the successive appearance of terrorist groups.

Key words

Baluchistan, Pakistan, Iran, Afghanistan, Gwadar, Indian Ocean, Central Asia, U.S., China, insurgency, terrorism, energy.

Introduction

Baluchistan¹ is one of those regions generally forgotten by the Western world. However, due to its geopolitical situation it is an area of special importance²: it sits astride Pakistan, Iran and Afghanistan; is an exit point to the Indian Ocean for the Central Asian region and a coast of passage on the trade route between the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf on the one hand and the Straits of Malacca on the other. In addition, it is the eastern border between Sunnis and Shiites. Also, at times, groups of separatist terrorists (from Pakistan and Iran) coincide in this region, and mix with Taliban groups linked to AlQaeda. Neither should its existing natural and energy resources be forgotten, nor its privileged location as a transit zone for oil and gas pipelines. And so, in spite of being frequently in the news due to assaults, especially in Quetta, the capital of the Pakistani zone, and also along the border between Pakistan and Iran, it seems to be relegated to the category of latent conflict, with no analysis of its causes, antecedents and possible consequences.

Geography³

This region, extending from the Iranian plateau to the mountain range of Khirtar in the southeast and from the Sulaiman mountains in the northeast to the Gulf of Oman in the Arabian Sea, is formed by rugged mountains of sparse vegetation, as well as more fertile areas though of little rainfall and dependant on the water and silt transported along the courses of rivers and rainfall. This mountainous aridity is dominant in the Afghan and Iranian areas. To the south lie desert areas known by the traditional name of Makran.

It is also an area prone to earthquakes, the most recent to date being that of September 24 2013 with an intensity of 7.7 on the Richter scale. This territorial composition produces agriculture based mainly on horticulture, dependant on rainfall and the volume of flow of its rivers.

This obliges the construction of an artificial irrigation system of canals and terraced land (qanats and gabarbands). In the oases of the Makran-area desert, palm trees are cultivated.

The coastal area called Makran has some thousand kilometers of coast of which 750 are in Pakistan and the rest in Iran. A series of small ports

¹ Multiple transcriptions of the name of the region exist: Baluchistan, Balochistan, Beluchistan or Belochistan.

² AHMAD, Syed Iqbal: *Balochistan, Its Strategic Importance*. Karachi, Royal Book Co. 1992.

³ Most of the descriptive data is taken from articles in the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, from JANE's, from the English Wikipedia, and from the U.S. Department of State (<http://countrystudies.us/pakistan/35.htm>).

are located along the coast, such as Ghabahar, Gwatar, Jiwani, Gwadar, Pasni and Ormara. The most important and significant of these is, as will become evident, Gwadar. The Makran was in Omani hands from the end of the XVIII century, even during the British presence, although in progressive reduction to a point where only some 800 square km. around Gwadar was held, until in 1958 this came definitively to form a part of the Makran district within the Pakistani province of Baluchistan.



Political map of Baluchistan⁴

From a geopolitical⁵ point of view, we find ourselves in a transit zone between the Iranian Plateau and the Indian subcontinent, of which it represents the north-western border, called the Al Hind frontier⁶. At the same time, it is the corridor from Afghanistan and Central Asia and its outlet into the Indian Ocean. Down these corridors poured the historic invasions and incursions of the Persian Empire, Alexander the Great, the Mongols and of Arabs and Turkish tribes who brought Islam into this area as well as into the north of the subcontinent. Its long coast also allowed access to the Portuguese and British from the sea.

⁴ Source: http://www.columbia.edu/itc/mealac/pritchett/00maplinks/modern/modern_index.html.

⁵ KAPLAN, Robert: *The Vengeance of Geography*. P194ss. Barcelona, RBA, 2013.

⁶ WINK, André: *Al Hind: The Making of the Indo-Islamic World, Vol.I, Early Medieval India and the Expansion of Islam 7th-11th Century*, chap. 4. Boston, Brill Academic Publishers, 1996.

As indicated above, the historic region has been distributed among three countries (Pakistan, Iran and Afghanistan) since the XIX century as a consequence of the setting of borders by the British with Persia along the Goldsmith Line in 1871 and with Afghanistan along the Mortimer Durand Line in 1893. In Pakistan the province of Baluchistan is the largest of the four existing, holding an extension of 347,190 square km., some eight million inhabitants and a density of 22.8 inhabitants per square kilometer. The province is structured into six divisions (Kalat, Makran, Naseerabad, Qetta, Sibi and Zhob) which organize the 32 districts into which it is divided. Three areas may be distinguished: the coastal (Makran), the central (Chalet), and in the north the area of Quetta, the capital of the province, with 842,000 inhabitants, located very close to the Afghan border and connected by road to the Afghan city of Kandahar. This area, as we shall see, due to its proximity to Afghanistan and the Federally Administered Tribal Lands (FATA) of Pakistan, directly suffers the consequences of the situation: Afghan refugees and terrorist attacks. The capital of the province is Quetta and the major cities are Gwadar, Turbat, Khuzdar and Kalat.

The tribal origin of the Baluchis⁷ together with the rugged terrain of the region has facilitated the persistence of the tribal system. There exist a great number of tribes, often with no very peaceful relations among them, such as the tribes of the Marri, Dasti, Dasti Bugti, Buzdar, Lund, Ranjhani, Ahmedani, Mazari, Mengal, Nuktani, Jiskani, Chandio, Muhammad Hassani, Nausherwani, Laghari, Mir Jat, Rind, Bizenjo, Zehri, Dehwar, Changwani, etc. The northern area of Baluchistan forms part of Afghanistan and is made up of the Chahar Burjak district in the province of Nimruz and the desert region of Registan divided into the provinces of Helmand and of Kandahar. Some of the Afghan governors of these three provinces have been of Baluchi origin.

The great majority of the inhabitants of the area are Sunnis, even in Iranian Baluchistan. Only a few significant Shii are to be found in the Hazara population of the city of Quetta or among the Sistanis in the northern area of the Iranian province of Sistar and Baluchistan. Normally this is a moderate Islam which has come into conflict with the radical visions of the Taliban who originate in Afghanistan or in the FATA and have immigrated into the Baluchi region as a consequence of the extension of the conflict in both areas.

In Iran⁸ we find the province of Sistan and Baluchistan, geographically separated from the rest of Iran by the Lut desert. It is one of the present-day Iranian provinces, with an extension of 181,785 Kms² and some two and

⁷ QUDDUS, Syed Abdul: *Tribal Baluchistan*. Lahore, Ferozsons 1990.

⁸ HOURCADE, Bernard: *Géopolitique de l'Iran*. Paris, Armand Colin, 2012, pp 26-31, 162-164 and 210. Dudoignon, S.: *Voyage au pays des Baloutches (Iran, debut du XXI siecle)*. Paris, Cartouche, 2009.

a half million inhabitants. In the north is located the Sistan (formerly Nimrouz), a flat area watered by the River Hilmand which descends from the Hindu Kush mountains, permitting a flourishing agriculture. This area of the province holds a small Baluchi presence found concentrated in the center and south of the province. The Sistanis are Shiites, the Baluchis are Sunnites. The capital of the province is Zahedan, where reside about 600,000 of the two and a half million who live in the province, of whom about a million and a half would be Baluchis. They are still a people with strong tribal structures (one of their principal tribes is that of the Rigi, which like others is spread along both sides of the border) engaging in cross-border contraband operations in an underdeveloped area with an incipient urbanization highly concentrated on the capital.

In 2009, the Iranian and Pakistani railway networks were connected in Zahedan, a fact which has helped the economic and population growth of the city.

The rest of the territory, however, is still poor and underdeveloped. In addition, the traditional tribal practice of smuggling has drifted into drug traffic, since the area is located on the opium route out of Afghanistan and Pakistan on the way to Turkey as the entry port to Europe. For the Iranian government, the difficult border control in an area little inclined towards the Shiite government of Tehran is a major problem, not only due to drugs but also as a possible zone of passage for illegal trade in nuclear materials.

Population and Languages

It is difficult to know how many Baluchis there currently are, although an approximate figure would be some twelve million, of whom about nine million would be living in Pakistan, a million and a half in Iran, some three hundred thousand in Afghanistan, some four hundred thousand in Oman and another two hundred thousand scattered throughout the United Arab Emirates, India, Turkmenistan, and certain countries of Africa's Indian Ocean coastline, such as Kenia and Tanzania.

Their language is Baluchi, a tongue of Indo-European origin belonging to the Indo-Iranian family, within the north-western Iranian group. It is a co-official language in the respective provinces of Pakistan and Iran, there being an official academy of the language with its central office in Pakistan. Different dialects are spoken depending on the area: In the east, Rakhshahan, with several variants (Sarhaddi, Afgano, Turkmenish, Panjguri, Kalati, Kharani and Sarawani); in the south, Makrani, with its variants (the Coastal, Lashari, Kechi and Karachi); and in the east, Sulaymani, with its dialects (Bugti, Marri-Rind, Mazari-Domki, Mandawni and Khatoi)

The Baluchis seem to be a people of Iranian origin, having arrived around the year 1000 from the shores of the Caspian Sea. They had a tribal organization which at times gave rise to the creation of tribal confederations in conflict with each other. The most important era was that of the Kingdom of Kalat, which united almost all the tribes in 1638 and came to proclaim its independence in 1747.

However, the region holds as well other peoples and ethnic groups, such as the Brahui, the Pashtuns or the Makranis.

History⁹

This region has been populated for some nine thousand years; a period corresponding to the remains of certain Neolithic settlements. In the Bronze Age, about 4,500 years ago, it formed a part of the Harappa culture in the Indo River basin. At the end of the second millennium B.C. people of Aryan origin began to enter, among them the Baluchis. The Archimedean Empire also acted upon the region and the troops of Alexander the Great crossed the area of Makran on the way back from their expedition to India. The Seleucid Empire, too, carried out incursions into the area. Tribes of other origins also appeared in the last century before our era. From the east, coming from the north of the Indian subcontinent, the Mauryan Empire (322-252 B.C.) dominated the territory. Coming down to our era, the Kushan Empire (30-375), out of the north, conquered the area, penetrating into the greater part of the Ganges plain. Between the years 320 and 550 those controlling the country were of the Indian Empire of the Gupta dynasty, although the Persian Sassanid Empire was also present.

In the seventh century Baluchistan was divided into two regions: the west formed part of the Persian province of Karman, and the northwest area, of the province of Sistan. With the expansion of the Arabs and their victory over the Sassanid Empire, Islam arrived in the region on its way to India. In the year 644 Caliph Omar conquered Baluchistan from the interior of the Iranian plateau and subsequently, the Makran area from the sea. Although in the early years several revolts took place, Islam settled into the area. The region was totally Islamized by the IX century, and at the beginning of the tenth century the Mameluke Mahmud al-Gazi created an empire unifying the entire area, from Afghanistan to the north of India. During this era the Persian Gaznavid Empire was also present. From 1526 on, the dominant power was the Mongol empire, which would last until 1858. During this time a certain degree of autonomy was enjoyed by the Khanate of Kalat, which gradually extended its influence throughout

⁹ DASHTI, Naseer: *The Baloch and Belochistan. A Historical Account*. Bloomington, Trafford, 2012. May also consult: <http://balochistanarchives.gov.pk/>.

the area. Until the arrival of the British, a series of different dynasties succeeded themselves in the region, under the influence of Afghanistan.

In 1849 there occurred the arrival of the British, whose presence would last until their departure in 1947. The British, through their East India Company,¹⁰ exercised control, improving the infrastructure, and, using as support the tribal chiefs and their quarrels, managed to maintain their power in the area. During the second half of the century the eastern area was under British influence while the west was annexed by Iran, and as stated above, the coastal area was controlled by the Omanis.

While the British ruled, they created four principalities after their expansion from India: Makran, Kharan, Las Bela and the most important of them, Kalat.

Well into the 20th century, when the imminent departure of the British was evident, Mir Ahmed Yar Khan, king of Kalat, favored the creation of an independent State in Baluchistan. Thus, when the States of India and Pakistan were proclaimed in 1947, the king also proclaimed his independence as well as that of his own State. This situation was not accepted by the Pakistani government, which invaded the region in April of 1948. An agreement was signed renouncing the formation of an independent Baluchi state. However, this accord was not accepted by all, which gave rise to the first conflict as analyzed below.

Pakistani political system.

The Pakistani political system has been stormy ever since its independence in 1947. Until 1956 it had no Constitution. In 1962 a new Constitution was approved. As a consequence of independence in 1971 for the eastern part, Bangladesh, a third was approved in 1973. However, the activities of the army and the intelligence services, which have always had, and continue to play, a fundamental role in Pakistani political life, have brought about long periods of governments headed by the military.¹¹

¹⁰ KEAY, John: *The Honourable Company. A History of the English East India Company.* London, Harper Collins, 1991. ARBOR, M.I. and Robins, Nick: *The Corporation that Changed the World. How the East India Company Shaped the Modern Multinational.* Hyderabad, Orient Longman, 2006 (2nd Ed.).

¹¹ In 1958 General Ayub Khan carried out a bloodless coup d'état deposing Iskander Mirza who months before had deposed Izkander Mirza. In 1977, General Zia alHaq ousted Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and governed until his death in 1988 in an air accident of still-murky circumstances. In 1999, General Pervez Musharraf, who the previous year had replaced General Jehangir Karamat as Head of the Armed Forces, dissolved the government of Sharif and ran the country until 2008 when, in August, he was forced to resign from the Presidency.

Currently the parliamentary system is made up of two Chambers. The National Assembly, with a 5-year term of office, is composed of 342 members, of whom 272 are elected by universal suffrage. They are distributed among the four provinces: 148 from the Punjab, 61 from Sindh, 35 from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (until 2010 called the Northwest Province), and 14 from Baluchistan. In addition, there are 12 seats reserved for the FATA, 2 for the Federal District of the Capital (Islamabad), 10 reserved for religious minorities and 60 for women. The Senate has 100 members elected by the provincial assemblies with a six-year mandate. As to the government ministers, these must be elected among the members of Parliament.

For their part, the four provinces are provided with a Provincial Assembly. These are required to contain general seats, as well as those reserved for non-Moslems and for women. The Provincial Assembly of Baluchistan is made up of 65 seats: 51 general, 11 for women and 3 for non-Moslems. The Assembly of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa holds 124 (99, 22, and 9) that of the Punjab, 371 (297, 66, and 8), and that of Sindh, 168 (130, 29, and 9). Elections are held every five years, and each province elects 19 Senators.¹²

Actors

A multiplicity of actors exist who add a degree of extreme complexity to a conflict conditioned by its geopolitical situation, its rugged or desert terrain, the still predominant tribal tradition and the diversity of interests.

In the first place, mention should be made of the governments, the central as well as the provincial, of Pakistan, Iran, and Afghanistan. Since the end of World War II, the region has witnessed instability, especially in Pakistan and Afghanistan, whose relations have undergone continuous change, having there been frequent Pakistani accusations of help and even shelter given to Baluchi nationalist groups. The situation of the Pashtun tribes and their actions has not helped good relations. On the other hand, neither have relations between Iran and Pakistan,¹³ in spite of their shared anti-separatist interests, been easy, due to their religious differences and their different international positions, which have made border control extremely difficult.

In addition, the non-agreement between the central Pakistani government and the provincial government on several occasions has been of no help in pacifying the situation.

¹² Pakistan, Internal Affairs. HIS Jane's, 30 April 2014.

¹³ UL HASSAN, Minjah: Pakistan-Iran Relations in Historical Perspective. University of Peshawar, 2004.

The importance which the intelligence services hold in Pakistani political life should not be overlooked. The most important is the Directorate for Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) and this is in addition to the Intelligence Bureau and the Military Intelligence (MI).

In the case of Iran, repression was harsh during the Imperial era and things did not change with the revolution; rather the opposite occurred, except during the stage of moderate government which allowed a period of calm.

In the second place, attention should be focused on the tribal players, of major importance as indicated above. Three stand out among the multitude of existing tribes: the Marri, the Bugti and the Mengal.¹⁴

The Marri, formed of three tribal subgroups, occupy most of the district of Kohlu in the border zone of Dera Ghazi. They are very active in legal actions within parties as well as in guerrilla movements. The Bugti, formed of seven tribal subgroups, were led by Nawab Agbar Khan Bugti together with 30 other members of the tribe until his death in 2006, which was the motive for a strong insurgent movement in the area. They have played a major role in elections and in the provincial government, of which Nawab was governor after the democratic restoration in 1988.

During the mandate of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, the Mengal, led by Ataulah Mengal, were involved in harsh confrontations with the Pakistani army.

In the third place is to be found a complex web of parties and political groups. The principal nationalist parties are: The Baluchistan National Party (BNP), The Jamboori Watan Party (JWP), the Baloch Haq Talwar (BHT), and the National Party (NP).

The BNP was founded by Sardar Ataulah Mengal through the fusion of two pre-existing groups: the sector of the National Movement of Baluchistan, led by Mengal himself, and the Ghaus Baksh Bizenjo of the National Party of Pakistan. Since the beginning it has had representation in the provincial government as well as in the National Assembly.

The JWP was founded and led in 1990 by Agbar Buti. It is a party basically formed by members of the Bugti tribe.

The BHT also has a tribal base, in this case the Marri tribe. It was founded by Nawab Khair Baksh Marri, whose son was charged by the government with having instigated the insurrection of 2005.

The NP arose out of the fusion of the National Movement of Baluchistan and the National Democratic Party of Baluchistan. It is led by Abdul Ha-

¹⁴ ANDLEY, Priyashree: Balochistan, a Backgrounder. New Delhi, Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies.

ye. It is flatly opposed to the projects promoted by the central government in Gwadar.

Additionally, a strong Baluchistan Organization of Students exists, very representative of the middle classes, which has frequently confronted the military, mobilizing at one point in the 1990's more than 20,000 militants. It is not linked to any political group.

There also exists a Pashtun-based party, the Pashtun Khwa Milli Awami (PKMAP), founded in 1987 to defend the creation of the administrative province in competition with the Baluchi defenders of this creation.

The principal insurgent separatist groups are Baloch Liberation Army (BLA), the Lashkar-e-Balochistan (LeB), and the Balochistan Liberation Tigers (BLT). Also acting or having acted are other groups such as the Baloch People's Liberation Front (BPLF), the Baloch Republican Army (BRA) and the Baloch Liberation Front (BLP).¹⁵

Nor should the major presence of Pakistani nationalist parties be ignored. The most important are the Moslem League of Pakistan-Nawaz PLM (PLM-N), the People's Party of Pakistan (PPP), and the Moslem League of Pakistan (Quaid-e-Azam) (PLM-Q). To the first belongs the present Prime Minister, Nawaz Sherif, who won the latest elections. Its electoral base is centered basically in the Punjab. It governed before Musharraf's coup, from 2008 to 2013 it was the principal opposition party, and it clearly won the 2013 elections. The PPP is the principal non-religious liberal party; among its leaders the Bhutto family has always stood out. During the period from 2008 to 2013 it governed with Zardari as President.

Also present is the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM), formed in the 80's out of the student movement in Karachi. Although it supported the Musharraf government, between 2008 and 2013 it formed part of Zardari's government. Its leader is Altaf Hussein. The Tehreek-e-Insaf, a party recently created by the former cricket player Imran Khan, holds very nationalistic positions and is basically directed towards the middle class, disappointed with more traditional parties.

The BLA is older. It appeared in the year 2000. It acts in Pakistan although it defends the existence of an independent Baluchistan uniting all the Baluchi territories presently divided among three States. It believes that the Baluchis suffer from the exploitation of their natural resources in benefit of third parties and that they are marginalized from political life. They carry out assaults against security forces and against infrastructure, especially in the field of energy.

¹⁵ Non-State Armed Groups. HIS Jane's.30 April 2014.

The LeB has acted since 2009 in Pakistan. It defends the secession of the province from the rest of Pakistan. Some link it to the Baluchistan National Party (BNP). They act mainly against infrastructure and against military garrisons. It has also carried out attacks outside Baluchistan. Thus, on April 24, 2012, it launched an attack in Lahore, in the province of the Punjab, in which four people perished and more than 60 were injured. Furthermore, on the 23 of July, it organized another assault, on the Chinese consulate in Karachi, as it considered that the Chinese also participated in the exploitation of the Baluchis.

The most recent is the BLT founded in August of 2011. It has been accused of being a group created by foreign services to destabilize the country. It carried out assaults on the Bismillah Hotel of Dera Allahyar on 14 August 2011 (date of the celebration of Pakistani independence) causing 15 deaths and 23 injured, and an attack on July 6, 2012 on a bus in the Turbat district causing 18 civilian deaths. Since then it has been inactive.

Geopolitical Situation

The region of Baluchistan occupies a geopolitical position of special strategic relevance for all the actors in the area. It is located on the edge of the Indian Ocean,¹⁶ so often overlooked in favor of the pre-eminence of the Pacific; and yet, Alfred Thayer Mahan observed that «he who controls the Indian Ocean will dominate Asia; this Ocean is the twenty-first-century key to the seven seas; the fate of the world will be decided in these waters.» This ocean is the meeting point between India (which considers it its own), China (for whom it is an energy transit route fundamental to its development), and the U.S., which after a period of oblivion, has returned in force to this area, whether due to its proximity to the Near East and Central Asia or because it is a possible area of contention with China. Neither should Russia be forgotten; even though at this point her presence is minimal, nonetheless her historic interest in opening a passage from the Russian steppes to the Indian Ocean through Central Asia and Iran is well-known. Such other actors as Australia should also be kept in mind. Baluchistan is located near the Straits of Ormuz, point of departure for petroleum and gas towards the Western Pacific, especially China, en route to the south of India and the straits of Malacca. It also stands as an exit corridor from Central Asia towards the sea, for its peoples as well as for its energy resources.

Baluchistan is an eastern border zone between Sunni and Shiite Islam; between the center of Pakistan and Iran; an area of concentration of the Taliban and the terrorist groups close to Al-Qaida, in an area where the

¹⁶ KAPLAN, Robert D.: Monzon. A voyage through the future of the Indian Ocean. Madrid. The Man of Three 2012.

tension between Pakistan and India, between China and Pakistan, remain high and their evolution unpredictable. A clear example of the geopolitical value of the area lies in the situation of Gwadar and its port.

Gwadar

The city of Gwadar has a long history. In the year 643 it was captured and Islamized by Omar. In 1581 it was attacked and sacked by the Portuguese. In 1783 it passed into Omani control until September 8th of 1958 when Prince Karim Agha Khan bought it from Oman for three million dollars and turned it over to Pakistan. It was then a small fishing town but within an important geostrategic location. On July 1st of 1977, the Pakistani government created the Gwadar District with its capital in this city and in 1993 decided to develop a broad plan for the construction of a deepwater port to be connected with the rest of the country by highway and railroad, at the same time creating a Gwadar Development Authority. In 2002 the construction of the port began; in this year as well, construction of a 653-kilometer highway was begun. This, following the coastline of the Makran, would join Gwadar with Karachi and the Pakistani highway network, and was completed in 2004. This year a new 820-kilometer highway was begun, to link the city to Ratodero in the Sindh province passing through Turbat, Hoshab, Awaran and Khuzdar. In 2007 the Aeronautical Authority purchased land for the construction of a large airport. At the same time the Gwadar Development Authority prepared an ambitious 50-year development plan for a broad industrial area.

In 2002 construction of the port began, its first phase having been completed at the end of 2006 and inaugurated in March of 2007. The cost of this phase came to some 248 million dollars. The second phase, with an estimated cost of 932 million, got underway in March of the same year. An agreement for its administration was signed with the Singapore Port Authority for a 40-year period. However, in 2011, China demonstrated interest in the port and its development. In early 2013 an agreement was reached whereby the China Overseas Port Holding Company will participate in the second phase of the enlargement and will take charge of the administration of the port.

As will be seen below, this port plays a major role in Chinese strategy in the area. This fact has stimulated the interest of India in supporting the development of the Iranian port of Chabahar, 70 kilometers away. As well, it has financed the Zaranj-Delarm highway connecting the Iranian port with Afghanistan, in a significant example of the play of interests between India and China in both the Indian Ocean and in Central Asia.¹⁷

¹⁷ SHAZAD, Lai: India, jostling for geopolitical control in Afghanistan. Open Democracy, 27 March 2014.

The instability of the area should not be forgotten, several terrorist acts having taken place there. So, for example, on March 29 of 2014 the radar station at Pasni, near Gwadar, was attacked (in an act, responsibility for which remains unclaimed by any group) which destroyed part of its facilities.¹⁸

The energy factor¹⁹

As in many areas, energy factors play a major role in the geopolitics and geostrategy of the area. This must be kept in mind when analyzing the conflicts.

Pakistani Baluchistan holds major coal and gas reserves. Fifty percent of the country's energy consumption comes from these deposits, Pakistan being one of the countries of greatest dependency on gas as a source of energy.

However, 17% of the population consumes between 36% and 45% of national production, helping to create a feeling of exploitation, especially considering that the principal fields of production, the Suis, lie in an area in the tribal zone of the Bugti, one of the most nationalistic areas. To transport the gas, there is a network of more than 27,000 kilometers of pipelines, part of which lie within the province. During conflicts, even at the quietest of times, these pipelines come under attack.

Additionally, there are construction projects for international gas pipelines which would pass through the province, such as the Iran-Pakistan-India project for a longitude of 2,700 kilometers, and the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) project for some 1,700 kilometers. Both projects represent major investments and thus the clash of interests between the companies and the countries, and not only in this area. Stability and security are fundamental to the carrying out of these projects.

A third project would be the connection of Central Asia with the port of Gwadar and the transport of liquid gas from there. This factor also explains China's interest in this port and in the achievement of stability and pacification in the area. Development plans and heavy investment around the port are an instrument for the guarantee of its security. The inhabitants of the area, however, feel that they have little participation in these projects, which in the end will redound to the benefit of outside interests.

Therefore, the existence of major energy resources, projects for gas transport, and the related heavy investment should aid in the economic

¹⁸ Pakistan News Digest, March 2014. IDSA, New Delhi.

¹⁹ WIRSING, Robert G.: Baloch Nationalism and the Geopolitics of Energy Resources: the changing context of separatism in Pakistan. Strategic Studies Institute, April 2008.

growth of a poorly developed area, bringing greater stability and security. However, the management of projects with complex interests and the perception of little participation by the inhabitants of the province could represent a new factor for greater destabilization, with an increase of nationalist movements.

Background

*In Pakistan*²⁰ Geography and history have produced a region with a strong personality, although there seems to be frequent interference from the ancient and profound tribal tradition, creating a complex dialect of interests, as is usually found in all areas of tribal composition. The deconstruction of the British Empire, which had been based on the traditional colonial policies of encouraging division in order to guarantee better control of its areas and avoid or limit insurrections, reinforced these particular tendencies after the departure of the troops. The separation between Islam and Hinduism not only brought about the existence of two countries, India and Pakistan, but also meant the creation of countries with profound domestic differences. Baluchistan is an example.

The inhabitants of this province, who hold strong feelings of identification with it, have felt exempted from political power both within their province as well as in the central government, a government which has tended to benefit some ethnic groups to the detriment of others.

The uniting of a strongly militarized power and the constant increase of the military presence²¹ in the province have accentuated the non-democratic tendencies of the political structures and this has had a bearing as well on the yearning for participation in power of the growing middle class, even in an economic situation which is not always sufficiently developed.

There is also the perception of little participation by the inhabitants in the exploitation of natural and energy resources in the area, in detriment to the local population and in favor of other provinces.

The sum total of all these factors has created conditions which facilitate the existence of successive conflicts, since the resolution of each one of them is a false solution, which does not deal with the causes of the conflict and which in the best of cases permits temporary periods of relative

²⁰ ANDLEY, Priyashree: Balochistan, a Backgrounder. Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, IPCS Special Report. October 2006. New Delhi. KUPECZ, Mickey: Pakistan's Baloch Insurgency. *International Affairs Review*. Vol. XX, no. 3. Spring 2012.

²¹ RICH, Paul B. And DUYVESTEYN, Isabelle: *The Routledge Handbook of Insurgency and Counter-Insurgency*, p. 327. Abingdon, Routledge, 2014.

peace and in the worst cases, deepens existing differences and exacerbates wounds ever more difficult to heal.

1948, First Conflict

As indicated above, upon the departure of the British and the proclamation of the States of India and Pakistan, the Baluchi area of Kalat refused incorporation into Pakistan and thus Mir Ahmad Yar Khan proclaimed the independent State of Kalat. The Pakistani government sent troops to the area and after a brief confrontation, the area was incorporated into Pakistan. However, Prince Karim, Khan's brother, did not accept the capitulation and began an insurgent nationalist movement which lasted until 1950 when Prince Karim was captured. During this time the region was governed directly by the central government.

1958-1960, Second Conflict

In 1955, the four Pakistani provinces were merged in order to strengthen national unity. This measure, however, fortified and radicalized the Baluchi nationalist circles, and Prince Karim, recently released, created the People's Party, bringing the different tribes together and giving them a political presence.

In 1958 the Pakistani government arrested Karim, charging him with promoting independence in an alliance with Afghanistan, and the army took over the streets. This produced a series of violent acts with a number of tribes refusing to hand their arms over to the army, so producing a broad guerrilla movement under the leadership of Nauroz Khan. The confrontation would last until July of 1960 when the latter died while under arrest and another five leaders were condemned to be hanged for treason.

1963-1969, Third Conflict

Once having smothered this revolt, the army built new garrisons throughout the province of Baluchistan. At the same time the nationalist movement was drifting into positions on the left under the leadership of Sher Mohammad Marri. A series of guerrilla camps were created, from the tribal areas of the Mengals in Jhalawan in the south to the tribal areas of the Marri and the Bugti in the north. The guerrilla movement controlled a broad area of the province in 1963 and launched attacks against the railroad and military convoys. The combats did not cease until 1969 when General Yahya Khan abandoned the centralized measures adopted in 1955 and so achieved a cease-fire agreement. In 1970 Baluchistan became a unified province of Pakistan.

1973-1977, Fourth Conflict

The National Awami Party was created in 1972; allied to the Islamist Jamaat-Ulema-i-Islam, it opposed President Zulfikar Ali Bhutto in the elections, achieving a victory in the province and a presence in the provincial government, from which it demanded greater participation in the social and economic development of the area. But in 1973, Bhutto dismissed the provincial government and put the province under the direct rule of the central government. The ousted government led a vigorous insurrectionist movement with the strong support of the Marri tribes and the student movement, attacking the petroleum infrastructure. The government sent in 80,000 troops with heavy arms and helicopters, touching off an authentic armed conflict which would last until 1977 and in which more than 5,000 insurgents and 3,300 soldiers would die. The army would go so far as to use armed ships, provided by an Iran fearful of the spreading of the conflict.

The insurrectionist movement, organized around the People's Liberation Front of Baluchistan and led by Khair Bakhsh Marri, presented itself not as a separatist movement but as a movement for the liberation of the entire Pakistani people. Its claims were therefore centered not on secession but on the demand for a profound autonomy under the leadership of Mir Hazar Khan Marri.

In 1977 there occurred a coup led by General Muhammad Zia which executed the deposed President Bhutto. The new President concluded a cease-fire with no autonomist concessions but granting the release of prisoners of a movement bled dry and leaderless from the effects of the harsh combat and having lost the aid lent by the Afghan government of Mohammed Daoud after this collapsed in 1978.

The participation of the nationalist movements in the elections allowed a period of calm during the 80's and 90's. However, the lack of a solution in depth to the existing problems would lead to a fifth conflict beginning in 2005.

2005, commencement of a fifth conflict²²

During these years a new middle class developed, far removed from tribal systems, moderately nationalist and politically articulate, around the Baluchi National Movement led by Abdul Hayee Baloch. This development coincided with plans for the development of the area around Gwadar and the coastal zone. However, the governments of General Musharraf, following the traditional policies of weakening or persecuting nationalist

²² Grare, Frederic. Baluchistan, fin de partie?. Herodote, 2010/4 no. 139, pp 99-122.

positions either through bribes and the encouragement of tribal divisions or simply through varying degrees of repression, ended by encouraging the radicalization of the moderate sectors such as that led by Atuallah Mengal within the Baluchi National Movement; Mengal, fearing to be pushed aside by manoeuvres of the central government, abandoned the traditional autonomist positions of the movement to demand the independence of Baluchistan.

And so, in the elections of 2002, victory was achieved by the Moslem League of Pakistan, led by Musharraf, through a pact with the Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (an alliance of six Islamic groups backed by the government itself in its process of greater Islamization of the country) which had obtained second place, forming a government which completely cornered the nationalist groups.

This situation, added to the growing dissatisfaction with the insufficient participation of the Baluchis in the development around Gwadar, plus the growing military presence to guarantee calm in the area, created a situation of increasing instability. In this new stage of the conflict, the principal protagonists would be the Dera Bugti and Marri tribes.

An incident²³ taking place in the hospital at Sui between a group of soldiers and the wife of a doctor would be the spark that ignited a new conflict. In the face of rising nationalist unrest, strongly represented by the Baluchistan Liberation Army, Musharraf opted for the use of force to definitively end the problem of Baluchistan. Varied assaults, including aerial attacks, were added to forced movement of population, illegal arrests, torture, and extrajudicial executions carried out by security forces and the intelligence agencies. At the same time the official press launched charges of interference by other countries (India, Afghanistan, the U.S., and Iran) in order to intensify the conflict and weaken Pakistan. More than their accuracy, these charges reflect the clash of interests and the strategic importance of the area.

In the elections of 2008, the People's Party of Pakistan, led by Asif Zardari, won elections all over the country, as well as in the province of Baluchistan. In October of that year, Zardari created a Committee of Reconciliation in Baluchistan. On November 24 of 2009, the committee presented 39 concrete proposals, and the government demonstrated a predisposition to grant autonomy to the province. The nationalist movements considered the proposed measures insufficient, and demanded the cessation of action on the part of the army and of acts of interference by the intelligence agencies.

²³ Amir Ali Chandio: Baloch National Movement 2003-2012, An analysis. *Interdisciplinary Journal of Contemporary Research in Business*, Vol. 4, no. 10, February 2013, pp. 1048-1059.

In December of 2009 the nationalist groups voted against the proposals and despite some measures on the part of the central government, the actions of the army and the intelligence agencies, overt or covert, continued during the year 2010.²⁴

Parallel to this situation, it should be kept in mind that in the northern area of the province, in Quetta and its district, where there is a strong Pashtun presence, which has increased with the great numbers of refugees proceeding from Afghanistan and from the Pakistani FATA areas as a result of the confrontations occurring on both sides of the Afghan-Pakistani border, there is strong and growing terrorist activity,²⁵ against both Pakistani forces and against the Shiite Hazaris²⁶ who live in the area and engage in major trade activity. These latter claim to have lost, in assaults, more than 800 members of their community due to attacks by Sunni groups. There have arisen groups such as Laskhar-e-Jhangvi or Sipah-e-Shuhada-e-Balochistan, which carry out frequent attacks on groups of Hazaris on route to Iranian pilgrimage sanctuaries. In one such attack, on January 22 of 2014, 22 pilgrims perished.

As indicated above, in 1871 the British divided Baluchistan between the Indian zone and the Iranian zone along the Goldsmith line, thus producing what would be the Iranian province of Sistan and Baluchistan; a province whose inhabitants are mostly of differing ethnic origins and languages, but whose majority religion is Sunni Islam as opposed to a Shiite majority in the rest of Iran.

The relations between the two communities were never easy. During the reign of the Pahlavi Shahs, between 1928 and 1979, repression was even harsher than in the rest of the country, which produced a strong insurgency between the years 1969 and 1973, with the more or less covert support of Iraq (as a response to the Iranian support of the Iraqi Kurds), Dubai, Syria and Egypt.

The Iranian revolution and the creation of an Islamic State (Shiite) in 1979 made the situation even more difficult for the Baluchis. Thus was created the fermentation vat for the appearance of separatist groups of a terrorist nature. The most outstanding is Jundallah (or Jondallah).²⁷

This group was formed in 2003, although it did not become clearly operative until 2005. Its leader and founder was Abdolmalik Rigi together with his brother Abdolhamid Rigi and other family members; the former

²⁴ IISS: Bad Times in Baluchistan. IISS Strategic Comments, vol. 17, 26 Dec. 2011.

²⁵ GONZALEZ MARTÍN, Andrés: Evolution of the Conflict in Pakistan. An Uncertain Future. Geopolitical Overview of Conflicts, 2013 pp 269-302. Madrid, IIEE 2013.

²⁶ BANERJI, Rana: Balochistan. Looking Beyond the Hazari Massacre. Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, 15 January 2013.

²⁷ Jondallah. IHS Jane's. 17 October 2013.

KOLSTAD WIIG, Audun: Islamist Opposition in the Islamic Republic. Jundallah. Norwegian Defence Research Establishment, 2009.

used as an alias Abdul Malik Baluchi, until his arrest and execution in June of 2010. His brother had been executed the previous month.

His successor is Muhammad Zahir Baluch. Since 2007 the group has acted under the name People's Resistance Movement of Iran, although at times it has also used the name Popular Resistance Movement.

Although the Iranian government has accused the U.S. of financing the group, it is considered by the U.S. to be a terrorist organization. The group has always denied association with AlQuaeda or with any other group.

At certain times, it seems to have received some type of support from Israel, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and certain Western countries (Switzerland, the U.K. and the US).

The group does not consider itself to be a separatist group but rather a defender of a democratic Iran which also recognizes the autonomy of areas such as the province of Sistan and Baluchistan. Its membership seems to have risen to about 2000 militants.

Its most significant actions have been:

- In 2005, it made an attempt on the life of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad during his visit to this province, causing the death of a bodyguard and several wounded.
- On March 16 of 2006, it cut off a highway for four days near Tasooki, murdering 21 civilians.
- The 14th of February of 2007 it placed a car bomb in Zahedan causing the death of 18 members of the Revolutionary Guard.
- On the 19th of August of the same year, it kidnapped 21 truck drivers near Chah Bahar, driving them to Pakistan, where they were freed by the police.
- The 13th of June of 2008, it kidnapped 16 policemen.
- The 19th of December of the same year it carried out a suicide attack in Saravan which caused the death of four persons in addition to the driver.
- On May 28th 2009 it set off a bomb in the Zahedan mosque causing 25 deaths and 125 wounded.
- On October 18th the same year a suicide attack caused the death of 42 people, among them 6 officials of the Revolutionary Guard in Pishin, in the province of Sistan and Baluchistan; on July 16th of 2010 27 people died in a double suicide attack at the Jamia mosque in Zahedan.

The death of its leader has caused a reduction in the activities of the group. However, a new Sunni group has arisen: Jaish al-Adl.²⁸ This group

²⁸ «Increased Sectarian Violence in Pakistan's Balochistan Province Likely Raises Risk of Wider Sunni-Shia Conflict.» Jane's Intelligence Weekly, 8 April 2014; and «Kidnapping

was formed in 2012 (in a way similar to other Sunni groups in other areas of Iran such as Harakat Ansar which merged with Hiz al-Furqan in December of 2013 to form Ansar al-Furqan). All of these use jihadist rhetoric and appear to enjoy some financing from Saudi Arabia within the framework of the confrontation between Sunnism and Shiism. Jaish al-Adl appears to have the support of Baluchi separatist networks in Iran and Pakistan. Its activities are centered mainly on the border, where on October 25 of 2013 it assassinated 14 Iranian soldiers. On the following day, Iran executed 16 Baluchi activists in the prison at Zahedan. In February of 2014, the group kidnapped four border guards whom it took to Pakistan, where they were later freed.

Current situation of the conflict

In May of 2013 elections were held which represented a significant change. In the general elections the broad winner was the PML-N, which obtained 176 seats of the 342; in second place, far back, the PPP with 39 seats.

Following them were 17 other parties, among which were three Baluchistan Nationalist groups, with one representative each: the ANP, the BNP and the NP.

In the provincial elections the PLM-N also won, with 22 of the 65 seats which make up the Provincial Assembly (for the national parliament it only obtained 6 of the 17 available). It was therefore far from holding a majority. The Pashtun party PKMAP obtained 14 (4 for the national). Among the nationalist groups the NP obtained 10 (for the national, only one), the BNP, 2 (for the national, one), the ANP one (none for the national), and the BNP-Awami also one. Three further groups as well as one independent won a presence. This is, as may be seen, a quite complicated assembly and of a very different composition from the national parliament. The difference may also be compared between voting in Baluchistan for the national and the provincial assemblies.

The complex and contentious history of Pakistan²⁹, with successive and alternating periods of democratic governments resulting from elections and of military governments, makes the situation difficult in Pakistani Baluchistan³⁰ as well as in the Iranian part, with harsh and moderate governments alternating with each other. In the current situation in Pakistan, there is a democratic government, the result of the May 2013 elections,

of Iranian Nationals Unlikely to Jeopardise Relations with Pakistan Given Low Threat Posed to Iran.» Jane's Intelligence Weekly, April 4 2014.

²⁹ RASHID, Ahmed: Pakistan on the Edge of the Abyss. The future of the U.S., Pakistan and Afghanistan. Barcelona, Peninsula, 2013.

³⁰ ALAMGIR, Aurangzaib: Pakistan's Balochistan Problem. World Affairs, Nov.-Dec. 2012, pp 33-38.

and in Iran a more moderate government holds power (the Presidential elections of 2013 gave 50.88% of the votes cast to the moderate Hassan Rouhani, while in the previous elections in 2009, the radical Mahmoud Ahmadinejad had obtained 62.63%). In the parliamentary elections of 2012 the different conservative candidacies had obtained 59.7% of the votes cast and 182 seats, the moderate reformist sector obtained 36.5% with 75 seats and another 14 were divided among religious minorities (Armenians, Syrians and Chaldeans, Jews and Zoroastrians) who obtained 12.1 %, the remaining 19 having gone to independent candidates.

Nonetheless, no negotiated settlements are in sight as a way out of the conflict. Assaults continue in both zones and in the Pakistani areas, there has actually been an increase in the activities of Taliban and jihadist groups.

The heavy repression applied by both the Pakistani³¹ and the Iranian³² governments have given rise in recent years to reports on both of these governments by Amnesty International. Human Rights Watch,³³ for its part, states that hundreds of Baluchis have vanished whose bodies for the most part have not appeared.

Role of external actors

China

The Indian Ocean plays a central role in Chinese energy strategy. Her heavy dependence on imports of both oil and gas has determined the need for a strategy to guarantee the security of supply, especially from the Middle East and from Africa. And so the creation has taken place of what has been defined as the «Collar of Pearls»³⁴ which would protect the supply lines from those two areas passing through the Straits of Malacca to their arrival on the Chinese coasts. Each one of the pearls is an enclave, civil or military, set along this route to protect it, serving as infrastructure or as a base where military units may be permanently or temporarily established. And the coast of Baluchistan would play a central role in the Indian Ocean.

³¹ AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL: Pakistan Investigates Murder and Torture of Baloch Activities. 16 October 2010; and Pakistan: Balochistan Atrocities Continue to Rise. 23 February 2011.

³² INTERNATIONAL AMNISTY: Iran Human Rights. Abuses against Baluchi Minority. September 2007.

³³ HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH: Pakistan Disastrous Year for Rights. Militant Attacks, Judicial Misconduct Mark the Year. 24 January 2011.

³⁴ BAREA MESTANZA, Alfonso: The Chinese Collar of Pearls Strategy. In Revista Ejercito, number 877, May 2014.

PEHRSON, Christopher J.: String of Pearls. Meeting the Challenge of China's Rising Power across the Asian Littoral. SSI. July 2006.

These «pearls» would be, leaving from China: in the South China Sea, the air and naval bases of the island of Hainan, as well as the air base on Woody Island; in Cambodia, the enlarged ports of Sihanoukville and of Ream; in Thailand, the project is for a new channel in the Kra Isthmus, in order to avoid passing through Malacca; in Myanmar, construction of a port at Sittwe, from which there would depart a strategic corridor to China, through which would pass an oil pipeline, a railroad line and a highway; in Bangladesh, the enlargement of military and civilian facilities at the port of Chittagong; in Sri Lanka, the port of Hambantota; in Pakistan the ports and naval facilities at Gwadar and Pasni; in Iraq, the petroleum facilities at Al-Ahdab; and on the African coast, connections via pipelines from the oil fields in South Sudan to the coast. The role of the port of Gwadar, 240 miles from the Straits of Ormuz, and of Pasni, joined by a recently built highway, would play a double role: as a maritime enclave and also as the departure point for a highway to connect with the Chinese province of Xiangjiang as well as for a proposed pipeline. And so for China, good relations with Pakistan are strategic, as also is stability in the Indian Ocean, which depends as well on the situation with regard to relations with Pakistan and India (relations which also affect the stability of Afghanistan and Central Asia, though which must pass the oil and gas pipelines which transport the petroleum and natural gas originating in the Caucasus and the Caspian Sea), and a Baluchistan at peace and exempt from terrorist-group activities.

The United States

North American policy for the area of the Indian Ocean has evolved since the end of the Second World War. For some time the area held little geostrategic importance, America going so far as to dissolve the Fifth Fleet, responsible for this ocean; her interest centered during the Cold War on avoiding the creation of an outlet into this ocean for the USSR and its projection into Africa. Later, with the breakup of the Soviet Union, North American interests in the Middle East (energy supply as well as the defense of Israel) and especially the anti-American policies of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the attitude of the Iraqi government of Saddam Hussein, and the extension of the jihadist terrorism of Al-Qaeda and its establishment in Afghanistan, all stimulated a new interest in the area, especially after the attacks on September 11 which culminated in the invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan and the tension with Iran because of its nuclear program. The Indian Ocean again became an area of growing American military presence.³⁵

³⁵ The North American Fifth Fleet, responsible for the Indian Ocean, was created April 26 of 1944, but at the end of World War II it was deactivated. After the experience of the first Gulf War in 1991, when it was necessary to use units from the Pacific Seventh Fleet, in July of 1995 it was reactivated.

However, the relative crisis in her power, the ascent of China and her more assertive policies, the beginnings of agreement on the Iranian nuclear program and the road towards a growing energy autonomy with the exploitation of non-conventional sources of gas and petroleum within her own territory, all have shifted the center of gravity of her interests first from the Atlantic to the Indian Ocean and at this time towards the Pacific especially with respect to China.

In the Indian Ocean there has been a rapprochement with India and a distancing from Pakistan. There does not seem to exist a concrete policy regarding the situation in Baluchistan although there has been a refusal to incorporate Baluchi groups into the lists of terrorist gangs as was requested by Pakistan. Some concern may be felt with the Chinese extension of the «collar of pearls» and with respect to her base on the island of Diego Garcia.

Nonetheless a small group of North American congressmen (Dana Rohrbacher, Louie Gohmert and Steve King), supported by Baluchi and Afghan nationalist groups in Washington, in 2012 drew up proposals for changing North American strategy in the area, especially respecting Pakistan. Among them figured the recognition of the Baluchi nation and its right to be considered a new State.³⁶

Although the proposals did not move forward, they may be an example of geo-strategic indecision with regard to the area.

India

The Indian Ocean has as its axis the Indian subcontinent, occupied principally by India. This nation considers the Indian Ocean to be a sphere of its own control and influence. In spite of this, for a long period it has not been equipped with a maritime strategy to guarantee this control, since its geostrategic outlook is concentrated on its confrontation with Pakistan over the control of Kashmir, and secondarily on the Chinese border. However, the war of Afghanistan and the growing Chinese presence on the sea have produced changes in its geopolitical thought and in its military strategies. Its priorities, without completely forgetting Kashmir, have been directed towards developing a navy for the control of the Indian Ocean and towards deepening its relationship with Afghanistan and with Central Asian countries. Thus we see a tendency towards the reinforcement of Pakistan's relations with China (the port of Gwadar is the clearest example), upon which India in addition to seeking closer relations with the U.S. is also doing so with respect to Iran. And so the Jawajarlal Nehru

³⁶ ALAMGIR, Aurangzaib: Pakistan's Balochistan Problem, an Insurgency's Rebirth. Zurich, ISN 3 December 2012.

Port, located to the south of Bombay, and the principal Indian container port, has arrived at agreements with Iran for its presence at the port of Chabahar, in the Iranian province of Sistan and Baluchistan, as a counterweight to the Pakistani-Chinese port of Gwadar.³⁷

At the same time this situation is generating a dynamic of corridors of communication from the coast of the Arabian Sea into the interior of Eurasia. Iran proposes a great corridor to unite the port of Chabahar with St. Petersburg, and India is financing the construction of highways in Afghanistan, for example between Delaram, located on the great Afghan beltway, and the city of Zaranj, on the border with Iran, and which would connect with an Iranian highway between Zaboij and Chabahar.

These tendencies may make yet more difficult the relations between Pakistan and India, with their mutual accusations of each supporting terrorist movements in the other's country. Nonetheless, following the May elections in India³⁸, which have meant a radical change with the victory of the Hindu Nationalist Party Bharatiya Janata (BJP) led by Narendra Modi, the latter has received the Pakistani Prime Minister, Nawaz Sharif, to discuss terrorism and the need for coordination and for an attempt at normalization of their relationship.³⁹

The European Union

In October of 2009 in answer to a question asked by the Euro deputy Tadeusz Cymanski about the opinion of the Council on the territory of Baluchistan and its possible right to self-determination in relation to Pakistan, he was answered that «the question of the self-determination of the people of Baluchistan has not been dealt with by the Council; as a consequence, it has no specific position on the question posed by Your Honor.»⁴⁰

Since that time, the situation has not changed: the European Union has no clear positions regarding the geopolitics of the Indian Ocean and the role of the Union in that geographical area.⁴¹

Each member country has its own strategy, when these exist, generally considering them included within their strategies for the Pacific.⁴²

³⁷ Trade Routes Between India and Iran. Stratford, March 6 2014.

³⁸ «El País». Madrid 17 May 2014, pp. 2, 3.

³⁹ «El País». Madrid 28 May 2014, p. 14.

⁴⁰ Minutes of European Parliament Session for Oct. 22nd, 2009. Appendix on written answers, response to question n° 18 from Tadeusz Cymanski.

⁴¹ ROGERS, James: From Suez to Shanghai. The European Union and Eurasian Maritime Security. Paris, EUISS Occasional Paper 77, 2009.

⁴² ROGERS, James: European (British and French) Geostrategy in the Indo-Pacific. Journal of the Indian Ocean Region, vol. n° 1, June 2013 pp.68-69, and SAINT-MEZARD, Isabelle: The French Strategic Vision of the Indian Ocean. In the same journal, pp. 53-

Only the question of the piracy of the maritime area off the coast of Somalia has provoked the intervention of the Union, with the launching of the maritime military operation Atalanta. But a global strategy has yet to be defined on this Ocean and the problems of the Asiatic countries bordering the Indian Ocean.

The same may be said of Spain, absent from any political or economic presence in this area.

Conclusions and perspective

A land of deserts and rugged mountains with some agricultural plains along the Indo and a long coast on the Gulf of Aden at the center of the energy trade routes from the Near to the Far East. Tribal peoples accustomed to nomadism, to whom borders make no sense and facilitate smuggling, undergoing a slow but progressive process of urbanization. Most of the population is Baluchi but important minorities are to be found in the Pashtuns (in Pakistan and Afghanistan) and Sistanis (in Iran) as well as smaller groups of Hazari Shiites in the area of Quetta. Standing at the crossroads of the Iranian plateau and Central Asia into the Indian sub-continent, its history has been determined by this situation and with it, subjected to the influence of or domination by the Persian, Central Asian and northern Indian empires. This situation culminated in the division of historic Baluchistan among Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Feelings of identification, reinforced by those of exploitation of their considerable natural resources by outsider third parties, have been transformed into nationalist movements which at times become guerrilla insurgencies or terrorist acts, but which do not turn into majorities in election results. This is present-day Baluchistan.

It is a case of a conflict, or rather a series of interrelated conflicts, which in part may be characterized as frozen and somewhat forgotten. It is a long-lasting, low-intensity conflict, except at certain times when it acquires the features of a very violent confrontation; this fact contributes to its lesser presence in the media compared with other conflicts. Nonetheless, its importance lies in Baluchistan's geopolitical situation, as has been seen. The coincidence of divergent and sometimes opposing interests in an area such as that which stands between Central Asia and the Indian Ocean may impact on its future development, or even, under certain circumstances, provide the spark leading to a more extended and high-intensity conflict.

Thus there is a strong temptation on the part of both regional and outside actors to support some of these movements in order to destabilize

68. This issue is dedicated to «Power, Politics and Maritime Governance in the Indian Ocean.»

others. The evolution of wider scenarios, either political-military or economic-energy based, will condition the interest of each actor in the area's enjoyment of stability or in the imposition of instability.

Frequent accusations are made by the Iranian government of the aid received by terrorist groups from the U.S., Saudi Arabia, or from Pakistani groups; for its part, the government of Pakistan launches frequent charges aimed at India, Afghanistan and even the U.S. Regardless of how much truth there is to any or all of these, they are an example of the complexity of relations and interests in the region. There should also be kept in mind the continuing evolution of the confrontation between Sunnis and Shies, and the impact this may have, especially on the border between Iran and Pakistan.

The increase taking place, and tending to rise, of the infrastructures of communication and transport (by rail or by road) as well as energy connections may aid in producing stabilizing interests of greater weight than those for destabilization; at the same time, if this results in a greater development of the area and an improvement in the standard of living of its inhabitants, social development and a growing middle class may reinforce the stabilizing tendencies. Competent regional policies on the part of the governments would intensify this tendency, while policies of non-integration would work to the opposite effect. It has been seen how the features of the conflict present differing situations in Pakistan or in Iran. In this latter country, the separatist movement is less intense, has a character more closely linked to the general political situation of the nation, and the type of confrontation is basically one of terrorist and counter-terrorist activities. In the former nation, the nationalist and separatist features are more marked, taking on guerrilla features with times of harsh battle with the Pakistani army; it is a longer-lasting conflict and its outlook holds no prospects for an immediate solution. The position of the Pakistani governments has been more unbudging, surely due to the role played by the Army and the ISI in the country's policies, many times even controlling the government or acting outside it. In the case of Iran on the other hand the existence of more or less radical or moderate governments has meant harsher or more conciliatory policies. The existence of a moderate government in Teheran could create an atmosphere of possible understanding, a greater pacification of the problem and a greater control of terrorism.

In the case of Pakistan, it must be kept in mind that the existence of jihadist terrorism and of nationalist insurgency movements produces a greater complexity. And there exists the danger that at some point alliances may take place between these two movements.

Progressive social and economic development as well as the modernization of the area should help to overcome tribal tendencies towards disintegration and instead encourage integrationist and conciliatory mo-

vements, which if corresponding to government policies also of an integrationist character, may allow the creation of conditions of greater social cohesion, facilitating dialogue and the subduing of confrontations.

IMAGEN 2

CHRONOLOGY OF THE CONFLICT	
DATE	EVENTS
644	Caliph Omar conquers Baluchistan.
1849-1947	British domination
1871	The British divide Baluchistan between Iran and India along the Goldsmith line.
1947	Creation of Pakistan.
1948	First conflict.
1958	Pakistan acquires Gwadar from Oman after two centuries of Omani dominion.
1958-1959	Second conflict.
1963-1969	Third conflict.
1973-1977	Fourth conflict.
1979-1989	Soviet occupation of Afghanistan.
2001	U.S. invades Afghanistan.
2002-2006	First phase of the Port of Gwadar.
2003	New incidents in Pakistani Baluchistan. Jundallah group created in Iranian Baluchistan.
2005	Fifth conflict begins.
2007	Second phase of the port at Gwadar begins.
2010	Execution of the principal leaders of Jundallah.
2013	Beginning of Chinese administration of the port of Gwadar. Elections in Pakistan: Mian Nawaz Sharif new Prime Minister. Presidential elections in Iran: Hassan Rouhani new President.
2014	Elections in India: Narendra Modi new Prime Minister.

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The JAMESTOWN FOUNDATION: Terrorism Monitor (published bimonthly).

SOUTH ASIA TERRORISM PORTAL: www.satp.org.

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In Pakistan:

PAK INSTITUTE FOR PEACE STUDIES: especially publishes periodically «Balochistan Watch».

In India:

INSTITUTE FOR DEFENCE STUDIES AND ANALYSIS: Especially, since July of 2013 it has published «Pakistan News Digest» with a specific section on Baluchistan.

INSTITUTE OF PEACE AND CONFLICT STUDIES.

Some websites and blogs about Baluchistan:

www.crisisbaluchistan.com

www.hamariweb.com

www.radiobalochi.org

www.thebaluch.com (contains links to a number of similar blogs).

www.topnews.in/regions/balochistan

Consultation in English is also possible at the official government websites of Pakistan, of the provincial government of Baluchistan, of the Port of Gwadar, and of the district and city of Quetta

Analysis of the conflict in the central american corridor: network geopolitics

Emilio Sánchez de Rojas Díaz

Chapter
ten

Summary

We find problems with deep historical roots, to which proven solutions are applied, along with «wicked» problems for which we have no recipes. The information available generally refers to the weaknesses related to trafficking, and studies which identify the cohesion forces – the strengths – in the Central American countries, which are far from being failed states. The challenge that all countries face with indigenous peoples consists in changing its conception of nation structured in terms of homogenous and mono-ethnic «citizenship» to a plural conception that gives rise to richness and to the diversity of cultures and the people that make them up. Central America acknowledges its multiculturalism, there is a qualitative change with respect to the assimilationist tendency and of acculturation

Key Words

Central America, «*intermestic*» threats, geopolitical networked balloon effect, «*wicked problems*», traffic, cocaine, inter-oceanic corridors

Introduction

If we had to choose a word to define the world situation during the first part of the 21st century, without a doubt it would be uncertainty.¹ As Fareed Zakaria reminds us, we are going through the third great change in modern times, the rise of others:

An aspect of this new era is the transfer of power from the states to other players; among the «others» that are rising are many non-state players. Power is abandoning the state-nations in order to go upward, downward and to the sides (2009, pages 13-15).

Currently, the limits between national and international security are hard to define, with the concept of threat, characterized by the absence of threat in the borders and the absence of borders for the threat, making its appearance. (Howard, 1987). The paradox is that «new threats», such as the insecurity of citizens, terrorism, cyber-insecurity, nuclear proliferation, drug trafficking, maritime piracy, illegal immigration, environmental pollution and climate change, the loss of national identity, that threaten peace and stability in the world today have long existed, and they turn into threats when they are boosted by Globalization (Kouliansky, 2010).

It is difficult to maintain an absolute definition of security, as Gérard Dussoy declares (2001), unless it is at the expense of simplifying the reality of an international context where threats do not come from just one place or one specific source, but rather are diffuse. As opposed to the traditional concept of security, there are alternative formulations, such as common, comprehensive, cooperative, global, etc. security, that questioned the prevailing approach (Pérez de Armiñon, 2007), and eased the appearance of new security concepts such as «societal security» and «human security» which illustrate the change from the supremacy of national (and international) security towards transnational, sub-national and individual security (Hänggi, 2003, pages 5-6).

Problems no longer have obvious solutions. The term «wicked problems» refers to problems that cannot be described in a simple and stable manner. They do not belong to the type of problems that, when dealt with in the same way, give similar solutions. In short, «wicked problems» are disorganized, on the wrong track, and reactive. Thus, the lack of understanding of the strategic implications of a given solution produces worse situations than those which were intended to be improved at the outset (Watts, 2012, pages 53-4). This is the case of the law of unforeseen consequences that has affected Libya, Syria or Mali, and that affect the «balloon» effect in the fight against drug trafficking, particularly of cocaine.

¹ Strategic uncertainty could indicate lack of global leadership.

Today, we are witnessing the proliferation of «wicked problems», and unforeseen consequences, which seem to indicate a certain decline of the world leadership of the United States. Besides not imposing, in a hegemonic manner, its desires, the United States is losing its influencing capacity, in other words, what has become known as *smart power*. The United States has lost some of its *hard power* with its pivotal strategy towards the Pacific Ocean, and no longer has its *soft power* due to its use of double standards.

Every problem needs different solutions from others, and a solution to a problem is not valid indefinitely. The lesson we are learning from conflicts such as those in Iraq, Libya, Syria, or Mali is that an immediate success does not in any way mean the end of the «wicked» strategic problems which represent changing and evolutionary challenges. Since the end of the Cold War, we no longer have available a set of metrics, indicators, or operational techniques available that may be applied to all the strategic problems or that are still valid for a specific individual problem during its whole life cycle (Watts, 2012, page 53).

Geopolitics of the conflicts in Central America

In Central America, we can find deeply rooted historical roots, to which backed solutions may be applied, together with emerging «wicked» problems for which we have no recipes. When analyzing the conflicts in Central America, it must be done both from a classical point of view of countries and borders, still relevant, and from a point of view of human security and critical geopolitics, where places, nodes, transnational bonds or flows, substitute the classical ones. In other words, geopolitics on the network, on top of a classical one. Let us start with the most classical aspect.

Geography

The inspection of Central America shows two contradictory geopolitical dynamics: Central America is a connecting isthmus between North and South America; and that is the road of south-north (drugs and human beings), and north-south (arms or power) trafficking. However, the national and historical dynamics turn the Central American countries into connectors - less resistance roads - between the Atlantic and the Pacific Oceans, whether by sea - the Panama Canal - or by land, through the new transoceanic corridors that are under construction in Nicaragua, Honduras or Guatemala.

The information that we most often find refers to the weaknesses related to trafficking, mainly as a consequence of the balloon effect caused by North American policies to eradicate trafficking, first in the Lesser Antilles, and later in the locations of origin and transit to their own countries

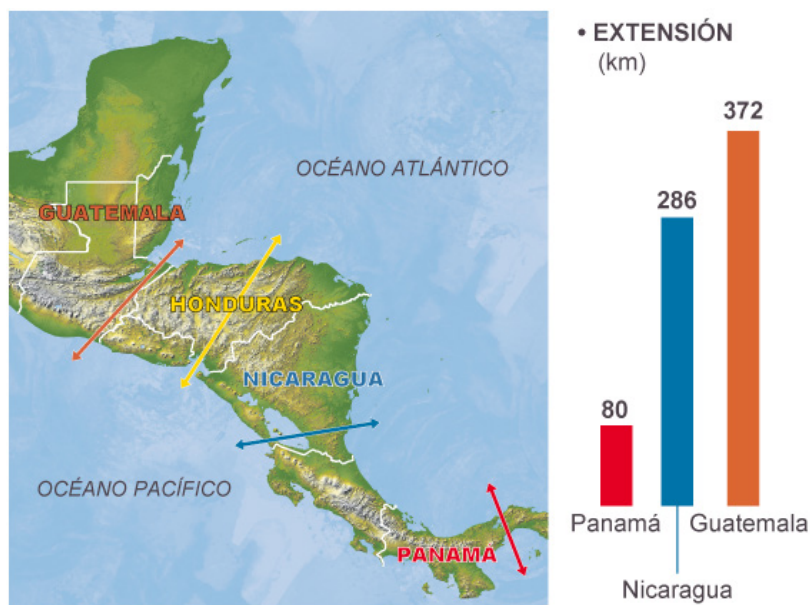
- the Colombia and Merida plans - but without eliminating the real cause of the problem: consumption. Trafficking, of drugs and human beings included, are augmented because of its demand.

It is not common to find studies that identify the cohesion forces – the strengths – of Central American countries which, in spite of their difficulties, are far from being failed states. The geostrategic readjustment of the United States, displayed in its pivot towards the Pacific Ocean – strategic withdrawal from other scenarios – leads to the appearance of other geopolitical – geoeconomic players that could project their power – soft power for now – onto the area abandoned by the decadent hegemony.

The long and conflicting process of the creation of national States in Latin America left a balance of numerous disputed areas, where different countries claimed to exercise their sovereign rights over the same strips of territory. Some of these disputes have lasted to our days. Neither the Spanish colonial administration, nor the Portuguese one, established exact delimitations of their territorial possessions. These ambiguities were inherited by the republics which rose from the independence process without substantial modifications.

The race for a new inter-oceanic route

One of the strengths of most of the Central American countries (with the exception of El Salvador and Belice) is that they are bathed by the waters of the two oceans. A new race to obtain a new inter-oceanic route to com-



pete with the Panama Canal, presently under being widened, has begun. Guatemala and Honduras' plans have come together with those of Nicaragua. Their governments have announced projects to transport goods by land from one ocean to the other. What has attracted the attention of international analysts is the growing presence of Chinese companies in that region. China has strategic interests to have alternative options to transport the raw materials that their companies need. (Salinas, Sandoval & Murillo, 2013).



The Guatemalan inter-oceanic corridor is a private project supported by the government, which intends to join the Pacific with the Atlantic Ocean through a «dry canal». The project includes the construction of two ports, and it will include a 372-kilometer road, a railroad line, and five oil pipelines, plus the installation of industrial zones along the 372 kilometers.

The Government of Honduras has also joined the race to achieve an «inter-oceanic canal». A Chinese enterprise is interested in building a set of 10 railroad lines that would connect the Caribbean with the Pacific Ocean in Honduras. The plan includes the construction of deep sea water ports in the Caribbean, and the Gulf of Fonseca, Honduras' exit to the Pacific Ocean. However, the Gulf of Fonseca is like a hornet's nest that often raises tensions among Tegucigalpa, Managua, and San Salvador, the capitals of countries which share this exit to the ocean. (Salinas, Sandoval, & Murillo.

Ethnic and cultural diversity

Five centuries after the conquest, there are still features of the pre-Hispanic past. The Mesoamerican languages and cultures spread from Yucatan and

Chiapas (Mexico) to the small indigenous site of Matambú in the Peninsula of Nicoya (Costa Rica). Its presence is massive in the highlands and in the lowlands on the Peten in Guatemala, and they disperse as one descends towards Honduras, El Salvador, and Nicaragua. The indigenous peoples from the southeast live in the lowlands of the Caribbean slope of Central America, in the Talamanca mountains (Costa Rica), and in various enclaves in central Honduras; the Lenca culture, located in the mountains in western Honduras, and in the east of El Salvador, in an area which may be considered a transition area between Mesoamerican indigenous cultures and those from the southeast of Central America. The Garifuna people live on the coast of Belize and Honduras, and in Laguna de Perlas in the Nicaraguan Mosquitia. The Afro-Caribbeans, who speak Creole English, are along the Caribbean coast of Central America, including the small islands near the coastline, in the center and southeast of the Isthmus of Panama. (PNUD, 2003, page 338).

The tendency to reject the old model of national mono-ethnic and homogeneous State, and the change towards a new multinational or multi-ethnic State model is a global phenomenon (PNUD, Human Development in the Caribbean coast of Nicaragua, 2002). Will Kymlicka believes there are three reasons for this: One is that the search for homogenization has turned out to be a failure. Second, it has been clearly shown that it is not necessary to exclude or assimilate the marginalized peoples or nations in order to be a successful country. The third reason for the change is the growing acknowledgement that the current model is unjust. (PNUD, Human Development in the Caribbean coast of Nicaragua, 2002).

The challenge that all of the countries with indigenous peoples face is to transform its conception of a nation formed in terms of a homogenous and mono-ethnic «citizenry», into a plural conception that generates the richness and diversity of the cultures and peoples that comprise them. It means the recognition of the collective and specific rights of the indigenous people enshrined in ILO Convention 169 and in the draft of the United Nations Universal Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, in addition to the effective exercise of their individual rights. It represents a thorough transformation of the structure and the institutions of the State, in order to guarantee the expansion of indigenous and ethnic representation, and to carry out modifications in key areas such as territorial recognition, bilingual and intercultural education, formalization of indigenous languages, plurality of the judicial system, the recognition and respect to the indigenous cultures and their spirituality. (Kaji'É & OCAA, 2001).

Central America recognizes itself in its multiculturalism, which is a new strength. The assessment shows that there is a qualitative change regarding the assimilationist tendency and that of acculturation². In the

² Pointed out half a century ago by Richard Adams in his pioneer works regarding this subject.

last two decades of the 20th century and at the beginning of the 21st century, some groups among the population, particularly the indigenous and Afro-descendants, have turned into social and political players that vindicate for themselves the right to self-classification, calling themselves «peoples», nations or ethnic communities with economic, social, cultural, and political rights unprecedented twenty or thirty years ago (PNUD, 2003, page 333).

Background to the conflict

History

After its initial annexation to Iturbide's Mexican Empire, Central America became independent and created the United Provinces of Central America in 1823. Following the civil war between 1838 and 1840 they fragment themselves, dissolving the political union. The long and conflicting process to form the national States in America gave rise to numerous disputed areas claimed by different countries. Some of these disputes still exist today. The instability in that period of «anarchy», and the forms of military *caudillo* regimes that were characteristic of that period, were the manifestation of the struggle for the appropriation of the land and the natural riches in the continent. The core of the rising *criollo* bourgeoisie, in alliance with foreign capital, consecrated legally and by force the private property system, and launched expansionist policies against the neighboring countries. (Bacheta, 1984, pages 73-4)

While the consolidation of the national States at the end of the 19th century gives rise to a period of stability in South America, without definitely eliminating the border and territorial disputes, in Central America and the Caribbean islands, the weakness of the small States that resulted from the division of the region, favored the direct intervention of the United States: imposition on Panama of the colonial treaty in the Canal Zone after its independence from Colombia (1903-14), the war between Honduras and Nicaragua (1907), and the war between Panama and Costa Rica (1921). (Bacchetta, 1984, page 74).

The failure of the long negotiation processes among the parties, the rejection to arbitration decisions taken by the tribunals or entities appointed for such a purpose, the expiration or denuntiation of old treaties, the rupture of diplomatic relations, the growing political tensions, and the armed border conflicts, are the ingredients characteristic, in a greater or lesser degree, of the re-emergence of a series of historical territorial disputes in Latin America, since the middle of the decade of the 70s. (Bacchetta, 1984, page 84).

The local General Staffs prioritize «blitzkriegs». In the opinion of Peruvian General Mercado Jarrin³, referring to a «local limited war» in the continent: it would not be necessary to have the supremacy, a relative and circumstantial superiority in the appropriate place and time would be enough. Adding,

Through diplomatic efforts politics should obtain and maintain before, during and after a conflict, the support from the great powers, particularly from one of them, to neutralize the others should they intend to intervene in favor of the enemy or try to stop the conflict before it has favored the achievement of their own goals. (Bacchetta, 1984, page 85).

Disputes over territorial limits

The establishment of territorial limits represents a key element for the creation of the nation-state. Central America has disputes that go from demarcations to territorial occupations. Although, historically, the majority of the disputes have been settled through arbitration or bilateral negotiations, and these conflicts are usually not violent, they have a significant impact on the stability of the region due to their duration. Multilateral intervention only happens when there is a military confrontation (or threat of one), when the multilateral preventive mechanisms are activated such as early alert systems. (Orozco, 2001, page 105)



³ in an article published in April, 1974.

Historical Central American disputes

The disputes in Central America are largely linked to colonial administration. One of the most significant legacies in colonial Central America were the territorial divisions drawn by the «Ordinances of the Intendancies» of 1785. (Orozco, 2001, page 108).

Mercado Jarrín (Jarrin, 1988, page 93) thinks that there are three types of interstate conflicts in Latin America: territorial (border), political, and anti- hegemonic. For Jarrin, the territorial conflicts still have international and Latin American relevance. Pfetsch and Rohloff's study about international conflicts shows that interstate border conflicts represent one third of all conflicts. It also shows that they tend to be longer and latent than any other type of dispute (Pfetsch and Rohloff, 2000).

Disputing Parties	Year Dispute began	Year Dispute escalated	Status in
Guatemala Honduras	1843	1928	Resolution in 1933
Honduras -El Salvador II	1854	1999	In dispute
Costa Rica - Panama	1879	1921	Resolution in 1941
Nicaragua - Honduras	1912	1957	Resolution in 1963
Guatemala - Belize	1946	1963	In dispute
Honduras - El Salvador	1910	1969	Under resolution
El Salvador - Nicaragua	1913	1917, 1984	Dispute Gulf of Fonseca
Costa Rica - Nicaragua	1981	1982	Resolution in the same year
Honduras - Nicaragua I	1981	1984, 2000	Dispute Gulf of Fonseca
Honduras - Nicaragua II	1986	1999	In dispute (Caribbean)
Honduras - Guatemala	1986	1999	uncertain
Costa Rica - Nicaragua	1997	1998	In dispute

(Orozco, 2001, page. 107)

Current situation of the conflict

Currently, there are four active bordering disputes in the region: between Guatemala and Belize, Honduras and Nicaragua, Nicaragua and Costa Rica, and among Honduras, Nicaragua, and El Salvador over the Gulf of Fonseca. There is also a possible fifth dispute between Honduras and Guatemala, which emanates from the ratification of the López-Ramírez Treaty. A common element to the current conflicts in Central America is the legacy of unsolved treaties. Furthermore, the current conflicts in Central America are progressively more linked to reserves of natural resources.⁴ These disputes are generally prolonged, but they show low levels of conflict. (Orozco, 2001, page 112).

The conflict between Honduras and Nicaragua, and possibly Guatemala, over the maritime limits of Honduras is directly related to the fishing resources in the Caribbean and to supposed oil fields. Honduras had already signed contracts with oil companies to drill the area currently under dispute. This conflict has also encouraged Costa Rica to negotiate maritime borders with Caribbean countries and with Colombia, thus increasing the potential for conflict. (Orozco, 2001, page 112).

Past and present disputes: some of its characteristics

Two important issues differentiate past disputes from current ones.

1. The duration. In the cases where a past dispute has been resolved, its duration exceeded thirty years.
2. Four of the most important disputes over the establishment of limits, resolved before 1980 (Guatemala-Honduras, El Salvador-Honduras, Nicaragua-Honduras, Costa Rica-Panama) shared three characteristics:
 - a) They escalated to military disputes,
 - b) Its controversy was related to the inability of the countries to establish their demarcations, and
 - c) They were finally settled through arbitration and involvement of a third party. (Orozco, 2001, page 120).

Contemporary disputes show important distinctive features that are linked to a changing dynamic of demands.

- Except for the case of the territorial dispute between Belize and Guatemala, the current conflicts in Central America are linked to reserves of natural resources.
- A key issue for the continuation of border problems is that, in spite of the *de facto* agreements over new borders, the Central American

⁴ Except the territorial dispute between Belize and Guatemala.

states have little capacity to delineate those borders or to maintain its jurisdiction.

The countries have used four mechanisms to solve the disputes: bilateral negotiations, arbitration, judicial rulings, and interstate violence. None of these methods have been totally effective.

Map of the conflicts in Central America

A map about the security and the conflicts in Central America should include factors which affect the internal cohesion of the different countries such as border disputes. Borders are an identity factor in spite of the diversity, and they define the area of application of internal policies, and are decisive for security.

On the other hand, although the measures to improve the governance should be planned within a regional framework, they are applied at a national and sub-national level. The border conflicts have often been used as an internal cohesion factor: reinforcing «we» against «you». In 2014, there still are territorial border conflicts:

1. Border conflict Guatemala – Belize: Guatemala claims 2,700 Km² of Belize's territory. In December of 2008, these nations decided to take their case before the International Court of Justice in the Hague.
2. Border conflict Costa Rica – Nicaragua: The mouth of the San Juan River delta is the epicenter of this territorial conflict. In 2010, Nicaragua began a dredging project in the waters of the San Juan River, and Costa Rica accused Nicaragua before the Organization of American States of misappropriation of Costa Rican territory, and of causing ecological damage. In 2010, Costa Rica submitted this case before the Hague.
3. Border conflict Honduras – Nicaragua: This conflict has focused on parallel 15, maritime limit between these nations. Honduras claims parallel 14°59' 08" as sea limit.
4. Border conflict between Colombia and Nicaragua: In 2001, Nicaragua presented a lawsuit against Colombia before the International Court of Justice in the Hague in order to determine the sea limit between these two nations. Meridian 82° used to be the border, but the ruling from the Hague, in November of 2012, decided to move this point towards the east, and now the border is closer to meridian 79°.

The ethnic and linguistic diversity is a centrifugal factor, particularly if the communities have a feeling of exclusion. The ethnic factor is present in all of Central America, and it sometimes has a transnational nature, and

if we add this to a weak governance, it may result in having areas out of the government's control.

Furthermore, the wide variety of superimposed geopolitical «agents» and «structures» is related to the «places» at different dimensions, which go from region to state, and even to group. It is a multi-player situation in multi-structures at multi-level.

In *Place and Politics* (1987), John Agnew holds that for a space to turn into a «place», three prerequisites must be fulfilled:

- A specific area that responds to the question: «Where?» In relation to all the other places.
- A scenario. Real shape of the space, as defined by the walls of a room or the parks and streets of a city, etc., but in general associated with daily activities (work, leisure, etc.).
- A feeling of place. The population has a personal and emotional fixation with a specific place.

Citizen insecurity

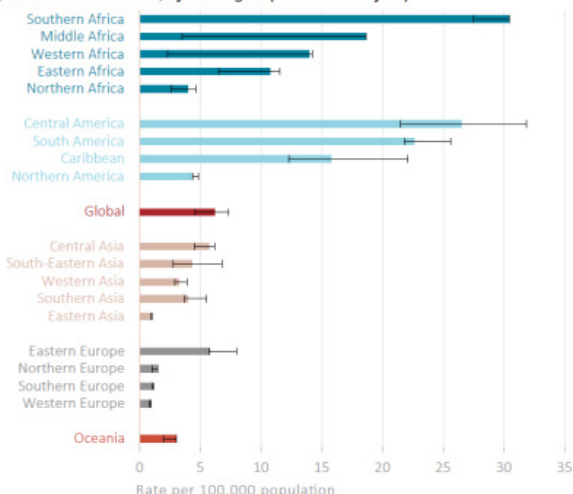
There is not a single magic formula to solve the problem, but insecurity does have a solution. (PNUD (c), 2013, page VI).

Human security is broad concept that considers a range of threats that may endanger the life and well-being of the people: Environmental disasters, wars, community conflicts, food insecurity, political violence, threats to health, and crime. (PNUD (d), 1994, pages 27-28).

Citizen security becomes a much more restricted concept. Citizen security may be understood as a specific modality of human security, related to personal security and, more specifically, with threats to it such as crime and violence. In Latin America, lethal violence is high in most of the countries, and it has a tendency to increase at a comparatively higher rate than in other regions in the world (UNDOC, 2011). The homicide rate for 11 out of the 18 countries analyzed is considered an epidemic level by the World Health Organization (PNUD (c), 2013, pages 4-5).

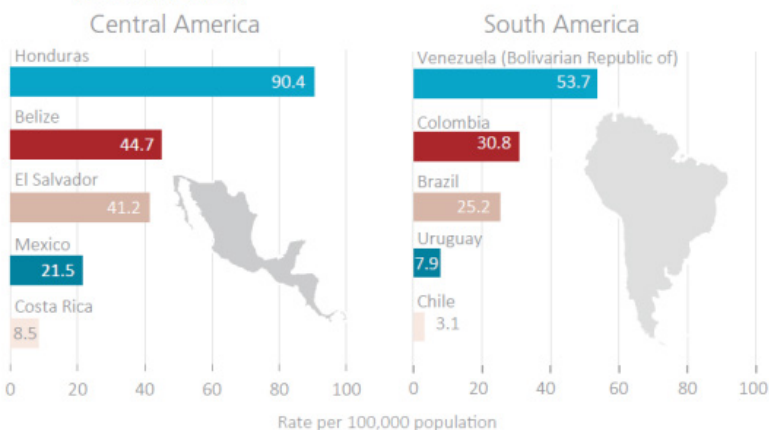
South America and Central America are the world regions with the highest homicide rates recorded – an average of over 25 victims per 1,000 inhabitants – followed by South America, Central Africa, and the Caribbean, with rates between 16 and 23 victims per 100,000 inhabitants. The fact that the homicide rates are significantly higher in the Americas than in other regions is not a new phenomenon. According to time series available since 1955, the Americas have suffered levels of homicides five to ten times higher than those in Europe or Asia. (UNODC (b), 2013).

Fig. 1.3: Homicide rates, by sub-region (2012 or latest year)



Source: UNODC Homicide Statistics (2013). The bars represent population-weighted homicide rates based on the source selected at the country level, with low and high estimates derived from homicide rates based on additional sources existing at the country level.

Fig. 1.5: Homicide rates at the national level, selected countries, by sub-region (2012 or latest year)



As in the rates and trends of regional and sub-regional homicides, the trends of the rates of national homicides can also hide differences at the sub-national level, which are important from a political and preventive perspective. For example, the so-called «hot spots» for homicides, which boost increases or changes in the types of global aggregates of homicides, could remain hidden in the global national rates of homicides. Therefore, it is also important to study homicide at a local level. (UNODC (b), 2013, page 25).

At a local level, the known factors that influence the levels of lethal violence could have different ways to become apparent. The mentioned signs include risk factors such as unemployment, poor quality of education, the presence of juvenile gangs and organized crime, poverty and inequality, and the access to firearms, but also the factors related to protection, which may be improved through prevention policies. These factors could lead to very different results in terms of violence and crime, as they operate in different areas and in different ways within a specific country. (UNODC (b), 2013, page 25).

Central America experienced a decrease in the rate of homicides between 1995 and 2004, followed by a sharp increase since 2007, often related to drug trafficking and a high rate of violence related with organized crime, resulting in one of the highest subregional homicide rates in the world (26.5 per 100,000 inhabitants). A large part of the high rate in this subregion can be attributed to very high homicide rates in the «North Triangle» (El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras). In terms of facing the growing levels of violence in Central America, recent developments include the reduction of the homicide rate in El Salvador by 40 percent since 2012, following a truce by the gangs in this country. (UNODC (b), 2013, pages 33-34).

After the end of the truce, violence increased again in El Salvador. Douglas Farah⁵ has been warning for over a year, that violence would intensify due to the sophisticated organization and weaponry possessed by the gangs. However, other voices, such as Linda Garred and Sarah Stephens⁶ are more hopeful in the case of El Salvador: «Beginning the 1st of June, the new Government of the Farbundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN) will have a period of 5 years for El Salvador to have a transformation, and turn from one of the most violent countries in the world into a pacific nation that offers its youth more options besides emigration, or a very short and brutal life of delinquency».

While some Central American countries have had a strong presence of organized delinquency groups and gangs for some years, the increase in the levels of homicides in Central America in the last years is due greatly to violence related to the control of the drug trafficking routes, to territorial wars among criminal groups, and to conflicts among the mentioned criminal groups, territorial organizations, and the State. (UNODC (b), 2013, pages 43-44).

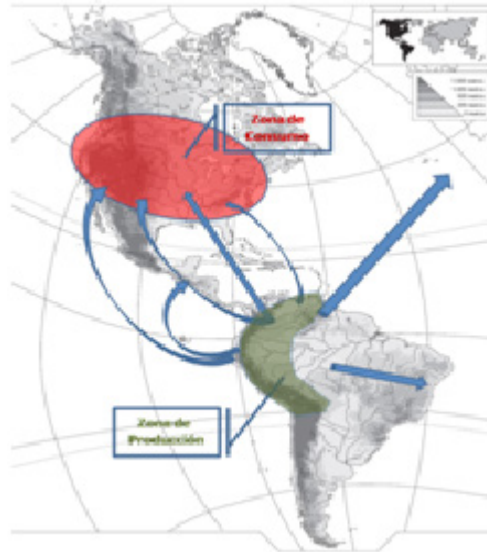
Drug trafficking and organized delinquency. Geopolitics in the network

As recognized by the report on Central America, there was a decrease in the rate of homicides, followed by a marked increase since 2007, often

⁵ from International Assessment and Strategy Center.

⁶ from Center for Democracy in the Americas.

related to drug trafficking and to the high levels of violence related to organized crime, which has resulted in one of the highest sub-regional homicide rates in the world. Adding these factors to our geopolitical map of the conflicts seems essential.



In the last few years, the study of the organizations has stepped forward with the analysis of social networks (ASN). This is an alternative method to look at criminal organizations through the study of social relations within a network. (Giménez-Salinas, 2011).

The theoretical explanations and the existing empirical results suggest that networks (of any type, where the nodes are school students, organic chemical products in the cells, or electrical network cables) can be divided into two types: Exponential, and without scale. (Albert, Jeong & Barabasi, 2000). The exponential networks (also called Poisson networks) are structurally homogenous, and most of the nodes have approximately the same number of links. The free-scale networks, on the other hand, are heterogenous – most of the nodes have proportionally few links, and a small number of the nodes (called hubs) have a large number of links. (Bright, Greenill & Levenkova, 2011).

For Bruce Bagley, the eight key tendencies or patterns which are characteristic of the transformation that is taking place in drug trafficking, and the organized criminal groups that it has produced beginning in the middle of 2011 are the following:

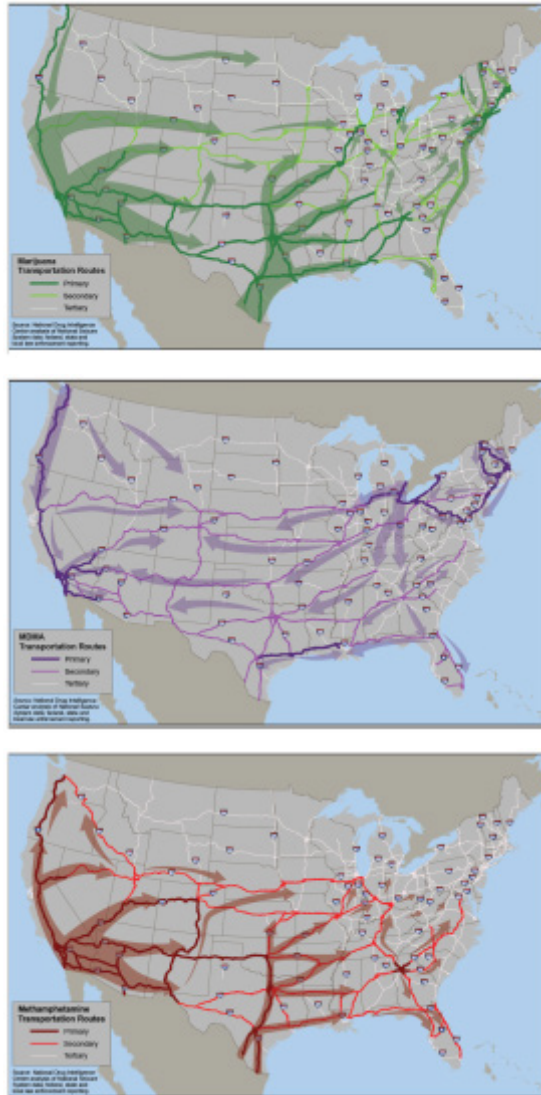
1. The growing globalization of drug consumption,

2. Partial or limited victories, and the «unintended consequences» of the «war against drugs» led by the United States, particularly in the Andes,
3. The proliferation of the drug cultivation areas and of the routes for drug trafficking in the entire hemisphere («balloon effect»),
4. The dispersion and fragmentation of the organized criminal groups or networks inside the countries and through the sub-regions («*cucaracha* effect»),
5. The failure of the political reform and of the efforts to build a State (desinstitutionalization effects»),
6. Inadequacy or failures of the national drug policies, and control of the delinquency by the United States (failures in the control of the demand),
7. The inefficiency of the regional and international policies for drug control (regulatory failures),
8. The increase of the support to the reduction of damages, the decriminalization, and the political alternatives for legalization (debate about legalization). (Bagley, 2013, page. 99).

Drug trafficking towards the United States is driven by consumption. This fact is key when defining the flows and the nodes. Essentially, drug trafficking is an American problem and of the producing countries or the ones that are conduits. When an area of production is reduced, by the action of a government or a program, the result is the «balloon» effect, and production grows in other areas. When a route is interrupted, another one is opened. However, any route must be connected to the internal routes in the United States; therefore, the entry points must be near the starting points of the mentioned routes.

The consumption indicators, seizures and price allow determining indirect indicators the flow of drugs in the United States of America.





Drug trafficking, between geo-politics and geo-economics

The transnational traffic of drugs implies the movement of illegal goods through borders, in which – in most cases – the buyers and sellers wish to cooperate, in order to achieve their respective objectives. For Naylor (2003), drug trafficking consists of multilateral exchanges of intrinsically illegal goods among producers, distributors, and consumers within a market context. From this definition, two elements are particularly relevant:

Analysis of the conflict in the central american...

- Drug trafficking represents a movement of illegal merchandise from the source to the user. The chain between both of them includes a certain number of intermediaries. This could be regarded as an «economic» element because it focuses on trading a single product.
- These exchanges happen within a social and political context; the product itself is secondary. The contextual element of drug trafficking has been the subject of many analyses in geopolitics. (Naylor, 2003).

On the other hand, most of the capital profits are obtained as compensation for the risk when importing, and in retail sales. The profit is greater for the high level or medium level traffickers, but the majority is divided among a great number of lower level traffickers. These analyses imply:

- The strategies to destroy the crops with the aim of increasing prices in the destination countries are doomed since the beginning, and
- Transnational drug trafficking means the transfer of money to the countries of origin and of transit. (Boivin, 2011).

The perspective of the world system offers a theoretical framework that allows a worldwide analysis of drug trafficking. It is based on two ideas common to geopolitical and economic analyses of drug trafficking:

- In the first place, drug trafficking is formed by chains of basic products, in other words, «a network [s] of work and production processes whose final result is a finished product». Evidence suggests that drug trafficking requires a structure of criminal opportunities, no matter if they are formal or informal.
- Secondly, the countries that participate in different stages of drug trafficking become interdependent. (Boivin, 2011).



Illegality plays a key role in any explanation of the concentration in the production of coca and of cocaine: If an easy to produce item is declared illegal worldwide, and its production is concentrated in one place, it will be produced where there are fewer risks, in other words, where the law is easier to break. This will occur where there is no state present, where society supports the illegal production against state norms, and where it is easy to create or use illegal trafficking networks. In short, where the social and institutional structures are weak. (Thoumi, 2012).



The groups that participate in organized transnational crime may be divided into territorial groups and trafficking groups (Carriers). The territorial groups focus on keeping the control over a geographic area and on imposing «taxes» on all criminal activities in that area, including drug trafficking. Some openly use violence if necessary to maintain this control. The Carriers, on the other hand, prefer a low profile, by simply moving the smuggled goods from one place to another, showing respect for the territorial groups when necessary. Some territorial groups, locally known as *tumbadores*, focus on robbing the cargo from their carriers, and are a significant source of violence. Finally, a type of territorial group, the street gangs known as *maras* have little relation with transnational drug trafficking, and they mainly focus on extortion, and other struggles for local power. (UNODC (c), 2012, pages 11-13).

The challenges faced by the seven countries that form the isthmus that unites North and South America are, in many ways, highly superior to those that Mexico faces. The region is located in the route between the production area for narcotics and the countries with the highest con-

sumption, thus being a natural springboard. These are decentralized and weak states that have difficulty modernizing, with few resources, and without the support of the elite who are unwilling to pay for those changes, nor of the general population who clearly remembers what a powerful and uncontrolled central government can do. (Dudley, 2011).

The result is a whole region under serious risk of falling into an uncontrollable spiral. The rates of assassinations, driven by the wars among transnational street gangs and drug trafficking organizations, are among the highest in the world. Numerous police, military, and border security agents are directly working with organized crime or have created their own operations. The judicial authorities are overwhelmed, they lack training or resources, or have simply given up confronted by the unprecedented challenge. There is no political party that is entirely above suspicion. (Dudley, 2011).

The two key challenges for security are the gangs, and organized crime. These two phenomena are not alien to each other, and they appear to have found their place in the center of the criminal world, as each one has expanded their portfolios

The main flow of drugs from South America towards the United States travels through the Central American corridor. According to calculations by the U.S. government, approximately 95 percent of the cocaine that enters the US, does so through Central America and Mexico. The amount that is directly sent from South America to Mexico has dramatically decreased during the last five years due to the increasing pressure on the cartels by the Mexican authorities. While in 2006, 55 percent of the illegal narcotics headed towards the U.S. initially reached Mexico; in 2010 this amount had decreased to only 7 percent.

Now, the drug shipments first reach Central America. The percentage of drugs destined to the U.S. that arrive in Honduras has increased from 7 to 24 percent during the last five years; the amount that entered through Panama went from 3 to 24 percent, and through Guatemala, from 9 to 17 percent. Approximately 12 percent enters through Costa Rica, a proportion which remains relatively stable. The rest reach Nicaragua (2 percent), Belize (2 percent), and El Salvador (1 percent) or to unknown places. (Harrigan, 2011).

Currently, the Drug Trafficking Organizations use, land, sea, and air traffic routes as means to move the drugs to the Central American isthmus from South America to Mexico. The Drug Trafficking Organizations exploit porous borders, corruption at all levels, and the lack of adequate means of the local security forces responsible for enforcing the law, to transport the illegal shipments through the region. Panama, Honduras and Guatemala are still the most common transfer points, and the consolidation points for South American cocaine before it is sent to Mexico and the U.S. (Harrigan, 2011).

Maritime traffic is the most common method for the entry of drugs in Central America until they reach Guatemala. Upon arriving in Guatemala, the drugs mostly travel to the U.S. by land. Due to the lack of trustworthy land routes between Colombia and Panama, cocaine tends to reach Panama on ships. The traffickers prefer to use swift motorboats to sail along the coastal regions throughout the thousands of remote islands and bays that splash the Central American coast on both sides, the Pacific and the Caribbean, to carry drugs to the isthmus since this protects them from being captured by the U.S. Coast Guard cutters. (Harrigan, 2011).

Central America is the classical representation of the incessant dynamic of drug trafficking in the last decades, in which the improvements in a country or subregion mean the deterioration in other places. The «balloon effect» generally describes the phenomenon by which the reduction of coca growing in one country can generate an increase in others. Nevertheless, the balloon effect is much more destructive. All aspects of organized crime – from cultivation of drugs, its production, and all forms of illegal trafficking – constantly change its aspects as the traffickers adapt in order to meet the growing demand. (Arnson, 2011).

Most analysts coincide in that the crucial advantage that Guatemala offers to organized crime, as well as to common delinquency, is the lack of efficient State institutions. «It is not a question of failed states», declares Carlos Castresana, the Spanish public prosecutor that led the International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG) from 2007 to 2010. «It is a matter of absent states because, between citizens and delinquents, there is nothing» (ICG, GUATEMALA: DRUG TRAFFICKING AND VIOLENCE, 2011).

The most powerful criminal organizations play, within the illegal markets, a governance role similar to the one played by the State in legal markets: the establishment of norms, the allocation of resources, and the resolution of disputes. In this sense organized crime is «a business and a government». In different contexts, the criminal organizations are accused of operating as «de facto government structures» or «private governments», «primitive states» or competitors to the state. They not only raise armies, in a certain way, but they can also assume legislative and judicial functions in the limited territories, markets, or towns. (Cockayne, 2013).

Organized crime groups

In Central America and the Caribbean, there are two main categories that include all the organized crime groups:

- Territorial organized crime groups
- Transnational drug traffic groups (UNODC (c), 2012, page 21).

Central America and the Caribbean are located in the center of what has been the flow of the highest value drugs in the world for a long time: The flow of cocaine from South America to the U.S. This flow has affected the region for over 40 years, but recent changes in the world market have changed the role played by some countries. The countries that had previously been used as refuelling stops have turned into storage and logistic centers for the transnational drug traffic groups. (UNODC (c), 2012, page 21).

The efficient interdiction efforts in the Caribbean, the narco-war in Mexico, and the dynamics of the isthmus itself made some Mexican Drug Trafficking Organizations expand their operations to the south. Fragile state institutions, vast ungoverned areas, especially in bordering and forest areas, corruption, a weak supervision of the financial system, limited law enforcement, as well as poverty and social inequality allow organized crime to flourish. (Wolf, 2012).

Guatemala is an door to access Mexico for drugs coming from other parts of Central America. Furthermore, it created the landing center for narco-flights before these increased in Honduras, where the confusion after the coup against President Manuel Zelaya, in 2009, allowed the intensification of anarchy and insecurity. The key players in this delinquent panorama are the Mexican OTDs (Drug Traffickers Organizations), and Central American groups known as carriers, whose main function is the reception, stockpiling, and movement of drugs throughout the isthmus. (Wolf, 2012).

Territorial organized crime groups

The key organized delinquency structures – the drug trafficking groups that control the territory – are, in fact, quasi-governmental players whose power feeds on its riches, and whose riches allow them to spread their power. Unlike the street gangs, who have spread even to the smallest Central American town, and include a significant part of the male youths; the number of members of these drug trafficking groups is limited.

This type of territorial control requires the capacity to impose it, to have something similar to a private army. It needs to have a clear hierarchy and a chain of command, otherwise the control would be lost in favor of other better organized groups. The «families» are the head of the group, often made up by a patriarch or patriarchs and their sons, with blood ties, which allow them to gain the trust in activities where otherwise it would often be insufficient. These territorial groups are involved in local affairs, which expand the reach of their activities. They can demand payment (extortion), give credit at high interest rates (usury), and dictate the local

employment conditions (labor blackmail) within their areas of influence. (UNODC(c), 2012, page 22).

In some countries, certain units specialized in the fight against organized crime have had spectacular success when disarticulating this type of crime. Those groups often include teams of researchers and public prosecutors who work jointly from the beginning of an investigation, guaranteeing that the proper and necessary documents are gathered to ensure a conviction in court. These are considered elite units, and may be supervised by international advisors, thus adding credibility and better global procedures for this initiative.

Guatemala is the country that best exemplifies the complexity of violence in this region. The most violent areas in the country are around the seaports, the border crossing points, and along the main roads. These are not merely drug trafficking areas: they are drug trafficking disputed areas. Large extensions of land in the southwest of the country (where the Cartel of the Pacific and its allies, the *Chamales*, operate), and in the provinces of the interior Alta and Baja Verapaz (area of influence of the *Zetas*) there is very little violence. The areas with more problems in Guatemala seem to be along the borders with Honduras and El Salvador, the areas disputed by the Cartel of the Pacific, allies of the *Mendozas*, and the *Zetas*, allies of the *Lorenzanas*.

The *maras*

As in the other countries of the northern triangle, the drug trafficking activities of the *maras* is usually limited to a local level, but the resulting scenario is not homogenous. (Wolf, 2012). The gang members' activities are concentrated in two groups: the *Mara Salvatrucha*, or MS-13, y the *Barrio 18*, or *Mara 18*. Both began in Los Angeles in the U.S. They have both spread throughout the United States, Mexico, and Central America, partly as a result of the U.S. policy to repatriate the illegal immigrants, as well as the gang members with permanent residence, back to their countries of origin, after having served jail sentences.

One of the most controversial aspects of the gangs is the nature of their participation in organized crime, particularly in drug trafficking. The Central American authorities have compared the *Barrio 18* and the MS-13 *maras* with organized crime groups because they allegedly have criminal purposes, a transnational structure, a leadership with several levels, and they use firearms and communication technology. Furthermore, police sources have declared that the gangs have taken up the drug trafficking business in the isthmus. (Wolf, 2012).

The fundamental difference between the street gangs and the organized crime groups is manifest in the aim that justifies the existence of these

criminal groups. The purpose of organized crime is to obtain and accumulate economic profit. However, although the juvenile gangs frequently commit crimes for economic purposes, they usually play an instrumental role with respect to other objectives. The aim of the juvenile gangs is not to become rich, nor to employ violence or crime, but rather to create an alternative means to make a living and lifestyle for its members. The economic crimes that the gangs commit are to provide a means of support to their members, and to preserve a specific identity. (Wolf, 2012).

The existence of transnational bonds is not surprising because many gang members are deported to their respective countries of origin. Nevertheless, the fact that youngsters in different countries declare that they belong to the same gang does not necessarily reflect the proliferation of a transnational gang network that responds to a sole chain of command. The *maras* are still networks of autonomous groups that share a symbolic, identifying, and standardized affiliation. (Wolf, 2012).

For ICG (2010), although there is a perception that the *maras* have an increasing bond with organized crime in the region, it is difficult to generalize. The size and dynamics of the gangs is different in every country. The leadership is amorphous: some *maras* have a more horizontal structure, while others are more vertical and hierarchical. What does seem clear is that the main purpose of the *maras* in the world of organized crime is the local distribution of illegal drugs, which sometimes introduces them into the wholesale business. In some cases they are paid assassins. In El Salvador and Honduras, they lead, from the prisons, extortion organizations which sometimes extend beyond national borders.

However, for Clare Ribando Seelke (2013), although the MS-13 and the M-18 started as loosely structured street gangs, there is evidence that both gangs, but particularly the MS-13, have spread out geographically, and that they are more organized and sophisticated. At the beginning of 2008, the U.S. police had found evidence that suggests that some leaders of the MS-13 incarcerated in El Salvador were ordering reprisal assassinations against people in the metropolitan area of Washington, and had laid out plans to unify their *clicas* (gangs) with those in the U.S.

The estimates of the total number of gang members in Central America vary widely; a senior official of the Department of State has recently estimated that there may be 85,000 street gang members from the MS-13 and the M-18 in the countries of the Northern Triangle (El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras). The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) recently estimated the total members of the MS-13 and the M-18 in Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras at a more modest 54,000 members. El Salvador has the highest concentration of members of the gang, with around 323 *mareros* (*mara* gang members) per 100,000 inhabitants, double the amount in Guatemala and Honduras. In comparison, in

2007, the UNODC had mentioned a total of 10,500 national members in El Salvador, 36,000 in Honduras, and 14,000 in Guatemala. (Seelke, 2013).

The regional and U.S. authorities have confirmed the increase of the participation of the *maras* in drug trafficking, although most of them locally, since the U.S. authorities maintain that the gangs «facilitate the logistics and transport for the trafficking industry in Central America and Mexico». It is known that the MS-13 is hired on an ad-hoc basis by conflicting Drug Trafficking Organizations in Mexico to carry out reprisal killings. Some analysts claim that the relationship between drug trafficking organizations and gangs seems to be more developed in El Salvador and, to a lesser degree, in Honduras, but with few connections among Drug Trafficking Organizations and gangs in Guatemala, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, or Panama. (Seelke, 2013).

Transnational drug trafficking groups

Besides the organized crime territorial groups, the drug trafficking transnational groups are essential for drug trafficking. A great deal of the current violence in the region is due to the growing control of the territorial groups over transnational traffic. This gives way to conflicts between the aforementioned territorial groups and the carriers, as well as to conflicts among different territorial groups. (UNODC (c), 2012, page 21).

Territorial groups initially focused on the control of the territory and on taxing the activities inside their domain. The traffickers, on their side, are supplier, carrier and receptor networks, such as the ones in any supply chain, and they are generically known in the entire region as «carriers». The carriers are continuously growing, transporting illegal drugs for the main Mexican cartels, including the one from Sinaloa, the most powerful and largest federation of groups in Mexico, with operations that go from Argentina to Colombia and all of Central America. (Wolf, 2012).

The importance of the sub-national groups

The main organized crime territorial groups in Central America already had an identity before becoming involved in cocaine trafficking. This is because cocaine trafficking does not create territorial groups but rather creates carriers. If the carriers could do their business without obstacles from the territorial groups, they would, and the impact of drug trafficking in the transit countries would be lower. However, once the traffic routes include wide areas, particularly border areas, the pre-existing interests clash. In the borders, these interests were already controlling the smuggling, they had experience in clandestine crossings, and high level connections with corrupt

officials at a high level. At the beginning, they simply tax the trade, but they soon try to control it. While traveling in these areas raises the costs, as a last resort, the cargo could be safer than at open sea. (UNODC (c), 2012, page 30).

The role of external actors

Regional actors

Colombia and Mexico are the two regional players that, together with Cuba – in the past – have had the most influence in the region. Mexico is the most influential country in the area after the United States, playing a historical role of compensation of the influence of the former. The present situation in Mexico, whose cartels control the cocaine traffic and the balloon effect of the fight against the mentioned cartels, has provoked the shift of violence to Central America, particularly to the Northern triangle. Whatever happens in Mexico affects Central America.

Colombia is the origin of most of the cocaine that travels throughout Central America. The Colombia Plan has pushed part of the production to bordering countries (mainly Peru and Bolivia) but it is still a key country as origin of the traffic, along with Venezuela, with growing protagonism. The agreement reached between the Colombian government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) guerrillas in Havana about drugs and drug trafficking could have an impact on 70% of the illegal production of coca in this country.

Global actors

Among the global actors, the United States deserves special treatment. China and Russia deserve less attention. Comparing the Mediterranean Sea with the Caribbean, Mahan used to declare:

«..... Besides, in many ways, at this moment there is a very notable analogy with the Caribbean Sea, an analogy that would be even greater if a route through the Panama Canal was ever completed. A study of the strategic conditions of the Mediterranean, which has been widely illustrated, will serve as a basis for a similar study of the Caribbean, which, comparatively, has little history...» (Mahan, 1890).

Roosevelt threatened the Latin American countries with an armed intervention on the grounds of the «right» to intervene in the affairs of other countries to defend the interests of the citizens of the United States, in application of his corollary «America for the Americans». (Selser, 1962). William Howard Taft once declared that: «.... The entire hemisphere will

be ours, as it already is morally the same way it is already ours morally, by virtue of our racial superiority». (Galeano, 1970, page 142).

In order to understand the policy of the United States toward Central America, it is useful to know the geopolitical approaches of Spykman and of Kennan. Spykman considers «Mediterranean America» as «an area where the supremacy of the United States cannot be questioned. For all purposes, it is a closed sea whose keys belong to the United States.....». The concept of special interest is the basis of the «Kennan doctrine» who, upon defining the «contention degrees» in front of the Soviet Union, pointed out that Central Europe, and Central America and the Caribbean would find themselves in an absolute degree of control, «where any movement should be answered forcefully».

The successive governments of the United States have given privilege to the short-term needs of their own domestic policies. (Villanueva, 2005). Nevertheless, the Obama administration focuses, in the words of Secretary of State Clinton, on «inducing greater cooperation among a growing number of actors..... displacing the balance from a multipolar world towards a world with multiple partners.» (Herd, 2011).

The Panama Canal is critical. It allows the mutual reinforcement of the fleets in the Atlantic and the Pacific Oceans, which is an essential element in the strategy of the United States. Any threat to the freedom of movement of the ships of the United States through the Panama Canal would be considered as a serious threat to its vital national interests, lines of communication, and resources.

We can divide the relations between the Soviet Union and Central America into five periods: The first (1917 to 1943) corresponds to the predominance of the relations among parties regarding the bonds between the states. The second (1944 to 1954) includes the beginning of the recognition of the states, although without an exchange of representatives, and with the participation of communist leaders in the governments of Costa Rica and Guatemala. The third (1954 to 1968) is characterized by a retrenchment of the relations, and by the ideological and strategic conflicts of the communist parties in the continent. In the fourth period (1970 to 1979) there is a relative increase of commercial relations. The fifth and last, in the decade of the 1980s, which starts with the Sandinista victory in Nicaragua, corresponds to the development of the crisis in Central America. Russia, heir of the USSR, has maintained discrete relations, with a certain degree of influence on the countries of the ALBA Group (ALBA - Bolivarian Alternative for Latin America and the Caribbean).

In any case, the Russian influence is being substituted by that of China. China is participating in various interoceanic corridor projects (Nicaragua

and Honduras), which would compete with the Panama Canal, controlled by the United States. Regarding consumption goods, the large purchases of raw materials by China, and the commercial deficit of the region along with the consolidation of the new-extractivism are to be highlighted.⁷

The commercial boom between China and the region emerges as a result of a deliberate strategy from China's side, and as a reaction from the Latin part. The estimations carried out by CEPAL (2011) is that China will gradually push out the classic commercial partners – the United States and the European Union -- for exports in the region. This same projection would be applicable to imports from China. In 2015 the Asian giant will have replaced the European Union as industrial supplier.

The role of the European Union and Spain

The European Union and the six Central American countries (Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Panama) have full relations that include political dialogue, cooperation and a favorable commercial regime. The San Jose Dialogue is the basis for the relations between the European Union and Central America. Since then, the European Union has undertaken an important contribution to peace, the democratization process, and the socio-economic development of Central America.

The European Union has always supported the regional integration of the area, keeping in mind the peculiarities and differential riches that are characteristic of the area. In June of 2007, the negotiations for an Association Agreement between the European Union and Central America started, and they ended in 2010 on the occasion of the EU-LAC summit held in Madrid. The Agreement was signed in Honduras in June of 2012 considering the provisional enforcement of the trade segment.

The role of Spain is at the same time historical, particularly linked to the role of the Chief of State – the Crown – and of the interests of Spanish companies in the area. Furthermore, Spain is, without a doubt, the natural bridge between both regions: the frequent visits of King Phillip VI, particularly to Inaugural Ceremonies of Central American Presidents, and the visits of the aforementioned Presidents to Spain, are an essential diplomatic element at the highest level, which is extraordinarily effective.

⁷ Neo-extractivism refers to a form of extraction more than to a specific activity: all activities that move large volumes of natural goods and are transported far from their areas of origin (almost) without processing. Mining, oil, gas, dams, monocultures (of cereal or forestry), agro-industry, cattle farming or intensive fishing, etc., are within this category, and they are able to increase their concentration. From among them, mining is the one that can produce the largest amount of non-renewable resources in the least amount of time.

Conclusions

In Central America we find deep-rooted historical problems along with emerging «wicked» problems for which we have no recipes. We are now witnessing a proliferation of «wicked problems», of unforeseen consequences, which seem to point out a certain weakness of the United States world leadership.

Central America shows us two contradictory geopolitical dynamics: It is a connecting isthmus between North and South America, but it is also the «least resistance road» between the Atlantic and the Pacific Oceans.

The process of the creation of the national States in Latin America resulted in numerous areas in dispute. Some of these disputes still exist in our days. One of the legacies of colonial Central America was the territorial divisions drawn by the «Ordinances of the Intendancies» of 1785, that were not totally marked, and the separations between State-nation that cannot be easily distinguished.

The superimposition of agents with structures nested at different levels forces its description to be done through complex geopolitics or geopolitical disorder. The ethnic and linguistic diversity is a centrifugal factor, particularly if the communities have a feeling of exclusion. The ethnic factor is present throughout Central America, and it is sometimes of a transnational nature.

The perspective of an eventual improvement of the security in the region will basically depend on the reduction of the North-South and South-North trafficking. The reduction of cocaine production in Colombia, after an agreement with the FARC, could be a positive element for the whole region; but the balloon effect would not guarantee the results unless there was a substantial reduction of the consumption in the United States. The transnational nature of the networks, the economic interests involved, and the corruption associated to both, leads us to believe that the security will not improve significantly on a short/medium term.

The transnationality mentioned above, the importance of the border crossing points, and the routes between them invite us to use geopolitical analyses based on the dynamics of the social networks, where the nodes and connectors are essential elements, and partly substitutive elements of the territory and the more traditional powers. In any event, it is considered necessary to superimpose diverse theoretical approximations in order to explain the situation in Central America.

Appendix I. Chart of regional data

	Panama	Costa Rica	Nicaragua	Honduras	Guatemala	El Salvador
Basic Data						
Extension in Km ²	75.420	51.100	130.170	112.090	108.889	21.041
Population	3.608.431	4.755.234	5.848.641	8.598.561	14.647.083	6.125.512
Growth %	1,35	1,24	1,02	1,74	1,86	0,27
Urban population%	75	64	57	52	49	64
Life expectancy	78,3	78,23	72,72	70,91	71,74	74,18
Fertility rate	2,38	1,91	1,99	2,86	2,99	1,95
Literacy rate	94,1	96,3	78	85,1	75,9	84,5
Economic data						
GDP PPP in billion \$	61,54	61,43	27,68	39,23	81,51	47,47
Per capita GDP \$	16.500	12.900\$	4.500	4.800	5.300	7.500
Agriculture (%GDP)	3,7	6,2	17,1	14,0	13,5	10,3
Industry (%GDP)	17,9	21,3	25,5	28,2	23,8	29,5
Services (%GDP)	78,4	72,5	57,4	57,8	62,7	60,1
Unemployment rate %	4,5	7,9	7,2	4,5	4,1	6,3
Population below threshold of poverty %	26	24,8	42,5	60	54	36,5
Inflation %	4,1	5,6	7,4	5,2	4,4	0,9
Exports in billions	18,87	11,66	4,278	7,881	10,29	5,112
Imports in billions	26,61	17,56	6,608	11,34	16,7	10,03
External debt in billions	15,22	15,1	8,16	6,17	17,67	14,44
Defense expenses						
% GDP in Defense	no	no	0,63	1,05	0,42	0,99
Security and Development						
Assassinations per 100.000 inhabitants	17,2	8,5	11,3	90,4	39,9	41,2
Rate of human development	0,780	0,773	0,599	0,632	0,581	0,680
World Rank in HDI	59	62	129	120	133	107

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Towards signing peace in Colombia

Miguel Ángel Serrano Monteavaro

Chapter eleven

Summary

Two years ago now, contacts started, and subsequently the peace talks between the Colombian government and the FARC-EP (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia-People's Army) Any well-informed observer might think that too much time has elapsed since that date without any definite results from this process, because the armed clashes and the political discrepancies have continued.. However, the fact that the parties involved are still in contact is in itself a promising factor.

Key words

Latin America, guerrilla activity, peace negotiations, drug trafficking, insecurity and citizenship education, international support.

Introduction

In «Geopolitical Overview of Conflicts, 2013» (Spanish Institute of Strategic Studies – IEESE - 2014), we had the opportunity to publish Part I of this paper which, due to publication deadlines, had to be delivered on September 1st of that year. Since then, peace talks between the Government of Colombia and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) have continued, although at a slower pace than many would want.

During this period, the key to these peace talks inexorably revolved around the legislative process in Colombia which took place, in accordance with the Constitution, in two stages: March 9th, when the legislative elections were held, and the presidential elections on May 25th for the first round and June 15th for the second round.

There is a feeling that the FARC tried to slow down the peace talks to obtain better results in the negotiations, thus putting pressure on the government of Colombia, which was subject to the results from the elections, without either of them realizing that if Colombia missed this chance for peace, it would be difficult to have such an opportunity again.

In the meantime, former President Álvaro Uribe, the shadow presidential candidate and head of the Central Democratic Party which submitted former minister Óscar Iván Zuluaga as official presidential candidate, decided to run for Senator in the legislative elections, while continuing to firmly oppose the form and conditions in which the peace talks were being held in Havana.

On the other hand, the existing perception in the international arena continued being favorable to the peace negotiations led by Colombian President J.M. Santos; in America (Michelle Bachelet, Rafael Correa, B. Obama), and in the European Union, the United Nations, the Davos Forum (held in January, 2014 with the attendance of President Santos).

From another perspective, the most directly involved countries in the peace process, Norway, Chile, Venezuela, and Cuba, continued giving their negotiating and logistical assistance to the Table of Talks being held in Havana

Background to the conflict

Previous negotiation attempts

As we have thoroughly commented in the first part of this work, in the breeding ground that was the Cold War, numerous guerrilla groups were born or were created in Latin America, some of a Marxist-Leninist nature,

and others that simply opposed the extreme conservatism that governed those countries; all of it under the scrutiny, at least of, the United States. Some time later, the spectacular increase of drug trafficking, the appearance of primarily criminal gangs (the BACRIM – Criminal Gangs – *Bandas Criminales*) dedicated to extortion, kidnappings, smuggling, the action of «paramilitary» groups, often protected by some governments with the aim of eliminating the guerrilla groups using the same weapons they used, the lack of collaboration from other governments in the region or the incompetent aid from only few sides, led Colombia to turn into an almost failed State. If we add to all of this the appearance in the world scenario of terrorism in its diverse forms and only apparently indiscriminate, we can state that today we finally find ourselves before a painting of thick and dark strokes.

The FARC-EP (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia – People's Army), about which we will speak now, apparently arose around 1950-1960 in the south of the country, namely in Maquetalia. Today, this guerrilla group is undoubtedly the most numerous and with the most political weight (as they are showing in Havana), and it carries out its activities in the south of the country, and in the areas of Putumayo, Tolima, Nariño, Cauca, and Valle del Cauca.

The leaders of this guerrilla group have, of course, changed since those first days due to the loss in combat of some of its leaders, and to the vicissitudes of the political dynamics of the group itself. Thus, the theoretical leadership of the FARC-EP is currently in the hands of Rodrigo Londoño Echeverry, alias «Timoleón Jiménez» and «Timocho».

The members of this guerrilla group amount to 18,000 men and women, between active and auxiliary members, although this information is subject to revision due to the natural difficulty of any calculation and to the abandonment of the arms by some of them, and to the incorporation of others to the guerrilla.

The European Union and the United States view the FARC-EP as a terrorist armed group.

Considering the worrisome increase of Colombian drug trafficking towards the United States and Europe (with a substantial activity through Spain), it is difficult at this moment in Colombia to distinguish among drug trafficking activities, political subversion, and the conduct of criminal gangs. In the opinion of former Colombian President Andrés Pastrana, which appeared in the Madrid newspaper «El País» on March 23, 2014, this guerrilla group has become the largest drug trafficking cartel in the world.

On the other hand, we cannot say that the current President Juan Manuel Santos Calderón has been the only one who tried to end the different gue-

rrilla groups by negotiating with them. Belisario Betancur Cuartas (1982-1986), Virgilio Barco Vargas (1986-1990), César Gaviria Trujillo (1990-1994), Ernesto Samper Pizano (1994-1998), Andrés Pastrana Arango (1998-2002) and Álvaro Uribe Vélez (2002-2006 y 2006-2010), in other words, all of the Colombian Presidents since 1982 tried, in one way or another, to negotiate peace with the different guerrilla groups.

Current situation of the conflict

The development of the negotiations

Currently, however, the negotiations seem to be going along different routes than in the earlier stage. Thus, immediately upon taking office in 2010, the current President, Juan Manuel Santos, decided to take on new peace negotiations with the different guerrilla groups, but from another perspective. He did not lack experience in this area as he had been an active Minister of Defense in Álvaro Uribe's last cabinet.

Land reform is being debated now. This reform has historically been a key issue pending to be settled in Colombia between landowners and settlers, livestock owners and farmers, coca growers and other peasants; as well as public health, education, housing; as well as the integration of the guerrilla members (especially the leaders) into the political arena, the future of the crops, the sale and trafficking of cocaine, and finally the disarmament on the part of the guerrilla members.

As can be confirmed, this negotiation entails a scope that reaches the political, and particularly the constitutional, arena, which it additionally developed under the fire of weapons by an express wish of the government of Colombia because the guerrillas had promised a ceasefire. Thus, the struggle, along with its corresponding casualties, kept on being at the expense of the population.

Thus, beginning on August 26, 2012, when the representatives of the government of Colombia and those of the FARC-EP signed the «General Agreement for the Termination of the Conflict and the Construction of a Stable and Lasting Peace», talks between the conflicting parties, in our opinion, have been purposely taking place too slowly by the FARC-EP. These conversations have, other than what was pointed out above, compromised the position of the Colombian government in other areas, which have forced the government to take action between the application of the Penal Code to criminal gangs, and the approval of a possible special political statute addressed to the members of the guerrillas that lay down their weapons. These concessions have raised suspicion, and even an alarm, among the numerous victims of this long lasting struggle.

With this situation, and we now chronologically connect with the First Part of this paper, and with the negotiations regarding the First Point of the General Agreement closed on May 26, 2013, in other words, of the «Integral Land Development Policy», the talks in Havana were resumed. This series of meetings and vacation periods aim to submit the course of the conversations to the approval of the government of Colombia, and the guerrilla base members and its leaders. Otherwise, it would be delaying the final agreement for no reason. In any case, we believe that it is a question of following step by step the «game theory» which we mentioned at the beginning of the first part of our paper; in other words, to the impossible search for the existence of no winners nor losers in the signing of the final document.

Finally, on November 6, the negotiations ended regarding the subject that was being discussed at the time, Point 2 of the General Agreement, called «Political Participation», whose terms were made public on Sunday, December 8, in Havana, under the heading «The joint report of the Peace Talks Table regarding Point 2 of the Agreement», entitled «Political Participation».

In short, this communiqué states the following:

1. The exercise of politics is not only carried out through the parties and the electoral process itself, but that it must always count on the participation of the citizens and social movements. Stated as such, nothing can be objected to this section, as long as the citizens run for office through a party or a group; otherwise we would find ourselves in an assembly process. On the other hand, the increase of the warp of the social weave of a country is always beneficial to the citizens.
2. The elaboration and approval of a legal Statute for the exercise of political opposition is agreed upon. This would lead, we pointed out, to a reform of the stipulations that regulate the conduct of the political parties and other organizations in Colombia.
3. There is a need for the existence of an integral security system to exercise opposition, which requires an adaptation of norms and institutions, a system of prevention and protection, and of evaluation and follow-up. The demands are understandable up to a point, in case some of the guerrilla members want to integrate into the political arena.
4. It is agreed that the official media collaborate in the creation of a reconciliation, coexistence, tolerance, and non-stigmatization culture.
5. All parties may be represented in Parliament without the need to have a minimum number of votes. Plus, finally, the creation of an

institutional private television channel, as a means of expression for the parties, and for the social and gender movements. This last section is difficult to accomplish in a democratic system where all the media may participate.

All things considered, these demands from the FARC, as they cannot be called otherwise, clearly show their lack of trust in the traditional and conservative political class in Colombia, whom they historically blame for the lack of real democracy in this American country. On the other hand, as may be verified, the wording of Point 2 of the General Agreement does not sufficiently specify the terms of what was agreed, and the wording will, therefore, have to be negotiated again.

Article 122 of the Colombian Constitution affects the terms of this Agreement, particularly for the electoral process, and specifically in the following paragraph: «cannot be registered as popularly elected candidates to office..... whoever may have been sentenced for crimes related to terrorist actions.....» But, we ask ourselves, and what if those subjects have been pardoned or pardoned under an amnesty before the elections? This obstacle was solved, for the moment, on March 9th, when the legislative elections were held, where no active guerrilla member ran for office.

Finally, on the 20th day of that month of November, 2013, President Juan Manuel Santos publicly announced his candidature to the presidential elections to be held on May 25, 2014. The polls during the following month gave 25% of the votes to Santos, an amount which was insufficient, and would force holding a second round of the elections, which should have been held on June 15. In a wise decision on November 27, Miqueria Rentería and María P. Riveros, experts in female gender issues, joined the negotiations in Havana on the government side of the table, in order to contribute their experience to the peace talks at that moment, given the high index of the Colombian female population, and to the fact that not few women are members of the FARC.

In search of support, on December 3, Santos Calderón had a meeting with B. Obama in Washington, during which the U.S. Head of State supported Santos' road towards peace in Colombia.

The following day, Santos appeared before the Assembly of the Organization of American States, where he presented his theory about «transitional justice» (about which we have already spoken), and asked that, in order to apply it, the Interamerican System of Human Rights, and what is more difficult, that the International Court of Justice leave the judicial handling of the peace process in the hands of Colombia. At the same time, Santos announced that he was holding new contact with the minority guerrilla group of the National Liberation Army (ELN), in order to also negotiate peace.

Finally, Santos made clear that he would be flexible in the negotiations regarding the production and commercialization of certain type of drugs, negotiations which were being carried out in Havana at the moment he made those declarations. Additionally, Santos' declarations coincided with the measures adopted by the States of Colorado and Washington, on the one hand, and the government of Uruguay, on the other, regarding the consumption of certain type of drugs called soft drugs, namely marihuana.

It comes as no surprise that on the very same day that Santos transmitted his considerations about «transitional justice» to those international authorities, the Attorney General of Colombia, the controversial Alejandro Ordóñez, asked the International Court of Justice to control the peace process in accordance with its own regulations, a discrepancy between both Colombian politicians which sows obstacles in the peace process.

However, the peace talks were not, in any case, the only subject that aroused the interest of the Colombian citizens at that moment. December 2 was the 20th anniversary of the assassination of Pablo Escobar by the police. Escobar, the sadly notorious drug trafficker, once declared that terror had to be sown to force the government to negotiate with him a certain way of life. Pablo Escobar showed his abilities, beyond delinquency, by surrounding himself by an aura of benefactor and protector of the poor, which has created a kind of cult to the «good narco», as seen through different popular events held in different parts of Colombia to remember him, without the apparent acknowledgement of the government.

In addition, on Saturday, December 7, the FARC perpetrated a new attack in the Cauca, causing 8 deaths between civilians and military personnel, apparently in response to the capture, the day before, of the prominent guerrilla member Anderson Yonda Cañas, alias «Pepo», by the government forces.

Shortly thereafter, on December 9, the 35th Interparliamentary World Forum for Peace was held in Bogota, whose participants undoubtedly supported the peace process, a support that is significant because the majority of the attendants were from countries in the Americas.

However, that very same day, on the 9th, the controversial Mayor of Bogotá, Gustavo Petro, former guerrilla member of the M-19, who had reached office as Mayor on January 1, 2012, was politically barred for 15 years by the Attorney General, Alejandro Ordóñez, curiously because of the embarrassing management of garbage collection in the capital city. This is not a trivial issue for President Santos, considering the significant role that this mayor plays in Colombian politics, as was demonstrated by the fact that shortly after, Gustavo Petro was able to momentarily hold back that ban.

In the meantime, the announcement by the FARC, which was made public on December 15, whereby it committed itself to a kind of unilateral Christmas armed truce for 30 days, was popularly acclaimed. However, as became evident later, the truce was not meticulously carried out.

On its part, the Catholic church, with the Archbishop of Bogota, Ruben Cardinal Salazar as spokesman, did not want, once again and coinciding with the Christmas period, to leave the terrorist victims aside from what was happening in Havana, particularly when speaking about the already highly announced «transnational justice», which could have probably been applied to the guerrilla members. Thus, on December 18, he showed his disagreement with an accord based on a sort of «making a fresh start» at the expense of the victims.

Fabrizio Hochschild, United Nations representative in Colombia, also took advantage of the proximity of the Christmas holidays to present his own campaign in favor of the end of the hostilities, under the motto «Peace is mine», with images of Teresa of Calcutta and Nelson Mandela.

The President of Ecuador, Rafael Correa, aimed better at the heart of the negotiations. In declarations made to the media on December 21, he openly criticized former Colombian President Álvaro Uribe for his militant stance against the negotiations.

On December 20, at the end of a new round of talks regarding «Illegal Drugs», and upon the announcement by the negotiators that they would meet again in Havana on January 13, 2014, the government representative, Humberto de la Calle, hastened to announce that the progress made until then was «important and hopeful». Nevertheless, the guerrilla members blamed the Government for its interpretation that the fight against drug trafficking was followed by the forced displacement of some groups of the population, the impoverishment of many farmers, etc. All these measures were derived from poor advice, according to the FARC, or, even worse, imposed by experts from the United States, the main cocaine importers.

Parrallel to this, the armed struggle continued. On Sunday the 22nd, Pedro Laín Parra Sons, «Jhon 26», second in command of the *Frente 53* of the FARC, along with 10 more guerrilla members, died in an air raid, which was followed by a terrestrial attack from the Colombian armed forces against a campground in the Cubarrial, department of El Meta, with mountains reaching over 3,000 meters high, in the center of Colombia. According to government sources, this guerrilla group was dedicated to raising funds through extortion and drug trafficking. The following day, 8 guerrilla members from the *Frente 57* died during another clash in the Salaqui River near Ríosucio, in the Choco, El Barranco sector, near the border with Panamá, where they apparently carried out drug trafficking-related activities. Needless to say, it didn't take the guerrillas long

to blame the attacks on the support from the CIA, more so because a few days later Álvaro Uribe unequivocally recognized that the CIA had collaborated, during his presidential term from 2002 to 2010, in the fight against different factions of the guerrilla, for example, in the death of Tomás Medina, alias «Negro Acacio» in 2007, in that of Luis Édgar Devia, alias «Raúl Reyes» in 2008, the same as in the cases of Guillermo Sáenz, alias «Alonso Cano» in 2009, and of Víctor Suárez, alias «Mono Jojoy» in 2010. However, Uribe forgot to recall that the Minister of Defense at the time was, precisely, the current President Santos.

That same day, Alejandro Eder Garcis, Director of the Colombian Agency for the Reintegration, and Presidential Advisor in the Havana talks, declared that his department was ready to welcome the possible demobilized guerrillas, calculated at 8,000 combatants and over 25,000 auxiliaries. The cost of the operation would be less expensive, in the words of Eder himself, and, in short, more efficient than the reinsertion of social or penal prisoners. The program that the Colombian government planned to undertake, apparently consisted in giving a monthly economic allowance to each reinserted guerrilla member, along with an assistance and community program, somewhat similar to the measures once taken with the «paramilitary» members.

On the other hand, on the 28th, the already known Fabrizio Hoshchild, United Nations representative in Colombia, and Roberto De Bernardi, representative of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), reported that the FARC were still recruiting children to integrate them into the armed struggle, which would additionally mean that the guerrillas were thinking of continuing with their struggle, behind the back of what may be agreed upon in Havana. From another point of view, the 31st of December, professor Alejo Vargas, in his «*Ola Política*» (www.olapolitica.com), in view of the ambiguous development of the situation, considered it indispensable to conclude the peace process «to enter into a process to reform the Constitution», although he did not specify if it would be to open a constitutional convention which in political doctrine means something quite different.

Year 2014

In the meantime, the resumption of the peace talks in Havana on January 13 of the new year, regarding the issue of «Illegal Drugs», coincided with the intensification of the fight against drug trafficking in Mexico. This led the so-called «popular self-defense» groups in some States, such as in the State of Michoacán, to temporarily seize the control of the State, on the fringes of the police force, bringing the rule of law into question.

On the other hand, maybe realizing its dark future, and of what may be a transfer phenomenon, the coca organizations in Peru placed

themselves on a war footing when they saw their subsistence, and that of many farmers and drug traffickers, in danger, a problem which should definitely be dealt with by the countries involved, and not only by Perú.

On the other hand, upon seeing the proximity of the Colombian elections, the FARC continued putting pressure on the government, within the negotiating game, through declarations and other media tools, which each part described according to their own point of view as, for example, that voting for the right, referring to the «uribistas» (Uribe's supporters), would not be an option for peace. Furthermore, they made believe that they were after the creation of a National Constituent Assembly, where the guerrillas would of course be present, a measure that would put Colombia almost at the foundation of it as a country again.

The problem was that, once the 30-day truce declared unilaterally by the FARC was over, the following day, January 16, a soldier was killed in a guerrilla attack in Medellín.

At the beginning of the year, President Santos travelled to Europe looking for political support and for investments from the European Union in his country, and to attend the Davos Forum. Previously, on January 22, he became the star during the «Invest in Colombia Conference», organized by the newspaper «El País» in Madrid, and where, along with Felipe González, he made some declarations in which he stated that the Colombian GDP was already at 5%, that unemployment reached only 8.5% of the population, inflation remained under 2%, and that the new Colombian middle class is already 27.1%, although Colombia still has a high rate of inequality, particularly in rural areas, and a serious problem of lack of public safety.

Santos himself signed an article, on the very same January 22, in the host newspaper «El País», entitled «To return again», in which he congratulated himself for the fact that Spain had eliminated the requirement of a visa for Colombians wanting to travel to Spain.

Shortly before that, President Santos, making a show of his Anglo Saxon education, made some revealing declarations to the same newspaper, in which he left many open fronts towards the future, and which raised a certain ambiguity in Europe, to say the least. Thus, for example, regarding the controversial declarations by President B. Obama to «*The New Yorker*», on January 20, his fifth anniversary in office, where he unashamedly said that «marihuana is no more dangerous than alcohol or tobacco», President Santos thought about the desideratum of Colombia without «*coca*», and about what this measure would mean for many farmers who live off its growth.

Later on, after commenting on former President Álvaro Uribe's politics, contrary to the negotiating position of Santos, the current President openly disclosed his doubts about the possibility that the peace negotiations with the FARC could end before the Colombian elections.

Thus, the planned peace referendum would be delayed, surprisingly till the possible reelection of Santos, which would lead to an unexpected situation if the plebiscite results were contrary to the political interests of Santos himself. We must not forget how truly original it was that the electoral campaign for the Colombian presidency was coupled with, or even better, the battle horse for, the peace talks. Álvaro Uribe then had the opportunity to demonstrate the existing fissures in the negotiations with the FARC, while Santos showed his negotiating success, as we will see later.

If all of this were not enough, and according to what President Santos gave a glimpse of, we find ourselves with the problem of the suspicious existence of secret clauses in the terms of the Colombian government – FARC negotiations; it all seems to indicate that, as in any negotiation of this type, something else is going on behind the scenes, while the victims of the guerrilla violence fear becoming a bargaining chip.

The words of President Santos in Madrid sowed uncertainty in the assessment of the political analysts because it was not clear how and when the Colombian population would give or not its approval to the accords, when they were finally signed; the concept of «transitional justice» is still an empty idea for the public opinion, particularly for the victims of the conflict who fear the impunity of the guerrillas, although it seems that it is a common feeling that peace has a price. Yet, at what price? For whom? One had to imagine what could happen regarding the peace talks if President Santos lost the elections, and they were won by the supporters of Álvaro Uribe. Juan Manuel Santos certainly does not lack audacity. He is carrying on the peace talks simultaneously, and apparently with success, with an ambitious development program, especially in the rural areas, as he made clear during his visit to Madrid. Some of these questions were cleared up, as we will see, after the presidential elections of May 25 and June 15.

A certain degree of optimism was brought to this scenario by the article published in the Colombian newspaper «*El Tiempo*» on January 25 by General Oscar Naranjo, who was participating in the peace talks in Havana, and whose elevated political outlook regarding the legislative elections on March 9, immediately brought the recognition of the entire social sector of the population. This initiative happened at the same time as the important step taken by the FARC when they publicly condemned the attack that one of its groups perpetrated against the town of Pradera, in the Cauca.

In the meantime, the Havana talks regarding «Illicit Drugs» continued, at the same time that the Colombian government publicly announced that the National Liberation Army (ELN), with 1,500 members, had shown its readiness to initiate peace negotiations.

Nevertheless, the climate of understanding between the government of Colombia and the guerrilla groups suffered a hard blow when the Colombian magazine «*Semana*» published on Tuesday, March 4, that, from offices located in Bogota that belonged to the Colombian Armed Forces intelligence service, there were wire-tapping and tracking activities of the negotiating members of the government who were carrying out their work in Havana. The FARC negotiators soon felt they were also being spied on. The accusing sources immediately addressed themselves to Álvaro Uribe and to their high-rank military contacts contrary about the way the peace talks were being carried out; shortly after, the President of Colombia rushed to announce that he had given no orders in that respect, and furthermore, that he himself had been a victim of the wire-tapping and tracking. For the moment, the serious incident ended up with the dismissal, as it usually happens in these cases, of some of the military chiefs. At the same time, the head of the Armed Forces, General Juan Pablo Ramírez, was quick to make his total agreement with the policies of President Santos perfectly clear.

The peace negotiations and the legislative elections of March 9

Close to the legislative elections, the Havana negotiators continued discussing the «Illegal Drugs». The first thing we must highlight is the good climate in which the elections were held, something unusual in that part of the world; however, following we must point out that the number of people who went to the polls was scant, in spite of what was at stake for the Colombians on this occasion. We do not know if this was a demonstration of the lack of interest on the part of the people of Colombia, or a lack of an attractive political option, or simply despair.

Results of the elections to the Senate	100 seats)
- <i>Partido de la Unidad Nacional</i> , of President Santos, (National Unity Party)	15.58%
- <i>Partido de Centro Democrático</i> , of Álvaro Uribe, (Center Democratic Party)	14.29%
- <i>Partido Conservador</i> , of Marta Rodríguez Blanco, (Conservative Party)	13.58%
- <i>Partido Liberal</i> , of Simón Gaviria	13.58%

(Liberal Party)	
House of Representatives (163 members)	
-Partido de la Unidad Nacional, (National Unity Party)	16.5%
-Partido Liberal, (Liberal Party)	14.13%
-Partido Conservador, (Conservative Party)	13.17%
-Partido de Centro Democrático, (Center Democratic Party)	9.47%
-Abstention,	56%

These elections reinforce the position of President Santos, although they place his political adversary, former President Álvaro Uribe as head of the opposition in the Senate.

Nevertheless, and in the opinion of this analyst, President Santos showed his political skills when, immediately after the elections, he called on A. Uribe to favor unity. Behind this call, there could have also been Santos' suspicions of what we could call «sabre-rattling» within the Colombian Armed Forces, revealed as a consequence of the scandals of the wire-tapping of the peace negotiators, other dignitaries, and of President Santos himself, which we have already mentioned, by the intelligence service, and the stir caused among a number of chiefs of the Armed Forces, supporters, more than of Álvaro Uribe, of the idea that the peace talks may be carried out through other means, considering the alleged responsibilities of some military chiefs acquired during the counter-guerrilla struggle.

If Santos, on the one hand, wanted to carry on the peace talks according to his ideas, he knew, on the other hand, that he could not neglect the dissatisfied military flank, linked to Álvaro Uribe, nor the political flank of his left-wing coalition, all of which could make his projects fall through.

As happens in «Game Theory», which leads us throughout this paper, the other part of the negotiators, in other words, the FARC, did not waste the opportunity to take advantage of the political moment, and thus, their spokesman in Havana, Jesus Emilio Carvajalino («Andrés París») hastened to declare in the Colombian newspaper «*El Tiempo*» on March 15 that the results from the recent elections open the way to a constitutional process that will lead to the application of transitional justice. A similar path was taken by Jeffrey Donaldson, Irish Member of Parliament from

the Democratic Unionist Party, arbitrator on his own initiative, who, on March 16 and to the same newspaper, declared he favored a sort of «making a fresh start» similar to what, according to him, happened during the conflict in Ulster and in World War II. We find these declarations rather unfortunate. Paula Gaviria, President of Unity for the Attention and Integral Reparation of the victims of the conflict in Colombia, does not share his opinion, and has called to «not forget» those who have suffered the consequences of the clashes.

More so when, on Sunday, March 23, upon the assassination of two police officers in the southeast of the country, the Colombian government and the Colombian Office of the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights outright condemned the assassinations, as it could not be otherwise.

Apart from that, in addition to Álvaro Uribe, another former president, Andrés Pastrana (1998-2002), has recently appeared in the political arena. Pastrana traveled to Madrid to launch his book «*Memorias Olvidadas*» («Forgotten Memoirs»), an account of the peace processes that have taken place until now. More specifically, in an interview to «El País» on March 25, he recalled that when he was President, he proposed the creation of a «goodwill area» in Colombian territory, where the FARC could freely carry out their activities. As expected, this solution did not satisfy anyone. Pastrana was more accurate during his intervention when he recognized that drug trafficking had seriously infiltrated into politics and into the life of the citizens in Colombia; and also that the guerrilla is currently the most important drug trafficking cartel in the world. Pastrana coincides with this analyst in that the solution to this and to other problems consists mainly in solving the social, corruption, health, and education problems that are plaguing Colombia and other American countries.

The peace talks and the Presidential elections

It was inevitable that the peace talks would «sneak» into the campaign for the presidential elections which had to be held on May 25 as per the Constitution. Or, better yet, that the leitmotiv of the elections revolved around the peace negotiations.

At such an early date as April 23, the political media commented on the rumor that the future configuration of the Colombian Armed Forces and their constitutional role was being discussed in Havana. This subject was sensitive in itself, and because the conservative influence during the period of Álvaro Uribe as President of the Republic is still in the minds of the Armed Forces.

The government negotiators rapidly forestalled the rumors and, as if that were not enough, on May 3 it was the Minister of Defense himself, Juan

Carlos Pinzón, who publicly declared that the Colombian Armed Forces were not subject to negotiation, even more if the fact that two of the government negotiators, Jorge Enrique Mora and Oscar Naranjo, were two well-renowned generals in the Colombian army, were taken into account.

On the other hand, the now Senator and former President Álvaro Uribe, always omnipresent in Colombian politics, who has a large number of supporters among the right wing of the country, although, during his presidency, he tried hard to negotiate peace with the guerrilla groups, was now reticent with the terms of the negotiations that President Santos was carrying forward, specifically regarding the apparent opening of a constitutional process, and what is now known as «transitional justice».

President Santos, by greatly focusing his policies around the peace talks with the guerrilla groups, risked his future reelection by putting it in the hands of the guerrillas. In contrast, if the FARC wanted to show the Colombian citizens that their desire for peace was real, it was expected that the negotiations would not be delayed by them.

In this social and political climate, the elections for President of the Republic were held on Sunday, May 25. Over 47 million Colombians, distributed throughout 32 Departments in the country, plus the district of Bogotá, who live in 1,120 municipalities, had to choose among the following candidates: (for more details, read the article «Presidential elections in Colombia 2014» by this author, IEEA (Spanish Institute of Strategic Studies), June 20, 2014).

Candidates

- Clara López Obregón, of *Partido Democracia Alternativa* (Alternative Democracy Party), united to *Partido Unión Patriótica* (Patriotic Unity Party), of socialist tendency.
- Enrique Peñalosa Londoño, of *Partido Alianza Verde* (Green Alliance Party), from the center left.
- Marta Ramírez Blanco, of *Partido Conservador* (Conservative Party).
- Juan Manuel Santos Calderón, of *Partido de Unidad Nacional* (National Unity Party), center-liberal.
- Óscar Zuluaga Escobar, of *Partido Centro Democrático* (Center Democratic Party), center-right.

The polls forecast a technical tie between Zuluaga's supporters with their hard line against the guerrillas, and those who desired the peace that Santos was negotiating, without still knowing for sure the terms of the negotiations.

The FARC, as expected, opted for Santos, using the procedure that was closest to them, and on May 16, nine days before the elections, they provided the joint publication with the government representatives of a communiqué announcing that an understanding had been reached in Ha-

vana regarding the point of «General Agreement» that dealt with «Illegal Drugs», whereby the FARC committed themselves to stopping drug trafficking activities, in order to consider, in the future, illegal drugs as a public health problem.

The communiqué is lengthy and a bit dense, and its title is conceived in the following terms: «We have reached an agreement regarding the fourth point of the Agenda included in the «General agreement for the end of the conflict and the construction of a stable and lasting peace», third in discussion, called «Solution to the problem of illegal drugs».

Among other things, it is recognized that the consumption of drugs entails a problem that affects public health, although «the recognition of traditional ancestral uses of the coca leaf, as part of the cultural identity of the indigenous community should be maintained», without specifying other aspects of the problem.

As the FARC are not a totally united front, and they reach agreements in a supposedly assembly manner, it is expected that the mentioned accord is to be followed also by the guerrilla groups that operate in the coca growing areas. Neither do we know at this stage of the negotiations what may happen, when the time of peace comes, to the guerrillas accused of drug trafficking, whose extradition was requested by the United States.

After these last news, the international support for the peace talks became more visible, now coming from the United Nations Secretary General, Ban Ki-Moon, from the Secretary General of the Organization of American States, José Miguel Insulza, and from the European Union itself. At the same time, Santos' rivals hastened to declare that «the FARC had entered the electoral campaign».

Some former presidents of Colombia did not hesitate to give their opinion publicly, as in the case of Andrés Pastrana to the newspaper «*El Mundo*» on May 18, where he held that all the presidential candidates would have had to participate in the Havana talks. This participation would have been difficult however you look at it, and impossible to coordinate, to have everyone be able to understand each other, in the face of so many disparate voices. Pastrana, more realistically, asked himself if Colombians would be willing to pardon, after half a century of confrontations, and such a high number of victims; and we add: only the Colombians have the answer.

Close to Election Day, the polls insisted in forecasting a technical tie between Santos and Zuluaga, between 24% and 29%. If the electoral campaign had almost come to a close, it was not so abroad because on the very day, May 25, the newspaper «*El Mundo*» published an interview with Santos, where, among other things, he declared that his intention was «to change the bullets into votes, and violence into scenarios for democra-

cy», and that he even planned on admitting into Parliament those guerrilla members who wanted to create a constitutional political party.

Once the electoral recount was finished, and according to the data from the National Electoral Registry of Colombia, the voting results were the following:

Electoral results	%
-Óscar Iván Zuluaga	29,25
-Juan Manuel Santos Calderón	25,60
-Marta Lucía Martínez Blanco	15,52
-Clara López Obregón	15,23
-Enrique Peñalosa Londoño	8,28
Absentee votes	60,28
28 Blank votes	5,99

Considering there was no clear winner, the stakes were still high between Zuluaga and Santos for a mandatory second round, which would be held on June 15. The central issue, of course, would again be the negotiations with the FARC. That is how the candidates faced it, raising the tone of their speeches: Zuluaga attacking the negotiations, and Santos presenting them as a hope for peace.

It was also shown that the vote in the big cities tended to favor Zuluaga, while in the countryside, which has directly suffered the actions of the guerrilla, of the «paramilitary» groups, and of the Colombian Armed Forces, clearly there was a desire for peace, although the many farmers who struggle to make ends meet, subject to coca growing, had their doubts about their future.

The second electoral round

The second round was held almost on personal grounds between Santos and Zuluaga. Both candidates looked for the support of the losing parties and, while Santos obtained that of the leftist group and even the support from former President César Gaviria; former President Andrés Pastrana bet for Zuluaga.

«Face to Face» broadcast on the Caracol Television Network, on Thursday, May 5, with each one of the candidates firmly defending their already known positions regarding the peace negotiations, was not of major interest, as the polls reflected; while DATEXCO suggested that Santos would be the winner, GALLUP gave the presidency to Zuluaga.

Meanwhile, the negotiations continued in Havana, and if on May 3, both negotiating parties had announced as if it were not enough, on Sunday, May 7, they made public a communiqué about the victims of the conflict in order to begin negotiations regarding Point 5. The contents, due to its length and ambiguity, look to please the civilian victims and the ones among the guerrilla groups during the so-called «dirty war». Zuluaga waited no longer to accuse Santos of electoral opportunism.

Still on Tuesday, May 10, President Santos, from the Palace of Nariño, solemnly announced the beginning of the negotiations with Nicolás Rodríguez Bautista, alias «Gabino», head of the National Liberation Army (ELN).

In the light of Santos' electoral offensive, the day before Zuluaga declared to «*El Mundo*» that, should he be elected President, he would continue backing the negotiations in Havana, although with a reconsideration of its bases.

The voting on Sunday, May 15, took place in a high degree of calm, under the armed truce declared by the FARC and the ELN, and had the following results:

Electoral results	%
-Juan Manuel Santos	50,9%
-Óscar Iván Zuluaga	45%
Absentee votes reached	53%
Blank votes	4%

In his first words to the media, after the results of the voting were announced, Santos spoke of the opportunity to put into effect the former constitutional ban by which presidents could not run for a second term, and to prolong the terms in office to 5 or 6 years.

Likewise, he implicitly recognized that it was necessary to rebuild a consensus because almost half of the voters chose Zuluaga, and many others had abstained.

Along the same lines, the President, in declarations to «*El País*» on June 18, recognized that «the key to reach peace in Colombia lies in knowing how much justice can be sacrificed to secure peace», referring to the so-called «transitional justice».

The Vice-President of the United States, Joe Biden, arrived in Colombia that same day, as a clear expression of his government's support to the new Colombian President.

However, the seemingly delay maneuvers, already far from «Game Theory» that we dealt with in this paper, certainly do not seem strange,

to the point that President Santos as well as the FARC seem to be using them now in the peace talks. A certain suspicion regarding this issue was present at the meeting held in Cartagena de Indias on June 30, under the title «Third Road Conference, economic and social progress», with the attendance of former presidents Clinton, Cardoso (Brazil), Lagos (Chile), Felipe González, and Tony Blair. This analyst heard the rumor that the former presidents strongly urged President Santos privately to accelerate the peace talks.

Thus, a bit later, specifically on July 10, Luis Alberto Albán Burbano («Marcos León Calarcá»), known leader of the FARC, stated, on Radio Santa Fe, his doubts about the end of the conflict, questioning the negotiating honesty of President Santos.

On July 15, the negotiations in Havana were resumed, with the attendance of representatives of the victims of the conflict.

In the speeches that were heard on July 20, at the annual opening of the Colombian Parliament, the only subject that was really interesting to the speakers was, without a doubt, the peace talks. The same thing happened on August 7, the day on which President Santos was sworn into office for a new term.

In this situation, on August 12, a representation of the victims caused by this conflict, now over fifty years long, arrived in Havana to somehow participate in the peace talks, as agreed by both parties. As could be expected, discrepancies came up about whether the newly arrived people really represented the victims.

Furthermore, a few days later, on August 21, a Technical Committee of high-ranking Colombian military officials also arrived in the island to study the procedures for turning over the weapons by the FARC. The reaction of the representatives of the FARC seemed to indicate that the government of Colombia adopted this measure in order to prevent a certain, or possible, malaise among the highest-ranking military officers due to the course of the negotiations, without forgetting what this means as a political gesture from President Santos toward his opponents, particularly toward Álvaro Uribe.

To September 1, the discussion about «truth, justice, reparation to the victims, the non-repetition of armed conflicts, etc.» still continues in Havana.

The role of external actors

The international outlook could not have been nor can it be more favorable to the Colombian peace process.

The meeting of the Latin American and Caribbean States Community (CELAC), made up of 33 States, although this time El Salvador and Panama did not attend, held on January 28 and 29 of 2014 in Havana, served to stage the support from the member countries to the peace process for Colombia. At the same time, CELAC was able to put into contact the representatives from Peru and Chile, after the sentence without right of appeal from the International Court of Justice at the Hague regarding the historical issue of terrestrial and maritime borders between the two countries, announced on January 27. On the other hand, the CELAC meeting gave Fidel Castro the opportunity to appear again before the cameras, together with political figures of the continent, such as Cristina Kirchner, Dilma Rousseff, etc. The Brazilian President also took the opportunity to announce that her country will build one of the biggest container terminals in America, in the Cuban port of Mariel, thus showing the strength of Brazil in spite of the poor economic news that were spreading about her country, or precisely for that reason.

Shortly after, during the last two weeks in February, the meeting of the Common Market of the South (MERCOSUR) was held in Caracas, and whose members are: Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay, Venezuela, and Bolivia, and as associate members, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Guyana, and Suriname. It was just one more of those forums that exist in that area, and whose sessions were previously livened up by the enthusiastic Uruguayan President José Mujica who also showed his support to the peace process in Colombia.

The 8th Summit of the Pacific Alliance, held in Cartagena de Indias on February 10, 11 and 12, with the presence of Colombia, Mexico, Chile, Peru, and the final incorporation of Costa Rica, also declared support to the peace talks being held in Havana.

Only the instability that Venezuela is suffering casts a shadow on the American horizon at this moment.

However, it is not only the countries in that area that show their interest for what is happening in America and, specifically, in Colombia; it seems that, among many others, whether for solidarity or for economic interests, a race to get somewhere before others may have been triggered.

The European Union has initiated a clear approach to Cuba, whose President, an aged Raúl Castro, is taking, step by step, some measures to liberalize the regime, always with the support of Vice President, Miguel Díaz-Canel, an emerging political figure of Asturian origin; a country, Cuba, in search of international support, as shown by its last movements (Colombian peace talks, the CELAC meeting, etc.).

On the other hand, we must reach due conclusions from the warm greeting that President B. Obama gave a surprised Raúl Castro, during the

ceremony held in South Africa on the passing away of Nelson Mandela in December of 2013. That should not surprise observers, considering China's political and economic movements, a country which comes closer and closer to America through the Pacific Ocean, and that is estimated will be the second largest buyer in that area in 2016, after the United States, and before the European Union.

China is a country which maintains underway its Project to open a new maritime communication canal between the Pacific and the Atlantic Oceans, through the lagoons in Nicaragua, and a dry railroad canal that would cross the Colombian isthmus, precisely now that widening works of the first Panama Canal are being undertaken. One should not forget the Brazilian efforts, with foreign capital, to communicate, by means of inter-oceanic roads, the basin of the Amazon River with the Pacific Ocean, through Bolivia and Ecuador (projects that we had the opportunity to discuss in «*Geopolitical Overview of Conflicts 2012*» Spanish Institute of Strategic Studies. 2013).

If that were not enough, on July 16 and 17, the emerging countries that make up the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa), met in Brazil, and they certainly showed their support for the peace process in Colombia.

Meanwhile, another great power such as Russia is «entertained» with the game with its former satellites, who move among a real independence, the European Union, and the distrust, and even the attraction towards its former mother country. Could the case of Ukraine be repeated in other countries like Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania, meaning a more ample exit for Russia to the Baltic Sea?. On their part, the Arab countries, who had initiated fairly recently a timid commercial approach to the American subcontinent, are now going through a tragic process of identification. Instability in the Middle East, of an economic and religious (between Sunnis and Shiites) nature, which has led, for the first time, and this is a very significant fact, the United States to decide to send a warning to Saudi Arabia against the economic aid that some of the Royalty members lend to jihadists.

Conclusions and perspectives

Without reaching a categorical pessimism, we can say, borrowing a term used by Zygmunt Bauman in «Culture in the world of liquid modernity» that the political and social situation in Colombia could not be more like a «carbonated drink» regarding the route and the final results of these negotiations. If, on the one hand, President Santos is willing to take the so-called «transitional justice» to its limits, under the principle «how much justice can be sacrificed in order to secure peace?», the FARC know

they cannot miss this opportunity to finally be able to participate in the Colombian political arena because they realize they will not be able to win this «war». From that point to the idea that the Colombian people might accept making a fresh start just like that, there is a long way.

Chronology of the negotiations

2010, November. President Santos contacts a businessman from Valle del Cauca searching a link with the FARC.

2011, January. Guillermo León Sáenz («Alfonso Cano»), the then highest chief of the FARC, approves the secret contacts with the government.

2011, February-October. President Santos speaks with Raúl Castro to get his support for the future negotiations.

2011, November 4. «Alfonso Cano» dies in a skirmish with the Armed Forces; his successors are Rodrigo Londoño Echeverri «Timochenco» and «Timoleón Jiménez».

2011, December; 2012, January. «Timochenco» indicates the interest of the FARC to continue their contact with the government.

2012, January. The first meeting between the government envoy, Alejandro Eder, and the guerrilla members Rodrigo Granda «Ricardo Téllez» and Jesús Emilio Carvajalino «Andrés Paris» is held in Río de Oro, Department of César

2012, February. After a meeting in Barines (Venezuela), the decision of choosing Cuba and Norway as guarantors of the talks is taken.

2012, February 23. The first meeting between the government representatives and the FARC is held in Cuba.

2012, August 26. The «General Agreement for the end of the conflict and the construction of a stable and lasting peace» is signed in Havana.

2012, October 18. Humberto de La Calle, on behalf of the government, and Luciano Marín Arango «Iván Márquez», on behalf of the FARC, sit at the negotiations table in Oslo.

2012, November 19. The negotiations begin in Havana.

2013, May 26. End of the negotiations regarding the first point of the Agreement, «Policy for the Integral Land Development».

2013, November 6. End of the negotiations about the second point of the Agreement, «Political participation».

2014, March 9. Legislative elections.

2014, May 16. End of the negotiations about the fourth point of the Agreement, «Solution to the problem of illegal drugs».

2014, May 25. Presidential elections.

2014, June 7. Joint communiqué from the table for peace. «Declaration of principles for the discussion of Point 5 of the Agenda regarding «Victims of the conflict.»

2014, June 15. Presidential elections, second round. Winner, Juan Manuel Santos Calderón.

2014, August 7. Santos Calderón swears office as President of the Republic.

2014, September 1. The peace talks are resumed in Havana.

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Embers of the division of the indian subcontinent: Assam, Manipur and Nagaland.

María José Izquierdo Alberca

Chapter twelve

Summary

The states of Assam, Nagaland and Manipur have for decades maintained an insurgency which produces frequent episodes of violence, and which is sustained through confrontation with the government of India along the borders of their territory. The demand for independence has evolved into a struggle for States of ethnic exclusivity. The rejection of the Moslem population and the clashes of the groups, both among themselves and with the security forces, has submerged the people of the Indian northeast in a climate of permanent insecurity.

Key words:

Assam, Nagaland, Manipur, India, territorial claim, insurgency, indigenous tribes, population security.

Introduction

It is not easy to present in a few pages the complexity of affairs of a country like India. Its historic trajectory is one of the most fascinating of the twentieth century and its interest lies not only in the process of its independence, but in the enormous effort to unify-- not homogenize—a territory of extreme wealth and diversity where mingle a mosaic of groups: ethnic, social, religious, linguistic and cultural. Its population of over 1.023 billion inhabitants, a fifth of that of the entire planet, plus the multicultural dimension of the country make what is considered the world's largest democracy a unique case.

After the end of the Cold War and with the economic and political resurgence of the Asia-Pacific area, India has come to play a prominent international role. Today it forms part, together with Brazil, Russia, China and South Africa, of the BRICS group of nations. Nonetheless, and in spite of undeniable advances and economic development, great economic and social inequalities continue to exist. The 2014 United Nations report on human development so states when it underlines as achievements of the country the increase in industrialization and its efforts in education policy.¹ India has managed to overcome the mid-twentieth-century famines and its different governments have assumed a judicial commitment to guarantee the right to nourishment in a time of climate change. Its anti-hunger policies are considered an example for the rest of the world and are so presented by the United Nations in relation to the challenge «Zero Hunger».² However, the impossibility of eliminating in practice and in its totality the caste system; the corruption reported; the worldwide rise of fundamentalism; and the permanent ethnic conflicts within the State, may hamper the advance of social development.

The Indian State, like the construction of all the great nation-states, runs the risk, in the era of globalization, of being dangerously reduced to the cultural fiction of a single ethnic group if the conflicts of identity and violent nationalism occupy the space of national security.³

From the political-administrative point of view India is a parliamentary republic of a federal type constituted upon the union of 29 states plus seven annexed territories.⁴ Since its independence from British rule in 1947 it has achieved outstanding economic development, and yet, this immense country stands upon a series of difficulties and contradictions inherited

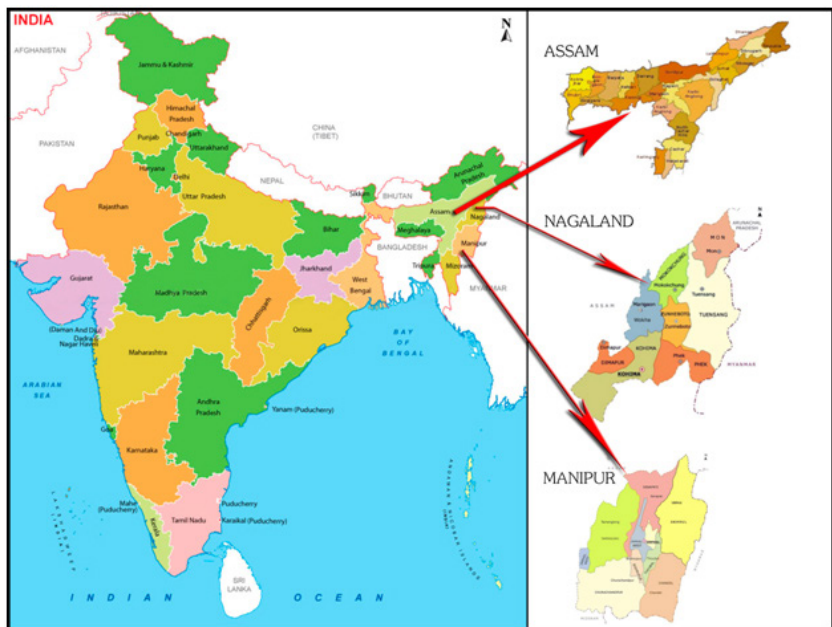
¹ Report on Human Development 2014. U.N. Program for Development, New York. 2014. Available at Website. <http://hdr.undp.org>.

² Report on Human Development 2014, op.cit., p. 54.

³ APPADURAI, Arjun. *The Rejection of Minorities. An Essay on the Geography of Fury*. Barcelona: Tusquets, 2007, pp. 38-39.

⁴ The last state to arise was Telegarana, in 2013.

from the subdivision which followed its constitution. Some of these are of a border nature, others religious and all are of a social nature. In fact, in India, the problems of linguistic and religious identity are superimposed on the economic problems. From among the social contradictions, one especially, that which produces sexual violence against girls and women, undermines and does extraordinary damage to the discourse on modernity and democracy that the government wishes to sell as the image of the country, and places India in the headlines of the international press with great frequency. Other conflicts, such as those which the population of the northeast have been suffering from for decades, have a lesser echo in the international press, but produce a constant stream of victims and the impression that in Assam, Manipur and Nagaland a political solution to the conflicts is not an easy task.



Cultural heterogeneity: the ethnic question at the base of the conflicts.

Within the enormous extension of Indian territory, 3,287,590 km², more than 1650 languages are spoken, of which the Constitution only recognizes 22. From among these, those which stand out for their greater use are Hindi, English, Bengali, Telegu, Marati, Tamil, Urdu, Gujarati, Malayalam, Kannada, Oriya, Punjabi, Assamese, Kashmiri, Sindhi, and Sanscrit. Although the official language is Hindi, English enjoys a special status and extensive use in the communication media and in advanced education.

Regarding religion, there are six groups differentiated by creed: Hindus, Moslems, Christians, Sikhs, Jainists and Buddhists. Some 8.2% of its peo-

ple are considered indigenous population.⁵ The Adivasi (literally, «indigenous peoples») make up more than 461 ethnic groups.⁶ The most important concentration of indigenous population is found in the seven states in the northeast of the country and in what is labelled the «central tribal cordon», extending from Rajasthan to Bengal.

For a number of years, policies of support and positive discrimination have undergone development for the minorities.⁷ The measures of support for these castes and ethnic groups generate permanent tension between individualism and ethnicity which is at the base of every domestic political debate in India. The domestic political scene thus appears to be marked by tension between Hindus and Moslems, but also between Moslems and minority tribal groups and even among the tribal groups themselves.

It is unanimously considered that these conflicts have their roots in the territorial restructuring which took place both during the colonial era and in the postcolonial. The colonial legacy undid a scenario which established barriers between peoples, regions and tribes, and replaced it with one of its own design. The architecture prior to British domination and which established the territories where for years the Naga, Kuki, Meitei and Bodo peoples lived, was dismantled and in its place were erected other separation walls in the form of international frontiers. Today, these lines of division run the danger of exploding and perpetuating the conflicts of northeast India.⁸

The other hot spot with regard to India is caused by the proximity of Pakistan. The constitution of the Indian nation-state in 1947 was carried out after a political partition which created Pakistan as a refugee State for the Moslems who lived in the territory dominated by Great Britain. From 1947 to 1973 the partition mapped a scenario where India was flanked by Western Pakistan and Eastern Pakistan. In 1973, the latter became independent and gave rise to a new country, Bangladesh. The whole process of dismembering, creation of new countries, confrontation with Pakistan and the insoluble crisis of Kashmir have gradually built an identification of Moslem citizens of India with Pakistan, the principal enemy, which is leading India into a secular crisis.⁹

⁵ International Working Group on Indigenous Peoples, Anuario 2014. Available at website: <http://www.iwgia.org>.

⁶ This figure only includes officially recognized tribes and excludes a good number of minorities.

⁷ BORREGUERO, Eva. Democracy in India. Tendencies and Perspectives of a Multicultural Nation. Documentos Cidob 94. Available at website: www.codob.org.

⁸ KNONGREIWOT, Rammathot: Understanding the Histories of Peoples on the Margins: A Critique of «Northeast India's Durable Disorder». Alternatives, vol. 34, 2009, p. 451.

⁹ Appadurai, op. cit., p. 88.

In India, minority rights have undergone a long trajectory of actions and litigation as to the role of the State, the limits of religion, civil rights and compensatory actions for these groups. One of these measures is the recognition of registered, or «scheduled», tribes or castes (ST-SC), which establishes a variable reserve of jobs within the public administration. This was a solution already adopted during the British period, as the first caste register was set up in 1935.¹⁰ Later, in 1951, a new category was created to include tribes as well.¹¹ As far back as 1980 a report was presented proposing a reserve of jobs for those castes considered victims of historic discrimination and which for some scholars is at the root of the rise of Hindu nationalism.

With respect to indigenous minorities, and in spite of the favorable vote of India's government on the United Nation's Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007), Delhi did not consider that the contents of this Declaration were applicable to India, so that her pertinent legislation is unsatisfactory and incomplete.

In this respect, a multitude of legislative proposals have been passed or have failed. Among the most recent, there stands out the 117th amendment to the Constitution, presented as a response to the repeated complaints of violations of the land rights of tribes. Nonetheless, of the 30,968 vacancies identified as reserved for minorities, only 18,000 were filled.¹²

Another pending item is the passing of a bill to protect farmers from being evicted from lands acquired in the ethnic areas.

The Constitution establishes the non-interference of the State in religious affairs, as well as rejecting any claims made which are based on matters of faith. However, after the creation of Pakistan as an Islamic State, the 150 million Moslems living in India have maintained within their communities the Islamic laws, as an argument for the defense of a minority identity. An unequal situation has thus been created, in such a way that confrontations between Hindus and Moslems, far from having been settled, reappear periodically and have increased in recent years. It is usually said that among the much-admired Indian middle class, no Moslems are to be found. The recent 2014 elections gave the victory to a representative of Hindu nationalism, Narendra Modi, a follower of Hindutva, the radical Hinduist thought, which may imply a risk for the achievement of a vertebrate and non-exclusive State.

As Masferrer points out, in spite of the Gandhian stereotype, the contradictions between the secular State and the religious communities make

¹⁰ Scheduled castes (SC).

¹¹ Scheduled tribes (ST).

¹² Anuario 2014, op. cit.

India a very violence-prone nation.¹³ Since 1947 it has gone through two border wars with China; constant confrontations with Pakistan over Kashmir;¹⁴ a state of emergency from 1975 to 1977; a pseudo-dictatorial period in 1975 under Indira Gandhi; harsh episodes of communal violence after her assassination in 1984; the destruction of mosques, as in Babur in 1992; slaughter as in Gujarat in 2002; assaults on Parliament in 2001 and other major assaults on it in 2006 and 2008 in Bombay; low-intensity but long-lasting confrontations in the northeast of the country; and with Naxalite groups¹⁵ in at least 83 districts of the country.¹⁶

In today's India a number of security problems persist. The presence of a far-left insurgency has increased in recent years. There is evidence pointing to groups of Pakistanis giving support to cells in India; and security is still very unreliable in Kashmir. The same holds for the northeast, especially in Assam, where attacks and confrontations between Bodos and Moslems have not ceased.

Finally, it remains to point out that the current situation is very different from that of years ago, when Sonia Gandhi, an Italian Catholic, had won the previous elections and working together in the government were a Moslem President, Abdul Kalam, and a Sikh Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh. At the present time, the jihadist expansion in the Middle Eastern environment and the marked nationalist character of the new Prime minister, Narendra Modi, make an intensification of conflicts with the Moslems foreseeable,¹⁷ if there is not a turnaround in the policies of proximity and a step forward towards resolving the conflicts with the states of the northeast.

Background to the conflict

The Northeast of India is not a very extensive territory, but is one of great geopolitical importance. Joined to the rest of the country by the 21-km. Siliguri corridor, it was the scene of the 1962 war between China and India. It consists of 7 states: Assam (which holds more than 70% of the total population of the region), Meghalaya, Tripura, Manipur, Nagaland, and Arunachal Pradesh. Each of them shares at least one international bor-

¹³ MASFERRER, Bernat. «Political Violence and Terrorism in Contemporary India». *Asia-Pacific Anuario*, No. 1, 2006, p.221. Available at website: <http://www.cidob.org>.

¹⁴ DIAZ SILVELA, Enrique; VACAS, Félix. *The India-Pakistan Conflict*. Madrid: Ministry of Defense, 2006.

¹⁵ CARO, Maria Jose. «India. The Naxalite Insurgency.» In *Geopolitical Overview of Conflicts*. Ministry of Defense, 2013. pp 303-328.

¹⁶ The figure for casualties in the latest action against urban Naxalite groups is offered on the website of the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA): www.idsa.in.

¹⁷ «India Reviews its National Security Policies». *Modification hopes*. IHS Jane's 10.06.2014.

der with some of the neighboring countries: Bangladesh, Bután, Myanmar and China, so that more than 98% of its territory is international borderland. In spite of being a region of relatively sparse population (in a country of more than a billion inhabitants), the porous limits of its geography and its diffuse borders make up a scenario which facilitates illegal arms and drug traffic. In this space, where Southeast Asia and the Far East meet, relations of proximity are of major importance, especially with Myanmar and Bangladesh.

From the cultural point of view, in the Indian northeast around 200 ethnic and 400 tribal groups co-exist, with as many languages and dialects, the majority of Sino-Tibetan and Austro-Asian origin. The tribal population of these territories is varied and is closer to the Southeast Asian than to the Dravidic dominant in the rest of India.¹⁸

The arrival of the British in the ancient kingdom of Assam was hailed as a liberation by the inhabitants of Manipur and Tripura, victims of the Burman invasions entering Assam through the Patkai mountains. The hope for British contribution to the development of the region and its exploitations of tea, petroleum and coal included the extension of the railway network through valleys and mountains. However, these plans to integrate the population of the plains and the hills were frustrated. The British restricted access, establishing barriers between the people of the valleys and those of the mountains, so that ethnic and territorial unity was fragmented, thus sowing the seed for the aspiration to a territory of exclusivity.

Today, after decades of conflict, tension in this complex region is not only with the central Indian government, but is also rising between ethnic groups and the autonomous government, against the Moslem community and even between the tribes and the inhabitants from other regions.

It is undoubtedly the area of India where insurgency is longest-lasting and most persistent, for separatist violence began in 1952 in present-day Nagaland, and has submerged the region in a long low-level conflict.¹⁹

Although official Indian information considers that the insurgency is of an exclusively anti-governmental and terrorist nature, there are many who point to other motives.

The most recurrent complaints and demands stem principally from a feeling of exclusion from the management of the natural resources that

¹⁸ In this area live Kukis, Mizos, Nagas, Chin, Meitei, Bodos, Karbis, Dimasas, Khasis, Garos, Assamese and Bengalis. In some cases, as in Mizoram, ethnic groups make up 94.5% of the population: 89.1% in Nagaland; 85.9% in Maghalaya; 64.2% in Arunachal Pradesh; 34.2% in Manipur; 31.1% in Tripura; and 12.4% in Assam. Nagaland, Mizoram and Meghalaya are in addition the only Indian states with Christian majority.

¹⁹ A low-level conflict involves a range of deaths of between 100 and 1,000 per year.

the tribal groups consider to be their single and true state. The disagreements make evident something more than the need for attention, for at the historic root of these conflicts is the demand for recognition of the indigenous territories prior to the partition of the subcontinent and the rejection of the state and territorial reorganization which constitutes the present-day India Union. In effect, the postcolonial period created new states with the incorporation of different tribes and territories, some of them without their consent, into an administrative organization marked by a certain incongruity and ethnic disparity. And so a situation was arrived at where some territories suddenly found themselves dominated by an ethnic majority alien to the traditional, as occurred in Assam and in Manipur.

Today no-one has any doubts about the effects of the so-called «cataclysm of 1947», respecting everything that the division of the subcontinent implied, especially for the territories of the northeast: division of routes of communication and of railways, isolation of strategic points like the port of Chittagong, and an incessant wave of migration causing demographic alteration. Subdivision meant, finally, traumatic poverty and isolation.²⁰

Later, another political upheaval, the birth of Bangladesh, originated massive migrations felt in this region as a weapon of destruction of indigenous culture. The violence has progressively crystallized in the face of the failure of reiterated protests, the generalized feeling of abandonment by the Delhi government and the reduction of territorial space. For many peasants, the central government's development projects and the arrival of immigrants do them nothing but harm. Claims have become deeply entrenched and have given rise to aspiration for the creation of autonomous states of ethnic exclusivity.

The conflicts are produced when the desire for cultural preservation of the minorities clashes with the majority cultural current represented by the national State. Ethnic minorities confront a State which they consider to be a cultural homogenizer, and at the same time clash with each other over control of resources and dominion of land. Thus there are conflicts of tribes versus states; tribes versus tribes and tribes versus non-tribal groups. Within this context of cultural and social tension, the atomization of armed groups, the proliferation and facility of acquisition of small arms and training, and the corruption of regional leaders cast a pall over the possibilities for a peaceful and immediate way out of these conflicts. The armed groups seem to have renounced the ideological revolution and are

²⁰ Ajai Sahni. «Conflict and Resolution in India's Northeast». South Asia Terrorism Portal. Available at website: www.satp.org. Date of consultation: 01/09/2014.

more concerned with the recovery of their territories or even with ethnic cleansing.

The creation of new States is an old affair in India, begun in the colonial and immediate post-colonial period. Even more, it appears as a reference in the Constitution of the Indian Republic²¹ which is, in the end, a union of states. The most recent case has been Telaranga, arisen in the southeast of the country from the division of the region of Andhra Pradesh and based on the argument of linguistic majority, and which has cost the lives of 400 people since the initiation of its petition for autonomy in 1979.

In 1953, with the creation of the States Reorganization Commission (SRC), an attempt was made to avoid the exclusive use of the linguistic criteria for the creation of new states; on the contrary, these were intended to be multilingual and endowed with sufficient resources as to be economically independent. Currently, however, the survival of the majority of those with a tribal population is 90% thanks to subsidies from the central government. And this is one of the indicators of the lack of uniform progress among the regions of India, for the northeast has experienced hardly any economic growth and remains in a state of backwardness similar to that of forty years ago.²² It is revealing that, while the inhabitants of other regions ask for work and health programs, those of the northeast still request identity and security.²³ An example of the state of panic and marginalization in which the population lives is its vulnerability in the face of possible attacks and clashes among ethnic groups. In August of 2012, there occurred the massive reception of mobile phone messages warning of clashes between communities, setting off a wave of people fleeing towards Bombay, Pune and Bangalore and arriving in Chennai, Hyderabad and Mysore. People expressed their anger, fury and charges of injustice on the Facebook and Twitter networks, to which the government responded by blocking the web, but without identifying the origin of the Messages.²⁴ Beyond the viral effect of the mass messages, what this event reveals is the feeling of insecurity that the population lives in and the permanent menace of conflicts in the territory.

Finally, the actions of the Security forces have produced complaints and abuses against human rights. The antiterrorist laws, especially the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA),²⁵ dictated in 2002 following the

²¹ States Reorganization Commission-SRC. This commission was created in 1953 and determined the organization of the State of India into 16 states and 3 territories attached to the Union.

²² GUIE, George S. «Kuki State Demand in Manipur: The only viable option for the Kukis.» *Journal of North East India Studies*, July-December 2013, pp 1-13.

²³ Guite, op.cit., p. 3.

²⁴ NEOG, Ruhee Neog, «Social Media: A Study of the Northeast.», (14 Nov.2013). Available at Website <http://www.ipca.org/ruhee/>.

²⁵ AFSPA is the abbreviation for the Armed Forces Special Power Act.

attacks on Parliament, have been considered excessive and a cause of the forced emigration of the population into urban centers.²⁶

The intervention of neighboring countries has been a determining factor in the development of armed action by insurgent groups. The collaboration between China and Pakistan with some of them led in the eighties to the proliferation of groups. A number of them have been transformed into extortionist gangs, and others are involved in drug trafficking out of the Golden Triangle. Currently, negotiations predominate, with more or less success, between the State and the most powerful groups, such as the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN), the National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB), and the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA). But in spite of the initiation of a number of peace processes, the blowing up of oil pipelines and violent clashes and incidents continue periodically.

Assam: from a territorial demand to petition for a Bodo state

The present-day State of Assam is located to the south of the eastern Himalayas. Culturally, 12.4% is made up of more than 200 ethnic groups.²⁷ Assamese has been recognized as the official language since 1873, together with Hindi and English.

From the economic point of view, and according to data from the Indian government itself, Assam is one of the states of least growth, in spite of being the first state to have produced petroleum and of holding four refineries.

Prior to the British colonial period, Assam held a broader territory which included the present-day state of Arunachal Pradesh and which was governed for 600 years by the Ahom dynasty. In 1826 the region was integrated into India, as part of the province of Bengal.

The conflict with the central government was born following the independence of India and was initiated when in 1951 part of the border territory was ceded to the State of Butan. Territorial shrinking increased after the birth of Nagaland and Meghalaya in 1963, Manipur and Tripur in 1972 and Mizoram in 1986. However, the trigger for protest was produced in 1970. Facing the imminent creation of Bangladesh, more than two million Bengali refugees settled in this state. This migration unleashed wrath in the face of what was seen as a menace to Assamese identity, weakened confidence in the Delhi government even further and fostered the appea-

²⁶ Urgell Garcia, Jordi and Vilellas Ariño, María. «Five Keys to Understanding the Disputes in the Northeast of India», *Cidob Review of International Affairs*, no. 89-90, pp.149-166.

²⁷ Bodo, Mising, Rabha, Sonowal, Lalung (Tiwa), Deori and Thengal (Mech).

rance of the first protest movement, the student movement All Assam Students Union (AASU). Following the creation of this group, more than 30 armed groups have entered into action, although today, only 15 remain active.

From among these, of special note is the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA), of Maoist inspiration and which decided to demand a sovereign Assamese state, socialist and independent of India, through armed struggle, in 1989. With training bases in Bangladesh, it centered its assaults in the eighties on the petroleum production of the region.

After a number of insinuations of peace conversations, in 1994 4,000 militants left the group, and its bases in Butan were seriously damaged thanks to an agreement for joint military intervention between the governments of Butan and India. Finally, in 2005, it sought to negotiate the initiation of a peace process, later interrupted.

In 1987, another focus of tension appeared, in this case of ethnic character: the Bodos, traditionally the majority tribal group in Assam, and which today has become an ethnic minority.²⁸ Backed by organizations like All Bodo Students' Union (ABSU), it has gradually transformed its territorial demands into the aspiration for an independent Bodo state within the region. The xenophobic spiral has progressively increased to the point of considering non-Assamese-speaking inhabitants to be terrorists. During the months from October to December of 2000 alone, more than 90 people were killed in disturbances.

Uniting for the rejection of Moslem immigrants are such groups as the National Democratic Front of Bodoland²⁹, (NDFB), with a broad Christian base and with camps in Butan and Bangladesh, which have found in the birth of the new state of Telangana one more argument for the raising of arms. In 2008, the death of a young Moslem in the Urdalguri district sparked clashes between Bodos and Moslems which left 55 dead and more than 100 injured.

For their part, the Moslem immigrants of Assam have started up their armed militia, demanding a segregated state for the Moslem majority. According to the census of 2001, although the indigenous groups consider them foreigners, many of these Moslems had arrived in the territory before the creation of Bangladesh, which technically makes them Indian citizens.³⁰

²⁸ They are 5% of the total population of the state.

²⁹ National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB).

³⁰ PRASAD, Bibu. «Violence in Assam. Battle for the Bodo Heartland». Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies. No. 85 (Oct.2008). Available at website:<http://www.ipcs.org>.

Today, the more than 15 armed Islamic groups are associated with the serious risk of connection with jihadists.³¹ The traditional support networks for drug and arms trafficking together with the ideological vacuum, the reverses suffered and the support maintained by Bangladesh and Pakistan increase the danger of *Islamization* of the Indian northeast.

In 2011 there seemed to appear a significant reduction in the violence, with a number of armed groups giving up their arms or initiating conversations with the government. But 2012 was a bloodstained year, with more than 32 deaths from the fights between the Bodo and Moslem communities. The sacking of 60 towns in the Kokrajhar and Chirang districts forced nearly 70,000 townspeople to flee their homes and take refuge in camps. In addition, clashes between minority tribal groups have not disappeared. The atomization of armed groups fighting among themselves to achieve zones of ethnic exclusivity stages a panorama making dialogue impossible, and which maintains a state of anxiety and alert in the populace.

Nagaland:

The oldest conflict of northeast India

The state of Nagaland, in northeast India, is a territory of 16,579 km², of which only 147 are urban areas. It borders on Assam, Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh, and is also a border passageway into Myanmar. It owes its name to the most numerous tribal group in the territory, the Nagas.³²

Traditionally isolated in the mountains, they enjoyed independence during British rule, an argument they bring up for the creation of a state of ethnic exclusivity and emancipated from the Union.³³

Of the three conflicts in the country's northeast, Nagaland's is the oldest, for it began shortly before the independence of India. The Naga country was declared a British district in 1881 and the rest of the territory of present-day Nagaland was one of the zones classified as an «excluded area», which permitted its population to follow their own

³¹ Zulfiquar, Rahman: «India's Northeast: the threat of Islamist Militancy». (March 2013. Available on website: <http://strategicstudyIndia.blogspot.com> .

³² This denomination refers to a society of more than 20 tribal groups who inhabit the Indian northeast and the Myanmar southwest, among whom are found the Ao, the Sema, the Lotha, the Tangkhul, the Konyak, the Rengma and the Mao. Each group speaks a different language, although all belong to the Tibetan-Burman linguistic group.

³³ Significantly, and unlike the country's Hindu majority, more than 87.5% of its population is of the Christian Baptist religion, as are the neighboring states of Manipur, Mizoram and Meghalaya.

rules and maintain themselves outside British administration until 1947. A year earlier, the National Naga Council (NNC), a political organization grouping together different Naga entities, solicited from the British and from the Indian leaders a guarantee for the independence of Nagaland, basing their claim on the fact that they had never belonged to this country. Since the agreement signed with the British was not implemented, in 1951 the National Naga Council convoked a referendum on the independence of the territory. Angami Zapu Phizo, the leader at that time, claimed to have obtained 99.9% of the votes in favor of independence. Rejection by the central government led to the radicalization of the Naga movement to the point where during the Indian Parliamentary elections of 1952, not a single member of this ethnic group attended in order to vote. Following the boycott came a civil disobedience movement which rejected the payment of taxes as well as support for any institution of the central government, including schools. Promulgation of the Law of Special Powers for the Armed Forces was the government's response. However, after a number of agreements and the decisive participation of a peace mission, the proclamation was achieved of the state of Nagaland in December of 1963, and years later, and thanks to the mediation of the Nagaland Baptist Church, the so-called Shillong Accord was signed in 1975.³⁴ Although this pact called for a total surrender of arms, in 1980 some 140 members of the rival faction of the Naga National Council reorganized themselves from China into a new group, the National Socialist Council of Nagaland, which internationalized the conflict upon demanding the creation of a great Naga state with the incorporation of Naga territories in Myanmar.

Finally, the ethnic factor was also the cause of a division in this same organization in 1988. The majority of its members are Konyak, while the hierarchy is of the Tangkhul ethnic group. Split into two factions, Isaac-Muivah (NSCN-IM) and the NSCN-Khaplang (NSCN-K), they maintain a strong rivalry.

The successive governments of India have shown unmistakable signs of their willingness to resolve the question, and in 2001 a new accord was signed, committing the National Socialist Council of Nagaland-IM to a cessation of extortion and to extending the cease-fire to beyond the territory of the state of Nagaland. Delhi's strategy seems to have been based on firm diplomatic resistance which permitted a second meeting in Osaka and later, in 2012, in Bangkok, this time with the mediation of the minister of Mizoram.

³⁴ Agreement of surrender and of acceptance of the borders of the Indian Union signed in November of 1975.

Manipur: the difficult aspiration to ethnic exclusivity

The kingdom of Manipur, formerly Muneepoor, sovereign until 1891, was the last kingdom to be incorporated into British India. The Act of Manipur³⁵ restored its independence in 1947, but two years later, its maximum political representative, Mahraha Bodhchandra, signed the Shillong treaty of adhesion by means of which Manipur was formally incorporated into the Indian Union, and assigned part of her former territory to Assam and to Nagaland. The signing of this treaty, as one more fact of the so-called «cartographic surgery» exercised upon the territories of the Indian northeast, is at the root of the permanent disorder in the region and is the source of the discontent of its population as well as of the rebellion begun several years later. Manipur merged with the Indian Union in 1949, but was not considered to be a state until 1972, and that, after years of protests and clashes with the central government and the Meitei. In addition to this latter tribe, within the territory of present-day Manipur, where nearly 90% of the territory are mountains, there also live Nagas and Kukis. These inhabit the mountains, while the rest of the land surface of Manipur is the valley of the Imphal where the Meiteis (Hindus) and the Meitei Pangals (Moslem) live, making up more than 50% of the population. This strict territorial distribution was agreed to by the Indian Government in 1960 following the Land Reform Act.³⁶ The difficulties lie not only in the demand for territories of ethnic exclusivity but in the implications for other states of the northeast, given that the Naga are extended throughout Arunachal Pradesh and Myanmar.

The three ethnic groups struggle among themselves through different armed groups. The first insurgent movement was headed by the Meitei in 1951, enjoying the support of the Burmese Communist Party; throughout the second half of the past century there arose armed organizations and groups of Communist as well as of ethnic membership. At this time, the Manipur People's Liberation Front is the group most active. Its claims are based on the attempt to organize a common front including the ethnic groups of the northeast with the objective of ejecting those considered «outsiders» or Mayangs. The historic claim to independence from the Indian state gave way in the nineties to a demand for the creation of ethnically pure states, which have given rise to actions of ethnic cleansing. Thus, in the face of the demand of the Naga and their group to create Greater Nagaland, the Kukis are calling for the creation of Kukiland, as in an unending jigsaw puzzle; they have no support from the Meitei.

³⁵ Manipur State Constitution Act, 1947.

³⁶ Two laws regulate this territorial distribution: the Land Reform Act and Manipur Land Revenue.

Turning to another aspect of the situation, the «combined operations», in which State security forces intervene along with paramilitary forces, not only produce numerous clashes which set back the idea of a definitive peace, but have also led to violation of the rights of the civilian population. Peace agreements have succeeded each other in a systematic cycle of signing and interruption.

In 2005, a MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) was signed with the groups from the valley, but the actual fact is that no-one can assure its full compliance because no-one knows with any certainty the number of groups and arms there are in the region. The situation is contaminated by the control of the drug traffic, and the hopes of finding a peaceful solution seem to be fading. The fear of losing land, the demands for empowerment, and ethnic exclusivity blend with the militarization of the area and the terrorist practices of extortion and corruption. In this scenario, perhaps there remains no other solution but to request international mediation to achieve a definitive cessation of the violence.

External actors

One of the difficulties entangling a solution to the conflict in which Assam, Nagaland, Manipur and the central government of India find themselves implicated is the involvement of neighboring countries.

Deliberate State support of insurgency in a neighboring State permits not only traffic in arms and ammunition but the establishment of protected sanctuaries. Without the aid of China and Nepal, it is difficult to understand how, for more than half a century, it has been possible to maintain armed conflicts between a State as powerful as the Indian Union and minority groups in conflict with one another. The Minister of the Interior of the Union himself denounced the participation of China in the year 2000, after detecting militants of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland-Isak Muivah in the province of Yunnan.

The involvement of China and her difficult relations with the Indian government is the question of greatest weight. Since the territorial clashes over Kashmir in 1962, China occupies two areas claimed by India: the Askai Desert and the Karakorum Pass, ceded to China by Pakistan in 1963. A third area remains open to litigation by the two countries.

This area is Arunachal Pradesh, approximately the size of Austria, and which the Chinese consider to be South Tibet, but which formed part of Assam until 1987.

Although currently the two governments recognize each other as partners and make diplomatic efforts to resolve border questions, neither of them has forgotten its territorial claims.

New Delhi has repeatedly denounced and accused Pakistan and its intelligence services of supporting the Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami (HuJI) not only in India but also in Bangladesh, as well as groups from Assam such as the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA), Burman groups like the Kachin Independence Army (KIA or Cox Bazar), and even China is fearful of radical Islamist influence in her Xinjiang territories.

The intense diplomatic activity developed in recent years by the Indian government has achieved a major improvement in relations with some of its neighboring countries, such as is the case of Butan, which for years sheltered insurgent groups and which in 2004 launched an intense offensive to eject hundreds of Assamese from her territory. Another achievement has been the serious measures taken by the governments of Myanmar and Bangladesh to wipe out terrorist sanctuaries in their territories.

Onto this international horizon, where national interests and the rivalry of two demographical powers such as China and India intersect, the religious factor erupts as a destabilizing element of great potency.

The diplomatic actions of the new Prime Minister Maranda Modi show a will towards conciliation with his neighboring countries, but his victory has also been interpreted as a major boost for Hindu nationalism. It does not seem credible, therefore, that the will for reinforcement of the nation-state which is India would consider a new remodelling of dividing lines, and even less so if these should affect the borders with her neighboring countries.

Current situation of the conflict

Up to August 24 of this year, when the 60th anniversary of the independence of India is celebrated, the number of deaths in the northeast following the birth of the Union has risen to 5,697, of whom 2,166 are civilian, 418 correspond to security forces and 3,113 to terrorists.³⁷

Conflicts in the area have been unceasing in the past two years. Specifically in Assam, they have intensified. Incidents range from relatively minor actions, such as extortion and kidnappings of citizens, to the closing of roads, the burning of residences and violence against women. The

³⁷ The portal The South Asian Terrorist Portal offers updated data. Available at website: www.satp.org. Date of consultation: 01/09/2014.

image of burning houses and the terrified flight of the townspeople in the incidents of July 2012 give an idea of the situation of risk in which the population is living.

The year 2011 seemed to have produced a significant reduction in the violence with the commencement of conversations with the government and the corresponding handover of arms by some of the armed groups, but 2012 was a bloodstained year, with more than 32 deaths from the clashes between the Bodo and Moslem communities. The sacking of 60 towns in the Kokrahar and Chirang districts sent nearly 70,000 townspeople fleeing from their homes to take refuge in camps. The intensity of the conflict caused the cancellation of rail traffic and left the entire region isolated for several days. Incidents have been on the rise in this state following the rupture of the dialogue between the government and the ULFA. During the pre-electoral period, this group intensified its actions with a campaign of bombing assaults on public places like markets or railway stations and increased attacks on immigrants. On the 24th of May alone, seven people died and more than thirty were injured by a bomb explosion.

In the last two years, six new groups have appeared in Assam: the Karbi National Liberation Army (KNLA), the United Popular Liberation Front (UPLF), Dima Hala Daogah-Action (DHD-A), Dima Jadi Naiso Army (DJNA), the National Liberation Front of Bengal (NLFB), and the United Dimasa Kachari Liberation Front (UDKLF).

Peace agreements have not been lacking, and in 2012 an agreement was signed between the Central Government, that of Assam and two factions of the Dima Halam Daogah. Also of note are the positive developments in the peace negotiations with the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) and the National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB). Nonetheless, even though the social tension relaxes, any pretext may provoke a new outbreak of incidents. It happened so, for example, last August 30th when two people died and more than twenty-six were arrested following the outbreak of violence during the celebration of a rally organized by the United Naga Council.

The border zones with Myanmar in the state of Manipur continue to be the scene of frequent confrontations and arrests not only of those suspected of forming part of insurgent groups but of undocumented persons. In spite of the incessant flow of detentions and the denouncement of excesses, it may be said that there has been a reduction of the violence in Manipur. At least the number of mortal victims has been reduced from 110 to 55 between 2012 and 2013. In Nagaland, despite conversations dating back to 1997, no appreciable advances have been made in the negotiations between the government and the NSCN-IM.

The current situation presents a panorama of gradual reduction in violence, but also of maintenance of the state of anxiety and alert of the population.

In contrast, the Justice Commission is investigating a total of 1,528 cases of presumed extrajudicial executions carried out by the Armed Forces which the Association of Families of Victims had presented in 2012.

The civilian society, made up of the Baptist Church and organizations of women and students, have held meetings with the opposing parties and seem to represent the only possibility for escape from the climate of militarization and violence in the region.

As the composition of this document was nearing completion, news arrived of the discovery of the bodies of two young girls, of 9 and 10 years of age, hung from a tree after being raped. This occurrence took place in Assam only 2 km. from the border with Bangladesh. Although unfortunately the rape and murder of women and children are not events limited to the Indian northeast, but rather are a social blight common to the whole country, this is one more case of the repeatedly denounced violence against women of minority tribal groups.

The statements of 4th September of Zawahiri, where he mentions the state of Assam as one of the objectives of Al Qaeda, were enough to place the security forces of India on the alert. Although there is no evidence to date of the presence of cells of the Islamic State in India, and with the caveat of considering this statement as a propaganda strategy, the Modi government should take measures in the face of the possibility of radical Islam finding weighty arguments in the pressure under which the Moslem population in these states is living.

Conclusions and perspectives

The origin of the disputes in the northeastern states of the Indian Union is the persistence of borders which have never been accepted by their inhabitants and have been shown to have perverse effects for their populations. The organization of the states of the northeast fragmented their coincidence with natural frontiers and put political interests before the territorial claims of tribal groups. In the case of the Nagas, following the territorial design of 1947, they were left divided and buried away between two great states, as are India and Myanmar. Designated a «non-administered area» by the Indian government in 1935, the borderlines between the two countries were not determined until 1967.

The events which brought about the creation of Bangladesh added to all of these, but most especially to Assam, a demographic destabilization

which transformed opposition to the Delhi government into a religious confrontation which has ended in ethnically centered demands.

The violence appeared in the three states as the effect of a lack of understanding, an underestimation of the tribal demands and the militarization of the area. Paramilitary groups like the Assam Rifles and the Special Security Forces face off periodically with a number of armed groups, which are born and splinter into fragments thus making more acute a situation which prejudices the economic development of the area and keeps the population in a state of permanent insecurity.

The central state has made great investment efforts and the area is rich in natural resources and possibilities for the development of tourism. Specific proposals have been made for shared development with neighboring countries Myanmar and Thailand through the ASEAN (Association of South-East Asian Nations); some of these, such as the building of a trilateral highway India-Myanmar-Thailand or the construction of a trans-Asiatic train, could contribute to alleviating the isolation of these states.

However, in answer to those who point to low economic investment as the cause of a lack of understanding with New Delhi, the extraordinary importance of the increasing ethnic factor must be emphasized. While it is true that anthropologically this region shares more features with its southeast Asian neighbors than with the rest of India, the demand for the creation of ethnically pure states implies a situation of ethnic exclusion.

An outcome satisfactory to all parties will not be possible without the involvement of the civilian society. Initiatives in this respect have been numerous, and once more, it is women's groups which have led the way, although in fragmented fashion, into coherent programs for the restoration of peace. Considered trustworthy mediators in a cultural context more equalitarian than that of Hindu or Moslem territories, they have set up movements like Maira Paibid (or Mothers of the Society), Nupi or Chanura Leishem Marup, which aid in the protection of the communities, in the development of actions aimed at the empowerment of women and at the prevention of alcoholism and drug addiction. Other social sectors such as citizens' councils, tribal leaders, and groups of pro-civil-rights activists also participate in peace conversations. Finally, it remains to highlight the great negotiating capacity of the Nagaland Baptist Church.

In light of the fact that a return to pre-colonial roots is impossible and setting aside ethnic exclusivity, it is essential to stimulate economic growth in the least favored areas and to return the exploitation of natural riches to the inhabitants of the territory. Collaboration will also be necessary

between central governmental entities and intermediaries sincerely involved in peace, leaving insurgent groups aside.

One last factor is erupting into the unstable panorama on the subcontinent: the dangerous propaganda of radical Islam, which may find in this region its optimal conditions if work is not carried out involving the integration of the Moslem population. Radicals, both of Hindu nationalism and of ethnic separatism, only contribute to the failure of a nation-building project and to the spreading of insecurity, in a true shattering of the sense of citizenship.

Insurgent groups in Assam

- United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA).
- National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB).
- Adivasi Cobra Force (ACF).
- Dima Halim Daogah (DHD).
- Hmar People's Democratic Convention (HPC-D).
- Kamtapur Liberation Organization (KLO).
- Moslem United Liberation Tigers of Assam (MULTA).
- Black Widow (BW).
- All-Adivasi National Liberation Army (AANLA).
- Karbi Longri National Liberation Front (KLNLF).
- Hill-Tiger Force (HTF).
- Karbi National Liberation Tigers (KPLT).
- Dimasa National Revolutionary Front (DNRF).
- United Kukigram Defense Army (UKDA). Rabha Viper Army (RVA).
- United Democratic Liberation Army (UDLA).

Insurgent groups active in Manipur

- Kangleipak Communist Party (KCP).
- Kanglei Yawol Kanna Lup (KYKL).
- Manipur People's Liberation Front (MPLF).
- People's Liberation Army (PLA).
- People's Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak (PREPAK).
- United National Liberation Front (UNLF).
- Kuki Liberation Army (KLA).
- Kuki National Army (KNA).
- Kuki National Front (KNF).
- Kuki Revolutionary Army (KRA).
- National Socialist Council of Nagaland - Isak-Muivah (NSCN-IM).
- People's United Liberation Front (PULF).
- United Kuki Liberation Front (UKLF).
- Zomi Revolutionary Army (ZRA).
- Hmar People's Convention- Democracy (HPC-D).

Insurgent groups active in Nagaland

- National Socialist Council of Nagaland-Isak Muivah (NSCN-IM).
- Nacional Socialist Council of Nagaland-Khaplang (NSCN-K).
- National Socialist Council of Nagaland-Unification (NSCN-U).
- National Socialist Council of Nagaland-Khole-Kitovi (NSCN-Khole-Kitovi).

(http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/india/states/assam/terrorist_outfits/index.html).

Chronology of the conflict

2014-Al-Zawahiri announces the creation of AlQaeda in India.

2014-Modi wins the May elections.

2011-Land Boundary Agreement with Bangladesh 2011.

2009-Terrorist attacks in Mumbai.

2008-Creation of the Cervantes Institute en India.

2007-Treaty of Friendship India-Butan.

2001-Cease-fire of the NSCN-IM in Nagaland.

1999-Cease-fire of the NSCN-K in Nagaland.

1983-Beginning of the armed struggle in Assam.

1978-India becomes 6th world nuclear power.

1975- Shillong. Accord.

1972-Creation of the State of Manipur.

1971- Bangladesh is born.

1965- Indopakistani War

1963-Birth of the State of Nagaland.

1958-The Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act.

1956-The Naga National Council begins armed struggle.

1949-Manipur joins the Indian State.

1947-Independence of India y Pakistán.

1946-Beginning of Naga resistance: Naga.National Council

1941-Creation of the Assam Rifles.

Embers of the division of the indian subcontinent...

	ASSAM	NAGALAND	MANIPUR	INDIA
AREA:total km ² / % north west	78,438 / 30%	16,527 / 6.3%	22,327 / 8.5%	3,287,263
POPULATION: total/% north west	3,116,927 / 68.37%	1,978,502 / 4.34%	2,721,756 / 5.97%	1,236,344,631
Population growth / national average	16.9% / 1.25%	0.5% / 1.25%	18.7 / 1,25%	1.25%
Density of population Km ²	397	119	122	382
Religious Groups				
Hindu	1,729,645	7.7%	48%	80.5%
Moslems	82,406	1.8%	8%	13.4%
Christians	9,865	90.2%	34%	2.3%
Sikhs	22,519			1.9%
Buddhists	51,029			
Jainists	23,957			
Literacy Rate	72.1	80.1%	79.8%	62.8%
Masculine	76.8%	83.3%	86.5%	75.2%
Feminine	67.3%	76.7%	73.2%	50.8%
GNP / National	19,520,000\$	1,590,000\$	1,830,000\$	\$4.99 trillion
Per capita income	626\$	453\$	602\$	4,000\$
Birth rate	23.2	16.1	14.4	20.72%
Death rate	8.2	3.3	4.1	7.94%
Population below poverty threshold / national average	37.9% / 29.8%	20.9% / 29.8%	47.1% / 29.8%	
State Capital	Guwahati	Kohima	Imphal	Nueva Delhi

Source: 2011 Census and data from the Centre for Development and Peace Studies; CIA World Factbook and the World Bank.

	Bangladesh	Myanmar
AREA	143,998 Km ²	676,578 Km ²
POPULATION	166,280,712	55,746,253
Population growth	1.6%	1.03%
Density of population per Km ²	1.203	79
Religious Groups	Moslems 89.5%; Hindu 9.6%; others 0.9%	Buddhists 89%; Christians 4%; Moslems 4%; animists 1%; others 2%
Literacy rate	57.7%	92.7%
Masculine	62%	95.1%
Feminine	53.4%	90.4%
GNP	324,600, million \$	111.1 million \$
Per capita income	2,100\$	1,700 \$
Birth rate/1,000 inhabitants	21.61	18.65
Death rate /1,000 inhabitants	5.64 deaths	8.01
Population below poverty line	31.5 %	32.7%
State Capital	Dhaka	Rangoon

Victims by States

		Civil	Security Forces	Terrorists	Total
Assam	2009	175	21	196	392
	2014	76	57	63	144
Manipur	2008	131	13	341	485
	2014	7	7	18	32
Nagaland	2008	42	2	01	145
	2014	11	0	11	12

Data in boldface up to August of 2014 Source: <http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/india/database/indiafatalities.htm>. Date consulted. 11/08/2014.

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The China and its neighborhood. The key test for the peaceful development

Ignacio García Sánchez

Chapter thirteen

Summary

This chapter deals with China's immediate vicinity, 25 actors: Japan, North Korea, South Korea, the Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei, Singapore, Indonesia, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Thailand, Myanmar, Butan, Bangladesh, Nepal, India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Tadjikistan, Kirghizistan, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, Russia, and the United States. They all represent the most immediate foreign challenge to Chinese domestic strength in her peaceful development towards the objectives of progress imposed by the Communist Party for the celebration of the hundredth anniversary of its accession to power, October 1, 2049.

As with all challenges, this one also has its thorny problems: a conglomerate of very differing actors coinciding closely and immediately¹ in their domestic development within what may be considered as one of the most difficult and demanding geopolitical settings on the world stage.

At the same time, it presents a wide range of possibilities for the generation of expansion vectors, thus forging an expansive dynamic in the fields of commercial, cultural, diplomatic and military relations, essential

¹ An example is the book by Richard Bush, «The Perils of Proximity: China-Japan Security Relations». Brookings Institution Press; 1st edition (11 October 2010). Washington.

in the Chinese development model, in an area of extreme richness for the natural expansion of the most productive forces of its society's progress.

The achievement of the accommodation of China's impressive socioeconomic development, as well as its future potential within this geopolitical framework marked by the nationalist tendency and by what still is the North American military hegemony, offers a unique opportunity, especially so that the second half of the 21st century may evolve gradually and progressively from a geostrategic setting dominated by cooperative security towards an integral vision of reality and intelligent management of the environment. All this, by means of the concept of dynamic security, will be necessary in order to adapt the new balances of power into a new world order, which must arrive framed by human security and sustainable development.

Key words

Conflict, China, borders, limits, geo-political, geo-strategy, the U.S.

«... The essential problem is not China's conduct but the growth in its all-around magnitude.

Riders in a crowded elevator cabin into which an extremely fat Mr. China has just stepped in must react self-protectively if he is becoming fatter at a rapid rate, squeezing them against the walls -even if he is entirely unthreatening, and indeed affable. True, the crowded elevator cabin already contained an even fatter, louder, and frequently violent Mr. America, but simply because he had long been fellow rider, almost everybody had over the decades come to a satisfactory accommodation with his noisy bulk... the approach... it is frankly deterministic. Instead of seeing leaders striving to act pragmatically in pursuit of their goals and preferences within the operative political constraints, I see them as trapped by the paradoxes of the logic of strategy, which imposes its own imperatives, all the more so when they retain the delusion of free choice in the presence of conflict. Were it not so, the history of humanity would not to be a record of its crimes and follies.»²

² LUTTWAK, Edward N. (2012). «The Rise of China vs. the Logic of Strategy». London, Harvard University Press. Pp. 6-7.



<http://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/docs/refmaps.html>

Introduction

«The Continental-Maritime split personality of China distinguishes East Asia from its competing realms. The Maritime Realm, with its seaman's point of view, is the open system sector whose outlook is based upon exchange -of peoples, goods, and ideas. Heartlandic Russia, with its landsman's perspective, is inward facing. It has traditionally pursued a closed system based upon internal resources, opened on a limited basis by its large-scale energy export. China encompasses both of these contrasting world orientations, retaining its repressive, top-down Communist governance apparatus, while encouraging a market-oriented economy. The competition is played out within two different geographical arenas --in the North and the Interior and in the «Golden Coast»- with varying political, economic, and cultural outlooks. How to reconcile the geopolitical contradictions that grow out of these two outlooks represents China's greatest internal geopolitical challenge.»³

³ COHEN, Saul Bernard. Geopolitics: The Geography of International Relations. Second edition (2009). Maryland, Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc. P. 254. The three stra-

CHAPTER 15. CHINA AND ITS NEIGHBORHOOD

DYNAMIC SECURITY CONCEPT



Produced by the Author

On August 8, the journalist Thomas L. Friedman, interviewing President Obama, began by asking him if, unlike its perception of the post-World-War-II U.S. as the indispensable nation for the integration and formation of the new world order, the world might at this time be judging him as President of the disintegration of the system. To which Obama, admitting to limited chaos, replied that he considers this opinion as something inevitable on the road, always difficult, towards the creation of a new world order marked by globalization and the integration of trade. Along this road he pointed to China, among other factors, as one of the key elements which must evolve for the structuring of the new order. In the case of China, he stated that she should evolve from a position of a «free rider»⁴ with features of a dominant regional power, towards a position of a committed global geopolitical actor; comments which naturally provoked a Chinese

tegic domains, according to the work quoted, would be: «the area of East Asia, dominated by China and embracing North Korea and a separate geopolitical region, Indochina, which includes Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia; continental Euroasia...dominated by Russia...extending like the inside of a half moon from the Baltic, through Eastern Europe and the Black Sea, Central Asia and Mongolia, tjo the Korean Peninsula; and the maritime environment, dependant on trade from the Atlantic and Pacific oceans... dominated by the U.S.

⁴ «They ride free. And they have acted with absolute freedom for the past 30 years. And they've done very well thanks to that behaviour.» <http://nytimes.com/video/opinion/10000003048414/obama-on-the-world.html?src=xps>. Visited August 14 2014.

reaction. Thus, an editorial in the People's Daily pointed out that » (...) it is the United States which has behaved like a 'free rider' with its so-called 'pivot to Asia' «, in opposition to what the same editorial described as years of Chinese diplomatic initiatives in which she had promoted friendly relations and trade with her Asiatic neighbors.⁵

This geopolitical vision of China is widespread in the West, perfectly explicated by Robert D. Kaplan in his book «*The Revenge of Geography*», when in its Chapter 9, «The Geography of Chinese Power», he refers to a disturbing quote from Mackinder about the yellow danger to world freedom, as enjoying a privileged position to lead the world together with the U.S., «building for a quarter of mankind a new civilization, neither too Oriental, nor too Western».⁶

Not very far from this viewpoint would be a review of the Russian military doctrine of 2009, which expressly reserves to itself the right to a first use of nuclear arms, maintaining a large arsenal of tactical nuclear weapons while defending a posture closed to any agreement as to its reduction. Joseph Nye, in «The Future of Power», reasons that this is the same posture the U.S. used during the Cold War to counter Russian conventional military superiority, which would explain a similar Russian response to Chinese military superiority in the Far East.⁷

Along the same lines, the National Security Strategy reminds us:

«Asia stands in the center of the geopolitical reordering which anticipates the coming world. Some of its great countries - China, in particular - are becoming consolidated as poles of influence in the international community, emerging and standing out as key elements in the new strategic panorama. The focal points of tension concentrated in Afghanistan, Pakistan, North Korea or those related to Chinese territorial claims affect the entire international community. At the same time, factors of stability are the economic growth of large countries like China or India which, on the other hand, have also become relevant actors in Africa and Latin America.»⁸

This Western viewpoint is very far from being shared by Chinese authorities, who describe the development of their country as a formidable challenge, and therefore, require international support and solidarity.⁹

⁵ The New York Times: «Obama's 'Free Rider» Comment Draws Chinese Criticism». By BREE FENG August 13, 2014.

⁶ KAPLAN, Robert D. «The Revenge of Geography: What the Map Tells Us about Coming Conflicts and the Battle against Fate.» (2012) Random House. New York. Pp. 188-189

⁷ NYE Jr., Joseph S. The Future of Power. (2011) New York. Public Affairs. P. 172.

⁸ National Security Strategy 2013: A Shared Project. Presidency of the Government. Spain.

⁹ Garcia Sanchez, Ignacio. Analysis of Chinese Security Strategy. <http://www.ieee.es/Galerias/ficheros/docs analisis/2011/DIEEEA282011 Chinese Security StrategyAnaly->

This viewpoint is reflected in its White Paper on China's Armed Forces, where it is opposed to any type of hegemonic conduct and also, as being contrary to military alliances, fixes the geopolitical framework upon two bases: peace and development. It identifies multipolarity, cultural diversity and the information age as global tendencies. It emphasizes as negative geostrategical tendencies the following: the increase of hegemonical conduct with neo-interventionist policies; the difficulties of distinguishing between traditional and non-traditional threats to security; and the beginning of a new arms race in the area; in addition to concentrating on the Far Eastern scenario, it points specifically to two actors as their principal promoters, Japan and the U.S.¹⁰ Thus, the Geopolitical Overview of Conflicts keeps a constant eye on this scenario, and in its first appearance, analyzed the conflict on the Korean Peninsula.¹¹ The following year it reviewed the tensions in the South China Sea¹² and, in the preceding edition, centered on the open conflicts in China's interior, with special emphasis on the situation in Taiwan, a suspended conflict which, as in the case of the armistice signed between the two Koreas, keeps the two economic giants of this century in a state of constant strategic tension.

Meanwhile, in accord with the annual evaluation of Chinese military development, the U.S. Department of Defense continues underlining in its first paragraph that «Preparation for a potential conflict in the Straits of Taiwan, which includes dissuading or defeating intervention by a third party, continues to be the principal focal point and the prime factor in Chinese military spending...»¹³ On the horizon stand the words of Mao, on the 21st of October, 1975, quoted by Kissinger: «It is better that (the island of Taiwan) be in their hands. And if you were to hand it over to me again, I wouldn't want it, because it is not the right moment. There is a great group of counterrevolutionaries there. Within a hundred years we're going to want it, (pointing with his hand) and we're going to fight to get it.»¹⁴

Continuing with this interest in the region, this chapter deals with transnational conflicts, which the book quoted at the beginning of the following section locates within the second ring of security. This would involve up to 22 actors, including the U.S., and which range from Japan to the East,

sis JGS.pdf White Paper, China's Peaceful Development (September 2011). Beijing, Information office of the State Council.

¹⁰ White Paper on China's Armed Forces: The Diversified Employment of China's Armed Forces (April 2013). Beijing, Information Office of the State Council.

¹¹ GARCIA SANCHEZ, Ignacio. Geopolitical Overview of Conflicts 2011: Chapter XII, Korea, The Dream of a Reunited and Denuclearized Peninsula (2011). Madrid, Ministry of Defense.

¹² MACKINLAY FERREIRÓS, Alejandro. Geopolitical Overview of Conflicts 2012: Chapter XV, South China Sea (2012). Madrid, Ministry of Defense.

¹³ OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE. Annual Report to Congress: Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2014. Washington.

¹⁴ KISSINGER, Henry (2011). «On China». New York, the Penguin Press. P. 307.

passing through Vietnam in the South, India in the Southwest and Russia in the North.¹⁵

Two fundamental theses are presented throughout the chapter. The first, set forth by Kaplan¹⁶, refers to a possible strategic calculation error causing a minor conflict to shift into a major conflict. The second, worked out by Nye and widely debated, is centered on the inevitability of conflict developed by Thucydides in his work on the Peloponnesian War, stemming from the rise of Athens in the face of the hegemonic power of Sparta, but from the angle that the belief in the inevitability of cycles of history was the main cause of the conflict.

Background to conflict

«On the borders, the authorities face a second ring of security concerns, involving China's relations with about twenty adjacent countries. No other country, with the exception of Russia, has a greater number of neighbors. Numbers apart, China's near vicinity is singularly complex. The contiguous states include: seven of the world's fifteen largest countries (India, Pakistan, Russia, Japan, the Philippines, Indonesia and Vietnam — each with a population of over 89 million); five countries with whom China has been at war at some point in the last seventy years (Russia, South Korea, Japan, Vietnam, India); and at least nine countries with unstable regimes (such as North Korea, the Philippines, Myanmar/Burma, Butan, Nepal, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Tajikistan and Kirgukistan). China has had border conflicts with each one of its twenty immediate neighbors since 1949, although the majority have been resolved. None of the neighboring states perceives that their vital national interests coincide with those of China. The most important neighbors are China's historic rivals, and the smallest resist Chinese influence. Complicating policy in the second ring is the presence of Taiwan.¹⁷ Finally, the second ring includes the twenty-second actor, whose presence represents the single greatest challenge to Chinese security: the United States, although located some thousands of miles away, casts a powerful shadow over the Chinese environment via the Pacific Command, with its general headquarters in Honolulu, but its major military base in Guam, the Pacific island located 6,000 miles from the American continent but

¹⁵ NATHAN, Andrew J. and SCOBELL, Andrew (2012). *China's Search for Security*. New York Columbia University Press.

¹⁶ KAPLAN, Robert D. «Asia's Cauldron. The South China Sea and the End of a Stable Pacific». 2014 Random House. New York.

¹⁷ GARCÍA SÁNCHEZ, Ignacio. *Geopolitical Overview of Conflicts 2013: Chapter XII, The Chinese Interior Ring. Strength or Weakness?* (201x). Madrid, Ministry of Defense.

only 2,000 kilometers from China; a naval presence dominating China's southern and eastern seas and various types of defense agreements with the countries on its periphery: South Korea, Japan, Taiwan, the Philippines, Vietnam, Thailand, India, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Kirgukhistan, in addition to its economic and political influence throughout the region. Thus, China's immediate periphery has good reason to claim the title of the most difficult geopolitical environment on earth for a great power».¹⁸

In order to understand this geopolitical environment of China, which Lucian W. Pye, the U.S.-educated Chinese scholar, defines as «a civilization attempting to be a nation-state», Samuel B. Cohen emphasizes that:

«The defeat of the U.S. in the Vietnamese War, and the collapse of the Soviet Union permitted China to broaden its base of power in East Asia, as well as to take on a more important role in the Asia-Pacific basin and in the southern and central regions of Asia. In a quarter of a century, China has become a recognized world power and has managed to forge a third geostrategic sphere, which competes all over the world with the Eurasian continent and command of the seas...»¹⁹

As Felipe Fernandez-Armesto²⁰ explains, China, like all civilizations of its time, initially depended on the mass production of a single type of food, in this case millet. Native to China were two varieties of this grain, of which traces are to be found in archaeological deposits dating back to 5,000 years b.C.

Both are drought-resistant and tolerant of alkaline soils, and allowed the first Chinese dynasties to achieve two of the marked characteristics of Chinese evolution: a great density of population and the maintainance of a formidable standing army. Thus, expansion into the south following the course of the Yangtze River provided it with the symbol of abundance which has remained inseparably united with Chinese development: rice. At the same time, it joined the two agrarian cultures, the cool dry millet zones and the warm humid rice areas. In this way, the bases were established for the development of its two cultural keys: Taoism and, fundamentally, Confucionism.

«Thousands of years in surroundings of national historic and cultural egocentrism have led to the current perspective of China's position, the vision of China as »the Middle Kingdom«, the center of the world... This Central Kingdom stood out because of the condition provided by

¹⁸ NATHAN, Andrew J. and SCOBELL, Andrew (2012). «China's Search for Security». New York, Columbia Univeresity Press, pp. 3-5.

¹⁹ COHEN, Samuel B.: op. Cit., p. 253.

²⁰ FERNÁNDEZ ARMESTO, Felipe (2002). «Civilizations: Culture, Ambition and the Transformation of Nature». New York, Simon and Schuster, p.212.

*agrarian culture, the essence of the civilized world. What there was beyond the limits of this agrarian world held no importance, since it was inhabited by uncivilized nomads, «the barbarians.»*²¹

Thus, and in order to confront that «most difficult geopolitical environment in the world for a great power», Deng Xiaoping, architect of the Chinese miracle, dictated a series of instructions²² which may be considered legacy for the new Chinese geopolitical vision. In these, he requested prudence, calmness and a willingness reserved for holding to a defensive posture, which would set as a priority the reinforcement of security. This outlook is reflected in the latest edition of the White Paper on Defense: «China has a difficult task in order to achieve national unification and ensure its territorial integrity and the defense of its interests. Some country has reinforced its military alliances in the Asian Pacific, increasing its military presence in the region, which provokes frequent situations of tension.»²³

M. Taylor Fravel²⁴ concludes his study »*Strong Borders, Secure Nation: Cooperation and Conflict in China's Territorial Disputes*» with three main ideas:

1. China has never been very predisposed to use force in its territorial disputes, being one of the states least inclined to initiate a conflict.
2. Most of the territorial compromises reached have their explanation in internal threats to the security of the regime.
3. China follows a negative model in the harshness of its claims, using force when she faces powerful opponents who could weaken her position, or when she controls little or none of the territory she is claiming.

In this sense, the Chinese authorities have reached bilateral treaties or agreements with the following countries: Afghanistan, to whom they have conceded 100% of its claims to an area of some 7,381 Km²; Tajikistan, 96% of 28,430 Km²; Nepal, 94% of 2,476 Km²; Burma, 82% of 1,909 Km²; Butan, with which there exists an agreement for the main-

²¹ COHEN, Saul Bernard. *Geopolitics: The Geography of International Relations*. Second edition (2009). Maryland, Rowland and Littlefield Publishers, Inc. P. 263.

²² «The instructions were austere and concise. Written in a traditional Chinese poetic style, they made up two documents: an instruction of 24 characters and an explanation of 12 restricted to high office-holders. The political explanation of 12 characters more restricted among the principal leaders, said the following: «The enemy troops are outside the walls. They are stronger than we. We must at principally on the defensive.» KISSINGER, Henry: op. cit., pp. 437-439.

²³ White Paper on China's Armed Forces: «The Diversified Employment of China's Armed Forces». Pekin, April 2013. Information Office of the State Council.

²⁴ FRAVEL, M- Taylor. «*Strong Borders Secure Nation: Cooperation and Conflict in China's Territorial Disputes*». (2008). Princeton University Press. New Jersey.

tainance of the status quo without a definitive abandonment of their respective claims, 76% of 1,128 Km²; India, 74% of 125,000 Km², although this is a case of an agreement in principle, and the deployment of troops, especially on the part of India, seems to indicate that the situation may be considered as one of tense calm; Kirghistan, 68% of 3,656 Km²; Kazakhstan, 66% of 2,420 Km²; Mongolia, 65% of 16,808 Km²; North Korea, 60% of 1,165 Km²; Laos and Vietnam, 50% with 18 and 227 Km², respectively; 48% of 1,000 Km²; and, finally, Pakistan, 40% of 8,806 Km², but in this case the dispute is still pending between Pakistan and India over Kashmir.²⁵

As in this last case, a fundamentally multilateral feature characterizes the conflicts in her South Sea, specifically in two groups of islands: Paracelso (or Xisha, its Chinese name) and Spratly (or Nansha, its Chinese name).²⁶ The former are an ancient dispute between China and Vietnam, which was settled by the delimitation of jurisdictional waters in the Gulf of Tonkin.²⁷ The resolution of this old conflict, maintained with France as colonial power and which led China to defend an old town of fishermen on the island of «The Tail of the White Dragon» (or Bailongwei, its Chinese name) was settled with the government of North Vietnam when the U.S. began to demonstrate increasing support for South Vietnam, in addition to the creation in 1955 of SEATO²⁸ as a way of containing Communist expansion.

In 1957, Mao handed over full sovereignty over this small island, with its 5 Km² surface, to Hanoi. From the time of this transfer,

«China has never again offered to compromise over the sovereignty of an offshore island. Instead, apart from the episodes of escalation, China has chosen to delay settlement in all its other offshore island disputes, a strategy that reflects Deng Xiao Ping`s maxim for these conflicts to «set aside conflict [and] pursue joint development». In the Paracels delay has given China time to strengthen its claim... In the Spratlys, China has held talks with other claimants, but it has never participated in negotiations over sovereignty... Delay has also dominated China`s approach to the Senkakus. China and Japan have never held talks over the sovereignty of these islets and rocks. The two side did discuss the islands in negotiations leading up to

²⁵ Ibid., pp. 46, 47.

²⁶ MACKINLAY LEICEAGA, Alejandro. Ops cit.

²⁷ This is the cause of the reduction of the famous map of Chinese maritime claims from 11 strokes to 9. Recently a new vertical map of China has been released, published by the «Hunan Map Publishing House» on which the South Sea islands are shown on the same scale as the continent.

²⁸ The Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) was a regional defense organization which functioned from 1955 to 1977, made up of Australia, France, New Zealand, Pakistan, the Philippines, Thailand, Great Britain and the U.S.

the 1978 peace treaty, but only to ensure that the dispute would be excluded from the agreement... Deng described the delaying strategy, stating: «It doesn't matter if this question is shelved for some time, say, ten years. Our generation is not wise enough to find common language on this question. Our next generation will certainly be wiser. They will certainly find a solution acceptable to all'»²⁹

The Senkakus (or Diaoyu, the Chinese name) consist of a group of eight uninhabited islands and islets whose total surface comes to some 5 Km², and are located in the East China Sea, 170 Km. from Taiwan and the Ryukyu Archipelago, 330 kilometers from continental China and 410 Km. from Okinawa. In this case, China's first claim³⁰ was asserted in 1970, in support of Taiwan³¹ and before the U.S. transferred its administration to Japan, in accord with the Okinawa agreement on reversion finalized in 1971. The area has seen a delay in the joint exploitation of its potential resources. Although in June of 2008 the two countries came to an agreement for the exploitation of natural gas in Chungxiao/Shirakaba and Longjing/Asurao, in 2009 the agreement was broken when the Chinese government declared its sovereignty over the fields, which continued with a series of unilateral actions by both parties.

In the group of islets in the Spratlys, around 50, with a total surface of less than 5 Km², of which China occupied seven between 1988 and 1994,³² very little exploration has taken place, and currently there is no active exploration.

However, «the dispute over the sovereignty and demarcation of the maritime limits in the area are not the principal hurdle to its exploitation, since the waters in contention present major technological and geological challenges due to deep valleys and strong underwater currents. In addition, the region is lashed seasonally by tropical storms and typhoons...»³³

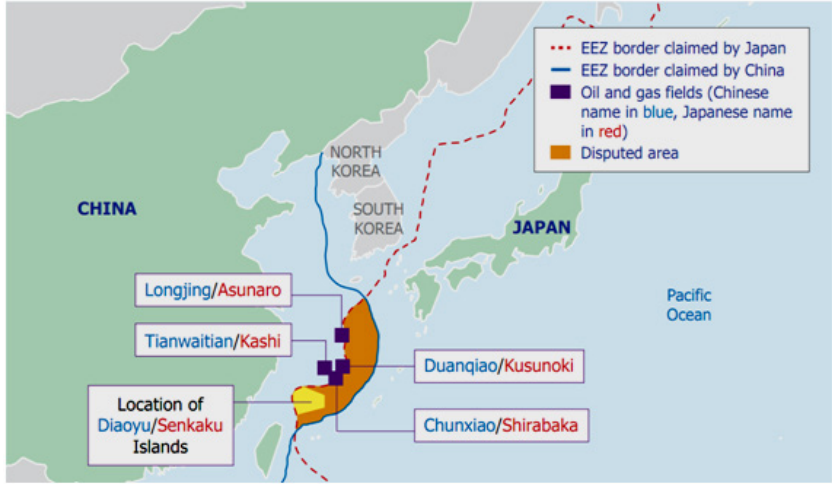
²⁹ FRAVEL, M. Taylor. Op. Cit., pp. 269-270.

³⁰ The Chinese position is documented in the White Paper «Diaoyu Dao, An Inherent Territory of China» published by the State Council in September 2012: http://www.gov.cn/english/official/2012-09/25/content_2232763.htm. The Japanese position is documented on the Embassy's official page in Spanish: <http://www.es.emb-japan.go.jp/politicaexterior/territory/senkaku/index.html>.

³¹ All claims of sovereignty on the ocean rim are sustained by China and Taiwan. In this context China always supports Taiwan in disputes, especially fishingboat incidents with neighboring countries, as if dealing with a region of China, strengthening the concept of a single China.

³² The Chinese occupation began after the Philippines (6 islets), Malaysia (5), Taiwan (1) and Vietnam (31) began to establish themselves on some of them.

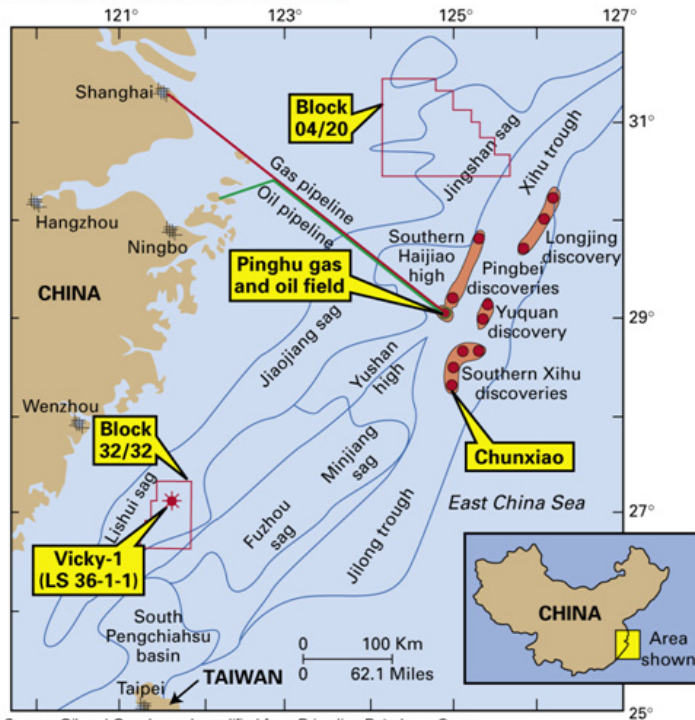
³³ GARCIA SANCHEZ, Ignacio J. «Energy and Geostrategy 2014. Chapter V. The Rise of China and Her Energy Supply.» Ministry of Defense 2014. Madrid. Pp. 273-275.



EIA (U.S. Energy Information Administration), «East China Sea.» Last Updated: September 25, 2012.

EAST CHINA SEA DISCOVERIES, STRUCTURES

Fig. 1



Source: Oil and Gas Journal, modified from Primeline Petroleum Corp.

EIA (U.S. Energy Information Administration), «East China Sea». Last Updated September 25, 2012

Current situation of the conflict

«... when people speak of the rising power of China or India, they tend to point to the large populations and increased economic or military resources of those countries. But whether the capacity that those resources imply can actually be converted into preferred outcomes will depend upon the contests and the country's skill in converting resources into strategies that will produce preferred outcomes... Power-conversion strategies turn out to be a critical variable that does not receive enough attention. Strategies relate means to ends, and those that combine hard and soft power resources successfully in different contests are the key to smart power.»³⁴

The fifth generation of Communist leaders of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party, elected at the 18th National Congress held in November 2012, continues along a path seeking consolidation of social cohesion and domestic development with more balanced growth.

The slogan of the new leadership team, as especially expressed by its president, Xi Jinping: «China's dream, the people's dream.»

«The development model stands as a fundamental element of her national security, a demand for her citizens and a necessity that all countries must support. achieved the objectives foreseen in its two first stages: doubling the Gross National Product (GNP) by 1980 to attend to the basic necessities of her population and quadrupling it by the end of the last century to acquire a basic level of prosperity. The third objective, set for mid-century on the centenary of the foundation of the People's Republic of China (1949), would come into being with general prosperity and the modernization of the country within a harmonious State. In this sense she is declared to be a nation on the road to development.»³⁵

Thus, for the past three decades the Chinese economy has grown at a rate of 9.9% and since 2010 has surpassed Japan's GNP (4.729 billion dollars³⁶, currently in 5th position) turning itself into the third world economic power (13.390 billion) behind the U.S. (16.720 billion) and the European Union (15.850 billion). Although this growth, when distributed among its population, 9,800 dollars, holds it to a modest position, the 121st, still far from the 52,800 dollars of the U.S. (14th), the 39.600 of Taiwan (28th), the 37,100 of Japan (36th), the 34,500 dollars of the E.U. (41st), the 33,200 of South Korea (42nd) and slightly below the world average of 12,700 dollars.

³⁴ NYE Jr., Joseph S. The Future of Power. (2011) New York. Public Affairs. P. 10.

³⁵ GARCÍA SÁNCHEZ, Ignacio. Analysis Document of the ieee.es 028/11 Analysis of Chinese Security Strategy. Summary of the ieee.es, «White Paper: China's Peaceful Development». September 2011.

³⁶ DRAE. Billion: a million million, expressed by the unit followed by twelve zeroes.

But if current figures speak for themselves, demonstrating amazing growth which has allowed more than 650 million people³⁷ to rise out of poverty, the outlook for the future may be even more amazing. However, the risks, at both domestic and foreign levels, continue to be major. Fundamental years for socio-economic development, according to forecasts for growth at an annual rate of 5.4%, would be: 2018, with a per capita income surpassing what is considered to be the critical level of development in democracies, 12,000 dollars; and 2020, during which she would surpass, at 13,624 dollars, the average world per capita income of 13,065 dollars.³⁸

Aware of this goal, which implies passing through the so-called «middle-income trap»: the trap of countries with per capita incomes of between 12,000 and 14,000 dollars³⁹, the basic objective of the new politburo is to continue a policy of reforms which permits the Chinese economy to compete with the developed economies and maintain constant, though moderate, growth. Fitting into this context were the acts of exaltation of the figure of Deng Xioping, on the 110th anniversary of his birth last August 10th, together with that of Xi Jinping as his natural continuator and defender of his policies, in detriment to the figure of Mao Zedong and the commemoration of the 120th anniversary of his birth last December 26th. This is of transcendental symbolic importance if Mao—the «great helmsman»—is considered to have been the incarnation of Chinese national pride, with more than 60 million deaths behind

³⁷ Data from «The World Factbook». Visited August 20 2013: <http://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>.

³⁸ Scenario of visit reference 21 August 2014: <http://www.eia.gov/oiaf/aeo/table-browser/#relea-se=IEO2013&subject=0-IEO2013&table=42-IEO2013®ion=0-0cases=Referen-ce-d041117>.

³⁹ The World Bank includes as medium-income countries a broad group of States with a total of nearly 5 billion inhabitants, 23.9 billion dollars in Gross National Product, growth of 4.8% and a 73% poverty rate. This classification is in turn subdivided into a low level, with a per capita income level of 2,068 (1,046 to 4,125) dollars and 39% urban population, and a high level with a per capita income of 7,540 (4,126 to 12,745) dollars and 68% urban population. <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/mic>. «If countries cannot increase productivity through innovation (rather than continuing to rely on foreign technology), they find themselves trapped (In today's increasingly globalized world, escaping the middle-income trap may be even more difficult. Eeckhout and Jovanovic 2007). The concept of a middle-income trap has some empirical backing. Latin America and the Middle East provide compelling support for the trap hypothesis: in these two regions, most economies reached middle-income status as early as the 1960s and 1970s and have remained there ever since (see figure BO.1.1a). Of 101 middle-income economies in 1960, only 13 became high income by 2008 (see figure BO.1.1b)—Equatorial Guinea; Greece; Hong Kong SAR, China; Ireland; Israel; Japan; Mauritius; Portugal; Puerto Rico; Republic of Korea; Singapore; Spain; and Taiwan, China.» 2013 International Bank for Reconstruction and Development /The World Bank and the Development Research Center of the State Council, P. R. China. «China 2030: Building a Modern, Harmonious, and Creative Society»

him, while the figure of Deng represents China's cultural superiority, originating in the teachings of Confucius and incorporating the liberal-reformist outlook, as well as the Chinese dream of becoming once again the world's model nation.

The great challenge is to unite the energies of this colossal nation behind the lines of a controlled reform which, on the one hand, does not endanger the one-party system, at the same time fighting the nepotism and corruption which mar and delegitimize it. Meanwhile, the current leaders, with the firm legacy of maintaining the inherited system and transmitting it to the next generation, must transform an inherited legitimacy into a new legitimization which, supported by economic results, is reinforced by international recognition, and a new nationalism linked to a glorious cultural superiority identified with the Party.

And so, if domestically the great challenge is to achieve her socioeconomic development so as to be considered as part of the select group of developed nations, abroad it would be to maintain the fundamental bases of the era of globalization and trade, but multilateralizing its structures and functions. Within this context, her situation may be considered to be, as Kaplan expresses it: «(...) with China penetrating into Central Asia, what Mackinder calls the «Heartland», and the possibility of an increase in her influence within Spykman's «Land Ring», of which Southeast Asia and the Korean Peninsula form a part. The land borders of China at the present moment seem to present more opportunities than dangers».⁴⁰

In this way, and transcending the bilateral principle in her foreign relations, China heads the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (or SCO in its English-language abbreviation); plays a fundamental role in the Asian-Pacific Economic Cooperation (or APEC in its English-language abbreviation); as a fundamental element in the resolution of disputes on its maritime periphery, holds to the Declaration of the Code of Conduct with all countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (or ASEAN in its English-language abbreviation); considers essential the renovation of the spirit of the five principles of peaceful coexistence⁴¹, an initiative es-

⁴⁰ KAPLAN Robert D.: Op.cit, p. 211.

⁴¹ «China does not subscribe to the notion that a country is bound to seek hegemony when it grows in strength. Hegemony or militarism is not in the genes of the Chinese. China will unswervingly pursue peaceful development because it is good for China, good for Asia and good for the world.»

«The notion of dominating international affairs belongs to a different age, and such attempts are doomed to failure.»

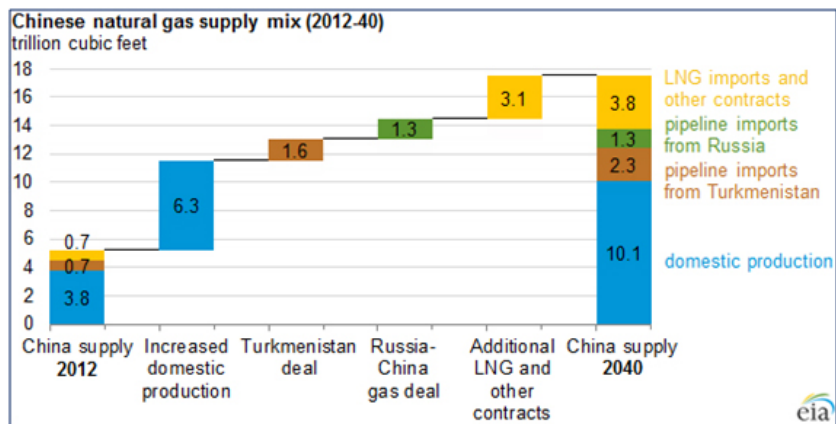
«Flexing military muscles only reveals a lack of moral ground or vision, rather than reflecting one's strength. Security can be solid and enduring only if it is based on moral high ground and vision.»

«Talking about frontier defence, one cannot help thinking about China's modern history when the country was so weak and destitute that it was for everyone to bully.»

«Foreign aggressors broke China's land and sea defences hundreds of times, plunging the Chinese nation into the abyss of calamity.» Xi added, calling on people not to forget

tablished jointly by Burma, China and India which celebrated its 60th anniversary last June 28th in Peking, and which has been universally recognized by the international community, having become a reference point for international relations; in addition, she has opened up to all corners of the globe with the recently achieved status of observer on the Council of the Arctic and the free-trade accord with Iceland.

With its action abroad framed along these basic lines, an effort is being designed to reorient the global geopolitical framework of relations by seeking greater multilateralism, seeking to distribute and restructure the power centers so that evolution towards a greater balance becomes a reality on a transformed stage, truly multipolar, where Chinese diplomacy can develop its traditional strengths. There is thus a clear example of the pragmatism of its relations in the recent accord with Russia, the most important yet signed by Gazprom⁴², rooted in the economic sanctions imposed by the U.S. and the European Union as a result of the annexation of the Crimea and support for the Eastern Ukrainian separatists.



EIA. «Russia-China deal will supply Siberian natural gas to China's northern, eastern provinces». August 20, 2014.

In addition, the establishment of a Development Bank⁴³ at the sixth meeting of the BRICS last July 15th in Fortaleza, Brazil, together with the creation of a contingency reserve (or CRA in its English-language abbreviation) holding a major total of 200 billion dollars, is an unmistakable sign of the desire for a reform of the decision structures of the World Bank and the IMF (International Monetary Fund), to accord with a dyna-

the «history of humiliation» and strengthen the borders, especially at sea.» Xi Jinping keynote speech. BEIJING, June 29 (Xinhua)

⁴² EIA. «Russia-China deal will supply Siberian natural gas to China's northern, eastern provinces».

⁴³ BARACUHY, Braz. The BRICS New Development Bank: A Geo-economic Game-Changer. 24 July 2014.

mic and changing geo-economic reality. But superimposed on this global framework of spheres of influence, power, as Joseph Nye reminds us, is no longer measured in terms of capacity of resources, but rather in terms of the quality of achieving objectives. Brzezinski's warning with respect to a resurgence in the area of nationalism due to political-party interests seems to confirm a tendency towards confrontation and violence, contained so far, and additionally towards rising tension, produced by an ever more rapid succession of new crisis situations necessitating a system of measures of trust and of more fluid, transparent and rapid relations.

And so, fishing-boat incidents repeat themselves, with confrontations occasioning frequent sinkings: the most recent, a Chinese fishing vessel near the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands; also, the announcement and movement of a Chinese petroleum prospecting station, which unleashed uncontrolled fury in Vietnam against Chinese businesses, obliging their withdrawal; in addition to military incidents, such as the overflight of a Chinese Tupolev observer aircraft

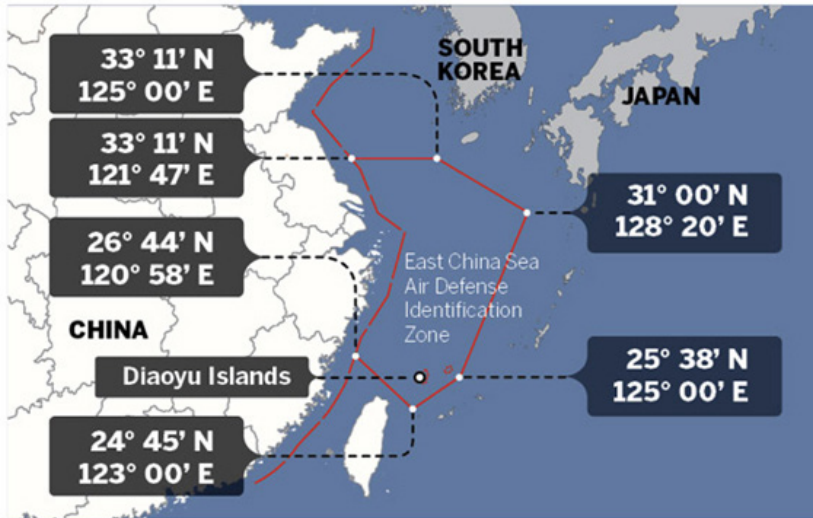
by Japanese fighter planes, or of Chinese fighter planes over a P-8 Poseidon from the northamerican Navy, and the incident with the Cowpens cruiser while it observed the manoeuvres of the new Chinese airplane carrier Liaoning on its maiden cruise through the South China Sea from the North Fleet base at Qingdao. This latter incident was contained by the bridge-to-bridge conversation between the officials of the U.S. cruiser and the Chinese escort, favored by the routine participation of units of both armies on manoeuvres, such as the recent RIMPAC 2014, and on customary exercises, such as that carried out by the flagship of the American 7th Fleet, «Blue Ridge», with the Chinese frigate «Yanchen», in this case a search and rescue mission, with the additional participation of helicopters from both Marines, preceded by a visit of the ship to the Chinese North Fleet base.

We cannot forget, on this scale of incidents, the establishment of a new area of identification in the East China Sea in November of 2013. This area includes the disputed Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands, and provoked an immediate northamerican reaction with the overflying of the area by two B-52 strategic bombers, making clear their strategic capacity for freedom of manoeuvre.

«The future of China is closely linked to the future of the world. China systematically maintains an independent foreign policy adhering to the five principles of: mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity; bilateral non-aggression; non-interference in the internal affairs of others; reciprocal equality and benefits; and peaceful coexistence. China constantly opposes imperialism, colonialism, and hegemonism.»⁴⁴

⁴⁴ Preamble to the Constitution of the People's Republic of China. 14 March 2004.

CHINA AIR DEFENSE IDENTIFICATION ZONE



Source: Ministry of National Defense

ZHANG YE / CHINA DAILY

The role of external actors http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2013-11/27/c_132922674.htm.

In her article, »*The future of politics will be decided in Asia, not Afghanistan or Iraq, and the United States will be right at the center of the action*«, published in «*Foreign Policy*» in October of 2011, Hillary Clinton announces the geopolitical pivot, which has been confirmed by the Obama administration in its latest strategic directives⁴⁵, doing no more than corroborating the principle that: «history teaches us that changes of economic weight come accompanied by corresponding strategic shifts.»⁴⁶

As Nathan and Scobell state, «China's attempt to pursue her interests in a global context is legitimate, as is the interest of the U.S: in ensuring that the international system continues with the notable evolution which it has been enjoying...»⁴⁷ In this sense, levelheadedness and reflection are of major importance, not only as to her own policy of a strategic rebalancing with the strengthening of the Asian-Pacific axis, favored by a near-future energy autonomy and weakened by the budget cuts necessary to reduce the serious fiscal deficit, but also in the policies of support for her allies in the area, to create policies of moderation and cooperation.

⁴⁵ White House. «Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership. Priorities for 21st Century Defense. Washington, January 2012.

⁴⁶ White Paper: «Australia in the Century of Asia.» October 2012.

⁴⁷ NATHAN, Andrew J. and SCOBELL, Andrew (2012). «China's Search for Security». New York, Columbia University Press. Page 358.

Along these lines of thought we are witnessing reinforcement of the military alliances of the area,⁴⁸ unconditional support for the constitutional reform of the Japanese Prime Minister, and even more, recently, in the visit of the Head of the Joint Chiefs of Staff⁴⁹ to Vietnam, a possible raising of the arms embargo. The Communist regime, which traditionally buys its arms on the Russian market, as in the signing of a contract for the acquisition of six Kilo-class conventional submarines, has confirmed that Japan has authorized the sending of six Coast Guard ships.

Robert D. Kaplan emphasizes in his latest book «*Asia's Cauldron*»⁵⁰ and in an article in Foreign Policy «*The Guns of August in the East China Sea: Dark echoes of world war lurk in Asia's dangerous, contested waters.*» of March 17, 2014, the phrase of Aristotle quoted by Shakespeare, to the effect that conflicts are not begun in order to achieve small things, but due to those small things. As well, in the book quoted above reference is made to a discussion as to whether current American policy can be viewed as contentious, concluding that it can, and looking back to discussions with Chinese analysts in which the U.S. was asked not to be manipulated by her neighbors, since «China would not tolerate a coalition of small countries with the U.S. and against her.»

«Though the islands in dispute in the East and South China seas are in many cases barren and below water during high tide, as Aristotle wrote, conflicts arise «not over small things but from small things.» The assassination of the Austrian Archduke Franz Ferdinand that sparked World War I was one such small thing. Claims in the Pacific, however petty, if they are tied to vital interests, can lead to war. Indeed, the primordial quest for status still tragically determines the international system -- just as it did prior to World War I. And these islets have become, because of their very barren abstraction, logos of nationhood in a global media age.

Remember that the Pacific is the geographic organizing principle of world economic order to no less an extent than Europe was in 1914.

The South China Sea functions as the throat of the Western Pacific and Indian oceans, where the most crowded global sea routes coalesce -- the Mitteleuropa of the 21st century. The oil transported here from the Middle

⁴⁸ TOW, William. «Understanding the Persistence of American Alliances and Partnerships in the Asia-Pacific.» Asia Pacific Bulletin. No. 276. August 14 2014.

⁴⁹ New York Times. «In China's Shadow: U.S. Courts Old Foe Vietnam.» By PERLEZAUG, Jane, August 16, 2014.

⁵⁰ KAPLAN, Robert D. «Asia's Cauldron. The South China Sea and the end of a stable Pacific.» 2014 Random House. New York.

East en route to Asian megacities is triple the amount that passes through the Suez Canal and 15 times the amount that transits the Panama Canal.»⁵¹

Within this context, and keeping in mind all the countries of the area, it seems that, with the new generation of leaders, we are witnessing a nationalist drift of which there were echoes in the analysis document «Six Factors in Understanding the Korean Peninsula», quoting a speech by Brzezinski, on December 11 2012, during the gala dinner of the «U.S.-China Policy Foundation». In his dissertation, he warned of the possibility of a slippage in the situation towards the «nationalist fervor which would reproduce in Asia conflicts similar to the ones Europe suffered in the twentieth century, over natural resources, territory or national power.» In particular, this referred to Shinzo Abe due to the historic connotations it implies and the reinterpretation of his constitutional charter in order to: «(...) In accord with Article 9 of the Constitution. Up to now, the Government has considered that the «use of force» is only allowed when there occurs an «armed attack» against Japan. However, due to the fact that the security environment of the region has been radically transformed... the Government has arrived at the conclusion that it is not allowed only when an armed attack against Japan takes place, but also when such an attack is produced against another country in close relation to Japan...»⁵²



EIA. U.S. Energy Information Administration. «South China Sea» Last Updated: February 7, 2013.

⁵¹ KAPLAN, Robert D. Foreign Policy. «The Guns of August in the East China Sea: Dark echoes of world war lurk in Asia's dangerous, contested waters.» March 17 2014.

⁵² White Paper: Defense of Japan 2014. <http://www.mod.go.jp/e/publ/wpaper/2014.html>.

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EIA. U.S. Energy Information Administration. «South China Sea» Last Updated: February 7, 2013.

In this context, the European Union, which is facing a major crisis in its near eastern and southern vicinity, must become a balancing power, with a pragmatic and stabilizing vision which would help, through its annual summit meetings with China organized on three pillars: political, social and economic, to accommodate its new role as a global power, with an integrating vision of «everyone wins». Thus, strengthening its trade relations with the U.S. and China, engaging the latter as its principal economic partner in Asia, its main supplier of imported products, and the second trade partner after the U.S., following the path towards the achievement of a bilateral agreement giving coherence to the negotiations of its member States.

Conclusions and perspectives

«One of the chief messages of this book..., is that the international system is subject to constant changes, not only those caused by the day-to-day actions of statesmen and the ebb and flow of political and military events, but also those caused by the deeper transformations in the foundations of world power, which in time make their way through to the surface...

... as the international system is concerned, wealth and power, or economic strength and military strength, are always relative and should be seen as such...

Those who assume that mankind would not be so foolish as to become involved in another ruinously expensive Great Power war perhaps need reminding that that belief was also widely held for much of the nineteenth century...

Each of today's large Powers... is therefore left grappling with the age-old dilemmas of rise and fall, with the shifting pace of productive growth, with technological innovations, with change in the international scene, with the spiraling cost of weapons, with alteration in the power balance. Those are not developments which can be controlled by any one state, or individual. To paraphrase Bismarck's famous remarks, all of these Powers are traveling on «the stream o Time», which can «neither creates nor direct» but upon which they can «steer with more or less skill and experience». How they emerge form that voyage depends, to a large degree, upon the wisdom of the governments in Washington, Moscow, Tokyo, Peking, and the various Europeans capitals.»⁵³

China's immediate vicinity represents the acid test of its peaceful development, through mutual trust and shared effort of all of the actors involved in the security and development of a region which, including the Indian subcontinent, will by 2050 contain more than 75% of the world's population. Its integration and growth are essential to the geopolitical equilibrium of the planet.

This is a challenge which will demonstrate the capacity of the international system of government, at regional and global levels, to overcome the fatalism associated with the inevitability of historic cycles. On the road to human development, the social conquests, the struggle against poverty and marginalization, and the central nature of human rights and personal dignity compose a scenario in which human security becomes the fundamental pivot of the history which remains to be written.

The gravitational balance of the universe is reproduced on a human scale in the adaptations of the geopolitical structure to the weights and shapes of the actors who compose it. The laws of attraction and repulsion must compose an organic whole, in order to adapt to the normal evolution of societies; their integration and capacity for connection should be an element favoring the adaptability of their structures.

Thus, China stands at the center of the system of geopolitical equilibrium of the terrestrial universe, a scenario in which the forces of attraction are supported by the idealist-humanistic vision of a new world order, with a positive-sum, or win-win situational outlook; while those of repulsion find their support in the new economic realism of an amoral character, in a new cycle of the inevitable order imposed by the balance of power, with a zero-sum outlook.

⁵³ KEENEDY, Paul. «The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers. Economic change and military conflict from 1500 to 2000.» Random House. New York 1987. Pp. 536-540.

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This is a geopolitical position vulnerable to relations with the Russian energy giant, nostalgic for a past it has no wish to forget; with the European Union, along a silk route full of groups in eternal strife; with the emerging power of India, with its great human factor, and its meeting point on the chaotic Indochinese peninsula; with the hopeful African continent, via its principal maritime expansion space, the Indian ocean; and finally, with the American continent and so back to the European and African continents, with Japan, Australia and the Korean Peninsula, past, present and future of a junction between the two geopolitical poles of the new order.

CHRONOLOGY OF THE CONFLICT	
CHAPTER XV	CHINA AND HER VICINITY: THE ACID TEST OF PEACEFUL DEVELOPMENT
DATE	EVENTS
1368-1644	Ming Dynasty
1644-1911	1840. First opium war
Qing Dynasty	1884. Xinjiang incorporated into Chinese administrative system
1912 (January 1)	Proclamation of the Chinese Republic
1949 (October 1)	Proclamation of the People's Republic of China
1954 (June 28)	China, India and Myanmar establish the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence
1960	Myanmar. Border Treaty
1961	Nepal. Border Treaty
1962	North Korea. Border Treaty. Mongolia. Border treaty. India. Border Conflict
1963	Afghanistan. Border treaty.
1965	Pakistan. Border Protocol
1970	China. First claim to the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands
1974 (January)	Total Occupation of the Paracelsus Islands
1975 (October 21)	Words of Mao: "In 100 years, we will want, and we will fight, for Taiwan"
1976 (September 9)	Death of Mao Zedong
1978 (August 12)	Japan. Peace and Friendship Treaty
1979	U.S. Recognition of the People's Republic of China in Beijing. China. Invasion of Vietnam
1980-1984	Vietnam. Border Conflicts

1980-1984	Vietnam. Border Conflicts
1988	India recognizes Chinese sovereignty over the autonomous region of Tibet
1988 (March 14)	First clash with Vietnam over the Spratly Islands
1991	Laos. Border treaty.
1994	China. Occupation of the seventh isle of the Spratly Islands
1998	Butan. Agreement on maintenance of the status quo. Kazakhstan. Supplementary agreement to the 1994 Border Agreement . Kirghistan. Supplementary agreement to the 1996 Border Agreement
1999	Russia. Protocol on borders. Vietnam. Border Treaty.
2002	Tajikistan. Supplementary agreement to the 1999 Border Agreement
2005	India. Agreement in Principle on Border Limits.
2008	European Union and Great Britain recognize the sovereignty of China over the autonomous region of Tibet.
2012 (November)	18th Congress of the Chinese Communist Party
2013 (November 21)	16th Meeting of EU-Chinese leaders.
2013 (November 23)	Establishment of a new area of aerial identification in the East China Sea.
2013 (March 14)	Xi Jinping named new President of China
2014 (July15)	BRICS. Establishment of the Development Bank .
2014 (August 20)	Russia - China. Agreement on supply of natural gas .

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Geopolitical indicators

	<u>CHINA</u>	<u>U.S.A</u>	<u>JAPAN</u>	<u>INDIA</u>	<u>RUSSIA</u>
<u>Area = km²</u>	<u>9,596,981 (4^o)</u>	<u>9,826,675 (3^o)</u>	<u>377,915 (62^o)</u>	<u>3,287,263 (7^o)</u>	<u>17,098,242 (1^o)</u>
<u>GNP</u>	<u>13.37 B\$ (3^o)</u>	<u>16.72 B\$ (1^o)</u>	<u>4.729 B\$ (5^o)</u>	<u>4.99 B\$ (4^o)</u>	<u>2.553 B\$ (7^o)</u>
<u>Agriculture</u>	<u>10.1%</u>	<u>1%</u>	<u>1.2%</u>	<u>49%</u>	<u>3.9%</u>
<u>Industry</u>	<u>45.3%</u>	<u>19.1%</u>	<u>27.5%</u>	<u>20%</u>	<u>36%</u>
<u>Services</u>	<u>44.6%</u>	<u>79.7%</u>	<u>71.4%</u>	<u>31%</u>	<u>60.1%</u>
<u>GNP - per capita</u>	<u>9,800\$ (120^o)</u>	<u>42,800\$ (13^o)</u>	<u>37,100\$(36^o)</u>	<u>4,000\$ (169^o)</u>	<u>18,100\$ (77^o)</u>
<u>GNP - Growth</u>	<u>7.6% (14^o)</u>	<u>1.6% (156^o)</u>	<u>2.0% (138^o)</u>	<u>3.2% (108^o)</u>	<u>1.3% (166^o)</u>
<u>Population</u>	<u>1,355,692,576</u>	<u>318,892,103</u>	<u>127,103,388</u>	<u>1,236,344,631</u>	<u>142,470,272</u>
<u>Population growth</u>	<u>0.46%</u>	<u>0.963%</u>	<u>0.108%</u>	<u>1.25%</u>	<u>- 0.02%</u>
<u>GINI Index</u>	<u>47.4 (29^o)</u>	<u>45.0 (41^o)</u>	<u>37.6 (76^o)</u>	<u>36.8 (80^o)</u>	<u>41.7 (52^o)</u>
<u>Life expectancy at birth</u>	<u>74.99</u>	<u>78.62</u>	<u>84.19</u>	<u>67.8</u>	<u>69.85</u>
<u>Internet users</u>	<u>389M (1^o)</u>	<u>245M (2^o)</u>	<u>99,192M (3^o)</u>	<u>61,338M (6^o)</u>	<u>40,853M (10^o)</u>
<u>Mobile phones</u>	<u>986.253M</u>	<u>290.3M</u>	<u>132.76M</u>	<u>893.862M</u>	<u>236.7M</u>
<u>Urbanization</u>	<u>50.6%</u>	<u>82.4%</u>	<u>91.3%</u>	<u>31.3%</u>	<u>73.8%</u>
<u>Military spending: % of GNP</u>	<u>2.6 (53^o)</u>	<u>4.6% (19^o)</u>	<u>1.0% (124^o)</u>	<u>2.43% (31^o)</u>	<u>3.9% (25^o)</u>

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/xx.html>.

Import - exports

	<u>Chia</u>	South Korea	North Korea	<u>Taiwan</u>	Philippines
<u>Área km²</u>	<u>9.596.961 (4^º)</u>	<u>99.720 (109^º)</u>	<u>120.538 (99^º)</u>	<u>35.980 (139^º)</u>	<u>300.000 (73^º)</u>
<u>PIB (PPP)</u>	<u>13.37 B\$ (3^º)</u>	<u>1.67 B\$ (13^º)</u>	<u>40.000 M\$ (106^º)</u>	<u>926.400 M\$ (21^º)</u>	<u>454.300 M\$ (32^º)</u>
<u>Agriculture</u>	<u>10.1%</u>	<u>2.7%</u>	<u>23.4%</u>	<u>2%</u>	<u>11.2%</u>
<u>Industry</u>	<u>45.3%</u>	<u>39.8%</u>	<u>47.2%</u>	<u>29.4%</u>	<u>31.6%</u>
<u>Services</u>	<u>44.6%</u>	<u>57.5%</u>	<u>29.4%</u>	<u>68.6%</u>	<u>57.2%</u>
<u>GDP per capita</u>	<u>9.800\$ (120^º)</u>	<u>33.200\$ (42^º)</u>	<u>1.800\$ (198^º)</u>	<u>39.600\$ (28^º)</u>	<u>4.700\$ (165^º)</u>
<u>GDP - growth</u>	<u>7.6% (14^º)</u>	<u>2.8% (123^º)</u>	<u>1.3% (167^º)</u>	<u>2.2% (138^º)</u>	<u>6.8% (27^º)</u>
<u>Population</u>	<u>1.355.692.576</u>	<u>49.039.986</u>	<u>24.851.627</u>	<u>23.359.928</u>	<u>107.668.231</u>
<u>population growth</u>	<u>0.46%</u>	<u>0.18%</u>	<u>0.53%</u>	<u>0.25%</u>	<u>1.81%</u>
<u>GINI index</u>	<u>47,3 (27^º)</u>	<u>31,1 (112^º)</u>	<u>NA</u>	<u>34,2 (94^º)</u>	<u>44,8 (42^º)</u>
<u>Life expectancy at birth</u>	<u>74.99</u>	<u>79.55</u>	<u>69.81</u>	<u>79.84</u>	<u>72.48</u>
<u>Internet users</u>	<u>389M (1^º)</u>	<u>39.4M (11^º)</u>	<u>NA</u>	<u>16.147M</u>	<u>8.278M</u>
<u>mobile Phones</u>	<u>986.253M</u>	<u>52.5M</u>	<u>1.7M</u>	<u>29.455M</u>	<u>103M</u>
<u>Urbanización</u>	<u>50.6%</u>	<u>83.2%</u>	<u>60.3%</u>	<u>NA</u>	<u>48.8%</u>
<u>Military Spending :%</u>	<u>2.6 (53^º)</u>	<u>2.7% (47^º)</u>	<u>NA</u>	<u>NA</u>	<u>1.19% (86^º)</u>

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/xx.html>.

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U.S.	<p>Exports: \$1,612 trillion (2012 est.) country comparison to the world: 3</p> <p>Exports: Canada 19%, Mexico 13.3%, China 7%, Japan 4.5% (2011)</p> <p>Imports: \$2,357 trillion (2012 est.) country comparison to the world: 2</p> <p>Imports: China 18.4%, Canada 14.2%, Mexico 11.7%, Japan 5.8%, Germany 4.4%</p>
CHINA	<p>Exports: \$2.05 trillion (2012 est.) country comparison to the world: 2</p> <p>Exports: US 17.2%, Hong Kong 15.8%, Japan 7.4%, South Korea 4.3%, Germany 3.4%</p> <p>Imports: 1.817 trillion (2012 est.) country comparison to the world: 3</p> <p>Imports: Japan 9.8%, South Korea 9.3%, US 7.3%, Germany 5.1%, Australia 4.6%</p>
JAPAN	<p>Exports: \$792.9 billion (2012 est.) country comparison to the world: 5</p> <p>Exports: China 19.7%, US 15.5%, South Korea 8%, Hong Kong 5.2%, Thailand 4.6%</p> <p>Imports: \$856.9 billion (2012 est.) country comparison to the world: 5</p> <p>Imports: China 21.5%, US 8.9%, Australia 6.6%, Saudi Arabia 5.9%, UAE 5%, S Kr 4.7%</p>
SOUTH KOREA	<p>Exports: \$552.6 billion (2012 est.) country comparison to the world: 8</p> <p>Exports: China 24.4%, US 10.1%, Japan 7.1%</p> <p>Imports: \$514.2 billion (2012 est.) country comparison to the world: 8</p> <p>Imports: China 16.5%, Japan 13%, US 8.5%, Saudi Arabia 7.1%, Australia 5%</p>
NORTH KOREA	<p>Exports: \$4.707 billion (2011) country comparison to the world: 115</p> <p>Exports: China 67.2%, South Korea 19.4%, India 3.6%</p> <p>Imports: \$4 billion (2011 est.) country comparison to the world: 137</p> <p>Imports: China 61.6%, South Korea 20%, European Union 4%</p>
RUSSIA	<p>Exports: \$530.7 billion (2012 est.) country comparison to the world: 9</p> <p>Exports: Netherlands 12.2%, China 6.4%, Italy 5.6%, Germany 4.6%, Poland 4.2%</p> <p>Imports: \$335.4 billion (2012 est.) country comparison to the world: 16</p> <p>Imports: China 15.5%, Germany 10%, Ukraine 6.6%, Italy 4.3%</p>
AUSTRALIA	<p>Exports: \$263.9 billion (2012 est.) country comparison to the world: 23</p> <p>Exports: China 29.41%, Japan 19.4%, South Korea 8.3%, India 5%, US 3.7%</p> <p>Imports: \$239.7 billion (2012 est.) country comparison to the world: 21</p> <p>Imports: China 18.1%, US 12.8%, Japan 8.5%, Singapore 6.2%, Germany 4.7%</p>

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The Philippines: drawing the claws of the separatists

María del Mar Hidalgo García

Summary

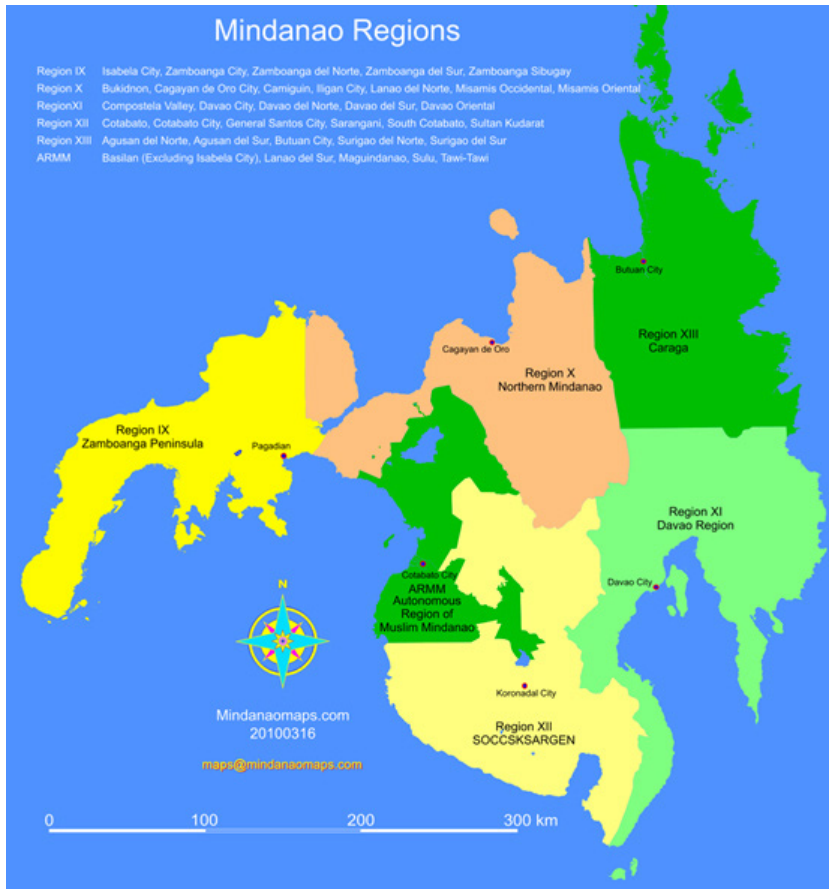
For the last forty years, constant separatist movements have succeeded each other in south-eastern Philippines with the objective of defending a cultural and religious identity and of proclaiming a Muslim State. In October of 2012, the Philippine government signed an agreement with the armed group MILF, thus culminating 18 years of negotiations constantly interrupted by violent clashes. The «Comprehensive Bangsamoro Agreement» recognizes the autonomous—not independent—character of the Moslem areas of Mindanao, grouped under the term «Bangsamoro». This may be called a success, although the agreement does not, for the moment, guarantee stability. It may be foreseen that other insurgent groups, dissatisfied with the agreement arrived at, may carry out isolated attacks on the population and on the central government. The real thrust for stability will come from the potential of Mindanao for becoming the motor for growth in the Philippines and therefore in the ASEAN area.

Key Words:

Mindanao, MILF, MNLF, BIFF, ASEAN, Bangsamoro.

Introduction

Mindanao is the second largest of the Philippine Islands. Its 20 million inhabitants represent approximately a quarter of the Philippine population. Mindanao is currently made up of 26 provinces, 33 cities, 422 towns and six regions: the Zamboanga Peninsula, North Mindanao, South Mindanao (known as Soccsksargen), Region XIII, the Davao Region and the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM).



Source: <http://www.mindanaomaps.com/Mindamaps/MindaRegions.png>

In a predominantly (82%) Catholic nation¹, Mindanao holds the largest Muslim community in the country², a total of 5 million people belonging

¹ Source: CIA the World FACTBOOK.

² The Moslem population constitutes 5% of the total population of the Philippines. Source: CIA the World FACTBOOK.

to thirteen ethnic-linguistic groups whose common denominator is the Islamic religion³. Apart from Catholics and Moslems, there are an additional 18 ethnic groups of the indigenous population, who are known as the «Lumad».

The conflict in Mindanao is complex. Various actors and factors converge within it, making its resolution a difficult one. A number of different armed groups operate in the region, each seeking a different goal. Some, such as the NPA/CPP (New People's Army/Communist Party of the Philippines), are opposed to the policies of the central government. For others, the aim behind armed struggle is achievement of an autonomous status for the Western region of the island in recognition of their historic rights. Within this category there should be included such armed Moslem-separatist groups, generically known as «moro», as the MNLF (Moro National Liberation Front) and the MILF (Moslem Islamic Liberation Front). Struggling for a more radical cause, the terrorist group ASG (Abu Sayyat Group) intends to establish an Islamic State in the region. In addition, the situation becomes even more complex when within a single community other types of conflict arise, brought about by the internal struggle of the local elites over power, illegal arms and drug traffic, and the income generated by the exploitation of the region's natural resources. Mindanao is a land of fertile fields and enormous resources in fishing and minerals, these latter being mainly gold and nickel.

Faced with this complexity, the central government and the international community have, in recent years, concentrated their efforts on ending the conflict with the Islamic separatist groups. The key objectives of these negotiations have been the achievement of stability in the region and the establishment of the degree and structure of autonomy with which the Western region of Mindanao may be governed in the future.

For the last forty years, continuous separatist movements have succeeded each other in the southeastern Philippines with the aim of defending a cultural and religious identity based on Islam. This proclamation of Islamic identity has been accompanied by a demand for the creation of an autonomous state, governed by political institutions based on the model of a sultanate.

The insurgency of Islamic separatist groups holds the second position among the oldest of the conflicts on the planet, behind the struggles between Sudan and South Sudan. According the Philippine constitution, the Mindanao region forms part of the Philippine state, although the Muslim population inhabiting the greater part of the area has never identified itself with the Catholic policies of the central government.

³ Small Wars Journal. «Ethnic Conflicts and the Moslem Question in Philippine Politics.» Priscila P. Tacujan. September 2013.

This rise in the defense of the ethnic-religious identity of the Moslem population in the Mindanao region intensified at the beginning of the 70's, owing fundamentally to four factors⁴:

- The programmed migration of Catholic population into the region with the objective of occupying land and producing a change in the demographic data, thus reducing the Moslem percentage of the population.
- Lack of identification with the central government's system of secular politics.
- The lack of social and economic development of the region.
- Fear of the disappearance of their political, religious and cultural traditions.

The conflict in Mindanao has also produced a high number of displaced persons. Since the year 2000, nearly three and a half million people have had to abandon their homes in flight from the violence. For 2013 alone, this figure was 325,000.⁵ To this humanitarian tragedy must be added the number of displacements caused by natural disasters. Since the year 2011, Mindanao has suffered the consequences of eight typhoons. In the floods resulting from Typhoon Sendong in 2011, nearly a million people, half of them inhabitants of Mindanao, found themselves obliged to flee their homes between June and September. In December of that same year, Tropical Storm Washi displaced 220,000 people in the north of Mindanao. In December of 2012, Mindanao suffered the harsh consequences of the passage of a new typhoon, which forced the evacuation of more than six million people and destroyed 235,000 homes.⁶ In November of 2013, the area was lashed by yet another typhoon, causing around 5,700 victims, 11 million of the affected and 4 million refugees.

These natural disasters and the conflicts have affected the poorest and most vulnerable. According to the U.N. Index of Human Development for the years 2012/2013, of the ten provinces whose indexes of development are among the lowest in the Philippines, nine are to be found in Mindanao⁷, specifically within the conflict zones.

In recent years there has been a growth of interest in putting an end to the violence and in achieving stability in this area. Ending the ethnic-religious conflicts has become a strategic objective, not only for the Philippines,

⁴ Peter Chalk, «Separatism and Southeast Asia: The Islamic Factor in Southern Thailand, Mindanao and Aceh.» *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 24:241—269, 2001.

⁵ <http://www.internal-displacement.org/blog/2014/can-mindanaos-new-peace-agreement-help-end-displacement>.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ <http://ph.undp.org/content/philippines/> Consultada on May 14th.

but also for the international community and specifically for ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations).⁸

In the coming years, Mindanao may undergo a transformation of its economic potential and achieve development in accord with its privileged geographic position and the wealth of its natural resources. It is growing at a faster rate than the Philippines themselves, and may become a key actor within the ASEAN Economic Community which will begin to function in 2015. Mindanao could become the preferred recipient of foreign investment and, more importantly, constitute a «hub» for the maritime transport of the Southeast Asian area. But the only way to do this is to guarantee peace, stability and the sharing of wealth among all sectors of the Mindanao population.

Background to the conflict

As happens with a number of the conflicts of an ethno-religious character which take place in Southeast Asia, the background, even if briefly, must be set within the colonial era. Prior to the arrival of the Spanish in 1565, Islam had taken root in a large part of the Philippine archipelago, having arrived there in the XIV century along with Arab merchants. Spanish colonizers tried unsuccessfully to convert to Christianity the native Muslim, whom they called «the others» and «moros» in order to underline the differences between the two communities. In 1896 the Philippines began to seek independence from the Spanish. In 1898, the Treaty of Paris was signed, putting an end to the Spanish-American war and requiring the transferring of Puerto Rico, Guam and the Philippines to the U.S. From then until 1946, the Philippines were under American power and the Muslim problem remained unresolved.

The separatist struggle began in a peaceful way in 1920. In 1946, the Philippines achieved independence with the annexation of the sultanates of Mindanao and of Sulu. The Moslem elite at first presented no objections to supporting the politics of the central government, including the displacement of Christians into the mainly Moslem region in an attempt to change the demography. This posture of accommodation resulted, in the following years, in the rise among the population of a separatist movement in response to the utter lack of defense by the elites regarding the autonomy of the Moslem zone.

In 1968, the most radical of the Islamic leaders founded the MIM (Moslem Independence Movement) which proclaimed the State of Bangsamoro.

⁸ ASEAN is a regional organization created in 1967. Currently it is made up of: Cambodia, Brunei, the Philippines, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Thailand, Singapore and Vietnam.

Between 1969 and 1972 bloody clashes occurred between Christians and Moslems in Mindanao, which, together with the Communist insurgency of the NPA, led President Marcos to proclaim Martial Law.⁹

The secessionist demands continued under Nur Misauri, who founded the MNLF (Moro National Liberation Front) in 1972. This was the most active group in the armed struggle during the decades of the seventies and eighties. From the time of its foundation until 1975, clashes between this group and the Philippine Armed Forces were so frequent and violent that they resulted in a figure of 120,000 deaths¹⁰. The group strove for the implantation of a Bangsamoro State to include Mindanao, Sulu and Palawan. Pressured by the violence that the group was imposing on the region of Mindanao, the Philippine government signed the Treaty of Tripoli in 1976, proclaiming a cease fire and establishing an Autonomous Region embracing the Muslim part of Mindanao led by Nur Misauri.

The agreement reached, however, did not put an end to the violence in the region, which intensified in the year following its signing. The Moslem population began to show its disagreement with the terms of autonomy, which produced splits within the armed group. In 1977, several members of the MNLF founded the MILF (Moslem Islamic Liberation Front) to take over the struggle to achieve not only the autonomy of the region, but the proclamation of a State of Bangsamoro.

In 1986, the Aquino government achieved a cease-fire with the MNLF and the creation of the Autonomous Region in Moslem Mindanao (ARMM in its English-language acronym). But in spite of this new status of autonomy, development of the full potential of the Moslem-majority region has not been achieved. The reasons are varied: dependance on the budget of the central government, low tax collection by the autonomous entity which has hampered it in its development of social policies, and, of most concern, the weakness demonstrated by the competent regional and state authorities respecting the control of arms and drug trade, perhaps due to their own involvement in these illicit activities.¹¹ The level of extortion and corruption became evident with the occurrence of the well-known so-called «Mangindanao Massacre» in 2009. Members of the Ampatuan clan kidnapped and murdered more than fifty members of the election committee of their opponent, the governorship of the province, Esmael Mangundadatu.¹²

⁹ <http://www.minorityrights.org/>. Consulted 24 April 2014.

¹⁰ Charles Donnelley: «Terrorism in the Southern Philippines: Contextualising the Abu Sayyat Group as an Islamist Secessionist Organization». 15th Biennial Conference of Asian Studies Association of Australia in Camberra, 29 June-2 July 2004.

¹¹ M. Coronel. Op. cit.

¹² <http://www.uplm.ph/?page id=261> (consulted April 24 2014).

The MILF was religion-oriented, and would only accept a resolution of the conflict based on total recognition of an Islamic republic. To the MLNF it was more a question of a nationalist-political nature. The divergence between the two organizations was clearly reflected in the agreement signed with the Philippine government in 1996. In this agreement, known as the Davao Consensus, the MNLF committed itself to halting the armed struggle and setting the organization onto a political path. The trade-off was the creation of the Council for Peace and Development (SPCDP) to be headed by this group and whose function would consist of coordinating the development projects for the fourteen southern Philippine provinces and the creation of an autonomous Muslim region. The 1996 agreement put an end to the actions of the MNLF, in consideration of the fulfillment of their aspirations for autonomy for the Bangsamoro region.

Although neutralization of the armed activities of one group had been achieved, peace was not reached in the Mindanao region; quite the opposite occurred.

New shoots of violence sprouted, instigated by the two main armed groups discontented with the Davao pact, the MILF and the ASG (Abu Sayyaf Group). In the eyes of the MILF, the autonomous region did not satisfy the religious goal of the creation of an Islamic state. The ASG objected that the pact failed to resolve the problem of the presence of Christians in the region. Since then, the two groups have resorted to violence in the southeastern Philippines using explosive devices, shoot-outs and kidnappings, not only against local institutions but also against foreign objectives in a clear show of opposition to Western culture.

Nevertheless, and in spite of this common struggle to establish an Islamic state based on implementation of the Sharia, there are considerable differences between the MILF and the ASG regarding the means used for carrying out their own particular jihad. The MILF approves neither the strategy nor the methods employed by the ASG.

The ASG is a violent Islamist group based on Sunni and Salafist ideology. It was founded in 1991 by Abdurajak Abubaker Janjalani who named the group in honor of the Afghan resistance leader, Professor Abdul Rasul Sayyaf. A number of States as well as the U.N. have included the ASG on their lists of terrorist groups. Their range of operations is based within the area of the Sulu archipelago and the Zamboanga peninsula, although assaults have been carried out in Manila as well. They are currently broadening their area of operations to include Malaysia and Indonesia.¹³

In addition to their goal of the achievement of an Islamic state, one of the ASG's aims is to expell those Christians resettled from Luzon into the

¹³ <http://stanford.edu/group/mappingmilitants/cgi-bin/>.

Visayas. They stake their claims through violence and terrorist actions, leaving no path open for negotiation. They are considered by the central government to be more a criminal gang than an ethnic-religious group with secessionist pretensions.

In spite of enjoying economic support from Al-Qaeda, lack of finance has led the ASG to encourage kidnappings, extortion and marijuana cultivation in order to finance the continuation of the armed struggle. The MILF continues its combat, but without explicitly rejecting negotiation with the central government. On the fifth of August of 2008, the two parties signed the Memorandum of Understanding on Ancestral Domain (MOU-AD) which foresaw the creation of a Bangsamoro Judicial Entity (BJE).

This could not, however, be implemented because the Supreme Court of the Philippines considered it unconstitutional. The MOU-AD was harshly criticized for its lack of consultation with the non-Moslem populace affected by the agreement. This part of the population was unable to express its disagreement with the new jurisdictions to be assigned to the region, converting it into a nearly sovereign State.

In the following years, the MILF and the Philippine government attempted to bring their positions closer, in order to end the conflict in the Mindanao region. But simultaneous to these negotiations, there appeared other armed groups of a more radical character, such as the BIFM (Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Movement).¹⁴ This armed movement arose in 2010 as a splinter-group of the MILF. With no defined strategy, but well-armed,¹⁵ the activities of the BIFM have been aimed at boycotting peace negotiations through attacks on the security forces of the central government and even against individual members of the MILF. Of the clashes which have taken place since its creation, mention should be made of the occurrences of August 2011 in which the BIFM and the armed group of the MILF known as the BIAF (Bangsamoro Islamic Armed Forces) faced off in the area of DatuPiang, resulting in fourteen victims among the combatants and more than 2,400 displacements¹⁶. This type of confrontation increased in intensity as the MILF and the central government approached a compromise in their negotiating positions. The targets were both military and civilian and even critical infrastructure such as the electricity grid. The last attempt to sabotage peace conversations took place between August and September of 2012, when BIFM militants carried out several

¹⁴ This group is also known as the BIFF (Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters).

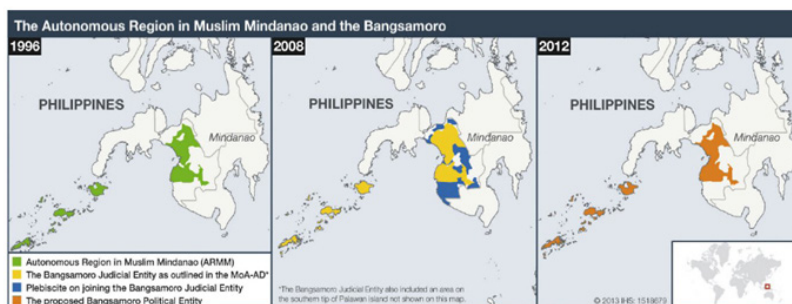
¹⁵ <https://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/the-bangsamoro-islamic-freedom-fighters-the-newest-obstacles-to-peace-in-the-southern-Philippines>.

¹⁶ <http://ndrrmc.gov.ph/attachments/article/269/NDRRMC%20Update%20Progress%20Report%20-%204%20re%20Encounter%20in%20Datu%20Piang,%20Mindanao%20as%20of%2012%20August%202011,%2010PM.pdf>.

attacks in the Maguindanao province in the center of Mindanao. For weeks clashes with the Philippine army took place, with a balance of nearly 40,000 persons displaced and dozens of rebels killed.

On the sidelines of this armed struggle, negotiations between the MILF and the government followed their course. Conversations were renewed in Kuala Lumpur in 2009. From that time on, the two parties met on sixteen occasions until finally, in October of 2012, the government of the Philippines signed an agreement with the MILF, culminating 18 years of intermittent negotiations.

The agreement, entitled «Framework Agreement on Bangsamoro» (FAB)¹⁷, constituted the first part of the final «Comprehensive Agreement on Bangsamoro»¹⁸. This important step may be seen as a serious commitment to ending armed violence in the Mindanao region, a purpose unachieved by the agreements previously signed in 1996 and 2008.



Source: Jane's Intelligence Review. Feb. 2014.

It establishes the creation of the political structure and the sharing of powers of a new region called Bangsamoro which will replace the current Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao. The specific points of the agreement are reflected in four appendices, the last of which was signed early in 2014. The first three deal with the autonomous character of the region. The last establishes the power structure and the institutions which will govern Bangsamoro.

In the opinion of the MLFN, the new accord represents a failure to comply with what had been agreed on in 1996 with the creation of the ARMM. Ever since October 2012 they have tried to boycott the continuation of the negotiations between the government and the MILF. In August 2013, a fraction of the MNLF joined its founder, Masuri, in the unilateral proclamation of the Federal Union of States of the Republic of Bangsamoro, a

¹⁷ <http://www.oppap.gov.ph./resources/framework-agreement-bangsamoro>.

¹⁸ To read the text: <http://www.gov.ph/downloads/2014/03mar/201140327-Comprehensive-agreement-on-the-Bangsamoro.pdf>.

proposition which, as could hardly be otherwise, is recognized by neither the Philippine government nor by adjacent countries such as Malaysia. In its attempt to implant this Republic, the MNLF has been involved in constant confrontations with the central government. One of the most serious occurrences was that of the assault on the city of Zamboanga in September of 2013, which ended with a total of 200 deaths, tens of thousands of refugees and some 10,000 homes destroyed.¹⁹

Current situation

The «Comprehensive Agreement on Bangsamoro» may be considered a success, and has been recognized as such by the principal world leaders who hastened to send congratulations to President Aquino on having been able to reach a historic agreement.^{20/21} Nonetheless, the fact that the agreement was signed only by the MILF makes it foreseeable that other groups may carry out acts of violence to demonstrate their discontent at having been left out of the negotiations. After the signing of the fourth amendment, a wave of violence was initiated in some of the central areas of Mindanao. The confrontations between the Philippine army, the BIFM, and the MNLF splinter group led by Nur Masuri, have been the most violent since 2008, causing the displacement of more than 10,000 people.²²

The interest in the current situation of the conflict centers on how to carry out the process of transition for the creation of «Bangsamoro», and the composition of the Basic Law which is to govern the region. This process of transition is being carried out by the Commission for the Transition which is formed by seven representatives from the central government and eight from the MILF, and on which are represented the various sectors and groups of Bangsamoro. This Commission will take charge of drawing up the Basic Law which will govern the region and which must be approved by the government and subsequently ratified by its inhabitants. The process will culminate with the election of the new government of Bangsamoro in 2016 via an electoral procedure.

The peace agreement is made up of four parts. The first three establish the autonomous, not independent, character of the Muslim areas of Mindanao, grouped under the term «Bangsamoro». The fourth appendix establishes the way in which the government and the MILF will work together to re-establish order in the region. In the sharing of powers, the

¹⁹ <http://www.unocha.org/top-stories/all-stories/philippines-escaping-conflict-zamboanga>.

²⁰ <http://www.philstar.com/nation/2014/04/26/1316348/eu-officials-briefed-new-bangsamoro-political-entity>.

²¹ <http://www.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2014/01/220622.htm>.

²² IHS Jane's. Ticking-clock Prospects for lasting peace in southern Philippines. Date posted: 27- Feb-2014.

central government will continue to hold control of Defense, the Economy, Foreign Affairs, Commerce, and Immigration, among others.²³

The whole process is intended to be carried out without modifying the 1987 Philippine Constitution, on the grounds of the text of Article X which foresees the possibility of the creation of autonomous regions.

The new government of Bangsamoro will be structured around a number of Ministries, with transferred competences such as Justice; others attached to the central government such as Defense; and still others being shared, as will be those relating to tax policies and the exploitation of resources.

The geographic extension of Bangsamoro will be determined by a plebiscite, once Congress has approved the Basic Law.²⁴ The plebiscite will be carried out in the provinces currently making up the Autonomous Region of Moslem Mindanao and Marawi, the cities of Cotabato and Isabela, the six municipalities in Lanao which back in 2001 voted to belong to the ARMM, and the municipalities of the north of the province of Cotabato. The plebiscite will also take place in those adjacent territories which request participation²⁵.

With regard to the disarming of armed groups, the MILF and the Central Government have agreed that this will be carried out gradually. Responsibility for enforcing the Basic Law will be transferred to the Police, which will be of a civilian nature, and will be responsible to both the central government and the Bangsamoro government.

The role of external actors

International Support for Resolution of the Conflict

Since 1997, the date of the start of peace negotiations between the MILF and the central government, the presence of international actors has been on the rise. In 2001, the parties agreed to negotiate outside the country with the support of Malaysia. In 2004, an international group (an IMT, or International Monitoring Team) was invited in as observers of the cease-fire. In 2009, the mission of this group was broadened to include civilian protection and rehabilitation tasks. Malaysia acted as coordinator and also lent support in the field of security together with Brunei, Norway, and Libya. Japan offered economic support and the European Union took on humanitarian aid and rehabilitation. Civilian protection tasks were in the hands of four civilian organizations: the MPC (Mindanao People's Caucus), MinHRAC (Mindanao Human Rights Action Center), MOGOP (Muslim

²³ <http://www.gov.ph/downloads/2013/12dec/20131208-Annex-on-Power-Sharing.pdf>.

²⁴ On Sept. 10 2014, the bill for the Basic Law was sent to Congress for its approval.

²⁵ <http://www.gov.ph/downloads/2012/10oct/20121012-Framework-Agreement-on-the-Bangsamoro.pdf>.

Organization of Government Officials and Professionals) and the NPF (Non-Violent Peace Force).²⁶

Apart from the IMT, in 2009 the Philippine government and the MILF established the International Contact Group (ICG), with the participation of four States (the United Kingdom, Japan, Turkey and Saudi Arabia) and four NGO's (Conciliation Resources, Muhammadiyah, The Asia Foundation (TAF) and the Center for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD)).²⁷ The ICG has played an outstanding role in the achievement of the peace accord between the government and the MILF. Their principal mediating functions have been: to provide flexibility of negotiation for the achievement of long-term commitments; involvement of the civil society of the regions affected by the conflict; introduction of the gender perspective, and the carrying out of the important task of coordination among all the actors involved throughout the resolution of the conflict.²⁸

The ICG is a private negotiating group and may represent a new way of ending longstanding conflicts such as those present in Southeast Asia. It is a heterogeneous group in which participating countries have no apparent interests related to the conflict. However, behind this negotiating group lie the underlying interests of the two great powers, China and the U.S., which each hope to achieve hegemony in the region of Southeast Asia.²⁹ The major powers have an obvious geostrategic interest in putting an end to the conflict in Mindanao. The G8 has stated that, in spite of the fact that the peace accord has been signed, it will continue offering its support for the consolidation of peace.³⁰

U.S. Interests

Following the 2001 attacks, the United States began a worldwide struggle against AlQaeda and against terrorist groups linked to that organization. Among these groups were Abu Sayyaf (ASG) and Jemaah Islamiyah whose base was located in Indonesia. In 2002, the «Joint Special Operations Task Force-Philippines» (JSOTF-P) was established as part of the «Ending Freedom 2002» mission. The objective of this operation is to assist the Philippine Armed Forces in their struggle against terrorism and insurgency. This collaboration is centered on four objectives: elimination of the sanc-

²⁶ <http://www.mindanews.com./peace-process/2010/10/18/everythings-set-but-the-date-of-the-talks/>. Consulted April 24 2014.

²⁷ http://www.c-r.org/sites/c-r.org/files/PracticePaper_Mindanao/CG_Conciliation-Resources_0.pdf

²⁸ *ibid.*

²⁹ I. Mastura. «Geopolitical Games and Malaysian Mediation in the Philippines.» *Jindal Journal of International Affairs* Vol. 1. (2011).

³⁰ <http://www.philstar.com/nation/2014/04/02/1307984/g8-members-vow-continued-support-mindanao-peace-process>.

tuaries of insurgent terrorists, hampering their mobility, impeding access to resources and preventing a rise in the number of affiliates among the population.³¹

According to the Philippine Constitution, foreign combat forces may not operate within the country. In order to make this requirement compatible with the JSOTF-P operation, specific rules of engagement were designed to establish the subordinate nature of U.S. troops with respect to the Philippine Armed Forces, permitting the use of force only in self-defense or when under attack.

The balance of the JSOTF-P is positive. The principal ASG leaders³² have died or been captured. The latest of these was Khair Mindos, captured in June of 2014, related to Al-Qaida and Jemaah Islamiya and featured on the U.S. most-wanted list with a reward of \$500,000 offered for his capture.³³

The number of ASG militants has dropped. Before the operation there were over a thousand, and now the number is below a few hundred. On the other hand, the operation has cost the lives of 17 U.S. military victims, ten of whom died in the helicopter accident which took place in 2002.³⁴

In addition to its military component for the fight against terrorism, the JSOTF-P mission also focuses on humanitarian and development aid to the Mindanao region. The most outstanding of these activities have been aid to the population of the province of Leyte after the passage of Typhoon Yolanda, medical aid, and construction of schools and infrastructure. This non-military component has permitted legitimization of the presence of the U.S. armed forces in the region and the strengthening of the image of the central government, while creating a positive image of U.S. troops.

With the achievement of the peace accord between the MILF and the government, the finalization of the JSOTF-P appears closer. The operation has cost about 50 million dollars annually and any savings comes as a relief to the U.S. economy.

Probably, the JSOTF-P will give way to an advisory operation, with reduced personnel in case isolated assaults by the ASG continue to occur. However, the finalization of this mission by no means represents a change in the mutual interests of the two countries; quite the opposite. In April of 2014, Presidents Obama and Aquino signed a cooperation agreement

³¹ <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/agency/dod/jsotf-p.htm>. Consulted April 25 2014.

³² The latest of them has been Khair Mundos, captured in June of 2014 and also related to AlQaeda and Jemaah Islamiyah. He was included on the Most Wanted list by the U.S. which offered a \$500,000 reward for his capture.

³³ <http://www.ibtimes.com/abu-sayyaf-commander-khair-mundos-who-is-most-wanted-list-captured-philippines-1598012>.

³⁴ The accident took place during a troop and supplies transport mission between the city of Zamboanga and the Isle of Basilan.

in the field of defense known as the EDCA (Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement)³⁵ which permits an increase in U.S. military presence in the Asia Pacific zone to counter the rise in the power of China which is taking place in the region.

The Philippines and China are involved in a territorial dispute over the Spratly Islands, located in the South China Sea,³⁶ where the situation is of continued tension. The area concerned is rich in fishing and energy resources and thus is of great interest to bordering countries. In addition, the U.S. aims to reinforce its presence in the Sulu archipelago and in Malaysia in support of its geostrategic interests in becoming a regional power. U.S. intentions include: guaranteeing maritime traffic in the area, exploring the future exploitation of natural resources and establishing anti-missile-system bases.³⁷

The International Community and Development Aid

As happens in other Asiatic countries, development aid from the international community plays an important role in alleviating the consequences of conflicts taking place at sub-national level in Southeast Asia. Countries like Myanmar, the Philippines, Indonesia or Thailand hold very longstanding conflicts and have been the recipients of major funding. Between 2001 and 2010, the international community contributed 5.8 billion dollars to internal conflicts in these countries. Since 2007, this aid has stood at around 400 million dollars a year.³⁸ Nonetheless, it is difficult to establish any relation with the end of the conflict. It might be thought that the real interest of the donors may be found in the maintenance of commercial relations or cooperation in the materials of terrorism with the central governments over and above the will to end these longstanding conflicts.

The interests of ASEAN

Traditionally, a principle of non-interference in internal conflicts has held within ASEAN, as a mark of respect for the sovereignty of the member nations. ASEAN has always advocated the peaceful resolution of conflicts in order to guarantee the peace and stability needful for the achievement of its economic objectives. As the date approaches for the definitive establishment of the ASEAN Economic Community, set for 2015, resolution of the longstanding internal conflicts present in Southeast Asia seems to be speeding up.

³⁵ <http://www.gov.ph/2014/04/29/document-enhanced-defense-cooperation-agreement>

³⁶ For the Philippines, «Western Philippine Sea.»

³⁷ <http://www.chinapost.com.tw/commentary/the-china-post/special-to-the-china-post-2013/07/21/384313/Philippine-bases.htm>.

³⁸ <http://www.asiafoundation.org/in-asia/2014/08/06/subnational-conflict-the-dark-underbelly-of-a-rising-asia/>. Consulted Sept.3 2014.

Achievement of the objective of a single market, with a base of production and a free movement of goods within the ASEAN countries, is only possible if a guarantee of security and stability within the zone is on offer.

It is the aim of the ASEAN Common Market to become one of the world's principal economic regions. In order to do this, it must stimulate its internal market, which currently stands at some 25%, far below, for example, the European Union's 60% in 1992.³⁹ And it is in this respect that Mindanao presents great opportunities for facilitating trade among the islands and for becoming a motor for the growth of the Philippines and consequently for ASEAN. Mindanao shows the highest growth potential in the Philippines. Total exports grew 16.7% reaching a value of 3.588 billions US Dollars⁴⁰, while exports in the whole of the country showed growth on the order of 7.6 %.⁴¹

Mindanao's privileged position gives it a very relevant protagonism within ASEAN. Among plans foreseen as propelling economic development is the modernization of ports and the opening of new maritime routes, such as that between Davao-General Santos (Philippines) and Tahuma-Bitung (Indonesia),⁴² which came into use early in 2014.



Source: <http://www.minda.gov.ph/>.

³⁹ <http://www.iiss.org/en/events/events/archive/2014-Of13/february-e91c/fullerton-lecture-purisima-3d1d>. Consulted Sept. 3 2014.

⁴⁰ Mindanao's ten principal markets are: the U.S., Japan, China, Holland, South Korea, Singapore, Switzerland, U.K., Germany and Malaysia.

⁴¹ <http://www.mindanews.com/business/2013/08/09/is-mindanao-ready-for-the-asean-economic-community-in-2015/>.

⁴² <http://www.news.pia.gov.ph/index.php?article=1701398844287>.

This connection of Mindanao with Indonesia forms part of the Plan designed by the Development Authority of Mindanao in order to establish three corridors of economic growth: the city of Zamboanga will serve as the entrance port to the EAGA (East Asian Growth Area) and act as a commercial hub. Cagayan de Oro will become a center for those businesses related to the agricultural sector and General Santos will be transformed into a logistics hub.⁴³ Another of the economic possibilities to open up if peace and stability are finally achieved in Mindanao is the supplying of Liquid Natural Gas (LNG) from Brunei. The report produced by the World Bank identifies several possible locations. Among these are: Davao, General Santos, Iligan, Cagayan de Oro and the Phividec industrial complex in the eastern part of Misamis.⁴⁴

A perspective on the conflict

The initial design and good intentions of the Framework Agreement on Bangsamoro do not seem to be materializing quickly. Discrepancies between the central Philippine government and the MILF as to the final wording of the Basic Law for Bangsamoro have generated multiple debates and brought about more changes in the text than had been expected, especially regarding questions of territory, resources and government structure. The MILF has accused the government of failing to comply with the agreement with respect to the requisites for the autonomy of the region. For the moment, the Law has been sent to Congress for its approval. Any stumbling block along the way may cause a resurgence of pockets of violence and shatter hopes for investment in such sectors as agriculture and mining, which had arisen based on the signing of a peace accord.

Since the signing of the accord, there has been ever-increasing growth of investment in the region. In 2013, investment rose to a total of 34.2 million dollars as against 13 million dollars in 2012. This growth seems to be continuing in 2014 given that in the first two quarters, investment reached a value of 57 million dollars, the highest in history.⁴⁵

Aquino had promised that the autonomy of Bangsamoro would become effective in 2015. But amending the Constitution formed no part of her plan, and that step, according to experts, is the only way to authorize the degree of autonomy demanded by the MILF. Amending the Constitution, or failing to do so, represents a key step in making Bangsamoro a reality as the MILF conceives it.

⁴³ <http://www.sunstar.com.ph/davao/business/2014/07/19/mindanao-eyed-transshipment-hub-354714>. Consulted 23 August 2014.

⁴⁴ To consult the report: https://www.doe.gov.ph/microsites/ngmd%20website/Final_Report_Mindanao_Market_Assessment.pdf.

⁴⁵ <http://news.pia.gov.ph/index.php?article=1611403066501>.

Supposing that everything agreed to between this group and the central government is strictly complied with and the Basic Law passes with the separatist requirements of the Muslim-majority region, a major step will have been taken towards the achievement of stability in the area, but it will not be possible to declare it a success until armed violence ceases and equality among the population and regional development are promoted. Following the creation of Bangsamoro, if this does in fact take place, further problems may arise endangering the stability of the region.

The concept of agreement is based on cultural or ethnic aspects. The MILF has negotiated as a group representing the whole of the Moslem population. But as mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the Moslem population of Mindanao is made up of 13 ethnic groups. So far, these differences may have been downplayed due to the struggle against a common enemy, the central government. Once autonomy has been achieved, this ethnic diversity may constitute a new source of violence if the rights of ethnic groups are not sufficiently protected or if there arises any kind of inequality in the exploitation of resources or in tax obligations. The struggle for autonomy could give way to a quarrel between clans within the region itself. In order to avoid this situation, the local governments should be represented by the greatest possible number of ethnic groups, in accord with the democratic principles established. The consolidation of Bangsamoro should put an end to extortion, to corruption, and to the inequity which has characterized the administrations of the Mindanao authorities. In the barangays,⁴⁶ the population is closely linked to the family and the clan. Security depends on the local elites. Some of these elites have their own armies and at times, instead of protecting the population, they create greater violence as a result of a power struggle among themselves and over the exploitation of Mindanao's natural resources. Support for the MILF was obtained as a result of the dissatisfaction of the people with the weakness of the institutions which governed the RAMM. It is essential not to commit the same error.

Regarding the MILF, there is a major question which will mark the success or failure of the peace accord. The MILF will have to undergo a transformation in order to become a political party in the elections, planned for 2016. Taking into account the corruption which has always characterized electoral processes in Mindanao, the MILF should be able to count on the support of the government and of international organizations if it wishes to run for election peacefully. This problem makes the disarming of this armed group, established in the peace accord, more difficult. As long as other groups and clans continue to be armed, the MILF may find the legitimacy to refuse to lay down its arms.

⁴⁶ The barangay is the smallest unit of local government in the Philippines. It may be compared to a neighborhood where several dozen families live.

Other insurgent groups such as the Maoist NPA (New People's Army), which apparently do not share the same ideology as the Islamic insurgency, could join the struggle to attempt to boycott the peace process and weaken the government.

On the other hand, the Bangsamoro authorities should guarantee the rights of the non-Moslem population, among whom are to be found the Christian community and indigenous groups. According to the Framework Agreement, the Bangsamoro government will be secular⁴⁷ and will guarantee the recognition of such basic rights as religious freedom, the participation of women in the political process, and equality of opportunity and non-discrimination in any economic or public-service activity with regard to gender, handicap, social class or ethnic origin. As President Aquino stated in a plenary session of ASEAN which took place last May: *«Peace anywhere in the world redounds to the benefit of everyone. As peace in Bangsamoro sets the bases of stability, integration and progress in Mindanao, there will be a rise in opportunities for the people of Mindanao, for the entire Philippines, and for the partners and friends who wish to contribute to this development.»*⁴⁸

Bangsamoro will have a secular nature and in no case, according to the agreement, will be ruled by the Sharia. This situation may provoke a violent reaction from the ASG and the BIFM who have already shown their support for the Islamic State in Syria and Iraq, to the point of sending a hundred militants to Iraq. There is concern that these insurgents may be trained to return to Mindanao and comply with orders to extend the Islamic State throughout Southeast Asia.⁴⁹

Without failing to recognize the successful nature of the accord achieved, there remains a long road to travel, not exempt from outbreaks of violence. Perhaps the best guarantee for Mindanao's stability is the promotion of its economic development and the participation of the local population in this growth. Its geostrategic position makes Mindanao a protagonist in maritime trade, especially with the upcoming initiation of the Economic Community of ASEAN in 2015. Southeast Asia cannot miss the opportunity for growth because of such longstanding conflicts as those taking place in Myanmar or the Philippines. Perhaps now there is a real interest in their resolution and a major effort by the whole of the international community that this takes place.

⁴⁷ <http://www.opapp.gov.ph/resources/framework-agreement-bangsamoro>.

⁴⁸ <http://president.gov.ph./news/aquino-hopes-bangsamoro-agreement-will-help-promote-peace-asean-region/>.

⁴⁹ <http://www.mb.com.ph/mindanao-newsbits-for-august-26-2014/> (consulted 1 September).

TABLE OF PHILIPPINE GEOPOLITICAL INDICATORS	
Extension: 300.000 km ²	
GNP: \$454 billion (nº 32 in the world)*	
GNP Distribution	Agriculture: 11.2 % Industry: 31.6% Services: 57.2 %
GNP per capita*: \$4.7	
GNP Growth rate*: 6.8 %	
Philippine Trade Relations	
Exports: \$47.450 billion	
Japan (19%), U.S. (14.2%), China (11.8 %), Singapore (9.3 %), Hong Kong (9.2 %), South Korea (5.5%), Thailand 4.7%	
Imports: \$93.910 billion	
U. S (11.5%), China (10.8 %), Japan (10.4%), South Korea (7.3%), Singapore (7.1 %), Thailand (5.6%), Saudi Arabia (5.6 %), Indonesia (4.4%), Malaysia (4%)	
Population:	
The Philippines 107,668,231 inhabitants*	
Life expectancy: 69 years old***	
Philippine Age Distribution	0-14: 33.7%
	15-24: 19%
	25-54: 37%
	55-64: 5.8%
	Over 65: 4.4%
Growth rate of Philippine population: 1.81% *	
Unemployment rate*: 7.4 %	
Active population: 41.33 million	
Philippine ethnic groups:*	
Tegalog: 28.1%	Cebuano: 13.1%
Ilocano: 9%	Bisaya/Binisaya: 7.6%
Hiligaynon Ilonggo: 7.5%	Bikol: 6%
Waray: 3.4%	Others: 25.3%
Philippine Religions: Catholics 82.9%, Moslems 5%, Evangelists 2.8%, other Christians, 4.5%*	
Literacy Rate of the Philippine population: 95.4%	
The Philippines are ranked 149th in spending on education, at only 2.7%	
Average years of schooling: 8.8 years old**	
Philippine population living on less than \$1.25***: 18.42%	
Population below poverty threshold: 26.5%	
Presence of women in Parliament: 27%**	
GINI Index: 43 (2009)***	
Index of Human Development: 0.66 (ranking 117)**	
Philippine defense spending: 1.9% of GDP*	

* CIA The world FACTBOOK

** <http://hdr.undp.org>

*** <http://datos.bancomundial.org/pais/filipinas>

The Philippines: drawing the claws of the separatists

Chronology

Chapter XIV: THE PHILLIPINES: DRAWING THE CLAWS OF THE ISLAMIC SEPARATIST GROUPS	
1970	Nur Masuri creates the MNLF
1975	President Marcos begins peace negotiations with the mediation of The Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC)
1976	Signing of the Tripoli Accord
1977	Creation of the MILF
1989	Establishment of the Autonomic Region of Moslem Mindanao
1991	Foundation of the ASG
1996	Davao Consensus
2008	In August, Memorandum of Agreement on Ancestral Domain (MOA-AD) signed but declared unconstitutional in October.
2009	Massacre of Manguindanao Establishment of the ICG to act as mediator in the negotiations
2010	Creation of the BIFM through a split in the MILF militants
2012	The government and the MILF sign the "Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro"
2013	One fraction of the MNLF proclaims the Federal Unión of States of the Republic of Bangsamoro
2014	The government and the MILF sign the "Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro"; the Basic Law which will govern Bangsamoro sent to the Congress for its approval.

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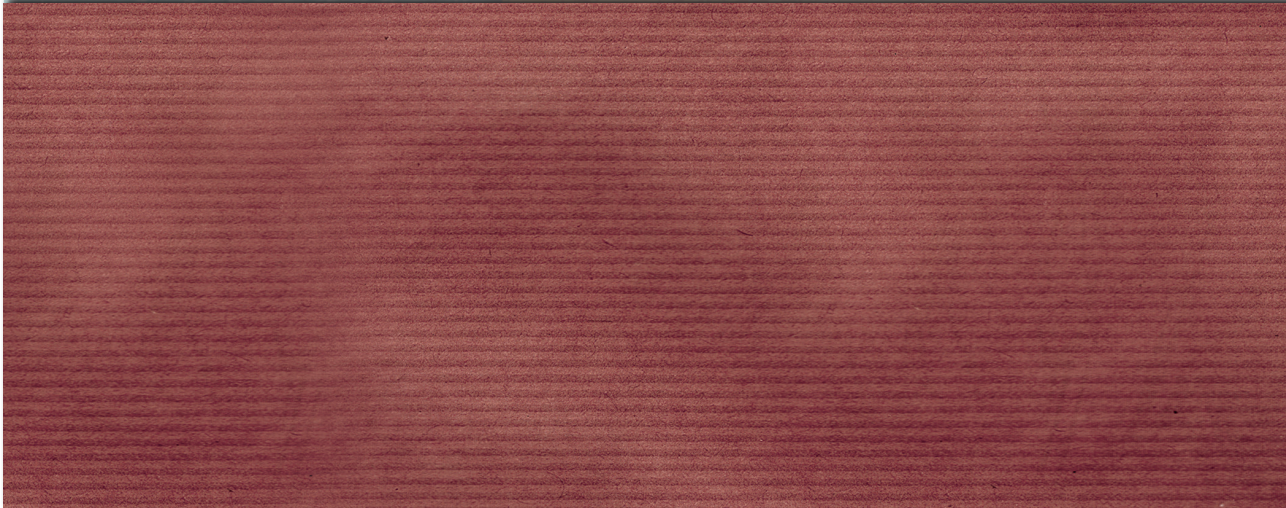
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