



Geopolitical overview of conflicts 2016

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MINISTERIO DE DEFENSA



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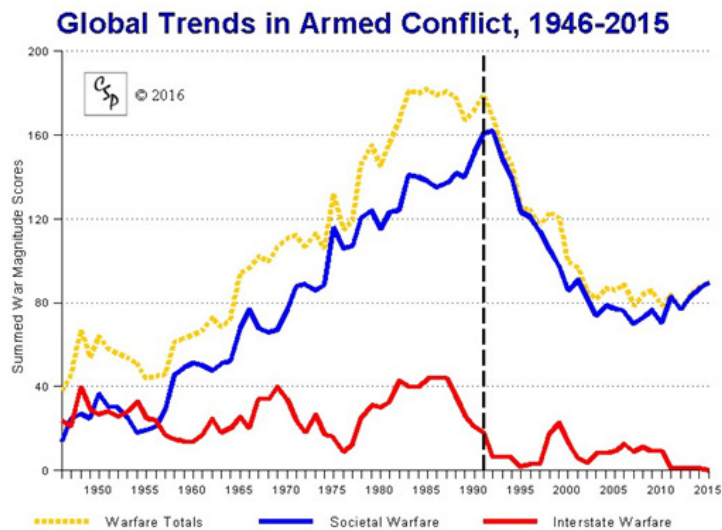
Introduction

The role of the major powers in current conflicts

Brigadier General Miguel Ángel Ballesteros Martín

Conflict trends

The Center for Systemic Peace presents the following graph in its study on «Global Conflict Trends» during the period from 1946 to 2015:



<http://www.systemicpeace.org/conflictrends.html>

It shows that from the end of the Second World War to the end of the Cold War —marked by the dissolution of the USSR— the number of asymmetric conflicts in which states were pitted against non-state actors did not cease grow. In contrast, the number of conventional interstate conflicts remained the same at around 20.

Following the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the USSR, the number of conflicts decreased, conventional conflicts between states practically disappeared, and asymmetric conflicts gradually dwindled by 60% until 2008. The reason for this decrease in the number of conflicts is that the Cold War between the USSR and the US fostered asymmetric conflicts as a means of spreading the ideology of each bloc. The failure of the ideology promoted by the USSR, coupled with the US's determination to banish the spectre of communism from Central America after the Cuban missile crisis in 1962, was conducive to the pacification of most of the Latin American conflicts. The popularity of the model of the Cuban revolution waned in many countries.

A similar case is Africa, where the USSR influenced the guerrilla movements in Angola and Mozambique. During the Angolan civil war, the People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), supported by Cuba and the USSR who sent arms and military advisors, was pitted against the National Liberation Front of Angola (FNLA) and the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA), which were supported in turn by the US and South Africa, the regional leader. The war ended on 13 December 1988 when the Angolan government, South Africa and Cuba signed a peace accord that was endorsed by the US and USSR nine days later and marked Namibia's independence.

A similar sequence of events occurred after Mozambique gained its independence. The civil war of 1977 waged between the South-African-backed Mozambican National Resistance (RENAMO) and the Mozambique Liberation Front (FRELIMO), supported by the USSR, ended in 1992 with a death toll of more than 900,000 and five million displaced people. Following the signing of the peace accords, 6,500 blue helmets monitored the transition to democracy for two years as part of the mission (ONUMOZ), in which United Nations observers took part, as well as Spanish troops.

In short, the geostrategic clash of world powers was conducive to and prolonged local asymmetric conflicts. Following the end of the Cold War, when Russian influence waned, a multipolar world emerged under the leadership of the US, which was set on pacifying conventional conflicts that broke out, such as the occupation of Kuwait by Saddam Hussein's Iraqi army. The same international community also involved itself in pacifying asymmetric conflicts that progressively emerged in the Balkans and Middle East. This was the age in which the world appeared to be striding towards effective multilateralism. The absence of conflicts between global powers was conducive to conflict pacification until the mid-2000s, and the role of the United Nations Security Council was reinforced by the passing of further resolutions on crisis management and peacebuilding.

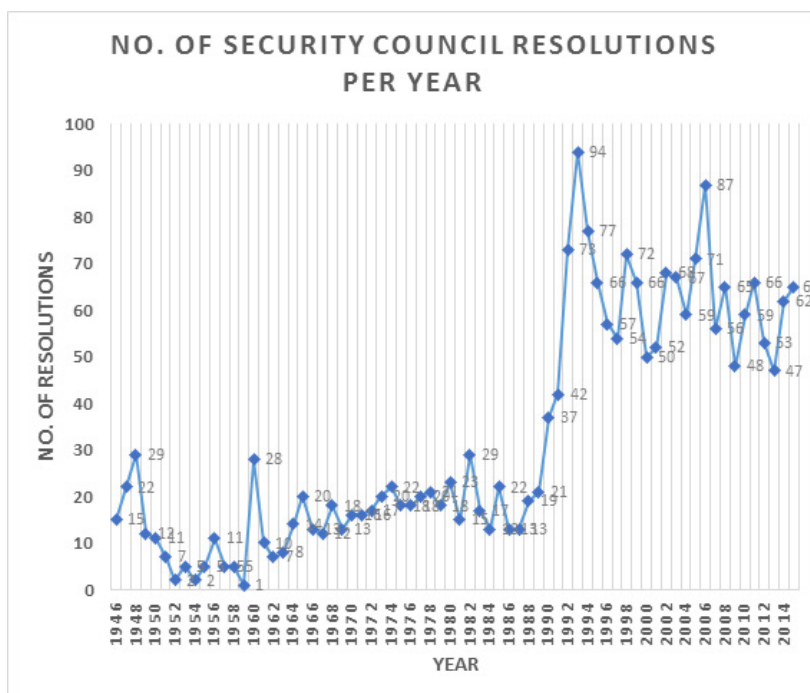
The United Nations was designed to prevent interstate wars and it has proved reasonably effective at this task, as wars of this kind have practically disappeared and those that do erupt barely last more than a few days. But the same cannot be said about this organisation's effectiveness at settling asymmetric conflicts, even though it is comprised of a group of agencies that appear to foster a comprehensive approach and the United Nations military command and control system, such as DPKO, DPA (Department of Political Affairs for diplomacy and political mediation), UN OCHA (for humanitarian assistance) and UNHCR (for refugees). Thirteen percent of the world's countries are involved in asymmetric conflicts and although some are on the road to peace, new ones appear in 3.5% of countries every year. The trend in the number of conflicts changed at the end of 2008 with a slight upturn, which became more apparent in 2011 when 16% of countries became involved in conflicts as a result of the inaptly named Arab Spring. And it is precisely in the conflicts that have arisen in the Arab countries where the emerging regional powers are playing a leading role.

The resolutions of the Security Council as a gauge of its activity

A significant indicator of the activity of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) is the number of resolutions it passes each year, as they are one of the international community's principal means of pacifying conflicts and maintaining world peace and stability. Another indicator to be taken into account when assessing the UN's strength is the number of members that ratify the UN Charter on joining the organisation and adopt collective security as a principle of international relations. Without entering into a more detailed analysis of the contents of the resolutions adopted up to the end of September 2016, it is possible to gain a general idea of the Security Council's activity from their number, 2,260.

Between 1946 —when the UN had 55 members— and 1962, the year of the Cuban missile crisis that triggered a change in the strategies of the US and USSR, the Security Council adopted 177 resolutions, an average of 10.4 per year. During this period both powers developed strategies for mass reprisals based on nuclear deterrence – that is, «mutually assured destruction».

By 1962 the number of members stood at 110. Between 1963 (113 members) and 1989, the year of the fall of the Berlin Wall leading to the breakup of the USSR and the creation of new countries in the post-Soviet area, the Security Council adopted 469 resolutions, averaging 17.3 per year. By 1989 the number of members had risen to 159. During this time both the US and the USSR adopted a flexible response strategy designed to avoid direct confrontation – but not indirect confrontation – by supporting their respective sides in third countries on which they wished to exert political, economic and military influence.



The most significant change came after the Cold War and the dissolution of the USSR, which resulted in a Russian Federation turned in on itself and easy to convince to vote for Security Council resolutions that fostered the pacification of many conflicts over which both powers formerly enjoyed influence.

In 1990, the UN had 159 members, and by 2011 the number had grown to 192. From 1989 to 2011, the year of the outbreak of the first Arab Spring uprisings, the Security Council passed 1,320 resolutions, an average of 66 per year. The increase with respect to previous periods is evident. Up until 1990, during its 54 years of existence the Security Council had passed a total of 647 resolutions. However, between 1990 and 2010 it passed 1,261 resolutions in 20 years: an increase of nearly 100% in its activity (in 1993 alone it adopted 94 resolutions). This busy activity came at a time when conflicts decreased by 60% and conventional conflicts practically disappeared. One of the keys is less use of veto powers during this period, especially by Russia. From 2011 to the end of 2015, 293 resolutions were passed, an average of 58.6 per year. As we can see, the average number of resolutions per year has dropped, even though conflicts have increased significantly as a result of the Arab Springs, as explained. The Syrian war has already caused more than 270,000 deaths, 4 million refugees and 7 million displaced people, yet the Security Council took more than four years (until 18 December 2015) to pass Resolution 2254 calling for a ceasefire in the Syrian war. It is therefore not

surprising that the UN's first special envoy, Kofi Annan¹, should have resigned in 2012, blaming the Security Council for failing to adopt decisions after a year of warfare. The US blamed Russia and China for Annan's resignation². When his successor, Lakhdar Brahimi, also stepped down in 2014, the Arab League blamed the Security Council³. The reason for their resignations was the vetoes of the main powers, especially Russia.

Russia's comeback as a world power

When Putin came to the Kremlin after winning the elections in 2000, Russia began to enjoy excellent economic growth driven by its oil and gas exports, which amounted to 72% during the period from 2000 and 2007 according to the International Monetary Fund⁴. Putin, who had an impressive track record of services rendered to the state, became the director of the Federal Security Service (FSB), a successor agency of the former KGB, combining this post with that of secretary of the National Security Council, and was undoubtedly well-versed in the strategies of the US and the regional powers. In August 1999, he was appointed to the post of prime minister under President Yeltsin and one of his first decisions was to launch an air attack on Grozny, which gave rise to the second war against the Chechen rebels in response to their invasion of Dagestan. This war, which Putin cloaked in a veil of nationalism to boost citizens' Russian pride, the victory over the Chechens and the use of Russian nationalism enabled him to win his second elections to the Russian presidency in 2004 with 71.31% of the vote, 18% more than in the 2000 elections.

In 2008, Russia made it clear that it was returning to the world chessboard with the aim of becoming the regional leader in what was once the Socialist Soviet Republics. The chosen theatre was the Georgian regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, where Russian troops had been acting as peace forces since the war of 1990-92 ended with no status agreement. A Georgian drone was shot down over Abkhazia on 20 April 2008 and everything indicates that Russian troops were responsible. In April, the Russians sent more troops to South Ossetia and Abkhazia. In June, Russian aircraft flew over

¹ *LA VANGUARDIA*: «Annan culpa a la comunidad internacional de la situación en Siria». News, 30 June 2012. Available at: <http://www.lavanguardia.com/internacional/20120630/54319207060/annan-culpa-comunidad-internacional-situacion-siria.html>

² RTVE: «EE.UU. culpa a China y Rusia de la renuncia de Kofi Annan como mediador de la ONU para Siria». News, 3 August 2012. Available at: <http://www.rtve.es/noticias/20120803/euu-culpa-china-rusia-renuncia-koffi-annan/553679.shtml>

³ *LA PRENSA GRÁFICA*: «La Liga árabe culpa al Consejo de Seguridad de ONU de la dimisión de Brahimi». News, 14 May 2014. Available at: <http://www.laprensagrafica.com/2014/05/14/la-liga-arabe-culpa-al-consejo-de-seguridad-de-onu-de-dimision-de-brahimi>

⁴ International Monetary Fund. Available at: <http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/weo/2008/01/weodata/weorept.aspx?pr.x=52&pr.y=13&sy=1992&ey=2007&scsm=1&ssd=1&sort=country&ds=.&br=1&c=922&s=NGDPD%2CPPP&grp=0&a=GDP>

Georgian airspace and the Georgian government withdrew its ambassador from Moscow. In August, Georgia's President Saakashvili mounted a military operation to regain control of South Ossetia. Russia's response was a counterattack that was stopped 40km from the capital with the aid of the international community and, in particular, France's President Sarkozy, then president of the EU. The result was the unilateral declaration of independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, which were immediately recognised by the Kremlin under Medvedev's presidency.

In addition, Georgian governments' interest in joining NATO is considered by the Russian government to be tantamount to going against Russia because it would entail bringing the Alliance's borders uncomfortably close. The same is true of Ukraine and the wishes of some of the Kiev governments to join NATO as the best means of protecting the country against the Kremlin's expansionist policy.

But where Russia showed its new strategy for regaining regional leadership was during the Ukrainian crisis triggered by President Victor Yanukovich's decision to postpone the signing of the Association and Free Trade Agreements with the EU. Signing it would have made it impossible for Ukraine to join the future Eurasian Union promoted by Putin, as well as relegating Russia's status to that of a secondary trading partner, even though Ukraine currently conducts most of its trade – gas imports and exports of manufactured products – with that country. On 23 November 2013 demonstrators occupied Maidan square in Kiev in protest against the postponement of the signing. Most western Ukrainians are in favour of joining the EU and NATO, whereas those in the east – the regions of Kharviv, Lugansk and Donetsk – and the Russian-speaking south prefer to maintain close relations with Moscow.

In the Crimean peninsula, which belonged to Russia in the past after being conquered by Tsar Peter I, 58.32% of the 3.2 million inhabitants are of Russian origin, whereas 24.32% are Ukrainians and 12.1% are Tartars.

In 1954 the Crimean peninsula passed to the Republic of Ukraine and in 1992, after Ukraine gained its independence, the USSR voided the grant, sparking tension between the two governments. In 1997, the agreement on the sharing of the Black Sea fleet and the Russian fleet's use of the Sebastopol base for at least 20 years appeared to have settled the differences. But Putin's Russia wished to take advantage of Ukraine's instability, triggered by the Maidan uprisings and President Yanukovich's stepping down from power, to fuel an uprising among the population who, egged on by the arrival of Russian soldiers – albeit without badges on their uniforms – declared Crimea's independence. Immediately afterwards, on 16 March 2014, a referendum was held and 96.77% voted in favour of becoming part of Russia. Putin later publicly admitted that the men in green without badges were indeed Russian soldiers.

The international community and Ukraine above all consider that the matter of Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea is by no means settled, though the

situation seems difficult to reverse. On 11 August 2016 Moscow announced it would take reprisals against Ukrainian troops' forays into the Crimean peninsula leading to the death of two Russians soldiers, one of them an FSB agent who was killed during the arrests of the alleged saboteurs in the early hours of 7 August near the city of Armiansk at the border between Crimea and Ukraine⁵. According to the FSB, the saboteurs were carrying 20 explosive devices with detonators, munition, antipersonnel mines, grenades and arms of the type with which the Ukrainian armed forces special units are equipped. At the same time the Russian foreign ministry reported attempts to destabilise Crimea by setting up a spy ring of Ukrainian and Russian citizens that aimed to carry out attacks on infrastructure, claiming that Russia would guarantee the security of the peninsula. It should be remembered that throughout the crisis Moscow has made effective use of psychological action and communication as a means of furthering its aims.

Putin assembled the Russian Security Council to decide what measures to adopt for the defence of Crimea. One of these measures was to deploy special operations units equipped with more modern arms and S-400 Triumf missiles at the border between Ukraine and Crimea.

The tension between Russia and Ukraine mounted to such an extent that on 11 August President Petró Poroshenko gave orders for all the Ukrainian troops deployed at the Crimean border and along the line separating the forces with the Lugansk and Donetsk rebels to be placed on «maximum combat alert»⁶.

These events allowed President Putin to dismiss the possibility of a meeting with the Ukrainian president Petró Poroshenko, the French president Francois Hollande and the German chancellor Angela Merkel – the so-called Normandy format – at the G20 meeting in China.

But the Ukrainian conflict had only just begun. In April 2014, the rebels of Lugansk and Donetsk declared the independence of these regions under the historic name of Novorossiya, a territory that encompasses the whole of southern Ukraine, from regions like Odessa to the Moldavian region of Transnistria east of the river Dniester. A Russian 14th army peace force stationed in this region – in political limbo since a short war that broke out in 1992 after it declared its independence – has become the de factor guarantor of the independence of Transnistria, which is recognised as an independent country by South Ossetia and Abkhazia.

Russia has not hesitated to support the Ukrainian rebels of Lugansk and Donetsk, showing that it is not going to allow the army and militias of Kiev to crush the rebellion in these regions using military means, even if it has to supply material and even troops in the form of militias. It should not

⁵ Agencia EFE. News 7 August 2016.

⁶ Agencia EFE. News 11 August 2016.

be forgotten that, according to the conclusions reached by the Dutch-led international investigation team, Malaysia Airlines flight MH17 was downed on 17 July 2014 by a Russian ground-to-air Buk missile launched from the rebel area and supplied by Russia to the separatist rebels or handled by Russian military⁷.

For a long time the chief of the armed forces of the Donetsk People's Republic, Igor Strelkov, called Igor Girkin, was a retired Russian colonel specialised in intelligence and special operations, and the prime minister of Donetsk until September 2014 was the Russian Muscovite Alexander Borodai, who describes himself as a «political consultant for ethnic conflicts».

Following the Minsk II agreements, the conflict became low profile, though this does not mean to say that it has completely died down, as skirmishes between the two sides frequently flare up. The United Nations estimates that the war has claimed more than 9,500 lives. EFE news agency reports that, according to the Ukrainian defence ministry, nearly 180 Ukrainian soldiers died during the first 9 months of 2016, and the ministry estimates that the rebels have the support of some 6,000 Russian soldiers.

The Ukrainians have also reported the use of drones by Russian-speaking separatists to counter mortar fire, although in theory, according to the Minsk accords, artillery pieces were supposed to have been taken away from the contact area.

But where the Russian armed forces are being used most extensively is in the Syrian war, where they arrived on 30 September 2015. They became involved in the war at the request of Bashar al-Assad's government when Aleppo, Syria's second largest city, was about to fall into the hands of Daesh. This would have cleared the way for Daesh's advance towards Latakia and the nearby airport that is key to supplying Tartus, the Syrian base used by the Russian fleet according to the agreements established between the two countries and the only one the Russians have in the Mediterranean, making it a crucial base for the long-term deployment of a Russian fleet. The deployment of Russian troops to protect the airport and Tartus base was accompanied by a major deployment of aircraft to provide air support to the Syrian regime's troops in its ground battles against Daesh and all the rebel groups, including the Free Syrian Army.

Russian military intervention in Syria was of key importance in changing the course of the war by steering Daesh and the opposition to the regime towards military defeat. Therefore, as of October 2016, neither Russia nor Syria is interested in a ceasefire, not even for humanitarian reasons as requested, to avoid killings in Aleppo. On the contrary, they intend to crush

⁷ COLAS, Xavier, «Rusia suministró a los separatistas el misil que derribó el MH17». *El Mundo*, 28 September 2016. Available at: <http://www.elmundo.es/internacional/2016/09/28/57ebabede5fdea572-c8b45a4.html>

all the opposition forces: the fight against Daesh will take place in Raqqa especially and a confluence of forces against the jihadists is assured.

It is important to Moscow for the agreements on the use of the Tartus base and Latakia airport to be guaranteed, and it is therefore determined that the regime – with or without Bashar al-Assad – must win and remain in power in Damascus.

On 12 October 2016, the Council of the Federation – the Russian senate – ratified almost unanimously the Russian-Syrian agreement on the permanent stationing of Russian air forces at the Khmeimim base in the Syrian province of Latakia⁸. According to the agreement, the actions of the Russian air force servicemen and their families enjoy immunity equivalent to that of diplomats.

According to the Russian press, by September 2016 there were 24 Russian aircraft and no less than a dozen Russian air force combat helicopters at the base.

Another country keen for Assad's regime to remain in power is Iran, which aspires to be the leader of all the Middle East countries with a Shia population, even if a minority. In Syria, the minority population is Alawite, whose interpretation of Islam is ideologically very close to that of the Shia.

These shared interests led Moscow and Tehran to sign an agreement in September 2016 whereby the Iranian government temporarily assigned the use of the Hamadan military base⁹ to the Russian air force, so that its Tupolev Tu-22 and Su-34 bombers can continue their campaign of air strikes in Syria at the request of Assad's regime. This could contravene United Nations Security Council Resolution 2231, which bans the transfer of arms and military technology to Iran.

Russia is attempting to establish stable military relations with Iran, to which it has supplied S-300 ground-air missiles according to the contract signed by the countries in 2007. Although Dimitri Medvédev, then president, cancelled the sale of missiles as a result of the embargo imposed on Iran due to its nuclear enrichment programme, President Putin revoked the ban in 2015, authorising the sale of missiles between April and September 2016. This is part of a policy of forging closer ties with other regional leaders and emerging countries such as India, with which Russia signed no less than 16 agreements in October 2016 for the acquisition of various Russian military material, including S.400 ground-air missiles, four frigates and Kamov 226T helicopters, to be built in India. These agreements entail technological transfer, various investments in infrastructure and cooperation in both gas and nuclear energy. In this connection, Russia is building new nuclear reactors at the Tamil Nadu plant in southern India.

⁸ Agencia EFE. News 12 October 2016.

⁹ Agencia Europa Press. News 20 August 2016.

Presidents Putin and Erdogan met at St Petersburg on 9 August 2016 to heal their wounds following the downing of the Russian SU-24 aircraft at the Turkish border on 24 November 2015 and to begin collaborating to help end the Syrian war. But Russia and Turkey seem to be taking their collaboration a step further during this new period, as Erdogan also announced Ankara's willingness to allow EU-bound Russian gas to cross Turkey as part of the Turkish Steam project with a gas pipeline that will run across the Black Sea from Crimea.

Putin's government bases its strategy for regaining influence in the post-Soviet area on the Middle East and East Mediterranean, and on the military muscle it has progressively rebuilt despite the economic crisis. Russia's income per capita in 2014 was \$12,718, but dropped to \$8,447 in 2015 with an inflation rate of 15.8%¹⁰.

Russia has been making a show of its military might since 2013 as part of this strategy. This is why for the past two years it has frequently made probing incursions into European airspace, including that of NATO members. On 22 September two unidentified Russian Tupolev Tu60 bombers with no flight plans filed – contravening international law – approached the coast of Norway, which had to scramble two F16 fighters to escort them to northern Scotland, where two British Typhoons took over and shadowed them round the Irish and British coast to northeast France. There they were intercepted by two Rafale fighters less than 100 kilometres away from the French beaches before heading towards Bilbao, forcing two Spanish F-18s to scramble to intercept them until they turned away from Spanish air space, without having actually violated it. This «game» of testing other countries' defences and demonstrating Russia's new muscle has been repeated hundreds of times since 2014. Neutral Finland's defence ministry reported that two Russian SU-27 jets had violated its airspace on 6 and 7 October 2016.

The capacity of the Syrian base of Tartus was boosted to allow it to dock as many as five large military vessels, making this logistic support base, which came into service in 1977 following the agreements signed in 1971¹¹, a permanent Russian base in the Mediterranean equipped with an S-300 missile defence system – essential for Russia to regain its permanent presence in the sea. The Russian military base in the Syrian city of Tartus will enable it to deploy simultaneously as many as five large military vessels, submarines and Russian naval aircraft, so the president of the fleet support movement, Mikhail Nenashev, announced. Russia is moving to the Mediterranean a large fleet with the only aircraft carrier it currently has, the *Admiral Kuznetsov*, which will be escorted by a flotilla with the corvettes *Serpujov* and *Zelioni Dol*, equipped with Kalibr long-range missiles from the Sebastopol-based Black Sea fleet, and the frigate *Admiral Grigórovich*.

¹⁰ IISS. The International Institute for Strategic Studies. *The Military Balance 2016*, Routledge, London, 2016, p. 189.

¹¹ News released by the Sputnik agency on 10 October 2016, Moscow.

The military policy of China as an emerging power

Another world power with veto rights on the Security Council is China. For a long time China seemed to be in favour of domestic and external policies of harmonious growth, but the fact is that bolstering its armed forces is more important than economic growth and this, coupled with the militarisation of some of the disputed islands in the South China Sea, clearly reveals its intentions of becoming the region's leading military power. According to Washington¹², China is building reinforced towers and hangars capable of housing fighter and bomber craft on disputed atolls in the South China Sea, and this could mark its first steps towards militarising these enclaves.

Satellite photos taken on 3 and 24 July and published by the Washington-based Center for Strategic International Studies (CSIS) show that China is building three runways and several hangars on three artificial islands, one of which is the submerged reef Mischief, near the Philippine islands of Palawan. The hangars being constructed around its aerodrome which could house as many as 24 fighter craft. Further runways are located on the Fiery Cross island and the Subi island, both of which belong to the Spratley archipelago that is claimed by China, the Philippines, Vietnam and Malaysia.

In July the International Court of The Hague ruled in favour of the Philippines and against China's claims based on historical relations.

China, which has the possibility of stemming North Korean warmongering, does not however seem fully committed to the task. North Korea is determined to develop a programme of nuclear weapons and medium-range missiles which, once it succeeds in miniaturising nuclear warheads, would enable it to drop a nuclear bomb on any of its neighbours. On 3 August 2016, it fired two ballistic missiles into the Sea of Japan violating Resolution 2270.

Shortly after launching the missiles, on 10 September Kim Jong-Un's regime conducted its fifth nuclear test, the second of 2016. According to the South Korean government, the explosive yield was equivalent to ten kilotons, making it the most powerful of all the tests carried out to date, half as powerful as the bomb the US dropped on Nagasaki. The Pyongyang government is sustained by the economic aid of Beijing, which appears to prefer a pseudo-controlled government like Kim Jong-Un's to a reunified Korea within the US sphere of influence.

The end of the US as the indispensable nation?

During President Putin's first term in power, relations between Russia and the US were marked by cooperation, especially in combating terrorism

¹² Center for Strategic International Studies (CSIS), Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative, Washington, 2016. Available at: <https://amti.csis.org/island-tracker/>

following the attacks of 9/11, which Putin used to step up his own actions against Chechen terrorism. Discrepancies began to surface during Bush's second term as a result of US support for the «colour revolutions» in Ukraine and Georgia and its backing for both countries' potential membership of NATO, as part of the so-called Freedom Agenda aimed at promoting the establishment of like-minded democracies in former Soviet republics. These policies led to Saakashvili's government's attack on South Ossetia and the Kremlin's categorical response granting independence to South Ossetia and Abkhazia. This was followed by a clash over the project to deploy a missile defence shield in the Czech Republic and Poland.

President Obama wished to resume cooperation, adopting what became known as the «reset policy»¹³. Hillary Clinton attempted to develop this policy as secretary of state, based on three criteria. The first was cooperation on issues where interests converged, such as the case of the sanctions on North Korea and Iran for their nuclear programmes and cooperation in combating terrorism, and on the START 3 agreements for the reduction of strategic weapons signed on 8 April 2010 by President Obama and President Medvedev. Obama agreed to refrain from deploying the missile defence shield in the Czech Republic. The second criterion was to stand firm in the case of divergent interests. And the third criterion was to improve relations with the Russians. The US continued to regard itself as the «indispensable nation», a concept coined in 1998 by Madeleine Albright when she stated «we are the indispensable nation»¹⁴.

Things began changing following the intervention in Libya, as Moscow believed that the allies, headed by the US, had made abusive use of Resolution 1973 with Operation Unified Protector. Prime Minister Putin's criticism was the harshest. In 2012, when he took up the presidency for his third term, Russia's policy toughened, taking the form of pressure on Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan to get the US to withdraw its bases from those countries, hindering the logistics in Afghanistan¹⁵.

Following Russia's annexation of Crimea on 18 March 2014, America changed its perception of Russian foreign policy, and in an address delivered on 24 September 2014 President Obama identified as one of the three major threats to international security the clash between major powers, especially Russia's new policy. Russia's policy in the conflict with the Donetsk and

¹³ The term was coined by vice-president, Joe Biden, at the Munich Security Conference of 7 February 2009 when he said it was time for Washington to hit the reset button in its dealings with Moscow and Beijing. Available at <http://www.politico.com/story/2009/02/biden-time-to-hit-the-reset-button-018533>

¹⁴ MENÉNDEZDELVALLE, Emilio, ¿Estodavía Estados Unidos indispensable?, *El País*, 12 August 2014. Available at: http://elpais.com/elpais/2014/07/30/opinion/1406737288_388001.html

¹⁵ PILLALAMARRI, Akhilesh, The United States Just Closed Its Last Base in Central Asia, *The Diplomat.com*, 10 June 2014. Available at: <http://thediplomat.com/2014/06/the-united-states-just-closed-its-last-base-in-central-asia/>

Lugansk rebels would confirm Russia's return to the international scene as a power capable of vying with the US for territory and influence.

On 15 October, it was reported that the US was planning to launch a cyberattack on Russia in reprisal for the latter's meddling in the election campaign.

The United States formally accused Russia of the attacks which resulted in WikiLeaks releasing 20,000 emails from the Democratic National Committee (DNC)¹⁶.

At the end of the last decade, the US adopted a new strategy involving a security pivot to the Asia-Pacific region, for which it periodically reminds its European partners and allies in NATO that they need to take greater responsibility for defence in Europe and its surrounding areas such as the Middle East, the Maghreb and the Sahel and even against Russian expansionism, but pressure from Eastern European countries like Poland, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania is hindering this pivot. In particular, the European countries, in the grip of a serious economic crisis, do not feel this is the best time to up their defence spending to 2%. Only the Eastern European countries and Germany seem to have heeded this request.

The Iraq war has taken its toll on the US: more than 4,506 military have died in combat; 1.3 trillion euros have been spent; and 134,000 civilians have been killed¹⁷. In Afghanistan 2,385 US soldiers have lost their lives, and the dozens of ex-servicemen left mutilated or with psychological trauma as a result of fighting in the Iraq and Afghanistan wars have been a drain on the Obama administration and in particular on US public opinion, which has misgivings about any foreign intervention especially if it means placing its soldiers at risk. This has led the US, NATO and the EU to develop a cooperative security strategy based on helping local troops and authorities boost their capabilities so that it is they who carry out the operations on the ground. This strategy, which seems a wise move in view of the lessons learned in Afghanistan and Iraq, nevertheless has its disadvantages. If another country involves itself more by supporting one of the sides, the latter will have a military advantage and greater possibilities of victory. Iran has involved itself on the ground in Syria by supporting Assad's regime, in the same way that Hezbollah has, and stands a very good chance of winning together with Russia, which has involved itself much more than the countries of the international coalition.

The composition of the Security Council has been under discussion—academically at least—for some time. There has been talk of increasing its membership, as in a previous phase, to make it more representative, and

¹⁶ Agencia EFE. News 15 October 2016.

¹⁷ Agencia Reuters/ EP. News of 14 March 2013. Available at: <http://www.europapress.es/internacional/noticia-guerra-irak-costos-13-billones-eeuu-mato-134000-civiles-20130314193336.html>

even of appointing new permanent members. What cannot be abolished is powers of veto. Though it is important for the countries that enjoy this right to exercise it responsibly, acting not only in their own national interests but in those of the whole international community.

Chapter one

War between states? Balance of power and realistic logic?

Ignacio José Garcia Sánchez

«The balance of power does not necessarily lead to peace. Throughout history there have been 119 wars involving some of the major powers, 9 of which were hegemonic in nature»¹.

Introduction

«Pundits have debated whether the new century is destined to become the Chinese or whether the United States will retain its global dominance... Instead of a world ordered by superpowers, an international geopolitical system is emerging that is polycentric and polyarchic. It is built on a hierarchical combination of great and regional powers... A third order of states has also arisen –those with unique ideological or cultural capacities to influence their neighbours–... Fourth-order states are generally incapable of applying pressure upon their neighbours, and those of the fifth order depend upon outside sustenance for survival.

This hierarchical system is dynamic, not static. States such as Nigeria and Venezuela, once regional powers, have lost these positions...

¹ Joseph Jr. Nye. Must History Repeat the Great Conflicts of this Century? Chantilly, The Great Courses, 1998, Page 11.

Without the dominant American superpower to play the role of global peacemaker, prepared to intervene militarily in conflict situations and to invest financial and diplomatic energies aimed at stabilising the international system, the world is now like a ship without a rudder. Such disequilibrium is inevitable in this period of geopolitical transition. Great and regional powers are focusing on a redefinition of their own national security interests, economic strategies, and ideological goals»².

The current geopolitical context can be characterised by uncertainty. The memories of the greatest war of all times, and its macabre consequence with the dropping of two atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki seem to be an historical event that is now fading into the dim and distant past. The end of the Cold War, the terrorist attacks on 11th September in New York and Washington, the Arab Springs in Tunisia, Libya, Egypt and Syria, and the selfproclamation of the Islamic Caliphate by the leader of DAESH, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, have epitomised a historical period masking a reality that has been relentlessly pursuing mankind: the armed conflict between major powers.

The scenario was presented in its purest realistic tradition by Bob Work, the US Deputy Secretary of Defense, at the CNAS Defense Forum, on 14th December 2015³, which I referred to in my analysis document at the Spanish Institute of Strategic Studies website: «*On power, the art of war and military capacity. The dilemma of perpetual peace*»⁴.

«..., we are at a time of crucial importance after the Cold War. I firmly believe that the historians will study the past 25 years. What I am really referring to is the period between 12th May 1989, when President Bush said that the military planning of Defence would no longer revolve around «containment»... And December 2013, when China initiated its policy of projects in the enclaves reclaimed from the South China Sea, and March 2014, when Russia illegally occupied Crimea and started to send troops to support the Ukrainian separatists.

Throughout this 25-year period –from my viewpoint, the most remarkable and distinct, compared to any other period since the Peace of Westphalia–, the USA has ruled as the supreme and sole great power and the only military superpower, which gave us great room for manoeuvre. However, cir-

² Saul Bernard Cohen, Geopolitics. The Geography of International Relations, Maryland, Rowman & Littlefield, 2015, third edition, Pages 3-4.

³ CNAS Defense Forum. As Delivered by Deputy Secretary of Defense Bob Work, JW Marriott, Washington, D.C., Dec. 14, 2015 Secretary of Defense Speech. Visited on 16th August 2016. <http://www.defense.gov/News/Speeches/Speech-View/Article/634214/cnas-defense-forum>

⁴ Ignacio García Sánchez. «On power, the art of war and military capacity. The dilemma of perpetual peace», Bulletin issued by the Spanish Institute of Strategic Studies (BIE3) no. 2, Madrid, 2016, Page 8.

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cumstances are changing. The unipolar world is gradually fading away and is now becoming much more multipolar, and one in which the USA's global leadership will probably be challenged. So, one of the most significant challenges over these 25 years, and the one which I consider to be the most demanding, is the re-emergence of competition between major powers».

As Professor John J. Mearsheimer⁵ indicates, this reality leads to a pessimistic outlook on the way international relations will function, based on the following five assumptions:

- The international system is anarchical⁶, which rather than meaning that it is chaotic⁷, indicates that it is composed of independent and sovereign units that monopolise the use of force without there being any higher regulatory authority;
- The states monopolize the use of force and hence their possession of lethal offensive military capacities, on an individual and sovereign basis⁸;
- And this unshared sovereignty makes it impossible to know their intentions, which could change rapidly, even during the course of a conflict, regardless of the system of government;
- The fourth assumption would be closely linked to the third one, and also to a natural mistrust in a system that makes states reluctant to share sovereignty and, basically, to trust their autonomous capacities only;
- And finally, the will of power, in its full range of possibilities⁹, from hegemony and the consequent maintaining of the status quo, to pure survival as a vital interest for national security, and in between the maximisation of relative power within the system.

With this patchwork of interests in constant conflict, trapped in a vicious circle of long-standing historical mistrust that is very difficult to overcome, political survival –often perversely confused with the survival of the State– becomes increasingly jeopardised; a zero-sum system influenced by two basic trends¹⁰:

⁵ John J. Mearsheimer. The False Promise of International Institutions, *International Security*, Vol. 19, No. 3 (Winter 1994/1995), pages 5-49.

⁶ The word «anarchy» is used in the sense of the first entry in the *Diccionario de la Real Academia*: the absence of public power.

⁷ One example could be the balance of power concept, arising as an international system of order after the Peace of Westphalia that put an end to the 30 Years' War, which for a variety of reasons, brought about the death of a quarter of the population of Europe.

⁸ The possession of nuclear arms by a select group of states constitutes yet another factor to disturb an international system that is already fraught with sinister connotations.

⁹ According to Mearsheimer, the two extremes of this range would be represented by the two most influential realists in the past 50 years, Hans Morgenthau and Kenneth Waltz. Mearsheimer states that he is more supportive of the latter's survival thesis.

¹⁰ «Two great power shifts are occurring in this century: a power transition among states and a power diffusion away from all states to non-state actors». Joseph Jr. Nye, *The Future*

- The transition from the hegemonic system led by the United States to a new era, where the prevailing concept in international relations will once again be the balance of power;
- And the global scenario being severely disrupted by transnational actors, weaving a plot of interests that can hardly be limited to the physical confines of state boundaries.

Conflict Background

«Great powers, I argue, are always searching for opportunities to gain power over their rivals, with hegemony as their final goal. This perspective does not allow for status quo powers, except for the unusual state that achieves preponderance. Instead, the system is populated with great powers that have revisionist intentions at their core»¹¹.

Michael Walzer begins his book, *Just and Unjust Wars*¹², with a chapter entitled *Against Realism*, in which he places the emphasis on two names, the Greek historian Thucydides (460-395 B.C.) and his work *Peloponnesian War*, and the English philosopher Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679)¹³ and his work, *Leviathan*. Nearly two millennia separate the two authors, yet they are bound by a realistic sentiment of reality and the use of power in its most tragic sense.

Charles Tilly, in *Coercion, Capital, and European States, AD 990-1992*, establishes his well-known proposition: War made the states and the states made War; around these three basic axes: Capital, Coercion and Territory, with a view to gaining portions of a power that is permanently in a state of unstable balance.

However, it is since the Peace of Westphalia (1648), which put an end to the so called 30 Years' War, when renowned intellectuals –Henry Kissinger, amongst others– considered that international politics was beginning to turn into a constant and vicious circle, in which the most powerful states, basically in the military field, seek to extend their power by promoting their national interests, sometimes in a dishonourable way.

But this civilisation (China) is assaulted by British military power, in one of the acts described by Kissinger¹⁴ as one of the most infamous in modern history: forcing Chinese society, where opium consumption was forbidden, to authorise and encourage British and American companies to trade in this

of Power, New York, Public Affairs, 2011, Page 15.

¹¹ John J. Mearsheimer. *The tragedy of Great Power Politics*, New York, Norton & Company, 2001, Page 16.

¹² Michael Walzer. *Just and unjust wars*, New York, Basic Books, 3rd Edition, 2000, Pages 3-21.

¹³ Thomas Hobbes translated the works of Thucydides into English, and generalised and applied his arguments to the Theory of the State and the Social Contract.

¹⁴ Henry Kissinger, *On China*, New York, the Penguin Press, 2011, Page 46.

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drug. It was a particularly lucrative trade for the British coffers, because opium production was prohibited in China, and India -under British rule- was the centre of world production. During what came to be known as the First Opium War (1839-1842) Western military might, assisted by the technological breakthroughs of the Industrial Revolution, easily overcame a bureaucratised army functioning purely as a police force and lacking in any fighting power.

One of the greatest symbolic actions to occur in this period was the destruction of the Emperor's summer palace. And the best anecdote to sum this up was the melancholic memoir addressed to the widow of the Emperor for who was the head of Chinese diplomacy for 40 years, Li Hongzhang, a senior Mandarin official who led the Chinese military forces against the Taiping rebellion:

«It goes without saying how I would enjoy it and how happy I would be if China were able to embark on a glorious and triumphant war; the dream in my final years would be to see the barbaric nations once and for all subjected to the submissive loyalty and respectful obedience of the Dragon Throne. Yet unfortunately all I can do is sadly admit to the fact that China is at a disadvantage if it embarks on such a task, and that our forces do not have the means to carry it out. Taking into account the integrity and survival of the Empire Who would be as mad as to fire projectiles at a rat with such a priceless piece of porcelain so close by?»¹⁵.

This unstable balance of power system underwent its most dramatic moments when the hierarchy established, normally by military capacity, received its reply from one of its main stakeholders. Thus, the last century was to witness the First and Second World War: conflicts that were to bring about unprecedented devastation.

The events leading up to the First World War are all too well known, but perhaps this is not the case with the Crowe Memorandum, to which Henry Kissinger makes reference in his work, *On China* –Epilogue: Does history repeat itself? The Crowe Memorandum Page 514–, by the British diplomat Eyre Crowe, who, after an analysis of the political situation, from a purely realistic perspective, concluded that the war was inevitable in view of the structure of the balance of power system prevailing in international relations¹⁶.

The War caused a hitherto unseen trail of destruction and death; and when it ended, there was a unanimous feeling that blamed the horror experienced

¹⁵ Ignacio Garcia Sánchez. Chinese Military Power: The Dragon Tales Flight. Araucaria Magazine, Volume 18, No. 35 (2016). <https://ojs.publius.us.es/ojs/index.php/araucaria/article/view/2676>. Translation by the author.

¹⁶ Ignacio José Garcia Sánchez, abstract from the book: China, by Henry Kissinger, journal issued by the Spanish Institute of Strategic Studies, Num. 0, (2012). It can be downloaded from: <http://revista.ieee.es/index.php/ieee/article/view/311/390> visited on 8th October 2016.

on the realist system of the balance of powers. One of its main critics, the 28th President of the United States, Woodrow Wilson, even described the balance of power as immoral and, at the same time, he was the author of the 14 points¹⁷ that were to be used to develop the 26 articles of the League of Nations Mandate¹⁸. It was the first opportunity for idealism¹⁹ and its «historical reason»²⁰, to come up with an answer to realism through the idea of collective security, thus, the Treaty of Versailles (1919), which put an end to the First World War, also saw the birth of the League of Nations.

But history is obstinate and human nature insists on proving the deepest and most critical realism to be right, with Thucydides, Machiavelli and Hobbes at the core of the vicious repetition of the cycles of history. The thirty seconds that the history of mankind occupies on the calendar of the universe were perhaps made shorter than ever, when the expected progress made by an imperfect League of Nations was truncated by the outbreak of the Second World War. A conflict that was to completely dehumanise the globe, winners and losers as a whole, with the unspeakable memory of the saturation bombing of civilians, the macabre genocide of the Jews and the dropping of two atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

The political game of the balance of power as «a system of cynical power manipulation, indifferent to moral prerogatives»²¹, was consolidated during the perverse and mortal game of the Cold War, where mutual assured

¹⁷ <https://prezi.com/fubip6-zzmcb/los-14-puntos-de-wilson-y-cual-fue-su-importancia-en-este-tiempo/> visited on 21st August 2016.

¹⁸ <http://www.dipublico.org/3485/pacto-de-la-sociedad-de-nations-1919/> visited on 21st August 2016.

¹⁹ I would like to use this term linked to the most important figure where this international relations theory is concerned, the German philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) forerunner of German idealism. In Anglo-Saxon literature, especially Joseph Jr. Nye, the term used is liberalism, as its first proponent is considered to be John Locke. Nye establishes the origins of the two tendencies in the conception of the natural state of man as put forward by two British philosophers, John Locke (1632-1704), father of classical liberalism, and Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) theorist of political realism and of the social contract.

²⁰ See Ignacio García Sánchez. Human security and historical reason, from justification to regression, going through the state of hibernation. Bulletin issued by the Spanish Institute of Strategic Studies (BIE3), no. 3, Madrid, 2016.

²¹ «At present, these Westphalian concepts are reviled as a cynical manipulation of power, indifferent to moral prerogatives. Yet the structure that was established with the Peace of Westphalia was the first attempt to institutionalise an international order on the basis of rules and limits that had been agreed upon, founded on the multiplicity of power as opposed to basing it on the domination of one single country. The concepts of «raison d'état» and «national interest» appeared on the scene for the first time, but did not amount to an exaltation of power, but an attempt to rationalise and limit its use».

«The United States has fluctuated between defending the Westphalian system or condemning its premises pursuant to balance of power and non-interference in domestic affairs, considering them to be immoral and obsolete, and on occasions has done both of these at the same time». Henry Kissinger, *World Order*, Barcelona, Penguin Random House, 3rd Edition, (2016), Pages 39 and 19. Translation by Teresa Arijon.

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destruction paved the way, in its most tortuous form, for the false hope of «perpetual peace» as per the predecessor of idealism²².

However, the conflict came to an end this time without an armed confrontation between the great powers; thus, the side that was trying to establish its hegemony in Europe ended into an economic and ideological freefall. Trapped by a moment in history, the Soviet Union was unable to adapt to the technological revolution and to transform a stagnant society. A transition of power was impossible, because one of the adversaries in the bipolar world in the second half of the 20th Century collapsed without being able to consider a challenge that would have amounted to collective suicide.

And then what? Now that 25 years have elapsed since the Soviet Union was dissolved Do we have to say that over a quarter of a century of Post-Cold War has been wasted? Do we have to say that the dream of the «end of history»²³, human security, the responsibility to protect, have been lost? Do we have to say that humanity as a whole and the human being as an individual in the centre of gravity of security, in accordance with that historic opportunity that was opened in 2005²⁴ of achieving freedom to live without poverty, without fear and with dignity, have been lost?

Current situation regarding the conflict

«There are no status quo powers in the international system, save for the occasional hegemon that wants to maintain its dominating position over potential rivals. Great powers are rarely content with the current distribution of power; on the contrary, they face a constant incentive to change it in their favour. They almost always have revisionist intentions, and they will use force to alter the balance of power if they think it can be done at a reasonable price. At times, the costs and risks of trying to shift the balance of power are too great, forcing great powers to wait for more favourable circumstances. But the desire for more power does not go away, unless a state achieves the ultimate goal of hegemony. Since no state is likely to

²² Therefore, and by way of conclusion, we can retrieve a quote from Henry Kissinger in the epilogue of his book *On China*, in which we are faced with a terrible geopolitical dilemma: «in his essay, Perpetual Peace, the philosopher Immanuel Kant argues that perpetual peace will eventually come to the world in one of these two ways, either by human conviction or by conflicts and catastrophes of such magnitude that humanity will have no other alternative. We now find ourselves in the latter situation». Ignacio Garcia Sanchez. *The Arctic. Old or new geopolitics? Geopolitical Panorama of the Conflicts 2015*, Madrid, Ministry of Defence, 2015, Page 118.

²³ See Ignacio Garcia Sánchez. *Taiwan, the beautiful isle and its inexorable dialectic towards the «end of history»*, Bulletin issued by the Spanish Institute of Strategic Studies (BIE3) no. 2, Madrid, Ministry of Defence, 2016.

²⁴ Report by the Secretary General, Kofi Annan. *In Larger Freedom: Towards Development, Security and Human Rights for All*, New York, United Nations, General Assembly, 2005.

achieve global hegemony, however, the world is condemned to perpetual great-power competition»²⁵.

For the analysis of the current situation of the conflict I will be using the three levels, images, established by Kenneth Waltz, namely: individual, state, system:

«Answers to the following question can be sought in political philosophy: Where are the basic causes of war to be found? The answers are disconcerting because of their variety and intrinsic contradictions. To be able to cope with such complexity, the answers have to be structured into the following three categories: regarding individuals, regarding the structures of the different states and regarding the international system... These three causal levels will be referred to as images of international relations, numbered in accordance with the allocated order, each image being defined with respect to the connection, where its major causes will be listed»²⁶.

I will also divide the international system into structures and processes, according to the method utilised by Joseph J. Nye in his series of lectures, *Must history repeat the great conflict of this Century?*; which are, in turn, the first two entries in the Spanish *Diccionario de la Real Academia de la Lengua* for the word «system»²⁷.

Thus, as far as individuals are concerned, we have observed, especially after the 2008 financial crisis, a general discrediting of the political class. Corruption²⁸ rears its ugly head everywhere and, all because of certain individuals, discredits an entire system of values and traits; yet it is its very nature and its unquestioned degree of legitimisation that tends to encourage and perpetuate these practices²⁹.

Another trend on the geopolitical scene, which has a direct effect on appointing the main leaders and the political bases that support them, is the radicalisation and rootlessness of major sectors of society and

²⁵ *Ibid.* John J. Mearsheimer, *The False Promise of International Institution*, Pages 11-12.

²⁶ Kenneth N Waltz, *Man, the State, and War*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1959, Page 12.

²⁷ 1. m. Set of rules or principles concerning a matter, rationally linked to each other. 2. m. Set of things that related to each other in a structured way contribute to a particular goal.

²⁸ «There is sufficient evidence to support the famous quote from Lord Acton stating that: «power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely», and furthermore, numerous studies have shown that it corrupts deeply, especially those who think that they deserve it». Joseph S. Nye, Jr. *The Future of Power*, New York, Perseus Book Group, 2011, Page 207.

²⁹ One of its greatest perversions is the perpetuation in power of the leaders. A phenomenon that is forever on the increase and that is leading to constitutional changes being made in many countries to enable those leaders to be re-elected with no time limits.

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their most dramatic consequences: racism and xenophobia; organised crime that is deeply entrenched in the social fabric and a savage form of terrorism that is becoming widespread. This trend is accentuated by the phenomenon of multiculturalism driven by the migration factor, spurred on by domestic crises, the fragility and de-structuring of numerous states, especially in Africa. Furthermore, in specific cases mainly brought about by armed domestic conflicts, large-scale diasporas occur that have a direct effect upon bordering countries and on the wealthiest destinations in the Western world.

As a result, we are witnessing a social and political bipolarisation towards the extremes, authoritarianism and populism, which is reflected in the characters of the new leaders. This dilemma has emerged especially in such countries as: China, Russia, Turkey, Egypt, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Israel, India, Indonesia, the Philippines, etc., which believe they are feeling more clearly that the Western hegemony of the past is weakening and undergoing a redistribution process.

Yet if this trend is clear in the new proponent powers, it is just as easy to discern in the hegemonic West, in the European Union and, just like in a perfect mirror, in the United States. The political analysts on one side or the other were unanimous in describing the Primaries for the presidential candidates as «the dirtiest and ugliest» elections in recent times, in which the three main candidates were the three models studied: the shadow of corruption, authoritarianism and populism³⁰.

On the next level, the states. There is no doubt whatsoever that these still are holding on to power and are monopolising the use of force. Any attempt or possibility of providing international institutions with executive capacity in their spheres of action, are immediately revoked when the national interests of any of the major powers are questioned. At the most, the realistic sense in international relations prevails whenever power relations become blurred and the sense of multipolarity increases. One recent example can be found in the ruling given by the Permanent Court of Arbitration (The Hague), regarding the claim brought by the Philippines concerning sovereign and legal rights in the South China Sea according to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

In this scenario, «*de facto*» situations abound. However, the most important factor for this analysis, for the time being, is that they invariably remain below the threshold of armed response by other states within the conceptual

³⁰ Hillary Clinton, with the scandal of her non-ethical use of emails and the favours paid back to those who donated to her Trust Fund. Donald Trump, and his speeches with clearly authoritarian connotations of a nationalist and racist nature. Bernie Sanders, with his populist view of a socialist nature, considered to be the intruder and who has brought about a genuine people's revolution by catalysing the citizens' indignation with the political class.

framework of the balance of power³¹, but never taking the international community and the multiplicity of functional institutions as the reference³². In a power transfer situation, survival –sovereignty and independence– once again emerges as the vital interest to protect. The United States, in its strategic review of security, prioritised its five challenges in accordance with that yardstick, thus terrorism which does not affect it directly, is relegated to fifth place, whereas state threats are perceived to be: Russia, China, Iran and North Korea, in that order³³.

And for these international actors, at a hegemonic power transfer phase, the anarchical balance of power system does not guarantee the survival of any of them. Maintaining the status of power of the state and, thus, its political class within the constitutional framework, is only guaranteed autonomously, with military power and autarchy as the basic pillars, or by weaving a network of alliances with sufficient guarantees. Japan would epitomise how the current situation is evolving where the two courses of action are concerned.

The geopolitical structure is consolidating itself with greater force, with a realistic perspective that is becoming increasingly pure. The idealism that prevailed after the fall of the Berlin Wall, suffered its greatest setback with the Iraq War, accentuated in Georgia, and was confirmed in the Libyan conflict and the criticisms of the use of NATO's responsibility to protect doctrine, after receiving authorisation from the UN Security Council, and so

³¹ GEN. DUNFORD: «Yeah, to be honest with you, what I described it as is its competition. And in most cases, or at least in some cases it's adversarial competition. It has a military dimension... We're talking about... a competition with an adversary that has a military dimension, but the adversary knows exactly what the threshold is for us to take decisive military action. So they operate below that level. They continue to advance their interests and we lose competitive advantage. And, frankly, our interests are adversely affected. And for me it's actually one of the most significant challenges that we're dealing with right now.

In fact, to that point, next Wednesday we have, you know, a quarterly session with the combatant commanders. In the uniform day, the first day, this is the topic...

Clearly Russia is probably the clearest example where they have fully integrated the whole of government to deal with issues like Georgia, the Ukraine and, you know, even to some extent in the Baltics on a day-to-day basis, where they use information operations and so forth to advance their interests.

I think, from my perspective, what we owe..., our leadership clarity on the military dimension of dealing with this challenge, what we can do in the military dimension and what we can't do. And..., how to more fully integrate our government».

Joseph F. Dunford, Jr., Remarks and Q&A at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, Washington, 29th March 2016, Page 7, transcription.

³² Always risky, because the response threshold for a political action is determined by a host of variables. Clear examples of this include the invasions of South Korea, by the Communist Regime in North Korea and the invasion of the Falkland Isles by the Argentinian dictatorship.

³³ North Korea, has launched a medium-range ballistic missile from a submarine, this time successfully, tracing a 500-kilometre path before falling into the Sea of Japan.

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on, until the conflicts arose in Syria and Ukraine, and the latent conflict in the South China Sea. Nowadays, the balance of power is at its initial stages with war declared in the storyline, in hearts and minds; the first forays into the economic domain with the sanctions imposed on Russia; the Chinese initiative regarding the overland and maritime silk routes; and, finally, the US Trans-Pacific Strategic Economic Partnership Agreement, which appear to be mutually exclusive. Furthermore, perhaps the most emblematic aspect is the clear challenge promoted by China, through the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank to the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Furthermore, the arms race can be considered a fact; and the Kantian premonition of mutual assured destruction keeps up the pretence of peace between the major powers, which show and conceal their hands in the political game called the balance of power.

The prevailing international security system that came into existence as a result of the Second World War, in the purest realist tradition, splits world power between the major powers that emerged victorious from the war. Using their veto power, they try to keep other powers outside their spheres of influence or away from what they consider to be vital interests. Thus, in an unstable balance, conflict between the military powers is rendered more complicated.

A system that is exposed to the passage of time and, basically, to the two essential schools of thought affecting the notion of power –consistent with Joseph Nye’s view– which highlight their own contradictions and a rigidity that prevents any transformation:

- The modification to the *status quo*, not because there is any variation in the international system, but because the weight, the power of the stakeholders is modified. Seventy years after the dropping of the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the world is a very different place, but the international system is still exactly the same. In it, new capacities and power relations in all areas: nuclear, economic, cultural, military, scientific... All of these are interacting on a new stage with more actors than ever before, so they have to adapt to this scenario.
- The unstoppable development of the human narrative and its moral sense as a caring species, different and distinct from all others. As Michael Walzer argued in his criticism of realism, moral judgement on war has always existed and is a reality that has accompanied the history of humanity. Often imperceptibly, with its comings and goings, its moral sense is a reality: «Reiterated along history, our arguments and judgements shape what I want to call «the moral reality of war», that is, all those experiences in which moral language is the descriptive element and furthermore is necessarily employed»³⁴. Thus, in histori-

³⁴ Michael Walzer, *Just and unjust wars*, Page 15.

cal and cultural relativism, as in the moral sense, «ignorance isn't all that common; dishonesty is far more so»³⁵.

Role of the external stakeholders

«The reconstruction of the international system is the ultimate challenge for the statesmen of our time. The punishment for failing will not so much be a major war between states (although this cannot be ruled out in some regions) as an evolution towards spheres of influence associated with specific internal structures and particular forms of government... It is essential to reappraise the balance of power concept. Therefore, everything depends on some idea of future. Yet varying internal structures can lead to different interpretations of the meaning of current trends and, more important still, confront criteria for resolving these differences. This is the dilemma of our era»³⁶.

I really should begin this part of the analysis by making reference to the United Nations and, more specifically, to the body responsible for watching over peace keeping and international security: its Security Council. However, it is really very hard for me to regard it as an external actor, when its function is basically to institutionalise the balance of power that emerged after the Second World War and, thus, keep its «*status quo*». Proof of this lies in the attempts to modify³⁷ its constitution and working procedures, especially as regards vetoing, without any success. This inability to agree upon peaceful reform supports the realist thesis as the only valid theory for analysing the future of a hegemonic war.

As Kant states in his philosophical sketch «On Perpetual Peace», the powerlessness to establish peace is a result of this inability to legitimise itself peacefully:

*«A state of peace among men who live side by side each other is not the natural state, «*status naturalis*»; the state of nature is rather a state of war; for although it may not always reach the outbreak of hostilities, it is nevertheless continually threatened with them. The state of peace must, therefore, be «*established*»; for the mere cessation of hostilities furnishes no security against their recurrence, and where there is no guarantee for peace between neighbouring states – something which can only be furnished under conditions that are regulated by Law- the one may treat the other, when proclamation is made to that effect, as an enemy»³⁸.*

³⁵ Michael Walzer, *Just and unjust wars*, Page 19.

³⁶ Henry Kissinger, *World Order*, Barcelona, Penguin Random House, 2016 (3rd Edition, translated by Teresa Arijon), Pages 370-371.

³⁷ See the Spanish position regarding its reform. Visited on 31st August 2016. <http://www.exteriores.gob.es/Portal/es/SalaDePrensa/RedesSociales/CelestesobrefondoMANZANA/Paginas/20143004.aspx>

³⁸ Prepared by the author from the English version (Jonathan Bennett) and the Spanish version (Miguel de Cervantes Virtual Library).

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Thus, Mearsheimer, in his article «The False Promises of International Institutions»³⁹, assesses the three theories that back up the role of international institutions in preventing interstate wars, namely: liberal institutionalism⁴⁰, collective security⁴¹ and critical theory⁴².

The author argues that institutions are a true reflection of the distribution of power, which are based upon the particular interests of the major powers. Therefore, they do not in themselves have an effect, as «independent variables», on their relations, especially those relations that affect relative power and the balance of power. His basic conclusion is that international institutions play only a marginal role and their influence in promoting peace and stability is minimal. At the present time, this would seem to be absolutely correct.

³⁹ John J. Mearsheimer. The False Promises of International Institutions, *International Security*, Winter 1994/95, Vol. 19, no. 3, Pages 5-49.

⁴⁰ «Liberal institutionalism is the least ambitious of the three theories. It does not directly address the important question of how to prevent war, but focuses instead on explaining why economic and environmental cooperation among states is more likely than realist recognize. Increased cooperation in those realms is presumed to reduce the likelihood of war, although liberal institutionalists do not explain how. The theory is predicated on the belief that cheating is the main inhibitor of international cooperation, and that institutions provide the key to overcoming that problem. The aim is to create rules that constrain states, but not to challenge the fundamental realist claim that states are self-interested actors». *Ibid.* John J. Mearsheimer, *The False Promises of International Institutions*, Page 14.

⁴¹ «Collective security directly confronts the issue of how to prevent war. The theory starts with the assumption that force will continue to matter in world politics, and that states will have to guard against potential aggressors. However, the threat of war can be greatly reduced, according to the theory, by challenging realist thinking about state behavior, and substituting in its place three anti-realist norms. First, states should reject the idea of using force to change the status quo. Second, to deal with states that violate that norm and threaten (or start) a war, responsible states must not act on the basis of their own narrow self-interest. Rather, they must suppress the temptation to respond in whatever way would maximize their individual gains, and instead automatically join together to present the aggressor with the threat of overwhelming force. Third, states must trust each other to renounce aggression and to mean that renunciation. They must also be confident that other states will come to their rescue, should they become the target of aggression». *Ibid.*, John J. Mearsheimer, *The False Promises of International Institutions*, Page 14.

⁴² «Critical theory is the most ambitious of the theories, as its ultimate aim is to transform the fundamental nature of international politics and to create a world where there is not just increased cooperation among states, but the possibility of genuine peace. Like collective security, but unlike liberal institutionalism, critical theory directly challenges realist thinking about the self-interested behavior of states. The theory is predicated on the assumption that ideas and discourse—how we think and talk about international politics—are the driving forces behind state behavior. It utterly rejects realism's claim that state behavior is largely a function of the given structure of the external world. For critical theorists, ideas shape the material world in important ways, and thus the way to revolutionize international politics is to change drastically the way individuals think and talk about world politics. Intellectuals, especially the critical theorists themselves, are believed to play a key role in that process». *Ibid.*, John J. Mearsheimer, *The False Promises of International Institutions*, Pages 14-15.

Conclusions and prospect

«The power of nations rests on four basic pillars:

1. Military force and the will to use it;
2. Sufficient economic capacity to enable a nation to provide other countries with aid and investments;
3. Ideological leadership that serves as a model for other nations; and
4. A society and a system of government that are united»⁴³.

«Second definitive article in the conditions for perpetual peace: «The Right of Nations shall be founded on a Federation of Free States» ... Every people for the sake of its own security, thus may and ought to demand from any other, that it shall enter along with it into a constitution, similar to the Civil Constitution, in which the Right of each shall be secured. Instead of this however, we rather find that every State founds its Majesty –for it is absurd to speak of the majesty of the people– on not being subject to any legal coercion; and the glory of its Ruler or Head is made to consist of the fact that without his requiring to encounter any danger himself, many thousands stand ready to be sacrificed at his command for a cause which may be no concern of theirs ... For states viewed in relation to each other, there can be only one way, according to reason, of emerging from that lawless condition which contains nothing but occasions of war, just as is the case of individual men, reason would drive them to give up their savage lawless freedom to accommodate themselves to public coercive laws, and thus to form an ever-growing State of Nations, such as would at last embrace all the Nations of the Earth –»*civitas gentium*»–. But as the Nations according to their ideas of international right, will not have such a positive rational system, and consequently reject in fact «in thesi» what is right in theory «in hypothesi», hence, instead of the positive idea of a universal republic –if all is not to be lost- we shall have as result only the negative surrogate of a Federation of the States averting war, subsisting in an external union, and always extending itself over the world. And thus the current of those inclinations and passions of men which are antagonistic to Right and productive of war, may be checked, although there will still be a danger of their breaking out betimes»⁴⁴.

On reading the preceding pages one could or should conclude that mankind is inevitably condemned to be involved, sooner or later, in a new armed confrontation between the major powers. Society would be unable to evolve, as if the Darwinian system of evolution and selection were to have reached its final state; the lion would forever be the lion, the bear, always the bear, the eagle, eagle, etc., and humanity a collection of states competing for survival

⁴³ *Ibid.*, Saul Bernard Cohen, Geopolitics. The Geography of International Relations, Page 2.

⁴⁴ Immanuel Kant, Perpetual Peace, Miguel de Cervantes Virtual Library (2003), Pages 8 and 9.

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and power, in an eternal cycle of hegemonic powers, balances of power and wars of transition towards a new hegemonic power.

However, the evolution of the human species wants to show us something other than that «still life». Francis Fukuyama in his dense work on political-social evolution in two volumes: *The Origins of Political Order, from Prehuman Times to the French Revolution*; and *Political Order and Political Decay, from the Industrial Revolution to the Globalization of Democracy*⁴⁵; shows us a dynamic development, which is neither uniform nor invariable, yet constant from prehuman times up to the present to converge into what constitutes the paradigm of the balance of liberal socio-political institutions, in search of that natural end, which is none other than the personal quest for happiness. That culmination would be represented by a natural balance between: the State, sovereign and free; the concept of Law implemented by the Rule of Law; and social responsibility, the need for a constant legitimation of both powers, State and Law, before the citizens whence it emanates and before those who are responsible⁴⁶.

The realistic basis of the solitary and isolated individual portrayed by Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau, is in opposition to the Greek perspective represented by Aristotle, Plato, Socrates, where the person is social by nature⁴⁷. Families, clans, tribes, peoples, nations, etc., bound by links of different kinds, from the most abstract ones such as religious ideas, to the most perceivable ones, such as genetic, racial or language links. A long and winding road, unevenly travelled along, with constant progressions and setbacks, seeking an ideal but never finding it, in the purest «Hegelian tradition, (through a) process of transformation in which two opposites, thesis and antithesis, are resolved in a superior form or synthesis»⁴⁸. An evolution in which the institutions that at any point in time have reached their maximum level of development, have unfailingly endeavoured to hold onto power and prevent change, refuting «historical reason»⁴⁹ as human beings' «vital reason».

⁴⁵ Francis Fukuyama, *The Origins of Political Order, from Prehuman Times to the French Revolution*; and *Political Order and Political Decay, from the Industrial Revolution to the Globalization of Democracy*, Barcelona, Deusto, Grupo Planeta, translated by Jorge Paredes (2016).

⁴⁶ «The aim of this book is to fill in some of the gaps caused by historic amnesia, by explaining the origins of basic political institutions in society that are now taken for granted. The three categories of institutions in question are: 1. The State, 2. The origins of legality, 3. And responsible government». *Ibid.* Francis Fukuyama, *The origins of political order, from prehistoric times to the French Revolution*, Page 43.

⁴⁷ «In either vision of the human being: in his natural state, –as a person essentially free–, or social –the political animal, «zoon politikon»–, the power struggle will continue to dominate the passions of the human being until its utmost consequences». Ignacio Garcia Sanchez. *On power, the art of war and military capacities. The dilemma of perpetual peace*, Page 2.

⁴⁸ *Diccionario de la Real Academia de la Lengua*.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, Ignacio Garcia Sánchez. *Human Security and Historical Reason, for the justification of Regression, going through the state of hibernation*.

Kant is very clear in his essay on *Perpetual Peace*:

«If one considers the perversity of human nature, unabashedly manifested in the relations between free peoples –contained, on the other hand, and watched over in the civil and political state by the legal coercion of the Government–, it is amazing that the word «right» has still not been deleted from war policy as being pedantic and arbitrary. No State has yet dared to publically air this opinion... All in all, the homage that States pay to the concept of «right» –or at least pay lip-service to–, shows that there is a major leaning towards moral goodness. This leaning, which lies dormant at the moment, aims to overcome the evil principle –which undeniably exists–, and makes it possible to expect a similar victory in others. If this were not the case, it would never occur to States to speak of «right» when they are preparing to go to war.... For people to say: «I do not want there to be war between us; let's establish a State, i.e., subject all of us to a supreme power that legislates, governs and settles our differences peacefully»; for people to say that, and I repeat, is something that can be comprehended. But for a State to say: «I don't want there to be any more wars between me and the rest of the States; but that does not mean I am going to recognise a supreme power, legislator, that guarantees my right and that of all others», is something that is quite beyond comprehension»⁵⁰.

Michael Walzer, uses a very similar argument:

«The clearest evidence about the stability of values throughout history is the immutable nature of the lies that soldiers and statesmen tell... If we were all realists, like the Athenian generals (the dialogue with the inhabitants of Melos) or like the followers of Hobbes in a state of war, there would be a common objective for both, morality and hypocrisy. We would simply say to one another brutally and directly, what we wanted to do or had done. However, the truth is that what most of us want, even in war, is to act or to appear to act morally. And we want that, simply, because we know what morality means»⁵¹.

Nothing is determined in the future history of mankind, except our own death. As Nye argues about the consequences of the First and Second World Wars: if Kaiser Wilhelm, his cousin Tsar Nicholas II and the Austro-Hungarian Emperor Franz Josef I had been able to look into crystal ball to see the outcome of the First World War Would it have been played out in the way it was? Would Neville Chamberlain's appeasement policy with Hitler or the US deterrence policy with Japan without room for manoeuvre have been the same, if it had been possible to appreciate the seriousness of the conflict that was to follow? And finally Was the fact that the Cold War came to an end without hostilities breaking out due to the risk of there being

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, Kant, *Perpetual Peace*, Pages 9 and 10.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars*, Pages 19 and 20.

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an escalation into a nuclear war and the most tragic possibility of «mutual assured destruction»?

Yet, idealism does not seek perpetual peace in the churchyard to which Kant sarcastically referred at the beginning of his essay:

«To the Perpetual Peace». These words were once put by a Dutch innkeeper on his signboard, as a satirical inscription over the representation of a churchyard, We need not enquire whether they told of men in general, or particularly of the governors or rulers of states who seem never to be satiated of war, or even only of the Philosophers who dream that sweet dream of peace. The question is left unanswered»⁵².

Idealism seeks the complicity of mankind in its commitment to «historical reason» and the socio-political evolution of society, so that never again may an author write:

«You are a citizen, and citizenship carries responsibilities. In the 1930s the world sleepwalked into the avoidable catastrophe of World War II because the electorates in the US and Europe were too lazy to think beyond the populist recipes of isolationism and pacifism. This error led to the sacrifice of their children. It is the citizens' responsibility to prevent our societies from sliding into another catastrophe, always preventable, that our children would have to face »⁵³.

⁵² *Ibid.* Kant, Perpetual Peace, Page 1.

⁵³ Paul Collier. The Bottom Billion, Why the Poorest Countries Are Failing and What Can Be Done About It, Oxford, University Press, 2007, Page 176.

Table of geopolitical indicators

GEOPOLITICAL INDICATOR TABLE (CHINA)¹	
Surface area 9,596,960 km ² (4 th in the world ranking)	
GDP 19.39 trillion \$ (1 st in the world ranking)	
GDP structure	Agriculture 8.9 %
	Industry 42.7%
	Services 48.4%
GDP per capita 14,100 \$ (113 th in the world ranking) –World average: 15,800 \$–	
GDP growth rate 6.9% (18 th in the world ranking) –World average: 3%–	
Trade relations	
(Exports): 2.27 trillion \$ (1 st in the world ranking)	
Trade relations	
(Imports): 1,596 trillion \$ (3 rd in the world ranking)	
Population 1,367,485,388 (1 st in the world ranking)	
Age structure (66 th in the world ranking) – World average: 30.1– – Chinese average: 37.1–	0-14 17.08%
	15-64 72.89%
	Over 65 10.01%
Population growth rate 0.45% –World average: 1.08–	
Ethnic groups: Han (91.6%); Zhuang (1.3%); Hui, Manchu, Yugur, Miao, Yi, Mongolian, Dong, Bouyei, Yao, Bai, Korean, Hani, Li, Kazakh and Dai (7.1%)	
Religions: Buddhism (18.2%), Christians (5.1%), Moslem (1.8%), local religions (21.9%), Hinduism (0.1%), Judaism (0.1%), unclassified (52.2%)	
Literacy rate 96.4% –World average: 86.1%–	
Population below the poverty threshold 6.1%	
GINI index 46,9 (28 th in the world ranking) –World average: 38,1–	
Military expenditure. % of the GDP 1.99% (40 th in the world ranking) –World average: 2.42%–	

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GEPOLITICAL INDICATOR TABLE (UNITED STATES)	
Surface area 9,833,517 km ² (3 rd in the world ranking)	
GDP 17.95 trillion \$ (3 rd in the world ranking)	
GDP structure	Agriculture 1.6%
	Industry 20.8%
	Services 77.6 %
GDP per capita 55,800 \$ (19 th in the world ranking) –World average: 15,800 \$–	
GDP growth rate 2.4% (127 th in the world ranking) –World average: 3%–	
Trade relations	
(Exports): 1,598 \$ (3 rd in the world ranking)	
Trade relations	
(Imports): 2.347 \$ (1 st in the world ranking)	
Population 321,368,864 (4 th in the world ranking)	
Age structure (62 nd in the world ranking) – World average: 30.1– – Average for the United States: 37.9–	0-14 18.99%
	15-64 66 %
	Over 65 14.8%
Population growth rate 0.78% –World average:1.08–	
Ethnic groups: Caucasian (79.96%), coloured (12.8%), Asian (4.4%), American Indian and natives (0.97%), Hawaiian and other island peoples (0.18%)	
Religions: Protestants (51.3%), Roman Catholics (23.9%), Mormons (1.7%), other Christians (1.6%), Jews (1.7%), Buddhists (0.7%), Moslems (0.6%), others unspecified (12.1%)	
Literacy rate –World average: 86.1%–	
Population below the poverty threshold 15.1%	
GINI index 45 (43 rd in the world ranking) –World average: 38.1–	
Military expenditure. % of the GDP 4.35% (9 th in the world ranking) –World average: 2.42%–	

GEPOLITICAL INDICATOR TABLE (EUROPEAN UNION)	
Surface area 4,324,782 km ² (7 th in the world ranking)	
GDP 19.18 trillion \$ (2 nd in the world ranking)	
GDP structure	Agriculture 1.6%
	Industry 24.4%
	Services 71.3%
GDP per capita 37,800 \$ (45 th in the world ranking) –World average: 15.800 \$–	
GDP growth rate 1.9% (137 th in the world ranking) –World average: 3%–	
Trade relations	
(Exports): 2,259 trillion \$ (2 nd in the world ranking)	
Trade relations	
(Imports): 2,244 trillion \$ (2 nd in the world ranking)	
Population 513,949,445 (3 rd in the world ranking)	
Age structure (21 st in the world ranking) –World average: 30.1– –Average for the European Union: 42.7–	0-14 15.5%
	15-64 65.7%
	Over 65 18.8%
Population growth rate 0.25% –World average:1.08–	
Ethnic groups	
Religions: Roman Catholics (48%), Protestants (12%), Orthodox (8%), other Christian groups (4%), Moslems (2%), others including Jews, Buddhists and Hindus (1%)	
Literacy rate –World average: 86.1%–	
Population below the poverty threshold 9.8%	
GINI index 30.9 (115 th in the world ranking) –World average: 38.1–	
Military expenditure. % of the GDP 1.65% (56 th in the world ranking) –World average: 2.42%–	

Chapter two

Jihadist terrorism in Morocco

Ignacio Fuente Cobo

Abstract

In Morocco, Islam has almost always been peaceful, rejecting violence as a political tool for the Islamization of society. But that does not mean that the Alawite Kingdom is immune to the most radical Islamist trends that have been generated in other Arab countries in past decades. The attacks in Casablanca in 2003, changed the political landscape of the country and its attitude in the fight against Jihadist terrorism and ended the illusion of exceptionality of Morocco and its consideration as a bulwark against fundamentalism. Although the traditional form of Islam practised in the Kingdom is far from the vision defended by Jihadist groups, the participation of Moroccan citizens in national and international terrorism networks makes it necessary to study the Jihadist phenomenon in the Alawite Kingdom from its origins to present days. The aim is to understand why it has reached the current situation and what guidelines can be anticipated for Moroccan jihadism in the future. Therefore, in this paper Moroccan contemporary jihadism is analysed in order to pinpoint the keys of the success by Moroccan authorities in their fight against a phenomenon, Jihadist terrorism, which is so violently hitting other countries on both shores of the Mediterranean basin.

Keywords

Morocco, Jihadism, Maliki, Syria, Salafism, Takfirism, Casablanca.

Introduction

Until the start of the seventies last century, political Islamism was a phenomenon that was practically alien to Morocco. The Alawite Kingdom appeared to be immune to the Islamic movements that were taking place in other Arab countries. The existence of a monarchy since the end of the 17th century that proclaimed being direct descendants from the prophet Mohammed, with the subsequent religious legitimacy this conferred it, was a comparative advantage over the rest of the Arab countries, regardless of these operating under a monarchic or republican regime. The king appeared to stand as an unbreachable rock for the Islamist groups who were deprived of enough space to develop and prosper. The only viable option the Islamic militant movements were given, during the initial years of political radicalism was either through integration in the institutional political system, or absolute alienation relegating their activity to the most marginal segments of society.

This situation does not mean that significant terrorist actions were not perpetrated prior to the Casablanca bombings in May 2003, nor that activity by Jihadist groups was not a challenge for the security policies of the Moroccan authorities, but until then terrorism had never reached a particularly concerning level¹. The political and religious legitimacy the king sought to position himself above the demands and disputes between the different Moroccan Islamic sectors, was understood as one of the main strengths in terms of security in the Kingdom, although, as the 2003 Casablanca bombings proved, it also entailed symptoms of weakness.

On the other hand, and unlike Algeria, where prohibition of the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) after suspension of the electoral process in 1992, fired the resistance against the authorities channelled through terrorist groups such as the Armed Islamic Group (GIA), in Morocco, tactical alliances between the monarch and the main Islamic party, the Justice and Development Party (PJD) subordinated to Royal Authority, was a very significant containing wall against Jihad terrorism arising internally. The PJD became an authorised, although limited, way of channelling aspirations of the most vulnerable popular areas, which avoided a possible assault against the power by groups affiliated to Jihadist Salafism.

Background to the conflict

The appearance of the first Islamic movements

It was in 1972 when the first Islamist movement in Morocco appeared, under the name of Shabiba al-Islamiya (Islamic Youth), which was created

¹ TOZY Mohamed. *Les Pronostics de Mohamed Tozy: Les Islamistes ne peuvent pas gagner*. Arabies. February 2001 Page 23.

by the nationalist Abdelkarim Moutiï, a former inspector of the Arabic language². This was a violent, clandestine, extremist Sunni association, whose objective was to establish an Islamic State in Morocco. Its ranks were full of professors and students who Moutiï taught a strongly radicalised «Islamic» education, following the footsteps of Hassan al-Banna and Sayyid Qutb, the founders of the Muslim Brothers in Egypt, whose ideas had spread to Morocco by political leaders such as Allal El Fassi, the founder of the Moroccan Nationalist Party «*Istiqlal*»³. Its birth came about during a period where «Nasserism», that had been so widely preached in the Arab world in the sixties, had started to run out of steam and the new Islamic trends were starting to openly raise their voices.

The *Shabiba* movement was born as an objective alliance between Islamism and the power, in which the Moroccan authorities deliberately chose to «design religious policy based on promoting Islamism to counter the Arab nationalist dimension expressed through «Nasserism»⁴. *Shabiba* benefited from exacerbation of the internal contradictions in the traditional left-wing parties, which had favoured the appearance of a radical, revolutionary left-wing, which became its priority objective. Consequently, the Islamic militants started to recruit students at schools and universities who they indoctrinated with an ideological discourse based on considering Marxists / Leninists as «atheist groups».

This militant formation, whose members opposed the Alawite regime, was supported by a political branch known as Dawa (the call to Islam, spiritual education, the practice of religious rites, etc.) and also a military branch created in 1981 by Moutiï himself, with the name of *Fighting Faction*⁵, a group that was very active in the early eighties organising demonstrations against the Alawite monarchy, and illegal traffic of arms and explosives. Their main terrorist action was the assassination, on 18th December 1975, of Omar Benjelloun, the leader of USFP, a socialist in favour of secular Morocco, a vision that was the complete opposite of that held by the Islamists of *Shabiba*⁶.

² After being accused of being involved in the assassination on 18th December 1975 of Omar Benjelloun, a left-wing leader and journalist, Moutia fled to Saudi Arabia where he took part in the assault on the Great Mosque of Mecca in November 1979. He then fled to Libya, where it is believed he is living in exile. See EL AZIZI Abdellatif. «Qui a tué Omar Benjelloun?». MarocHebdo. 16.03.2001. <http://www.maghress.com/fr/marochebdo/45610>.

³ DARIF Mohamed. «L'expérience de la Chabiba Islamiya», La Gazette du Maroc. 16.06.2003. Available at <http://www.maghress.com/fr/lagazette/2780>. Consulted on 21.05.2016

⁴ *Ibidem*.

⁵ SETTECASE, Gerardo. *Not so distant deserts: the Canary plot behind the 11-M*, Santa Cruz de Tenerife, IDEA, 2008, page 65.

⁶ Along with Noumani another three theorists were involved in the attacks: Miloudi Zakaria, 37 years old, head of the outlawed association Assirat al-Mustaqim; Abdelkrim Chadli, 45 years old, doctor in philosophy; and Omar Haddouchi, 44 years old, a travelling salesman. Zakaria was sentenced to life imprisonment and the other two to thirty years each. DALLE Ignace: «L'assassinat del Omar Benjelloun», *Les Trois Rois: La monarchie*

The *Shabiba* intended to copy the scenario in the Middle East, i.e. direct confrontation with the regime. Nevertheless, police repression and the lack of strategic success meant the remains of the organisation split into a number of small Jihadist organisations. A significant number of the surviving members dissented from the organisation, and to mark this rupture they founded a more political rather than activist movement under the name of the Jamaa Khayria Association to subsequently become «Reform and Renovation» (Al Islah Wattajdid)⁷. The dissidents decided to join the official political life in accordance with constitutional legality, which mean any armed activity was renounced. A new change of name came about in the nineties, becoming «Unity and Reform» (Attawhid Wal Islah), whose members joined up with the Popular Constitutional Democratic Movement (MPDC) created in 1967 by MD. Abdelkrim Al Khatib ultimately ending up in the moderate trend of the Justice and Development Party after 1998 (Hibz al-Ahdala wa tanmia), chaired by the Prime Minister Abdelilah Benkirane⁸.

Other Jihadist groups of fairly low relevance appeared as well in the north and east of Morocco during the eighties⁹ such as the Association for Islamic Research (Jam'iyat al-Ba'th al-islami) in Oujda and Tetouan, the so-called «Call to Goodness and Elevation of the Soul» (Da'wa ila al-Khayr wa al Tannazûh) in Oujda, The People of the Flag (Alh al-Liwâ) in Nador, or the Islamic Liberation Party (Hizb al Tahrir al-Islami) in Tangier. Some of these groups created small Jihad cells in the cities of Berkane and Nador where they carried out several assassinations¹⁰ and years later were involved in the Casablanca bombings of 2003¹¹.

It could be said that the eighties made a very important period in the consolidation of an Islamist consciousness by part of certain sectors in Moroccan society. The success of the Iranian revolution played a big part in this, leading many Moroccans to believe, as was true in other Muslim countries, that an Islamic alternative to the political situation in Morocco was possible.

marocaine de l'indépendance à nos jours, Fayard 2004, google play. <https://books.google.es/books?id=lvN66tIPmv4C&pg=PT243&lpg=PT243&dq=Abdelaziz+Noumani&source=bl&ots=RjyphSINJi&sig=dDhwr-Fk9SvHV9SpRi2pKG8GGU0&hl=es&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjG8ZernsPMAhUB1BoKHQIMDqQQ6AEIMDAD#v=onepage&q=Abdelaziz%20Noumani&f=false>.

⁷ «La nébuleuse extrémiste», in *Aujourd'hui Le Maroc*, 30.08.2002. Available at <http://aujourd'hui.ma/focus/la-nebuleuse-extremiste-19827>. Consulted on 26.05.2016.

⁸ BENKHALLOUK Mohamed. «La genèse extrémiste: l'itinéraire marocain», *Aujourd'hui le Maroc*. 12.09.2003.

⁹ CHAARANI Ahmed. «La mouvance islamiste au Maroc: du 11 septembre 2001 aux attentats de Casablanca de 16 mai 2003». Karthala. 2004. Page 49.

¹⁰ As was the case of the assassination in Nador of Lahbib Oudaïf, a police informer. *Ibid.* Page 49.

¹¹ GUITTA Olivier. «Alive and Well and Living in London. Why won't Britain extradite Islamic extremists?». *The Weekly Standard*. 07.05.2007. Available at <http://www.weeklystandard.com/article/14697>. Consulted on 22.05.2016.

The influence of Wahhabism in Morocco

Starting in the seventies last century Morocco opened its gates up to Wahhabism from Saudi Arabia, a country it held close relations with ever since the Western Sahara conflict when the Saudi monarch channelled significant funds to finance Morocco's war effort and politically supported Morocco in the Arab world.

When the conflict was over, Saudi support was mainly directed at developing institutions that permitted dissemination of its own, more radical religious ideology among Moroccan society. That included opening Wahhabi Koranic schools and charity organisations that shared a Salafist outlook based on a return to original Islam from the times of the prophet Mohammed and his companions. They also financed the education of clerics in Saudi Arabia, which ended up producing a new generation of radical preachers, educated in a strict interpretation of Islam, far away from the Maliki school native to the Maghreb region.

Like this, and although the official, popular forms of Islam in Morocco, in their ideology, are incompatible with the Wahhabi doctrine, for political and financial reasons the country allowed Saudi religious personalities to finance up to 70% of the 35,000 mosques in the Kingdom¹² in cities such as Tangier, Casablanca, Fez, Rabat, Marrakesh and Tetouan, where they imposed their own preachers. These preachers used the religious centres to call Muslims to join the Jihad abroad, in countries such as Afghanistan, Bosnia or Chechnya.

The commitment by the Alawi monarchy to promoting such a strict outlook on Islam would become counter-productive after the first Gulf War (1990-91) when a certain number of those preachers started to separate from the official line of passive Salafism, which accepted the legitimacy of Arab monarchies, to take a much more violent approach to Jihadist Salafism driven by the leaders of Al Qaeda, Osama Bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri¹³. Those preachers started to openly criticise the Alawi monarchy and consequently they were forbidden from preaching in official mosques, and were arrested on numerous occasions.

Nevertheless, the repressive measures did not bring an end to activity by clerics, since they moved their activities to the suburbs and started to build improvised mosques in the poorer districts of the major Moroccan cities. Their influence started to spread among the poor residents and those who

¹² MAGHRAOUI Abdeslam. «After the Moroccan terrorist connection: state policies and Saudi Wahhabism» ARI No. 63/2004, Real Instituto Elcano, 07/04/2004. Available at http://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/wps/portal/rielcano/contenido?WCM_GLOBAL_CONTEXT=/elcano/elcano_es/zonas_es/mediterraneo+y+mundo+arabe/ari+63-2004. Consulted on 19.05.2016.

¹³ PARGETER Alison. «The Islamist Movement in Morocco», in *Terrorism Monitor*. Volume 3 Issued: 10.05.2005. Pages 115-140.

had become disillusioned with the authorities due to a lack of social action, the latter seeing in their political message a dangerous alternative to the stability of the monarchy. Consequently, and under the guise of charity services, the Islamists wove a silent network of extremism through the different regions of the Kingdom, mainly targeting the districts and suburbs where poverty and despair were at their worst.

These were the seeds that blossomed in a mosaic of small groups somewhere between crime and religion, with names such as «Salafiya Jihadia», «Attakfir Wal Hijra», «wattabligh Addaâwa», «Assirate Almoustaqime»¹⁴. Most of their leaders, despite academic supervision by the self-appointed preachers, were illiterate or had very limited levels of instruction, being to a greater or lesser extent ideologically linked to the postulates that the terrorist organisation Al Qaeda defended.

The appearance of Takfir Salafism

But after the fall of the Soviet Union, a new model of fundamentalism started to emerge from the Arab world, mainly from Egypt, represented by the so-called Takfiri Salafists. The main difference with other Islamic groups is that the Takfiri were not prepared to compromise with the national authorities in legal political activity that allowed them to establish an Islamic state through the polls. For them, this objective had to be achieved through violence. The importance of the Takfir doctrine in Morocco did not only lie in refusing to acknowledge the king as the maximum religious authority, but above all in that it was deeply rooted in the suburbs of Moroccan cities where State action was practically non-existent and where poverty--stricken social masses victims of rural exodus had settled in the years following independence in 1956¹⁵. The destruction of the «*derb*», the traditional working class district, became a key factor for the growth of these districts of Takfir Jihadism, an ideology that in less than a decade was capable of mobilising part of the youth in the marginal areas, bringing them out of their isolation and committing them to political violence against the country's authorities.

After 1999 the Moroccan Takfir movement decided to move towards political violence with the appearance of groups such as «Rebaa» in Meknes or «The Community of the Straight Path» (jamâ'ata al-Sirât al-mustaqîm) in Casablanca. These groups benefited from the dismantling of the police security network established by the Hassan II's regime, as a result of liberalising measures approved on occasion of the ascent to the throne of

¹⁴ «La nébuleuse extrémiste». Aujourd'hui Le Maroc. 30.08.2002. Available at <http://aujourd'hui.ma/focus/la-nebuleuse-extremiste-19827>. Consulted on 24.05.2016.

¹⁵ In 2003 around 10% of the urban population lived in shacks. In Casablanca, this number was around 300,000, accounting for 8.6% of the population. www.bladi.com. Consulted on 17.05.2016.

his son and successor Mohammed VI. The consequences of this situation led to greater coercion of the inhabitants of the poorest districts, and a wave of attacks initially targeting *Mokadems* (a kind of local police force) and public servants, but which spread to other professions and to the social fabric as a whole.

Nevertheless, unlike the Algerian Jihadists of the Armed Islamic Group and its heir the Salafist Group for Preach and Combat (GSPC), the Moroccan Jihadists showed greater signs of weakness in the last decade of past century. While the Algerian Salafists of the GIA were capable of recruiting up to 500 young men per week in 1994¹⁶, the Moroccan activists were unable to reach some hundred, although that number was larger if sympathisers were counted¹⁷.

Some of these groups acted more as criminal organisations than Islamic institutions. The main one, namely the Community of the Straight Path, reached a certain level of relevance after 2002 as a result of the assassination of rivals considered to be infidels, and ended up settling in the suburbs of Casablanca, Sale, Tangier, Nador, Oujda, Fez and Marrakesh¹⁸. In the end it encompassed a nebula of small groups with no central coordination, but united by the idea that Morocco was a corrupt State that needed to be violently purified in order to focus on the Jihad against the infidels¹⁹.

The Community of the Straight Path ended up producing two different groups, although they were closely linked to each other²⁰. The first was directed by Zakaria Miloudi²¹, who converted his group in a true sect, controlling every aspect of its members' lives, which guaranteed blind obedience, this strong control being used to impose strict interpretation of Islam on the local population. The second group had a very limited number of members (there were never more than thirty members divided into cells of five people), but it was particularly active during the nineties. It was controlled by Youssef Fikri, a natural of Safi who ended up settling in Casablanca where he was eventually arrested by the police in July 2002 because of his links to

¹⁶ VRIENS Lauren. Armed Islamic Group (Algeria, Islamists). Council on Foreign Relations (27.04.2009). Available at <http://www.cfr.org/algeria/armed-islamic-group-algeria-islamists/p9154>. Consulted on 27.05.2016.

¹⁷ BELAALA Selma: *Op.cit.*

¹⁸ PARK Thomas K and BOUM Aomar. *Historical Dictionary of Morocco*. Scarecrow Press, (16.01.2006). Page 191.

¹⁹ Its main ideologist in Morocco was Khamlî Dâoud, a graduate in modern languages who founded the group in Douar Sekouila.

²⁰ MARTIN JONES David, LANE Ann, SCHULTE Paul. *Terrorism, Security and the Power of Informal Networks*, Edward Elgar Publishing, Massachusetts, Edward Edgard Publishing Ltd. (01.01.2010). Page 81

²¹ CHADI Taieb. «L'ange de la mort». MarocHebdo. (23.05.2003). Available at <http://www.maghress.com/fr/marochebdo/55909>. Consulted on 27.05.2016.

organised crime²². It was in this context of social marginality and Islamic radicalism, in conjunction with organised crime, that the perpetrators of the May 2003 Casablanca attacks arose²³.

Moroccan Jihadists in the Afghanistan war

While the aforementioned organisations were acting inside Morocco, some Islamic militants headed to Afghanistan (1979-88) as part of a contingent of 20,000 Arab fighters who decided to join the Jihad against Soviet occupation²⁴. Although only a very few «Afghan» Moroccans were committed to the Jihad in Afghanistan, and most of them played non-fighting roles. After the Soviet withdrawal, some of them remained in Afghanistan, whereas others chose to travel to Bosnia to be a part of the Jihadist nebulous participating in the ethnic, religious war that was taking place there at the time (1991-1995). Finally, most of them preferred to return home²⁵.

These former sympathisers and Mujahideen fighters who returned home, formed the organisation Harakat al-Islamiya al-al-Maghrebiya Mukatila (HASM) focussing on instigating violence with a view to political change in the country, where the king would be replaced by an Islamic Government. Nevertheless, their acting capability was very limited and was mainly aimed at ensuring a certain degree of solidarity and social support for the former fighters who had returned to Morocco from Afghanistan.

The number of Moroccan volunteers who had remained in Afghanistan was so scarce that they initially joined the most numerous group of Libyan Jihadists grouped together in the Libyan Islamic Combat Group (LCIG). The tension with their partners however led to the Moroccans finally establishing their own embryo of organisation and as time went by they became known as the Moroccan Islamic Combat Group (GICM), following the example of the Libyan fighters. Nevertheless, their small size meant their political action was very limited until around the middle of the nineties when, inspired by radical preachers and driven on by a growing Jihad movement in Morocco,

²² «Je tue et je découpe les corps des mécréants», Maroc Hebdo, (03.08.2002). Available at <http://www.bladi.net/je-tue-et-je-decoupe-les-corps-des-mecreants.html>. Visited 22.05.2016.

²³ Fikri was involved in a total of six «Islamic» executions, and as was the case of Miloudi, he was sentenced to death for his participation in the bloody attacks of Casablanca in 2003.

²⁴ TEMPLE Dina: «Western Fighters Answer Mideast Extremists' Clarion Call», NPR, (28.06.2014). <http://www.npr.org/2014/06/28/326313364/western-fighters-answer-mideast-extremists-clarion-call>. Consulted on 26.06.2016. Other sources raise this number to up to 35,000 fighters. COMMINS David. *The Wahhabi Mission and Saudi Arabia*. London. I.B.Tauris & Co Ltd, 2006. page 174. Also RASHID Ahmed. *Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil and Fundamentalism in Central Asia*. New Haven. Yale University Press. 2000. page 129.

²⁵ KARIM Sanaa. *Party Politics for Morocco's Salafis?* Carnegie Endowment for international Peace. (2.10.1012). Available at <http://carnegieendowment.org/sada/?fa=49544>, Consulted on 26.05.2016.

an increasing number of Moroccans started to head off towards Afghanistan. Fired by the coming to power of the Taliban in 1996 and the return of Bin Laden to the country, this new batch of fighters gave rise to what could be called the «second generation» of Moroccan Jihadists in Afghanistan. So, although only «78 Moroccans took part in the first Afghan war against the Soviets... from 1999 onwards, there were weeks when dozens set off for Afghanistan»²⁶.

Some of these second generation «Afghan» Moroccan volunteers were captured by the idea of an Islamic Emirate fostered by the Taliban and they established close links with their fellow believers from other countries in the Gulf through marital alliances. These Moroccans, mostly natives of Tetouan and Tangier, where they had been selected by preachers such as Mohamed Fizazi and Youssef Fikri²⁷, became much more involved in international terrorist attacks, leaving local action in the hands of groups from the marginal districts of cities such as Casablanca or Fez.

The problem put to the small group of Jihadists comprising the Moroccan Islamic Combat Group (GICM) at the end of last century was therefore not the fact that it had not the strength or the operational capabilities of its Maghreb counterparts, and it had therefore to decide whether, in those growing circumstances of national and international persecution of Jihadist groups, it should exclusively focus on supporting small cells dedicated to terrorist activity, or on the contrary to change into a more political organisation considering the weak situation it was in. Until then the organisation's role had stuck to providing logistical support for Al Qaeda, finding places where its members could hide, providing them with false documents, finding Moroccan women they could marry and facilitating travel to and from Europe. Nevertheless, after the September 11th attacks in 2001, which aligned the Kingdom of Morocco and other states in an implacable fight against terrorism, the GICM changed its strategy and chose terrorist attacks inside the Kingdom²⁸.

Current situation of the conflict

Situation of the Moroccan Jihad at the outset of the 21st century

The death of Hassan II on 23rd July 1999 and the ascent to the Alawi throne of his son Mohammed Ben Al Hassan Ben Mohammed had been seen as a new era in the country, where many believed they would see a historical

²⁶ Le Figaro, (22.03.2004). The figures for the first period contradict other sources, which raise the number of «Afghan» Moroccans to 600 in 1990.

²⁷ CHAARANI Ahmed. *La mouvance islamiste au Maroc : du 11 septembre 2001 aux attentats de Casablanca du 16 mai 2003*. Karthala Collection Tropiques. 2004. Pages 49-51.

²⁸ DARIF Mohamed. «The Moroccan Combat Group». *ARI No. 51/2004*. RIE. 03.30.2004. Page 4. Available at <http://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/analisis/465/ARI-51-2004-I.pdf>. Consulted on 21.06.2016.

opportunity for substantial change leading to a rupture from the patronage tradition of *Majzen*²⁹ and a transition towards a consolidated democracy³⁰. The first decisions by the new monarch, including dismissing the controversial civil servants from the times of the previous king, returning to the country of opposers, release of political prisoners and greater respect for the freedom of speech and demonstration, seemed to prove the strong expectations after his ascent to the throne. Nevertheless, large sectors of the population were soon disenchanted when they saw that the sovereign held to his powers and kept *Majzen* as a parallel power structure.

At the same time the change in political power represented by the ascent to the throne by the new monarch, Mohammed VI, in 1999, saw a weakening in the security structures, which were considered particularly repressive, which along with the release of a large number of Islamic activists, many of whom were Afghanistan veterans, favoured the strengthening of the Jihadist networks and creation of a breeding ground for major terrorist attacks, which crudely materialised in May 2003 with the Casablanca bombings.

The drastic change in the international situation with the defeat of the Taliban by North American forces and the occupation of the country at the end of 2001 added to the situation. At the same time that some radicalised Moroccan citizens were detained in Afghanistan and deported to Guantanamo³¹, others were exiled and settled in Europe or Canada where they lived off funds supplied by Al Qaeda until the end of 2001, and afterwards from counterfeiting banknotes and passports in Morocco or from drug trafficking and petty theft in Europe³².

At the end of January 2003 there was a meeting in Istanbul between several Moroccan Jihadist leaders and certain high-ranking members of Al Qaeda

²⁹ The *Majzen* represents the traditional Moroccan administration organisational system which has remained in force to our days and is a singular fact in the contemporary Arab world. This term refers to «the central power represented by the Sultan, the Ministers, the Army and a group of bureaucrats» comprising a complex structure to articulate the social and political life of the Kingdom. PLANET, Ana, 2002, «El sistema político del Reino de Marruecos», en DELGADO, Irene, CHÁVARRI, Pilar y OÑATE, Pablo (coord.): *Sistemas de organización política contemporánea*. Madrid. UNED (Open University) Page 605.

³⁰ DESRUES Thierry. «Mohamed VI y la paradoja de la transición marroquí». Magazine CIDOB d'affers internacionals. Issue 51-52. December 2000 - January 2001.

³¹ This would be the case of Lahcen Ikassieren alias «Chej Hasan», born in Ceuta, who, after spending four and a half years in Guantanamo, returned to Madrid where he regulated his situation in 2011 to be detained once again in 2014 by the police accused of leading a Jihadist network that recruited Mujahideens and sent them via Turkey to join the ranks of the terrorist organization Daesh (Islamic State of Iraq and the Levante). BALÍN Mateo: «Un preso de Guantánamo, líder de la red yihadista caída en Madrid», Diario de León (11.10.2014). http://www.diariodeleon.es/noticias/espana/preso-guantanamo-lider-red-yihadista-caida-madrid_898013.html. Consulted on 25.05.2016.

³² CHAARANI Ahmed. «La mouvance islamiste au Maroc: du 11 septembre 2001 aux attentats de Casablanca de 16 mai 2003», Karthala, 2004, page 51.

accompanying the Jordanian Ahmed Fadil Nazzal Al-Khalayleh, better known as Abou Moussaab Al-Zarqawi, the leader of Al Qaeda in Iraq, with the goal of preparing a major attack in Morocco³³. On 16th May 2003, in what has come to be known as the Moroccan «9/11th»³⁴, five practically simultaneous explosions by 12 suicide bombers struck the financial capital of Morocco, Casablanca, sowing terror with a balance of 45 dead and over 100 injured.

The attacks shook the country and substantially changed the State's security policy, which since then centred on guaranteeing the security of its citizens with no qualms about the resources or methods. On 30th April 2004, King Mohammed VI announced a series of religious measures³⁵ to protect the country from the desires of «extremists and terrorists» and to «enhance the image of Islam and preserve its identity, characterised by deliberation, moderation and tolerance». Among the announced reforms was a review of the legislation about places of cult and the «rationalisation, modernisation and unification of Islamic education» in the country.

A very important measure along these lines was the creation of the Mohammedan Ulema League of Morocco³⁶, consisting of «venerable» people who favour the learning of the Koran at schools as well as the integration of preachers trained at these schools in the national education system, in order to promote «the opening up towards other cultures» instead of «forming obtuse, obsolete spirits». Clerics were demanded «loyalty to the sacred institutions of the State» and the ability to conjugate «religious erudition and an opening up to modernity». With these reforms the State would be able to exercise greater control over the mosques and Koranic schools with a view to avoiding fundamentalist preachers from spreading their extremist theses.

Within the scope of legal measures, the attacks allowed the Government to urgently approve an anti-terrorist bill, which until then had seemed improbable given the difficulty of obtaining parliamentary approval. The new anti-terrorist law stiffened sentences whilst reinforcing the prerogatives of the judiciary police and reducing the rights of those accused. The law established what Mohammed VI called «the end of the era of laxity against those who exploit democracy to undermine the authority of the State and for those whose ideas represented the grounds for sowing the thorns

³³ These included the brothers Benyaïch and Saâd Houssaïni, Karim Mejjat, Driss Chebli, Abdellatif Mouraïf, or Mohamed El Guerbouzi. Ahmed Chaarani. *Op.cit.* page 51.

³⁴ AÏT AKDIM Youssef. «Attentats de Casablanca : le 16 mai 2003, un 11 septembre marocain», *Jeune Afrique* (16.05.2013), <http://www.jeuneafrique.com/137508/politique/attentats-de-casablanca-le-16-mai-2003-un-11-septembre-marocain/>. Consulted on 26th May 2016.

³⁵ «Mohamed VI anuncia reformas religiosas contra los extremismos», *La Nación.com*, San Jose, Costa Rica, 30.04.2004. Available at http://www.nacion.com/ln_ee/2004/abril/30/ultima-mu25.html. Consulted on 15.07.2016.

³⁶ *Ibidem*.

of ostracism»³⁷. Through this the end was recognized of «the illusion of Morocco as being an exception in terms of its pacific management of social challenges and having a certain degree of immunity against the dangers of contagious Islamist radicalism»³⁸.

It can be stated that the Casablanca bombings caused «a juridical regression process that contaminated the political system leading to erosion in the ability to differentiate between interior and exterior security, and subsequently between repression and war»³⁹. Following these measures, one year after the attacks, over 2000 people had been arrested in Morocco⁴⁰, of which 1200 were brought before the courts, the Moroccan tribunals passing 700 sentences, 17 of which were the death penalty and some dozens of life sentences.

The attacks also had significant effects in areas unexpected until then, such as progress in women's rights. On 10th October 2003, during the opening of the Autumn parliamentary session, King Mohammed VI announced an ambitious reform of the *Mudawana*⁴¹ which represented a giant step forward towards equal rights between men and women. Nevertheless, since it was imposed by the King's royal authority and was opposed by Islamists, the reform was a Pyrrhic victory, since it accredited a de-politicisation of Moroccan society and paved the way for the low participation - 37% - in the 2007 legislative elections.

Morocco and the «Arab Spring»

Morocco must be considered a singular case among Arab countries since it has not undergone any of the destabilising processes known as «Arab

³⁷ Speech by Mohammed VI on 29th May 2003. BRAS Jean-Philippe. «Le Maghreb dans la guerre contre le terrorisme : enjeux juridiques et politiques des législations anti-terroristes», *L'Année du Maghreb*, II. 2007. CNRS Editions, pages 447-467.

³⁸ SANTUCCI Jean-Claude. «Le pouvoir à l'épreuve du choc terroriste : entre dérives autoritaires et tentation de l'arbitraire». *Annuaire de l'Afrique du Nord*. 2003. Paris. CNRS Éditions, 2005, page 245.

³⁹ DELMAS-MARTY M. *Les Forces imaginantes du droit (I) : Le relatif et l'universel*, Paris, Seuil, 2004, page 304.

⁴⁰ «Marruecos ha detenido a 2.000 sospechosos de terrorismo desde los atentados de Casablanca», *El País*, 13.05.2004. Available at http://internacional.elpais.com/internacional/2004/05/13/actualidad/1084399201_850215.html. Consulted on 15.07.2016.

⁴¹ The *Mudawana* is the family code regulating marriage, inheritance and custody of children. The modification of the code brought about fundamental changes for families. For example, after approval of the law, couples have to appear before a secular court to be granted divorce, whereas before a repudiation letter by a cleric was sufficient; parents who are granted custody of the children also keep the house, and the legal age for marriage is now eighteen rather than fifteen. Likewise, sexual harassment became a crime, punishable by law. As for polygamy, although it is still allowed, application was made more difficult after 2003 as exceptional, objective justification is required. See BOUAYACH Amina. «Reform of the *Mudawana* in Morocco». AKFAR/IDEAS No. 1, Winter 2003/2004.

Springs» as has been the case of other countries such as Libya, Syria, Egypt or Yemen. The timid protest led by the 20 February 2011 Movement was silenced by a review of the Constitution announced in March 2011 and subject to electoral consultation on the first of July the same year. This consultation, considered to be a referendum about the monarchy, sought to silence any internal dissidence. The result has heartening, with 98% votes in favour of the power and 72% participation, a very high level for Moroccan standards⁴². This all took place despite the new Constitution, providing the monarch with very wide powers, mainly maintaining his status as religious leader that he continued to exercise, although the responsibility for governance did not lie exclusively with him.

The two main Islamic groups in Morocco «Justice and Charity» and the «Justice and Development Party (PJD) joined this game. Although the former, as the Islamic force with most support within Moroccan society, continued to question the religious legitimacy of King Mohammed VI as commander of the believers and refused to take part in the elections, its leader, Sheik Abdeslam Yasim limited his political action to lobby for an amendment of the Constitution limiting the absolute powers of the king, whilst at the same time rejecting the use of violence and being extraordinarily critical with terrorist groups such as Al Qaeda. The Justice and Development Party on the other hand, directed by Saadeddine Othmani, was much more pragmatic, being the only Islamic formation that accepted the religious legitimacy of the Moroccan monarchy and took part in the political game⁴³.

In 2015 the Justice and Development Party of Benkiran obtained a good score in the local elections held on 4th September, their first electoral test since 2011. The party won the first overall position in the regional councils (25.6% of seats) followed by their rival Fouad Ali El Himma, a friend of the King, from the Authenticity and Modernity Party (PAM, Liberal, 19.4%), a political formation founded as an alternative to the Islamist PJD and aimed to ensure a formal multi-party system although controlled by the monarchy. Nevertheless, these elections reflected a certain degree of polarisation of society between PJD and PAM, whereas other parties, particularly the Popular Forces Socialist Union (USFP in the opposition), lost ground, mainly in the cities.

This Moroccan strategy based on preventing majority control of Governmental bodies by any single political force, was vital to maintain internal stability and could be considered one of the most representative political achievements of the Alawite monarchy.

⁴² «Morocco approves constitutional reforms». CNN. 01.07.2011. Available at <https://www.google.ru/#newwindow=1&q=Morocco+referendum+2011>. Consulted on 07.09.2016.

⁴³ VAGNI Juan José. «Marruecos a 10 años de la asunción de Mohamed VI: Breve balance de logros y cuentas pendientes». Instituto de Relaciones Internacionales (IRI). Yearbook 2009. Buenos Aires. Available at http://www.iri.edu.ar/publicaciones_iri/anuario/Anuario%202009/Africa/04Marruecos%20a%2010.pdf. Consulted on 22.06.2016.

As far as Jihadism is concerned, the conflicts stemming from the so-called «Arab Springs» and more specifically the conflict in Syria/Iraq, was an important magnet for a significant number of Moroccans who, in June 2016, had managed to constitute the third most numerous Arab contingent. Over 1500 Moroccan citizens went to fight in Iraq and Syria, of whom it is estimated that to date around 300 have died in Syria and around forty in Iraq⁴⁴. This constant flow of Moroccan citizens to conflict zones meant that travelling outside the country, which until then had been tolerated by the authorities, fell under strict control, the same thing applying to the case of returning fighters, for fear that these experienced, strongly motivated combatants would carry out an attack inside the Kingdom.

The way control is exercised was incremental. At first it was relatively simple because it only entailed controlling a few dozen people who had left the country without any difficulty, with some of them already being known by the authorities. Their principal motivation was to fight against Bashar al-Assad's regime and help the Syrian people, they being inspired by the symbolism of the fight in Syria (Sham). It was in Morocco's interests to let them go, not only to rid themselves of Jihadist troublemakers, but also for political reasons due to Moroccan opposition to the power of Bashar al-Assad⁴⁵, an interest that materialised with support by Morocco with the decision by the Arab League to expel Damascus from the organisation in 2011⁴⁶. Most of the Moroccan Jihadists would operate under Jabhat al-Nusra, although many of them eventually ended up joining the Daesh forces⁴⁷.

After the summer of 2012 a significant number of Moroccan Jihadists went to Syria to fight against the Bashar al-Assad regime, joining ranks with Daesh, following the example of other fighters from Tunisia, Libya, Saudi Arabia, Chechnya and the West. The departure of Moroccan fighters to Syria cannot be seen as tardy, but it made apparent the lesser interest of the cause

⁴⁴ Data from the Central Investigation Office (BCIJ) for the fight against organised crime and terrorism, established in March 2015. Nonetheless, in proportion to the number of inhabitants, the number of Moroccan Jihadists is still below mobilisation for example in Tunisia, although the number of Moroccans in Syria is higher than Algerians and Mauritians. See ILHEM Rachidi. «La tentation djihadiste des salafistes marocains», Mediapart, 19.06.2016. Available at <https://www.mediapart.fr/journal/international/190616/la-tentation-djihadiste-des-salafistes-marocains>. Consulted on 06.07.2016. Also Masbah M. «Moroccan Fighters in Syria». Sada, translation by Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. 2014. Available at: <http://carnegieendowment.org/sada/2014/04/10/moroccanfightersinsyria/h7t4>. Consulted on 06.07.2016.

⁴⁵ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁶ «Leales al régimen sirio atacan embajadas de Marruecos, Qatar y Emiratos Árabes Unidos». El Mundo. 16.11.2011. Available at <http://www.latercera.com/noticia/mundo/2011/11/678-405580-9-leales-a-regimen-sirio-atacan-embajadas-de-marruecos-qatar-y-emiratos-arabes.shtml>. Consulted on 10.09.2016.

⁴⁷ SAILLET Romain. «L'influence de la guerre en syrie sur le courant jihadiste marocain». Études et Analyses – No. 33, April 2014. Religioscope. Available at: http://religion.info/pdf/2014_04_Caillet.pdf. Consulted on 06.07.2016.

within Moroccan society, unlike the case of countries such as Tunisia where the Syrian affair divided the political class.

In August 2013, a former inmate well-known by the Moroccan authorities, Ibrahim Benchekroun, managed to create the Jihadist group «Harakat Sham al-Islam» («Movement of Islam in the Levante», HSI)⁴⁸ in Latakia (Syria) almost exclusively consisting of Moroccan citizens, including radicals such as Mohammed Mazouz and Mohammed Alami, who like Benchekroun, were two former inmates from Guantanamo, previously sentenced for terrorism in Morocco in 2007, who were killed in April 2014 while fighting against the Syrian regime forces.

The formation of HSI was a turning point in the perception of this phenomenon, which was now considered to be a potential terrorist threat⁴⁹. The group became known for its role in the offensive against Latakia in 2013 and the following year was one of the main factions, along with the al-Nusra Front and Ansar al-Sham–, who participated in offensive against Latakia in 2014⁵⁰.

One of the most well-known figures in this warring exodus was Mehdali Abdelaziz, alias Abu Osama Al-magrebi, a street vendor from Fnideq who became a legend among young people fired by the ideology of the holy war advocated by Daesh. Recruited by the Al-Nusra Front, an affiliate of Al Qaeda, his bloody actions led him to be assigned military command in Aleppo, where he reached notoriety for his cruelty in the strict compliance with the Sharia precepts⁵¹. Another fighter who has greatly hailed in the media was Mohammed Hamdouch, alias «Kokito» (the Head-Slayer), a Jihadist who was also native to Fnideq, who competed at an advantage with Mehdali exercising savagery⁵².

It could be said that today's Moroccan Salafists are divided into two groups. On the one hand are those who came to support Daesh, and on the other, those who prefer better understanding with the regime and acceptance of the political party system. The former have a fairly low number of followers, and since Abdelkarim Chadli, sentenced for terrorism in 2003, and other Salafist Jihad fighters were released from prison, they have been captured under a low-profile campaign by the Moroccan Government, aimed at

⁴⁸ ROGGIO Bill. «Syrian jihadist group Sham al Islam appoints new leader», The Long War Journal, 22.04.2016. Available at <http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2016/04/syrian-jihadist-group-sham-al-islam-appoints-new-leader.php>. Consulted on 06.07.2016.

⁴⁹ LEFEBURE Anaïs : «Jihadistes marocains en Syrie: un voyage sans retour?», *Interview with Romain Caillet*, JOL Press. 08.05.2014. Available at <http://www.jolpress.com/syrie-maroc-jihadistes-djihadistes-marocains-article-825865.html>. Consulted on 06.07.2016.

⁵⁰ CALEB Weiss. «Harakat Sham al Islam operates training camp in northwest Syria». The Long War Journal. 02.12.2014. Available at http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2014/12/harakat_sham_al_islam_operates.php. Consulted on 10.09.2016.

⁵¹ Mehdali Abdelaziz died in January 2014, shot by his former brothers in arms of Al Nusra.

⁵² His image holding five heads in his extended arms shook the world. He died in October 2015 in a skirmish against the Syrian army in Aleppo.

integrating these Salafist theorists in the national political life⁵³ thus avoiding purely Salafist political entities from being consolidated. All these internal movements within the world of Salafism appear to indicate the confidence by the Moroccan Government in containing the principal Salafist leaders within inactive political structures that are loyal to the regime, but at the same time sufficiently legitimate before the Islamists.

The Moroccan anti-terrorist policy

Nevertheless, not everything is that simple. The excessive exposure to the media by historical Islamist Sheiks would have made them lose support from the popular Salafist base which rejects the political system and are attracted by a more radical discourse⁵⁴. Therefore, at a time when these Jihad veterans could have lost their opportunity, the bet by the Moroccan regime is siding more with a purely security policy considered to be more effective.

This policy is reflected in the creation of institutions such as the Central Judicial Investigation Bureau (BCIJ) in March 2015 in the city of Sale⁵⁵, in charge of fighting against terrorism and organised crime, that in twelve years, from 2002 to 2015 was responsible for dismantling 132 «terrorist cells», arresting 2720 suspects while at the same time causing «276 terrorist attack projects» to be aborted⁵⁶.

Likewise, within this reactive policy, the amendments to the anti-terrorist Act after 2012 are to be considered. The increase in the number of Moroccan nationals in Syria and Iraq forced the authorities to demonstrate greater firmness against a phenomenon that was becoming increasingly worrying, particularly from the moment when the first returning fighters arrived. In January 2015 a amendment to the law was made with the goal of designing a legal framework that would permit management of this situation by penalising the fact of joining, or having the intention of joining, a terrorist group. This has made the return by Jihadist fighters who were disillusioned

⁵³ In this sense Chadli himself joined the ranks of the Democratic and Social Movement in May 2015, relinquishing his former Jihad ideas and considering Daesh an «apostate» movement. DARIF Mohamed. «Maroc : Un mouvement islamiste lancé à l'hôtel Farah 12 ans après les attentats de Casablanca». Yabiladi. 27.12.2015. Available at <http://www.yabiladi.com/articles/details/41213/maroc-mouvement-islamiste-lance-l-hotel.html>. Consulted on 07.07.2015.

⁵⁴ STITOU Imad: *Op.cit.*

⁵⁵ «Morocco to Inaugurate FBI-Like Bureau of Investigations», Morocco World News, 20.03.2015. Available at <http://www.morocoworldnews.com/2015/03/154425/morocco-to-inaugurate-fbi-like-bureau-of-investigations/>. Consulted on 07.07.2016.

⁵⁶ Statements by Abdelhak Khiam, director of the Central Investigation Bureau (BCIJ). «Le Maroc, leader de la lutte contre le terrorisme au Maghreb». *Africa Partnership Conference*. 21-22-09.2016 Afrique Inside. Available at <http://fr.africatime.com/external?url=http://afriqueinside.com/le-maroc-leader-de-la-lutte-contre-le-terrorisme-au-maghreb25032015/>. Consulted on 10.09.2016.

with the war in Syria more difficult, as they are afraid of being arrested if they return to Morocco⁵⁷. This completes the tightening of Moroccan anti-terrorist legislation that began in the first decade this century, and which has proved to be effective, for the dozens of prison sentences that have been lined within the context of the fight against terrorism⁵⁸.

Employing a pragmatic approach, complementary to the «soft power», very useful in the long-term, must also be added to this, mainly based on controlling the message delivered through their mosques. After the May 2003 Casablanca bombings, that were partly interpreted as the result of Islamist ideology being spread through Moroccan mosques, the Moroccan State chose to place each new Mosque that was built under the control of the Ministry of Islamic Affairs, appropriating the exclusive prerogative of appointing the Imams and the personnel directing the mosques. This measure has been reinforced by a serious determination to fight the radical opinions on Islam spread by clerics, institutions and the media and power groups established in the Persian Gulf.

In this battlefield for public opinion, the most important decision by the King of Morocco was in October 2004 when he launched a TV and Radio channel «Mohammed VI», whose purpose is to counter the propaganda broadcast by the most radical satellite media and issue a moderate message on Islam in accordance with the Kingdom's traditions, which, along with the implementation of a large scale programme to convert mosques in places of teaching of the Moroccan branch of Islam, based on Maliki jurisprudence, have proved to be very effective in containing radicalism. These measures were reinforced in June 2014 by a religious support programme aimed to teaching values within an open, tolerant Islam to Imams working in Morocco, and in other countries who face the threat of violent extremism. This strategy has permitted Morocco not only to fight extremism, but also to increase its religious influence on the African continent. The creation in March 2015 of the Mohammed VI Institute for training Imams and the Mohammed VI Foundation for training «Ulemas» in Africa in June 2015⁵⁹ are part of this comprehensive strategy.

⁵⁷ RACHIDI Ilhem. «La tentation djihadiste des salafistes marocains». Mediapart. 19.06.2016. Available at <https://www.mediapart.fr/journal/international/190616/la-tentation-djihadiste-des-salafistes-marocains?onglet=full>. Consulted on 08.07.2016.

⁵⁸ As was the case in December 2015 when a Moroccan Court sentenced eleven people to prison ranging from two to seven years for «having been members of a group to prepare and perpetrate acts of terrorism (...) and to undermine public order» and for «collecting funds for financing acts of terrorism». *Maroc: 11 condamnations pour terrorisme*, Le Figaro, 04/12/2015, <http://www.lefigaro.fr/flash-actu/2015/12/04/97001-20151204FILWWW00398-maroc-11-condamnations-pour-terrorisme.php>.

⁵⁹ LARBI Arbaoui. *Morocco Launches Mohammed VI Foundation for African «Ulemas»*. Morocco World News. 29.06.2015. Available at <http://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2015/06/161998/morocco-launches-mohammed-vi-foundation-for-african-ulemas/>. Consulted on 25.08.2016.

Moreover, Morocco has taken some truly controversial measures, but ones with unquestionable political effect, such as rehabilitating a number of key religious figures who had been accused of being ideological instigators concerning the 2003 Casablanca bombings, while King Mohammed VI has been pardoning dozens of Islamist prisoners in relation to those attacks over recent years⁶⁰. The result has been a certain degree of reconciliation between the political power and the more moderate Islamists, and consequently more willing to cooperate with the authorities, which in turn has led to a toning down of the Islamist message in Moroccan society.

Morocco has made fuller use of the human factor as well as of the wide network of informers and undercover agents hired throughout its territory, with the *Muqaddamin* or Municipal Bailiffs being one of the central pillars in the anti-terrorist strategy, acting as the Ministry of the Interior's eyes and ears. Having said that, perhaps the key to it all has been the establishment in October 2014 of a reinforced security deployment known as *Hadar* (surveillance) with the objective of anticipating attacks such as those that took place in Paris in 2015. The deployment consists of reinforcing the protection of strategic sites in the country, as well as tourism, implementing the Royal Armed Forces, the Gendarmerie, police and auxiliary forces, which have been provided with the necessary resources to foil terrorist attacks before they take place. This led to the dismantling of 27 terrorist cells between 2013 and June 2015.

Along these same lines, and in the framework of the uncompromising fight by Morocco against Jihadism put forward by Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), in North and Sub-Saharan Africa, Morocco has increased its control on the borders with Algeria, a measure accompanied by reinforcing military presence on its Sahara's southern border.

All these measures in the field of intelligence and prevention have positioned Morocco in a state of «permanent surveillance», but have also allowed it to enjoy political and economic stability, far superior to other countries in the region, making it, with regard to terrorism, a benchmark player in the fight against Daesh and other affiliate groups⁶¹ both regionally and internationally⁶².

⁶⁰ The most prominent of them were the former Jihadists Hassan El Kettani, Omar El Haddouchi, and Mohamed Fizazi, who had been sentenced to 30 years prison and who were given Royal Pardons in 2011.

⁶¹ FARID Mnebhi. *Le Maroc, un acteur incontournable dans la lutte contre le terrorisme*. SXMINFO. 23.11.2015. Available at <http://www.sxminfo.fr/103881/23/11/2015/le-maroc-un-acteur-incontournable-dans-la-lutte-contre-le-terrorisme/>. Consulted on 11.08.2016.

⁶² Hence for example, Belgium requested support from the Moroccan services to dismantle the Jihad affiliates in its territory. FAHD Yata. «Lutte contre le terrorisme, le Maroc en première ligne !». La Tribune blog. 26.11.2015. Available at <http://lnt.ma/blog/fahd-yata/lutte-contre-le-terrorisme-le-maroc-en-premiere-ligne/>. Consulted on 11.08.2016.

It remains to be seen whether the measures taken and the institutions created in recent years, in a context where unemployment affects one out of every three young Moroccans, are enough to prevent the foreseeable return of hundreds of Moroccan Jihadists who are currently fighting in Syria or Libya turning into an increase in terrorist action inside the country, particularly against tourism which is a vital sector for the economy and one that is particularly vulnerable, following the model that we have seen in other Arab countries. Moreover, participation by Morocco as the only country in Maghreb in the international coalition against Daesh, stemming from the strategic alliance games with the United States and remaining countries fighting against terrorism, although with a low profile, could be causing the Kingdom a risk of terrorist retaliation in its territory.

The arrest of 52 alleged militants inspired by Daesh in July 2016, who were planning the creation of a proper Moroccan province (*Wilaya*) and who had the intention of murdering members of the Moroccan security forces and tourists, and of attacking prisons, festivals and other institutions in the country⁶³, proves that Morocco is not immune to the threat of terrorism unsettling the region, but is also proof of its undeniable success in keeping it at contained levels, at least to date.

Nevertheless, the fact that the nerve of the war for Daesh is still largely relying on its capability of recruiting foreign fighters indicates that any large-scale action directed at drying out the sources of recruitment in Morocco, in the heart of the Kingdom, would initially be counter-productive for the strategic objectives of the organisation directed by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. Moreover, its distant location from the grey areas that have arisen through the Arab Spring chaos means that Morocco can still hold on to its delicate balance that only a strategy of internal de-radicalisation⁶⁴ can maintain in time according to the sociologist Mohammed Masbah⁶⁵.

In short, five years after the geopolitical convulsion that saw the uprising of the «Arab Springs», Morocco is faced with a real terrorist threat on its own soil. As was patent with the 2011 Marrakesh attack, killing 17 people, most of whom were tourists, the Alawite Kingdom is not immune to terrorist attacks. That does not mean the threat will necessarily materialise, or if it does

⁶³ «Morocco Foils Terrorist Attacks, Arrests 52 Militants». Asharq Al-Awsat English. Available at <http://english.aawsat.com/2016/07/article55355229/morocco-foils-terrorist-attacks-arrests-52-militants>. Consulted on 10.09.2016.

⁶⁴ STITOU Imad and GUGUEN Christophe. «Enquête. Au Maroc, la menace de l'Etat islamique». *Courier International*. 13.12.2015. Available at <http://www.courrierinternational.com/article/enquete-au-maroc-la-menace-de-letat-islamique>. Consulted on 11.09.2016.

⁶⁵ Masbah is a politician / sociologist resident at *Carnegie Middle East Center* whose work centres on Salafism, Islam, authoritarianism and political youth movements, focussing on North Africa. His most recent work is «Salafis and the political process in Morocco» in *Salafism After the Arab Awakening: Contending with People's Power*, edited by Francesco Cavatorta and Fabio Merone. Hurst Publishers. 2015.

it will be with the same intensity as in other Arab or European countries. Quite the contrary, Morocco is an example of adequate management of all its national power resources meaning the country was kept immune from terrorist attacks over the last years, despite lacking the financial and logistic resources of its European neighbours. Continuing with the success in the fight against terrorism is a priority, not only for Morocco, but also for its European neighbours who have made Morocco an indispensable partner in the field of political cooperation and for whom the stability of the Alawi Kingdom is one of the key factors to security in the Mediterranean.

Table of geopolitical indicators

TABLE OF GEOPOLITICAL INDICATORS	
Extension 446,550 km2	
GDP 273,500 million \$ (est. 2015)	
GDP Structure	Agriculture 13.8%
	Industry 29%
	Services 57.2%
GDP per capita 8,200 \$ (est. 2015)	
GDP Growth Rate 4,5% (est. 2015)	
Trade relations	
(Exports): 21,150 million \$ (est. 2015)	
Trade relations	
(Imports): 37,320 million \$ (est. 2015)	
Population: 33,320,000 (est. July 2015)	
Age structure	0-14 26.42%
	15-64 67.1%
	Over 65 6.43%
Population growth rate 1%	
Ethnic groups: predominantly Arabs and Berbers	
Religions: Muslims 99% (practically all Sunni), others 1%	
Literacy rate 68.5%	
Population under the poverty threshold 15 % (est. 2015)	
Unemployment 9.7% (2015)	
Military expenditure. % of GDP 3.7% (2014)	

Source: CIA The World FACTBOOK

Chronology of conflict

CONFLICT CHRONOLOGY	
CAP. III	The fight against Jihad terrorism in Morocco
DATE	EVENTS
1972	Appearance of the first Islamic movement in Morocco, the Islamic Youth (Shabiba al-Islamiya)
1975	Assassination of Omar Benjelloun, leader of USFP.
1984	Change of name to the Maghreb Mujahideen Organisation (Harakat al-Muyahidin al-Magariba) until it was dissolved in 1985.
1987	Creation of the Justice and Charity Movement (Jami'at al-'Adl wal-Ihsan) by Sheik Abdessalam Yassine
Approx. 1990	Creation of Harakat al-Islamiya al-Maghrebiya al-Mukatila (HASM) predecessor of the Moroccan Islamic Combat Group centring on violent political change in Morocco
1996	Taliban rise to power in Afghanistan and the appearance of the «second generation» of «Afghan» Moroccan Jihadists.
1997	Transformation in Algeria of the Armed Islamic Group (GIA) in the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC)
1998	Integration of the Shabiba in the moderate trend of the Justice and Development Party (Hibz al-Ahdala wa tanmia)
1998	Creation of the Moroccan Islamic Combat Group (GICM) in Peshawar (Pakistan) based on figures such as Mohamed el Guerbouzi, Abdellatif Mourafik and Meknassi Saâd Houssaini
1999	Death of Hassan II on 23rd July, and ascent to the Alawite throne of his son Mohammed Ben Al Hassan Ben Mohammed
2001	Change of strategy by GICM after September 11th 2001, from providing logistics support to Al Qaeda to terrorist attacks inside the Kingdom.
2002	Rise of the Takfir group, The Straight Path Community (jamâ'ata al-Sirât al-mustaqîm) in Casablanca, Sale, Tangier, Nador, Oujda, Fez and Marrakesh
June 2002	Discovery of a terrorist network of Moroccan citizens who intended to attack the NATO ships deployed in the Gibraltar Strait, as well as urban centres and tourist sites.
30th April 2004	King Mohammed VI announces a review of the legislation about places of cult and «rationalisation, modernisation and unification of Islamic education» in the country.
16 May 2003	Casablanca bombings, five almost simultaneous explosions by 12 suicide bombers causing 45 deaths and over 100 injured.
28 May 2003	Approval by Royal Decree of the new Anti-Terrorist Law
10 October 2003	King Mohammed VI announced an ambitious reform of the Mudawana which represented a giant step forward towards equal rights between men and women.
October 2004	Launch of a TV and Radio channel «Mohammed VI» with the aim of countering propaganda broadcast by more radical satellite media

CONFLICT CHRONOLOGY	
CAP. III	The fight against Jihad terrorism in Morocco
DATE	EVENTS
11 March 2007	Suicide attack in a cyber-café in Casablanca with four victims
February 2011	Timid popular protest movement «20th February»
28 April 2011	Attack in a café in Argana in Jamaa El Fna Plaza in Marrakesh. 17 people died and at least 25 were injured.
1st July 2011	Referendum about the amendment of the Constitution, with a pacifying vote in favour of 98% and 72% participation. The Monarch holds very wide powers, conserving his status as «commander of the believers»
November 2011.	The elections brought Abdelilah Benkiran of the PJD to power, although they are structured so that no political party can obtain more than 20% of the seats in parliament.
August 2013	Formation of a Moroccan Jihadist group in Syria under the guidance of Al Qaeda, namely Harakat Sham al-Islam (Islam Movement of the Levante, HSI). Along with the al-Nusra Front and Ansar al-Sham they took part in the offensive against Latakia in 2014
October 2014	Establishment of the Hadar (precaution) alert device, intended to reinforce protection of strategic sites in the country, and tourism.
2013	Adhesion to Daesh by a significant number of Moroccan Jihadists
January 2015	Amendment to the anti-terrorist law was made with the goal of designing a legal framework that would permit penalising having joined, or having the intention of joining, a terrorist group.
March 2015	Creation in March 2015 of the Mohammed VI Institute for training Imams, and the Mohammed VI Foundation for training «Ulemas» in Africa in June 2015.
September 2015	Benkiran´s Justice and Development Party won the first overall position in the regional councils (25.6% of the seats), followed by their rival Fouad Ali El Himma of the Authenticity and Modernity Party (PAM, liberal, 19.4%)
July 2016	Capture of 52 alleged militants inspired by ISIS who were planning to create a proper Moroccan province (Wilaya) for Daesh

Chapter three

Lybia: trying to «tie up loose ends» of the revolution

Emilio Sánchez de Rojas Díaz

Introduction

«...after the Iraq and Aghanistan wars, appetite for post-conflict deployments was very low in most western capitals. Europe was in the midst of a financial crisis and the United States just emerging from one. Electoral cycles likely also played a role, and the Obama administration was no doubt wary of the risk that a quagmire in Libya [...] during a presidential election year.» (Chivvis & Martini, 2014)

Almost six years have passed since the beginning of the revolution that toppled Muammar Qaddafi's regime; Libya is still divided into two rival regimes in Tripoli and in Tobruk, and submerged in a civil war that has destroyed the economy, and provoked the displacement of half its six million inhabitants.

Nearly 30 months of war have produced nearly static fronts. A cease-fire in November of 2015 practically ended the combats in the west of Libya. However, the Islamic State has taken advantage of the existing chaos to organize their bases in the country, expand their territory, and attract a large number of recruits. In December 2015, with the mediation of the UN, a unity government was reached, the Government of National Accord, in the hope that it would lead to an end to the civil war and involve the state forces and militias in neutralizing the Islamic State. Nevertheless, both the Islamic-



oriented regime in Tripoli and the Parliament elected in Tobruk initially rejected the government of unity¹.

Background to the conflict

Qaddafi, Saddam Hussein and Hafez al-Assad: the symmetries of three dictators.

When Qaddafi, the «Arab Che Guevara», assumed power after a cruel coup d'état, he was a young 27-year-old military officer and a lawyer. He then emulated Nasser in Egypt, and nationalized Western trade interests (the oil industry). Qaddafi later abandoned the Egyptian model of «soft dictatorship», and would come close to the Ba'athist regimes of Saddam Hussein in Iraq, and Hafez al-Assad in Syria. In spite of their revolutionary rhetoric, the three leaders were conscious of the artificiality of states whose citizens showed more loyalty to their tribes, ethnic groups, or religious sects. In order to maintain their leadership, they created alliances with different tribes and clans².

Sectarian conflicts³ did not affect Qaddafi –as they did Hussein and al Assad– but rather, his problem was the historic rivalry among Tripolitana, Cyrenaica, and several semi-autonomous cities that resisted the central government. The *Mukhabarat* – security forces – operated against «the enemies of the state» without control, and the repression spread out to ethnic groups or

¹ «Confronting failed government and the Islamic State in Libya». 2016, Strategic Comments 22:1, pp.. i-iii. DOI: 10.1080/13567888.2016.1159823.

² ANDERSON, S., «Fractured Lands: How the Arab World Came Apart», Nueva York : The New York Times Magazine, 2016. ISSN 0028 7822.

³ The large majority of Libyans are Sunni Muslims.

Lybya: trying to «tie up loose ends» of the revolution

entire tribes, besides the Islamists⁴. In the decade of the nineties, the contour of the borders of the countries framing the image of the dictators appeared on the posters, murals and mosaics of the dictators. The message was: «I am the nation; if I leave, the nation goes with me»⁵.

Tribes play a key role in Libyan politics and society. There are about 140 tribes in Libya, but only around 30 of them have political influence. Qaddafi used the tribal system to obtain political support, and thus the western tribes close to Qaddafi got posts with responsibility in the government and security forces, while those in the east, particularly the ones close to the *Sanusi* brotherhood, and their rivals in the west, such as the Berbers, were excluded from the regime⁶.

Institutional weakness

Before the war, the military institution was very weak. Qaddafi, afraid of a possible coup d'état, transferred officers and granted promotions arbitrarily. The most sophisticated weapons systems were in the 32nd Brigade, under the command of Khamis, son of Qaddafi. This brigade was in charge of most of the combats of the regime during the war, and the most severely punished by NATO⁷. In the opinion of Florence Gaub:

«Libya's current predicament is not only the result of the implosion of its existing security structure during the 2011 war – it is also due to the lamentable state of the pre-2011 security sector [...] The armed forces, previously estimated to number some 76,000 men, in reality only totaled 20,000 [...] Once the conflict erupted, these structural weaknesses and the extent to which official figures had been artificially inflated became apparent, with large numbers of troops defecting, deserting or simply not existing from the start.»⁸.

The revolution of 17 February 2011

Popular discontent was palpable in the years previous to the revolution of 17 February 2011, and numerous unauthorized protests and demonstrations against Qaddafi took place, which focused on socio-economic aspects. On 26 January 2011, Qaddafi gave a speech in which he referred to the problem of the lack of housing, and he invited the youngsters to occupy empty houses.

⁴ ANDERSON, S., Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ BELL, A y WITTER, D. The Libyan revolution, part 1 - Roots of rebellion. Washington : The Institute for the Study of War (ISW), 2011, p. 6.

⁷ CHIVVIS, C. y MARTINI, J., Libya After Qaddafi: Lessons and Implications for the Future. s.l. : RAND National Security Research D

⁸ GAUB F., Libya: The Struggle for Security



Fig. 1: 1st Cyrenaica battle: movements between 2 and 29 March 2011

Hundreds of Libyans occupied homes –some of them half built– throughout the country⁹.

This maneuver allowed Qaddafi to gain time, but an uprising against his regime was underway in Benghazi and other cities in the country. The catalyst of the revolution would be the repression of a demonstration coinciding with the anniversary of the publication of some offensive vignettes against the Prophet in Denmark.

After the demonstrations in Benghazi, the uprising spread to other eastern cities such as Derna, Tobruk and Al-Baida¹⁰. The security forces started to use live ammunition, killing over 150 people, and later used it against the participants in funeral marches for the dead in the demonstrations¹¹. The demonstrators armed themselves to combat Qaddafi's forces, activating the conflict in three different theatres.

The first part of the conflict – February to March 2011 – would focus on the east of the country. The rebels captured Benghazi, headed towards Brega – the second largest refinery in Libya – and continued on towards Ras Lanuf and Bin Jawad, where they were repelled, causing their withdrawal. The forces loyal to Qaddafi seized Ajdabiya, and on 19 March they reached the poor areas of Benghazi¹².

Simultaneously, and led by a council of 12 deserting-officers, an uprising took place in Zawiyah, close to Tripoli and with port and refinery facilities. Qaddafi used the security forces against the rebels, defeating the defense at the beginning of March and, with the support of the Khamis brigade,

⁹ ICG. «Popular Protest in North Africa and the Middle East (V): Making Sense of Libya». El Cairo/Bruselas : International Crisis Group Middle East/North Africa, 2011. Report N°107, p.2.

¹⁰ Ibid, p.3

¹¹ BELL, A and WITTER, D. The Libyan revolution, part 1, Op. Cit. p. 24.

¹² Ibid, p.7.

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Fig. 2: the battle of Zawiyah, February to March 2011

recovered full control of the city on 11 March 2011. Two hundred rebels died and hundreds were wounded in the battle, an example of the fierceness that would be imitated in the combats in Misrata. The forces, attacked by the rebels from the mountains of Nefusa, conquered the city and other key areas in the plains of Jafara.

International Intervention

The international intervention started with Resolution 1973 of the UN Security Council of 17 March. On 19 March, the Paris Summit met in which the participants made a joint declaration to enforce UN Resolution 1973 with all the necessary measures, including military force. On the same day, France started a campaign of air strikes against the forces loyal to Qaddafi. Hours later, the United States and its allies launched Operation «Odyssey Dawn» «....to protect the civilians and areas populated by civilians under threat of attack». The opinions from key actors opposed to the intervention, such as Germany, Russia, and China are well documented before, during, and after the intervention of 2011¹³.

Between the middle and the end of March 2011, the Libyan Air Force were left inoperative, and the air defense, command and control systems were downgraded. The forces loyal to Qaddafi withdrew to Ajdabiya, and the rebels, with the support from NATO, recovered the initiative and resumed their march towards the west¹⁴. The general opinion is that France played a decisive role in the start and the development of the armed intervention in Libya: France and the United Kingdom were at the origin of the initial western

¹³ BELL, J., «Libya crisis: Wishful thinking still isn't a viable strategy», *Comparative Strategy*, 35:2, 2016, pp. 139-153. DOI: 10.1080/01495933.2016.1176464., p. 145.

¹⁴ BELL, A and WITTER, D. *The Libyan revolution*, part 1, Op. Cit., p.8.

response, and subsequently of that of NATO, and Libya was part of the area defined as of national interest to France¹⁵.

Alan Kuperman, a critic of the intervention, affirms that¹⁶ «the popular revolt in 2011 was violent from the beginning and not peaceful»; and regarding whether a slaughter was imminent, as President Obama had declared:

«We knew that if we waited one more day, Benghazi – a city almost the size of Charlotte – could suffer a massacre that would have echoed all over the region and stained the world’s conscience»¹⁷.

Kuperman questions whether the number of victims at the moment of taking the decision justifies the allegations that «Qaddafi would have ordered the indiscriminate assassination of civilians»¹⁸.

The combats continue

The fight continued for eight months until 20 October 2011 when Colonel Qaddafi was captured and killed near Sirte, his hometown. His death ended the armed combats, but not the «revolution» with which his young followers tried – nothing further from current reality – to establish a nation with responsible leaders, economically developed, and with individual liberties¹⁹. Some of the main battles during the period were:

- The second battle for Cyrenaica: Between mid-March and the beginning of April in Cyrenaica. There were continuous changes in the control of the main towns. An impasse was reached until the rebels received weapons and instructors from Qatar in the month of July. The assassination of the rebel Head of General Staff, Abdul Fattah Younis, complicated the progress made by the insurgents on the eastern front.
- The Misrata Campaign: After the fall of Misrata into the hands of the rebels in February, Qaddafi ordered a siege of the city. The lack of weapons and ammunition seemed to signal that there would be an imminent defeat of the rebel forces, but beginning on 28 March, a maritime bridge between Benghazi and the port of Misrata, protected by NATO, allowed weapons coming from Qatar to enter.

¹⁵ BELL, J., *Libya crisis*, Ibid, p. 143.

¹⁶ KUPERMAN, A. «Obama’s Libya Debacle. How a Well-Meaning Intervention Ended in Failure». *Foreign Affairs*, 2015, 94.2 (March/April 2015), pp. 66-77.

¹⁷ Obama, Barak. «National Defense University. Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation on Libya». Washington, D.C. : The White House. Office of the Press Secretary, 2011. Available at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/03/28/remarks-president-address-nation-libya>

¹⁸ KUPERMAN, A. «Obama’s Libya Debacle, Ibid.

¹⁹ MCQUINN, B. *After the Fall: Libya’s Evolving Armed Groups*. Graduate Institute of International and Development. Ginebra : Small Arms Survey, 2012. Pp. 1-67, Working Paper 12. ISBN 978-2-9700816-6-1, p. 10.

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- The campaign in the Nafusa Mountains: This is an area dominated by the Libyan Berbers. The combats began in February, and in a few days²⁰ (from 18 to 26 February), the rebels controlled the cities of Zintan, Nalut, and those between Nalut and Gharyan. The clashes went on for four months, with air support from NATO, and weapons from France and Qatar.
- The capture of Tripoli: At the end of August, the offensive battle against Tripoli and its surroundings broke out, with rebel forces from Misrata, the Nafusa Mountains, and Tripoli. The troops from Nafusa advanced towards the north, and on 20 August, they controlled Zawiyah. The assault against Tripoli started that same night. The Bad Al-Aziziya camp fell on the 23rd, and on the 28th, the capital was already under the control of the rebel forces.

After the fall of Tripoli in August 2011, a rebel victory seemed more and more possible. Ivo Daalder, the then Ambassador of the United States to NATO, and James Stavridis, then Supreme Allied Commander in Europe, declared: «NATO's operation in Libya has been rightly considered a model intervention». Obama himself, at the peak of his prestige after Qaddafi's death, affirmed «Without a single member of the United States service setting foot on the ground, we have achieved our objectives»²¹.

The «exemplary» international intervention did not resolve the situation, and the prominent role passed to the militias.

When trying to understand the problem of the militias, one must keep in mind that they are heterogeneous and with different interests, representing a destabilizing element which has contributed to the insecurity of post-Qaddafi Libya, by turning their coercive power into political influence in the fragile political process²². When labeling all armed groups as «militia», one ignores the differences among the groups that operate in the country in a complex and fluid security environment, closely coordinating in many cases with the city halls to guarantee the security of the communities²³.

In a country of 6 million inhabitants, 250,000 people (half of them not having participated in combat) are registered in the Libyan Program for Reintegration and Development (LPRD), of which only 6,000 are willing to become part of the Armed Forces, 2,200 of the border police, and 11,000 prefer to be guards at the refineries. In the words of the General Director of the LPRD, Mustafa El Sagezli:

Dialogue and reconciliation are the first bricks of building a state, but there is still much to be done. When the LPRD can say that all those who contributed to make Libya free have returned to society managing a company, a family,

²⁰ MCFATE, J. and GAMBHIR, H. «Islamic State's Global Ambitions». The Wall Street Journal. 22 February 2015.

²¹ KUPERMAN, A. Obama's Libya Debacle, *Op. cit.*

²² GAUB F., Libya: The Struggle for Security, *Op. cit.* p. 3.

²³ MCQUINN, B. After the Fall, *Op. cit.*

and working to have a stable and prosperous country, we will know that our mission has been successful...we will be publishing a detailed strategic plan for a joint future with the pertinent institutions, to be defined and established by the next government of unity. This plan will include the reintegration of the armed groups, along with a strategy for disarming them²⁴.

These simplifications and the constant abuses against human rights moved many international organizations to call on the militia to give up their arms or to integrate into the Armed Forces, forgetting that:

1. Many of these groups play an major role in the security of the local communities.
2. The revolutionary forces do not recognize the legitimacy of the National Army, with its pre-revolutionary overtones
3. The National Army does not have a formal recruitment process²⁵.

The rebel forces that overthrew Qaddafi were quite fragmented, and the idea of a unified «rebel army» was pure fiction²⁶. There are four different types of armed groups in Libya:

- The revolutionary brigades: They emerged during the first months of intense combats, and were closely integrated with the local authorities and associations
- Non-regulated brigades: These are revolutionary brigades separated from the local councils, operating out of their control
- Post-revolutionary brigades: They emerged in cities or neighborhoods as local protection forces after the void created by the withdrawal of the pro-Qaddafi forces
- The militias: Other armed groups ranging from delinquency networks to violent extremists²⁷.

The revolutionary brigades are well united and they are very loyal to their leaders. In Misrata alone, there are 236 revolutionary brigades registered in the Misrata Union of Revolutionaries (MUR), which have almost 40,000 combatants and control over 90% of the weapons in the city²⁸.

After Qaddafi's death

Qaddafi's ousting led to instability and a void of power where no authority had total control of the situation. The National Transitional Council (NTC),

²⁴ LPRD. From Conflict to State Building: Aims, challenges and opportunities. LPRD PROGRESS REPORT 2011 TO 2015. s.l.: The Libyan Programme for Reintegration and Development, 2015.

²⁵ MCQUINN, B. *After the Fall*, *Op. cit.* p. 11.

²⁶ CHIVVIS, C. and MARTINI, J., *Libya After Qaddafi*, *Op. cit.* p. 13.

²⁷ MCQUINN, B. *After the Fall*, *Op. cit.* p.11.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 17-8

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which included the rebels that had fought to topple Qaddafi, declared in October 2011 that Libya was free and it was assuming the direction of the country. The NTC tried to impose order on the numerous armed militias that appeared during the months previous to Qaddafi's ousting. In August 2012, the NTC handed over the power to the General National Congress (GNC), an elected parliament, which appointed an interim Head of State²⁹. Two opposing groups emerged – each one with a series of interests – who polarized the already very fragmented political panorama. The representatives of the «revolutionary» forces were looking for a total change of the political and business elites to their benefit³⁰.

2012-2013: The Muslim Brotherhood

The political atmosphere in Libya during this period is dominated by the consequences of the revolutions of the «Arab Spring» that took place in the North of Africa in 2011, after which the Muslim Brotherhood failed in their attempt to establish governments of the brotherhood in several countries. In Egypt, an elected government was toppled by the Army in a coup – with wide popular support – in 2013, while in Tunisia, the party of the brotherhood cedes power in the elections at the end of 2014³¹.

The case of Libya is instructive. The brotherhood's ideology is contrary to politics based on tribal affiliations. However, the Brotherhood's party, the Justice and Construction Party, achieved by a narrow margin the establishment of a government coalition in the General National Congress elected in 2012. But it was not able to broaden its support, as the opposition affirmed that their most outstanding policies --- creating a parallel army, the «Libyan Shield Force» (LSF), and purging the top officials from the administration in Qaddafi's era (Political Isolation Law) – were none other than attempts to institutionalize the Islamic control of the state³².

In fact, what united the revolutionary groups to the coalition of political forces in the GNC was their promotion of a revolutionary agenda: the isolation of the elites from Qaddafi's regime, and the purge from the armed and security institutions of elements from the former regime. Its political adversaries grouped themselves in Mahmud Jibril's National Forces Alliance, with representatives from tribal groups that had not supported the revolution (led by groups of Zintani's interests), and dissatisfied Army officers³³.

²⁹ BBC. Libya country profile. Londres : BBC, 2016.

³⁰ LACHER, W. and COLE, P. Politics by Other Means: Conflicting Interests in Libya's Security Sector. Geneva : Small Arms Survey Working Paper 20, 2014. ISBN 978-2-940548-07-1, p.5.

³¹ «Libya's civil war: the essential briefing», Strategic Comments, 2014, 20:10, ix-iv, ISSN 1356-7888, p. 1

³² *Ibid.*

³³ LACHER, W. Fault Lines of the Revolution: Political Actors, Camps and Conflicts in the New Libya. Berlin : German Institute for International and Security Affairs, 2013.

In September 2013, a survey carried out by the National Democratic Institute of America set support for the JCP at only 14% of the voters. In the elections of the House of Representatives (HOR) held in June 2014 to replace the General National Congress, the JCP received a major electoral defeat³⁴.

In 2012 and 2013, the main divisions of the LSF went from being stabilization forces to becoming parties in conflict. Although the LSF leaders and their allies insisted on their loyalty to the office of the Chief of Staff, the real status of the LSF was a reflection of the existing divisions at the highest level in the government and security institutions. The LSF continued operating thanks to the support from the different government factions³⁵.

The dissatisfaction among the remains of the former Army grew in 2013, particularly in the east where the members of the Armed Forces, the Police, and the dissolved internal intelligence apparatus were the objective of a campaign of assassinations. At the end of 2013, the army units with headquarters in Benghazi, including the special forces, took charge of the problem. The federal leaders as well as the retired General Haftar tried to exploit this dissatisfaction to mobilize support in their favor³⁶.

2014: The civil war

Libya has been undergoing a civil war since July 2014. After three years of growing rivalries among the militias after the fall of Muammar Qaddafi in 2011, the confronting groups have become polarized in a conflict between the elected, internationally recognized, government based in Tobruk, and a coalition led by the Islamists and based in Tripoli. The emergence of the radical group known as Islamic State and its growing presence is an additional element to the bipolar conflict³⁷.

The civil war in Libya started after the elections for a new Parliament, the House of Representatives (HOR), resulted in serious losses for the Muslim Brotherhood and their allies. The Islamists and their allied militias, mainly in Misrata, formed the coalition «Libya Dawn» and seized Tripoli, the putative capital, which forced the House of Representatives to move to the northeastern city of Tobruk³⁸.

An attempt has been made to simplify the nature of the conflict in 2014 by describing it as an ideological battle between an Islamic coalition, led by the

³⁴ Libya's civil war: the essential briefing, *Op. cit.*, p.1.

³⁵ LACHER, W. Fault Lines of the Revolution, *Op. cit.*, p.43.

³⁶ *Ibid*, p. 57-8.

³⁷ Libya's civil war: the essential briefing, *Ibid*.

³⁸ *Ibid*.

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Misrata militia, and an anti-Islamist coalition made up of military forces led by the retired General Khalifa Haftar and the Zintan militia; but the «Libya Dawn» coalition is composed of Islamists and non-Islamists, with the participation of several tribal groups. The flow of the formation of alliances in 2014 led to thoughts about another stronger motivation: the intention of consolidating political positions, and holding onto influence over the weak Government of Libya³⁹.

The increase in number and duration of the battles in 2014 can be explained as an attempt of the militias financed by the government to ensure their resources, and the financing from foreign powers, such as Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, Sudan, Qatar, and Turkey. Since the middle of May, the «Libya Dawn» coalition started a campaign to occupy the state institutions, taking control of the airport and the administration in Tripoli. Later on, it tried to divert funds from the Central Bank of Libya⁴⁰.

Current situation of the conflict

2015: The Islamic State and the government of unity

During 2015, many threats hovered over Libya. Nevertheless, there were two basic tendencies that define the trajectories of violence in 2015, and they are the bases for the patterns of the conflict in 2016: the continuation of the violence between «Operation Dignity» and «Libya Dawn», which leads to the loss of political-power relevance of the Misrata brigades, and the increase of visibility of the groups affiliated to the Islamic State⁴¹.

The Misrata brigades put all their effort, between January and March, into combats against the Libyan National Army (LNA), as well as against the pro-government militias in Zintan, for the control of the oil ports of Al-Sidra and Ben Jawad. In March, the Misrata forces withdrew to concentrate their firepower and combat strength in Sirte, where the Islamic State forces had already consolidated their position⁴².

This period reached a point of no return with the 166 Brigade's withdrawal from Sirte at the end of May, justified by the lack of resources when the combats were beyond their capacity, while the GNC retained its reinforcements and military equipment. The withdrawal of the Misrata forces provoked the dissolution of the Misrata-«Libya Dawn» alliance. From that moment on, the numerous communal brigades acted autonomously⁴³.

³⁹ MOODY, «J. A Review of Libya in 2014 Libya». CONFLICT TRENDS (NO. 33) REAL-TIME ANALYSIS OF AFRICAN POLITICAL VIOLENCE, JANUARY 2015, p. 7.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ MOODY, J. «Libya», CONFLICT TRENDS (Nº. 45) REAL-TIME ANALYSIS OF AFRICAN POLITICAL VIOLENCE, JANUARY 2016. 2016, pp. 7-8, p.7.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Ibid.*

Government of unity

At the end of 2015, the UN negotiated an accord to form a «government of unity» led by Prime Minister Fayez Sarraj, but the Tripoli Administration as well as the Tobruk Administration were reluctant to admit his authority. Sarraj and some of his collaborators finally settled in Tripoli in March 2016 and established their headquarters in a naval base strongly guarded⁴⁴.

Although the creation of a government of unity composed of 32 members was announced on 19 January, there were still doubts about its capacity to govern, considering the erratic behavior of the signatories of the peace accord, and the unresolved conflicts among them. A demonstration of the difficulties were the protests that took place during Fayaz Sirraj's visit to western Libya on 8 January, imposed by the UN, which included the cities of Zliten, Misrata, and Tripoli. The emergence of new armed groups to confront the Islamic State, such as the Petroleum Facilities Guard (PFG) and the Ajdabiya Border Division, caused a major political antagonism, and it reduced the possibility of achieving a united military force⁴⁵.

The Islamic State in Libya

The main headquarters of the Islamic State in Libya is Sirte, a mid-size coastal city, the birthplace of Qaddafi, and the stage of his execution. In Sirte, the Islamic State has found allies among Qaddafi's former supporters, who are reinforced by local volunteers and Islamists from Yemen, Mali, Syria, and Tunisia.

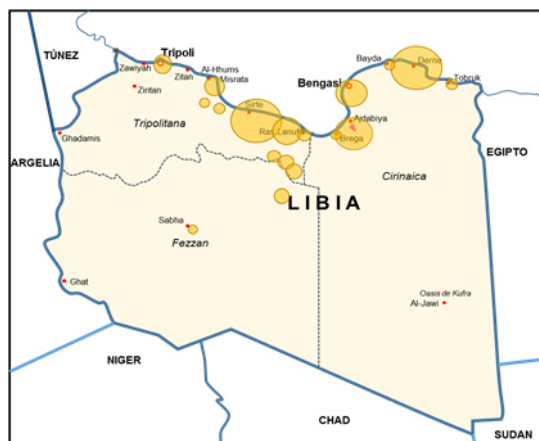


Fig. 3: activities of the Islamic State in 2015 and in January 2016 base on (MOODY J 2016)

⁴⁴ BBC. Libya country profile, *Op. cit.*

⁴⁵ MOODY, J. Libya, *Ibid.*, p.8.

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For the Islamic State, Libya is the alternative war theater should the one in Syria-Iraq be destroyed. The efforts of the Islamic State to dominate the Libyan scene, from February 2015 to this date, have been favored by the internal rivalries. 2015 was a productive year for the Islamic State in Libya, which spread its actions along the east and west coasts and into the interior. The map illustrates the scope of its actions.

The Islamic State has exploited the empty areas between the parts in conflict in the civil war in Libya, and has settled on the front line, occupying the territory when there are no local forces in condition to defend it. This approach of the Islamic State is a reflection of the expansion in Syria and Yemen, which shows the threat that the adoption of a regional strategy by the Islamic State means. The group is now defending its bastion in Sirte, at the same that it spreads, imposing its domain on the population as it grows stronger, through the creation of government structures and the imposition of a very rigorous version of the Sharia⁴⁶.

The Islamic State will use its safe hideout in Libya to resist and project instability throughout the whole North of Africa and, potentially, in Europe. A stronghold in Libya allows the Islamic State to survive in case of a defeat in Iraq and Syria, providing two key attributes: a safe physical hideout for their main authorities, and a safeguard for the ideological legitimacy of the Islamic State, which depends on the territorial government of an Islamic State⁴⁷.

The Wall Street Journal published an article with the opinion of Jessica Lewis McFate and Harleen Gambhir in which they stated that the Islamic State was no longer a regional problem and was carrying out a complex strategy which it applied in three concentric geographic circles. Regarding Libya, they stated that:

«The recent incursion of the Islamic State in Libya, taking of hostages, and the executions of Jordanians and Egyptians, are a clear attempt to provoke offensive operations in these countries and, as such, they have largely succeeded. The objective is to polarize the local populations to dissuade their participation in the coalition led by the United States against the Islamic State. The long-term objective is to cause failure in the different states in the region that spread from within the inner circle⁴⁸.

The main mission of the Islamic State in the «near exterior» is territorial expansion. The Islamic State is also fomenting relations with local jihadist groups capable of carrying out simultaneous and independent military operations, particularly in Libya and the Sinai Peninsula.

⁴⁶ GAMBHIR, H. *Isis's Campaign in Libya: January 4-February 19, 2016*. Washington: The Institute for the Study of War, 2016.

⁴⁷ GAMBHIR, H. *Isis's Campaign in Libya*, *Op. cit.*

⁴⁸ MCFATE, J. y GAMBHIR, H., *Op. Cit.*

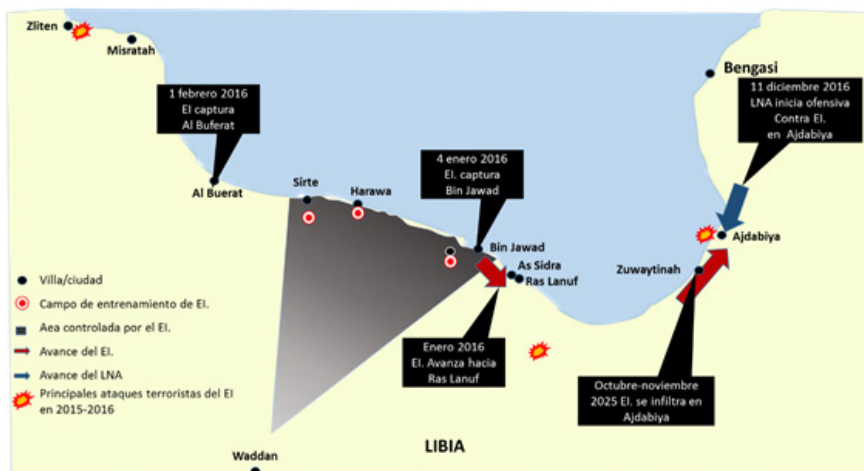


Fig. 4: Controlled areas and expansion of the Islamic State in January 2016

In February 2016, *Foreign Policy*⁴⁹ echoed the achievements of the group at that moment:

«Only after understanding its spread, size, and tactics can the international community develop a proper strategy for rolling back its recent gains. The group dominates a 120-mile stretch of territory extending east along the coast from the town of Sirte, seized almost entirely during 2015. This is its most significant achievement, because this territory provides it with a relatively safe base from which to attract new recruits and plan attacks elsewhere.»

At the same time, the Islamic State was present in Benghazi, but without the satisfaction of having territorial control, and it demonstrated its capacity to carry out guerrilla type attacks in the west, where they have a network of sleeper cells, including some in the capital, and it has probably absorbed elements from Ansar al-Sharia. The UN estimates its forces are between 2,000 and 3,000 combatants; in the opinion of the United States, between 5,000 and 6,000; while the French intelligence raises those figures to 10,000⁵⁰. The headquarters of the Islamic State in the west of Libya is Ajajlat, a former military site south of the coastal city of Sabratha, west of Tripoli.

At the end of June 2015, the Islamic State lost control of its first refuge, Derna. Residents of Derna, associated with the Islamic State in Syria, returned to Libya in 2014 and formed the Majlis Shura Shabab al-Islam group, who took control of Derna. These activists administered the Sharia, and carried out public executions and supplied basic services to all areas of the city. The group publicly declared its loyalty to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi

⁴⁹ AMRANI, I. «How Much of Libya Does the Islamic State Control?» *Foreign Policy*, 2016.

⁵⁰ AMRANI, I., *Op. cit.*

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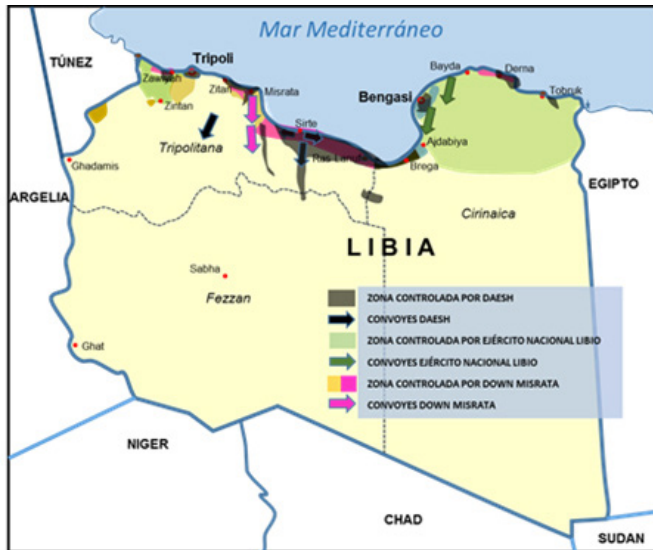


Fig. 5: Movements between January and April 2016

in October 2014, and the Islamic State admitted them as official affiliates in November 2014. The expulsion was undertaken by local Islamists after the assassination of Nasser al-Aker, leader of the Martyrs of Abu Salim Brigade, and a distinguished member of the defunct Libyan Combatant Islamic Group, member of al Qaeda⁵¹.

After losing the battle for Derna, the Islamic State strongly emerged in the city of Sirte. In August 2015, it had totally occupied Sirte, where it found no real resistance. The Islamic State was able to gain the loyalty of the former members of the Ansar al-Sharia group, quite weakened after the death of its leader, Mohammed al-Zahawi, at the beginning of 2015⁵². It was the greatest success of the Islamic State, as Sirte and the towns nearby formed an area dominated by tribes loyal to the *ancien régime*. The region was neglected by the authorities, in spite of the vast destruction it suffered during the uprising. Apart from Ansar al-Sharia, there were no rival local militias with a strong presence there⁵³.

In January 2016, and inspired by its success, the Islamic State adopted a more aggressive attitude towards its neighbors, and menaced the oil infrastructure in Libya. It led its military power towards the nearby city of Misrata, cradle of the most powerful militias in the west of Libya, and it simultaneously headed

⁵¹ ZOSCHAK, C. y GAMBHIR, H. *ISIS Loss Libyan Stronghold*. Washington: The Institute for the Study of War, 2015.

⁵² LEFÈVRE, R., «High stakes for the peace process in Libya» *The Journal of North African Studies*, 2016, 21:1, pp. 1-6, DOI: 10.1080/13629387.2015.1121949

⁵³ AMRANI, I., *Op. cit.*

towards the oil port of Sidra and the Ras Lanuf refinery. It also advanced towards the oil production fields in the southern desert, defying the militias in charge of protecting the area known as the «Crescent Petroleum». Thus, it threatened its main military rivals, and at the same time, it put the principal means of financing which Libya depends on at risk.

For the western world, a response to the Islamic State from a united Libya seems far off. On the one hand, the main Libyan militias try to avoid direct confrontation, due to the risk of an escalation of tribal violence. On the other hand, these militias give priority to the control of their own territory and are afraid to get too far away from their region. Furthermore, they feel that if they put all their efforts against the Islamic State, their defense against other more conventional enemies would be endangered. Finally, although the rival factions admit that the Islamic State means a threat on a long term basis, there is neither dialogue nor the necessary coordination to prepare a joint response⁵⁴.

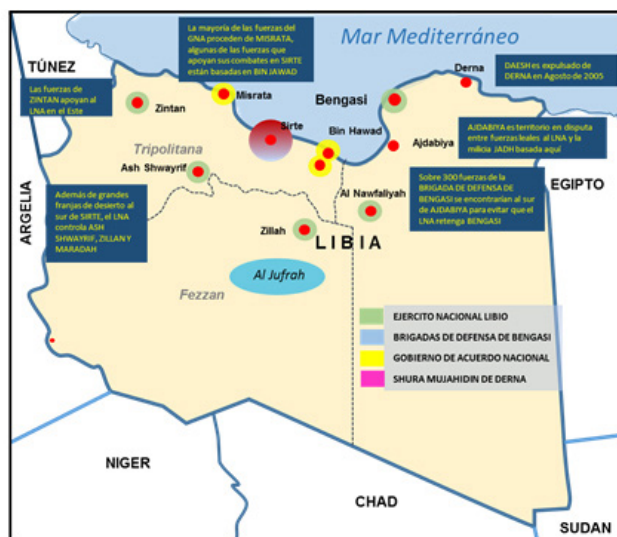


Fig. 6: Positions of the different actors in the middle of 2016

The international community's hope that a government of unity could take the initiative in the fight against the Islamic State is highly unrealistic on a short term basis. An efficient military strategy against the Islamic State, particularly in the area of Sirte, requires collaboration among the militias that are currently rivals. Doing nothing is not an option, but over-reacting would be more reckless, and it would endanger the hard work of a broad peace process in Libya just in order to please the promoters of the global

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

fight against the Islamic State. In the middle of such chaos, the Islamic State could emerge even stronger⁵⁵.

In May 2016, Libya entered a stage of transition where the political groups that separated got together again, returning to a bipolar and more stable situation. Two recent events that happened in Libya support the hypothesis of stabilization:

- The increase in military forces and in battles in which the territory was captured by the government forces.
- The increase of the contacts among the lower level militias in Tripoli, which suggests an attempt to be «included» in a possible accord⁵⁶.

These events, if combined, could indicate that the political forces on the ground might be taking measures leading towards the avoidance of a greater fragmentation.

Offensive against the Islamic State in Sirte

Armed Libyan Factions

In the middle of May 2016, three of the main armed factions in Libya initiated an offensive against the Islamic State in the city of Sirte. The different agendas of these factions and the possible strong resistance of the Islamic State gave the impression that the operation would be longer and would not be decisive⁵⁷.

The attacking forces were attached to four different general headquarters, and they had little coordination on the ground. The Government of National Accord (GNA), backed by the UN, had two different general headquarters affiliated in Tripoli. The first one led the offensive of the Misrata revolutionary brigades between Misrata and Sirte, while the second one did so with the «Oil Facilities Guard» militia of Ibrahim Jadhnan, the main force deployed against the Islamic State in the area of Sirte-Ajdabiya⁵⁸.

Despite the fact that some coordination in the air support provided by the MiG-23 in Misrata was noticeable, the two forces lacked real coordination on the ground. Ibrahim Jadhnan has warned that he will not allow the Misrata brigades to advance east of Sirte. For his part, the Libyan National Army, headed by General Khalifa Haftar, occupied positions in the city of Zillah, in

⁵⁵ AMRANI, I., *Op. cit.*

⁵⁶ MOODY, J. *Libya, Op. cit.*, p.8.

⁵⁷ COCHRANE, L. «Offensive against Islamic State in Sirte unlikely to be decisive in uprooting the group from Libya». s.l.: Jane's Intelligence Weekly, 2016. 2040-8315., p.1.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* p.2.

a totally independent operation, and was hostile to the Misrata brigades as well as to the «Oil Facilities Guard»⁵⁹.

It is highly unlikely that this situation will change until the rejection by Haftar of the GNA authority ends. The main objective of each group is to improve their respective positions after the civil war, and therefore it cannot be ruled out that this may be the reason why the elements of the three factions fight among one another, instead of combating the Islamic State. This risk has materialized in Zillah where combats among the forces pro and anti LNA took place at the beginning of May 2016⁶⁰.

The Islamic State

The Islamic State's political rhetoric focuses on the fact that the legitimacy of its caliphate derives, among other things, from its capability of enforcing the Sharia in the territories where it rules and, in spite of the message of the late spokesman of the group, Abu Muhammad al-Adnani⁶¹, of saying that the caliphate would be maintained, even if all its territory was lost, without mentioning Sirte by name⁶².

Libya is the only place – apart from Syria and Iraq – in the whole MENA region where the Islamic State can show it has control of the whole territory; thus, it may be said that the main effort of the Islamic State is the defense of Sirte. The plans for the offensive of the Misrata brigades in Sirte were announced at the beginning of April, and the Islamic State had enough time to reinforce its positions in the surroundings of the city by placing improvised mines and explosives in the outskirts, fortifying the sniper positions in and around Sirte⁶³.

Any force that tries to enter Sirte is vulnerable to these defenses and to the urban guerrilla tactics that the jihadists use to prevent the enemy from capturing and controlling the city. This may lead to an impasse of the situation in Sirte, as the will to win of the irregular combatants, who represent a large majority of the forces that combat the Islamic State, may become eroded⁶⁴.

Current situation

The four-month campaign to recover the coastal city is now in its last stages. The Islamic State exploited the divisions to seize Sirte and rule it for over a

⁵⁹ COCHRANE, L., *Op. cit.*, p.2.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p.3

⁶¹ Assassinated while inspecting the battle front in the northern province of Aleppo, near the Syrian-Turkish border, where the Islamic State is fighting its most important battle.

⁶² COCHRANE, L., *Ibid.*

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ COCHRANE, L. *Op. cit.* p.3

year without any problems. However, after a bloody campaign, the Misrata brigades are on the verge of recovering what represents the most important site of the Islamic State outside the Middle East⁶⁵.

The Sirte campaign has been unstable, with attacks followed by long pauses while the forces regrouped and the hospitals struggled to take care of the wounded. The brigades operate depending on the command centers in Sirte and Misrata, aligned with the government backed by the UN in Tripoli, but on the ground, the formations vary, the combatants are poorly equipped, and the advance has been difficult⁶⁶.

The air strikes from the United States, which started 1st August helped to clear the snipers, and to avoid suicidal attacks and the movements of the Islamic State. However, these attacks came too late and they were not intensive enough. As far as the civilian population, most of the 90,000 estimated inhabitants fled the city after the Islamic State took control of it, and before the battles. The families that stayed in the city are those of the Islamic State combatants. Some of the Islamic State combatants escaped before the campaign started, and hundreds of them died, although there are no reliable figures. Only fifteen combatants have been captured, but none is a relevant person⁶⁷.

The forces aligned with the UN-backed government of Libya attacked some of the last redoubts of the Islamic State in Sirte; upon resumption of combat, and after several days of a relative calm, we could find ourselves in the final



Fig. 7: BBC image control and crucifixions: Life in Libya under IS

⁶⁵ LEWIS, A. «Libyan forces prepare for last push against Islamic State in Sirte». Reuters. 31 August 2016.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ LEWIS, A. Libyan forces, *Op. cit.*

stages of the campaign to expel the Islamic State from its former bastion in the North of Africa. However, there was strong resistance from the militants, who were entrenched in a residential area in the center of the coastal city. The forces seized several buildings between neighborhoods one and three in Sirte. The loss of Sirte was a hard blow for the Islamic State, which had kept complete control of the city for over a year, using it as an important stronghold for Libyan and foreign combatants⁶⁸.

Nevertheless, old habits do not change and internal conflicts were reactivated. On 11 September, the Libyan National Army (LNA), under the command of General Khalifa Hifter, seized control of the four main oil export terminals in the center of Libya. The LNA aligned with the enemy government in the east of Libya, and expected to use the oil fields to reach an accord with the rival government in the west, and thus consolidate its position in the command structure of the future government of unity of Libya. The most likely accord that Hifter is trying to negotiate is a military council similar to the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces in Egypt, a country that significantly supports Hifter already, and will probably support his future moves. In order to gain control of the ports, Hifter was aided by 2,000 combatants from the Sudanese rebel group, Justice and Equality Movement (JEM).

Conclusions

The Future of the Islamic State

Thinking that in spite of an eventual defeat, the problem of the Islamic State will be resolved is unreal. The resilience shown in previous experiences in Iraq allows us to predict that the Islamic State will submerge in some areas, at the same time that it will try to create a new sanctuary in Libya, taking advantage of the existing unending rivalries.

Among the places considered by the experts as a future stronghold is Kufra, and also the region of Fezzan (declared Wilayat Fezzan), with places like Ghat, Sebha, Ubari, and al-Jawf. A strong Fezzan presence would facilitate the traffic of arms and combatants from Niger, Chad, and Sudan – countries of origin of most of the foreign combatants in the group – towards Libya to strengthen its ranks, and attack the critical infrastructure in the south of Libya (including the oil fields in Sarir and Sharara), adopting the same strategy that was used in the Sirte Basin⁶⁹.

This would also permit it to increase its influence on the Sahel and sub-Saharan African countries, and include cross-border attacks of the French

⁶⁸ LEWIS, A. «Libyan forces report further progress against Islamic State holdouts in Sirte». Reuter. 5 September 2016.

⁶⁹ COCHRANE, L., *Op. cit.* p.4.

units in the north of Niger. The Islamic State would plan and undertake attacks against the militias that support the GNA and the PFG, activating the sleeping cells in Tripoli, Misrata, and the area of Sirte, resorting to selective assassinations to foster divisions among its enemies. A possible conflict among the Misrata brigades, the PFG, and the LNA would permit the reintroduction of the Islamic State in Sirte⁷⁰.

A safe environment?

To face a promising future, Tripoli – besides expelling the Islamic State – should be able to negotiate among the parties to attain a safe environment for the political, social, and economic development that a country with the resources Libya has should enjoy. The achievement of a safe environment means three basic tasks:

- Cleansing the country of weapons from the regime and the war, and securing the Libyan borders.
- Reform of the Security Sector (RSS) so that the armed forces are efficient, and support the transition to a representative government.
- The rebel militias who have won the war should be disarmed, demobilized, and reinserted into society (DDR), whether as civilians or in the new Armed Forces⁷¹.

A safe environment would also benefit the entire region. The Libyan borders are long and porous; weapons out of control mean a threat to the entire region and beyond. Achieving control of the 2,700 kms. in the southern border of Libya is a difficult task. Qaddafi controlled and influenced the border through alliances with the tribes that regularly moved through it⁷².

But old habits do not seem to change, and as an old Arab peasant proverb says: «I, against my brother; my brother and I against our cousin; our cousin, my brother and I against the stranger», and before «the stranger» disappears, the internal conflicts have already revived.

Or not!

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⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ CHIVVIS, C. and MARTINI, J., Libya After Qaddafi, *Op. cit.* p.7-8.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 9.

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Lybia: trying to «tie up loose ends» of the revolution

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Table of geopolitical indicators

TABLE OF GEOPOLITICAL INDICATORS	
Surface 1,759,540 Km ²	
Border 4,339 kms	
GDP: 92.61 billion USD	
GDP Structure	Agriculture 1.8 %
	Industry 40.2%
	Services 58%
GDP per capita 14,600 \$	
GDP growth rate -6.4%	
Public debt 6.6% of GDP	
Trade relations	
(Exports): 10.51 M \$	
Trade relations	
(Imports): 11.24 M \$	
Population 6,541,939 inhabitants	
Men 3,386,743	
Women 3,155,196	
Immigrants are 12% of the population	
Age structure	0-14: 26.17% (men 875,430; women 836,272)
	15-64: 64.4% (men 1,787,191; women 1,628,050)
	Más de 65: 4.22% (men 137,409; women 138,343)
Population growth rate: 1.8 % annual	

TABLE OF GEOPOLITICAL INDICATORS
Ethnic groups: Berberes y Arabs 97%, other 3%
Religions: Muslims (Sunnis) 96.6%, other religions 3.4 %
Literacy rate of the population 91%
Population below poverty threshold: 7.4%
Extreme poverty. Not available
GINI Index. Not available
Military expenditure. Not available

Chronology of conflict

CHRONOLOGY OF THE CONFLICT	
CAP	LYBYA: TRYING TO «TIE UP LOOSE ENDS» OF THE REVOLUTION
DATE	EVENTS
7th century b.C.	The Phoenicians settled in Tripolitana, where the Berbers had lived until then
4th century b.C.	The Greeks colonized Cyrenaica, and named it Libya
Year 74 b.C.	The Romans conquered Libya
Year 643	The Arabs conquered Libya and imposed Islam
16th century	Libya is integrated into the Ottoman Empire. A Regency is created in Tripoli for the provinces of Tripolitana, Cyrenaica and Fezzan
1911-1912	Italy seized Libya from the Ottomans. Omar al-Mukhtar started an uprising of 20 years against the Italian power
1942	The allies expelled the Italians from Libya, which was then divided between the French and the British
1951	Libya gained its Independence with King Idris al-Sanusi
1969	Colonel Muammar Qaddafi, 27 years old, dethroned the King through a cruel <i>coup d'etat</i>
1992	The UN imposed sanctions on Libya for the attack on a Pan Am flight over the Scottish city of Lockerbie in December 1988
17 February 2011	Violent protests sparked up in Benghazi, which spread to other cities. This gave way to a civil war, foreign intervention, and finally to the assassination of Qaddafi
20 October 2011	Colonel Qaddafi was captured and killed near Sirte, his hometown
July 2014	The civil war started in Libya
March 2016	A new government of «unity», backed by the UN, settled in a naval base in Tripoli. It confronts the opposition of both rival governments and a series militias
May 2016	Three of the main armed factions in Libya started an offensive against the Islamic State in the city of Sirte.

Chapter four

The arab-israeli conflict. 100 years from the Balfour declaration

Federico Aznar Fernandez-Montesinos

Abstract

2017 marks the 100th anniversary of the Lord Balfour Declaration, assuring British support to the construction of a Jew homeland in a part of Palestine, and located in the very roots of the process leading to modern Israel. In this context, it is worth reviewing the dynamics that have led to the current situation of the Palestinian Israeli conflict. Israel was born in state of war and thus has been able to survive for almost 70 years after its foundation, which has legitimized the country and converted it in another member of the international community. The war has lost its political sense for Israel, violence can bring little more; on the contrary, it affects its legitimacy.

Israel's future and legitimacy are paradoxically linked to the Palestinian people due to its victory only being possible after having stripped them of their homeland. During this time, both violence and diplomacy have been abused ending up in a no-win conflict affecting 10 million Palestinians.

Keywords

Israel, Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the Middle East, terrorism, settlements, the West Bank, Gaza, refugees.

Introduction

I have travelled to Israel on several occasions. Whenever I have been to Jerusalem I have stayed at the Our Lady of Zion convent, in the Arab Sector in the famous Via Dolorosa street, the area where the ancient tradition positions the Antonia Fortress and Pilate's Praetorium. In an underground part of the convent is the Lithóstroto (Gabbatha), an area paved with stone where according to the bible, the great exaction took place. Accommodation here is not particularly good, but the religious, historical setting and the views over the Al-Aqsa Mosque are spectacular.

It is very easy to pick up the Arab - Israeli conflict here. Whenever I return, it is as if nothing had changed, despite everything having changed. It is living water and stagnant water at the same time. The «hot diplomacy» defined by Kissinger to resolve the conflicts, what Luttwak called «giving war a chance» has not brought peace, not to mention stability in the Middle East. The problem is that no end appears to be nigh and almost seventy years of the same news have caused over-exposure in the media, which, along with the psychological distance, has led to a feeling of disgust.

This conflict has been with the UN ever since it was founded, and the West has been involved right from the start. As the former British Resident Minister for the Middle East presciently forecast shortly after the end of the World War: «The way the United Nations deals with the problem will have a profound effect on relations between western civilisation and the Arab world»¹.

And the problem has poisoned the entire region, altering its different geopolitical balances and introducing huge doses of volatility in relations that take place simultaneously on different sidelines, preventing diplomacy. In fact, the region is a geopolitical fulcrum, a merger of fracturing lines that the problem exacerbates by adding a new dimension which can only be addressed in absolute terms.

Worse still, it has masked other conflicts some times and has permitted them being built on false keys. Hence, the problem of Daesh in the region, Iran's struggle to be recognised as a regional power, the claims by Al Qaeda, Pan-Arabism, Islamic movements and Pan-Islamism... all these problems or movements feed directly or indirectly from it.

Analysing any conflict requires knowledge about the object, the parties, the framework and the dynamics of it.

It is important to get to grips with the conflict. Israel covers a total surface area of 20,770 km², whereas the surface area of the region of Valencia in Spain is around 10% bigger. The two Palestinian territories are the West Bank

¹ Charles Zorgbibe. *A History of International Relations From the Yalta System to Our Days 2*. Alianza Universidad, Madrid 1997, pages 149-150.

(Cisjordan) covering an area of 5,970 km² which includes Eastern Jerusalem, claimed by both sides as their capital; and the Gaza Strip with a surface area of 365 km²; a strip of land 41 km long and between 6 and 12 km wide. The Gaza Strip has a 51 km border with Israel, 7 km with Egypt and 40 km on the Mediterranean Sea. As can be seen, it is not a particularly large territory, but it is symbolically significant.

Far from being uniform, the two entities embroiled in conflict are extremely complex and polymorphous, and there are therefore huge difficulties to reach a consensus on unified approaches. Those same sectors feel they are supported by large majorities: The Israeli right-wing remains in power thanks to the coalitions of parties leaving it with no margin for the Jewish posture. And Hamas, well established in Gaza, is winning ground in the West Bank; and its influence in Palestinian politics is increasingly more notable, both because of its huge network of social support and its comfortable attitude of letting PNA and Fatah taking the brunt of the negotiations with the Israelis, as because its legitimacy before the Palestinian people to represent the large and only resistance movement against occupation².

The dynamics are a part of a history that needs to be explained.

Background to the conflict

In order to understand the conflict, it is a good idea to take a quick look at the local history and that of the Jewish people with a view to linking this to current times, more so if we consider that protestant education, strongly marked by the bible, has continued to forge a natural familiarity in the West with Zionist objectives.

Religion becomes a fundamental factor in order to understand the conflict. Nevertheless, this analysis is only partial. The conflict may have initially been religious, but it is actually political. In fact, the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP) guaranteed in 1947 that the reasons for creating the State of Israel were «based on biblical and historical sources».

Religion, difference and conflict

Religion, and more specifically monotheism, has traditionally been identified as a warring factor by calling the exclusive definition of the population and distributing it according to the inside / outside logic. The first thing that there must be for a conflict to arise are groups of people to carry it out. And religion permits this.

² José Antonio Albentosa Vidal. «Palestina-Israel, el sempiterno conflicto». http://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs_marco/2016/DIEEEM01-2016_Palestina_Israel_Al bentosaVidal.pdf

The House of Abraham is the tap root for the three monotheist religions of Semitic signs, Judaism, Islam and Christianity, established along the Mediterranean coasts and all three claiming the figure of Abraham for themselves. The difference between one and other lays in the ability of their members to live together. As the King-Crane report stated in 1919:

«With the best intentions in the world, one could wonder if the Jews could appear before the Christians and Muslims as guardians of sacred places, or the Holy Land in general. There is a reason for this: the most sacred places for Christians - those who are connected through the life of Jesus - are likewise sacred for the Muslims. For the Jews though they are not only profane sites, but execrable sites... in fact, the Muslims, because they venerate the Holy Sites of the three religions, are naturally much more satisfactory guardians that the Jews could be»³.

Religion constitutes a factor of identity definition, whose proposals cannot leave one indifferent: they invite comment, to profess the faith or oppose it. Hence, using religion to vertebrate parties in a conflict is easy, and to stimulate or justify it - «religious, moral or other types of conflicts become political conflicts and can cause regrouping in a decisive fight based on friend / enemy differentiation. But if it comes to this, the decisive confrontation is no longer religious, moral or economic, it has become political»⁴.

That means, and it is essential to understand it as such, that confrontations, however much they are based on religion, once they occur they are political confrontations, the religious keys can help to understand what has happened, but it is a partial analysis and to be completely understood must be globally political, which is the only one correct, because when it breaks out, it is lead by politics, In fact, religious belief can be used (and it is used) to justify more pragmatic policies; referring to religion is very often none other than a language for justification.

Freud⁵ considers that in human conduct there is an underlying degree of narcissism. «Something» is wanted to the extent that it is similar to «us» and confirms us; and inversely «something» is hostile depending on how far off it is. There is recognition but no otherness. Ignatieff following in Freud's wake in «Civilisation and its Discontents» shows how small differences are taken and converted in decisive factors, the axis of all. Under this outlook, the enemy is no longer simply «the other» and undergoes a process of metamorphosis to become permanently demonized. The right of the other against my right is no longer questioned, but rather the other's right to be and to be equal.

³ Charles Zorgbibe. *A History of International Relations. From Bismark's Europe to the end of the Second World War 1*. Alianza Universidad, Madrid 1997, page 489.

⁴ Carl Schmitt. *The Concept of Politics*. Alianza editorial, Madrid 1991, page 33.

⁵ Various Authors. *Notes on Polemology*. Work Document by the Department of Strategy at the Chief of Staff School of the Armed Forces. Chapter VII.

And the truth of the matter is that major conflicts are not based on major differences, which paradoxically tend to lead to indifference, but rather on small differences, that allow recognition whilst at the same time force us to repudiate otherness. In fact, the smaller the difference, the greater is the violence that serves to feed the conflict, even contributing to its justification. Exercised violence, quashes all doubts.

The big fights do not take place between civilisations, but rather within them, as is the case that major religious conflicts are in fact intra-religious and are established between orthodoxy and heresy. It is perhaps significant to remember that both Islam and Christianity both come from Judaism.

And History has shown us that cruelty is higher among adversaries in the same society that against foreigners⁶. Civil wars are the worst kind of war. The more similar the parties are to each other, the more vicious the fighting. And paradoxically, fights make the parties more similar to each other. It is ridiculous to accuse the Arabs of anti-Semitism because they too are Semites, which paradoxically not all Jews are. The race nearest to the Israeli Jews is the Arabs themselves.

Ancient History

The Bible tells the story of Abraham, who was from Ur Kásdim, and set off for the Promised Land through divine inspiration, where he lived as an stranger. The first property he bought was a cave in Machpelah. He buried his wife Sarah there, and the site is now known as the Cave of the Patriarchs located in Hebron. As the Bible tells, in that same cave, in the presence of Ishmael, so loved by the Arabs, who will return for the occasion, Abraham will be buried. That is why when Baruch Goldstein murdered 29 Muslims at the Mosque there in 1994 - a sacred place for the three daughter religions of the House of Abraham: Christians, Jews and Muslims - he was digging his finger in a top level wound. Not by chance, the Arabs perpetrated another massacre there in 1929.

Jacob's dream took place on Mount Moriah, a site traditionally identified with the Temple's mount. According to the Bible, the conquering of the Promised Land initiated by Joshua was linked to anathema (*Herem*), the more or less strict destruction of the native people and their property, a way of ensuring the religious and cultural pureness of Israel.

The second king of Israel, David, conquered Jerusalem from the Jebusites around the 10th century BC. When his son Solomon died, the kingdom was divided in two: Israel and Judah. The House of Judah included the tribes of Judah and Benjamin who accepted the authority of Rehoboam,

⁶ Raymond Aron. *War and Peace among Nations*. Revista de Occidente, Madrid 1963, page 351.

son of Solomon, with Jerusalem as their capital. It is they who receive the recognition as the Jewish people.

The other ten tribes formed the Kingdom of Israel, to the north, which would be conquered by the Assyrians around 732 BC, who then expelled the inhabitants and introduced new peoples whose mixture led to the Samaritans. The captivity in Niniveh had dispersed the other ten tribes which were incapable of preserving their roots and creeds.

The word «diaspora» means «dispersion» and is usually used to refer to the Jewish people, owing to historical reasons. The first diaspora took place around 586 BC when the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar II destroyed the first temple, conquered the kingdom of Judah and moved the leaders and some of the Jewish population to Babylonia. Around 537 BC Cyrus II, King of Persia, authorised their return. That was when Jewish communities started to appear in the Middle East.

In 70 AC Titus conquered Jerusalem in the first Jewish - Roman war. Flavius Josephus said 1,110,000 people died during the siege, of which most were Jews. Moreover, 97,000 were taken prisoner and enslaved and the temple was destroyed for the second time.

The Bar Kokhba rebellion between years 132 and 135 accounted for the second Jewish - Roman war (for some historians the third) and was caused by the wish to spread Romanisation to replace the Jewish identity. In the end, according to some sources, around 580,000 Jews were killed and the Romans implemented some radical reprisals: religion was forbidden and even more people than in the first war were massively and rigorously expelled.⁹

Although there has always been a Jewish community in Palestine, either larger or smaller over time and more prosperous depending on the time, the Jews spread out around the empire and were in general accepted, although there were some problems after Christianity was adopted as the main religion in the Empire, particularly in the Eastern Empire.

The relevance of Jerusalem for Islam cannot be ignored either. According to Muslim tradition, the Prophet Mohammed miraculously travelled from Mecca to the Temple's mount in Jerusalem (the Night Journey) from where, in the company of the Angel Gabriel and mounted on the winged steed called Al-Buraq, he ascended to heaven. The al-Aqsa Mosque was built on this site after the region was conquered by the Arabs in 637, converting Jerusalem in the third Holy City of Islam, well integrated in a region where travel was very common either due to pilgrimage or trade.

Nevertheless, the history of instrumentalisation of the religion is very long. When Ariel Sharon entered the forecourt at the Al-Aqsa Mosque it provoked the second Intifada; paradoxically his presence was not offensive to Muslims as such (Mohammed had already allowed Christians in his Mosque; the Pope

himself has visited some of the most significant Islamic Mosques); but it was seen as sacrilege in the eyes of many Jews⁷.

The fact is that the forecourt to the Mosques houses the foundations of the Temple of Solomon, where the Ark of the Covenant was in the *Santa Santorum*, and where only the Highest Priest could enter once a year in a state of ritual pureness⁸. Owing to the fact that since the destruction of the temple by the Romans, a state of ritual purity could not be achieved (The Red Heifer Law), Maimonides among others in the 12th century, ruled that the whole ground was sacred and that no Jew could enter under penalty of sacrilege, since the exact location of the *Sancta Sanctorum* was unknown⁹.

In a nutshell, most of the Jews in the Middle Age remained in Muslim territories integrating well in the *Millets* system as *dhimmies*, a protected minority but as second class citizens. After the late Middle Age they started to settle in Europe and at the start of the 19th century a vast majority of the two and a half million Jews were living in Europe.

Expulsions and aggressions against the Jewish people in the West were constant throughout the Middle Age. The main European kingdoms had carried out various purges of Jews since the 12th century. King Philip Augustus of France ordered seizure of their properties and expulsion of the Hebrew population from his kingdom in 1182. This measure was repeated another four times in the 14th century (1306, 1321, 1322 and 1394) by different monarchs. Not in vain, the first mass expulsion of Jews was ordered by Edward I of England in 1290. Those that took place in the 15th century were also notable, dictated by the Archduke of Austria and the Duke of Parma¹⁰.

The expulsion decreed by the Catholic Monarchs in 1492 followed these lines and although it was important, neither was it the first or the last, although for many it is a reference that obscures the rest.

Recent history

The French Revolution brought with it an improvement in the political conditions of the Jewish people, with the result of extending the citizenship model. This saw them come out of the ghettos and integrate in society.

Another decisive matter in the advent of Zionism was the weakness of the Ottoman empire, Europe's sick, its future giving rise to numerous debates

⁷ Paul Johnson. *A History of the Jews*. Javier Vergara Editor, Buenos Aires 1991, pages 566 and following.

⁸ Numbers (19,2) and Deuteronomy (21,3)

⁹ Paul Johnson. *A History of the Jews*. *Opus cited*, pages 556 and following.

¹⁰ Cesar Cervera. «La expulsión de los judíos de España de 1492: La leyenda que construyeron los enemigos de España». ABC Newspaper 01.11.2014. <http://www.abc.es/espana/20141030/abci-mito-expulsion-judios-reyes-201410271408.html>

including the issue of the Holy Land. Israel was brought back to the minds of many after centuries.

Paradoxically, and with religion still being an intimate affair in the West since 1648, it was in those societies where they fitted in best, the German society amongst them, where years later they would be more fiercely repudiated. As we have seen, minor differences tend to be key in relationships between human groups. Think, for example, that in 1894 there had been the famous case of the French Captain of Jewish origins, Alfred Dreyfus, who was unfairly accused of treason.

In 1896 Theodor Herzl, who had been a correspondent in Paris, published his pamphlet «Der Judenstaat» (The Jewish State) Proposal of a modern solution for the Jewish question» in which he considered the assimilationist processes had failed, and accepted that his religion made him an alien in his own country, the only solution therefore being to create a national home in Canaan. In 1897, inspired on Herzl's work, the Basel Congress took place where the Zionist Organisation was founded, a religiously inspired secular cultural movement, which adopted its official programme demanding a «publicly recognised and legally guaranteed» home. The impact of this congress in the media was enormous, and opened up the public debate about the matter. Herzl sent his demands to France, United Kingdom and Germany, and even directly negotiated with the Sultan, although with no outcome.

Zionism then did not approach the problem of around 500,000 Arabs who were living in the region at the time, with whom they discussed cooperation and even the mutual benefits of living in the same land in terms of material progress. Think how, after the First and Second World Wars, and between or after them, enormous numbers of people would be forcibly displaced with the huge suffering this entailed. Paradoxically, it was at this time when Nequib Azoury appeared and started to spread the ideology of Arab nationalism.

The First World War and Turkey entering the conflict in support of Germany caused a definitive alteration in established order. The arrival of Lloyd George to power at the end of 1916 would bring the advent of the imperialists who stated Britain's interest in the Middle East by considering it extra protection of the Suez Canal and a nexus for communication with India. The question of Palestine was used to guarantee sympathies among the Zionists, particularly in the United States and Russia.

The Lord James Arthur Balfour Declaration on 2nd November 1917 in the form of a letter to Lord Rothschild and commonly known as the «Balfour Declaration» is a milestone in this sense. That letter stated British support for creating a home for the Jews in a part of Palestine. The text is as follows:

«Dear Lord Rothschild: I have much pleasure in conveying to you, on behalf of His Majesty's Government, the following declaration of sympathy with Jewish Zionist aspirations which has been submitted to, and approved by, the Cabinet:

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«His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country»

I should be grateful if you would bring this declaration to the knowledge of the Zionist Federation.»

The idea of creating a Jewish State was criticised in some circles, even by some Jewish personalities, ever since Judaism is a religion and the creation of a State on this basis would alter the position of citizens of that religion residing in other States. This dilemma remains the case today.

After the end of the war, and with Palestine assigned by the League of Nations British Mandate, Zionism intentions altered the current balance at the time and created strong tensions with both the Arabs and the occupying power. The King-Crane's report of 1919 used the 14 points of President Wilson, and particularly the free determination of people, to make a claim against Zionism. Nevertheless, in 1920 the Supreme Allied Council ignored those contradictions and assembled in St. Remo to grant a mandate to the United Kingdom to implement the Balfour Declaration. As result of this the tensions intensified, the White Paper of 1922 making a minimalist interpretation of the Balfour Declaration with the intention of restricting Jewish emigration to Palestine.

Despite this, the Jewish population in the region continued to grow, influenced by factors such as the Russian Revolution. In 1880 there were 24,000 Jews in Israel. In 1925 there were around 100 thousand Jews living among 765,000 Palestinians. In 1940 the Jewish population reached 400 thousand, who lived among tension with around one million Palestinians.

In the meantime the Zionist community established an almost State structure, a Proto-State that ended up being recognised *de facto* by the British authorities, who in 1929 entrusted to it the management of public services. Education, health care, economy and even its own armed militia, with the creation of the Haganah in 1920, were passed. Nevertheless, it was seen how the land buying policy had its limits.

Incidents grew in terms of frequency and intensity. The Arabs, more backward, were unable to give politically comparable answers or to effectively coordinate their efforts, and they could only look on with exasperation how they were continuously losing ground.

Moreover, the Arab and Jewish people at that time had become more aware of themselves and their rivalry, which meant the United Kingdom to consider dividing the territory between the two communities, reaching a point at the start of the war that it reversed the Balfour Declaration and even encouraged the independence of a mostly Arab Palestine.

After World War II, and the Holocaust, the Shoah, the international community became more aware of the Jewish problem from the accounts by the survivors, which led to a change in attitude. In turn, the Jewish organisations took on a more aggressive approach against British power, making the situation on the ground even more difficult. The Shoah would be the prism used to look at the world.

On 29th November 1947 the United Nations Assembly spoke out in favour of creating two independent States, an Arab one and a Jewish one, with an international zone under UN control in Jerusalem, 30 years after the Balfour Declaration created the Palestinian question. The Jewish State would cover around 14,000 km².

The decision was saluted with riots all over the Arab world and clashes between both communities were exacerbated. Despite Arabic superiority in terms of numbers and material, the Jewish Proto-State was better organised and in view of the climate of violence imposed through a Resolution that could not be implemented without a fight, Great Britain decided to bring an early end to its mandate. On 15th May 1948 the State of Israel was proclaimed. It is what Palestinians call «*Nakba*» meaning «disaster» or «catastrophe»: the start of the national tragedy.

The Arab countries entered into a conflict, but were unable to resolve the problem with arms whilst at the same time they refused to negotiate, so the State of Israel defeated them winning strategic ground and increasing its area to 20,700 km², while Arab unity broke apart.

Between 700 and 750 thousand Palestinians fled or were expelled from their land by the Army, thus converting the Jews in the majority. Israel took advantage of the breakdown of Palestinian society caused by the exodus and the war to appropriate their land and resources.

The Palestinian territories of West Bank and Gaza were put under the control of Jordan and Egypt respectively, the creation of an Arab State in Palestine was thwarted, and the city of Jerusalem divided¹¹.

This consummated fact changed with time the centre of gravity of the problem that was no longer the very existence of the State of Israel. Restoring the former borders and the return of the refugees now became a central theme. But Israel in turn has taken a step forward and believes that stage has been overcome.

At the same time the Arab countries separate from the West's influence, who they blame for the situation. The Superpowers have to choose and divide their support. The United States chose to support Israel, while the USSR, whose objectives were to prolong the conflict to wear out their strategic

¹¹ «Conflicto Palestino: El origen y el desarrollo del conflicto». <http://palestinalibre.org/articulo.php?a=13475>

rival in this peripheral theatre, assumes the Arab maximalist positions. The Israeli - Palestinian problem from this moment on was part of the logic of the Cold War.

In 1956 the Suez Crisis resolved by a North American decision accounted for a step forward in that globalisation that paradoxically helped to bond the blocks that were in conflict. In 1967 the militarisation and new close of the Straits of Tiran to Israeli merchant traffic led to a new edition of the crisis that ended up in the Six Day War in the context of which the Israeli forces managed the surprise strategy against Egypt and the Arab countries followed by their complete defeat.

A military and political earthquake took place in the region. At the end of the conflict, Israel had conquered the Sinai Peninsula, the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights, increasing its territory four-fold to reach 89,353 km² and obtaining territorial guarantees but not true peace. Quite the contrary, they found nearly one million Arabs under their administration and lines that were difficult to defend.

The different Palestinian movements unified in 1964 creating the Palestinian Liberation Organisation which then expanded its framework through the internationalisation of the conflict: and it bore its fruit. In the words of a Palestinian leader «the first (aircraft) hijacks were more effective than 20 years of pleas before the UN, to make the world aware and pique the interest of the press and public opinion». Moreover, «the choice of the Olympic Games... was like painting the name of Palestine on a mountainside that can be seen from the four corners of the World». 18 months after the Munich attacks, Yasser Arafat was invited to speak before the UN General Assembly¹².

As a result of the 1967 conflict, the number of refugees and displaced by the war increased significantly, particularly in the Lebanon (400,000) and Jordan (250,000), as does their tragedy. The surrounding countries are in turn hostages of the conflict since guerrillas infiltrate from their territory to perpetrate their acts. Moreover, the Palestinians represent a numerous armed group who have an influence on those countries' political life.

As a result, there are confrontations between Palestinian armed organisations and their foster countries. In 1970 the so-called «Black September» events took place, meaning the PLO moved its bases from Jordan to the Lebanon. Palestinian presence in this country has perturbed the delicate balance of power there and is at the root of the civil war that has blighted it. In fact, this war started when the armed militias controlled a significant part of the country and confronted the Army, leading to armed militias appearing among the different creeds. At the same time, the actions that Palestinians carried out from this territory against Israel, led to Israel sending in forces to occupy the southern strip until 2000.

¹² Hoffman, Bruce. *A History of Terrorism*. Espasa Calpe 1999, pages 100 and following.

Egypt, under Anwar Al-Sadat, sought to recover its honour lost in the Six Day war with an Arab victory, and on 6th October 1973, the Yom Kippur fasting day, Egyptian troops crossed the Suez Canal and brought with them a new twist to the Israeli Palestinian relations. On the Egyptian front they were joined by Algerians, Libyans and Kuwaitis whereas on the Syrian front there were Iraqis, Jordanians and Moroccans. The offensive was much better prepared this time, and was much more equal. In fact the Egyptians would later talk about the «October Victory», and through this they restored their honour and paradoxically made peace possible.

On 23rd August 1973 the Egyptian President, Sadat, held a meeting with King Faisal of Saudi Arabia where the decision was taken to use crude oil to apply pressure to the West. Ten days after the start of the Yom Kippur war, Libya, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Iraq, Qatar, Kuwait and Abu Dhabi unilaterally increased their oil prices by 17% to \$3.65 per barrel. On 19th October they proclaimed an oil embargo on the United States which they lifted on 17th March (except Libya). The price of the barrel was then \$12, having increased by 400%. The psychological effect of this demonstration of the vulnerability of economies was huge¹³.

But not only oil is involved in this issue. When analysing the Palestinian - Israeli conflict from a water perspective, it can be seen that the main source of drinking water in the region is from the River Jordan, whose sources are found in the Golan Heights; and whoever controls the Heights, controls the water. Within this framework, the question of territoriality of the small areas of the Shebaa farms (Lebanese or Syrian) occupied by Israel was of capital importance.

In 1960 Golda Meir warned against any attempts at diverting water from the Jordan headwaters would be considered a «breach of peace»¹⁴. In 1966 this issue was close to triggering a war because of the Syrian project to divert the River Yarmuk, a major tributary of the Jordan, and if it had been carried out, it would have limited the availability of water in Israel. The Six Day War served to resolve this controversy, and others, as Isaac Rabin claimed «even if we resolve all the Near East problems, if we do not resolve the water problem, the region will break out in war»¹⁵.

Another very significant source of fresh water in the region are the underground aquifers. Broadly speaking, Israeli settlements in occupied territory tend to follow the geography of these settlements, as does the Wall. Consequently, we can reach the conclusion that water and settlements are fundamental factors in the Israeli concept of security¹⁶. We shall discuss this issue in further detail later on.

¹³ Juan Rosell Lastroeras. *Las guerras del petróleo*. Ediciones Universidad de Navarra, Barañáin 2005, page 13.

¹⁴ Michael T. Klare. *Resource Wars* Ediciones Urano, Barcelona, 2003.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, pages 178, 211 and following.

¹⁶ Noam Chomsky. *The New (and the Old) World Order* Grijalbo Mondadori. Barcelona 1996, page 269.

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In a nutshell, the so-called «October Victory» also produced realignment and re-dimensioning of strategic objectives, so that the Arabs would refrain from destroying the State of Israel in exchange for recovering the territories they had lost in 1967. In 1977 the two major powers reached an agreement about the terms to unlock the peace process by restoring the 1967 borders, but local affairs prevented its resolution.

In any case, this led to the initiative by President Sadat, breaking down the taboos of 1947, and recognising Israel by establishing direct, bilateral contacts with the country, which was condemned by the Arab world: the intended conditions were to evacuate the occupied territories and acknowledge the rights of Palestinians. In 1978 the Camp David Accords arrived under Carter's Administration, solving the bilateral Egyptian - Israel contention featuring the intention of extending it to the region as a whole. This time it led to real peace.

The rest of the Arab countries also evolved. They were divided in defenders of maximalist positions that denied the possibility of even negotiating with Israel and recognising it; and those with more possibilistic positions choosing intermediate solutions. The latter group gradually grew and became stronger.

Moreover, the PLO's own objectives gradually became more limited; adopting a more moderate approach from initially wanting to eradicate Israel and recover all its territory, to creating a small Palestinian State in Gaza and the West Bank in 1974 comprising the basis for building a reunited Palestine through a peaceful fight, but now, importantly, accepting the existence of Israel as a State. Hence, the PLO gradually accepted the territorial distribution, whilst at the same time demanding materialisation of its own national rights. Meanwhile, the focus moved from the outside of the country to the inside.

Current situation of the conflict

The Peace Accords

In view of the stagnation of the international situation, the Palestinians inside the country took the initiative in 1987 with a popular uprising in the West Bank and Gaza. It was the first Intifada (Arab Uprising) «The War of Stones», a massive, mainly civil demonstration and disobedience movement, rejecting the occupation with «low intensity» violent action and episodes of terrorism. The aim was the collapse of the legal system.

This movement initially surprised Israel and sought to reverse the roles in the conflict. The Palestinians were given a new, different visibility, their cause, previously associated with terrorism, was now that of the weak, abused people, leading to new support from the international community who no longer felt ashamed to do so.

Israel, on the other hand, and above all at the beginning, lost the initiative whilst at the same time became the main actor in a logic of action / repression through a number of actions of dubious legality.

In 1988 Jordan broke off its administrative links with the West Bank and in November the same year the Palestinian National Council proclaimed the State of Palestine. At the end of the Cold War a new opportunity to resolve the problem arose. First the USSR and then Russia reduced their support for the Arab countries, with Israel subsequently recognising the PLO and the PLO recognising the State of Israel.

In 1991 the Madrid process began, fostered by the major powers. In 1993 the PLO and Israel signed the Oslo Peace Accords, through which the PLO renounced «violence and terrorism» and acknowledged the «right» of Israel «to exist in peace and safety». After these accords, the National Palestinian Authority was created, but the implied tensions to explicit renouncement of their historical positions meant that the Palestinian side became even more fractured, and organisations such as Hamas (created in 1987 by Sheik Yassin) did not agree to this recognition¹⁷. In 1994 Jordan ceased its war against Israel. Yitzhak Rabin author of the draft accords of 1993 was murdered by a radical Jew in 1995.

The policy of approach would continue and the conversations in 2000 at Camp David driven by the Clinton Administration with Yasser Arafat and Ehud Barak in the leading roles, came very close to succeeding, but failed due to the Palestinian negative to accept any agreement that entailed revoking the right to return by refugees.

The frustration caused by this and the subsequent attempts (Taba) was enormous. Ehud Barak's peers never forgave him for going so far. On the other hand, Arafat, who did not renounce his past and remained unmoveable, was also unable to avoid a fracture of the Palestinian block in 2003 between Al Fatah (a secular party) and Hamas (an Islamic party), who still advocates the destruction of Israel. And the geographical separation between the West Bank and Gaza Strip (one of the most densely populated places in the world) would turn into a political separation when Hamas took charge of the government there after 2005, after the local elections that year, and definitively in 2007 with the expulsion of Al Fatah. This bode ill for the Israelis about what could happen in the West Bank after their exit.

The second Intifada came about from the frustration caused by this failure. Acts of terrorism took place in addition to popular demonstrations, such as the launching of *qassam* rockets, suicide bombings and other individual acts of terrorism, seriously questioning Israel's security, who soon became involved

¹⁷ José Antonio Albentosa Vidal. «Palestina-Israel, el sempiterno conflicto». http://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs_marco/2016/DIEEEM01-2016_Palestina_Israel_Al bentosaVidal.pdf

in a dynamics entailing the extremely legally dubious and internationally unpopular «minor» actions (such as «selective assassinations») and «major» actions (different military operations).

In 2012 the UN granted Palestine the status of «Non-member Observer State», and was therefore no longer simply an «observer entity». This change meant that Palestine could take part in the General Assembly deliberations and improve its possibilities of becoming a member of UN agencies and other organisations. The West Bank started to call itself the «State of Palestine»¹⁸.

The frustration and climate of violence caused notable desperation to the point that the current leader of the National Palestinian Authority, Mahmoud Abbas, stated before the UN General Assembly in 2015 that his people had finally lost patience and no longer feel bound by the «Oslo Accords»¹⁹.

And the fact is that 23 years after the Accords were signed, the Palestinians have not substantially improved their political or economic conditions, whereas the climate of mutual mistrust and disrepute has become established between the parties. No progress towards the construction of the two states is seen. Ascent to the poles took place and the two entities are being dominated by their radical factions. In Israel by a right wing that is becoming increasingly more nationalist, ultra-orthodox and extreme, whereas in Palestine by Hamas, in a conflict that is being constantly fed by violence and exclusion of the other party. In the 2015 Human Rights Watch report, the following was stated:

There was a sharp rise in killings and injuries... Palestinians killed at least 17 Israeli civilians and 3 Israeli soldiers, and injured 87 Israeli civilians and 80 security officers in the West Bank and Israel... Israeli security forces killed at least 120 and injured at least 11,953 Palestinian civilians in West Bank, Gaza, and Israel as of the same date, including bystanders, protesters, and suspected assailants...»²⁰.

Israel and Security

Israel lacks the security needed for its inhabitants to live in freedom. It could be *de facto* considered a country in a state of war, since in fact it is in war against Syria. It is worth pointing out that the actions aimed at achieving it, however strongly criticised among the international community, are widely backed by the Israeli civil society.

¹⁸ José Antonio Albentosa Vidal. «Palestina-Israel, el sempiterno conflicto». http://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs_marco/2016/DIEEEM01-2016_Palestina_Israel_Al bentosaVidal.pdf

¹⁹ *Ibidem*.

²⁰ Human Rights Watch. Report 2015. <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2016/country-chapters/israel/palestine>

In order to assess a problem, there is nothing better than experiencing it. My personal experience of finding shelter during a rocket attack was particularly burdensome (coinciding with the 2014 Gaza crisis, in which the Iron Dome system proved to be extraordinarily effective) and I was only there for a fortnight. There are lobbies in the West that want to reinstate torture owing to the problem of lone wolves, an added problem the Israelis have to face.

Nevertheless, the disproportionate, penalising and dissuasive nature of some of the measures against the perpetrators of the attacks, affecting the future of their families and entire communities, are worth of special consideration since they concern the legitimacy of Israel giving the State an asymmetric character that *de facto* is not equal for all. The legitimacy of the State is being eroded through the use of violence.

The need for security must be analysed inside and outside the country. Regarding the exterior, the borders have been contained and sealed. While inside, strategies have been defined and legal instruments provided to carry them out and halt low intensity violence. As Clausewitz would point out, the best strategies are only successful for a time, but in the end the enemy ends up adapting and getting round them.

External policies have turned into actions against infiltration from Lebanon and Gaza. The intervention in Lebanon in 2006 against rocket launches by the Shia group Hezbollah was seen as a failure by Israel and a success by Hezbollah, but it also allowed sealing the border, which was its objective.

The operations in Gaza, the other point considered and a Hamas fiefdom, were challenged by the international community for the widespread use of violence in a densely populated area, causing multiple civilian victims; and in this sense the intervention in 2014 is worth of a special mention, although it is also true that some of these victims were people who were voluntarily and deliberately acting as human shields. As Human Rights Watch says: «Neither the Israeli authorities nor Hamas have prosecuted anyone for alleged crimes committed during the 2014 Israel-Gaza war, which, according to the UN, killed 1,462 Palestinian civilians, including 551 children, and 6 civilians in Israel, including one child»²¹. Moreover, the blockade against this territory has also been criticised due to the inferred suffering of the civil population (80% of the population depend on humanitarian aid in an environment of poverty and marginality), which has once again fallen victim to the conflict.

But security cannot be separated from other questions, given the comprehensive nature of the policies used to enforce them. In 2002 Israel started to build a wall, reportedly for security reasons, but the wall does not follow the intended border and is actually used to integrate a part of the settlements' structure, by including the major part of them within the

²¹ Human Rights Watch. Report 2015. <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2016/country-chapters/israel/palestine>

protected perimeter, including some land belonging to the Palestinians, thus reducing the area under the latter's control by figures that could reach up to 54%, according to some sources, whilst separating Palestinians from their workplaces and resources, thus further impoverishing their living conditions. This way, the problem of security was also transferred to the Palestinians themselves.

The Settlements

One of the problems for reaching an agreement is the matter of the borders. Israel does not want to go back to the pre-1967 borders, and considers the territories occupied at that time as their own. And they have claimed these territories by simply appropriating the land using methods that have not been symmetrical in all cases and with all ethnic / religious groups.

In 1980 Resolution 465 unanimously approved by the Security Council declared that all attempts by Israel to modify the physical, demographic or institutional characteristics of Palestinian territory would lack any legal validity and would be seriously damaging to peace in the Middle East, whilst it deplored the persistence by Israel in using these practices and requested dismantling of colonies and the existing forward posts. In 2004 the International Court of Justice passed the sentence of 9th July 2004 establishing that «the Israeli settlements in occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, were not only illegal, but were also barriers to peace and economic and social development, and were established in violation of international law...»

Although Israel evacuated the few settlements it had in Gaza in 2005, it has continued its policy of establishing settlements in the West Bank, thus making it extraordinarily difficult to find a solution to the problem. The current situation is described in Human Rights Watch:

«Israel continued to provide security, administrative services, housing, education, and medical care for around 560,000 settlers residing in unlawful settlements... authorizing construction work on 566 new settlement housing units, 529 of which were completed during the first quarter of 2015, an increase of 93 percent in housing starts... Building permits are difficult or impossible for Palestinians to obtain in East Jerusalem or in the 60 percent of the West Bank under exclusive Israeli control (C Zone). Palestinians in these areas have limited access to water, electricity, schools, and other public services, all of which the state makes readily available to the Jewish settlers there.»

Moreover, the extent of the settlements in the West Bank make construction of a Palestinian State unviable, not only because of the reduced size left, but because of the deliberate discontinuity and dilution of its possible terrain. In fact, many of the supporters of this construction, are now taking a new look

at the United Nations mandate because of the impossibility of implementing it as a result of this policy.

The Refugees

According to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees (UNRWA), the «people whose normal place of residence between June 1946 and May 1948 was historical Palestine - what is today the current State of Israel - and who lost their homes and means of living as a result of the war, are Palestinian refugees. The descendants of these people are also considered to be refugees by the Agency». Consequently, approximately one third of the world's refugee population are Palestinians. The present UNRWA records report over 5 million Palestinian refugees²². Other sources raise this number to 10 million (10.6 million according to the PLO²³), considering the number of displaced persons (who did not cross the border) in the 1967 conflict and those refugees after 1948 that the organisation does not count.

The living conditions of refugees, often deprived of all or part of their social, civil and political rights are exceptionally severe. According to the UNRWA, over 1.4 million live in 58 refugee camps in Gaza, in the West Bank (886,716 refugees), in Jordan - it is worth mentioning that all the refugees in Jordan, 2,090,762, have full citizenship, except for nearly 140,000 refugees native from Gaza-, in Lebanon (470,604 with problems to access public services) and in Syria (518,949 refugees living, as is known, in a situation of civil war)²⁴.

Their return would alter the Jewish status of the State. Nevertheless, any solution must also resolve the problem of the refugees. The Palestinian problem is not just a question of territory, an inert issue, but one of people. That, and no other, is the core of the problem.

The role of external factors

The reality, the truth of a conflict is discursive, it adapts to the events and is relative to them; the names explain it all: they set the framework and establish the rules. The conflict we are dealing with, that was initially the question of the Jews or Israel, has now become the problem of Palestine.

Moreover, we can talk about the Israeli - Palestinian conflict with local dimensions, but it is also possible to extend it a little more to the region in

²² Official United Nations for Refugees website (Spain) <http://www.unrwa.es/los-refugiados/nakba>

²³ BBC. «10 questions to understand why Israelis and Palestinians fight» http://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias/2014/08/140801_israel_palestinos_conflicto_preguntas_basicas_jp

²⁴ Official United Nations for Refugees website (Spain) <http://www.unrwa.es/los-refugiados/nakba>

general or to talk about an Arab - Israeli conflict. This dimension is extended to Islamism if we consider the commitment to it by Iran, a non-Arab Shia country.

The PLO internationalised the conflict after 1964 by implementing a terrorist strategy: their agenda continued in Palestine but it could be carried out in the rest of the world. And it gained a definitive global outreach when it became one of the key factors in the Cold War. Having reached this point it is impossible to ignore that Israel is not a signatory of the Nuclear Proliferation Treaty, and has not admitted to or denied having nuclear weapons, which lent an even more incisive character to the situation. Islamic terrorism with its accusations against a Jewish-Crusade alliance has contributed to this globalisation.

The analysis of such a complex conflict requires a micro analysis followed by a more general one to understand it properly.

Local framework

Dealing with the local framework first, it must be said that in the Middle East there are three fracture planes: the first is religion, between Muslims and non-Muslims; the second is ethnic between Arabs and non-Arabs and the third is once again a religious issue, as a sub-product of the first, and is the division between Sunni and non-Sunni believers. There could also be a fourth plane depending on interpretations, whether broad or narrow, concerning religion, and the correct sense of society positioning it in terms of the biblical debate between man and the Sabbath.

There is an over-rating however of the religious factors, which very often ignores the necessary analysis and the weighting of merely nationalist or ideological aspects, in a world where religion acts as a counter-culture backbone, but one that does not draw up specific solutions, and less so, in the scope of International Relations.

And this is because the Middle East is a highly fragmented, poly-central region where the States have become consolidated and pragmatism and interests rule, giving rise to complex power struggles and extravagant balances. Within this context the States have assumed the cultural values belonging to each of them to make an approach to the international sphere from an Islam-nationalist perspective.

Starting off with the first plane mentioned. The States are of Muslim majorities, with the exception of Israel, whereas Christians integrate in the countries (like the Lebanon) where they are more or less diluted. Israel only has relations with two Arab states (Egypt and Jordan) with whom Peace Treaties were signed in 1979 and 1994 respectively.

As for the Sunni, we cannot really talk about a monolithic block because of the existence of several countries who challenge for leadership, each of

them with a different proposal in accordance with its national reality. The players in this game are Turkey, Egypt and Saudi Arabia.

Turkey, with its 72 million inhabitants and an imperial past (former occupying force), after a succession of failures in its approaches to Europe, has turned again towards the East, re-defining its foreign policy on the basis of a neo-Ottomanism, whilst remaining a member of NATO and an ally of the USA. Its relations with Israel have undergone changes, and the country currently holds a position of re-conciliation after the death of 10 Turkish citizens in 2010 in a flotilla that was attempting to break down the Gaza blockade. Their friendship has traditionally broken down as a result of the lack of Israeli allies in the region.

As a Wahabbi Paladin is Saudi Arabia, self-proclaimed «The Kingdom», which stands out on the peninsula due to its size, population (28 million inhabitants, 8 million of whom are foreign workers) and resources. The Saudi Arabian king puts above all his titles the title of «Guardian of the Holy Sites» and consequently guardian of the religion's essence.

Nevertheless, albeit on the one hand Saudi Arabia tries to lead the Sunni Muslims, on the other it holds a strategic alliance with the United States, proving once again that if the truth be known, international relations are built on interests and pragmatism. Its rivalry with Iran, paradoxically can take it explicitly or implicitly closer to political agreements with Israel, with whom it has concurrent interests.

Another key player is Egypt, the intellectual lighthouse of Islam, whose conduct paves the trend for the Muslim world. The major approaches to Islam stem from Egypt, ranging from Hassan Al Banna and the Muslim Brotherhood to Al Zawahiri and Al Qaeda. Furthermore, it is the most highly populated Arab country (80 million), in addition to its two million emigrants distributed around the region, and is solidly consolidated as a State.

But the country is undergoing deep social discontent, with nearly 40% of the population living under the poverty threshold. Mursi's inability to resolve the problem and its worsening through economic failure and tensions in a plural, diverse society by offering Islamic proposals, is one of the reasons for his fall from power. But, despite all of this, the country has not made any significant changes in terms of its foreign policy, finally maintaining its alliance with the United States and its balance with Israel.

The Shia side is capitalised by Iran, whose geopolitical situation, geographic centrality in the Islamic world and his feature of geopolitical pivot, along with its visibility, make it an indispensable key player in the region. Two planes converge in Iran, the religious and ethnic ones, their confrontation taking them to an even higher degree of polarisation. Although Iran was the second Islamic country to recognize Israel, after Turkey, since the fall of the Shah in 1979, the situation has changed.

Nevertheless, the Revolution has become institutionalised and has lost some of its drive, and moreover, despite Messianism in the declarations by some of its leaders - it has not been capable of overcoming its intrinsic contradictions. The visibility of the Iranian regime confronting Israel and the United States, or carrying out its nuclear programme has given it in the past popularity and recognition from the Arab world, which the country has capitalised on to encourage recognition of its regional leadership. All told, Iran, the champion of the Arab world in the eyes of the West, is in reality Persian; and is postulated as the world's leader of Islam when Shia Islam is a minority branch and is secularly persecuted within that world. The nuclear agreement reached on 14th July 2014 implies a long-term change of status and model of international relations after its reinstatement as a regional power in the international community.

Israel is part of Iran's rhetoric, but if Iran wants to find a balance with the West, it must revoke it, which it will do owing to the fact that it is relatively insignificant for the country and despite its support for Hezbollah. Its model of foreign relations in the long-term will tend to adapt to the schemes that were implemented during the Shah's era, when its return to the international community prospers, which will prosper, i.e. as progress is made in a process burdened with contradictions and returns to the past.

Syria is a reciprocal example of Saddam Hussein's Iraq: a Sunni majority country controlled by a minority (Alawites and Christians; in Iraq during Saddam's government the Sunnis governed over the Shia majority). Despite the ideological incompatibilities with a secular regime, although pre-eminently Alawite, Iran has kept strategic relations since the Revolution. Syria supported Iran during the Iran / Iraq war. Moreover, Tehran sees Syria as a gateway to the Sunni and Arab world through which it can break away from the strategic siege it has been subjected to. The model that was presented was Syria and Iran united against Saudi Arabia, USA and Israel.

In either case, Syria is a key country for peace in the region. Relations between Syria and Israel have always been fraught with tension, in fact since the creation of the Jewish State, there has always been a warring attitude. And although Israel and Syria have not attacked each other directly since 1967, and the borders between both countries are the safest, both countries remain in a state of war.

Nevertheless, we must not forget that they carried on settling their differences through interposed players, either the Lebanon or through support of all kinds from Syria to an endless number of terrorist groups and organisations so that they would attack Israel. However, it is worth mentioning that Israel has never refused peace negotiations with Syria, despite the fact that Israel annexed Golan in 1981. The truth of the matter is that negotiations with Syria started at the Madrid Conference, although they were frozen in 1996 when

Syria opposed condemning the suicide bombings perpetrated by terrorist groups on that year²⁵.

At present, the Syrian state has collapsed, and violence has spread meaning that deciding who the goods and the bads are is not a fully operational reasoning; both of them are children of the same culture. The current political regime in the country is part of the problem, but is most likely part of the solution as well. Nevertheless, the problem has been prevented from spreading to Lebanon and the border with Israel has not suffered any significant breaches. In fact Israel has kept outside the conflict, except for occasional intervention. When peace arrives, which it will do sooner or later, the new regime is more likely to reach a better understanding with Israel, because of its weakness and need for support from the West.

The Lebanon is in a very unstable situation, because of the religious diversity in the country with weakened State structures and the presence of armed groups inside such as Hezbollah, a Shia group inspired and supported by Iran and by the Syrian government which was created in 1982 in reaction to military occupation by Israel, and whose military wing is listed as a terrorist organisation by the EU. The Lebanon currently supports the Syrian government in the civil conflict going on in the country.

In the context of an economic crisis and high unemployment levels, the Lebanon is also home to 40% of Syrian refugees in addition to the Palestinians. The result is a ratio of 183 refugees for every 1000 inhabitants according to UNHCR. The stability of this country that declared war on Israel in 1948 is critical for peace in the region. Fortunately, it has not been contaminated by the Syrian crisis.

Jihadist movements are also players in this conflict, including Daesh and Al Qaeda, who have used Israel in their rhetoric, but whose efforts are not in agreement with their rhetoric in the fight against the Hebrew state. The priority goal is at local level, whereas the West and Israel are secondary theatres where they can win ground in benefit of their main theatre. Moreover, these organisations, and this could become the case here, have colonised and infested conflicts of another nature (ethnic, tribal... Mali is a good example) and have transformed their codes and nature in religious affairs, without really resolving them and in some cases have even ended up fighting against those they had come to support. Israel is a part of their rhetoric, but little more.

Hamas, which forms a part of the Muslim Brotherhood, is an Islamic group the United States has listed as a terrorist organisation. Nevertheless, some Arab countries, Russia and Turkey, do not see it as such. The European Union

²⁵ Romualdo Bermejo. «Las conflictivas relaciones de Siria e Israel en el ajedrez del Próximo Oriente». UNISCI Magazine Issue no. 37 (January 2015). <https://www.ucm.es/data/cont/media/www/pag-72478/UNISCIDP37-6BERMEJO.pdf>

included Hamas on its list of terrorist organisations in 2003, although the Court of Strasbourg ordered it to be removed from the list in 2014, an order that has not been met in that it is subject to evaluation by the European Council.

Extended framework

The problem has a global dimension, as proved by the composition of the Near East quartet for peace created in 2002, also known as the Madrid Quartet, in order to supervise application of the road map designed to channel the Arab / Israeli conflict, whose members are the UN, EU, Russia and the USA.

At the time, and in its context, very different from the situation today, the United Nations approved the creation of the State of Israel, and was involved at Security Council level and in the General Assembly in the peace process, putting forward many resolutions which have been violated on many occasions, but which have given the parties political strength, particularly to the Palestinians whose State planned by the United Nations has not been founded.

USA and EU are like Mars and Venus acting together, never better anywhere else. The USA represents a more favourable position for Israel, which is highly influenced by the Jewish Americans and the Bible Belt protestants.

North American commitment, higher still among the Republicans, to the Hebrew State is practically unconditional, its maximum expression being its military and political support. Ever since the sixties, the US has allowed Israel to hold a decisive qualitative military advantage over its regional enemies.

But that does not exclude Washington from being the only player with the ability to force the parties to negotiate, and that has been shown through its vocation to promote different peace process related initiatives. In fact, all North American presidents, at least in their second mandates, have made major efforts to resolve the problem.

The European Union includes countries with different attitudes towards Israel, which makes its influence in the region, in the context of European Neighbourhood Policies, being more economic and humanitarian than political (it is the first economic contributor to cooperation and the main donor of humanitarian aid). A weak power, which through all has been very critical against Israel and influential in terms of legitimacy and capacity for dialogue.

In any case, the 2003 European Security Strategy already defined the peace process as a priority for Europe. But in addition to the Quartet, the EU has also supported the Arab Peace Initiative (2002) which, headed up by Jordan

and Egypt aimed to normalize diplomatic relations between Arabs and Israelis. Apart from the special envoy to the Middle East, the European Union has delegations in Israel, Lebanon and Jordan²⁶.

Spain has always played a mediator's vocation, with presence and specific weight in the region above its theoretical level in accordance with its position as a mid-level power. Not in vain, the King of Spain holds the historical title of King of Jerusalem.

This is explained by the traditional friendship between Spain and the Arab countries which has contributed greatly to the acceptance of its mediation role. Spain and Israel established diplomatic relations in 1986, as formalised in a joint Spanish-Israeli declaration in the Hague²⁷.

The Sepharad-Israel House was officially opened in Madrid in February 2007, now called the Sepharad-Israel Centre, an institution assigned to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation which has the goal of serving as a meeting point between Spain and the Jewish World and Culture. The Sephardi Jews are a historical link between Israel and Spain²⁸. The granting of Spanish nationality to this collective is the continuation of Spanish policies initiated at the start of the 20th century, which permitted numerous Jews to escape from the concentration camps.

The most visible action by our country today, is undoubtedly the deployment of a military contingent in the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) to support the Lebanese authorities and their Armed Forces to exercise their authority in the south of Lebanon, and thus comply with the demands defined in Resolution 1701 and precedents by the United Nations Security Council²⁹.

Spain has been involved for many years in the search of a solution to the Palestine / Israel conflict, whether at the Madrid Peace Conference in 1991, continuing its support for Resolution 1515 (2003) by the UN Security Council - where the well known Madrid Quartet Road Map was officialized - and, basically, actively cooperating and even leading initiatives from the European Union and other security and defence related organisations³⁰.

²⁶ Alberto Priego Moreno. «Presente y futuro de la acción exterior de la UE». Spanish Institute for Strategic Studies http://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs_marco/2013/DIEEEM10-2013_AccionExteriorUE_AlbertoPriego.pdf

²⁷ Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation. «Israel» http://www.exteriores.gob.es/Documents/FichasPais/Israel_FICHA%20PAIS.pdf

²⁸ *Ibidem*.

²⁹ José Manuel García Sieiro. «El papel de España en la estabilidad del escenario regional de Oriente Medio» in Emilio Casinello (Dir). *Oriente Medio y su influencia en la seguridad del Mediterráneo*. Cuaderno de Estrategia no. 139, Spanish Institute for Strategic Studies, May 2008.

³⁰ *Ibidem*.

Conclusions and prospects

Maurice, Elector of Saxony wrote: «Winning is surviving on the battlefield». The question is that the military purpose of war is victory, but this must be placed at the service of politics to make sense; prolonging the use of violence without political benefit is both a crime and a mistake. Yitzhak Rabín was a great general and an extraordinary politician who knew how to understand this relationship better than anyone. The death of Simon Peres and his funerals were a suitable framework for a change in approach.

Israel, a country that was born in a state of war, has won because it has survived. The victory consisted of gaining time to consolidate and legitimise its situation. Israel has now been a state for 70 years, time enough. It has won its right. Gaining time is starting to give little advantage, and increasingly less. It would be a time to change its strategy, to keep ahead of events instead of behind them.

Because the price of victory entails an inherent political cost, which is the defeat of a people unfairly dispossessed, such as the Palestinian. In the Bronze Age that would not be a problem, but in the 21st century it is.

Peace is always a compromise between different planes, and is therefore fragile. It is not now about winning, but also about convincing, i.e. rethinking victory and turning it into a common episode of mutual benefit. This way the paradoxes of war take us to Israel's legitimacy going parallel to the destiny of the Palestinian people. Their interests in this sense are no longer contradictory, and can even be considered concurrent. In the long-term Israel has no future without a future of the Palestinian people. The Palestinian problem is the problem of its people, ten million people, not their territory and not their holy sites, although these too must be considered.

Repression no longer contributes. Asymmetry in the practice of law (even archaeology has been used as a legal and political weapon) illegitimizes the State. Democracy in the West is not built on an ethnic or religious base, but rather over real and equal citizenship. And, by the way, democracy incorporates a similar behaviour towards the interior and the exterior, and towards the area where both these terms merge. Democracy is an attitude, a method and a will to settle conflicts.

If Israel has shown its determination, and that is why it has won, it is also true that the Palestinians have shown the same, if not more, determination. It serves no purpose to try and make them leave, to harass them further, because they are not going to, and the scenarios that can arise are not going to any worse than the ones they have already lived through. And that has a cost in terms of legitimacy that Israel ought to avoid. Violence will only drag on, and that will serve nobody's purpose.

Changing the trends, interpretative cultures require teaching and time. 2017 will see the 100th anniversary of the Balfour (this must not be forgotten)

Balfour Declaration, a good time to reflect on what too many years (100) of war have brought. In that time, and particularly since 1991, the dialogue and negotiation processes have taken place as if they were exercises at a School of Diplomacy. In 2014 the attempts by the Secretary of State Kerry, failed and now France is trying to restart a well-stagnated peace process.

The question is that with the settlements' policy applied since 2005, the viability of building a Palestinian State has been considerably reduced and, as President Hollande recognises, is being seriously questioned. The other options along the lines of the UK's proposals during the independence process would be a Federal State or cantonal municipal districts, both of which would be difficult because they entail co-habitation and altering the demographic base of Israel.

And violence will not serve to unblock the situation. Battles do not help to solve identity problems, that is not their purpose: they measure the willingness of the parties, which has been made more than obvious in this case. Diplomacy and violence appear to have little to offer, since both have been abused to the limits of disgust.

Moreover, we have seen how the centre of gravity of the conflict has moved from the exterior to the interior, whereas what «could» be offered to the Palestinians has been reduced over time with consolidation of situations.

Consequently, the prospects are not cause for optimism in the mid-term, because to this situation which is installed on a historical context of violence, atomisation of the parties, stultification of the Palestinian political structure resigned to the current situation, and the presence of extremists with a notable polarisation capability on both sides, are added. Strong leadership is required, which does not exist at present on either side and a project to commit to, which does not currently exist either.

Shema Yisrael.

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Chronology

10th Century BC	David conquered Israel from the Jebusites. Division of the Kingdom between Israel and Judah
732 BC	The Assyrians conquered the kingdom of Israel. Captivity of Niniveh
586 BC	First Diaspora: Judah conquered by Nebuchadnezzar II Captivity of Babylonia
537 BC	Return from Babylonia
70 AC	Jerusalem conquered by Titus
132-135	Bar Kokhba Rebellion
637	Jerusalem conquered by the Muslims
691	Construction of al-Aqsa
1290	Expulsion of Jews from England
1894	Dreyfus Affair
1896	Theodor Herzl published «Der Judenstaat (The Jewish State). Proposal of a Modern Solution for the Jewish Question».
1897	Basel Congress
1917	Balfour Declaration
1936-1939	Arab Revolt in Palestine
1947-1949	Civil War in the British Mandate of Palestine
1948	Proclamation of the State of Israel
1956	Suez Crisis
1967	Six Day War
1973	Yom Kippur War
1978	Camp David Accords
1979	Israel - Egypt Peace Treaty
1982	First Lebanon War
1987	First Intifada
1991	Madrid Conference on the Middle East
1993	Oslo Process
1998	Way River Summit
2000	Camp David Summit. Second Intifada
2001	Taba Summit
2007	Annapolis Summit
8th Century BC	Medes Empire
640 BC	Foundation of the Persian Empire by Cyrus the Great
522 BC	Maximum outreach of the Persian Empire under Darius I
331 BC	Battle of Gaugamela - Victory by Alexander the Great

The arab-israeli conflict. 100 years on from the Balfour...

634 BC	Start of the Arab invasion of the Persian Empire
9th Century	The Farsi language became consolidated
1221	Mongol occupation
1501	Proclamation of Shia Islam as the State Religion
1639	End of the 150 year war against Turkey
19th Century	Russian / British rivalry over Persia
1828	Cession of the Caucasus to Russia
1921	Coup d'état by Reza Khan, crowned Emperor in 1925
1935	Persia changed its name to Iran
1941	Fall of Reza Khan for his pro-Germany position Reza Palhavi came to power
1951	Nationalisation of the Oil Industry
1953	Fall of the Prime Minister Mosadeq
1963	White Revolution, authoritarian westernisation of the Shah
1979	Islamic Revolution
1981	End of the hostage crisis
1980-1988	Iran - Iraq War
1989	Death of Khomeini Succeeded by Ali Khamenei The technocrat Rafsanjani became the new president Re-elected in 1993.
1995	USA imposes sanctions on Iran for supporting terrorism
1997	Khatami the Reformer as new president Re-elected in 2001.
2002	USA includes Iran in the Axis of Evil
2003	Iran announces suspension of its enriched uranium programme
2005	Ahmadineyad elected president of Iran. Enriched uranium programme restarted
2006	Iran enriches uranium to 3.5% The Security Council votes to impose sanctions
2009	Ahmadineyad re-elected Green Tide Demonstrations in the streets
2010	Iran starts a programme to enrich uranium to 20% Uprising. Sanctions by the International Community are intensified
2012	European Union imposes an embargo on Iranian oil products
2013	Hassan Rohani elected as Prime Minister
2015	Nuclear Agreement

Chapter five

Lebanon

Jose Luis Cabello Rodríguez

Abstract

Over the last years the everlasting crisis in Lebanon has been marked by two main trends. One is the permanent attempt of Hezbollah to assume power, blocking the political institutions' normal functioning and threatening with violent actions in a more or less veiled way if their goals are not achieved, like for example their wish to avoid indictment for the murder of Prime Minister Hariri in 2005. The other relevant event, external yet not less disturbing, has been the Syrian Civil War. The flow of refugees, mostly anti-Assad Sunni, brought a humanitarian as well as political problem, while Hezbollah military involvement in the conflict, with significant casualties including some relevant army commanders and the Jihadist retaliation over Shia population, have imposed additional pressure over the country that Lebanon has managed to resist so far despite many negative forecasts.

Keywords

Lebanon, Hezbollah, Syria, Middle East.

Introduction

Geopolitical outlook on the region

If there is one region in the world whose name is tantamount to conflict, that is the Middle East. Although the term is somewhat confusing, in order to fit the Lebanese conflict in, we shall consider the area from Anatolia Peninsula in the north, to the extreme southern tip of the Arabian Peninsula, with the connecting areas of Mesopotamia, Levant, Palestine and the Jordan River, plus the territories of Egypt and Iran.

Historically, the strategic players have been positioned at the ends: Egypt, Anatolia, Mesopotamia and the Iranian plateau, and have kept the struggle for the central territory around which they pivot. The cradle of Judaism and Christianity is located in the central territory, which made Palestine a territory with huge emotional value, far higher than any economic or strategic value it could have. The Arabian Peninsula remained an onlooker until the appearance of Islam made it an intermittent centre of power, initially military and political power, to later become a spiritual epicentre with capital influence in the world.

A struggle took place among the peripheral powers until the end of the 19th century and early 20th century that practically the entire region was under control by the Ottoman Empire rulers, Iran being relegated to a marginal geopolitical position, being seen more as a connection point with Southern Asia and a buffer for the Russian - British friction, rather than a source of power on itself irradiating out its geostrategic vectors.

After the two World Wars, the situation changed considerably. The fall of the Ottoman Empire and the French and British decolonisation led to a profusion of new political entities within artificial borders, sharing space with age-old entities of invariable geostrategic value. A newly created Iraq, that did not previously exist, appeared on an equal footing with the age-old interests of Egypt.

Nevertheless, the final detonator of the conflict was the constitution of the Israeli State, initially only planned on part of the British Mandate over Palestine. It was rejected at the time by the Arab majority in the region, who wanted a multi-religious, united Palestinian State (with an Arab majority), and ever since that moment its existence has been the cause of permanent instability, with numerous wars, both conventional or otherwise.

These two circumstances, a rushed decolonisation with artificial results, along with the borders with Israel, have been the root of the conflict in Lebanon. The Lebanon in itself is a world of contradictions, imbalance and age-old confrontations inherent to the geopolitical system of the Middle East. There have been periods of enviable prosperity, compared to its neighbours, although this has not avoided the Lebanese becoming embroiled in violent

disputes for power, or avoiding rivals from gaining power; wasting everything that had been achieved during periods of peace.

To be fair, we must acknowledge that the Lebanese have been treading on hot coals ever since their peculiar process of independence from France, in view of the fact that the country is in a physically and human geographical position condemning it to high on impossible feats of balance both internally and externally.

Relevance of the conflict

With a recent history consisting of a succession of human tragedy, social and political failure and magical survival, studying the case of the Lebanon is relevant because today it is an example of how players and interests interact, without large amounts of violence, whereas in other parts of the Arab world, such as Syria, this takes place as open warfare.

Studying the relations between the internal dynamics of Lebanon and the Civil War in Syria is another fundamental point in order to foresee undesirable scenarios. Beyond the presence of United Nations forces in the country, with Spanish participation, the geographical situation of Lebanon regarding Europe is a point that requires that country to be kept stable to avoid an avalanche of refugees coming out, either through expulsion or due to a hardening of the country's attitude towards those who have fled there from Syria, or because an explosion of violence expels the native population and those who live there now after being displaced, towards other areas..

Any destabilisation of the country would force Israel to openly intervene, with the subsequent cascade of political, military and economic reactions by the regional and global players that would damage the scenario of global economic recovery.

Background to the conflict

Distant background

The distant background to the conflict dates back to the era of Ottoman dominion. During that period the concept of «Arabism» appeared in the Middle East in response to the attempts by the «Young Turks» to create a feeling of imperial nationality, similar to that professed by the «White Dominions» in relation to the British Crown among the different peoples of the British Empire. A basis was sought for modernisation of the Government structures that would allow them to face up the pressure from the European powers, causing populations traditionally passive and hostile to Turkish dominion to join in the idea of an «Inclusive Ottomanism», a dominion that was tolerated in Arab areas more as a vehicle towards an Islamic Caliphate than as an acceptable form of governance.

This ideological offensive was seen in those areas of Arab majority as an attempt of assimilation and a loss of cultural and ethnic identity, at a time when Turkish military and political weakness was launching learned minorities to seek political solutions by moving away from the Sublime Porte.

The incipient arab nationalist movements in Lebanon were violently culled by the Turkish authorities. In fact, the Independence monument in front of the Great Mosque in Beirut does not glorify the martyrs sacrificed by the West, but rather those sacrificed by the Turks.

After the defeat of the Turks in the Great War and in view of the Sykes-Picot agreement, France inherited the Levantine block of the Turkish domain and the dilemma was served, lasting to present day. Just, which was the political project to be fomented and, just which were the possibilities of kindling it among the «intelligentsia» so as not to be rejected by the people. The solution represented the permanence of the French geopolitical vision about the Levante: the division of the French mandate in two nations so that the Christian population of the Lebanon could serve as a guarantee of permanent Westernisation of the region, constituting the tip of the lance of French influence in the area.

Recent background

The conditions under which decolonisation took place, French national decomposition in World War II (during which the Mandate of Syria was the only territory in the Empire where free French ground troops and those of Vichy faced each other in battle) and the permanent political crisis in the Fourth Republic later, forced Syria and the Lebanon out into the international limelight. Without the natural resources of Algeria or Indochina, maintaining a political and social tinderbox was not part of France's plans even before the war.

And it was apparently the right solution. The existence of the State of Israel and the defeat against it, although it is true that it there was a half-hearted fight by the Lebanese, did not diminish the status of the country as the most westernised Arab country, where Muslims were forced to live with and tolerate Christians, sharing power with them and not simply tolerating their existence. The example the presence of the American University of Beirut has represented since 1886, is an exception to the existence of exclusively Islamic teachings, and has guaranteed the dissemination of western thinking even among Muslim students of both confessions, who have resorted to study there in search of a technical education that is difficult to find anywhere else in the Arab world.

The natural course of events pointed towards an exception in the Levantine where tolerance, education and a network of highly developed banking services would have been the nexus between the different political

expressions in the Arab world and a western world whose only contention with this area was the recognition of the State of Israel.

Ever since then, the source of all the problems in the Lebanon has been its own political organisation, that recognises and embodies distribution of power based on religious communities rather than political ideology as would be normal in a parliamentary democracy. Loyalties tend to focus more on the religious side rather than on the State as a whole, and it is very difficult to build a feeling of belonging to a national community in this situation. If in the beginning as an independent country the solution of assigning the highest magistracies to certain confessions, a Christian president, a Sunni Prime Minister and a Shia President of the Parliament, was a formula that guaranteed stability, maintaining this distribution however has proved to be an encumbrance for the institutions and has generated distrust among the communities preventing an integrating transversality.

Ultimately, the national reality was legally subordinated to the religious communities and conflicts are resolved the «Lebanese way», always postponed until a formula is found with no winners and no losers. This results in institutional paralysis and blocking of more compromising and effective solutions.

The country is not only divided into a host of communities, the social differences are poles apart. The existence of this matrix of interests and loyalties has been a millstone around the neck of the national project and has caused a succession of internal conflicts lasting through to today.

As if the internal factors were not enough on their own, Lebanon is geographically placed between Syria and Israel, which has meant the country has suffered the consequences of all the conflicts between these two players, despite having taken an active part, rather dismally due to the size and quality of its Armed Forces, in the 1948 War only, in the attempt to avoid the division of the former British Mandate's territory of Palestine and the birth of the State of Israel.

If the country ventured into this armed conflict based on Arab solidarity and the hope that more powerful armies would take the brunt of the hard work, the experience of defeat and the awareness of the advantages of investing in human and financial capital for an efficient banking system, limiting to propaganda only the hostilities towards Israel, made Lebanon to steer clear of the successive Arab / Israeli wars of 1967 and 1973. Nevertheless, Lebanon technically maintains a warring status with its neighbour to the south, that sometimes flares up in reality.

The appearance of Israel caused the Palestinian diaspora. Palestinians, who had been arriving since 1948, at the end of the first Arab - Israeli war and after the arrival from Jordan of those expelled by the Hashemite Government, became a destabilisation factor. Their number and military

capability made them an uncontrolled power within the fragile Lebanese institutional structure. In a country with very fragile military structure and security, the presence of the Sunni masses, who could disrupt the balance of power, armed and acting outside the needs of the country (basically peace and stability) was a calamity.

World War II should have taught more than one ruler that once a group sets off on the road to exile, the possibilities of them returning are practically zero. Neither the Jews who survived the Holocaust were welcomed back in their countries of origin in Eastern Europe, nor the Germans from Eastern Prussia or the Sudetes have ever returned home (nor have they conditioned German foreign policy). The possibilities of the Palestinians who left Israel returning and recovering their property were next to nothing, but, unlike the Germans or the Jews, they had no «homeland» to shelter in, except the «Umma», the community of Muslim believers.

Although they were initially welcomed, the avalanche of refugees entailed a serious humanitarian problem, particularly for countries that were not exactly rich to start with. But the Palestinians also became an unpredictable, unmanageable strategic player, in a world that was clearly divided between US and Soviet Union interests. Since there was no single country with a clear political and strategic agenda responding for them, they directly went into an irregular fight against Israel, extending from classic guerrilla warfare to acts of terrorism as a kind of «action propaganda» keeping their claims alive in the agendas of the main regional and global powers.

Their hate towards Israel led them to attack it from any bordering territory where they could settle, not only in the case of Lebanon, causing retaliation from Israel against the territories the attacks came from. In the end they became a parallel state that even imposed contributions and coerced the local population. The southern region became a territory where Al-Fatah imposed its law and controlled the local population, which became involved in a growing crossfire between Palestine and Israel, without Beirut being capable of doing anything about it. It is therefore not surprising that during the first invasion of Lebanon by Israel in 1978, after three years already of civil war, the Lebanese people applauded the pass of the Hebrew tanks.

This combination of institutional weakness, lack of national feeling, social inequality, the presence of Palestinians and powerful neighbours influencing their politics took Lebanon to a civil war in 1975. Curiously, during this fight the fiction of the state remained in place, so that at its end, power was distributed among the different communities in the same way. Memories of the 1958 crisis served as a reference throughout the entire conflict.

This conflict, which was initially caused by the distrust and subsequent forming of armed militias by the Christian community, against the growing power of the Palestinian militias, was the gateway for intervention by Syria and Israel.

The recurrence of crises in the country of cedars meant that western countries saw them as something assumable and not as an indicator of the fragile situation in the Middle East. The Levantine strip has never managed to become entirely pro-west and a beachhead against Arabism, whether socialist or Jihadist, who see the west from their traditional viewpoint dating back to the crusades and colonisation/protectorates at the end of the 19th century to the early 20th century, leading to the cosmic Islamic visions today in which the west is the source of all evil due to its sins ranging from arrogance (according to Tehran) to idolatry or inducing apostasy and atheism - in short the embodiment of values completely opposite to the Islam values.

The neighbouring proximity of Syria just adds an extra dose of insanity to the internal conflicts. Its neighbour, surrounding its territory, is also an explosive mosaic, which has remained united thanks to the Ba'ath regime of the Assad family. With a strong alliance to the Soviet Union first and afterwards to the Russian Federation, who has been its defender internationally come hell or high water; the strange mix of «forward-looking» ideology and despotism by the Assad family, has kept most of the Sunni population away from political power. The most elementary geopolitical conception would lead any Syrian government to monitor and attempt to control the Lebanon, hence the call for help that Syria received in 1976 to mediate in the civil war only served as an excuse for a large-scale military intervention.

What is truly important in the politics of Lebanon is that the development of the sixties and early seventies in the 20th century disappeared, and the always existing distrust between the communities in a country that has practically been invented, surfaced with violence. Following the example of the Palestinians, the political parties based on ethnic or religious groups created their own militias and made ready to secure their networks of power using force.

The civil war brought an operational end to the state structures. Although they continued searching for an agreement and maintained a fictitious state, it actually disappeared. Violence was on the verge of destroying the country and a Christian «Maronistan» was about to crystallise. The dwindling infrastructures disappeared completely through armed conflicts or lack of maintenance and the country entered a black hole. There were borders that were virtually respected, but inside the country there was little more than general chaos sustained by armed force. The truth is that during the late stages of the Cold War, nobody was interested in the disappearance of the Lebanese state, which could only have been occupied by Syria, a true ally of the USSR.

As a result of the insecurity caused by the Palestinians and afterwards by the civil war, Israel repeatedly invaded the Lebanon, even laying siege to Beirut, causing much the relief of the Lebanese population, the top brass of Fatah led by Yasser Arafat, fleeing to Tunisia.

One of the consequences of the civil war and the Israeli intervention, was the appearance of Hezbollah, literally meaning «Party of God». The Shia community, which had traditionally been less relevant in political and economic terms, started to organize around a movement which from its beginning, born from the more traditional Amal Movement, was the drive chain from Iran,. The first official announcements by Hezbollah insisted on naming the United States and USSR as enemies of Islam. The military effectiveness achieved from its training and equipping by the Iranian Revolutionary Guard meant it was not only able to fight against Israel, but was also able to start an intimidation campaign and gain presence in the political life of the Lebanese, backed by the use of violence.

The main source of prestige for the emerging movement was its ability to make Israel's permanence in the southern part of the River Litani so costly, so much so that it led to Israel's first ever retreat in the face of an adversary, which was not even a state.

If it had been a Sunni movement, its prestige would have been enormous in the Arab world, but since it was Shia, they were the Iranians who realised that they had been right to create a force they could use to strike at Israel and become in Muslim popular opinion, mainly among Palestinians, the only hope against Zionism..

Hezbollah's particular influence over Israel, from tactical matters to the development of the «Hybrid War» concept, was a determining factor in the evolution of the fighting concepts in the Israeli army. Israel traditionally had to contemplate two options in its military response against any threat. These could be either a conventional air/land threat which, except in the case of Jordan, would be fairly uncoordinated and inefficient, or an enemy that used asymmetrical warring efforts relying on luck, and insurgency.

Hezbollah was the first to coordinate both types of action. Conventional combat, usually defensive, giving the disproportionate capabilities, and a rigorous campaign of irregular resistance, so that coordinating activities to deal with both combat methods at the same time diminished the command and control capabilities and the manoeuvring capacity of the Israeli army. This without considering that in 2006, despite the overland Israeli effort and the air strike campaign, the launching of rockets over the north of Israel did not stop for one single day.

Current situation of the conflict

The issue that has marked the evolution, rather the stagnation, of the political situation in the Lebanon was, until the Syrian crisis broke out, the development of the investigations about the attack that claimed the life of Prime Minister Hariri.

Hariri was assassinated on 14th February 2005 by a car bomb that also claimed the lives of 22 other people. This event stunned the Lebanon, who did not believe these levels of violence would reappear after the end of the civil war. The first consequence was a Lebanese nationalist movement of the masses, grouping together those who opposed Syrian patronage and the rise of its Shia ally. The reaction was such that in view of the alternative of fighting against the Lebanese population, Damascus called back its troops and the security structure that had backed its influence beyond simply monitoring the peace agreements. The Shia and their allies immediately organised another movement and a parallel wave of mobilisation, frightened of being trampled by the alliance headed up by the son of the murdered Prime Minister.

A result of the assassination was the start of an investigation which consequences last through to present times. The main suspect, namely Hezbollah, backed by Syria, always threatened political or other consequences should its name be stained by these investigations. Beyond the sympathies that the victim could induce in the pro-Syrian and Shia sectors (either very little or none), openly appearing as a terrorist against its own nationals would irreparably damage the aura of «resistance» of the organisation, since Hariri could never be positioned as being closed to the «Zionist enemy» by any means.

Moreover, it would strengthen the idea of the Lebanon as a hostage country, first taken by the Syrians, then by the Shia and their Iranian allies, which would weaken the not strictly confessional electoral basis. Although a Zionist conspiracy to weaken the strategic trinity of Hezbollah: people - army - resistance could always be resorted to; which would undoubtedly be accepted by the Shia, the legitimacy of any government including Hezbollah would be not sit well inside the Lebanon or in any international forum that were not direct negotiations with Russia, Syria or Iran.

Over time Hezbollah has been taking advantage of the weakness of the state to spread its influence, superimposing its own structures over the official ones, with the aim of firstly neutralising them and then substituting them afterwards in a slow approach to taking over power.

A security scandal flared up in Beirut airport in 2008, where Hezbollah had established an unofficial passenger control system in the dark, with image recording systems that had not been officially declared and which were controlled by security managers all of whom belonged to the Shia Movement. This affair, which led to the dismissal of Hezbollah members, caused some uncommon tension in which Nasrallah presented the movement as a victim of a conspiracy and not as the culprit of a crime. It would basically be an attempt to dislocate the security capacity of a party that was threatened by the Israeli security services and to permit the latter an easier approach to the Shia leaders. The final result was the strengthening of Hezbollah and granting a veto right to them on parliamentary agreements.

The investigation into the assassination of Hariri, meanwhile, was not stopped, mainly because it was referred to an international tribunal. The fact that they were finally the members of Hezbollah, although the organisation as such was not accused, those who were considered the material authors of the bombing, caused political instability and institutional blocking, so typical of the Lebanon. A consequence of this confrontation is the lack of agreement to elect a new President since 2014 when Michael Suleiman ended his six-year mandate. Although as far as the institutions are concerned and in the absence of an agreement the scarcity of the presidential powers, permit administrative life to continue, it further showcases the fracture between the two blocks framing the political life in the Lebanon.

For once the dynamics of the conflict in the Middle East saved the Lebanon. The outbreak of the civil war in Syria diverted all the attention by the Lebanese politicians to two issues. The influx of Syrian refugees, mostly Sunni (as was the case of the Palestinians) and the military weakness of Bashar Al Assad against his enemies, meaning he was constantly losing terrain in the useful part of the country, these two issues being the focus of attention by the Lebanese leaders.

The case of the refugees was further complicated by the presence amongst them of fighters who required medical care, returning to their factions once they had recovered, plus very limited infiltrations of anti-Assad fighters who used Lebanese territory to carry out their surprise attacks in areas that were supposedly safe for Damascus.

For the Lebanon, one and a half million refugees is yet another challenge. First from the point of view of its capacity to deal with the humanitarian crisis, and secondly because most of the refugees are anti-Ba'ath and are a potential risk for the supporters of the Syrian regime within the Lebanon. For now we do not need to think about the long-term status, but Arab solidarity has not allowed the Palestinians to integrate in Lebanese society with the excuse of protecting their «right to return». Given the religious characteristics of this new wave, any different treatment cannot really be expected. Conceding rights to these populations, in the event of them finally settling in the country, would entail a shift in the political / religious balance.

The risk of the Ba'ath regime collapsing drove increased participation by Hezbollah in the conflict. At first it was all about ensuring that the insurgents did not use the Lebanon as a base for their operations, then it was the participation of Shia militia units, even at brigade level, with notable losses in opinion of their adversaries.

This growing participation, particularly after June 2013, has been a source of speculation about possible intervention by Israel to take advantage of the debilitated conventional military capabilities of its enemy in the south of Lebanon, although it is fairly unlikely that this will arise.

Hezbollah is completely committed to the conflict in Syria, and as long as the situation lasts, they will not provoke Israel directly, since an Israeli intervention would mean attention would have to be diverted back to their own territory in order to continue being the resistance force fighting the «Zionist enemy», thus weakening the efforts against the Islamic State and the anti-Assad militias that their Iranian mentors demand. Israel is content to watch how its adversaries bleed themselves and there is no reason to believe they will take part unless their most vital strategic interests are threatened, which is very unlikely to happen. An open conflict in the south of the Lebanon would lead to some rather strange brothers in arms, and it is safe to say that action by IS and Israel, at least in an uncoordinated manner, would be mutually beneficial. On the other hand, an Israeli intervention on their flank would force the Syrian regime and its allies to organise an «observation mission» that would take forces away from their main operations against the Islamic State.

Hezbollah's motives to participate in Syria¹ are strategic and political, beyond any obligation to support another religious community. On the one hand, Syria has always been an ally, although it has never been their main arms supplier or a source of funding, since this role has always been played by Iran. Support for Syria is presented as a bone of contention for radical Sunni Muslims² that would be lethal for multi-cultural societies such as the Lebanon and Syria, where, not without tension, Sunni and Shia Muslims, Christians and other minority groups such as the Druze have lived together.

The violence against anyone who does not share the Sunni faith or who does not profess it with the same intensity as claimed by Daesh, backs this justification in the sectors of the Lebanese population who would be affected by the defeat of the Syrian regime and an Islamic intervention in their territory.

On the other hand, certain areas of the population, not only in the Lebanon, who until now saw Hezbollah as a pillar of the resistance against Israel, have changed their outlook and now see it as another player involved in conflicts among Muslims and an enemy of the Sunni paladins such as Saudi Arabia and Qatar. Whichever the case, Syria is an important matter for Hezbollah, but not vital. Their survival and influence in the Lebanon would be guaranteed even if Al-Assad is defeated.

As for the internal situation in the Lebanon, nothing would be more the IS's liking than an outbreak of international or civil violence in the Lebanon, forcing Hezbollah to curb its efforts in Syria. Nevertheless, this scenario is not welcomed by any of the factions comprising the Lebanese political

¹ <http://www.iai.it/it/publicazioni/impact-syrian-crisis-lebanon>. The impact of the Syrian Crisis on Lebanon. Local and Regional Rationales for Hezbolallah's Involvement in Syria. Charles – Brian Blondi. IAI Working Papers 13/31 October 2013

² Known as «Takfiriyin»

panorama, who do not see any profit in weakening by force the forces supporting Nasrallah.

A return to the previous status-quo before the Syrian civil war, a stable regime in Damascus with friendly relations with Tehran, with or without Bashar in power, would entail territorial continuity so that Iran could continue supplying Hezbollah, but when that was a fact, it was not a factor that could stir up the possibility of generalised internal conflicts in the Lebanon, beyond those that are inevitable in a highly «militarised» country, where heavy armament is by no means limited to the Armed Forces.

The death in combat of Mustafa Badreddine, Hezbollah's military leader, near Damascus airport on 14th May 2016, proved the degree of involvement by the militia in the Syrian civil war and the importance given to it, not only by Hezbollah. The rumours that the organisation has a brigade size armoured unit means that they are gaining experience and material that could be disruptive for the future stability of the Lebanon. As a result of this increase in conventional capability by Hezbollah, the Israeli Prime Minister has admitted attacks on targets in Syrian territory where weapons were found that, in the opinion of Israel, could provide the Shia with technological capabilities that the Israelis are not willing to allow in order to maintain the necessary operational gap.

As for the political situation in the Lebanon, although there is a high degree of religious and ideological division, the population at large distrusts its leaders and are convinced, rightly so, that there is a very high degree of corruption at all levels³, something that is admitted as long as it carries out a distribution of the benefits among followers thus creating perpetual, growing nepotism. The absence of public social services means that those who are sponsored by the factions, particularly the medical insurance sponsored by Hezbollah, are a way of strengthening community ties and sometimes to create rather strange loyalties, it not being unusual to see Christians and Sunnis affiliated together. The hardships of a population that feels abandoned by its leaders mean that those who provide minimum services to cater for the needs of the poor, receive a support, albeit unpredictable.

The truth is that the power distribution system by religious communities has been, against all odds, one of the reasons the Lebanon has survived so far as a nation, by ensuring a fixed share of power, whereas on the other hand it could be one of the guarantees of an outbreak of violence at any time. In the case of electing Christian military officers for the post of President without there having been a «degaulization» of the institution, is proof of how the system has been accepted.

³ A survey conducted in 2012 revealed that 71% of Lebanese trusted the Armed Forces, whereas only 12% trusted the Parliament and barely 5% the parties. European Union Institute for Security Studies. Lebanon: an Officer and a president? Florence Gaub. April 2014. http://www.iss.europa.eu/uploads/media/Alert_23_Lebanon.pdf

The growth of the Shia community, at the expense of the influence capacity and above all of the levels of wellbeing of the Christian and Sunni communities, can cause the latter's disaffection against the system and movements of violent character for fear of situations of submission and dependence of some communities versus others. Although for now the case is that Christian support is swinging towards Hezbollah who are seen as being more likely to win in the case of an internal conflict, but for the time being this support has not destabilised the balance between the blocks.

The Syrian experiment, based on theoretical equality of all members of all communities and a superiority of the national feeling rather than that of belonging to ethnic or religious groups, has failed far too visibly for the Lebanese. On the other hand, this same failure feeds the idea that the imaginary collective is the only way of survival in a world of very specific loyalties. The constant deterioration of conditions in the Christian and Sunni communities, not to forget the small Druze community, along with the unstoppable increase in the specific weight of the Shia, means that community relationships take on a very special value for the generations who have lived through other distributions of power and who see this shift as a threat to the very survival of their groups and furthering political alienation.

The democratic system, which in a country with a civil society as vigorous as in the Lebanon, should keep at least internal control of each block, is hindered by a very unusual system of census designed to avoid any changes in town that may alter the religious distribution assigned to each zone, thus, people who move to the cities seeking job opportunities are forced to vote in their hometown, the political map having therefore very little opportunities to change.

On the other hand movements are appearing such as «*Beirut Madinati*» (Beirut My City) to demonstrate just how fed up they are of the politicians and the deterioration of living conditions. Along with «Citizens within a State» they represent the fight for an improvement of the basic living conditions rather than ideological claims, the garbage crisis of the summer of 2015 was the start of transversal mobilisation among the communities which now extends to the growth of «new» movements for local elections in 2016 and very possibly for the legislative elections in 2017.

Whichever the case, any process of change in the Lebanese political structure to move from a system based on religious quotas to another based on ideological nuances in a more European style, is not something that will happen in the short-term. The religious system, for good or for ill, is the backbone of the entire Lebanese political system and the networks of interests, sometimes international as is the case of the Shia, will not give up their quotas of power or their influence in a passive way.

Nevertheless, we must not forget that this system is designed to guarantee balance and not predominance of communities, in countries where the

national feeling is based on nothing more than decolonisation. The oppressive predominance of one community over the others inevitably leads to internal conflicts.

If we add economic imbalance and different quality of life among the communities, the kindling for a conflict is just waiting to be lit. The current situation is a poverty stricken Sunni mass that through eyes of frustration see how the Shia are taking over the actual control of the political situation, this leading to growing alienation of this population and them looking at more radical ways of religious interpretation where they believe they can find the answer to their problems and the breath for the fight in all forms. Further still, the example of Syria is paradigmatic, and resorting to taking up arms is seen as something that is becoming less reluctantly among a population who still vividly remember the atrocities and consequences of civil war. The north, particularly the area of Tripoli, is the most representative example of this situation, where the higher poverty indices are among the urban Sunni population.

The role of external actors

Syria, who has always attempted a more or less controlled annexation, and Iran, have played their cards strongly in the Lebanon. The Western nations have always opposed this meddling, unsuccessfully so far, while Israel has done so with weapons, without better results.

Since 2011 Syria has no longer been a player with the ability to exercise influence over the Lebanon, becoming instead a more determining factor in internal politics through refugees and insurgent groups. The role of mentor has been replaced for one of cooperation on equal terms between the Syrian Government and Hezbollah, who has become more and more involved to avoid the collapse of its traditional ally and the appearance on its flank of a Sunni state which would be hostile and could encourage Lebanese Sunnis to try wall-in the Shia party / militia.

Tehran has been in a situation in recent times where it has been forced into military cooperation, leaving behind other projects until the situation in the region is more favourable for its interests. Until this happens, it is unlikely they will embark on any other venture than military support of all kinds for Hezbollah.

The international community takes part through the United Nations in the UNIFIL mission. Created after the military intervention by Israel in 1978, its mandate has extended and evolved, to reach what it has become today after the Israel - Hezbollah war in 2006. It is commissioned to confirm withdrawal of Israel from Lebanese territory (determined by an armistice line and not a recognised frontier), to restore peace and security between both countries and to help the Beirut Government to consolidate its authority in the south of the country, specifically the area to the south of the River Litani.

The mission has gradually lost its validity since the territory to the south of the Litani, is now in peace and in the hands of the Government that includes Hezbollah, which means there are no armed forces there outside the supervision, albeit partially, of Beirut. Nevertheless, a hostage force is maintained which, although it does not dissuade from occasional action, it can prevent an escalation of violence among the former enemies of 2006 that may unforeseeably deteriorate the international situation.

The European Union⁴ has included the Lebanon as part of the Euro-Mediterranean Association (EUROMED), through which the Lebanon has an association agreement with the EU allowing it duty free access to European Market for manufactured products, as well as preferential treatment for agricultural products, processed agricultural produce and fishing products. Likewise, the Lebanon is included in the European Neighbourhood Policy Action Plan. Beyond these discreet trade links, the EU has an entirely secondary role and avoids becoming involved in scenarios that require firm action.

Saudi Arabia and the Arab countries in the Gulf Cooperation Council have been more specific, having financed infrastructure projects, although since early 2016 Saudi Arabia has started to lose confidence in the Beirut government and has discontinued the military assistance in reprisal for the half-hearted reaction by the Lebanese regarding the assault of the Saudi Embassy in Tehran, after execution of the Shia cleric Nimr al-Nimr. This shows the difficult balance Beirut is exercising between the two Muslim blocks.

Conclusions and prospects

The problem with the Lebanon is clearly caused by its own constitution and situation, and by an evolution marked by the clash between its internal factions and the external factors. Organising a state by religions has inevitably led to a sectarian confrontation and ultimately to civil war. The Arab / Israel conflict incorporated the Lebanon into the Palestinian dynamics that ended up causing the conflict with Israel and the upsurge of Hezbollah, ending up destabilising the state structures. The proximity of Syria as a neighbour has meant Lebanon has been submissive to its neighbour and has become the rearguard in its civil war. There are basically not many players interested in building a modern, efficient state, although many see the country as a lever to achieve their own interests.

With the outbreak of the Syrian civil war, the contention barriers of the international relations system have blown to pieces. The geostrategic logic of Iran, i.e. to unify all the Shia majority territories in a network of dependant states on Tehran, has forced it to intervene in Syria, thus dragging in

⁴ http://exporthelp.europa.eu/thdapp/display.htm?page=cd/cd_Libano.html&docType=main&languageId=ES

Hezbollah and the Lebanon at the same time. The mass arrival of refugees has become an unbearable burden for the Lebanese public services, which were already substandard before such human avalanche.

Basically, beyond the intention or neglect by the internal players to settle the problems, external causes are the main driving forces in the Lebanon's situation today. The future is not very promising either, but we should not underestimate the Lebanon's ability to survive crises and war during periods of time that would be unbearable for other societies.

Table of geopolitical indicators

TABLE OF GEOPOLITICAL INDICATORS		
Area 10,452 Km ²		
GDP 45,730,000.000 USD		
GDP Structure	Agriculture	74 %
	Industry	6 %
	Services	20 %
GDP per capita 15,675 USD (2015)		
GDP Growth Rate 0.7% (2015)		
Trade Relations EU 15.3 % (Exports): South Africa 10.69 % Saudi Arabia 10.2 % UAE 9.9% Syria 6.9%		
Trade Relations EU 40.5 % (Imports): China 11.5 % USA 5.7 % Russia 5.6 % Turkey 3.6 %		
Population 4,200,000 (2008) 280,000 Palestinians 2,000,000 Syrian refugees (2015)		
Age structure	0-14	23.5 %
	15-64	67.5 %
	Over 65	9 %
Population growth rate 1.38 %		
Ethnic Groups		
	Arab	92 %
	Armenian	6%
	Others	2%

TABLE OF GEOPOLITICAL INDICATORS		
Religions	Shia Islam	41%
	Sunni Islam	27%
	Maronite Christians	16%
	Other Christian denominations	9%
	Druze	7%
Literacy rate		90 %
Population under the poverty threshold		28 %
HDI		0.679 (67 / 188)
Military expenditure, % of GDP		4.04 %

Chronology of conflict

CONFLICT CHRONOLOGY	
CAP.	Lebanon
DATE	EVENTS
1943	Independence of Lebanon from France
1946	Withdrawal of foreign troops
1958	Civil War. North American intervention
1968	Army / PLO conflict. Cairo Agreements PLO presence made official
1975	Start of Civil War
1976	Deployment of Arab League troops, mostly Syrian
1978	Israeli intervention up to the River Litani
1982	Israeli offensive against Beirut, expelling PLO.
1983	Israeli withdrawal to the south of the Litani. Foundation of Hezbollah as a splinter group from the Shia party Amal.
1985 / 1988	War of the Camps, Amal against PLO
1988	Amal / Hezbollah conflicts, with the latter as winner.
1989	Taif Agreements. End of the Civil War
1991	Dissolution of the militias, except Hezbollah and the South Lebanon Army (pro Israel)
1993	Combat between the Lebanese Army and Hezbollah
1996	Operation «Grapes of Wrath» by Israel in the south of Lebanon
2000	Israeli withdrawal from the security zone in south Lebanon The zone is occupied by Hezbollah
2004	The Lebanese Government refuses to disarm Hezbollah
2005	Assassination of the Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri. The Cedar Revolution. Withdrawal of Syrian troops.
2006	Hezbollah / Israel conflict.

CONFLICT CHRONOLOGY	
CAP.	Lebanon
DATE	EVENTS
2009	Elections with wide support for March 14th Alliance (Sunni / pro Hariri Christians)
2011	Withdrawal of Hezbollah Ministers. Start of the Syrian Civil War
2012	Conflicts in Tripoli and Beirut. Assassination of General Wissam al-Hassan, with Hezbollah as prime suspect
2013	Assassination of the Minister of the Economy Muhammad Shattah in Beirut
2014	Attacks in the Beirut districts controlled by Hezbollah. Institutional Blockade
2015	Imposition of visas for Syrian refugees. Attempts by the Islamic State to take positions on Lebanese territory.
2016	Hezbollah declared a terrorist group by the Gulf Cooperation Council.

Chapter six

Syria: where everyone is at war with each other

Mario Laborie Iglesias

Abstract

After five and a half years of war in Syria, the interconnection of multiple actors and factors has led to a maze of interests and conflicting goals. This explains the long duration, high intensity and deep cruelty of the hostilities. The chapter makes a brief survey of the Syrian civil conflict's evolution since its inception, details the major events that occurred between September 2015 and September 2016 and discusses a few trends which may characterise this armed conflict in the medium-to-short term.

Keywords

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

Introduction

Five and a half years on, the war in Syria is showing all the signs of an unstructured conflict, owing to the fact that it is based on sectarian parameters. In general, the Sunni majority (70% of Syria's population), who make up the insurgency, are at odds with the Alawites (11%) and Christians (10%), the traditional supporters of Bashar al-Assad's regime, while the Kurds have their own agenda.

This creed-based division has spurred the emergence of a host of non-state armed actors who, as well as attempting to topple the Syrian regime, are engaged in relentless combat with each other. Dozens of local militias, hundreds of armed groups of different sizes and with different aims, and the direct involvement of the foreign powers afford this long-drawn-out war an unprecedented complexity.

The United Nations stopped counting the death toll in 2013, though at least 470,000 people have died in the war according to some estimates. All in all, one out of every nine Syrians has been killed or wounded as a result of the violence¹. In addition, nearly five million Syrians have taken refuge in neighbouring countries or Europe, and at least another 6.6 million are displaced inside the country. In some areas the «sectarian cleansing» has been completed and it is unlikely that the distribution of the population will return to the pre-2011 parameters.

The huge outflow of refugees, the growing number of armed extremist groups, developments in the Kurdish issue, the arrival of foreign fighters from all over the world and the spread of the conflict to Lebanon and Iraq are having a negative effect on Middle Eastern stability as a whole.

The fact that the parties to the conflict have adopted increasingly brutal tactics over time is inflicting indescribable suffering on the civilians, who are the main victims of the armed struggle. The Russian-US agreement of early September 2016, whose real impact has yet to be ascertained at the time of writing this article, is aimed chiefly at mitigating the anguish of the civilian population.

Based on the foregoing, this chapter, which continues previous editions in the IEEEE's «Geopolitical Conflict Panorama» series², briefly surveys

¹ BLACK, I. «Report on Syria Conflict Finds 11.5% of Population Killed or Injured». *The Guardian*. 11/02/2016. Available at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/feb/11/report-on-syria-conflict-finds-115-of-population-killed-or-injured>

² The three editions written by this author are: LABORIE, M. «Oriente Próximo: cambio sin retorno», in *Panorama geopolítico de los conflictos 2011*, IEEEE, November 2011. «Siria: deslizándose hacia el caos», in *Panorama geopolítico de los conflictos 2012*, IEEEE, February 2013. «Siria: guerra, sectarismo y caos», in *Panorama geopolítico de los conflictos 2013*, IEEEE, January 2014. All three volumes are available at <http://www.iecee.es>. For developments in the war in 2015, see LABORIE, M. «Rusia apuesta fuerte en Siria (y en el mundo)», *Análisis*

Syria: where everyone is at war with each other

the developments in the Syrian civil war since the outset, gives a detailed account of the main events which occurred between September 2015 and September 2016, and notes a number of trends which may characterise this armed conflict in the medium and short term.

Background to the conflict

At the start of the so-called «Arab Spring», few analysts believed that the Syrian regime, in power since 1970, would be influenced by people's demands, as had occurred earlier in Tunisia, Libya, Egypt and Bahrain. 2011 was the 40th anniversary of the coup d'état which brought Hafez al-Assad, the current Syrian president's father, to the presidency of the republic. With the support of the Baath party, the regime seemed to control all aspects of social, political and economic life in the country.



Political map of Syria // Source CIA World Factbook³

Nevertheless, March of that year saw a series of peaceful demonstrations calling for political changes. Their brutal suppression by the government triggered a spiral of violence which shattered the existing socio-political balance and paved the way for the appalling humanitarian tragedy that is ravaging the country today.

The clash between the two main branches of Islam, Shia and Sunni, has highlighted the longstanding geopolitical rivalry between Iran, which

GESI, 22/2015. 25/10/2015. Available at <http://seguridadinternacional.es/?q=es/content/rusia-apuesta-fuerte-en-siria-y-en-el-mundo>

³ Available at <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/sy.html>

supports Assad's Alawite regime, and the Gulf monarchies and Turkey, which back various Sunni rebel groups.

Similarly, the conflict has activated the existing global and regional alliances in support of or opposition to one side or the other. For example, the diplomatic disputes between Russia – and, to a lesser extent, China – on the one hand and the US and its European and Arab allies on the other have been constant, hindering the achievement of agreements on the peaceful handling of the conflict. Arms, money and foreign political support for the parties to the war have played a decisive part in intensifying the armed struggle.

The successive incorporation of actors and factors, coupled with the spread of violence to the neighbouring countries, led to the war attaining its current regional scope. The conflicts in Syria, Lebanon and Iraq are so closely interrelated that it is not possible to envisage an independent solution to any of them. And the current geopolitical implications the Syrian civil war holds for international relations on a global level are undeniable.

Similarly, the Syrian war has given impetus to the Kurdish people's aspirations of greater political autonomy, both in Syria and in the neighbouring states⁴. Accordingly, the «Peshmerga» – armed Kurdish fighters – who enjoy the firm support of the United States, have become one of the most decisive military forces in the war, though this has sparked a reaction from Turkey, ever wary of the Kurds' ambitions.

The civil war went through several phases from its initial outbreak to September 2015. The string of victories and defeats of both sides have turned it into a war of attrition in which neither currently seems capable of achieving a military victory.

Over the course of the war, the opposition side has become increasingly radical and many jihadist groups have emerged that are better armed and trained than the western-backed «moderates». Beginning in early 2013, the al-Nusra Front – then al-Qaeda's Syrian branch whose name was recently changed to Front for the Conquest of the Levant (FCL) – and the Islamic State, also known by the Arabic acronym Daesh, gained prominence among the host of armed groups wielding jihad as their ideology⁵. Clashes between the various jihadist factions and with other rebel groups have been a constant feature of the conflict.

Its rapid territorial expansion across Iraq and Syria and the huge power of attraction it exerts on the most radical Muslims the world over have made

⁴ LABORIE, Mario. «Los kurdos y el conflicto sirio». Documento de Análisis 25/2012. IEEE. 27/11/2012 Available at http://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs_analisis/2012/DIEEEA52-2012_KurdosyConflictoSirio_MLI.pdf

⁵ From the Arabic «Al-dawla al-islâmiyya fi l-'Irâq wa l-shâm». This name is offensive to group members owing to its negative connotations, as depending on how it is used, the word Daesh can mean «intolerant» or «one who sows discord».

Daesh one of the main factors in explaining the keys to the conflict. In view of the unstoppable advance of the radical Sunni and the real danger of their committing genocide against the religious minorities in northern Iraq, in early August 2014 the United States launched operation «Inherent Resolve»⁶ to crush the jihadists in both Iraq and Syria. More than 60 nations are currently part of the international coalition led by the USA⁷ with the support of the United Nations.

Despite its unceasing clashes with other factions, its advances in Syria during the course of 2015 came mainly at the expense of al-Assad's forces, marking a new turn in the conflict. Up until the start of that year, fighting between the Islamic State and the loyalists had been sporadic. By the summer of 2015, Daesh controlled large areas of the country; although these were relatively sparsely populated parts of northeast and central Syria, they included most of the valley of the Euphrates river and some areas adjacent to the Turkish and Iraqi borders.

Since the outbreak of the war, the main problem the regime has faced is the shortage of personnel for its military units. This has prevented it from conducting lasting offensive operations on several fronts at once, as well as from retaining the land it has conquered⁸. Following the long years of war, driven by his inability to find replacements for the casualties, throughout the first half of 2015 Assad suffered major military setbacks which appeared to be undermining his ability to defend key areas of the country, and it seemed that the regime might be toppled.

Current situation of the war

Assad's regime and support: in danger of collapsing?

By the end of the summer of 2015, the extreme weakness of the Damascus regime and fear that its traditional ally would suddenly crumble led Russia to decide to intervene militarily, as a result of which the war took a new turn.

With unceasing Russian air support, together with that provided by the Lebanese Shia militia Hezbollah and other groups of the same creed such as the Quds Force – a special forces unit of the guardians of the Iranian revolution, made up of nationals from other countries⁹ – Assad has launched

⁶ 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->

⁷ Information available on the operation's website. <http://www.inherentresolve.mil/>

⁸ «Syria's Assad Admits Army Struggling for Manpower». Aljazeera. 26.07.2015. Available at <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/07/syria-assad-speech>

⁹ The Iranians are leading an amalgam of Shia units, including Fatemiyoun of Afghanistan, Zeynabiyoun of Pakistan, Hezbollah and the Iraqi Harakat al-Nujaba. Available at <http://>

various offensives and has won back territory in the provinces of Idlib and Hama. The recapture of the famous city of Palmira from Daesh gave a boost to the regime at all levels, allowing it to present itself to the world as the last stronghold against jihadist irrationality and barbarity. However, after five years of warfare, the Syrian Arab army is reckoned to have lost between 80,000 and 100,000 men and therefore, save for a few elite units, it is no longer capable of carrying out offensive operations of a certain size on its own¹⁰.

Although the government has lost control of large parts of the country, it still has total or partial control of most of the country's cities, its stronghold in the province of Latakia, and all but two provincial capitals. Its strategic military goal is to capture Aleppo, the country's second most important city before the war, and do away with the pockets of rebel resistance in Damascus, Hama, Idlib and Latakia and at the Lebanese and Israeli border.

Under the current circumstances, the regime is attempting to compensate for its limited ground troops by stepping up the airstrikes and also resorting to paramilitaries and militias.

The regime's use of indiscriminate ways and means of combat – and therefore contrary to IHL – is causing unnecessary suffering to the civilian population, who have unfortunately become the centre of gravity of the conflict. In particular, the use of so-called «barrel bombs» hurled from helicopters, which are capable of razing whole buildings, has become common practice. Improvised explosive devices of this kind are destroying hospitals, schools and infrastructure essential to the life of the Syrian population¹¹.

With these tactics, the Damascus regime seems to be seeking to destroy the hospitals and health centres in the areas controlled by its opponents¹². Amnesty International reported at least six of these attacks between December 2015 and March 2016, which would constitute a war crime. The NGO suggests that Russia and the regime are using these attacks to force residents to flee before laying siege to a city or neighbourhood¹³. In August

www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2016/09/soleimanis-presence-in-aleppo-underscores-strategy-of-crushing-rebels.php

¹⁰ SCHNEIDER, T. «The Decay of the Syrian Regime is Much Worse Than You Think». *War on the Rocks*. 31/08/2016. Available at <http://warontherocks.com/2016/08/the-decay-of-the-syrian-regime-is-much-worse-than-you-think/>

¹¹ ROTH, K. «Barrel Bombs, Not ISIS, Are the Greatest Threat to Syrians». *The New York Times*. 05.08.2015. Available at <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/06/opinion/barrel-bombs-not-isis-are-the-greatest-threat-to-syrians.html>

¹² «Syria Crisis: Air Strikes on Hospitals 'War Crimes'». *BBC News*. 16.02.2016. Available at <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east>

¹³ «Syrian and Russian Forces Targeting Hospitals as a Strategy of War». *Amnesty International*. 03.03.2016. Available at <https://www.amnesty.org/en/press-releases/2016/03/syrian-and-russian-forces-targeting-hospitals-as-a-strategy-of-war/>

2016 alone, Aleppo's hospitals were bombed 13 times and its ambulances eight¹⁴.

The use of chemical arms during the conflict has also been reported¹⁵, but in this case by both the regime and the rebels¹⁶.

The regime's resilience is unconceivable without the support provided by the Lebanese Shia militia Hezbollah, whose involvement in the Syrian conflict has gradually intensified since 2011, going from initial advice to combat missions. But as its role in Syria has increased, the number of casualties has risen exponentially, triggering internal disagreement – a surprising phenomenon in such a disciplined and highly motivated organisation. It is estimated that more than 1,500 Hezbollah militiamen were killed between the start of the war and June 2016¹⁷.

As well as the Lebanese Shia, a further 29 militias with various degrees of cohesion and motivation for combat are fighting alongside the remnants of what was once Syria's regular army¹⁸. Some reports state that on the Aleppo front the Quds Force is coordinating the operations of all these militias¹⁹.

In this connection, the National Defence Forces (NDF), the «umbrella» organisation for various pro-government militias, are a critical asset for Assad. The NDF operate at the provincial level and appear to be vaguely supervised at the national level. The central government seems to have

¹⁴ BARNARD, A. «Even Amid Cease-Fire Countdown, Syria's Conflicts Deepen». *The New York Times*. 10/09/2016. Available at <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/11/world/middleeast/even-amid-cease-fire-countdown-syrias-conflicts-deepen.html>

¹⁵ As a result of the international pressure, Assad handed over his arsenal of weapons of this kind in July 2014. In November 2015, The Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons confirmed the use of mustard gas in Marea, north of the Syrian city of Aleppo, the area of fighting between the Islamic State and a group of Syrian rebels. DEUTSCH, A. «Exclusive: Chemical Weapons Used by Rebels in Syria – Sources». Reuters. 05.11.2015. Available at <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-chemicalweapons>

¹⁶ A United Nations report of August 2016 holds Assad's government responsible for two attacks using chemical weapons and Daesh for one. GLADSTONE, R. «Syria Used Chlorine in Bombs Against Civilians, Report Says». *New York Times*. 24/06/2016. Available at <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/25/world/middleeast/syria-used-chlorine-in-bombs-against-civilians-report-says.html>

¹⁷ «Hezbollah Suffers Heavy Casualties in Syria Including another Mughniyeh Commander». *YaLibnan*. 20/06/2016. Available at <http://yalibnan.com/2016/06/20/hezbollah-suffers-heavy-casualties-in-syria-including-another-mughniyeh-commander/>

¹⁸ AL-TAMIMI, A.J. «Bibliography: Pro-Assad Militias». 30/08/2016. Available at <http://www.aymennjawad.org/2016/08/bibliography-pro-assad-militias>

¹⁹ TOUMAJ, Amir. «Soleimani's presence in Aleppo underscores strategy of crushing rebels». *The Long War Journal*. 07/09/2016. Available at <http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2016/09/soleimanis-presence-in-aleppo-underscores-strategy-of-crushing-rebels.php>

been losing its control over the Shia militias in recent months. The actions of the latter have exacerbated the sectarian nature of the war, triggering an outflow of Sunni refugees who are fleeing not only from the war but from the possible reprisals.

Opposition to the regime: fragmentation and jihadism

The fragmentation of Syrian political opposition has been a constant factor since the beginning of the war in Syria. United solely by the wish to defeat Assad, the various opposition groups disagree about their objectives and the ways and means of realising their ambitions.

The main opposition bloc is the High Negotiations Committee (HNC). Established in December 2015, this organisation brings together more than 30 political and military groups and has the support of Saudi Arabia and the approval of the West²⁰. At Turkey's request, the HNC, which represents the opposition in the negotiations led by the United Nations, does not include members of the pro-Kurdish Syrian Democratic Council or other Sunni political organisations. In contrast, the National Coalition of Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces, which represented the opposition in earlier rounds of negotiations, is part of the HNC.

In early September 2016, the HNC submitted a detailed plan for the political transition. The plan recommends holding extensive negotiations during a ceasefire, followed by an 18-month interim government designed to prepare the country for subsequent elections²¹. The plan, at least for the time being, seems to have few possibilities of being accepted by Assad's government or by its allies Russia and Iran.

But the rebels are even more divided on the battlefield. Over the course of the five years of civil war, hundreds of armed groups have sprung up, which, as well as battling the loyalist forces, form alliances or fight with each other depending on the situation and the area in question.

This division at both the political and military levels has facilitated the development of jihadist groups, which over time have gained predominance over the more or less moderate factions. The main groups are Jaish al-Islam, the Islamic Front, the Islamic Union of Ajnad al-Sham, Jaish al-Mujahideen and, of course, the al-Nusra Front, now called FCL, and the self-proclaimed Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant or Daesh. In accordance with the general trend in

²⁰ HUBBARD, B. «Syrian Rebels Form Bloc for New Round of Peace Talks», *The New York Times*. 10/10/2015. Available at <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/11/world/middleeast/syrian-rebels-form-bloc-for-new-round-of-peace-talks.html>

²¹ WINTOUR, P. «Syrian Opposition Coalition to Announce Democratic Transition Plan». *The Guardian*. 07/09/2016. Available at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/sep/07/syrian-opposition-coalition-to-announce-democratic-transition-plan>

the war, these organisations have no qualms about fighting against each other or, on the contrary, forging temporary alliances if the circumstances so require.

In July 2016, the leader of the al-Nusra Front, Abu Mohamad al-Golani, announced that the organisation was severing its ties with al-Qaeda and changing its name to Front for the Conquest of the Levant (Jabhat Fatah al Sham). This decision had purportedly been approved and coordinated with high commanders of al-Qaeda and seems to be designed to allow the organisation to join forces with other Islamist groups in Syria. It also appears to be intended to make it difficult for the United States and Russia to justify their attacks on the FCL. Judging by group's growing popularity with Syrian Sunni, this change seems to have been quite fruitful, at least for the time being²².

As for the Islamic State, the brutality of its means of combating and controlling the population living in the areas under its sway has gained worldwide notoriety²³. Disseminated by the social media and information technologies, the radical images and stories immediately reach audiences all over the world in a ploy to rapidly secure a support base.

The international campaign against Daesh reached a decisive phase in the summer of 2016. Weakened by the long strings of bombings, the organisation headed by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi has lost as much as one-third of the territory it occupied in Syria and Iraq until a few months ago and is facing imminent offensives against its two most important strongholds: Raqqa and Mosul.

As will be explained in detail further on, the offensive begun by the Turkish army in northern Syria in August 2016 has cut Daesh's supply lines, further complicating its military situation. In view of these circumstances, the Islamic States is changing tactics, carrying out many suicide attacks throughout Syrian territory, especially in the areas controlled by the regime. It is to be expected that, as Daesh progressively loses control over more territory, acts of terrorism in neighbouring countries and Europe will be stepped up.

²² AL-TAMIMI, A. «Al-Qa`ida Uncoupling: Jabhat Al-Nusra's Rebranding As Jabhat Fateh Al-Sham». *CTC Sentinel*. 22/08/2016. Available at <https://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/al-qaida-uncoupling-jabhat-al-nusras-rebranding-as-jabhat-fateh-al-sham>

²³ In any case, Daesh is not exclusively responsible for war crimes and crimes against humanity. Amnesty International has reported human rights violations by Syrian rebel groups in Idlib and Aleppo. The report states that the rebels in those areas have carte blanche to commit war crimes and other violations of international humanitarian law with impunity and are now using torture methods initially employed against them by Assad's regime. «Syria: Abductions, Torture and Summary Killings at the Hands of Armed Groups». Amnesty International. 05/07/2016. Available at <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2016/07/syria-abductions-torture-and-summary-killings-at-the-hands-of-armed-groups/>

The Kurds

Instability in Iraq and Syria is heightening tension over the Kurdish issue, while a window of opportunity has been opened for this people's longstanding desire to achieve a state of their own. Nevertheless, the Kurds' aspirations are coming up against two fundamental stumbling blocks.

First of all, the lack of unity between the various factions indicates that there is no actual route map defining their possible political future. The 40 million Kurds are divided among four states: Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria. Conditioned by this geographical and political situation, over the course of several generations the Kurds living in each state have developed particular characteristics of their own, such as dialects, tribal loyalties, leadership, ideologies and historical experience. The Kurdish parties are asserting these differences with notable bureaucratic meticulousness on both sides of the Syrian-Iraqi border²⁴.

Secondly, apart from the conditional support of both the USA and Russia, the Kurds do not enjoy the sympathy of any regional power to counter the opposition of Turkey, its fiercest adversary.

President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan views the Kurdish separatist movement, represented by the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK in Kurdish), as the main instability factor for Turkey. The resumption of the conflict between the summer of 2015, when the peace talks between the PKK and Turkey failed, and September 2016 has led to the deaths of nearly 2,000 people²⁵. The country has suffered the scourge of terrorism several times, and although Daesh was mainly to blame, the Ankara government maintains that PKK was linked to some of the attacks²⁶.

With a view to the post-war period, the Syrian Kurdish parties are working on a plan to formalise the semi-autonomous area they have established in much of the north during the five years of war as a model for a decentralised federal system in the whole country²⁷. This possibility has been firmly rejected by both Assad's regime and the opposition.

²⁴ HILTERMANN, J. «The Kurds: A Divided Future?». *NYR Daily*. 19/05/2016. Available at <http://www.nybooks.com/daily/2016/05/19/kurds-syria-iraq-divided-future/>

²⁵ BILGINSOY, Z. «Group: Renewed Turkey-Kurds Conflict has Killed Nearly 2.000», Associated Press. 05/09/2016. Available at <http://bigstory.ap.org/article//turkey-2-soldiers-killed-clashes-kurds-southeast>

²⁶ PESTANO, A.V. «Erdoğan Blames Syrian Kurdish PYD for Ankara Bombing; Separate Blast Kills 6». UPI. 18/02/2016. Available at http://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2016/02/18/Erdoan-blames-Syrian-Kurdish-PYD-for-Ankara-bombing-separate-blast-kills

²⁷ BARNARD, A. «Kurds Hope to Establish a Federal Region in Country's North». *New York Times*. 16/03/2016. Available at <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/17/world/middleeast/syria-kurds.html>

Syria: where everyone is at war tieh each other

Following the utter failure of the US programme to train and equip the moderate Syrian rebels, the Peshmerga have become the most effective ground force the Americans have to strike Daesh.

The main Kurdish militia in Syria is the People's Protection Units²⁸ (YPG in Kurdish), which are connected to the PKK. But whereas the PKK is on the US Department of State's list of terrorist organisations, the same is not true of the YPG. This circumstance has allowed Washington to provide this group with continuous air support in combat operations and a constant supply of weapons and equipment. This support has been denounced by Erdogan, who declared «We have written proof! We tell the Americans: 'It's a terror group.'»²⁹ YPG has been leading the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), a coalition of armed Christian, Turkmen, Sunni and Kurdish groups, since 2015.

The Syrian Kurds live in three separate cantons located by the Turkish border. The SDF's ultimate aim would be to link the two situated east of the Euphrates, Jazeera and Kobani, with the canton of Afrin, which lies further westwards. This would mean occupying the approximately 80km-long strip of territory that separates them. This area, which has always been inhabited by Arab tribes, has been violently disputed by Daesh and allied rebel groups of Ankara.

Early in the summer of 2016, the SDF's advance towards Afrin against the Islamic State and clashes with allied rebels of Turkey led Ankara to fear that the Kurds' aims of creating an autonomous entity by its Syrian border might be realised.

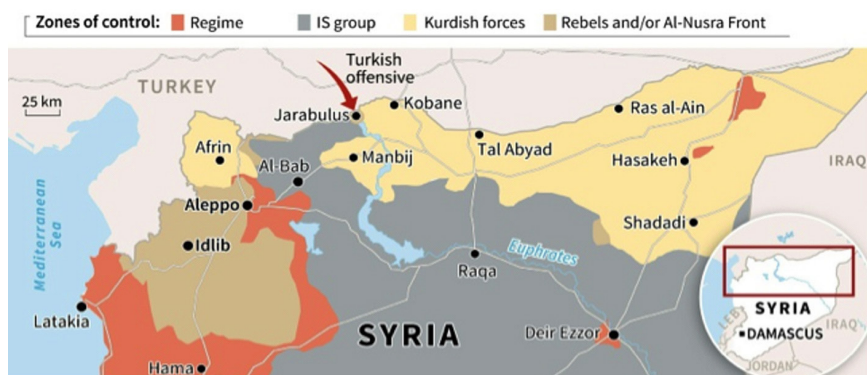
Given that «the fundamental Turkish red line is not Assad. It is against the formation of a Kurdish state»³⁰, Ankara had warned it would not tolerate the presence of the SDF west of the Euphrates. As the Kurds were reluctant to comply with this condition, on 22 August 2016 the Turkish Armed forces launched operation «Euphrates Shield», which, as the Turkish defence minister explains, has a twofold aim: «Islamic State should be completely cleansed, this is an absolute must. But it's not enough for us ... The PYD and the YPG militia should not replace Islamic State there»³¹.

²⁸ YPG are held to be the armed branch of the Democratic Union Party (PYG). For more about the background to the Kurdish issue in Syria, see LABORIE, M. «Los Kurdos y el conflicto sirio». Documento de Análisis. 52/2012. IEEA. 27/11/2012. Available at http://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs_analisis/2012/DIEEA52012_KurdosyConflictoSirio_MLI.pdf

²⁹ «Turkey's Erdogan Denounces US Support for Syrian Kurds». BBC News. 10/02/2016. Available at: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-35541003>

³⁰ Spoken by Admiral James Stavridis, former NATO Supreme Allied Commander for operations. DOLAN, D. «After Sweeping into Northern Syria, Turkey Faces Hard Choices». 01/09/2016. Available at <http://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-mideast-crisis-syria-turkey>

³¹ PAMUK, H.; BEKTAS, U. «Turkey Fires on U.S.-backed Kurdish Militia in Syria Offensive». Reuters. 26/08/2016. Available at <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-turkey>



Operation "Euphrates Shield" (August 2016) // Source: Al Monitor³²

The role of the external actors

Initiatives for a negotiated solution

During the more than five years of civil war, the UN Security Council has not managed to agree on any measures to put an end to the war. Russia, with Chinese support, has blocked the various draft resolutions promoted by the western powers to penalise Assad's regime. Even the attempts to get the International Criminal Court to investigate and prosecute the alleged war crimes or crimes against humanity have been vetoed³³.

Given this state of affairs, the international initiatives for achieving a negotiated solution have been centred chiefly on the so-called Geneva talks, in which the parties to the war are represented – with the exception of Daesh, the Front for the Conquest and the Kurds, the latter at the express wishes of Turkey. So far three rounds of negotiations have been held, all with negative results.

At Geneva in June 2012, Action Group for Syria³⁴ agreed on a peace plan which envisaged a transitional government including members of the current regime and opposition – Geneva I. February 2014 saw the holding of Geneva II, but no progress was made, and the third round began in March

³² «Turkey's Operation in Syria Fraught with Risk: Analysts». Al Monitor. 26/08/2016. Available at <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/afp/2016/08/syria-conflict-turkey-diplomacy.html>

³³ BLACK, I. «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>

³⁴ Formed by China, Russia, the USA, France, the UK, Turkey, the Arab League, the UN and the EU. Action Group for Syria. Final Communiqué. 30.06.2012. Available at <http://www.un.org/News/>

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2016. Only a month after the start of Geneva III, the opposition suspended its participation on discovering that the regime was carrying on its offensive in the province of Aleppo, though international observers have reported that the negotiations are continuing on an informal basis³⁵.

The regional powers

Turkey and the Persian Gulf monarchies

Each with its own priorities and interests, Turkey and the Gulf monarchies – led by Saudi Arabia following the withdrawal of the Qatari diplomats³⁶ – have been very hostile to Assad's regime, defending the need to topple it and supporting various opposition groups.

Following years of struggles, in 2015 the Sunni world began coordinating its political activities in Syria itself. Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Turkey have firmly supported Jaysh al-Fatah – the Army of Conquest – a coalition of Islamist militias which has secured major military victories and is made up of Ahrar al-Sham, Faylaq al-Sham (linked to the Muslim Brothers) and also the FCL. The fact that the then branch of al-Qaeda was receiving foreign support aroused western suspicions of Jaysh al-Fatah³⁷.

The current Turkish-Arab alliance does not mean that all the states share the same strategic aims. Whereas Saudi Arabia leads the forces opposed to what it views as Iran's dangerous Shia expansionism, Turkey is determined to quash any plans to encourage Kurdish sovereignty. The abovementioned operation «Euphrates Shield» – a name that leaves no doubt about its intentions – is one of the most important developments in the Syrian conflict as it could radically change the course of the war.

In a matter of weeks, the Turkish army and its rebel allies have forced Daesh to withdraw to inland Syria. West of the Euphrates, Turkey is already in control of an area that it has repeatedly demanded be made into a no-fly zone that would take in Syrian refugees, acting as a sort of «buffer» zone by preventing them from continuing to flow into its territory. The fact that overhead wires are being installed across the Turkish-Syrian border to supply energy to the

³⁵ HACKWILL, R. «Syrian Opposition Stays Away from Geneva Peace Talks». Euronews. 18/04/2016. Available at <http://www.euronews.com/2016/04/18/syrian-opposition-stays-away-from-geneva-peace-talks>

³⁶ During the early years of the conflict, Qatar adopted a very active stance which led it to back Turkey and oppose the Saudis. Since 2016, this position has shifted towards a foreign policy that is more in harmony with the rest of the Sunni countries. LABORIE, M. «Hacia un nuevo orden en Oriente Próximo», in *Panorama Estratégico 2014*. IEEE. Available at http://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/panoramas/panorama_estragetico_2014.pdf

³⁷ SENGUPTA, Kim. «Turkey and Saudi Arabia Alarm the West by Backing Islamist Extremists the Americans had Bombed in Syria». *The Independent*. 12.05.2015. Available at <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/syria-crisis-turkey>

newly conquered population centres could be a further sign of Erdogan's unmistakable intentions to create this buffer zone³⁸. These Turkish claims had previously been rejected by the international community on account of their possible negative repercussions.

Although Assad's regime and Russia have officially condemned the Turkish offensive, it is possible that Damascus and Moscow may have consented to the invasion. Now that relations between Erdogan and Putin are closer, there is speculation about an agreement that would allow Assad to capture Aleppo and Turkey to establish an area of influence in Syria and accordingly crush the Kurds' aspirations³⁹. Such a manoeuvre would be made with or without the approval of the US, which in turn maintains ties with the Kurds, rebel groups in Aleppo, and Turkey – a real brain teaser for Washington.

Iran

Assad's regime would have already collapsed had it not been for the firm support lent by Iran since the start of the war. Iran's assistance in intelligence matters and supplies of arms and fuel have shored up the regime, enabling it to keep up its combat operations. But above all, Assad remains in power thanks to the deployment of members of the Quds Force, who train the Alawite militias and coordinate the military operations against the rebels, and also to the political cover of the Shia regional movement sponsored by Tehran. Nevertheless, the fact that thousands of Shia volunteers from all over the world have come to Assad's defence⁴⁰ has heightened the sectarian nature of the Syrian conflict.

The reasons why Iran wholeheartedly supports Assad have been much debated. To sum up, in the past the Middle East has been divided by two fracture lines: the struggle between Sunni and Shia and between Arabs and Persians. Iran has a mainly Persian population and a political regime governed by the principles of Shiism. Surrounded by hostile pro-western Sunni states, Iran needs all the allies it can get to ensure that its regional interests are protected⁴¹.

For decades the Tehran regime, Syria and Hezbollah have made up the so-called «Axis of Resistance», which aims to spread the Iranian Islamic

³⁸ BARNARD, A. «Even Amid Cease-Fire Countdown, Syria's Conflicts Deepen». op. cit.

³⁹ «Assad regime, Turkey agree on fighting Kurds in Syria». ARA news. 30/08/2016. Available at <http://aranews.net/2016/08/assad-regime-turkey-agree-on-fighting-kurds-in-syria/>

⁴⁰ It is reckoned that as many as 20,000 Afghan Shia are fighting on the regime's side. In addition, combatants of the same creed from Lebanon, Pakistan, Iraq and recently China are part of the pro-government militias trained and equipped by the Iranians. MOSLIH, H. «Iran 'Foreign Legion' Leans on Afghan Shia in Syria War». ALJazeera. 22/01/2016 Available at <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/01/iran-foreign-legion-leans-afghan-shia-syria-war>

⁴¹ BARFI; B. «The Real Reason Why Iran Backs Syria». *The National Interest*. 24/01/2016. Available at <http://nationalinterest.org/feature/the-real-reason-why-iran-backs-syria>

revolution and promote anti-western and anti-Israeli policies. Hatred of Israel can be viewed as the strategy adopted by Iran to curry favour with the Sunni Arab peoples. The Damascus regime was the link between Persians and Arabs.

However, the Syrian conflict has already curbed Iran's influence throughout the whole of the Middle East and any possible Syrian influence has completely disappeared. From Lebanon to Yemen, the Sunni leaders are concerned about Iranian movements in the Arab countries⁴².

The fall of Assad's regime would be a further blow to Tehran's regional influence and therefore a change of stance cannot be expected of Iran. Even if Assad's regime were to collapse, Tehran will attempt to control key areas of Syrian territory where it can defend its vital interests. Obviously this position would favour a «federal solution» for a post-Assad Syria.

In view of these objectives, it is not surprising that Tehran is cooperating so closely with Moscow, not only over the Syrian issue but also in other areas of defence⁴³. According to the Iranian authorities, relations between the two countries are regarded as strategic⁴⁴.

International actors

The global geopolitical aftereffects of the Syrian war are increasingly evident. This conflict and the changes in the strategic environment of the Middle East show that the world order is increasingly less western, and Russia is attempting to take advantage of the situation.

Russia

Russia has proven to play a key role in the aspirations of Assad, to whom it has provided diplomatic cover, arms and essential supplies to enable him to continue fighting.

At the beginning of September 2015 – a time when Assad's regime was showing clear signs of weakness – the Russian military intervention in Syria marked a qualitative leap for its foreign policy in the region. This action was Russia's first expeditionary deployment outside the former Soviet area since the war in Afghanistan.

⁴² *ibid.*

⁴³ As indicated by the agreement reached in February 2016 for Iran to purchase a total of 8 billion dollars-worth of Russian arms. «Iran Looks to Spend \$8bn on Russian Arms». RT. 16/02/2016. Available at <https://www.rt.com/business/332604-iran-arms-russia-deal/>

⁴⁴ «Iran Open to More Military Cooperation with Russia: Shamkhani». PressTV. 26/08/2016. Available at <http://www.presstv.ir/Detail/2016/08/26/481755/Iran-Russia-Syria-Saudi-Arabia-Yemen>

Apart from supporting a government which is also a historical ally – it should be recalled that the Syrian port of Tartus has hosted Russia's only foreign naval base since the times of the USSR – and an excellent arms customer, Vladimir Putin's initiative of intervening militarily in Syria could stem from four aims: (1) to boost Russia's geopolitical influence in the Middle East; (2) to serve as a counterweight to the United States in that region of the world; (3) to crush the jihadist organisations before any of their members can return to Russia; and (4) to gain diplomatic status for his ambitions in Ukraine⁴⁵.

When the campaign of air strikes on the rebels was begun, Moscow stated that the attacks would only be against Daesh. However, there is evidence that most of the strikes are being directed against the opposition forces in order to back the offensives of Assad's ground forces. Indeed, the strikes have gradually increased in response to the rebels' advances in various areas. Some of these actions have been targeted at rebel groups directly supported by the United States or Turkey.

Since Russia embarked on the campaign of bombings, official sources of the Russian Federation's defence ministry have stated that, as of June 2016, 12 Russian soldiers have lost their lives during active service in Syria. Nevertheless, independent media have reported more deaths and have pointed out the existence of confidential reports not recognised by the government, which speak of dozens of casualties⁴⁶.

Perhaps with the intention of avoiding the negative repercussions of these casualties, Russia is directly involved in the Syrian hostilities not only with regular military forces but also with private security contractors⁴⁷. This ploy provides the Russian authorities with a deniable means of sending trained military personnel abroad⁴⁸.

One of the most striking changes that occurred during the first half of 2016 was the radical turn in Russian-Turkish relations, barely seven months after a Turkish air force fighter-bomber shot down a Russian Su-24 fighter

⁴⁵ LABORIE, M. «Rusia apuesta fuerte en Siria (y en el mundo)». op. cit.

⁴⁶ FITZPATRICK, C. A. «How Many Russian Soldiers Have Died in Syria?». *Daily Beast*. 22/06/2016. Available at <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2016/06/21/how-many-russian-soldiers-have-died-in-syria.html>

⁴⁷ At the end of March 2016, an investigation published by *Fontanka*, an independent Russian newspaper, stated that the Kremlin had hired a private security company called «Wagner» to go and fight in Syria and Ukraine. It claimed that these contractors are handling combat tanks and heavy weapons as part of the Russian military forces in both theatres of operations. «In Syria Killed Dozens of Russian Soldiers Working for Private Military Company». *Fontanka.ru* - Last news from Russia. 30/03/2016. Available at <http://en.news-4-u.ru/fontanka-ru-in-syria-killed-dozens-of-russian-soldiers-working-for-private-military-company.html>

⁴⁸ QUINN, A. «Vladimir Putin Sent Russian Mercenaries to 'Fight in Syria and Ukraine'». *The Telegraph*. 30/03/2016. Available at <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/03/30/vladimir-putin-sent-russian-mercenaries-to-fight-in-syria-and-uk/>

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plane, killing the pilot. At the end of June 2016, the Turkish president backed down from his stance of not apologising for the incident and sent a letter to Russia's President Vladimir Putin expressing his «sympathy and profound condolences to the family of the Russian pilot»⁴⁹.

Erdogan's official visit to Russia in early August 2016 – the Turkish leader's first foreign trip following the previous month's attempted coup d'état – marked a definite step towards overcoming the crisis⁵⁰.

Under these circumstances, after Turkey had stated it would agree to Assad remaining in power «during a period of transition»⁵¹, it is likely that Putin and Erdogan reached an understanding to safeguard both nations' interests. Such an agreement would allow Ankara to achieve its aims in the north of Syria and Iraq without being hampered by Russia – hence the Turkish military intervention along its Syrian border – while Moscow would have Turkey's permission for the Syrian regime to maintain control of Damascus, Hama, Homs and Latakia, under the supervision of Russia and Iran. In other words, we appear to be witnessing the traditional geopolitical concept of «spheres of influence»⁵².

The United States and its European allies

Since the start of the war, the western countries, headed by the US, have promoted diplomatic efforts to achieve a negotiated agreement between the parties at war provided that Assad immediately resigns. In addition, the diplomatic actions have been complemented with «non-lethal» US support for certain opposition groups and the more or less covert training and provision of arms of specific rebel forces.

This approach has been modified over time and, in view of the increasingly complex reality, the intensity of the calls for Assad to step down has waned. The extreme danger of Daesh's expansion likewise modified the US viewpoint in the Middle East. Now the top priority is to destroy the jihadists, while Assad is perceived as a lesser ill, since his fall could be counterproductive to western interests.

With these objectives and the continuing air strikes against Daesh and other jihadist groups, the US strategy was aimed at supporting the Kurds, regarded

⁴⁹ «Russia-Turkey Relations: Rapprochement on Russian Terms». Defense News. 31/08/2016. Available at <http://www.defensenews.com/articles/russia-turkey-relations-rapprochem-russian-terms>

⁵⁰ «Erdogan Travels to Russia to Reset Relations». AlJazeera. 09/08/2016. Available at <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/08/erdogan-travels-russia-reset-relations-.html>

⁵¹ «Turkey May Agree on Assad Remaining in Power for Interim Period – Reports». Sputnik News. 10/07/2016. Available at <https://sputniknews.com/politics/20160710//turkey-assad-syria.html>

⁵² ABI, F.A. «Turkey's Syria Intervention Likely Reflects its Acquiescence to 'Zones-of-influence' Agreement with Russia». *Jane's Intelligence Weekly*. 12/09/2016.

as the most effective military force, and attempting a rapprochement with Russia in order to coordinate the actions on the ground.

This strategy has had two major repercussions. After more than ten months of negotiations, at the beginning of September 2016 Russia and the United States agreed on a plan to attempt to lessen the degree of violence in the Syrian war. If it succeeds, it could lead the two powers to coordinate their military operations against Daesh and the FCL for the first time⁵³.

The plan consists in achieving a credible ceasefire for at least a week and during this time granting the humanitarian organisations access to the areas under siege in the city of Aleppo. If this were to work, the second step would be to establish a joint Russian-US centre to coordinate the bombings. The key to the plan's success lies in Russia preventing President Assad's forces from carrying out any operations on the areas controlled by the opposition forces, and the United States doing likewise with the rebels to prevent them engaging in offensive actions⁵⁴.

At the time of writing this text, the parties are somewhat sceptical about the possibility of the agreement being successfully implemented. The difficulty of controlling the many armed groups engaged in fighting in Syria, coupled with the fierce mistrust between Russians and Americans, endangers the success of this new opportunity to put an end to the conflict.

Unlike with Russia, Turkey's relations with its western NATO allies have deteriorated to the point that the US secretary of state, John Kerry, appealed to the Turkish government to respect democratic principles following the intense purge that is being carried out following the failed military coup⁵⁵. It should be remembered that the essential requisite for belonging to the Atlantic Alliance is democracy⁵⁶. The firm support lent to the YPG, which has undoubtedly enabled the Kurds to gain positions in northern Syria, the

⁵³ Twenty or so rebel groups have criticised the agreement for excluding the Front for the Conquest of the Levant and regret that the same treatment is not given to the jihadists and the «foreign sectarian militias» that are fighting against the regime and have been committing crimes against Syria for five years. AYESTARAN, M. «Rusia pone pie en tierra en Siria para supervisar el alto el fuego y la entrega de ayuda». *ABC*. 13/09/2016. Available at <http://www.abc.es/internacional/abci-rusia-pone-tierra-siria-para-supervisar-alto-fuego-y-entrega-ayuda.html>

⁵⁴ SANGER, D.A.; BARNARD, A. «Russia and the United States Reach New Agreement on Syria Conflict». *The New York Times*. 09/09/2016. Available at <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/10/world/middleeast/syria-john-kerry-ceasefire-deal-russia.html>

⁵⁵ As well as military, this purge extends to judges, teachers and political opponents. More than 35,000 people had been arrested and a further 75,000 civil servants had been fired by mid-August. CUPOLO, D. «Voices of Turkey's Purged». *The Atlantic*. 19/08/2016. Available at <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2016/08/turkey-erdogan-coup-purge-kurds-akp>

⁵⁶ MORELO, C. «Kerry Urges Turkey to Maintain Democratic Principles after Coup Attempt». 18/07/2016. Available at <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/kerry-warns-turkey-nato-membership-potentially-at-stake-in-crackdown.html>

United States' apparently lukewarm reaction to the attempted coup and the new rapport between Putin and Erdogan have poisoned the traditional partnership between Turkey and the US.

Another source of malaise, this time with the EU, is the influx of Syrian refugees into Europe, fleeing from the war. The agreement reached in March 2016 to put an end to illegal emigration has prevented diplomatic tension from deepening, at least for the time being.

Conclusions and perspectives

Since the outset, the war in Syria has been characterised by three deeply interconnected factors: its sectarian nature, the considerable fragmentation of the opposition and the influence of the conflict on the geopolitical dynamics that affect the Middle East as a whole. The interconnection between these three factors and the involvement of foreign powers have led to a highly complex situation, which explains the long duration, high intensity and deep cruelty of the war.

After more than five years of unrestricted warfare, Syria's government institutions, social structures and basic infrastructure have ceased to exist. Although the danger of the regime collapsing has lessened since the Russian intervention, it is highly unlikely it will be able to recover full control of the territory that was once Syria. The same is true of the opposition, which has neither the means nor the support to seize power and rebuild the Republic of Syria.

The Kurds, for their part, are realising that what makes them different from each other is more significant than what they have in common. The regional tension underlines how difficult it is to modify the Sykes-Picot Treaty⁵⁷. In view of these two factors, the Kurdish people's ambitions will probably be suppressed, as in the past, by geopolitical conditioning factors.

In an area that is vital to the world's energy supply, the constant features that characterise the current Middle East situation chiefly revolve around traditional Turkish-Arab-Persian rivalry, the struggle between the two main branches of Islam, Shia and Sunni, and the competition between the great world powers.

Current trend points to a more or less formal division of the country according to ethnic and religious identity: a Turkish-sponsored enclave in the north, the Kurds to the northeast, and the centre for the Sunni, while the coast, Damascus and the area surrounding the Israeli and Lebanese borders would

⁵⁷ Sources, F.J.; Pellicer, J.M. «Cien años de geopolítica en Oriente Medio: el acuerdo de Sykes-Picot». Documento Marco 15/2016. IEEE. 08/09/2016. Available at http://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs_marco/2016/DIEEEM15_2016_Geopolitica_OrienteMedio_Fuentes_y_Pellicer.pdf

remain in the hands of the regime, with or without Assad. The question is whether it is possible to reach an agreement like the Dayton accords for Bosnia and Herzegovina, allowing the parties to establish a stable framework for coexistence – even accepting the ethnic and sectarian cleansing that has already taken place. The suffering of the population and weariness of the parties may steer events in this direction in the coming months, but this will only occur if they perceive victory through arms to be impossible. It is therefore important for the foreign powers to stop acting solely in their own interests and aims. Only time will tell whether or not this is feasible.

Table of geopolitical indicators

Area	185,180 km2 (89) - includes 1,295 km2 occupied by Israel
Length of coastline	193 km
Length of borders	2,363
Population	17,064,854 (July 2015 est.) (65)
Ethnic groups	Arabs 90.3%, Kurds, Armenians and other 9.7%
Religions	Sunni 74%, other Muslims 16%, Christians 10%
Average age (total)	24.1 years

(Source CIA World Fact Book)

Conflict timeline (sept 2015-sept 2016)

2015	Sept	In view of the danger of Assad's regime collapsing, Russia joins in the war to support it. The US defence secretary starts talks on Syria with his Russian counterpart to avoid confrontation between US and Russian troops
	Oct	Loyalist forces begin the fourth Hama offensive with Russian and Iranian support. Russia and the US sign a memorandum of understanding to avoid possible confrontation
	Nov	Turkey downs a Russian fighter jet, triggering heightened diplomatic tension between the two countries. NATO calls for a de-escalation of the crisis
	Dec	The German parliament approves the government's plans to join in the military campaign against the Islamic State in Syria
2016	Jan	President Putin states that Assad can seek asylum in Russia
	Feb	The Geneva III talks fail
	Mar	Russia begins partially withdrawing its troops from Syria. However, it continues its air strikes against rebel positions
	Apr	The battle of Aleppo grows fiercer, with hundreds of deaths on both sides
	May	Daesh carries out a string of suicide attacks throughout Syria. The SDF begin an offensive in northern Syria against Daesh
	June	The Turkish president sends a letter of condolence to Russia for the death of the pilot shot down in November 2015

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	July	The attempted coup d'état in Turkey fails. Erdogan responds by carrying out an intense purge of opponents. The leader of al-Nusra announces that he is severing ties with al-Qaeda and rebranding the organisation Front for the Conquest of the Levant
	Aug	President Erdogan visits Russia. The Turkish army starts operation «Euphrates Shield». The Kurdish units withdraw to the east of the Euphrates
	Sept	The Syrian High Negotiations Committee (political opposition) submits a transition plan. Russia and the US agree on a plan to reduce violence and achieve a ceasefire

Chapter seven

The imminent defeat of the islamic state in Iraq

Francisco José Berenguer Hernández

Abstract

The civil war in Iraq has reached its final stages. Following the capture of Ramadi and Fallujah, the imminent storming of Mosul will put an end to the conflict, although we cannot rule out the survival of an Islamist insurgency. However, the strengthening of Kurdish and Shia tribal militias during the war is hindering the full stabilisation of Iraq and even its survival as a state.

Keywords

Iraq, Islamic State, civil war, international coalition, Mosul.

Introduction

The civil war that is ravaging Iraq is largely a paradigm of the type of conflicts witnessed since the end of the Cold War and probably still to come. Its deep-rooted causes can be traced back to age-old factors which were present not only in the country but in the region as a whole and continued throughout the decolonisation and dismembering of the Turkish empire following the First World War. They also lie in important circumstantial factors, such as the invasion of the country in 2003, the influence of religious radicalism and jihadism, the political aspirations of the Kurdish community, and the regional impact of the Iranian revolution.

Basically, it is an enormously complex war waged in several, distinct stages. The current stage appears to be slowly drawing to a close, but it is difficult to envisage a permanent end unless, after this phase, the country undergoes a number of deep structural changes – which, however, seem unlikely to occur as things currently stand.

On the contrary, everything appears to indicate that the international community is increasingly resigning itself to partitioning Iraq – de facto or de jure – into political entities different from the unitary state which still exists formally and is internationally recognised.

Background to the conflict

Distant background

The distant background to this war can be traced back at least to the turbulent and bellicose times when Islam emerged and first spread from the Arabian Peninsula. Indeed, the circumstances surrounding the murder of Caliph Utman, the fragmentation of the Muslim community (*fitna*) into various would-be successors and, finally, the assassination of Ali in Kūfa in 661¹, albeit for reasons of political succession, also highlighted the important issue of the legitimacy of the prophet's successors, which would later give rise to Sunnism, Shi'ism and Khawarijism. Since then the main Shia havens – Najaf and Kerbala – have been located on Iraqi soil and still are today. This forged an indissoluble link, but also triggered friction, between this region with an Arab population and the Persian people, who are mostly Shia.

As a result, mainly following the theocratic revolution in Iran, the interests of this regional power have been very directly linked to those of the Shia Arab community of Iraq – a factor which is proving to be decisive in the present phase of the Iraqi civil war.

¹ CAHEN, Claude. *El Islam, vol.1. Desde los orígenes hasta el comienzo del Imperio otomano*. Historia Universal siglo XXI, Siglo XXI Editores, Madrid, 1992.

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Closer to the present time, the collapse of the Turkish empire as a result of the stipulations of the Treaty of Sèvres² and the consequent interference of the victors of the Great War – chiefly France and the United Kingdom – in regional affairs led, through the Sykes-Picot Treaty and during British rule,³ to one of those so often repeated examples of new nations' borders being arbitrarily created as part of the colonisation/decolonisation process of many African and Asian states.

In this case, the agreement consisted in three different provinces formerly under Ottoman rule and with capitals in Mosul, Baghdad and Basra being united into a new state. Forcibly bringing together Kurds, Sunni Arabs and Shia Arabs (the respective majorities in the abovementioned provinces) and many minorities (Assyrians, Christians, Yazidis, etc.) within the same borders of a «modern» – that is, western-style – state triggered a long spate of rivalries and clashes for control of the new political entity, Iraq. These rivalries are powerfully present in the current civil war.

Recent background

It might seem logical to begin this section with the invasion of the country in 2003, chiefly by the US, but by doing so we would omit certain earlier events which have at least as much influence on the current situation as the invasion.

The event in question is Saddam Hussein's rise to power. Under the power structure of the Baath party, which was socialist and secular but imbued with a strong sense of Arab nationalism, this politician progressively climbed the rungs of the party ladder and saw his popularity grow among part of the Iraqi population. Finally, after becoming party leader in 1979, he established one of the most brutal and violent dictatorships ever recalled.

During this dictatorship, although episodes such as his lengthy war with Iran and subsequent invasion of Kuwait, a territory long claimed by Iraq, might have strengthened national unity, Hussein took the supremacy of the Sunni Arab community over the others in the country – mainly the Kurdish majority in the north and the Shia Arab community in the south – to an extreme. For this purpose he did not hesitate to commit acts of extreme violence against these rival communities, such as the Iraqi air force's infamous attack on the Kurdish city of Halabja with nerve agents and mustard gas on 16 March 1988.

Furthermore, the almost permanent state of war which was established during the abovementioned Iran-Iraq conflicts and the international community's military response to the Iraqi dictator's invasion of Kuwait

² CAHEN, Claude. *El Islam, vol. 2. Desde la caída de Constantinopla hasta nuestros días, Historia Universal siglo XXI, Siglo XXI Editores, Madrid, 1992.*

³ *ibid.*

led to widespread destruction of the country's critical infrastructure. This overall impoverishment, further exacerbated by the harsh sanctions to which the country was subjected from 1991 onwards, spread the conviction that much of the population was used as cannon fodder in the dictator's military adventures. Meanwhile only he, his powerful clan and like-minded members of the Sunni Arab community enjoyed the benefits from exploiting the country's resources – which in times of peace and stability could have generated major hydrocarbon exports, ensuring the population's wellbeing.

The abuse suffered by non-supporters of Saddam's regime, who were subjected to an extremely violent crackdown, largely explains the current events in Iraq, as the situation was reversed following the destruction of the regime during the invasion of 2003. This circumstance, surrounded by controversy over the well-known issue of the alleged weapons of mass destruction in the possession of Saddam's regime, was accompanied by an even greater error than the much-disputed invasion itself. The mistake consisted in completely dismantling the power structures – army, security forces, administration, justice, etc. – that were holding the country together.

This institutional underpinning and network of real power on the ground, which served the purposes of a dictatorship that was undeniably terrible but might have been steered towards a more favourable situation by the huge presence of troops and international officials, was thus torn apart but given no replacement in practice.

As a result, 2003 saw the emergence of two parallel factors which constitute the recent background events that most decisively influenced the outbreak of the civil war studied in this short article.

The first is the resilience of the regime, which, after being conventionally defeated by chiefly US military power, morphed into a high-intensity insurgency. At this point it should be stressed that this resistance was an ideal breeding ground for the emergence of a new actor on the scene, jihadism.

Indeed, as had previously occurred in Afghanistan and would later occur in Libya and Syria, the conflict situation, furthermore involving the Sunni Arab community on which religious radicalism and jihadism have had a greater impact in recent decades, attracted members and sympathisers of international jihadism, who regarded it as a clear opportunity in the wake of Russia's defeat in Afghanistan to do the same with the United States in Mesopotamia.

The armed resistance of the members of a political movement that had once been the socialist and secular «scourge» of religious radicals and was defeated and removed from power by the invasion rapidly morphed into something more complex and transnational: a new and important element of the international jihadist struggle – in this case against the West, chiefly the United States.

The imminent defeat of the Islamic State in Iraq

The symbiosis and alliance of both spheres of interest – the ousted Baathists and the international jihadists – gave rise to one of the main actors in the current civil war: Daesh, or the self-styled Islamic State. Strengthened by each other's capabilities, these former opponents and now allies gave shape to the political entity which even today continues to withstand the rebuilt Iraqi army, the Kurdish and Shia militias, and the powerful resources deployed by the international coalition.

The capability and resilience of the Islamic State to date, both in Iraq and in the different yet related civil war in Syria, can only be explained precisely by this clever symbiosis described in previous paragraphs between veterans of Saddam's regime and religious fanatics.

The second recent background factor is different from but reinforces the first one. Following the establishment of a democratic regime under US supervision, the new authorities resulting from the elections have proven incapable of governing all Iraqis and, adopting laws and administrative measures, they have «purged» the institutions of sympathisers with Saddam's defeated regime.

The «de-Baathification» process has by no means managed to camouflage the new authorities' bid to wreak revenge on their former oppressors and their interest in filling the many resulting vacancies – at all levels – with their «own» people.

The government of the previous prime minister, al-Maliki, the current government of al-Abadi and the Kurdish representation in the Iraqi parliament, an ally of both, have used their joint majority in the house to show that the concept of «we and them» in war studies remains as prevalent as ever in Iraq, predominating over the intelligent and pragmatic measures needed to enable the three communities to achieve a peaceful and stable coexistence within Iraq's internationally recognised borders.

This process gained momentum during the turmoil immediately after Saddam's regime was toppled and, chiefly, during the relatively peaceful period after the main US successes against the insurgency. In particular it was given impetus by the implementation of the Petraeus doctrine, which enjoyed the support of many Sunni tribal military committees. It therefore convinced much of the Sunni community that, following full US withdrawal from the country in 2011 and the resulting disappearance of the only intermediary capable of tempering the Baghdad government's aims of snatching any share of power from the Sunni Arabs in Iraq, the only way of defending their interests was to take up arms again.

This factor, together with the trigger effect of the powerful return of the Islamic State (IS) from Syria early in 2014, sparked the current state of civil war and the military campaign whose current developments are described in the following pages.

Current situation of the conflict

The past year's developments can be best summed up by mentioning two related factors which not only underpin the present situation but will most likely also characterise the near future of the war.

The first of these factors is the growing efficiency of the strategy adopted since the outset by the US-led international coalition. Its three main elements⁴ have been implemented without much variation since their adoption, at least as far as the main courses of action are concerned, though there have been different stages with respect to the intensity of each implementation:

- a) **The constant campaign of air strikes** which made it possible initially to stem IS's advance through the country, chiefly in 2014 and part of 2015. Subsequently, during the ensuing period of territorial stabilisation, the actions of the allied aviation wore down IS's financial, organisational and operational capabilities, albeit less effectively than desired because the troops rarely came into contact with the IS militias, who mostly went unnoticed among the population.

Finally, following the significant increase in military actions on the ground against jihadist positions throughout practically the whole of 2016, the air strikes have more clearly identifiable targets, such as vehicles, groups of militiamen, positions of artillery or snipers, etc., as being engaged in all-out combat with the allied groups is forcing the jihadists to reveal their position and unmistakable nature. This has given a significant boost to the air strikes, which have destroyed much of the Islamic State's military potential and have contributed decisively to its current weakening.

- b) **Arab countries' participation in the coalition**, a fact which has been considered of paramount importance since the coalition was first established in September 2014. The aim was mainly to dismantle one of the central arguments of IS's propaganda by demonstrating to the international Muslim community that the Iraq war is not, as claimed, a religious conflict between «crusaders» and Muslims.

The fact is that this course of action has been more political and formal than effective, as the Arab military forces active in the coalition have been scant and are furthermore often diminished as a result of the intervention of the coalition of Arab states led by Saudi Arabia in Yemen, known as «Operation Decisive Storm».⁵ At any rate, it is a far cry from the action of land army contingents intervening

⁴ BERENGUER HERNÁNDEZ, Francisco José. «La guerra contra el Estado islámico y el factor tiempo», IEEE, 17 March 2015.

⁵ FUENTE COBO, Ignacio. «Yemen, o cómo convertirse en estado fallido», in *Panorama Geopolítico de los Conflictos 2015*, IEEE, 2015.

on the ground within Iraq's borders and directly against the jihadist militias. This idea, envisaged by the allies during the coalition's first weeks of existence, has not materialised and has become a progressively more distant possibility over the course of the months.

The Arab countries' participation currently consists chiefly of the political support provided by their formal belonging to the coalition, and the involvement of small air contingents, often sporadically, in the air strikes. The extreme complexity of the regional geopolitical situation makes any greater involvement impossible.

- c) **Training of Iraqi military forces and support for local armed groups** is the third and most important course of action adopted, since the start of the intervention and currently.

Indeed, it seems clear that confidence in the local forces, regular or otherwise, which are duly trained, advised, armed and funded in some way or another by the coalition members, has been the international community's favourite option. In fact, it is currently the only feasible means of putting an end to the war, but unfortunately it is also the most likely source of future conflict – so much so that it raises doubts about the feasibility of a stable and peaceful Iraqi state.

The possibility of creating an international intervention force to defeat IS rapidly and decisively with conventional warfare, putting an end to its control of much of Iraqi territory in order to immediately withdraw and hand over to the legitimate Iraqi authorities, has always been on the table. However, the highly negative previous experiences in Iraq itself and in Afghanistan, along with the policies and priorities established by the US administration, have hampered the emergence of a political will to carry out such an operation.

As a result, IS has managed to survive as a territorial entity and pseudo-state – and is still alive – for too long, in both Iraq and Syria. The Iraqi army currently under reconstruction has been recovering very slowly from the dismantling of its commands by the above-mentioned «de-Baathification» laws, the subsequent state of neglect and corruption and, finally, the military debacle of Mosul, despite the intense training and re-equipping efforts of several coalition nations, among them Spain.

It is now, in the summer of 2016, that the Iraqi army has a few military units, such as the antiterrorist forces known as «Golden Division». ⁶ With air support and the backing of the coalition's «military advisors» on the ground, they can contribute along with the local

⁶ MORRIS, Loveday. «The Force Leading the Iraq Army's Fight against ISIS Went from 'Dirty Division' to Golden Boys», *The Washington Post*, 26 July 2016.

militias to launching operations of a certain size, such as the recent recovery of Fallujah or the manoeuvres for approaching Mosul.

Owing precisely to the shortage of regular units with sufficient confidence and capabilities, not only has the role played by the local militias since the outset, when they proved to be the only ground forces capable of stemming the advance of IS in 2014, not diminished but they have become the predominant military forces in the war.

Both the Kurdish militias in the north and the Shia militias in the south and centre of the country are still undeniably the main players in the war, though they are giving rise to many problems. The fact that they each inevitably have their own agendas and objectives and act in their own interests means that unfortunately the common fight against IS is punctuated with actions of unjustified violence against members of adversary communities, such as the accusations frequently levelled by Sunni citizens against the Shia militias that played a significant role in the liberation of Ramadi and Fallujah,⁷ for example. A by no means insignificant number of Iraqis thus view the pro-government militias not only as contrary to law but comparable to the outrages committed by IS itself.

Equally frequent, albeit less intense, are the quarrels and clashes between militias that belong, at least in theory, to the same side. The cause of these clashes is the delimitation of the respective areas of influence in post-war Iraq. It is obvious that the inevitable end of IS as a pseudo-state is viewed by the various elements that make up the militias, chiefly Kurds and Shia, as an opportunity to consolidate the territory under their control and even to expand at the expense of their neighbours. This is the reason for the tension between the Kurdish militias in their southward advance along the Tigris and the Shia militias advancing in the opposite direction, with sporadic exchanges of fire. The aim is basically to establish the boundaries between the sides, seeking the greatest possible advantages and, once again, ignoring the interests of the Sunni community. In this connection, the de facto empowerment of certain Shia warlords will undoubtedly be one of the main and most serious problems in Iraq following the disappearance of the Islamist pseudo-state, as indicated by the outrages committed after the capture of Fallujah.⁸

The role of mediating and easing tension with the Baghdad government in this domestic conflict within a wider conflict that can be played by the growing number of foreign forces, particularly Ameri-

⁷ BERENGUER HERNÁNDEZ, Francisco José. «Faluya, nudo gordiano del Estado islámico», IEEE, 9 June 2016.

⁸ PARKER, Ned. LANDAY, Jonathan. «Special Report: Massacre Reports Show U.S. Inability to Curb Iraq Militias», Reuters, 23 August 2016.

can, deployed to the country, is not well regarded by the main actors. This fact probably explains the aggressive statements made by the well-known Shia leader Moqtada al-Sadr, who, backed chiefly by his traditional alliance with Iran, no doubt fears that US support for the Kurdish community and militias will place him at a disadvantage in the immediate post-war period. In view of this situation, he has no qualms about openly threatening Americans present in Iraq,⁹ with the evident intention of ensuring that the power shares in Iraq in the immediate future are distributed among local actors, without foreign interference, as the many powerful militias under his control would give him an advantage over the rest of the communities in the country, including even the Baghdad government.

These threats are also a clear warning that foreign forces will not be welcome in the country subsequently; indeed, they could trigger a wave of insurgency similar to that already witnessed in previous years, for which the militias under Moqtada al-Sadr's control were partly responsible.

This attitude, coupled with the Kurdish people's long-standing historical demands for a state of their own, perhaps defines the biggest problem that is brewing in Iraq: its very survival as a state, which seems increasingly difficult.

Coupled with this significant issue is another of lesser geopolitical importance but also very serious, at least for the international community, which is highly sensitive to this question: news of the use of child soldiers by some of these militias. They recruit them at the many camps for displaced civilians to reinforce frontline positions,¹⁰ hardly differing in this respect from the jihadists, who even use children as suicide bombers¹¹ (as on 20 August 2016, when a boy of 12 or 13 murdered 54 guests at a wedding in Turkey) as well as training them from a very early age to become future «conscripts» for their armed groups.

Despite all the difficulties described above, the second factor, derived from the previous one, very possibly marks the definite reversal of the initiative which has been in the hands of the abovementioned local militias, Iraqi security forces and the coalition for months, resulting in a slow but steady recovery of the territory held by IS in Iraq.

⁹ TILGHMAN, Andrew. «Moqtada al Sadr and His Followers in Iraq are 'Thirsty for Americans' Blood», *Military Times*, 30 July 2016.

¹⁰ ASSOCIATED PRESS. «HRW: Iraqi Militias Recruiting Children Ahead of Mosul Push», ABC News, 30 August 2016.

¹¹ BLOOM, Mia. «How the Islamic State Recruits and Coerces Children», *The Washington Post*, 25 August 2016.

According to various sources, the amount of territory recovered could account for as much as 50 percent of that under IS control at some point in Iraq. However, this figure does not mean much given the nature of the territory and the large empty spaces ambiguously controlled by one faction or another. The truly significant data is the number and size of the main population centres that have changed hands, and in this regard the statements made by the Pentagon's spokesman in June 2016 are highly telling.¹² He pointed out that the jihadist militias had been incapable of capturing or recovering any towns over the past year, and had lost the very important Fallujah, Ramadi, Rutbah, Hiit, Sinjar and Baiji, describing them as losses of significant territory over and over again.

A very important aspect of this string of successes in Iraq is the gradual modification of the steadily growing presence and role to be played by the international ground force on the ground. The initial intention of involving the western members of the coalition only in air operations and in training the Iraqi armed forces under reconstruction soon proved to be unfeasible.

This policy has been greatly influenced by the US administration's wish to ease the pressure the previous phases of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars have had on the country's armed forces and finances – and, ultimately, on society – for many years. Indeed, this has been one of President Obama's main tasks during both his terms in office, and his decision to severely limit US troops and functions in Iraq from 2013–14 onwards was consonant with his policy and objectives for the armed forces and their contribution to international stability.

Nevertheless, this attitude was less consonant with the reality of the situation: the extreme weakness of the Iraqi security forces, the lack of capabilities and confidence of the local militias, and the very limited Arab involvement in the struggle against IS.

Therefore, the number of US ground forces has not ceased to grow, while the air strikes and efforts to train the Iraqi contingents continue. However, this has been occurring discreetly, possibly because the Democratic administration feared that this change of policy would become a topic of debate during the upcoming presidential campaign between the Democratic candidate Clinton and the Republican Trump, who hold opposite stances.

The arrival of a substantial American contingent in Iran might well have merely revealed how mistaken President Obama was in his strategy. Indeed, he often went against the opinions of his highest military commanders and advisors, who whenever they had the chance pointed out the impossibility of defeating IS without troops operating on the ground.¹³

¹² MCINTYRE, Jamie. «Pentagon: Islamic State Hasn't Won in a Year», *Washington Examiner*, 27 June 2016.

¹³ SCHAKE, Kori. «The Inherent Fallacy of Believing We Can Beat the Islamic State Without U.S. Ground Troops», *Foreign Policy*, 20 April 2016.

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Just as on so many other occasions where politics conditions purely military aspects, the solution adopted in recent months has been to significantly increase the number of US troops in Iraq, particularly special forces, but staggering their arrival in small groups, often almost weekly, in a steady flow so that the number has crept up to around 5,000.¹⁴ This, together with the larger role given to the many trainers and advisors already present – as a result of which they are guiding and advising the Iraqi forces directly engaged in combat and there have already been some casualties¹⁵ – has significantly strengthened the military capabilities against IS and is one of the main causes for the reversal of the fortunes of the previously successful jihadist group in Iraq.

As usually occurs, this greater involvement of US forces in Iraq has triggered a reaction from other nations belonging to the coalition, which have followed suit to the best of their abilities in response to America's request to the allies at the Washington meeting held in early July 2016. This attitude comes on top of the previous very notable change in France's stance following the spate of jihadist attacks suffered by the country.¹⁶ Similarly, the decision adopted by the Spanish government following the Washington meeting has been equally significant, as it has extended the training mission under way since the establishment of the coalition to include aspects such as military and police health and, more importantly still, advising and accompanying the units trained by Spanish troops on real operations, provided that this does not involve entering into combat.¹⁷

Fallujah and Mosul: in pursuit of IS's defeat in Iraq

In short, regardless of the causes, the fact is that the growing international political will to do away with IS in both countries is significant, if undoubtedly later than desirable given the major impact of the limited Russian intervention in Syria. As a result, the odds now appear to be against the jihadist group, which is being relentlessly hounded in both Iraq and Syria as of August 2016, the date this article was written.

The growing momentum of the allied forces has led to two landmark achievements. The first was winning back Fallujah from IS. Located in the province of Ambar, this city, which had approximately 350,000 inhabitants in 2003, achieved worldwide fame on account of the battles waged between

¹⁴ THOMPSON, Mark. «Number of U.S. Troops in Iraq Keeps Creeping Upward», *Time*, 18 April 2016.

¹⁵ LIZ, Sly. SALIM, Mustafa. «A U.S. Marine is Killed in Iraq, the Second Combat Casualty of the ISIS War», *The Washington Post*, 19 March 2016.

¹⁶ BASSETS, Marc. «Hollande busca en Washington una coalición única contra el yihadismo», *La Vanguardia*, 24 November 2015.

¹⁷ LQT Defensa. «Soldados españoles acompañarán y asesorarán al Ejército de Irak en el campo de batalla», 24 July 2016.

the Iraqi insurgency and US troops, known as «Operation Vigilant Resolve» and «Operation Phantom Fury», both in 2004, and a third battle of Fallujah in 2006, after which the city was pacified.

These fierce clashes made Fallujah a symbol of Sunni resistance, and the local insurgents were reinforced by militiamen from practically all over the country. Its strategic location in the centre of the country's «Sunni core», its closeness to the capital, Baghdad, which makes it an ideal starting point for offensives and attacks on the government, and, last but not least, its status of «city of the mosques», with an important religious significance, could not escape IS's attention.

As a result, this city was one of the Islamic State's first targets during its successful phase of expansion in Iraq. Captured by IS militias on 31 December 2013, it was soon established as one of its main, highly fortified strongholds from which many of the brutal terrorist attacks Baghdad has suffered since then have been launched.

The Iraqi security forces' inability to pursue several important objectives simultaneously prevented them attacking Fallujah until the spring of 2016. But following the previous capture of Ramadi and before the Mosul campaign, which is considered decisive, it seemed essential to free Fallujah because of the abovementioned factors and the inadvisability of permitting the survival of a considerable group of IS forces which could not only act simultaneously from the south against the forces assigned to the battle of Mosul but also continue to carry out major attacks in nearby Baghdad.

After a considerable number of difficulties,¹⁸ the city was finally liberated on 26 June 2016, chiefly with the involvement of the government armed forces and Shia militias, together with the decisive air support of the international coalition.

This first landmark victory was followed by the second, the capture of Mosul, a battle which at present – late August 2016 – is the lynchpin on which practically the entire conflict hinges. It is hoped that the fall of Iraq's second city into government hands will mark IS's final defeat in Iraq, at least as a pseudo-territorial entity.

The past spring and summer months of 2016 have witnessed a string of battles and advances in the north of the country which should pave the way for the final assault on the city. It should be remembered that it is a large population centre with more than 1.5 inhabitants at the time of its capture by IS. This fact sparks fears, perhaps in view of what is occurring in Aleppo in Syria, of much greater difficulties than those experienced in retaking important but much less heavily populated cities such as Ramadi and Fallujah.

¹⁸ BERENGUER HERNÁNDEZ, Francisco José. «Faluya, nudo gordiano del Estado islámico», IEEE, 9 June 2016.

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Nevertheless, aside from these difficulties, since the fall of Fallujah both the Baghdad government and those of the countries involved in some way in the war have been aware of the paramount importance of retaking Mosul.¹⁹

It may be concluded that the positions from which to storm this major city have been attained as of the end of August 2016. Prominent among them all is the Qayyarah Air Base. Seized from the IS militias in July, it is expected to be the main logistics base both for most of the government troops and for the hundreds of air transport movements needed to supply and sustain a battle that may be long and intense.

Indeed, its capture raised what are perhaps overly optimistic expectations on the part of the Baghdad government, which announced the imminent liberation of Mosul. However, the reality is less encouraging because the jihadists, fully aware of the importance of the air base, only abandoned it after carrying out systematic demolitions and actions which are considerably delaying the pace of operations as they affect 95% of the infrastructure.²⁰ The repairs and rehabilitation work may even drag on for months according to the Iraqi defence spokesman, Colonel Karim Rodan Salim, and this could of course make it impossible to recover Mosul before the end of 2016 as initially planned. The fact that dozens of vehicles with heavy machinery and some 400 men from the 101st US Airborne Division are working on fitting out the base highlights its importance in this theatre of operations.

Other factors, however, are contributing positively to the progress of operations and raise hopes that the campaign will end sooner than previously thought. One is the announcement by Lieutenant-General Sean MacFarland, the current US commander of the counter-IS campaign, underlining that the combination of air strikes and ground combat in Iraq and Syria has eliminated as many as 45,000 IS fighters and estimating that the total number of jihadists available for combat, in both countries, now stands at few more than 15,000.²¹ The fact that they are less effective than before may indicate that they furthermore have less experience and fighting spirit.

We should therefore not be surprised at the significant advances of the Peshmerga,²² who are already some 15km from the urban centre of Mosul to the east. The territory controlled by IS around the city is therefore progressively shrinking, though the Kurds are expected to take part as a support force rather than be directly involved in the forthcoming storming of the city.

¹⁹ BERENQUER HERNÁNDEZ, Francisco José. «El aniversario de la caída de Mosul», IEEE, 17 June 2015.

²⁰ ASSOCIATED PRESS. «ISIS destruction of Iraqi Base could hinder Mosul Operation», 30 August 2016.

²¹ BALDOR, Lolita C. «US: 45.000 Islamic State Fighters Taken off Battlefields», Associated Press, 11 August 2016.

²² Iraqi Kurdish fighters. Literally «those who face death».

A third and possibly decisive factor is Turkish military intervention in Syria, which has ended up isolating the areas along the Turkish border that IS still controls in Syria and Iraq.²³ Now deprived of its last means of illegal cross-border trade, IS's possibilities of receiving new volunteers or material from abroad are greatly diminished and it can be expected to soon suffocate from a shortage of resources.

The combination of elements and circumstances described above leads to two significant conclusions. The first is that IS's territorial retreat in Iraq seems irreversible and that the capture of Mosul, which may well put an end to the pseudo-state in the country, is only a question of time – a few months at the worst.

The second is that precisely IS's terminal situation, its militias' growing difficulty of fleeing to another area controlled by their brethren and the fanatical nature of many of them will probably lead the IS defenders of Mosul to perceive they are cornered and spark a desperate reaction. They can therefore be expected not to go down without putting up very fierce resistance. It is thus not surprising that one of the most prominent Peshmerga leaders, Sirwan Barzani, is less optimistic than Lieutenant General MacFarland and foresees a very harsh and bloody battle for Mosul.²⁴

In any event, the jihadist militiamen can be expected to repeat the tactics they used on abandoning Manjib, in northern Syria. Sensing the imminent defeat of their last lines of defence, the surviving forces managed to escape in a convoy of more than 500 vehicles by using civilians as human shields to prevent them from being attacked by allied aircraft.²⁵ Several hundred jihadists thus succeeded in returning to battle, thwarting predictions that the column would be totally destroyed.

This circumstance is undoubtedly worth bearing in mind, but it is very difficult to come up with suitable preventive measures other than completely capturing the Mosul area, which has nonetheless been announced by the coalition's commanders. A scenario with a large number of booby traps, suicide attacks and the frequent use of human shields is unfortunately easy to predict in the final assault on Mosul.

The conviction that the announced capture of Mosul will put an end to IS's territorial control in Iraq is so great that parallel initiatives are being carried out at the same time to gather data and evidence in order to bring all the survivors of IS, especially leaders of a certain level, to justice, whether in local Iraqi or international courts. As is common practice in this field, the

²³ ASSOCIATED PRESS. «IS Loss of Border Area with Turkey Sharply Harms Group», 6 September 2016.

²⁴ GARLAND, Chad. «Battle for Mosul Appears to be Entering Final Stage», *Stars and Stripes*, 28 August 2016.

²⁵ MICHAELS, Jim. «U.S. Plans to Hit ISIL before Militants Grab Human Shields», *USA Today*, 6 September 2016.

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involvement of the European Union and the political determination to act is high, and the Euro MP Victor Bostinaru has underlined the need for the civilian and military authorities on the ground to do their utmost to preserve the mass graves where IS's many victims lie, protecting them from vermin and the elements, as they are an irreplaceable source of data and evidence that will enable the perpetrators of these crimes, which may even be classified as genocide, to be charged and sentenced appropriately.²⁶

Lastly, it should be pointed out that Spain is taking part in the final campaign in Mosul, as a Mobile Training Team (MTT) belonging to Spanish Special Operations Task Group IV has travelled to northern Iraq to continue teaching and training Iraqi troops who will take part in the battle of Mosul. Obviously this task, as stated earlier, will not include their direct involvement in the fighting.

Role of external actors

Although it would be more appropriate to speak of the current phase, the Iraqi civil war is a classic case an internal conflict that has become international on account of the significance and implications of the operations.

In addition, as the leading role is played by a transnational rather than a state actor – Daesh, which has proven its ability to carry out large-scale terrorist actions outside the region even in Europe, the United States, Afghanistan and the Far East – this international involvement has gradually increased to the point that it is currently one of the main security concerns of the international community. The following paragraphs will outline the involvement of the main external actors with the greatest impact on the conflict in some way or another.

United States

Since the first Gulf War, US involvement in Iraq's domestic affairs has been very great, reaching its zenith following the invasion of the country in 2003. The US forces' intense struggle against the insurgency of some kind made the Iraq war one of the longest, bloodiest and most fruitless campaigns the US administration had undertaken in decades.

Following the total and permanent US withdrawal from Iraq at the end of 2011, the country's situation continued to be highly unstable,²⁷ while the US administration endeavoured to distance itself as much as possible from the situation, at the same time preparing to follow suit in Afghanistan.

The new and powerful eruption of the Iraqi insurgency in the country – chiefly among the Sunni community – transformed for the occasion into a member

²⁶ ASSOCIATED PRESS, «EU Lawmakers Seek Help to Preserve Syria, Iraq Mass Graves», ABC News, 6 September 2016.

²⁷ CORRAL HERNÁNDEZ, David. «Irak, diez años después», IEEE, 12 March 2016.

of the commands and contingents of the Islamic State, initially triggered a lukewarm response from the United States, which was loath to involve its forces in the disheartening Iraqi situation again. However, the Baghdad government's disastrous response to this threat, which was chiefly caused by the military debacle of the new Iraqi army in the first months of 2014, forced President Obama to meet the demands for help from the government still headed by al-Maliki that summer, when the Islamic State seemed capable of gaining control of most of the territory, including the capital.

Since then, US military intervention as a bilateral response to this request for help, as well as the diplomatic effort of creating and leading a broad international coalition against jihadist terrorism and especially the Islamic State,²⁸ has not ceased to grow, slowly but surely.²⁹

America has focused its efforts on sustaining the Baghdad government, wearing down the military power of the Islamic State, and training and equipping the Iraqi army and most trustworthy militias, chiefly Kurdish. More recently, the US administration has had to bow to the evidence of the need for the presence of an army contingent, essentially special operations, to be involved in coordination with air actions in the battle against jihadist militiamen. Terrorist actions carried out or inspired by Daesh, whether locally, regionally or even globally, including in US territory, have contributed decisively to raising the level of President Obama's and his government's responsibility and political commitment to Iraq.

Consequently, as described above, America's greater involvement has been decisive in turning around the situation in Iraq, and the defeat of the Islamic State as a conventional force in the country seems irreversible.

Another matter is curbing the insurgency that still remains after the conflict and the feasibility of the Iraqi state, which has marked unresolved internal contradictions. Whether or not the US will involve itself in these efforts is currently an unknown factor that is not unrelated to the result of the forthcoming presidential elections. Whatever the case, it will not be an easy task, as it will be necessary to try to reconcile the often clashing interests of many of the United States' allies, such as those of Turkey and the Iraqi Kurds, Saudi Arabia, Israel, the Baghdad government and the progressive normalisation of relations with Iran.

Iran

Analysing Iranian interests in the neighbouring country is considerably simpler compared to those of the US, as they are clearer and unidirectional.

²⁸ BERENGUER HERNÁNDEZ, Francisco José. «El Estado islámico como oportunidad», IEEEE, 16 September 2014.

²⁹ BERENGUER HERNÁNDEZ, Francisco José. «El aniversario de la caída de Mosul», IEEEE, 17 June 2015.

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Tehran necessarily wants to maintain and even strengthen its already very considerable influence on the Baghdad government and its control of the Shia tribal militias that are its chief means of achieving this in Iraq.

This objective is evidently part of its strategy of intervening and supporting the Syrian regime as one of the cornerstones of the ploy to assert its role as regional leader vis-à-vis the Sunni monarchies of the Gulf and, especially, Saudi Arabia.

The essential intervention of the Shia militias in the withdrawal and final defeat of IS as a result of low western military involvement in both Syria and Iraq has spurred on and helped achieve Iran's objectives in this conflict, from which it is among the actors who stand the most to gain.

Turkey

The Turkish government's good relations – stemming from self-interest – with the Iraqi Kurds before this phase of the war in Iraq do not conceal the difficulties Turkey's policy in the area is experiencing, apart from its very serious internal problems.

Whatever the case, the red line the strengthening of the Kurdish national cause represents for Ankara is inevitably going to be crossed, as in both Iraq and Syria an evident military contribution is being made by the Peshmerga and the People's Protection Units (YPG). This contribution is greatly strengthened by the supply of western material, and must be compensated for in some way. But this is not precisely in the interests of Turkey, which regards the Kurdish problem as a structural problem of its own that is greater than that posed by the Islamic State in recent years; this fact largely explains the lateness of Turkey's very recent and powerful military involvement in crushing the jihadist group.

In keeping with this bid to make up for Turkey's lost time and prestige, it seems that President Erdogan would be willing to collaborate directly with the United States and even take part in the storming of Raqqa, IS's Syrian capital, as it hinted during the G20 meeting in China.³⁰

Russian Federation

Russia has not involved itself directly in Iraq to a great extent; rather, it has concentrated more on the Syrian theatre, where it is playing a decisive role both in sustaining al-Assad's regime and in considerably harming the Islamic State and other actors considered terrorists by both Damascus and Moscow.

³⁰ BBC News. «Islamic State Group: Turkey and US 'Ready to Invade Capital'», 7 September 2016.

Russian influence in Iraq has largely been orchestrated by its ally Iran, which is involved very directly in the conflict, as previously described.

The serious damage Russia has inflicted on IS in Syria is reflected indirectly and inexorably in the weakening of the Islamic State's options in Iraq. It is therefore making a positive contribution to the common effort to do away with the jihadist enemy.

Arab countries

Despite the fact that this is an Arab problem and initial conviction of the decisive role that would be played by the Arab countries, chiefly those with the most financial clout, their involvement has been focused on explicit political support but scant real participation.

Even countries with significant potential in the area, such as Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Qatar, have played a very limited role in taking in refugees and alleviating the serious refugee problem caused by the Iraqi and Syrian wars, and their attitude can only be described as disappointing.³¹

European Union

As usually occurs with the problems of greatest substance and scope, the EU's response must be viewed more as that of each of its members rather than as a whole. Several countries, among them Spain, have decided to involve themselves actively and significantly in the international coalition, while Europe's main efforts have been centred on providing the best possible response to the very serious refugee crisis.

The EU's role will undoubtedly be reinforced following the end of the fighting, when the action is centred on reconstruction, resettling the population, disarming the militias – as far as possible – and issues related to bringing the alleged war criminals to international justice. They are all immensely significant and useful questions in which the European institutions have previously proven to have substantial capability and experience, but they are unfortunately not sufficient for Europe to occupy its rightful geostrategic role in the world.

Conclusions and perspectives

The war waged by the Iraqi state against Daesh marks a new, internationalised phase of the civil war in which the country has been immersed since 2003. This phase, including the Islamic State's now imminent and irremediable

³¹ BERENGUER HERNÁNDEZ, Francisco José. «El dilema saudí», IEEE, 2 February 2016.

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conventional defeat in Iraq, will end shortly after the forthcoming fall of Mosul.

As in previous phases, how the post-conflict stage is managed and the possible survival of a Sunni insurgency, together with an even more decisive factor, will determine Iraq's immediate future.

The factor in question is the necessary adjustment of relations between the Kurdish, Sunni and Shia communities to establish a new, stable balance of power between them under the aegis of the Baghdad government. Iraq's real possibilities of surviving as a state lie in this pending task.

At present, with the Kurdish and Shia communities wielding disproportionate power since 2003 as a result of the conflict – once again, to the detriment of the Sunni community – the country is closer to a de facto or even de jure partition than it is to permanent stabilisation.

Only the establishment of an inclusive government capable of largely undoing the very serious mistakes made by prime ministers al-Maliki and, to a lesser extent, al-Abadi, together with agreed formulas for sharing power and funds between the various national communities, can offer a glimmer of hope in the medium and long term.

Whatever the case, the harm caused by the excessive time IS has had free run of much of the country is irreversible. Part of the country's human, social, historical and artistic heritage has been destroyed irremediably, while the international community looked on passively at first. As more and more evidence is gathered following the end of the fighting, we will soon regret the terrible damage caused by the jihadists and the more than likely genocide committed, which has resulted in a different Iraq worse than that that existed before Daesh burst into the country across the border from Syria at the end of 2013.

In the following table of geopolitical indicators,³² it should be borne in mind that some are imprecise estimates owing to the conflict situation in which the country is immersed.

³² The World Factbook, CIA, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>, consulted on 12 September 2016.

Table of geopolitical indicators

TABLE OF GEOPOLITICAL INDICATORS*		IRAQ
Area		438,317 km ² (59°)
GDP		544,100 M\$ (37°)
Structure	Agriculture	5.2%
GDP/Active population	Industry	49.7%
	Services	45.1%
GDP per capita		US\$15,500 (104°)
GDP growth rate		2.4% (128°)
Unemployment rate		16% (156°)
Trade relations (Exports):		China 22,6% India 21,1% South Korea 11.2% USA 7.8%
Trade relations (Imports):		Turkey 20.7% Syria 19.6% China 19.2% USA 4.8%
Crude oil production		3.36 million barrels per day (7°)
Population		37,056,169 (37°)
Rate of urbanisation		69.5% (3.1% annual increase)
Age structure	0–14	40.25%
	15–64	56.42%
	Over 65	3.33%
Population growth rate		2.93% (9°)
Ethnic groups		Arabs 75–80%, Kurds 15–20%, Assyrians and others 5%
Religions		Muslims (Shia 60–65%, Sunni 32–37%), Christians 3%
Population literacy rate		79.7%
Population living below the poverty line		25%
Internally displaced people		1.3 million
Military expenditure. % of GDP		8.7% (2°)

Conflict timeline

DATE	EVENTS
January 661	Ali is murdered in Kufa
10/10/680	Battle of Kerbala. Death of al-Hussayn
23/05/1916	Sykes-Picot Treaty

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DATE	EVENTS
10/08/1920	Treaty of Sèvres
16/07/1979	Saddam Hussein is president of Iraq
22/09/1980 to 20/08/1988	Iran-Iraq war
02/08/1990	Iraq occupies Kuwait
02/08/1990 to 28/02/1991	First Gulf War
20/03/2003 to 01/05/2003	Invasion of Iraq. Start of the insurgency
18/12/2011	US withdrawal from Iraq
late 2013 to early 2014	Daesh enters Iraq. Conquest of Ramadi and Fallujah
09/06/2014	Daesh captures Mosul
29/06/2014	Proclamation of the Caliphate and the Islamic State
08/08/2014	The US begins air strikes against IS
August/September 2014	The US-led international coalition against the Islamic State is established
28/12/2016	Recovery of Ramadi
26/06/2016	Recovery of Fallujah
August/September 2016	Start of the offensive to retake Mosul

Chapter eight

Burkina Faso: post-crisis stabilization process

Col. Juan Mora Tebas

Introduction

After a checkered political history (see fig. 1), and in spite of the «perfect storm» the Sahel has been, and is, Burkina Faso (BFA)¹ enjoyed several decades of calm and security from the end of the nineties to the early years of the twenty-first century. However, instability has returned, with the country having undergone, within the last 24 months: a popular revolution, a coup, and a counter-coup, with the transition to democracy culminating in historic parliamentary and Presidential elections which were carried out in calm and transparent fashion.

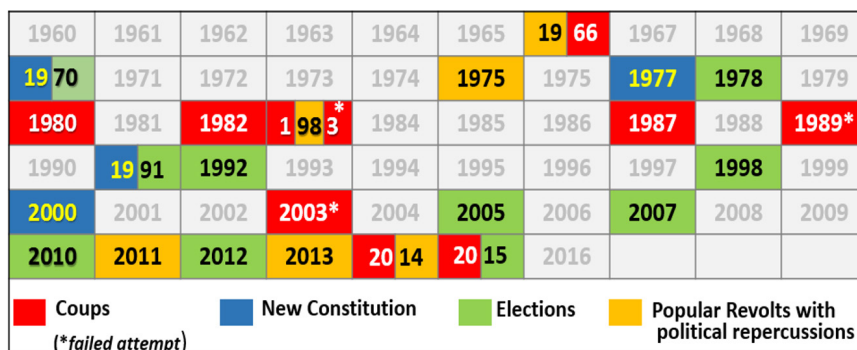
The victory in the Presidential elections of November 29th 2015 of Roch Marc Christian Kaboré shows that the Burkinese aspire both to change and to continuity as well, given that he represents simultaneously the stability of the old regime, and the desire for change, as shown in the rupture with former President Compaorè (October 1987-October 2014)².

All these events have taken place in a fragile and insecure environment in which some factors of instability (Armed Forces, popular demonstrations...) have exercised greater influence in certain periods, and into which certain new elements are being incorporated (terrorism, religious extremism, etc.).

¹ Acronym according to Norma ISO 3166-1 Alpha 3.

² (International Crisis Group, 2016), p. 1

Burkina Faso: Principal Milestones of Political Life



SEP 2016

Infografía: JAMT

Figure 1: Principal milestones of political life

But others are beginning to be perpetuated over time (poverty, corruption, intercommunity clashes, etc.), these being probably the most dangerous, as they have the capacity to interact easily with the other factors, acting as contributory and/or accelerants.

Political and Historical Antecedents of Interest

Following Independence (1960-1980)

The Upper Volta, a French colony, was granted independence on August 5 1960. Its first President, Maurice Yaméogo, created a de facto single-party regime. His authoritarianism and unpopular austerity measures earned him the hostility of the tribal leaders and the unions, and he was finally overthrown by the Army in January of 1966.

The Head of the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the Armed Forces, Lt. Col. Sangoulé Lamizana, who succeeded Maurice Yaméogo, prioritized the consolidation of public finance, before beginning a process of political liberalization resulting in the adoption of a new Constitution in June of 1970 and the organization of multiparty municipal elections in December of 1970. These were won by the Democratic African Assembly (RDA)³, whose President, Gérard Ouédraogo, became Prime Minister. But his rivalry with the President of the National Assembly, Joseph Ouédraogo, paralyzed the political institutions.

In February of 1974, Sangoulé Lamizana put an end to the democratic experiment, banned political parties and suspended the Constitution, forming a military government of national renewal. However, the strikes of December of 1975 obliged him to reverse course. A new Constitution was approved in

³ RDA: From the French initials, *Rassemblement Démocratique Africain*.

November of 1977, and Presidential and legislative elections were organized for April of 1978. Sangoulé Lamizana, who ran in the name of the RDA, won the general elections, for in spite of being tied with Maurice Ouédraogo, of the National Union for the Defense of Democracy (UNDD)⁴, he won the second round held in May⁵.

Coups and the arrival in power of the military. Thomas Sankara (1980-1987)

In November of 1980, Sangoulé Laminaza was the victim of a military coup, in a context of social tension, marked by a strike in the educational sector. His successor, Colonel Saye Zerbo, was overthrown in turn in November of 1982 by Dr. Major Jean-Baptiste Ouédraogo, who, in January of 1983, named Captain Thomas Sankara as Prime Minister, a man risen from a younger generation, and influenced by the ideas of the extreme left.

In May of 1983 and through an initiative of the conservative wing of the regime, Thomas Sankara was placed under arrest, which provoked demonstrations and the dissidence of a part of the Army under the command of Captain Blaise Compaorè. Thomas Sankara returned to power in August, constituting a new government composed of military figures, including Blaise Compaoré, Henri Zongo, Jean-Baptiste Lingani and Abdul Salam Kaboré, as well as civilians coming mostly from the far left.

In August of 1984, President Sankara rechristened the country as Burkina Faso, which means «Nation of Men of Integrity» in Mossi and Djula, the two major languages. Sankara established a system of Marxist-Leninist inspiration, headed by a National Revolutionary Council, dividing the territory into zones with committees for the defense of the Revolution and revolutionary popular tribunals. He undertook agrarian reform, launched literacy and vaccination campaigns, and made strenuous efforts to strengthen the role of women. But fiscal pressure and the abuses of the popular tribunals caused him to lose the sympathy of part of the population, while the tribal leaders saw their privileges challenged⁶.

The twenty-six years of power of Blaise Compaorè (1987-2014).

In October of 1987, Captain Blaise Compaorè took power in a coup in which Thomas Sankara was assassinated. The new regime, called the Popular Front, intended to rectify the revolutionary process. It met with tribal leaders, unions and the middle class, at the same time physically eliminating its opposition.

⁴ UNDD: From the French initials, *Union Nationale pour la Defense de la Démocracie*.

⁵ (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Development, 2016).

⁶ Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Development, 2016).

Henri Zongo and Jean-Baptiste Lingani were executed in September of 1989 after denouncing the increasingly rightist nature of the regime.

The adoption by referendum of the new Constitution in June of 1991 marked the beginning of an opening to democracy. Blaise Compaorè, however, was the only candidate in the Presidential elections in December, the rate of participation in which was fixed at 25%. In February of 1996 he solidified his power upon the creation of the Congress for Democracy and Progress (CDP)⁷, the dominant political party within the Burkinese political groupings, and was reelected in November of 1998.

In December of 1998, the murder of journalist Norbert Zongo provoked massive demonstrations, organized by the opposition and organizations of the civil society. In May of 1999, Blaise Compaorè found himself obliged to create an independent commission of investigation, which ended by concluding that some members of the Presidential Security Regiment (PSR) were under suspicion for this death and that the motive had been the murder of the driver of Francois Compaorè, brother of the President. Military Justice took over the case and convicted the three military officers in August of 2000. Finally, a summary dismissal was held in July of 2006. Meanwhile, the regime made concessions via the adoption of a new Constitution in April of 2000, which provided more room for opposition and limited to two the number of Presidential terms. Based on the non-retroactive nature of the dispositions of the Constitution, Blaise Compaorè was re-elected in November of 2005 and in November of 2010.

At a regional level, Compaorè distinguished himself as mediator in the numerous crises affecting neighboring countries⁸. In addition he supported the rebellion against the President of the Ivory Coast, Laurenté Gbagbo, in September of 2002.

In February of 2011, the death of a student in Koudougou, after a beating by the police, provoked intense disturbances. Shortly thereafter, from March to June, it was the military which mutinied, first in the capital and later in the provinces. Elements of the Presidential Security Regiment (PSR) went so far as to fire heavy arms in the capital. Blaise Compaorè named a new Prime Minister, Luc-Adolphe Tayade, and took personal charge of the post of Defense Minister, achieving recovery of control.

Starting in March of 2011, disturbances proliferated in the capital and outlying areas. These included salary protests by soldiers, as well as protests by students, businessmen and residents regarding the rise in food prices and the increase in police brutality and the crime rate. On the 15th of April, 2001, demonstrations began with a mutiny of the PSR, as a consequence of

⁷ CDP: From the French initials *Congrès pour la Démocratie et la Progrès*.

⁸ Togo (July 1993-August 2006), Niger (April 1995), Ivory Coast (March 2007), Guinea (October 2009) and Mali (June 2013).

discontent with the conditions of life. Throughout several days of protest, soldiers sacked businesses, set fire to buildings and fired shots into the air. Due to this generalized discontent, the mutiny spread rapidly into at least four of the country's major cities⁹.

In the legislative elections of December 2012, the Congress for Democracy and Progress (CDP)¹⁰ obtained 49% of the votes cast, compared with 11% for the Union for Progress and Change (UPC)¹¹ led by Zephirin Diabré, who became the leader of the opposition.

The disturbances resumed in May of 2013, in response to the Government project to create a Senate. The opposition suspected that Blaise Compaoré was preparing a review of the Constitution in order to modify the limitation of the number of Presidential mandates.

In January of 2014, several historic members of the CDP, including the ex-president of the National Assembly, Roch Kaboré, the former mayor of Wagadugú¹², Simon Compaoré, or even Salif Diallo, founded a new party, Movement of the People for Progress (MPP)¹³, which positioned itself against the proposal to modify the Constitution and permit Blaise Compaoré to run in the Presidential elections¹⁴.

Current situation

From Revolution 2.0¹⁵ to the establishment of a transition regime

The proposal to modify the Constitution materialized in October of 2014, when a bill was presented in the National Assembly for its modification, thus extending the President's mandate. The support of the AD and the RDA made possible the adoption of the Constitutional revision. In response, on the 30th of October of 2014, massive protest demonstrations developed throughout the country.

The President, who had remained at his post for 27 years, dropped his plan to amend the Constitution, but the opposition and the demonstrators did not find this sufficient; they wanted to see changes in the Government.

The protests took place mainly in Burkina Faso's capital, Wagadugu, but spread as well to other cities such as Bobo Dialasso and Wahigouya. Official buildings, among them that of the National Assembly, were attacked and

⁹ (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Development, 2016).

¹⁰ CDP: From the French initials, *Congrès pour la Démocratie et le Progrès*.

¹¹ UPC: From the French initials, *L'Union pour le Progrès et le Changement*.

¹² Name form adapted to Spanish spelling and pronunciation of the name of the capital of Burkina Faso. *Panhispanic Dictionary of Doubts. Royal Spanish Academy*.

¹³ MPP: From the French, *Mouvement du Peuple pour le Progrès*.

¹⁴ (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Development, 2016).

¹⁵ Term coined by *The Guardian*, 30 October 2014.

burned; tens of thousands of demonstrators clashed with government security forces. State radio and television closed down. Homes of politicians were sacked, resulting in the deaths of 24 people¹⁶.

In an attempt to stifle the protests, President Compaorè dissolved his government and dismissed the heads of the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the Army, the Air Force and the Police. But calm was only provisional; in the meantime the President continued to modify his government, naming popular and influential figures to key posts.

Blaise Comaorè resigned and took refuge in the Ivory Coast. Lt. Colonel Isaac Zida, 2nd in command of the Presidential Security Regiment, proclaimed himself Head of State, placing himself above the Head of the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the Armed Forces, General Honoré Traoré. The Community of West African States (CEDAO), and the African Union (AU), supported by the international community, demanded the return of power to the civil transition authorities, otherwise threatening sanctions¹⁷.

Political transition

The Army took control of the country and prepared the creation of a provisional authority. The United States and France, who had been major allies of Compaoré, expressed their concern, underlining the importance of remaining calm. The EU and the African Union, as well as the United Nations, also asked for an end to the violence.

In November of 2014, a statute of transition was adopted by consensus of the political parties, organizations of the civil society, the Armed Forces and the Security Forces, and the religious and tribal authorities. This foresaw the naming of a civil transitional President and the holding of Presidential and legislative elections within a year's time. The former diplomat Michel Kafando became the transitional President, and Lt. Colonel Isaac Zida was named Prime Minister. The National Council on Transition was formed of representatives of the political parties from the former majority and opposition, the civil society, the Armed Forces and the Police¹⁸. The transition authorities, who had as their principal mandate the organization of elections, had to deal with both the tensions relating to the PSR and with the decisions as to who could be included on the electoral lists. In April of 2015, the National Council on Transition adopted an electoral code which declared ineligible all those who had supported an unconstitutional change in prejudice to the principle of alternating democracy, including the rule of limitation of the number of Presidential terms which had led to the insurrection.

¹⁶ (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Development, 2016).

¹⁷ (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Development, 2016).

¹⁸ (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Development, 2016).

On September 16th, 2015, a month before elections took place, the transition process was interrupted by an attempted coup led by General Gilbert Diendéré and the PSR. President Michel Kafando and the government were held briefly. Groups of civilians resisted the military coup with violent protests, resulting in at least 12 deaths and 271 injured¹⁹. The authorities, reinstated a week later, decided to dissolve the Presidential Security Regiment.

1st Free Elections

On November 29th of 2015, Presidential and parliamentary elections were held; those elected were Roch Marc Christian Kaboré, leader of the Movement of People for Progress (MPP)²⁰, with 53% of the votes cast, compared with the 30% for Zéphirin Diabré, President of the Union for Progress and Change (UPC)²¹. In the legislative elections, the MPP obtained 55 seats out of the 127 total, compared with the 33 for the UPC and 18 for the Congress for Democracy and Progress (CDP)²². The inauguration of President Roch Kaboré on the 29th of December of 2015 put an end to the transition.

On January 6th 2016, the new Government assumed its functions (29 Ministers, of whom 7 were women). There was an immediate necessity to concentrate on security in the country, stemming from a bloody terrorist attack (Wagadugu, 15 January 2016). Also prioritized were increasing public income, dealing with social unrest and re-establishing State authority in certain areas of the country. On March 16th a Constitutional Commission was established to revise the clauses on the length of mandates and the distribution of executive and legislative powers. Their conclusions were to be submitted to a referendum at the end of 2016²³.

On February 20th, 2016, the Ivory Coast detained three members of the former Presidential Guard and turned them over to the Burkinese authorities. On April 28th, for procedural reasons, a withdrawal took place of the international detention order issued in January by the Tribunal of Military Justice of Burkina Faso against the President of the National Assembly of the Ivory Coast, Guillaume Soro, related to his presumed participation in the coup of September 2015²⁴.

The holding of municipal elections on 22nd May 2016, with a participation of 48.9%, has been fundamental for consolidating the democratic future of Burkina Faso, as these completed the process of transition.

¹⁹ Security Council Report Monthly Forecast, January 2016.

²⁰ MPP: From the French, *Mouvement du Peuple pour le Progrès*.

²¹ UPC :From the French, *Union pour le Progrès et le Changement*.

²² CDP: From the French, *Congrès pour la Démocratie et le Progrès*.

²³ (Secretary General, 2016), p.2 par. 6.

²⁴ (Secretary General, 2016) p. 2, par. 7)

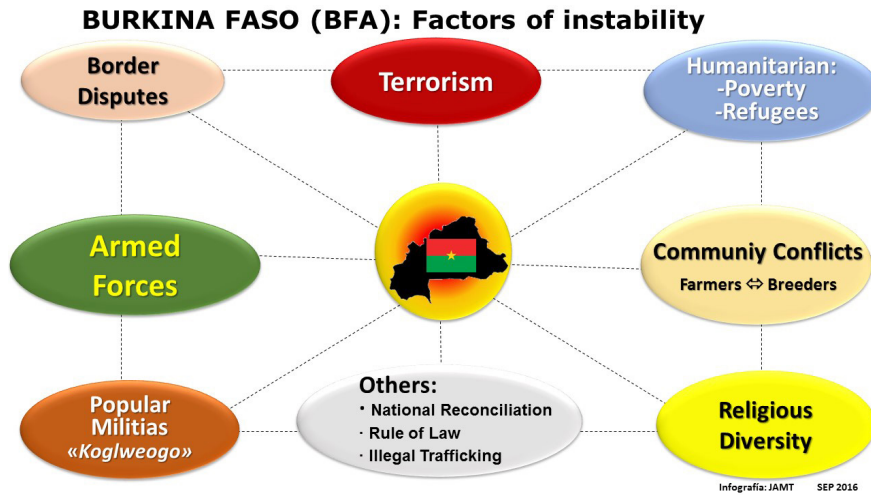


Figure 2: Principal factors of instability: (From Upper Left)

Armed Forces

The Armed Forces have always held a major place in Burkinese political life. The specter of their interference in the political sphere is a constant in the history of Burkina Faso ever since its independence (1966) and has never disappeared (cf. fig.1)²⁵.

It possesses an entity with some 12,000 troops, (58% land forces, 5% air force, 35% security groups and 2% paramilitary); it is also equipped with popular militias (reservists) of some 45,000 troops. It is structured around the units of light infantry, the composition being²⁶:

- Land forces
The Army has 5,000 troops which are relatively well financed and motivated by African standards. It has some disciplinary problems regarding salaries and living conditions. As in many countries in the Sahelian region, the Army is centered around light and mobile units. Their missions are centered on border security and the carrying out of patrols.
- The Burkina Faso Air Force (*Force Aérienne de Burkina Faso* (FABF))
The FABF possesses a minimum capacity for combat, and therefore would find it difficult to defend the air space of the country. Their missions are centered principally on border vigilance. The acquisition of three EMB-314 *Super Tucano* aircraft in 2011 has augmented and im-

²⁵ CHÂTELOT, Christophe «In Burkina Faso, Times of Insecurity». Le Monde (25 January 2016).

²⁶ (The International Institute of Strategic Studies—ISS, 2016)

proved the capacity for providing fire support to land forces on their counterinsurgency missions which until now have been provided by the 2 Mi-35V *Hind* attack helicopters.

- National Guard (3,500 troops)
This is a relatively large and well-armed force which officially reports to the Ministry of Defense (MoD), but which generally functions in support of the Ministry of Security and the Ministry of Justice.

Peace Missions/Operations (PMO)

Currently, 3,036 troops deployed (13 military experts, 496 police and 2530 military personnel)²⁷:

- United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA)²⁸. In January of 2015, the Army of Burkina Faso deployed a battalion of 850 troops for integration into MINUSMA.
- Hybrid operation of the African Union and the United Nations in Darfur (UNAMID)²⁹. In August 2016, the Burkinese Government announced the withdrawal of its troops deployed in Darfur (battalion of 850 troops) due to the growing threats to the security of the Sahel-Saharan region³⁰.

Terrorism

During the decade of the 90s, and given that some 100,000 Tuaregs live in Burkina near the border zones, BFA was also affected by the Tuareg insurgency of its Sahelian neighbors Niger and Mali. However, the feared «pan-Tuareg rebellion» never materialized nor affected Burkina. In 2012, the northern half of this country underwent domination by terrorist groups. The Jihadist experience ended in January of 2013 with the intervention of French troops within the frame of the *Serval* operation. Since then, Burkina Faso has been a major player within the military and intelligence deployment which France and the United States maintain in the Sahel to counter the actions of jihadists in the region.

In 2015, four terrorist attacks marked the end of decades during which no terrorist incidents had been experienced (see table).

The participation in antiterrorist operations in the north of Mali, the establishment of new military bases on the northern border and the presence

²⁷ Data as of 31 August 2016, <http://www.un.org>

²⁸ MINUSMA: *United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali*.

²⁹ UNAMID: *United Nations-African Union Mission in Darfur*.

³⁰ (IHS Jane's Information Group, 2016) p. 56.

of U.S. and French military bases on its territory increase the risk of foreign workers being victims of kidnappings and attacks on the part of terrorists³¹.

BURKINA FASO (BFA) :		
PRINCIPAL TERRORIST ACTIONS		
DATE	LOCATION	RESULTS
2012	Domination of the northern half by terrorist groups.	
4 APR 2015	First kidnapping committed by Islamic terrorists in BFA. A security agent (Rumanian nationality) from a manganese mine in Tambao (in the NE). Responsibility claimed by the al Murabitoun group in May.	1 injured (<i>guard</i>) 1 kidnapped (<i>civilian</i>)
24 AUG 2015	3 armed men attacked a Guard post in Oursi (in the N) ² , after a false alarm which distracted the detachment, apparently on the cry of «We are Boko Haram».	1 dead (<i>guard</i>) 1 injured (<i>civilian</i>)
9 OCT 2015	40 armed men attacked a Guards convoy in Samorogouan (SE, 40 km from Mali border). No claim of responsibility, but police sources blame the Macina Liberation Front ³	4 dead (3 <i>guards</i> and 1 <i>attacker</i>)
27 NOV 2015	Attack on a gold shipment at Inata (N) with grenade launchers and IED. Robbery was aborted ^{4 5}	1 dead, 1 injured (<i>security guards</i>)
15 JAN 2016	- A group (30-50), heavily armed with kalishnikovs and grenades, attacked the Cappucino café continuing on to the Hotel Splendid, ending their bloody attack at the Yibi Hotel and the Taxi Brousse café in the capital, Wagadugu. Responsibility quickly claimed by al-Mourabitoune, attached to alQaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), for attack as first joint action of the two south of the Sahara ⁶ . - Attack on a Guards convoy near the border with Mali (N) ⁷ - Kidnapping of an Australian couple in Baraboule (N., near border with Niger), responsibility claimed by Ansar Dine, principal armed Tuareg group in Mali ⁸	30 dead and 50 wounded (mostly foreigners) 2 deaths(<i>guards</i>)
1 SEP 2016	Attack on a customs post at Markoye (N). Responsibility claimed by <i>l-Sahraoui (Islamic State in the Greater Sahara)</i> ⁹	2 deaths (one customs official and one civilian)

Counterterrorism

In the year 2015, Burkina Faso worked on the development of a special tribunal to combat the financing of terrorism. The National Cell for Treatment of Financial Information (CENTIF)³² reported that between 1 January and 26th

³¹ (IHS Jane's Informaton Group, 2016) p.6.

³² CENTIF: From the French initials for National Cell for the Treatment of Financial Information.

November, a total of 68 reports of suspect transactions were presented, and 17 individuals were processed for money laundering or other financial offenses, including three new cases in the year 2015. Nonetheless, it may take years for sentences to be handed down for the criminal cases; as an example, there were no convictions in 2015³³.

Burkina Faso depends on the Personal Identification Secure Comparison and Evaluation System (PISCES)³⁴, belonging to the program for the repression of terrorists, to carry out detection and follow-up of travelers. The country also participates with the International Immigration Organization (OIM) to provide detection of travelers at a selection of border control points³⁵.

New President Kaboré stated that security and the struggle against terrorism were the first priorities for his Government. In December of 2015, with the specialized judicial assistance that the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODOC)³⁶ provided it, Burkina Faso adopted an updated version of the law regarding the fight against terrorism, which contains regulations with respect to foreign terrorist combatants³⁷.

The predisposition of Burkina Faso to participate in operations of the fight against terrorism has been nourished by the assistance provided to its security forces through the bilateral and regional cooperation against terrorism of its partners and allies.

«Koglweogo» Popular Militias

In the rural areas which have been abandoned for some time by the State, self-defense militias have proliferated, known as «Koglweogo» («jungle vigilantes», in the local dialect). They are made up of young and old, Moslems and Christians, with a single common objective: to arrest, try and punish thieves. This type of militia is not recent. Citizens organizing to help the security forces in the arrest of thieves is rooted in the traditions of Burkina Faso, but in recent months they have exceeded the limits of their functions.

In the past year, their activity has multiplied both in the south of the country and in the central region (Boulsa, Manga, Koupela to the east of the capital). In January of 2016 they were accused of excesses and torture by human rights associations in BFA³⁸.

³³ (Bureau of Counterterrorism and Countering Violent Extremism, 2016) p. 15.

³⁴ PISCES: *Personal Identification Secure Comparison and Evaluation System*.

³⁵ ((Bureau of Counterterrorism and Countering Violent Extremism, 2016) p. 14.

³⁶ UNODOC: *United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime*.

³⁷ (General Secretary, 2016) p. 16, par. 60.

³⁸ LE CAM, Morgane, In Burkina Faso, popular militias impose order on the countryside, 2016).

The growth of this phenomenon is the result of:

- The increase of insecurity in the past twenty years in cities and especially in rural areas.
- The State has completely ignored this question, even during the Compaoré period.
- Lack of confidence in the institutions of the Republic³⁹

Inter-community Conflicts: Livestock breeders vs. Farmers

Since 2007, there have been reports of 18 deaths and one person wounded in an unknown number of incidents between livestock breeders and farmers. These incidents take place principally in two areas (see map in fig. 3 below):

- Provinces of Gogo, Perora, Zounwéogo and Poni (to the South, on the border with the Ivory Coast); *Peul* (breeders) vs. *Lobi* (farmers).
- Sanementenga (north-center of country): *Fulani* (breeders) vs. *Mossi* (farmers).

These problems of access to land between peasants and shepherds should have disappeared in 2002 with the adoption of the Marco law with regard to pasturage, a text defining the spaces allotted to grazing and the routes for the movement of animals. But apparently, the State, which committed itself to conditioning an area for grazing in Guirao, does not assume its functions in these regions, and thus the problem persists⁴⁰

Sixty percent of the breeders in the south-central region now live in Ghana. In 2009, there were 29 cases of lands with damage caused by animals in Nahouri (central region). In 2015, in spite of efforts by authorities to encourage breeders and farmers to collaborate peacefully, there are still focal points of conflict.

Humanitarian

Burkina is a poor country, even in comparison with the rest of West African countries. Forty percent of its 19 million inhabitants live below the poverty line (less than \$3 a day). The subsistence of the population depends on rain-fed agriculture, highly sensitive to the irregular weather typical of the region.

More than 3.2 million people need nutritional aid, of whom 1.1 million are in danger of food insecurity and malnutrition⁴¹. To these must be added the 40,000 refugees from Mali who, according to the United Nations High Command for Refugees, are to be found in the two camps established in the Burkinese Sahel: Mentao and Goudobo (see fig. 3)⁴².

³⁹ CARAYOL, Remi (2016). «Koglweogo, vigilantes of the forest». Young Africa. 6 April 2016.

⁴⁰ LE CAM, Morgane, In Burkina Faso, with those displaced in the conflict between Peul and Lobi. *Le Monde* 06/04/2016.

⁴¹ (World Food Program, 2016).

⁴² <http://reporting.unhcr.org/>

Border disputes

BFA shares borders with 6 countries: Mali (1,000 km), Niger (628 km), the Ivory Coast (584 km), Ghana (549 km), Benin (285 km) and Togo (126 km). The majority of the difficulties Burkina Faso has had to face since its independence in 1960 have been related to the determination of its borders. The problem stems from the decision of the French to split the territory of what was then called the Upper Volta among its neighbors in 1933. Following protests from local tribal leaders, the territory was unified in 1947.

Niger

In April of 2013, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) at The Hague ordered a new demarcation of the border between Niger and Burkina Faso, which affected a territory under litigation since independence and investigated by the ICJ since 2012. The disputed territory, populated mainly by nomad tribes, has a land surface of 786 km² and stretches along 375 km of the 630 km of common border between the two countries⁴³.

In May of 2015, the governments of Burkina Faso and Niger announced the application of the decision of the ICJ which both States were pleased to accept. In accordance with the sentence, Burkina Faso obtains 14 cities belonging to the neighboring State, while Niger receives another 4⁴⁴.

Benin

For decades, Koalou, a territory of 68 km² and 10 km in length which includes three towns: Koalou, Niorgou I and Njiorgou II, has been a source of border controversy between Burkina Faso and its neighbor, Benin. According to a Decree of 22 July 1914, the border with Burkina Faso was limited to the natural line of the river Pendjari. According to this agreement, the town of Koalou belongs to Burkina Faso. However, the Benin authorities possess a document signed in 1938 by a colonial administrator which concedes to Benin ownership of the terrain in dispute.

At the beginning of 2006, a border dispute in Koualou (Benin) broke off cordial relations when Burkina was accused of moving the border markers in its favor in the midst of clashes between the two communities. From the outset of the crisis, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has been involved in it, denouncing the unilateral closing of the border by Benin as being contrary to the free circulation of peoples. The dispute rapidly disappeared and caused no lasting damage.

⁴³ (IHS Jane's Information Group, 2016), p. 1.

⁴⁴ AFP. «Burkina Faso and Niger exchange 18 towns to settle border dispute». *The Guardian*, 8 May 2015.

In 2009, the two countries agreed, with the aid of EMUWA (the Economic and Monetary Union of West Africa) to remit their border dispute to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) at the Hague. While awaiting the verdict of the ICJ, the two governments agreed to declare it a neutral zone, with a special statute; in consequence, each one of its 5,000 inhabitants chooses to which nation they wish to belong. This status is supervised by a Committee of Joint Concerted Administration for the Kourou/Koalou zone (COMGEC-K), financed by both countries⁴⁵.

Mali

The dispute between Mali and Burkina over the Agacher Strip caused two «sand wars» in November of 1974 and in December of 1985, both won by the Army of Mali. The conflict was settled by the International Court of Justice in a sentence on December 22 1986, dividing into equal parts the nearly 3,000 km² of disputed territory.

Since early in 2002, the two countries have collaborated in a joint force which patrols their common border. There have been brief skirmishes over control of the farmlands on the Burkina-Mali border in June of 2006, but both countries have expressed their willingness to settle these affairs peacefully⁴⁶.

Religious diversity

Although BFA is an example of diversity (60.5% Moslems, 19% Catholics, 15.3% Animists and 4.2% Christian Protestants; 1% others)⁴⁷ and religious toleration, which makes it almost an exception in the region, there is growing concern regarding two situations:

- The scarce public representation of Moslems.
- The speech of foreign Moslem preachers, principally Wahabbis from the Gulf whose number has been rising, reaching a total of 425, according to the Interior Ministry⁴⁸.

Government/Rule of Law

The lack of good governance and the consequent absence of the application of a State of law are causes of destabilization. The excesses committed during the previous regime must be investigated.

⁴⁵ (IHS Jane's Information Group, 2016) p. 24.

⁴⁶ /IHS Jane's Information Group, 2016) p. 28.

⁴⁷ OFFICE OF DIPLOMATIC INFORMATION-Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, Country File (DEC 2014).

⁴⁸ (LE CAM, Morgane, Burkina Faso facing threat of radicalization, 2016)

On March 22 2016 the inauguration took place of the High Council on Reconciliation and National Unity, which will examine violations of human rights committed by the authorities of the State between 1960 and 2015. Its priorities are:

- To hold Presidential elections within 12 months.
- To reopen the investigation into the death of Thomas Sankara in 1987, under Compoaré's mandate.
- To continue to support Mali in order to settle the conflict.

On March 26th, the National Assembly approved a law creating a new national commission on human rights.

Illegal trafficking

Burkina Faso, together with several other States of West Africa, has been catalogued as the most vulnerable of 177 countries for illicit trafficking, organized crime and terrorism. Emphasis has been placed on certain factors which make these States more susceptible to the aforementioned activities:

- Structural weaknesses in their economies, characterized by the low volume of domestic consumption and an excessive dependence on only one or two products for export.
- Fragile national institutions.
- Large land areas with a limited number of urban centers, which reduces the presence of government personnel responsible for implementing the law.

Traffickers and terrorists represent a considerable threat for fragile States, above all when these two groups interact and support each other. In weak environments such as Burkina Faso, these groups have been able to proliferate and to act in other countries. Fortunately, in the case of Burkina Faso, they cannot act inside the cities, because to date the local communities have not supported or sheltered these groups⁴⁹.

The role of external actors

International Relations

Burkina Faso has achieved a notable realignment of its foreign relations throughout the twenty-first century. For several decades, until 2002, it had maintained a balance between the status of «international pariah» with

⁴⁹ ANING, Emmanuel K., 8 October 2010. «*Potential new hotspots for extremism and opportunities to mitigate the danger: The case of Sahel*». A document presented at the conference of the *Pluscarden Programme Conference* entitled «The Future of International Cooperation in Countering Violent Extremism», on October 8th 2010.

links and a pre-approach towards Libya and the presumed relationship with various insurgent African movements, with Western recognition for its relative internal stability, reasonably democratic institutions and solid economic administration.

The considerably improved relations with international partners were temporarily threatened by the attempts of Blaise Compaoré to keep an iron grip on power in 2014. Accusations of support for dissident groups against the Governments of Chad, the Ivory Coast, Mauritania and Togo continued to surface between 2003 and 2005. Seeking his diplomatic rehabilitation, Compaoré began to promote himself as a mediator in the conflicts in Togo (from April of 2006), and in the Ivory Coast (from January of 2007). He obtained major recognition, being named as President of the ECOWAS along with the Presidency of the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU). In October of 2009 he was chosen by the ECOWAS as mediator between the Governing Board of Guinea and the opposition parties in the political and military crisis in that country. In 2012, Burkina also held regional peace conversations which had as their objective the achievement of a political dialogue with the militant Islamic groups which occupied the north of Mali.

Regional and International Cooperation

Burkina Faso has been active in regional organizations and in international organisms, as shown by the increase in its collaboration with the U.N. in the field of the struggle against terrorism and its active participation in international forums, such as the *Global Counterterrorism Forum's Sahel Working Group*. During a meeting of this working group, the Minister of Territorial Administration and Security presented a strategic fight plan against terrorism. Burkina Faso is a member of the *Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership* (TSCTP), has been active in the ECOWAS and is a member of the G-5 Sahel group, created in February of 2014.

African Union (AU)

Upper Volta became a member of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), forerunner of the AU, in 1963. Since then, its pan-Africanism wavered between radical and conservative concepts until the overthrow and death of Thomas Sankara in 1987.

With the backing of Libya, Blaise Comaoré was elected President of the OAU for the period 1998-1999 and aided in the creation of the vision of Muammar Ghaddafi for the new African Union. Burkina has not been especially active in the AU since then, although it was elected as member of the AU Council on Peace and Security, holding its presidency in 2006.

Burkina Faso: post-crisis stabilization process

Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD)

The CEN-SAD was established in 1998 and since then has grown to include 27 members with the aim of achieving economic integration through a free-trade area and customs union. The achievement of these objectives is unlikely, given that several of its members are part of other agreements on free trade and monetary union: Burkina Faso was one of the founders together with Chad, Libya, Mali, Niger and Sudan.

Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)

The ECOWAS was established in 1975 by 15 countries of West Africa, with the objective of encouraging regional economic integration, including a free trade zone which is still being negotiated today. The member States signed a non-aggression and mutual defense protocol, while the organization has also sent peacekeeping forces in response to the constitutional crises of its members.

Upper Volta was a founding member and in 1991, Blaise Compaoré presided over the Community during the first year of civil war in Libya, when the support of Burkina Faso for Charles Taylor was contrary to the official position of ECOWAS, directed by Nigeria and Ghana. Burkina was also a motive of controversy with regard to the conflicts in Sierra Leone and the Ivory Coast, and Compaoré was blocked from playing any role of mediation for the period 2000-2005.

However, this regional distrust was constantly overcome and after 2005, Compaoré became progressively more of a protagonist in the ECOWAS, successfully mediating in the domestic conflicts within Togo.

Burkina Faso is a member of the ECOWAS *Standby Force* (ESF), one of the five regional brigades established by the AU as an *African Standby Force* (ASF).

G5-Sahel

In 2014, Burkina Faso joined Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger to form the Group 5 of the Sahel, with the objective of combating human trafficking and terrorism. At its first meeting (Wagadugu-Burkina Faso, 1st November 2015) the Chiefs of Staff of the G-5 Sahel and France signed the Working Rules of the Military Association for Cross-border Cooperation (PMCT)⁵⁰. This established «permanent military presence for the coordination of borders and the organization of joint cross-border operations.» They are also assigned «the sharing of information and intelligence which may be of interest in the fight against terrorism in the region.»

⁵⁰ PMCT: From the French initials for Partenariat Militaire de Coopération Transfrontalière.

In May of 2015, the members of the G5-Sahel signed the «Niamey Declaration» (Niamey-Niger, 14th May 2015), committing themselves to a common strategy and to the creation of a secure communications system for the fight against terrorism and organized crime.

During the first meeting of the Directing Committee of the UNODC⁵¹ for the Sahel (Dakar-Senegal, 12-13 April 2015), the representatives of the G5-Sahel and other countries of the Sahel and of the Maghreb agreed to concentrate on foreign terrorist combatants, the treatment of children linked to terrorist groups, crimes related to wild flora and fauna and forest crimes, trafficking in cultural goods, treatment of persons and illicit migrant trafficking.

European Union

In coordination with international and regional African organizations, the EU supports the Burkinese democratic transition which began in November of 2014. During 2015, the EU has disbursed 128 million Euros to support the development of the country, with a total contribution of 623 million foreseen in the 11th European Development Fund for the period 2014-2020. This support will concentrate on good governance, health, food security, sustainable agriculture and water. The objective is to support the new authorities so that they may offer aid rapidly to the populace, where the transition has raised high expectations⁵².

France

For many years, France has maintained military assistance to Burkina Faso. Initially, this support concentrated on the development of military autonomy, being channeled into training, rehabilitation of infrastructures, logistics and preparation of contingents of troops to participate in peacekeeping missions, so that Burkina might play a greater role in regional security⁵³.

In 2010, the French Army installed in Wagadugu, with absolute discretion, the rear base for the special forces operating in the region⁵⁴. French planes and reconnaissance drones have been accumulating at the Wagadugu airport since mid-2012. In January of 2014, Jean-Yves Le Drian, the Defense Minister, announced that the French military presence in Burkina Faso would be increased as part of the regional operations against terrorism. After the attacks⁵⁵ in Grand Bassam (Ivory Coast), the French Government announced

⁵¹ UNODC: *United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime*.

⁵² Press Communiqué from the IP-16-283 Commission on February 11 2016.

⁵³ JANE'S Sentinel Security Assessment-West Africa. April 2016.

⁵⁴ HOFNUNG, Thomas, «*Burkina-Faso, a Base for Paris*». *Libération*, 3 November 2014.

⁵⁵ On March 13 2016, a group of 6 heavily armed men attacked the *Etiole du Sud* Hotel in the coastal town of Grand Bassam, causing 19 deaths and more than 40 wounded before

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the deployment of members of the NGIG⁵⁶, the elite Guard anti-terrorist unit, in Wagadugu. As part of Operation *Barkhane*, it will be able to provide a rapid response capability anywhere in West Africa⁵⁷.

The United States

In November of 2005, Burkina was declared one of the 23 States who were candidates (13 of which were in Africa) for an increase in development aid proceeding from the US Millennium Challenge Account, due to the application of satisfactory economic and political measures⁵⁸. This fund finances programs for poverty reduction.

The United States considers Burkina Faso to be a strategic military ally within its program for the fight against terrorism in the Sahel, which has functioned since 2005. It also supports the proposals of USAFRICOM to increase and exploit capacities and to form a Border Security Guard Unit and an Antiterrorist Company.

Since 2007, the United States has held a base in Wagadugu which acts as a nexus of intelligence in the region, with spy planes which overfly Mali, Mauretania and the Sahara, searching for combatants of AQIM⁵⁹.

Ivory Coast

Around 3 million Burkinese live in the Ivory Coast, but in recent years a series of events have taken place which have clouded relations between the two countries:

- The Ivory Coast accuses Burkina Faso of supporting the rebels acting in its northern region.
- Since October of 2014, former President Blaise Compaoré (who is under a pending international arrest order issued by a Burkinese tribunal in February of 2016) has not only found refuge in the Ivory Coast, but has taken on that country's nationality.
- Another arrest order, this one issued by BFA's military justice against Guillaume Soro, President of the Ivory Coast National Assembly, for his presumed implication in the failed coup against the government of Burkina Faso in September 2015.

being taken down by the security forces. Responsibility for the act was immediately claimed by *Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM)*.

⁵⁶ From the French initials for the *National Guard Intervention Group*.

⁵⁷ *Le Figaro*, 15 March 2016.

⁵⁸ *Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment-West Africa*. April 2016, p.7.

⁵⁹ TAYLOR, Adam, «MAP: Tdhe U:S. military currently has troops in these African countries». *The Washington Post* 21 May 2014.

In spite of the transition process, relations continue to be tense and difficult, but at least the Prime Ministers of the two countries have discussed antiterrorist cooperation at the opening of the 5th Conference on the Friendship and Cooperation Treaty (FCT) between the two countries (Yamoussoukro⁶⁰, Ivory Coast, 28 July 2016).

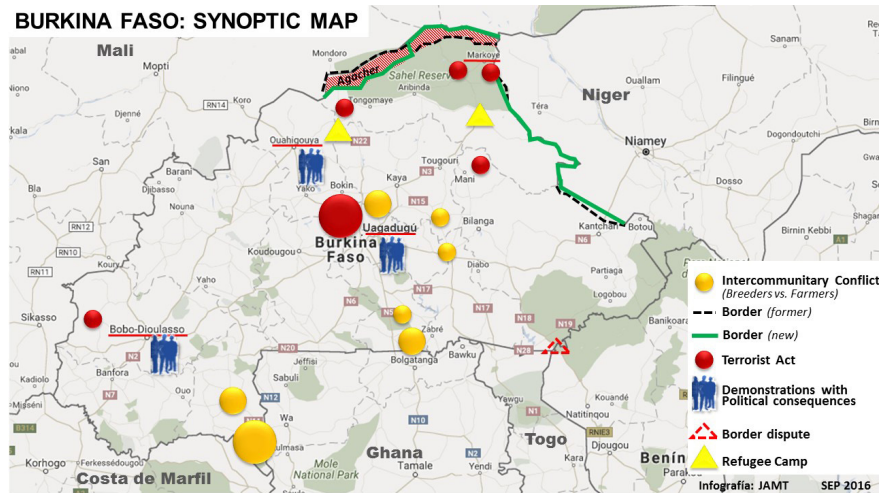


Fig. 3: Burkina Faso, Synoptic map

Conclusions and Future Prospects

The true transition began when the new authorities took power; from now on, they must lead the consolidation of democracy and the commencement of a new form of governance, all within a context of uncertainty.

In October of 2014, the popular revolts which spread throughout the country marked a historic landmark, for they brought about the resignation of President Compaoré. Some analysts have compared the revolts in Burkina Faso to the Arab revolts (known as the «Arab Spring») of 2012-2013. As in the Arab countries, the Burkinese society is young, and as was the case with the «Arab Spring», the media and the social networks played a major role in the protests.

The protests demonstrated the growing firmness with which citizens express themselves against the Government and may have a great influence on other countries of West and Central Africa, which have the same problems of leadership.

The last failed coup attempt (September 2015) showed that the Armed Forces still occupy a predominant position in the public life of the country.

⁶⁰ Political capital of the Ivory Coast.

The dissolving of the Presidential Security Regiment (PSR) will probably increase the vulnerability of the country, as this was an elite corps of some 1,300 men who have lost their comfortable status. What so far has been a model and solid equilibrium between the religious communities runs the risk of becoming altered, or even shattering. The authorities must pay close attention to this possible inter-religious conflict which may break out if several of the other factors of instability come to coincide in space and time.

The case of the realignment of the borders with Niger may not be the last for Burkina Faso, since it shares more than 3,000 kilometers of border with Benin, the Ivory Coast, Ghana, Mali, Niger and Togo, and nearly a third of these limits need to be defined. The pacific nature of the development of the application of the sentence of the ICJ regarding the common border between Niger and Burkina constitutes a real example for similar conflicts.

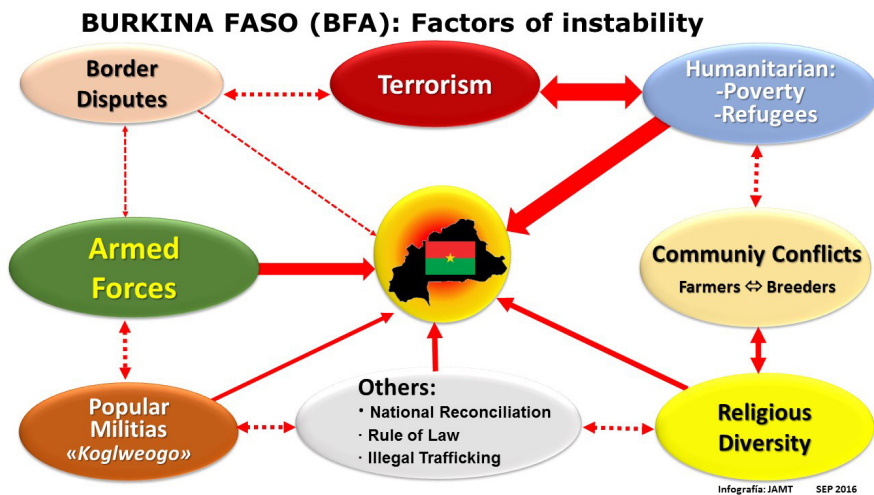


Fig. 4: Principal Factors of Instability, Future Prospects

Terrorism is the new and great protagonist of the political transition. The brutal attack in Wagadugu is not an indication of political failure on the part of the new Government, nor a sign of the radicalization of Burkinese Moslems; the simultaneous terrorist attacks in the African country reaffirm the intention of Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and of other jihadist groups (*Al Moarbitoum*) to extend terror further into the south of the Sahara, outside the traditional zone of action in the north of Mali. Jihadist ideologues had previously threatened countries collaborating with France in the fight against terrorism in Mali.

Future Prospects

Countries in a post-crisis situation usually overestimate their processes of stabilization, considering themselves to be stable without taking into account whether they have reached minimum requisites. It is exactly this excess of confidence which causes governments to fall, seduced by the «green sprouting» of an emerging economy or the vision of Armed Forces and Police subject to political power, leading them to lower their guard and cease to be vigilant.

The process of stabilization must be comprehensive, that is, multidimensional, and must be considered as such, and therefore should include:

- **Constructive dialogue:** Adopting, at the earliest possible date, measures of social pacification, agreed upon with the elements of society and concentrating on youth and the poorest regions of the country.
- **National Reconciliation/Rule of Law:** An independent and impartial commission should be established for the investigation of supposed violations of human rights committed by members of the Army, forces of order and prison employees, during the protests of 30 October to 2 November 2014, the results to be made public.
- **Religious diversity:** In spite of being a taboo, since once the subject arises, there is an attempt to manipulate it for political benefit, it should be faced from the point of view of education, encouraging a rise in the number of Moslems with access to a Franco-Arab education of quality which would distance them from extremist ideas.
- **Reform of the Security Sector (RSS):** Reform of the Armed Forces and of the forces of order, under the control of a parliamentary commission which should include civilians and military retirees. Integrating them into the regular Army will be one of the principal goals of the new government. Committing errors in this integration may push them towards positions favoring coups.
- **National High Council of Elders:** The important role which this institution carries out should be to make official what the Commission for Reconciliation has already recommended, to consolidate its role as an institution which intervenes actively in the resolution and prevention of social and political crises.
- **Civil and democratic education:** Since the «revolution of 2014», many citizens feel confident in their ability to influence the government, and are willing to participate in the political processes; but only a few know their rights and duties. Therefore, the Government and the civil society must reinforce civil and democratic education with the aim of facilitating the qualitative participation of citizens in the political process.
- **Global strategy against terrorism and radicalization:** In a territory where, at a grass-roots level, Islam is very far from its most radical version,

- religious fundamentalism is capable of expanding by recruiting new members of the faithful. Nonetheless, only one program is being carried out to de-radicalize young people, in collaboration with Denmark.
- Inter-community conflicts (breeders vs. farmers): Both within Burkina Faso and in its neighboring countries (mainly Ghana and the Ivory Coast), there exists a foreseeable rise in the risk that these may be produced. This is above all true if, due to chronic drought, a significant drop is produced in agricultural production, especially in animal forage, and if areas of animal pasturage are reduced, in favor of irrigation projects.
 - Improving relations with neighboring countries:
 - o The possibility of engagement in war with any of its neighboring countries is very low.
 - o The leaders of the Ivory Coast should overcome their ties to the former regime, and continue to strengthen relations between the two countries, for stability in Burkina should be a priority for them, entering, if necessary, into cooperation with the courts.
 - International partners: Mediation by foreign partners/allies is vital. These should be attentive to provide not only necessary financial aid, especially for social assistance, but also for:
 - o Supervising the evolution of the main post- conflict problems.
 - o Lending technical and financial contributions.
 - o Creating conditions for a return to normality, and the return of refugees.
 - Regional/subregional actors acquire a major role in this type of transition process. In the case of Burkina Faso, it is necessary to have the participation of ECOWAS.

The attacks in Wagadugu provide confirmation of the tendency observed in Mali in the past year and a half. The jihadist groups have resisted the defeat inflicted upon them by French forces in the north of Mali in 2013, and have adapted to the presence of international antiterrorist forces in the region, overcoming all types of obstacles in order not only to stay active, but also to recover their ability to carry out spectacular strikes, including in joint and coordinated actions. The ease with which the assault in Wagadugu was executed, and the great number of victims are a message that the jihadists wish to send to France, and to her European and African partners: they are able to strike even in those places which are believed to be secure, as was the capital of BFA. The contribution of Burkinese troops to the UN/AU missions in Mali raises the risk of reprisals by extremist groups.

Finally, the so-called «*Black Spring*»⁶¹ has represented a milestone in being the first time that a popular movement has succeeded in expelling an autocrat

⁶¹ A term employed by Pargui Emile Pare, a member of the opposition party *People's Movement for Progress (PMM)*: «*October 30 is Burkina Faso's black spring, like the Arab Spring*», in an interview with the AFP agency. BBC News, 30 October 2014.

in Subsaharan Africa since the so-called «Arab Spring». It remains to be seen whether the citizens of other countries in Western or Central Africa, in spite of having different geopolitical contexts, will be capable of following its example. Countries such as Equatorial Guinea, Angola, Cameroon, Uganda and Zimbabwe, have leaders in power who have perpetuated their mandates for decades and have tried, or may try, to use the same type of constitutional revision to prolong their stay in office. On the other hand, doubt arises as to whether, within the current regional situation, Burkina Faso could fall victim to its internal conflicts, as has happened to many of the countries of the «Arab Spring», or will be capable of finalizing a peaceful and exemplary transition.

Burkina Faso: geopolitical indicators

Land surface (km2) (1)	274,200
Population (est. 2015) (1)	18,931,686
Growth Rate	
(Annual % of population) (1)	3.03
Infant mortality rate	
(per 1,000 inhabitants) (1)	102
Life expectancy (est. 2015; men/women) (1)	53,1/57,21
GDP (2015; millions of dollars) (1)	30,880
Annual growth rate (%) of GDP (2014)(1)	4.1
Income per capita (dollars) (1)	5.34
Defense Budget	
(Millions of dollars, 2012)(1)	204
% GDP for Defense (2012)(1)	1.39

Chronology of conflict

CRONOLOGY OF CONFLICT	
CHAP. VI	Burkina Faso: Process of post-crisis stabilization
DATE	EVENT
08/05/1960	Independence of Upper Volta from France. Maurice Yameogo elected president.
01/03/1966	Popular revolt followed by coup, overthrow of Yaméogo who is replaced by the head of the Army, Lt. Colonel Sangoulé Lamizana. <i>This coup would be the first in a long series, marking the beginning of half a century of military rule.</i>
06/1970	New Constitution, leading to political liberation.
08/1970	Multiparty Elections, won by the African Democratic Grouping (ADG).Its leader, Gérard Ouèdraogo, becomes Prime Minister.

Burkina Faso: post-crisis stabilization process

CRONOLOGY OF CONFLICT	
CHAP. VI	Burkina Faso: Process of post-crisis stabilization
DATE	EVENT
02/1974	President Lamizana puts an end to the democratic experiment, dissolves the Assembly and constitutes a military government of National Renovation.
12/1975	Strikes oblige Lamizana to reverse direction.
11/1977	New Constitution.
04/1978	Presidential and Legislative elections. President Lamizana runs on ADG ticket and wins on 2 nd round, held in May.
11/25/1980	Coup: After long period of drought, starvation, popular unrest and labor strikes, President Lamizana overthrown by military coup led by Col. Saye Zerbo.
11/07/1982	Coup: Major Dr. Jean-Baptiste Ouédraogo and several NCO's , many of them radicals, overthrow the Saye Zerbo regime.
01/1983	Dr.Ouédraogo names as Prime Minister Captain Thomas Sankara, emergent member of a younger generation influenced by the ideas of the far left.
02/28/1983	Coup: (attempt): Against the Council of Popular Salvation and its leader, Dr. Jean-Baptiste Ouédraogo. Beginning of a period of malaise and power struggles.
05/1983	Through an initiative of the conservative wing of the regime, Thomas Sankara arrested, causing demonstrations and dissidence of one part of the Army under the command of Captain Blaise Compaoré.
08/04/1984	Coup: Organized by Blaise Compaoré , who names Thomas Sankara President. The new government is composed of military figures, including Blaise Compaoré, as well as civilians, most of them members of the far left. Upper Volta renamed Burkina Faso.
10/15/1987	Coup: Blaise Compaoré eliminates his old ally and political rival .Thomas Sankara and installs the popular Front.
09/18/1989	Coup: While President Compaoré is on a State visit to China, a Coup is uncovered, planned by Captain Gilbert Diende, head of the Presidential Security Regiment (PSR).
1990	Blas Compaoré introduces limited democratic reforms.
06/11991	New Constitution
11/1998	Presidential elections: Compaoré, sole candidate, elected to 2 nd term.
04/2000	New Constitution: Limits Presidential mandates to two.
2002	Legislative elections: The CDP retains a slim majority.
2005	Presidential elections: Campaoré wins, by a narrow margin, his 3 rd mandate, which is reduced to 5 years.
2010	Presidential elections: Compaoré wins 4 th mandate with 80% of votes cast.
02-04/2011	Intense civil and military unrest during the first 6 months, including an uprising of certain components of the PSR.
12/2012	Legislative elections.
05/2013	Resumption of unrest, in response to Government project to create a Senate.

CRONOLOGY OF CONFLICT	
CHAP. VI	Burkina Faso: Process of post-crisis stabilization
DATE	EVENT
04/6-7/2014	Members of former regime arrested and faced with trial by a military judge appointed to investigate the assassination of President Sankara.
04/25/2014	Thousands of people demonstrate in favor of the new electoral law in Wagadugu.
10/30/2014	Popular uprisings. 24 people dead.
10/31/2014	President Compaoré renounces power following intense pressure from violent protests. The Army announces creation of a transition Government and the dissolution of Parliament.
11/2014	Statute of transition adopted by consensus.
12/04/2014	President Kafanda announces the creation of the Commission on National Reconciliation led by Prime Minister Zida.
12/13/2014	Prime Minister Zida announces the nationalization of several companies such as SOCOGIB, considered a symbol of the nepotism and «old-boy networks» of the Compaoré era.
12/15/2014	The Government suspends pro-Compaoré parties and organizations.
03/04/2015	New anti-corruption law approved.
03/10/2105	The National Commission for Reconciliation and Reform holds first session, naming President Archbishop Paul Ouédraogo.
09/17/2015	Coup: Michel Kafando deposed through Coup carried out by members of the PSR, led by General Gilbert Diendèré, former Head of the Armed Forces.
09/23/2016	Transition Government resumes its functions.
09/25/2016	Government dissolves Presidential Security Regiment (PSR), following recommendation of Transition Commission.
11 /29/2015	1st free Presidential and Legislative elections since 1978. Carried out in conditions of calm, no incidents.
01/01/2016	New Government assumes its functions.
01/15/2016	A heavily armed group (30-50) using kalishnikovs and grenades attacks hotels and leisure spots in the capital of Wagadugu, causing 30 deaths and 50 wounded.
05/22/2016	Municipal Elections

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Chapter nine

The lake Chad Basin

Blanca Palacián de Inza

Abstract

The decline of the surface area of Lake Chad, the resulting food crisis, and the political and economic instability in the countries of the basin: Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria, is exploited by extremist groups like Boko Haram, which have worsened the situation particularly since 2013. The resulting mass population movements, in an already precarious region due to the pre-existing population pressure, have become increasingly difficult to manage by the affected countries. The situation is described by international agencies as a severe humanitarian crisis.

Keywords

Boko Haram, terrorism, climate change, humanitarian crisis, mass population movements, food crisis.

Introduction

In the words of the former director of the division of land and waters of the FAO, Parviz Koohafkan¹, the Lake Chad Basin is one of the most important agricultural heritage systems in the world. This area, which is clearly declining ecologically, economically and in security – as we will see in this chapter – provides livelihood to almost 50 million people in the bordering area of four Central African countries: Niger, Cameroon, Nigeria and Chad. This is a highly valuable geostrategic area in the African continent.

The history of this region is indissolubly linked to its most valuable resource: water. Beyond providing fishing and facilitating agriculture, it



Map of the Lake Chad Basin

permits exporting these as a way of living of its inhabitants. Furthermore, for centuries, its cross-border nature has converted this region into an important commercial exchange point between the center and the north of the continent, gradually more dominated by illegal trafficking.

¹ SALKIDA, Ahmad. «Africa's vanishing Lake Chad». Africa Renewal, 2012. Available at the website Africa Renewal Online.

Geographically located south of the Sahara and Sahel deserts, the vital and rich ecosystem that the Lake Chad Basin occupies includes more marginalized and more neglected areas in the four countries that form it. However, this was not always so.

European explorations meant a radical change in its unified configuration. The French, the Germans, and the British, attracted by the opportunities, had to fight against Rabah, or against Rabih Fadlallah, the Sudanese leader who had created a strong state in that region in 1878. Together, they defeated him, turning the area into an area open to navigation with three areas of influence: one for each European power. This tripartite was dissolved at the end of the First World War, with the German defeat, leaving the region divided into two colonial areas: a British one, and a French one. It was during these years of colonial domination when the region remained unnaturally divided into the four countries that make it up today.

Once those four countries achieved their independence in the decade of the sixties in the last century, they created the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC) to jointly manage the natural resources in the region.

Such a central geographic location of the lake basin leaves it exposed to political and economic pressures, and ambitions of all types. Thus, the northernmost area belongs to the Sahara desert, leaving it inside the transactional network that links this desert to the northern Arabic area of the continent. On the other hand, through Sudan, the oriental part opens up to the Arab countries in the Middle East. Both connections expose the basin to political and sectarian interests of important countries in terms of security such as Libya. A clear example that we will see in this chapter are the suspicions which link Boko Haram to Daesh, the latter entrenched in that country. It was with the 9/11 attacks in the United States when the international community started to be more conscious of the geostrategic weight of this region which houses the most numerous Muslim community in Africa².

In recent decades, this population's survival has been threatened by the dramatic decline of the surface of the lake, the drought, and the over-exploitation of natural resources. These conditions have exacerbated the conflicts due to the use and distribution of the resources. In addition to the instability and insecurity factors, and taking advantage of this socio-ecological crisis in the basin, the effects of violence from extremist groups have strongly worsened the situation since 2013. The result is that the population in the region lives in a critical situation of political instability, food insecurity, and of constant risk for life itself due to the violence staged by these groups. This leads to population movements that this precarious region, with a pre-

² Gilbert L. Taguem Fah. «The War on Terror, the Chad–Cameroon Pipeline, and the New Identity of the Lake Chad Basin». *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 25. January 2007. pg. 1.

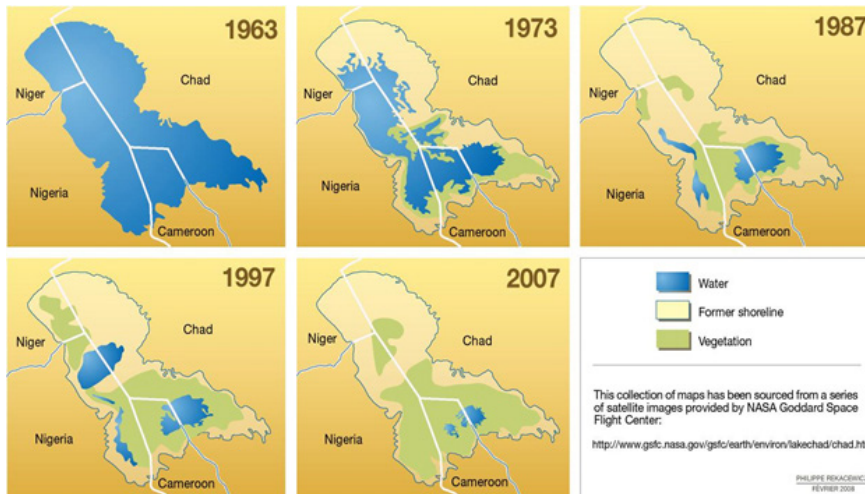
existing demographic pressure, cannot manage. The situation is described as a severe humanitarian crisis by international agencies.

According to the report from the LCBC: *Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis of the Lake Chad Basin*³, the population of the basin was estimated at 25 million inhabitants in 1990, increasing to over 37 million in 2003, and to 45 million in 2012. This population is quite plural regarding ethnicity and languages. It is an essentially rural population, mainly dedicated to traditional activities such as farming and fishing, and very young. In Niger, for example, 50% of the population is under 15. The population density is higher in Nigeria and near the lake, and, logically, it is less so in dry areas in the north of the region.

Background of the conflict

Decline of the surface of Lake Chad

In the last 60 years, the water surface of the lake has declined by 50%. In a region that lives off the lake, and suffers from various elements of instability, food insecurity is a chronic factor. It is true that the less water surface, the greater the land available for farming, but the equation gives a negative result just the same because the less water available, the more difficulties for irrigation. This element is considered one of the preexisting causes of the current situation of this widespread crisis. The relief from it, more and more difficult due to the



Decline Lake Chad 1963-2007

³ HARUNA, Hassan and BLOXOM, Martin. «Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis of the Lake Chad Basin», 2010. pg. 68.

growing presence of Boko Haram in the region has led to such an insecure situation, that it is impossible to deploy technicians and experts to the site.

Conflicts over access to water

Armed conflicts and the violence from rebel groups began to increase in the seventies. Although it is true that the conflicts are, in many cases, due to the fight for natural resources due to the reduction of the lake, the root is found in a number of civil wars that took place in Chad. However, the decline of the water surface is directly correlated to the increase of violence. The demographic pressure – especially in the southeast of the basin --- and the inefficient environmental policies contribute to greater pressure for water. The crisis for livelihood and unemployment have led to the appearance of violent jihadist groups – as there is an important Wahabist indoctrination base in the region – and to the increase of drug trafficking.

Lack of basic services: health and education

Another of the preexisting boosters of instability and lack of development to the present situation of insecurity in the region is the lack of public services. Particular signs of this can be seen in the lack of health and education services in the rural areas. Especially serious on a daily basis is the absence of a health system, considering that the region has one of the highest rates of infant birth and mortality in the world.

As far as education goes, the low levels of education and its correlation with malnutrition reveal its importance on the health of the population. The twinning of education and security is also of special importance because education and the transfer of social values and behavior are elements capable of determining the resistance of an individual to the use of violence as a way to solve conflicts⁴. The greater or lesser inclination of a society to resort to violence as a way to solve conflicts resides, essentially, on its own psycho-cultural disposition⁵. Investing in education means investing in security and development. Education for peace must be included in the study plan for primary and secondary schools with the idea of youngsters learning about a pacific solution of conflicts from an early age⁶.

⁴ ROSS Marc Howard. *La Cultura del Conflicto, (The Culture of Conflict)*, Ediciones Paidós Ibérica SA, 1995 pg. 30-31, quoted in SANTÉ ABAL, Jose M^º. «Disposiciones psicoculturales y violencia. La importancia de la educación» («Psycho-cultural dispositions and violence. The importance of education»), Analysis document of the IEEA (Spanish Institute for Strategic Studies) 54/2016 pg. 4.

⁵ SANTÉ ABAL, Jose M^º. *Op. cit.* pg. 9.

⁶ DUROTOYE, Adeolu. «Economic consequences and management of Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria», *International Journal of Economics, Commerce and Management*. United Kingdom Vol. III, Issue 6, June 2015. pg. 1269.

Quality health and educational systems are essential to the achievement of human development and food security. As reports from the World Food Program (WFP) point out, the poor infrastructure and social protection in the Lake Chad Basin reflect the lack of investment in rural development which undermines the means of living of the people who depend on the system in the basin. The high rates of HIV/AIDS, the low rate of children's schooling, and the high rate of illiteracy in adults have a direct impact on the perpetuation of inequalities and on security in general⁷.

Instead of investing in infrastructure and social services, the governments' expenditures have focused more and more on national armies, with the aim of subduing the opposition and preparing for armed conflicts⁸.

Boko Haram

Islamic radicalism in Africa is geographically concentrated in some regions and countries, even though their actions may have an effect in other areas. We can find it in the North of Africa, and in other bordering States in that region and in sub-Saharan Africa: Algeria, Libya, Egypt, Mauritania, Sudan, Chad, Niger, Nigeria, the Central African Republic, and Somalia.

In the region that this chapter deals with, the Lake Chad Basin, we find a growing presence of the Nigerian group, Boko Haram. Due to the relentless pursuit it has suffered from the Nigerian Armed Forces and their allies, the group has been forced to change their settlement area, and move to islands and shores of Lake Chad.

Boko Haram uses Islamic radicalism, and the narrative of a historic resentment against the abuses of the State to recruit new members and supporters⁹. Its ideological basis is not Islam, which is a religion, but rather Islamism, which is an ideology, and more specifically Jihadist Salafism. It is a perverse and minority¹⁰ derivation of the doctrinal current known as Salafism, which advocates the return to the beginning of Islam, and which intends to build a society similar to that in those early days through the jihad¹¹.

⁷ World Food Program. «Lake Chad Basin: Socio-economic analysis of the Lake Chad Basin Region, with focus on regional environmental factors, armed conflict, gender and food security issues». April, 2016.

⁸ World Food Program. *Op. cit.* pg. 16.

⁹ AFEIKHENA, Jerome. «Lessons from Colombia for Curtailing the Boko Haram Insurgency in Nigeria» PRISM 5, nº. 2, 2015. pg. 96.

¹⁰ , Javier, «El terrorismo islamista en España», («Islamist terrorism in Spain») in Amalio Blanco Abarca, Rafael del Aguila Tejerina, José Manuel Sabucedo Cameselle (coord.), Madrid 11-M: un análisis del mal y sus consecuencias, (Madrid 11-M: an analysis of evil and its consequences), (Madrid: Trotta, 2005), pgs.79-112.

¹¹ Jihad means «effort». Nevertheless, in this context, the term refers to the use of violence in the name of Islam.

The name by which the terrorist group that has sown terror in the north of Nigeria and throughout neighboring States¹² is Boko Haram, which in the *hausa*¹³ language means «the western education is *haram* or sin». In this context, the term «western» refers to Christianity, to the secular state, to democracy, to liberalism, and to consumerism¹⁴. The official name of the group is Jama'atu Ahlis Sunnah Lidda'awati wal-Jihad, which translates into «People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet's Teachings and Jihad».

It was founded in 2001 by Mohammed Yusuf, a charismatic and popular scholar of the Coran, in Borno, in the northeast of the country. Yusuf had studied theology at the Islamic University of Medina, in Saudi Arabia, and he was much influenced by the intolerant sermons of the Egyptian Shukri Mustafa.

In the year 2000, due to pressures from the numerous Muslim groups, President Olasegun Obasanjo authorized the 12 States with a Muslim majority to adopt the *sharia*¹⁵. Yusuf himself had helped to bring the Islamic law into practice in several of those States¹⁶, but the failure to totally implement the Islamic Law, according to Yusuf himself and a considerable number of Muslim youngsters, led them to call it a deceit, and to organize themselves as the Boko Haram group.

Their acts have not always been tinged with the violence which characterizes them now. It was in 2009, when the Nigerian security forces killed at least 700 people with the intention of eliminating the group, and their founder died when he was under police custody¹⁷, that his successor and present leader Abubakar Shekau took a new turn.

Boko Haram uses asymmetric war tactics such as ambushes, suicide attempts, or blowing up of bridges. However, the most worrying thing is that the territory seized by this group has turned into an import-export center for terrorism, both from neighboring or distant countries as well as towards them¹⁸.

¹² «The image of Cameroon as an island of peace in the middle of a tumultuous región ended in 2013, when violence from Boko Haram crossed the Nigerian border». HEUNGOU, Hans de Marie. «The dangerous religious tensions in Cameroon», 09/08/2015. Estudios de Política Exterior (Studies in Foreign Policy). Available at website: <http://www.politicaexterior.com>

¹³ Afro-Asian language belonging to western «chadic» languages particularly spoken by Muslims in Western Africa.

¹⁴ PENNA, Pio. «Da África do Norte para a África Subsaariana – Grupos radicais islâmicos no Malí e na Nigéria» («From Northern Africa to sub-Saharan Africa – Radical Islamic Groups in Mali and Nigeria»), Boletim Meridiano 47, vol. 15, n. 146, 2014. pg.50.

¹⁵ The *sharia*, according to the Coran, where this term first appears, is the right way in religion. This could mean, what the right way is and what is not, is subject to human interpretation; therefore, of «non-divine» nature. The Inherent Ambiguity of Islamic Law en KHAN, H., OMAR, M., KUEHNAST K., HAYWARD, S., «Fostering Synergies for Advancing Women's Rights in Post-Conflict Islamic States: A Focus on Afghanistan, Egypt, and Libya». Brookings, November 2013. pg. 7.

¹⁶ AFEIKHENA, Jerome. *Op. cit.* pg. 97.

¹⁷ LABORIE, MARIO A., «Boko Haram: an underlying threat». Revista Española de Defensa (Spanish Defense Magazine), February, 2013. pg. 55.

¹⁸ OKEREKE, C. Nna-Emeka, «Counter Terrorist Trends and Analysis», vol 7, Issue 1, January/February 2015. pg. 101.

In their record of attacks are actions such as the bomb that exploded in the Police Headquarters in June, 2011; the suicide attack at the United Nations Headquarters in Abuja in August of the same year; the destruction of the Air Force Base in Maiduguri in December, 2013, and innumerable attacks that killed hundreds of fellow citizens, and burned and devastated entire villages. Among all of them, the action that was most talked about in the media was the kidnapping, in 2014, of 273 girls in Chibok, in Borno, although, unfortunately, this is not the only massive kidnapping at the hands of the terrorists, as we will see in this chapter. Boko Haram is the most lethal terrorist group in contemporary history.

Current situation of the conflict

Division and internal rivalry

It seems that Boko Haram is going through a process of disintegration. One faction would be made up of the original Boko Haram followers, very weakened by military repression and the attacks from the Multi-national Joint Task Force. This faction, led by Abubakar Shekau, as this chapter is being written, has holed up in Borno, Yobe, and Adawa – at the south end of the lake, in Nigeria. On the other hand are those close to the Daesh ideology, who aspire to spread their fight to Central Africa. This faction is the one that has settled in the shores and in the small islands of Lake Chad, taking advantage of the pre-existing conflicts in the region, and they would be led by Al-Barnawi¹⁹.



Map of Nigeria

¹⁹ NARANJO, José. «ISIS announces a new leader of the jihadist sect Boko Haram», El País, 08/03/2016.

The rivalry between both factions is similar to the one Boko Haram had with Ansaru, because, as happened with Ansaru, for al-Barnawi's group, Shekau is killing too many Muslims for trivial reasons²⁰.

Change of location and strategy of Boko Haram

The hounding of the Nigerian Army and of the Multi-national Joint Task Force, which we will see later, has forced a faction of Boko Haram – the one led by Abu Musab al-Barnawi – toward the lake. The group had no structure to defend the sought-after caliphate; however, it is capable of staging a guerrilla war, as in their beginnings, for which the basin of the lake is the perfect stage to settle its bases. Furthermore, there is an ideal group of youngsters from which to recruit new supporters in this area: thousands of Wahabi youngsters, unemployed and disenchanted with the State. Jihadism perfectly knows how to exploit conflicts among the communities and pre-existing rivalries in the region²¹.

Exploitation of the rivalry among communities

Hand in hand with the exchanges and relations with the Arab world, a «reactionary Islam» has always had its place in the region²². This religious extremism has evolved as a tool to take advantage of the frustration and desperation of the people. Combining chaos and the lack of protection from a weak State, the social inequalities, and the lack of education, Boko Haram has found a breeding ground for their own aims.

On the other hand, the States are incapable of obtaining the support of the communities as well as of defending them. Neither have they been capable of stopping the causes that motivate social discontent and radicalization. After decades of corruption, the regional governments have not been able to turn around the bitter claims against them²³.

This discontent and frustration is used by Boko Haram, through religion, to mobilize the poor population in their favor, gaining supporters voluntarily or involuntarily, as it gradually takes control of the area in the absence of protection from the State, nor a capable State of Law. Kidnapping is an important way of recruitment, for which this group is also known.

²⁰ CAMPBELL, John. «Nigeria's Boko Haram: Now, They are Killing Each Other». Council on Foreign Relations. September 2016.

²¹ NARANJO, José. «The slow decline of Lake Chad», *Mundo Negro* (Black World), n° 619, September 2016. pgs. 21-22.

²² TAGUEM FAH, Gilbert L. *Op.cit.*

²³ *Ibidem*

Kidnapping of children

Although the kidnapping of girls and women is alarming, the number of boys kidnapped is even larger. The calculations for the last three years are that this number has reached 10,000 boys stolen who are trained for fighting²⁴. They are indoctrinated into radical fundamentalism and used as combatants, human bombs, and spies. The problem is of disproportionate magnitude because not only is this destroying many homes, but, in addition, the after-effects on a generation growing up within radicalism and hatred are very difficult to neutralize.

Broadly speaking, we can say that the recruitment of minors is a response to the need to increase the number of combatants due to the deep entrenchment of the conflicts, and to the high number of casualties. However, only in recent times, thanks to the existence of lighter armament, and of easier use, can this recruitment be possible²⁵. Furthermore, the fact that the children are obedient combatants who are less suspicious than adults, can be easily manipulated and held by the group, and are more daring due to having difficulty in evaluating the risks of their actions, is an added value to the objective of using children to combat. In addition, children are cheap, efficient, and dispensable²⁶.

Just as happens with the Daesh, the harassment that Boko Haram is being subjected to causes them, on the one hand, to need to mitigate their casualties, and on the other, to need to train and indoctrinate a second generation because the fight is expected to be a long one.

The psychological and social problems and consequences related to the war situation these minors live in is defined by some authors²⁷ as a «psycho-social trauma», which, unlike post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), is not limited to the intrapsychic or individual environment, but rather, contextualizes itself socially. Only the most resilient survive and manage to overcome it. Only those who have community, social and family support, those who set goals for themselves, who make commitments and who keep a positive outlook manage to overcome adversity²⁸.

²⁴ HINSHAW, Drew and PARKINSON, Joe. «The 10.000 kidnapped boys of Boko Haram», The Wall Street Journal. 08/12/2016.

²⁵ PALACIÁN DE INZA, Blanca. «Los cachorros del Daesh». Documento de Análisis del IIEE (Analysis document of the Spanish Institute of Strategic Studies), 26/2015. pg. 2.

²⁶ KAPLAN, Eben. «Child Soldiers Around the World», Council on Foreign Relations, 2005. Available at website: <http://www.cfr.org/>

²⁷ MARTÍN-BARÓ, I. «Political violence and war as causes of psycho-social trauma in El Salvador». Revista de Psicología de El Salvador (Psychology Magazine of El Salvador), 1988, pg.28.

²⁸ BARDERA, M^a Pilar. «Boy and girl soldiers: the psychological perspective in the growing phenomenon of the use of childhood in war». Multidisciplinary approximation. Working Document of the Spanish Institute of Strategic Studies.04-2016. pg. 55.

Training children to combat and to use explosives by the radical Islamist groups also means potential international damage. A child so trained is a threat almost impossible to detect and easy to introduce into any European country through illegal human trafficking networks or through ordinary means of transport²⁹. It is also a long-term threat because those children will become adults capable of traveling by their own means or of training the coming generation to carry out terrorist actions.

Massive population displacements

In May, 2016, the United Nations Security Council expressed its alarm due to terrorist attacks, crimes against human rights, and the abuses of human rights by Boko Haram³⁰. It was, furthermore, alarmed by the high number of refugees and displaced people in the Lake Chad Basin.

Violence does not cease, and neither do displacements of population. The pressure on the few existing resources in the host communities worsens the possibilities of survival. Most of the displaced people do not live in refugee camps, which have long been overcrowded, but rather they live with host families who take pride in their generosity despite their limited possibilities. The above-mentioned report from the Security Council estimated that over 4 million people from the lake basin are facing a serious food crisis.

Official data regarding the number of refugees and displaced people varies depending on the source; however, according to the NGO ReliefWeb, the general estimate is around 4.7 million displaced people, most of them women and children, who have abandoned their homes since May, 2013.

Women

The vulnerabilities based on gender inequality, such as difficulties to access resources and services, often define the relation of power between men and women in Central and Western Africa³¹. In the Lake Chad Basin, due to the crisis of resources, these inequalities associated to pre-existing ones become more acute.

One of the most significant and hampering factors for development is the difference in literacy between men and women, which the low schooling of girls reflects. As a consequence, early marriages and pregnancies are more

²⁹ PINHEIRO, Cole. «The Role of Child Soldiers in a Multigenerational Movement». ISN ETH Zurich, 03/19/2015. pg. 13.

³⁰ UNITED NATIONS. SECURITY COUNCIL. «Security Council Presidential Statement Condemns Boko Haram Terrorist Attacks in Lake Chad Basin, Demanding Immediate Halt to Violence, Human Rights Abuses». SC/12363. 13 May 2016.

³¹ World Food Program. *Op. cit.*

common. We are faced with a region with one of the highest birth rates in the world.

In the context of violence and displacement of populations in this region, women and girls, particularly the displaced ones and refugees, are exposed to all types of sexual violence (SGBV (Sexual and Gender-Based Violence), including rape, child marriages, sexual exploitation, and transmission of HIV.

In 2013, there was a change in the tactics of Boko Haram, who started to carry out kidnappings habitually, and to use and exploit women. This new turn of events was the group's response to the arrests of the wives of its members carried out by the government³².

Regarding the use of women, who generally raise less suspicion, there are many examples, such as Islamist violence in Pakistan and Indonesia, in the Arab-Israeli conflict or in the Algerian fight against the French. However, Boko Haram not only uses them for their attacks, but they also use growing levels of violence, particularly against Christian women, such as rape, torture, and murder. It is calculated that a very high percentage of Boko Haram's mortal victims were Christian women and children³³. We have also seen these types of actions in other conflicts, such as in Mozambique, Sierra Leone, and Rwanda, where sexual violence or forced marriages of «enemy» women have been habitual. However, we must not forget that the violence against women in this region has not been an exclusive monopoly of Boko Haram; in many cases, the government forces have engaged in similar behavior³⁴.

The *sharia* is a factor which facilitates gender violence as it imposes ideological structures of inequality. The version of the *sharia* that Boko Haram defends reinforces strict norms in female clothes and sexual conduct. These gender norms are considered contrary to the supposed western values which Boko Haram is against, like women's rights³⁵.

The role of external actors

When considering the role of external actors in this region, it is mandatory to begin with another one of the main jihadist groups that is making their way in the continent: the self-proclaimed Islamic State or Daesh. Later, we will see regional approaches and initiatives to confront the general crisis situation, those of the UN, and the one from a world power as is the United States.

³² ZENN, Jacob and PEARSON, Elizabeth. «Women, Gender and the evolving tactics of Boko Haram», Journal of Terrorism Research, volume 5, n° 1, 2014.

³³ BARKINDO, Atta; GUDAKU, Benjamin; TYAVKASE, Wesley and KATGURUM, Caroline. «Boko Haram and Gender Based Violence Against Christian Women and Children in North-Eastern Nigeria since 1999», NPVRN Working Paper N°. 1, 2013.

³⁴ IRIN news. «Analysis: Understanding Nigeria's Boko Haram's radicals». 18/07/2011.

³⁵ ZENN, Jacob. «Boko Haram Recruitment Strategies», John Campbell Blog, Council on Foreign Relations, 2013

Daesh

Boko Haram, which was then led by Shekau, swore loyalty to Daesh in March, 2015. However, everything seems to point to the fact that it was the self-called group Islamic State itself which placed Al-Barnawi as leader, to oppose Shekau³⁶.

We must remember that the faction led by Al-Barnawi is precisely the closest one to the Daesh ideology, and which is settled in the area of Lake Chad. It is not known up to what point both groups are collaborating, but there are signs that Boko Haram would be sending some of its members to Libya to fight next to Daesh's terrorists³⁷. On the other hand, and at the same time, it could be contributing to its ranks with members of the former group fleeing from cities they are losing, such as in the case of Sirte³⁸.

It is clear that their collaboration was to be expected, and it will grow closer, without a doubt. Both groups are relatively close geographically and, above all, ideologically, and both harassed by national and international forces, so they need each other.

The Lake Chad Commission

The Lake Chad Commission was created in May, 1964 by Cameroon, Niger, Nigeria, and Chad. In more recent decades, other countries like the Central African Republic and Libya joined it. Sudan, Egypt, the Republic of the Congo, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo are observers.

Its mandate is the sustainable and equal management of Lake Chad and other water resources shared in the basin, to preserve the ecosystems, and to promote integration, peace, and security in the region. Although, judging by the enterprising mandate, and by what has been set forth so far in this chapter, one may conclude that it has not been very successful so far, although there are some milestones worth mentioning such as the demarcation of borders among Chad, Niger, Nigeria, and Cameroon between 1988 and 1992, or the preparation of the Vision 2025 analysis with the challenges for the Integrated Water Resources Management³⁹.

³⁶ SEARCEY, Dionne and SCHMITT, Eric. «Boko Haram May Have a New Leader, ISIS Magazine Suggests». The New York Times, 07/03/2016.

³⁷ THE GUARDIAN. «Boko Haram may be sending fighters to Isis in Libya – US officials», 05/14/2016

³⁸ PENNETIER, Marine. «While ISIS Loses Libya's Sirte, Tunisia Fears Fleeing Fighters». Haaretz, 09/06/2016.

³⁹ The Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) is an empirical concept born out of the field experience of professionals, although many elements of the concept have been present for decades, in fact since the first global conference in Mar del Plata in 1977. However, it was not until after Agenda 21 and the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Rio in 1992 that the concept of the IWRM was the subject of serious debates that included

However, the absence of an integrated management strategy of the drainage basins is partly responsible for the conflicts related to Lake Chad. Although feasible technical solutions are known, the authorities in charge of the water have not been willing to apply them⁴⁰.

The second Regional Security Meeting was held in May 2016 in Abuja. The meeting this year focused on what should be done with the 566 terrorists arrested during the first months of the year, on how to mitigate the humanitarian crisis which affects over 2 million Nigerians that have been forced to flee from their homes, on how to attend to the 450,000 displaced people in Cameroon, Chad, and Niger, to over 4 million people suffering from severe food crisis in the basin of the lake, or to the almost 200 children daily who are at risk of starving to death in the northeast of the region. Many issues, of difficult solution, and that only encountered vague words but no specific commitment. In that meeting, Federica Mogherini, High Representative of the European Union, confirmed the 50-million-Euro contribution from the EU to the Multi-national Joint Task Force.

Multi-national Joint Task Force (MNJTF)

This military hit force, heir to previous attempts, was created as such in Addis Ababa on May 25, 2015. It is made up of the four founding lakeside countries of the LCBC (Lake Chad Basin Commission) and Benin. Its mandate is to combat Boko Haram, with Nigeria at the head.

In January 2015, two very negative actions for the credibility of this force took place. Its General Headquarters, in Baga, Nigeria, was attacked by members of Boko Haram who destroyed the city and assassinated its citizens. There were reports that said the soldiers had escaped from the attackers. Once the period of distrust from the countries that support this force had passed, the General Headquarters was moved to Djamena, Chad. This city suffered three attacks, and thus, the number of troops was increased.

The funds for the MNJTF have no direct origin in the United Nations, but rather from donors headed by France, the USA, and the United Kingdom, who give special emphasis to issues related to respecting human rights, keeping in mind the history of the armies involved.

its involvement in practice. The definition given by the World Association for Water of the IWRM is now the most accepted one: «The IWRM is a process that promotes the coordinated management and development of water, land, and other related resources, in order to maximize economic results and social welfare in an equal manner, without compromising the sustainability of vital eco-systems». Integrated Water Resources Management in Action. WWAP, DHI Water Policy, PNUMA-DHI Centre for Water and the Environment. 2009. pg.3. Available at the UNESCO website.

⁴⁰ GLOBAL WATER PARTNERHIP. «Transboundary: Lake Chad Commission wants to save the lake and mitigate conflicts (#371)». Available at <http://www.gwp.org>

European Union

Humanitarian aid⁴¹

The humanitarian aid from the European Union (EU) to the Sahel region, from January to July 2016, amounted to a total of 203.7 million Euros, to be distributed among Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, and Senegal, as well as to the regional programs for Western Africa. The European humanitarian aid includes food, shelter, clean water, and health assistance, plus protection for displaced people and host communities.

Operational Framework for the Sahel & Lake Chad Window⁴²

This is a project of the European Commission in the framework of a more general project: «Emergency fiduciary project of the European Union for stability, which allows confronting profound causes of irregular migration, and the displacement of people in Africa». A group of African countries surrounding the great African migration routes to Europe benefit from this fund. Among them are the Sahel region and the Lake Chad area: Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Gambia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, and Senegal.

Within this context, the operating framework for the Sahel is based on a double logic with a common denominator, youth in the region:

- The prevention of irregular migration, and forced displacement, and to better facilitate the management of these movements.
- The construction of an integral approach for stability, security, and the capability of recovery.

The EU's major concern is the migratory movements and their possible implications for Europe. In order to avoid these, measures such as encouraging employment for youngsters or combating human trafficking are considered priorities for investment. These missions are included in the Common Security and Defense Policy.

Strategy for the Sahel⁴³

In March 2011, the European Union adopted this strategy as an integral approach for the Sahel region.

This strategy is the key framework for the EU's action to help the countries in a region as wide as the Sahel-Sahara with the challenges of security and

⁴¹ Data from website: <http://ec.europa.eu>

⁴² *Ibidem*

⁴³ Information available at: <https://eeas.europa.eu>

development. In March 2014, this strategy was extended to Burkina Faso and Chad, besides Mali, Mauritania and Niger.

EUCAP SAHEL Niger⁴⁴

This is a civil mission that started in 2012, whose objective is to give support to Niger in the fight against terrorism and organized crime. Along the same lines as the strategy for the Sahel, EUCAP is a training and advisory mission to give support to the security institutions in this country: the police, the gendarmerie, and the national guard.

EU Ambassador to the Sahel⁴⁵

From December 2015 to February 2017, this office is occupied by the Spaniard, Ángel Losada Fernández. This Embassy plays a key role to guide the action of the EU in the region, helping to coordinate the global approach of the EU with the strategy of the Sahel as a model framework.

The mandate of the Ambassador responds to the commitments made by all the parties interested in the region, particularly the G5 Sahel, as a regional organization. Also involved are the governments, other international organizations, and the civil society. The Ambassador also represents the EU in pertinent regional and international meetings, and ensures the visibility of the aid from the European Union toward managing the crisis and preventing conflicts, such as the EUTM Mali, the EUCAP Sahel Mali, and EUCAP Sahel Niger.

G5 Sahel⁴⁶

The regional organization G5 Sahel was created in December 2014 to reinforce the cooperation regarding development and security in the region. Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, and Chad are part of the organization.

Although its constitutional treaty emphasizes the development issues, the area of security is the one which has had the greatest repercussion on the G5 Sahel. Although the G5 Sahel has been criticized on many occasions for its inefficiency, the creation of a joint military force, the Military Association for Cross-border Cooperation (*PMCT* is its acronym in French: *Le Partenariat Militaire de Coopération Transfrontalière*), the Investment Priority Program, the creation of a regional school for Defense studies, the establishment of a regional air company, and the construction of a railroad to facilitate the

⁴⁴ *Ibidem*

⁴⁵ *Ibidem*

⁴⁶ Information from <http://www.g5sahel.org/>

exchange among the countries in the region are agreements and projects to be highlighted.

The G5 Sahel has the support of the EU which has expressed its willingness to create a «special association» with this organization.

The UN

The Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force was created by the Secretary General in 2005 to ensure the coordination and coherence of the work to fight against terrorism that the United Nations is undertaking. The initiative Integrated Assistance on Countering Terrorism⁴⁷ (I-ACT) is made up of representatives from each one of the entities associated with this special group, and presided by the Executive Office of the Secretary General. Through this initiative, the office of the special group sets out to strengthen the capacity of the United Nations system to help those member States interested, if they so apply for it, and in a way that is adapted to their needs, to apply the global strategy of the United Nations against terrorism⁴⁸, in an integrated way.

Currently, work is under way to extend the Integrated Assistance on Countering Terrorism (I-ACT) to the region of the Sahel, jointly with the United Nations Office for Western Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS). For its part, the World Food Program⁴⁹ has several initiatives to mitigate food insecurity in the region. Some of them, those addressed to childhood, work in collaboration with UNICEF. A novel idea, in areas where there are markets, and enough supplies, the World Food Program uses a system of transfers through mobile phone so that those benefitted buy the articles they may need.

The United States

After years of scarce collaboration, the United States is reopening channels with Nigeria. The Government's corruption and the abuses against human rights by the Nigerian Armed caused the American giant to obviate this country in the fight against Boko Haram, and only gave their support to its neighbors, Cameroon, Chad, and Niger.

Among these new ways to collaborate with Nigeria, the American government will sell them 12 aircraft to support the fight against the terrorist group⁵⁰.

⁴⁷ More information in website: <https://www.i-act-infosystem.org>

⁴⁸ More information in website: <https://www.un.org/counterterrorism/ctitf/es/un-global-counter-terrorism-strategy>

⁴⁹ Information from website: <http://www.fao.org>

⁵⁰ COOPER, Helene and SEARCEY, Dionne. «After Years of Distrust, U.S. Military Reconciles With Nigeria to Fight Boko Haram», The New York Times, 05/15/2016

Furthermore, the United States gives support with advisors, intelligence, training, humanitarian and logistics aid to the Multinational Joint Task Force⁵¹.

AFRICOM is the Africa command of the United States belonging to the State Department of the United States, responsible for its military operations with respect to the 53 African nations, excepting Egypt. In its action plan for the next 5 years, the third line of action is to neutralize Boko Haram. The fourth will focus on disrupting the illegal activities in the Gulf of Guinea and in Central Africa.⁵²

Conclusions and prospects

As we have seen in this chapter, the performance of different actors covers a wide spectrum of actions, all of them necessary. The situation in the Lake Chad Basin is very complex and has multiple causes. Therefore, in trying to find the best coordination and prominence for the regional initiatives, the holistic approach to a problem that also has that dimension is adequate.

The response taking place for the humanitarian, ecological and security crisis in the Lake Chad Basin, in spite of being belated, seems adequate. An exclusively military approach to neutralizing Boko Haram, or sending emergency aid would only delay the most visible issues, at least the structural ones, for some time.

In any case, we must keep in mind that if al-Barnawi succeeds in eradicating violence centered on Muslims, and in redefining the relationship with the local populations in a less predatory manner, the result could well be a rebirth and a stronger support for Boko Haram. Therefore, although possible, its neutralization could be more difficult.

A terrorist group may be defeated, but if the socio-economic conditions of a growing very young population do not improve, other groups will spring up, illegal trafficking as a way of life will not cease, etcetera.

Once a situation of greater security is achieved, it is necessary to support sustainable policies for the management of natural resources which include the perspective of gender, along with the needed development of infrastructures, and strengthening of the institutions. Without development, there is no security. Therefore, the short-term measures, the most frequently used, must be combined with other measures such as investment in education to be part of a long-term strategy for development.

⁵¹ UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT. STATE DEPARTMENT. «United States Support to Counter Boko Haram: Fact Sheet», 02/11/2016.

⁵² UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT. DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE. «Africom Campaign Plan Targets Terror Groups» DoD News, Defense Media Activity, 01/05/2016.

Table of geopolitical indicators

TABLE OF GEOPOLITICAL INDICATORS NIGERIA	
Surface 923,768 km ²	
GDP \$US 490.2 trillion (2015 est.)	
GDP Structure	Agriculture 20.3%
	Industry 23.6%
	Services 56.1% (2015 est.)
GDP per capita \$ 6,100 (2015 est.)	
GDP growth rate 2.7% (2015 est.)	
Trade relations (Exports) Oil and its derivatives 95%, cocoa (2012 est.) India 18.2%, The Netherlands 8.5%, Spain 8.2%, Brazil 8.2%, South Africa 7.8%, France 5.2%, Japan 4.5%, Ivory Coast 4.2%, Ghana 4% (2015)	
Trade relations (Imports): Machinery, chemical products, transport equipment, manufactured products, food, and live animals China 25.7%, USA 6.4%, The Netherlands 6.1%, India 4.3% (2015)	
Population 181,562,056	
Age structure	0-14 43.01%
	15-64 53.88%
	Over 65 3.11%
Population growth rate 2.45% (2015 est.)	
Ethnic groups: The Nigerian population is made up of over 250 ethnic groups. The largest in number and political influence are: Hausa and Fulani 29%, Yoruba 21%, Igbo (Ibo) 18%, Ijaw 10%, Kanuri 4%, Ibibio 3.5%, y Tiv 2.5%	
Religions: Muslims 50%, Christians 40%, Indigenous religions 10%	
Population literacy rate 59.6% Men: 69.2% Women: 49.7% (2015 est.)	
Population below the poverty line 70% (2010 est.)	
GINI Index 48.8 for 2013	
Military expenditure 0.89% of GDP (2012)	

TABLE OF GEOPOLITICAL INDICATORS NIGER	
Surface 1,267 million km ²	
GDP US\$ 7,151 trillion (2015 est.)	
GDP Structure	Agriculture 37.3%
	Industry 18.9%
	Services 43.8% (2015 est.)
GDP per capita \$US 1,100 (2015 est.)	
GDP growth rate 4% (2015 est.)	
Trade relations (Exports): uranium, farm animals, cowpeas, onions France 53.1%, Nigeria 20.3%, China 13.8% (2015)	
Trade relations (Imports): food products, machinery, vehicles and parts, oil, cereals France 12%, China 10.4%, Nigeria 9.5%, French Polynesia 9%, Togo 6.1%, Belgium 5.3%, Ivory Coast 5.3%, USA 4.3% (2015)	
Population 18,045,729 (July 2015 est.)	
Age structure	0-14 49.57%
	15-64 47.79%
	Over 65 2.64%
Growth rate of the population 3.25% (2015 est.)	
Ethnic groups: Hausa 53.1%, Zarma/Songhai 21.2%, Tuareg 11%, Fulani (Peul) 6.5%, Kanuri 5.9%, Gurma 0.8%, Arab 0.4%, Tubu 0.4%, other 0.9% (2006 est.)	
Religions: Muslims 80%, others (including indigenous religions, and Christianity) 20%	
Population literacy rate 19.1% Men: 27.3% Women: 11% (2015 est.)	
Population below the poverty line 63% (1993 est.)	
GINI Index	
Military expenditure 1.06% of the GDP (2012)	

TABLE OF GEOPOLITICAL INDICATORS CAMEROON	
Surface 475,440 km ²	
GDP US\$ 8.48 trillion (2015 est.)	
GDP Structure	Agriculture 22.3%
	Industry 29.9%
	Servicies 47.9% (2015 est.)
GDP per capita US\$ 3,100 (2015 est.)	
GDP growth rate 5.9% (2015 est.)	
Trade relations (Exports): crude oil and oil derivatives, Wood, cocoa, aluminum, coffee, cotton China 16.7%, India 15.7%, Spain 6.2%, Belgium 6.1%, France 6.1%, Portugal 5.6%, The Netherlands 5%, Italy 5% (2015)	
Trade relations (Imports): machinery, electronic equipment, transport equipment, fuel, food China 27.9%, Nigeria 13.9%, France 10.9%, Belgium 4.1% (2015)	
Population 23,739,218	
Age structure	0-14 42.78%
	15-64 54.07%
	Over 65 3.15%
Growth rate of the population 2.59% (2015 est.)	
Ethnic groups: Cameroon Highlanders 31%, Equatorial Bantu 19%, Kirdi 11%, Fulani 10%, Northwestern Bantu 8%, Eastern Nigrific 7%, other African 13%, non-African less than 1%	
Religions: Catholics 38.4%, Protestants 26.3%, other Christians 4.5%, Muslims 20.9%, Animists 5.6%, others 1%, non-believers 3.2% (2005 est.)	
Population literacy rate 75% Men: 81.2% Women: 68.9% (2015 est.)	
Population below the poverty line 48% (2000 est.)	
GINI Index	
Military expenditure 1.42% of the GDP (2012)	

TABLE OF GEOPOLITICAL INDICATORS CHAD	
Surface 1,284 million km ²	
GDP US\$ 10.89 trillion (2015 est.)	
GDP Structure	Agriculture 54.9%
	Industry 14.2%
	Servicies 30.9% (2015 est.)
GDP per capita US\$ 2,600 (2015 est.)	
GDP growth rate 1.8% (2015 est.)	
Trade relations (Exports): oil, cattle, cotton, sesame, gum arabic, shea butter USA 58.5%, India 13.3%, Japan 11.3%, China 4.1% (2015)	
Trade relations (Imports): machinery and transport equipment, industrial products, food products, textiles France 16.5%, China 14.2%, Cameroon 11%, USA 6.4%, India 6%, Belgium 5.7%, Italy 4.8% (2015)	
Population 11,631,456 (July 2015 est.)	
Age structure	0-14 44.2%
	15-64 52.82%
	Over 65 2.98%
Growth rate of the population 1.89% (2015 est.)	
Ethnic groups: Sara (Ngambaye/Sara/Madjingaye/Mbaye) 25.9%, Arab 12.6%, Kanembu/Bornu/Buduma 8.3%, Wadai/Maba/Masalit/Mimi 7%, Gorane 6.8%, Masa/Musseye/Musgum 4.7%, Bulala/Medogo/Kuka 3.6%, Bidiyo/Migaama/Kenga/Dangleat 3.6%, Marba/Lele/Mesme 2.9%, Dadjo/Kibet/Muro 2.5%, Mundang 2.5%, Gabri/Kabalaye/Nanchere/Somrai 2.4%, Zaghawa/Bideyat/Kobe 2.3%, Fulani/Fulbe/Bodore 2%, Tupuri/Kera 2%, Tama/Assongori/Mararit 1.6%, Baguirmi/Barma 1.3%, Karo/Zime/Peve 1.3%, Mesmedje/Massalat/Kadjakse 1%, other Chadian ethnicities 2.5%, Chadians of foreign ethnicities 0.6%, foreign nationals 2.5% (Sudanese 2%) (2009 est.)	
Religions: Muslims 58.4%, Catholics 18.5%, Protestants 16.1%, Animists 4%, others 0.5%, non-believers 2.4% (2009 est.)	
Population literacy rate 40.2% Men: 48.5% Women: 31.9% (2015 est.)	
Population below the poverty line 46.7% (2011 est.)	
GINI Index	
Military expenditure. No data available	

Source: CIA The World FACTBOOK (EXCEPT FOR THE GINI INDEX: WORLD BANK)

Chronology of conflict

CHRONOLOGY OF THE CONFLICT	
CHAPTER.	THE LAKE CHAD BASIN
DATE	EVENTS
The 60s	Colonial Independence of Niger, Nigeria, Chad and Cameroon
1964	The Lake Chad Basin Commission was created.
2001	Boko Haram is set up
2011	The EU defines the Strategy of the Sahel
2012	EUCAP SAHEL Niger begins
2013	Change in Boko Haram's tactics: kidnapping and exploitation of women
2014	The regional organization G5 Sahel is created
2015	Shekau swears loyalty to the Daesh
2016	The Multi-national Joint Task Force (MNJTF) is created
2016	Daesh appoints Al-Barnawi as the leader of Boko Haram. The group splits

Chapter ten

Burundi: ambition for power instigates ethnic violence

Jesus Díez Alcalde

Abstract

In April 2015, Pierre Nkurunziza announced his candidacy for a third term as president of Burundi. His decision, based on a biased interpretation of the Constitution of the State, meant a break with the Arusha Agreement signed in 2000, which ended a gruelling civil war and allowed the Burundian population to dream about a future away from the permanent political and social attacks suffered for decades. In addition, it caused an immediate social reaction on the streets of Bujumbura, violently «pacified» by pro-government security forces.

After a failed coup and a disputed election, the new presidency of Nkurunziza appears defiant and repressive, while Burundi sinks into absolute political, economic and social decline. Although violent clashes have decreased noticeably, fears of a new civil war remain strong and have even triggered alarms of genocide. Against this ominous backdrop, and despite the limited efforts of the international community, there is still no room for an inclusive and complete dialogue to end a year and a half of this violent political crisis, which is not limited to the borders of Burundi, but also threatens the stability of the entire region.

Keywords

Burundi, Nkurunziza, CNDD-FDD, violence, repression, dialogue, East African Community, United Nations, and Rwanda.

Introduction

With just over 10 million inhabitants, in the very heart of Africa and with a land mass of only 27,830 square kilometers, the independent history of Burundi commenced in 1962, when it disconnected from the colonial power of Belgium. Since then, its evolution has been marked by continuous ethnic clashes and despotic regimes, turning it into one of the most unsafe, underdeveloped, and poorest nations of the entire African continent¹.

And upon these difficult parameters its future stands. It was not until the year 2000 that the end of a brutal civil war—which began in 1993 and left more than 300,000 dead— was glimpsed after the signing of the Arusha Accords, and the Burundian population began to trust that an existence might be possible, free from the constant social and political aggression they had undergone for decades. It was at that time, too, when it was assumed that an incipient and imperfect democracy—conditioned by a consensual distribution of power between the Hutus (85% of the population), Tutsi (14%), and Twa (1%)— would open the path towards the stability and peace which they had never enjoyed.

The challenge was extremely complicated, but the commencement of the Presidency of the Hutu Pierre Nkurunziza in 2006—who transitioned from armed rebellion to politics as the head of the NCDD-FDD²— and his first years of government, were hopeful. However, this period was marred by fanatical remnants of various rebel groups—among them, his principal opponent: the National Liberation Front— which, by force of arms, continued to deny, until 2006, the legitimacy of the government of Bujumbura—the State capital—to lead the «newly founded» Burundi.

But everything fell through in May of 2015, when Nkurunziza's ambition for power and the backing of his political party led them to justify a self-interested—and above all, dangerous and inopportune— interpretation of the supreme law of the State, which was officially validated by the Constitutional Court itself. This decision permitted the President to run for re-election for a third term: something expressly prohibited by the Arusha Accords. This act represented a frontal attack on democracy and the State of Law in Burundi in the view of all of his political opponents—Hutus as well as Tutsis—in addition

¹ The data relating to the underdevelopment and the endemic poverty of Burundi have barely improved since the country achieved its longed-for national independence, linked as well to its definitive separation from Ruanda. Currently, the 2015 Human Development Index places Burundi in 184th place of a total of 188 countries (HDI report available at http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/2015_human_development_report_overview_es.pdf), while its average per capita income—\$276 per person per year on which to subsist— makes it the third most poverty-stricken country on earth. (Data World Bank: <http://databank.bancomundial.org/data/home.aspx>)

² National Council for the Defense of Democracy-Forces for the Defense of Democracy.

to a part of the Security Forces —especially in the heart of the Army— plus a major sector of civil society.

As a result, the objections of the political opposition and of a part of the population, fed up with the abuses of their national leaders, were not long in coming, nor was the disproportionate reaction of the Government to stifle them. Since the onset of the crisis, and leaving no place for tolerance, social protests have been violently «pacified» by the governmental security apparatus —above all by the dreaded and oppressive Burundian police— but also by the most bloodthirsty armed militia: the Imbonerakure, more than presumably backed by the government and acknowledged as the youth wing of the CNDD-FDD.

Like a whirlwind, the violence spread throughout the principal quarters of the capital, filling its streets with death and desolation, and extended as well into the rural areas of the province of Bujumbura. By then, a major faction of the Army —deeply divided between loyalists and opponents to the controversial intention of the government to maintain itself in power— refused to smother the popular revolts by force, and finally rose in arms to destroy President Nkurunziza. The failed military coup did not achieve its aim: to contain the atrocious reaction of the governmental apparatus before it provoked an open and fratricidal conflict.

However, this action, condemned by the entire international community, became the government's pretext for intensifying the repression against its opponents; desertions grew among the rank and file of the armed forces, and even within the governing party, and persecution increased within State institutions and broad sectors of civil society. In all, the fracturing of society was now highly alarming, but did not stop the population being summoned, in July of 2015, to boycotted elections which ratified —by a highly questionable majority— the continuance of Nkurunziza as national president until 2020.

Under the new presidency of Nkurunziza, who stands absolutely defiant under regional and international pressure, Burundi is once again sinking into utter decline, politically, economically and socially. Although security has ostensibly improved, political persecution, selective assassination and the absolute denial of rights and freedom do nothing to disperse the fears of a new civil war. For the U.N., all of these factors have unleashed alarms of a genocide³, which would thrust Burundi back into its most tragic past, and which for the moment the population is not going to permit.

In the face of this worrying scenario, Nkurunziza continues obstinately to break up the ethnic distribution consecrated at Arusha, a fundamental

³ UN believes «genocide» Burundi and possible «crimes against humanity». RPA, 21/09/16. Available at <http://www.rpa.bi/index.php/component/k2/item/2833-l-onu-craint-des-crimes-contre-l-humanite-et-un-danger-de-genocide-au-burundi>. Date consulted: 23/09/16.

element in preventing a civil war and even more in setting the bases for a national reconciliation. For the moment, there is no space for an inclusive and complete dialogue, wherein there could be a debate even over everything agreed upon at Arusha. And this, in spite of the fact that there exists no other path forward into a lasting and peaceful consensual solution to this violent political crisis which, since April 2015, has left, as its most devastating consequence, thousands dead, a million Burundians on the edge of a humanitarian emergency, and nearly 300,000 obliged to flee their homes and seek refuge both within and outside of the country.

Once again in Africa, and once again due to uncontrolled political ambition, Burundi is approaching a difficult crossroads. On the political stature of its current leaders in staunching and resolving the deep underlying causes of this renewed crisis, but also on the stance, determination and pressure from the international community, will depend its definitive resolution, and with it, the stable and peaceful future not only of the country, but of the whole of this violence-prone region.

Antecedents of the crisis

On the 28th of August, 2000, the city of Arusha was witness to the signing of a political agreement for peace and reconciliation which brought to a close 17 years of fratricidal civil war in Burundi marked by bloody clashes between Hutus and Tutsis, and set the political bases for a re-establishment of the nation. Thanks to regional and international pressure —with the mediation of Tanzanian President Mwalimu Nyerere and, even more decisively, of South African President Nelson Mandela— thus ended the final process of the negotiations between part of the rebel groups and the Burundian government of the Tutsi President Buyoya. While it is true that this accord did not stifle the insurgent struggle, which only began to diminish when the agreement was ratified by the National Liberation Front (NLF) in 2006, Arusha did mark a transcendental milestone throughout Africa, which thus celebrated its incipient policy of finding «African solutions to African problems», a key and indispensable axiom for the achievement of greater continental integration.

Within Burundi, the accords were interpreted as an opportunity for ending a long tradition of political and ethnic affrays which had marked the evolution of its population since even before its independence in 1962. At the Conference of Berlin in 1885, the European powers agreed on the sharing out of Africa, and just four years later, the German Empire annexed the former kingdoms of Ruanda and Burundi until the end of the First World War, when it was obliged to abandon its African colonies. From that time on, initially under the shelter of the Society of Nations and later as a trust territory of the United Nations, Belgium carried out an iron-fisted administration of the entity known as Ruanda-Burundi.

Burundi: ambition for power fuels ethnic violence

During all these years, both powers exacerbated, to their own benefit, the region's ethnic rivalries, upon fostering a social structure which favored the Tutsi minority over the Hutu majority, so shattering the ancient political and social domination of the latter. After independence, Burundi restored a monarchical regime —ethnically equitable— with the reign of the Tutsi Mwambutsa IV, until the proclamation of the Republic in 1966. From then on, there occurred a series of coups and the resulting despotic governments —dominated by the single and mostly Tutsi Union for National Progress (UNAP)— which aggravated ethnic tensions and failed to favor the longed-for national integration.

After numerous episodes of Hutu and Tutsi rebellions instigated by the discriminatory practices carried out from governmental power and resulting in thousands of victims on both sides, the international community demanded a political aperture in Burundi in 1993, which established a multiparty system and allowed the holding of the first democratic elections. The victory of the recently legalized Front for Democracy in Burundi (FDB) carried with it the proclamation of Melchior Ndadaye as the first Hutu president of Burundi. But his assassination, a mere three months after his investiture, and the death in 1994 of his successor Cyprien Ntarimayra together with that of Rwandan Hutu President Juvenal Havyarimana —the spark which detonated the Tutsi genocide in Rwanda— dynamited the incipient Burundian democracy and plunged the population into a bloody civil war, which spread as well into the adjacent countries, especially into the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which still today serves as the rearguard of the Burundian rebels. This conflict resulted in more than 300,000 deaths and the devastation of the entire country. In addition, it confronted loyalists of the UNAP and of the national army, mostly Tutsi, with the followers of the FDB and the two principal Hutu rebel militias: the Forces for the Defense of Democracy (FDD) —the military wing of the National Council for the Defense of Democracy (NCDD), founded in 1994— National Liberation Front (NFL), the armed branch of the Party for the Liberation of the Hutu Population (named since its origin in 1980 as PALIHUPO).

In 1996, a new coup by Pierre Buyoya (UNAP), who had already held the national presidency between 1987 and 1993, caused the paralysis of incipient peace conversations. These were resumed in 1998, following the economic embargo imposed on Burundi by the countries of the region and by the pressure from the entire international community, especially by the African Union and the United Nations —together with the United States, France and Canada in the bilateral sphere— after the incorporation of Nelson Mandela as principal mediator of the peace conversations of 1999. As the analyst Caroline Sculier points out in her extensive report «Peace Negotiations in Burundi: An Arduous but Necessary Justice»⁴, the principal aspects of the

⁴ Sculier, C. Report Peace Negotiations in Burundi. An arduous but necessary justice. Center for Humanitarian Dialogue. May 2008. Available at http://escolapau.uab.cat/img/programas/procesos/hd/burundi_Report_French.pdf. Date consulted, 23/09/16.

Arusha Accords —which today still govern Burundian policy— «may be summarized as follows:

1. Commitment by the participants to lead the country into reconciliation, establishing the truth about the origin and nature of the conflict;
2. Proposal for an institutional transition period permitting organization of conditions for a democratic renovation based on the equitable sharing of power;
3. Need for a cease-fire and reformation of the security and police forces, as guarantee of security for all citizens;
4. Stages for economic and social reconstruction as well as stabilization based on the return of refugees; and
5. Formulation of international guarantees to insure the application of the measures decided upon at Arusha».

However, and although the agreement was an undeniable success, at Arusha many questions were left hanging, due to the reticence of many rebel groups to join in the negotiations, which it was necessary to settle in the following years. The most transcendental was resolved in November 2003, under the transition government of Domitien Ndayizeye (FDB), with the incorporation of the principal rebel political movement during the civil strife —the NCDD-FDD, now led by Pierre Nkurunziza— into the new Burundian political scenario. Thanks to this, in February of 2005 it was possible to convoke a representative referendum to sanction the new national constitution⁵, which was widely supported by the Burundian population.

This supreme law ratified the conciliatory and reformative spirit of the Arusha Accords, with a few limited amendments. On the one hand, and with respect to the president of the Republic, it is stated that his election shall be carried out through «universal direct suffrage for a mandate of five years, renewable once (article 96)»; and on the other, it consecrates the ethnic distribution of power between the Hutus (85% of the population) and the Tutsis (14%) in the principal institutions of the State: in the Government and the Parliament, 60% and 40% respectively. The Senate was established with a system of parity, as were the security forces. In this way, in a search for peace and stability, an «imperfect democracy» was established in Burundi, based on ethnic representation which had little to do with the social reality of the country: a controversial aspect which aroused the reservations of the NCDD-FDD about the accords.

Undoubtedly, as Caroline Sculier emphasizes, «Arusha could have represented an ideal occasion on which to renounce the ethnic label, especially after the

⁵ Interim Post-Transition Constitution of the Republic of Burundi. Law n° 1/010 of 18 <<march 2005. Available at http://www.wipo.int/wipolex/es/text.jsp?file_id=195947. Date consulted: 12/05/16.

participants themselves acknowledged that the conflict was essentially of a political nature»⁶.

From that perspective, it is understandable that the «ethnic dimension» should become a hindrance for the political ambitions of the new leaders of the country: the NCDD-FDD, which won the legislative elections with support at the polls of more than 65% of votes cast. By Parliamentary agreement, Nkurunziza was proclaimed President of Burundi on August 20, 2005. From then on, his popularity rose, due to his frequent trips to the least favored rural areas of his country and also to his policies regarding health and education. The Burundian population as well as the international community began to believe that it was possible to leave Burundi's erratic history behind and advance towards greater levels of democracy, security and development.

However, the general elections of 2010 —to which, for the first time, the NLF was summoned after its legalization as a political party in 2009— accentuated the decline of the NCDD-FDD government, which was receiving ever more criticism for its ironfisted authoritarianism. In the end, the majority of the political opposition, both Hutu and Tutsi, boycotted an electoral process in which Nkurunziza —as sole candidate— was reelected by a questionable 91.6% of the votes cast and a participation of 76.98% of the population. Nonetheless, in spite of the absence of pluralism and the heavy restrictions on freedom of expression and information, «the electoral observers jointly gave a green light to the results»⁷.

Following the establishment of the new government in Bujumbura, and as reported by Human Rights Watch (HRW), there was an increase in social repression, as well as of the media of communication and the opposition parties, coinciding with a resurgence of armed groups which represented a real menace: «If Burundi» —as HRW emphasized— «wants the world to consider it a democracy, its leaders must resist the temptation to govern as a de facto single-party State, and guarantee space for political opposition and expressions of dissent»⁸. So far from heeding these and other considerations, President Nkurunziza began organizing his intended perpetuation in power beyond the two mandates permitted by the Arusha Accords and the Constitution itself. And all this in spite of the fact that, in March of 2014, the Burundian Parliament, dominated by the NCDD-FDD, had rejected a government proposal to modify the constitutional text. Thus, and as was foreseeable, and with major dissent within his own party and

⁶ Sculier, C. Report Peace Negotiations in Burundi, *Op. cit.*

⁷ Vandeginste, S. Burundi Chronicle 2010-2011, published in L'Afrique des Grands Lacs, Annuaire 2010-2011, Éditions L'Harmattan, Paris. Available at http://www.africafundacion.org/IMG/pdf/Cronica_Burundi_2010-2011.pdf. Date consulted: 16/09/16

⁸ Burundi: Repression of rights after elections. HRW, 23/11/10. Available at <https://www.hrw.org/es/news/2010/11/23/burundi-repression-de-los-derechos-tras-las-elecciones>. Date consulted: 16/05/16.

among some of his closest advisors, Nkurunziza announced his «legitimate decision» to run for a third term in office in April of 2015.

Current situation of the crisis

Nkurunziza's premeditated decision to perpetuate himself in the presidency had predictable results: the social reaction —centered in the capital at Bujumbura— censure as a direct affront and a betrayal of the political consensus reached at Arusha and to the Constitution of 2005, when these two had permitted more than a decade of relative peace and stability in the country. What is difficult to understand is why President Nkurunziza failed to listen to the warnings arriving from both the opposition party —grouped under the umbrella of the Democratic Alliance for Change *Ikibiri* (DAC-*Ikibiri*)⁹— and from numerous sectors of civil society: non-governmental organizations, journalists or the Catholic Church itself. Even more notable was the scorn with which he treated his most direct advisors and his fellow party members. Understanding his «reasons» is a complicated endeavor, but even more so is the fact that he failed to foresee the grave consequences that his excessive thirst for power would provoke, especially when Burundi is only too used to resolving its disputes by force of arms.

«The third mandate of the current president» —as denounced in an official statement by the DAC-*Ikibiri* in March of 2015¹⁰— «is contrary to the spirit and the letter of the Arusha Accords (...) Furthermore, it violates the binding Constitution. Both documents permit only two presidential mandates. Therefore, the third mandate is illegal and will give rise to problems that the people of Burundi and the international community will have to absorb.» At the same time it demanded that the president immediately abandon his illicit pretensions. For their part, more than 70 members of the NCDD-FDD itself made public their rejection of Nkurunziza's pretensions; the head of the Intelligence Services, General Godefroid Niyombare (Hutu), warned as early as March of the grave consequences his decision could carry with it; and the internal divisions of the security forces began to show themselves: the police

⁹ This Alliance was formed in 2010, and represented the greatest verification of the fact that practically all of the opposition (ten parties of Hutu and Tutsi background) were against the authoritarian drift of the Nkurunziza regime, and its principal joint action was to agree to a total boycott of the presidential elections. Among those principal parties —more than thirty— making up the DAC-*Ikibiri* were found the former UNP, FRODEBU, or the Rwaswa NLF, together with such newly-minted others as the Movement for solidarity and Democracy (MSD).

¹⁰ Speech of the Coordinator of the DAC -*Ikibiri* to the international community on the occasion of the General Assembly of the DAC in Brussels. Published by Bujumbura News, 14/03/15. Available at <https://bujanews.wordpress.com/2015/03/15/discours-du-copinateur-de-lacd-ikibiri-a-letranger-a-loccasion-de-lassemblee-generale-de-ladc-a-bruxelles>. Date consulted: 12/06/16.

faithfully supported the President, while the then Minister of Defense Cyrille Ndayirukiye hastened to emphasize the political neutrality of the Army.

Neither was any effect obtained by the letter addressed by former presidents of Burundi —the Tutsis Bagaza and Buyoya, together with the Hutus Ntibantunganya and Ndayizeye— to the Community of Eastern Africa (CEA) in order that it might cause President Nkurunziza to reconsider his dangerous decision. Even Ban Ki-Moon, Secretary General of the United Nations and not normally given to preventative interference in the internal politics of nations, expressed his firm opposition to a possible third mandate¹¹. Ignoring all criticism, the government of Bujumbura held to its total intransigence: on April 26, Nkurunziza was designated the candidate of the NCDD-FDD and became the aspirant to a third consecutive mandate in the presidential elections to be held in the month of June. According to his supporters, this presidential candidacy was set within the most absolute legality, given that in 2005 Nkurunziza was elected by vote of the National Assembly and not by direct universal suffrage, for which reason his first mandate should not be taken into account. Within a few hours, the streets of Bujumbura were filled with NCDD-FDD protesters —Hutus as well as Tutsis— whose demands were brutally smothered by the supporters of the President, by the Burundian police and by armed militias loyal to the regime: the dreaded Imbonerakure. Days later, the Constitutional Court —in the midst of strong pressure¹²— ratified the legality of Nkurunziza's candidacy, thus provoking intensification of the protests, a harshening of measures of repression and the beginning of a bloody «witch-hunt» to silence voices contrary to the government—politicians, military personnel, journalists and the civil society—which, with reduced intensity, continues to the present day.

The Community of East Africa (CEA), conscious of the gravity of the situation, summoned Nkurunziza to an urgent meeting the 13th of May in Tanzania in an attempt to lead to a solution through dialogue among all parties, which, as we shall see below, continues to be stalled. Taking advantage of the president's absence, the ex-Generals Niyombare and Ngendakumana, together with the ex-Minister of Defense General Ndayirukiye, led a bloodless coup in Bujumbura and proclaimed that Nkurunziza had been relieved of his functions for having violated the Constitution¹³. Within just 48 hours, security

¹¹ Kenemeh, E. Cameroon: Burundi- UN Opposes Third Term for Nkurunziza. All Africa, 30/03/15. Available at <http://allafrica.com/stories/201503301441.html>. Date consulted: 10/05/16.

¹² Days after the decision of the Constitutional Court was proclaimed, its vicepresident Sylvere Nimpagaritse fled to Ruanda and denounced the governmental pressure to decide for the legality of Nkurunziza's candidacy. Senior Burundi judge flees rather than approve president's candidacy. The Guardian, 05/05/16. Available at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/may/05/senior-burundi-judge-flees-rather-than-approve-president-s-candidacy>. Date consulted: 21/05/16.

¹³ Valdhita, C. Three Burundi coup members arrested.

forces loyal to the government dismantled the military insurrection, its principal leaders were arrested —except for Niyombare, still at an unknown location— and Nkurunziza was reinstated¹⁴, swearing never again to leave Burundi to take part in an inclusive dialogue outside the country, such as the international community was demanding he do. During the trial against the leaders of the failed military coup attempt, held in January 2016 in Gitega (Burundi), the ex-minister Ndayirukiye declared himself to be guilty of the charges but justified himself alleging that «he could not stand by with arms crossed as members of the police were killing the population, while President Nkurunziza was playing football and while the troops...seemed indifferent»¹⁵. In this way, he denounced the fact that the Forces of National Defense (FDN) —until then the State security institution of greatest ethnic cohesion and professionalism in Burundi following the profound reform beginning in 2004— had renounced its political neutrality and desisted from its obligation to defend the population in the face of the harsh repression instigated by the national authorities themselves; a social repression to which was soon joined an incessant purge within the ranks of the military —especially against Tutsi commanders, but also against dissident Hutus— which has ended by dynamiting the principal guarantor of security and the democratic system in Burundi.

Despite the continuous deterioration in the situation, and with the entire international community resigned to accepting them, the electoral processes scheduled in Burundi were finally held on June 29th (the local and legislative) and on July 21st (presidential), although both were boycotted by the whole of the political opposition. Although the United Nations declared that the «atmosphere was not conducive to the holding of free, credible and inclusive elections»¹⁶ their results ratified the absolute power of the NCDD-FDD in the National Assembly¹⁷ and the continuance of Nkurunziza —with 69.41% of the votes— as Burundi's leader.

¹⁴ Karimi, F. and Kniel, R. Burundi: Leaders of attempted coup arrested after President's return. CNN, 20/05/15. Available at <http://edition.cnn.com/2015/05/15/africa/burundi-coup-leaders-arrested/>. Date consulted: 12/06/16.

¹⁵ Burundi General Ndayirukiye pleads guilty to coup attempt. AFP, 05/01/16. Available at <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/afp/article-3385186/Burundi-general-Ndayirukiye-pleads-guilty-coup-attempt.html>. Date consulted: 06/07/16.

¹⁶ Preliminary statement of the MENB on the legislative and communal elections of June 29 2015. MENUB, 02/07/15. Available at <https://menub.unmissions.org/d%C3%A9claration-pr%C3%A9liminaire-de-la-menub-sur-les-%C3%A9lections-1%C3%A9gislatives-et-communales-du-29-juin-2015>. Date consulted: 08/05/16.

¹⁷ In the National Assembly only three political parties or coalitions obtained seats: the NCDD-FDD, 77 seats; the independent coalition Amerizoy 'Abarundi, 21 seats; and the UNP, 2 seats. The National Independent Electoral Commission assigned 21 seats by cooption in order to comply with the norms regarding ethnic and gender origin established in the Constitution. Data collected in the Report of the Secretary General on the Electoral Observation Mission of the United Nations in Burundi. S/2015/985.

On August 20th, 2015, during his inauguration at the Congressional Palace of Bujumbura, the reelected president stated: «We condemn all those who were against democratic elections. Political parties should respect each other and we shall continue to fight for the unity of the country and the restoration of peace and stability»¹⁸. So far from achieving his «purpose», for the moment the most tangible consequences of his third mandate are a growing national chaos, the obvious radicalization of his Government, and the turning of the security forces—military opponents having been eliminated— into a «repressive machine» acting with absolute impunity.

Forces loyal to the government and armed opposition groups

Since the start of the crisis, the brutal governmental coercion has been led by the National Intelligence Service and by the Police, who, unlike the Army, have not evolved under the Nkurunziza regime and continue to be strongly politicized. In addition, following the failed coup, Forces for National Defense—less controlled by government power than the Police— have also allied themselves with the oppressive drift of the Government, while any internal dissidence is reported by members of the NCDD-FDD who are infiltrated into military bases. Finally, and in support of the security forces, the armed Imbonerakure militia—youth linked to the NCDD-FDD, according to all indications, and trained by the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (DFLR) inside the Democratic Republic of the Congo— has become a brutal armed reserve which controls any opposition within the capital and the rural areas, and which also deploys along the frontier with Ruanda and Tanzania to prevent a massive flight of refugees. In the face of governmental pressure, the armed opposition to the regime is led by the veteran Hutu National Liberation Forces (NFL), who maintain their struggle against the NCDD-FDD on a civil war basis, although a major part has been reconverted into political opposition (the Rwasa NFL faction). To these there have been joined two armed groups which have arisen under cover of the current crisis: on the one hand, the Republican Forces of Burundi (REFOBU)—led by General Niyombarey, responsible for the most serious attacks on the State security forces— and on the other, the Resistance for the State of Law in Burundi (RED TABARA), whose stated objective is that «in the absence of intervention by an African force or the United Nations to stop the murders of Pierre Nkurunziza, it is the duty of (the Resistance) to protect the Burundian population, held hostage by a bloodthirsty and lawless regime.»¹⁹

¹⁸ Moses, H. No negotiations with coup plotters—Nkurunziza. *The East African*, 22/08/15. Available at <http://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/news/Nkurunziza-is-sworn-in-in-a-surprise-ceremony-/2558-2842222-xsgg46z/index.html>. Date consulted: 12/07/16.

¹⁹ RED-TABARA: A new armed front. *ImporeBurundi.org*. 05/01/16. Available at <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/central-africa/burundi/burundi-dangerous-third-term>. Date consulted: 16/07/16.

Although all these groups proclaim themselves to be defenders of the Constitution and of the Arusha Accords, their attacks on the Government and its followers make a negotiated solution to the conflict even more difficult, and on many occasions, generate more terror among the population they wish to protect. In this scenario of growing confrontation, the various international organizations and the countries of the surrounding region should demand of the armed groups—as well as the political parties which back them—that they cease attacking the forces and leaders of the regime since by doing so, both sides lose credibility as legitimate actors in any peace conversations.

Dynamiting the Arusha Accords and the incitement to ethnic violence

Underlying the background to this violent crisis, apart from the limitless ambition for power, stands the declared opposition of President Nkurunziza and the NCDD-FDD to the institutional system agreed upon at Arusha in the year 2000, which has become the principal reason for the progressive radicalization of his policies. Although at that time Nkurunziza himself was seen to be opposed to an ethnic distribution of power, since this measure failed to correspond to social reality in Burundi, he finally joined in the agreement to facilitate the achievement of peace and the establishment of a democracy, in spite of its being «flawed». Nonetheless, in recent years, as indicated in a report by the International Crisis Group, «through the use of ethnically charged rhetoric and showing an obvious desire to bring the democratic consensus of the Arusha accords to an end, the regime has broken off its relations with part of the population»²⁰ and this rupture resulted in the alarming scenario which today is crushing the country.

In 2014, towards the close of Nkurunziza's second mandate, the NCDD-FDD presented a bill in Parliament to modify the institutional structure established in the Constitution of 2005, which in the end did not move forward. However, the most radical wing of the ruling party seems unwilling to renounce its ambitions, and everything points to a continuance in this commitment, even via force and social repression. Currently, this intention to unilaterally and politically re-found Burundi threatens to dynamite the benefits of the peace achieved since the agreement leading to the end of the civil war was reached in 2000; in spite of this, such has become the principal obsession of the third presidential mandate.

It is beyond doubt that unilaterally imposing an aspect which is vital to the guaranteeing of peaceful communal life will have irreparable consequences for the country. It is not so much a question of the basic matter, since even with regard to an extremely sensitive subject, any debate is feasible in a

²⁰ Burundi: A Dangerous Third Term. ICG, 20/06/16. Available at <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/central-africa/burundi/burundi-dangerous-third-term>. Date consulted: 16/07/16.

democracy; rather, it is much more important that the manner and moment of opposing it be opportune and credible, and it is here that the Nkurunziza government is committing its most serious error. In September of 2015, and by presidential decree, the National Commission for Inter-Burundian Dialogue was established²¹, whose principal aim is to evaluate the validity of the Arusha Accords and of the binding Constitution, and if they so agree, raise the question of its modification. In what is proclaimed to be the sole and legitimate «national dialogue», there has once again been imposed the doublespeak and the closed-mindedness of Nkurunziza himself. On the one hand, he recognizes that in Burundi «dialogue and consultation have always existed. Every time a point of disagreement came up, people sat down around a table and exchanged ideas (...). This is what we want to revive so that people can share their vision»²², and on the other, he denies participation by his opponents, as the majority of its 15 members —led by Bishop Nzoyisaba— belong to social sectors and political parties loyal to the regime.

For the moment, its biased composition invalidates this government initiative, while the international community continues to foster a complete and inclusive dialogue outside of Burundi, to guarantee the transparency of the peace process, as well as the participation of all parties involved in the crisis and in the evolution of the country. Among these, and very especially, the EAC (Eastern African Community) demands the participation of the National Council for Respect of the Arusha Accords and the State of Law (NCRAA) which, with its leadership in exile, draws together the great majority of the opposition parties and various groups representative of civil society. However, it has not yet been recognized as a valid negotiating partner by the Bujumbura government.

But beyond the enormous uneasiness generated by the establishment of this «national dialogue», of true concern to the international community are the incendiary speeches and the incitement to ethnic hatred of the Bujumbura regime, which in addition to instigating fratricidal fighting, increase the threat of genocide which has always hovered over this crisis. From its outset, ethnicity has become a recurrent and highly dangerous theme in the narrative of the governing party, when the reality is that it persecutes any opponent, whether Hutu or Tutsi. While the President of the Senate, Réverien Ndikuriyo, proclaimed in October of 2015 that it was necessary to «pulverize and exterminate» the bastions of the opposition in the neighborhoods of Bujumbura²³, in August of 2016 the president of the NCDD-FDD, Pascual

²¹ Report of the Secretary General on the United Nations Mission of Electoral Observation in Burundi. United Nations Security Council, 16/12/15. Available at <http://www.un.org/es/comun/docs/?symbol=S72015/985>.

²² Bankukira, B. Burundi sets up internal dialogue commission. *Afrika Reporter*, 23/10/15. Available at <http://www.afrikareporter.com/Burundi-sets-up-internal-dialogue-commission/>. Date consulted: 05/05/16.

²³ Genocide announced: It will be done—Réverien Ndikuriyo.

Nyabenda, insinuated that genocide against the Tutsi minority in 1994 in Rwanda was an «invention» of the international community to overthrow the Hutu government²⁴.

All in all, when there has been an attempt to eliminate a taboo subject—genocide— from the collective subconscious of the entire region for decades, it is now being brandished to aggravate the climate of fear and tension from which the population of Burundi is suffering. Fortunately, but without lowering the level of alarm, Burundian society has thus far shown great strength and resistance in the face of those who intend to fracture their relatively peaceful communal life since the end of the civil war; even though «the current strategy of repression of the regime—which claims a Tutsi conspiracy and has broken up the security services and created units loyal to the Government— has revived the fears of genocidal violence»²⁵, about which the African and international world must continue to be extremely watchful.

Currently, and at the close of this paper, Burundi continues to be stalled in a profound state of crisis. On the political plane, the government is becoming dangerously isolated within the regional and international scenarios; financially, the bankruptcy of the public coffers is colossal²⁶, brought about by the trade restrictions imposed by the Burundian authorities themselves, which are stifling the precarious subsistence economy of the rural population, as well as by the decision of the European Union—the principal foreign donor—to cancel any official aid to the regime. But without any doubt, the most appalling aspect of this crisis is the suffering—always irreparable—which it is causing among the population.

For the moment, since April of 2015, political repression has caused the deaths of more than 1,150 people²⁷ 286,000²⁸ have taken refuge in Tanzania, Rwanda, Uganda and the DRC, and 61,268²⁹ have been displaced within the national borders. In June of 2016, the U.N. High Commission for Human Rights reported that there have taken place «348 extrajudicial executions

²⁴ The UN criticizes the president of the Assembly of Burundi for branding as an «invention» the genocide in Ruanda. EP, 26/06/16. Available at <http://www.europapress.es/internacional/noticia-onu-critica-presidente-en-burundi-tilda-invento-genocidio-ruanda-20160826070554.html>. Date consulted: 28/08/16.

²⁵ A Dangerous Third Term, *Op. Cit.*

²⁶ Bukeyenzeza, A.G. After a year of political crisis, Burundi at an economic impasse. *Jeune Afrique*, 26/07/16. Available at <http://www.jeuneafrique.com/344811/economie/apres-annee-de-crise-politique-burundi-impasse-economique/>. Date consulted: 06/08/16.

²⁷ Country Report. Burundi Crisis Year One. Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED), May 2016. Available at <http://www.acleddata.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/ACLED-Country-Report-Burundi-May-2016.pdf>. Date consulted: 12/07/16.

²⁸ Burundi Situation UNHCR, 25/08/16. Available at <http://data.unhcr.org/Burundi/regional.php>. Date consulted: 28/08/16

²⁹ Displacement Tracking Matrix, Burundi, International Organization for Migration (IOM), June 2016. Available at https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/es/system/files/documents/files/iom_burundi_dash_board_june_2016.pdf. Date consulted: 28/08/16.

and some 651 cases of torture in Burundi (...), a significant number of cases of arrest and detention affecting children,(...), 5,881 detentions which may be characterized as arbitrary»³⁰. This, in addition to numerous crimes of hassling and intimidation against organizations within the civil society and journalists, plus restrictions of fundamental liberties, and the indiscriminate use of grenade attacks, especially on the civilian population. In short, a macabre balance sheet of the violent political crisis which Burundi is undergoing, which will only come to a halt if the international community—as seen below—succeeds, with determination and effectiveness, in leading a negotiated ending. And this, for the moment, continues to be too far off.

Role of outside actors

Since its independence in 1962, Burundi has tied its very subsistence—conditioned by its landlocked geographical location—to peaceful diplomacy with its bordering countries: Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), and Tanzania. Nonetheless, beginning in the decade of the 90's, regional communal life was aggravated as a result of the Great Lakes crisis—with the incessant flow of combatants and refugees across porous national frontiers—and even more by the civil war in Burundi which completed the shattering of the complicated neighborly relationships. Years later, the restoration of the East African Community (EAC)³¹ on the part of Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania in 2001, together with the incorporation of Ruanda and Burundi in 2007, strengthened regional integration thanks to economic and commercial agreements, which also impacted on the reduction of conflicts, of greater or lesser intensity, which were perpetuated among the States. However, this path towards regional peace and stability has been plagued with obstacles since the beginning of the revolts and the ethnic clashes in Burundi, sequels to the failed coup and the controversial elections of 2015. Border security has deteriorated exponentially due to the continuous transit of armed groups against or in favor of the regime of President Nkurunziza, in the face of ongoing conflicting accusations of interference and cooperation with the rebels between Ruanda, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi; while the massive affluence of refugees fleeing from the repression

³⁰ Report of the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights on the situation of human rights in Burundi. A/HRC/32/30. ACNUDH, 17/06/16. Available at <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Countries/AfricaRegion/Pages/Blindex.aspx>. Date consulted: 12/07/16.

³¹ The Community of East Africa (CEA), also called the East African Community and the Community of Africa of the East, was born as a regional initiative—sponsored by Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania—to create an economic and customs union of Eastern Africa in 2001, after recovering a similar initiative abandoned in 1977. In 2007, Ruanda and Burundi became members of the CEA. In September of 2016, South Sudan ratified its incorporation into this incipient and ambitious regional organization. Official web page: <http://www.eac.int/>.

has generated a new humanitarian crisis which Burundi's neighbors will find it difficult to ameliorate without external aid.

In the face of the deterioration produced by the crisis taking place in Burundi, the EAC as well as the African Union have attempted to find an «African solution to an African problem», but with no success due to the narrow-mindedness of the Bujumbura regime, as well as major internal controversies regarding the various initiatives proposed in order to halt armed combat. Nor has the United Nations offered a conclusive answer to this alarming situation; neither have countries with great influence on this African nation—from Rwanda and Tanzania, to European countries such as Belgium or France—with proposals incapable of overcoming the defiant and autocratic attitude of President Nkurunziza.

Currently, and admitting that the present conflict is in great part of a political character, the international community continues to denounce the fact that ethnic rivalry and clashes might be reopened, with unpredictable consequences for Burundi and for the entire region. In the face of this threat, an inclusive dialogue is indispensable in order to avoid the generation of another civil war. But in order to achieve this, it is essential that forces be united and actions be coordinated. For the moment, this consensus is far from being produced, given that in the background lies the disparity of the positioning of the external actors in the face of the crisis ravaging Burundi.

Regional organizations: the East African Community and the African Union

When in 2014 President Pierre Nkurunziza began to take steps to ensure his permanence in power with a third mandate, the decision came as no surprise to those at the heart of the East African Community. At that time, Presidents Yoweri Museveni of Uganda and Paul Kagame of Rwanda were already proclaiming their own intention, confirmed at the beginning of 2016³², of extending their respective mandates: a «democratic» pretension which, in large measure, invalidates them to flatly oppose Nkurunziza's ambition. In the face of the pretensions of these three presidents, highlighting the

³² In February of 2016, President Museveni won very controversial elections, so beginning a new mandate which would keep him in power after 30 years at the helm of Uganda (President Museveni extends mandate in Uganda; opposition says election was farce. Reuters, 20/02/16. Available at http://lta.reuters.com/articles/topNews/idL_TAKCNOVTORO). For his part, President Kagame organized a referendum, «harshly criticized by the international partners of Rwanda, especially by the United States», on the possibility of opting for his re-election in 2017, which would represent his third term as president after winning the elections of 2003 and 2010 (the president of Rwanda announces that he will run for a third term in 2017. EFE, 01/01/16. Available at <http://www.efe.com/efe/america/mundo/el-presidente-de-Ruanda-anuncia-que-optará-a-un-tercer-mandato-en-2017/20000012-2801562>). Date consulted: 21/05/16.

political differences within this regional organization, the then President of Tanzania, (2005-2015) as well as of the EAC, Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete, stated that Nkurunziza's third mandate would not be the best option for Burundi³³. For his part, Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta underlined, in May of 2015, that the most important thing was to respect the constitutional accord in Burundi and requested the Burundian president to postpone elections until, among all the parties, «an amicable solution was arrived at which guaranteed a lasting peace in Burundi»³⁴.

These statements arrived following General Niyombare's failed coup, on May 13 of 2015, unleashed during the meeting of all the presidents of the EAC in Dar es Salam (Tanzania), the objective of which was to find a negotiated settlement to the incipient Burundian crisis. This time all condemned the attempted military coup as «it was not going to solve the problems» of the country, requesting at the same time that the elections be celebrated «respecting the Constitution, electoral law and the spirit of the Arusha peace accords»³⁵. Nonetheless, and in the case of the Rwandan president, backing of the insurrectionary military personnel and of the rebel resistance was plainly evident—even to the United Nations³⁶, although Kagame has always denied such accusations.

With all these reservations, which still inhibit the role of the EAC in the resolution of this crisis, the regional African organization finally left space for the organization of elections in Bujumbura on condition that, after these took place, a government of national unity would be formed, which in the end never took place. Days before, in July of 2015, the EAC agreed upon its first attempt at mediation, led by Ugandan President Museveni, between the government and the opposition in Burundi. Since then, with the backing of the African Union and the United Nations, Museveni has tried unsuccessfully to reconcile the parties, but his mediation has always been highly suspect³⁷, even more so following the announcement of his candidacy for a fifth presidential mandate in his country.

³³ Tanzania's Kikwete says Burundi should heed president term limit; risks regional tensions. Mail and Guardian Africa, 20/03/15. Available at <http://mgafrica.com/article/2015-03-20-tanzanias-kikwete-says-burundi-should-heed-president-term-limit-risks-regional-tensions>. Date consulted: 16/05/16.

³⁴ Kenya calls for Burundi vote delay at PAP. News 24, 18/05/15. Available at <http://www.news24.com/Africa/News/Kenya-calls-for-Burundi-vote-delay-at-PAP-20150518>. Date consulted: 21/05/16.

³⁵ Burundi: EAC Leaders Condemn Burundi Coup. All Africa, 13/05/15. Available at <http://allafrica.com/stories/201505131945.html>. Date Consulted: 21/05/16.

³⁶ A UN report accuses Rwanda of training rebels in Burundi. Abc, 05/02/16. Available at <http://www.abc.es/internacional/abci-informa-acusa-ruanda-entrenar-rebeldes-burundi-201602050215-noticia.html> Date consulted: 12/06/16.

³⁷ Buchanan, E. Burundi mediation talks: Is Uganda's Yoweri Museveni the right man to broker peace? IBT, 15/12/15. Available at <http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/burundi-mediation-talks-ugandas-yoweri-museveni-right-man-broker-peace-1533457>.

Perhaps for this reason, as well as for the lack of advances in the inclusive dialogue held inside Burundi, the EAC decided to name the ex-president of Tanzania, Benjamin Mkapa, to facilitate the negotiations in March of 2016. A nomination well-received in Burundi, and which sought to strengthen the decimated prestige of the EAC as mediator of the conflict. To date, Mkapa's major achievement has been to hold two rounds of conversations in Arusha: in May³⁸ and in July of 2016, the latter boycotted by the Government itself and various opposition groups³⁹. Once more, and to date, the negotiated and peaceful exit from the crisis has remained stalled. In spite of this, the United Nations continues to trust in Mkapa, whom it has encouraged—in its Resolution 2303 (2016) of late July—to «call for new meetings, including with the interested parties who were not present at Arusha» in order to consolidate «an authentic and inclusive dialogue among the parties of Burundi, based on respect for the Constitution and the Arusha accords»⁴⁰.

For its part, the African Union (AU) also expressed its strong condemnation of the conflict which broke out in Bukrundi in May of 2015 after the official confirmation of Nkurunziza's candidacy and the failed military coup. Through an official communiqué, in addition to condemning «any attempt to take power by force», it emphasized that this crisis could degenerate into serious clashes which would endanger not only peace and security in the entire country, but the stability of the region as well, plus undermining the advances achieved after the Arusha Accords⁴¹. «We are not going to permit another genocide to take place on our territory»⁴², it stated after the progressive escalation of ethnic fanaticism in Burundi at the end of 2015.

However, its involvement in the resolution of the Burundian conflict has so far been largely irrelevant and even inexplicable, when—as pointed out by the analyst Linda Ann Akanvou—in the background lies the defense of democracy in Africa: «The African Union and the international agencies need to rethink their policies towards those African leaders who ignore constitutions and their responsibilities for the wellbeing of the people they

³⁸ East Africa: Mkapa Praised Over Part In Burundi Peace Talks. All Africa, 26/05/16. Available at <http://allafrica.com/stories/201605260151.html>. Date consulted: 16/06/16.

³⁹ Five Political Parties Boycott Burundi Peace Talks. VOA, 13/07/16. Available at <http://www.voanews.com/a/five-political-parties-boycott-burundi-peace-talks/3415626.html>. Date consulted: 17/07/16.

⁴⁰ Resolution S/RES/2303 (2016) of the United Nations Security Council, 29 July. Available at [http://www.un.org/es/comun/docs/?symbol=S/RES/2303\(2016\)](http://www.un.org/es/comun/docs/?symbol=S/RES/2303(2016)). Date consulted: 03/08/16.

⁴¹ Communiqué Peace and Security Council African Union. 507th Meeting. Addis Ababa (Ethiopia), 14/05/15. Available at <http://www.peaceau.org/uploads/psc-507-comm-burundi-14-5-2015.pdf>. Date consulted: 26/04/16.

⁴² Burundi Crisis: African Union «Won't allow Genocide». BBC, 17/12/15. Available at <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-35120221>. Date consulted: 16/05/16.

represent. If ignored, the situation in Burundi could create a regional crisis with enormous economic, humanitarian and political costs»⁴³.

In the political sphere, the AU has lent its explicit support to the dialogue led by the EAC as the only possible exit from the crisis; while on the operative plane it has encountered failure in its attempt to intervene decisively to reach consensus —as specifically indicated in the founding protocol of the Council on Peace and Security of the AU— on «prompt responses in order to contain crisis situations with the aim of avoiding their becoming full-blown conflicts»⁴⁴.

Thus, on December 17 of 2015, it authorized deployment of the African Mission of Prevention and Protection (AMPROBU)⁴⁵ in Burundi, with an initial force of more than 5,000 military and police personnel, which was immediately rejected by President Nkurunziza, whose government threatened battle against any force entering its borders, which it would consider to be an «invader». Several days later, on 31 January 2016, the AU clearly expressed its internal disagreement: those opposing the military intervention, without the explicit consent of Burundi⁴⁶, managed to slam the door on AMPROBU; and only agreed on the sending of a high-level delegation to persuade the Government to change its opposition regarding the deployment of this mission, as well as to underline its support for the Arusha dialogue.

Today AMPROBU is virtually no longer an option, proving that the AU lacks the political will to impose peacemaking forces upon Burundi; and has only authorized —in February of 2016 and with the connivance of the Burundian president— the sending of up to 100 military observers and 100 human rights experts, of whom barely half a hundred had arrived in the country last June. Everything points, according to African diplomatic sources, to the principal cause of this limited deployment being the demands of the Burundian government, who intend that «the reports of the observers shall be sent to them before being passed to the general headquarters of the AU, something which the organization rejects»⁴⁷, besides impeding the

⁴³ Akanvou, L.A. Burundi and the Responsibilities of the African Union. *The World Post*, 22/03/16. Available at <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/young-professionals-in-foreign-policy-burundi-and-the-responsib b 9507144.html>. Date consulted: 12/04/16.

⁴⁴ Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council. African Union, 09/04/02. Available at <http://www.peaceau.org/uploads/psc-protocol-en-pdf>. Date consulted: 12/04/16.

⁴⁵ Communiqué of the 565th meeting of the PSC on the situation in Burundi. Peace and Security Council of the African Union (AU), 17/12/15. Available at <Http://www.peaceau.org/en/article/communiqué-of-the-565th-meeting-of-the-psc-on-the-situation-in-burundi>. Date consulted: 07/05/16.

⁴⁶ Anderson, J. African Union peacekeeping force unlikely to deploy to Burundi, increasing risk of violence escalating to civil war. *HIS Jane's Intelligence Weekly*, 24/02/16.

⁴⁷ Just a quarter of agreed AU observers in Burundi. *AFP*, 23/06/16. Available at <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/afp/article-3656808/Just-quarter-agreed-AU-observers-Burundi.html>. Date consulted: 05/07/16

presence of armed militias on its border with Ruanda. In all, the principal African organization is still stalled, while President Nkurunziza continues to make his national sovereignty a brake to any attempt at intervention by the international community to protect the Burundian population.

The prevalence of Rwanda in the complex regional environment

Undoubtedly, a greater determinant than the actions of the international organizations is the complex relationship which Burundi has woven with the countries on its borders. Within this scenario, the leading role belongs to its northern neighbor, Rwanda: the history of the two countries—even far earlier than their respective national independence in 1962—has been inexorably joined, and subject to political tensions and ethnic rivalries; and especially to constant mutual accusations of interference with the internal affairs of the neighboring country and of backing subversive activities within their territories, always denied by successive national governments.

With the same ethnic distribution—a Hutu majority facing Tutsi and Twa minorities—the development of the two countries has been marked by two landmark events still transcendental today. On the one hand, the end of their two bloody civil wars—Rwanda in 1994 and Burundi in 2000—in which the proclaimed victors were the two antagonistic ethnic groups of the strife: the Tutsis in Rwanda and the Hutus in Burundi. These events left a complicated legacy which called for rebuilding and reconciliation. Even more important was the democratic proclamation of the Tutsi Paul Kagame as president in Rwanda in 2000 and of the Hutu Pierre Nkurunziza in Burundi in 2005, which in fact represented the transformation of each of the two former rebels into national leaders. Following this, their relations may be characterized as having been positive, if tense. All this collapsed after the attempted military coup in 2015 against the Burundian president, who has always accused Rwanda of protecting the coup leaders and rebel groups⁴⁸. Meanwhile, both governments have drifted into ever more authoritarian and repressive regimes. Today nothing is going well between Kigali and Bujumbura, but nonetheless, the restitution of their relations constitutes a key element in order to eliminate the threat of regional instability.

Today, incendiary rhetoric has reached its climax. In November of 2015, the Rwandan president accused the Burundian of the massacre of his population with «people being murdered every day, bodies in the streets (...) and the leaders spending time killing»⁴⁹, and stated that this crisis «recalls

⁴⁸ Boisselet, P. Rwanda-Burundi mille collines, mille refuges. *Jeune Afrique*, 31/03/16. Available at <http://www.jeuneafrique.com/mag/311373/politique/rwanda-burundi-mille-collines-mille-refuges/>. Date consulted: 07/06/16.

⁴⁹ President Kagame accuses his Burundian counterpart of «massacring» his people. *France 24*, 09/11/15. Available at <http://www.france24.com/fr/20151109-burundi->

somewhat that which prevailed here in 1994», referring to the genocide in Rwanda, where more than 800,000 people, mostly Tutsi, were vilely murdered. Harsh declarations, which Burundi called «inappropriate and of unprecedented aggressiveness» and which, in March of 2016, were returned based on equal arguments: «President Paul Kagame», Burundian Minister for Foreign Affairs Alain Aimé Nyamitwe stated in an interview, «is seeking to 'export' genocide to Burundi (...). In addition, we plan to take Rwanda before the courts for backing rebel insurgency»⁵⁰.

Currently, in the face of the persistent distancing between Rwanda and Burundi, the bordering governments —within the framework of the EAC as well as the bilateral sphere— are attempting to smother this growing political tension. At its plenary session in Arusha, held in August 2016, the Legislative Assembly of the EAC underlined the urgency of seeking a solution and of responding forcefully, before the situation worsens. The principal threat continues to be that the repression of the minority Tutsi community of Burundi will provoke the direct intervention of Rwanda in support of the armed groups in opposition to the Nkurunziza regime: a scenario with grave and highly unpredictable consequences for regional stability, and beyond this, for the peaceful survival of its population. «It is evident that something must be done», laconically stated a member of the Assembly⁵¹, but everything points to an efficacious and definitive solution being utopian.

The United Nations and the European Community

Burundi became a member of the United Nations (UN) in 1962, after being subject from 1916 to the administrative authority of Belgium. Since then, the UN has deployed several missions to collaborate in the resolution of various conflicts which the country has undergone. In May of 2004, the United Nations Operation in Burundi (UNOB), which with a maximum force of 5,650 military personnel had as its main objective assuring the implementation of the Arusha Accords; in January of 2007, the United Nations Integrated Bureau in Burundi (UNIBB) supported the Burundian government on its path towards lasting stability; and finally, the United Nations Bureau in Burundi (UNBB) was opened in January 2011, with the purpose of motivating political dialogue after the boycotted Presidential elections of 2010. In the face of the escalation

rwanda-paul-kagame-massacrer-peuple-pierre-nkurunziza-desarmement-bujumbura. Date consulted: 06/05/16.

⁵⁰ Burundi to sue Rwanda for «destabilizing» the country. DW, 28/03/16. Available at <http://www.dw.com/en/burundi-to-sue-rwanda-for-destabilizing-the-country-a-19146955>. Date consulted: 13/07/16.

⁵¹ Buchanan, E. East African Community warns of regional instability as tensions mount between Burundi and Rwanda. IBT, 24/08/16. Available at: <http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/east-african-community-warns-regional-instability-tensions-mount-between-burundi-rwanda-1577770>. Date consulted: 27/08/16.

of political tension, the UN proposed extending the mandate of the UNOB, but the lack of approval by the Burundian government obliged it to withdraw the mission at the end of 2014. In exchange, the national authorities only accepted a new observation mission —designated MENUB⁵²— to supervise the elections held during 2015.

With these antecedents —which marked a story of relative success— the more significant within the context of the security reform —the United Nations is now attempting to alleviate this new crisis. But this time they are faced— like the rest of the external organizations and actors —with the refusal of the Burundian President to permit the deployment of international forces, even more so if they are UN forces. In addition to the incidents following the proclamation of the candidacy of Nkurunziza, and the harsh repression in the wake of the failed military coup, the first record of the gravity of the situation was the report of the MENUB itself on the legislative and municipal balloting of 2015, which «were carried out in a tense atmosphere of political crisis, fear, and intimidation in parts of the country (...): an atmosphere unpropitious for the holding of free, credible and inclusive elections»⁵³. A report which, de facto, discredits the constituted government in Burundi and has made relations even more tense between the African country and the UN, already much deteriorated since 2014, when the international organization accused the government of distributing arms among the youth league of the CNDD-FDD: the Imbonerakure⁵⁴.

In spite of these barriers, the UN continues to promote «an authentic and inclusive dialogue among the parties based on respect for the Constitution and the Arusha Accords»; maintains its support for the various initiatives proposed by the East African Community and the African Union; and demands that the countries of the region «abstain from any interference, especially in supporting in any way the activities of armed movements». So it appears in the latest and above-quoted Resolution 2,303, approved in July 2016⁵⁵, which additionally envisages the deployment of up to 228 United Nations police officers, for an initial period of a year, with the task of keeping watch on the security situation as well as on violations and abuses of human rights in Burundi, under the authority of the Office of the Special Advisor on Prevention of Conflicts.

⁵² United Nations Electoral Observation Mission in Burundi (MENUB). Official web page: <https://menub.unmissions.org/en>.

⁵³ Preliminary statement of the MENUB on the legislative and municipal elections of 29 June 2015. MENUB, 02/07/15. Available at <https://menub.unmissions.org/d%C3%A9claration-pr%C3%A9liminaire-de-la-menub-sur-les-%C3%A9lections-1%C3%A9gislatives-et-communales-du-29-juin-2015>. Date consulted: 08/05/16.

⁵⁴ Alert on escalation of violence and political repression in Burundi. EFE, 29/07/14. Available at http://noticias.lainformacion.com/interes-humano-sociedad/al-advierte-de-la-esalada-de-violencia-y-la-represion-politica-en-burundi_wJ85kee4fKuY5rMmIRZAV2/. Date consulted: 16/05/16.

⁵⁵ Resolution S/RES/2303 (2016) of the United Nations Security Council. *Op. Cit.*

The predictable reaction of the Burundian authorities was not long in coming, and on 3rd August, they announced their absolute rejection of this new international arbitration. To the Bujumbura government, in the words of its spokesperson Philippe Nzobonariba, this proposed deployment—which had previously been accepted—«is a violation of the basic rules of the United Nations, especially with regard to the violation of sovereign territory.» In addition, he launched a serious accusation at Paris—the principal sponsor of Resolution 2,303—to the effect that with this initiative it intended to seal «its reconciliation with Kigali (Rwanda)», referring to the—in his opinion—controversial role of France in the genocide in Rwanda in 1994. And finally, the government's spokesperson demanded that the United Nations modify the deployment of its forces, sending them towards Rwanda, who is responsible for setting in motion the «business of destabilization with terrorist groups»⁵⁶ which ignited the Burundian crisis. In the face of the ironclad posture of Bujumbura, it is difficult for the United Nations to take any action whatsoever. In addition, it would likely encounter the opposition of Russia and China at the heart of the Security Council.

Regarding the European Union (EU), this organization has maintained an unswerving position of rejection towards the attitude of the national leaders and their brutal social repression, as well as towards the attempt to compel the destitution of President Nkurunziza by force of arms. For reasons of security, and after the attempted military coup by General Nyombare, the EU felt obliged to suspend its electoral process observation missions, and since then has centered its coercive efforts on imposing sanctions of varying kinds on Burundi, causing its relations with Bujumbura to deteriorate. Thus, in October 2015, it prohibited four top-level security officials from travelling to Europe as it considered them to be those most responsible for the social repression: a measure considered by their government to be an authentic provocation which in addition endangered the peace talks.

Finally, via the Council's Decision 2016/394⁵⁷, the EU has considered as concluded its consultations with Burundi—held within the terms of the Agreement on Association between the States of East Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific: the Cotonú Accords—and has suspended the direct aid it had lent to the national authorities «in the face of the wave of violence and the violations of human rights detected in the African country.» Nonetheless, it emphasized that it would always maintain direct humanitarian aid to the population. These economic sanctions, which in the words of the High Representative Federica Mogherini, «may support inter-Burundian dialogue,

⁵⁶ Opposed to the deployment of UN police, Burundi speaks out against Paris and Kigali. France 24, 03/08/16. Available at <http://www.france24.com/fr/20160803-refus-deploiement-policiers-onu-burundi-fustige-paris-kigali-rwanda-france>. Date consulted: 09/08/16.

⁵⁷ Decision 2016/394 of the EU Council, of 14 March 2016. Available at <http://www.boe.es/doue/2016/073/L00090-00096.pdf>. Date consulted: 09/06/16.

with the mediation of the East African Community, which is key to achieving a lasting political solution to the crisis»⁵⁸, are today the only measure which the EU envisages as a form of direct intervention —with any civil or military mission— in the resolution of this bitter African conflict.

Conclusion

Where is President Nkurunziza going to take the Burundian people? Since the beginning of his third mandate in August 2015, and beyond its questionable legality, it has only been the cause of a critical political, economic and social fracture; and levels of terror and repression which threaten to thrust the country back into its most dramatic past. In all, his intention to perpetuate himself in power and the radicalization of his political regime has seriously eroded the benefits of the Arusha Accords. Now, everything points to President Nkurunziza's holding the reins of Burundi until at least 2020 —no international organization has questioned this— and the most likely outcome is that this crisis —though at low intensity— will be perpetuated in time, underscored by the risk of a drift into an open conflict with grave consequences for Burundi and the entire region.

This situation will not change as long as President Nkurunziza refuses to hold a dialogue with all the political and social forces regarding the best future for Burundi; a complete and inclusive dialogue which might even deal with the institutional system agreed on at Arusha. Neither should it be forgotten that, while it is true that this Accord did not resolve the ethnic problem, it did inaugurate a period of relative peace and stability without precedent in the country's history. For their part, the opponents of the Bujumbura Government should also renounce their recourse to violence since otherwise, they will only achieve the encouragement of ethnic rivalry and the social fragmentation which they denounce and are attempting to avoid. In the face of their mutual animosity, is for the international community —led by the regional area, with the determining support of the African Union and the United Nations— to redouble its efforts and its determination to facilitate and sponsor peace conversations for Burundi, even though so far, it has only harvested failure.

Regrettably, and as long as there is no negotiated end to this crisis in view, Burundi —like so many other African nations— will continue to be the principal victim of its own political leaders, in spite of these having been elected to strengthen the democracy, security and development of its people. An unbounded thirst for power should not continue to sustain this dramatic paradox.

⁵⁸ EU suspends direct aid to Burundi Government due to violence in the country. EFE, 14/03/16. Available at http://www.eldiario.es/economia/EU-suspende-Gobierno-Burundi-violencia_0_494500788.html. Date consulted: 04/06/16.

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<http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/un-documents/burundi/>

Chapter eleven

The Cabinda enclave

José María Santé Abal

Introduction

Cabinda, an Angolan Province separated from the rest of the country by a narrow strip of land belonging to the Democratic Republic of Congo, has been the subject of a long armed conflict dated back to 1975, months before Angola became independent.

This armed conflict, which revolves around demands for independence, is a result of a move towards violence led by the peaceful movement that came into being at the end of the 1950s with the same objective, albeit at that time the independence that it aimed to achieve was from the colonial power that administrated the territory, Portugal.

The armed Cabindan movement, basically spearheaded by the FLEC (Front for the Liberation of the Enclave of Cabinda) has been characterised by its low intensity, internal dissidence and little media repercussion.

Throughout this chapter we will be attempting to analyse this conflict, situating it in the actual context of Angola. We will see the basic background to the conflict, its place in the recent history of our neighbour, Portugal, its causes, its chronology and its arguments, with a view to reaching conclusions about the feasibility of the movement's demands in the world we live in.

The chapter begins with an analysis of Angola and its northern province, Cabinda, before examining the historic background surrounding the

constitution of that province. The rise of the Cabinda independence movement is then analysed together with the circumstances that led to its evolution until violence erupted. After that, the violent history of this movement is examined, special emphasis being placed on the current situation, before ending with an analysis of the arguments employed by the pro-independents in demanding that the province of Cabinda be separated from the rest of Angola.

Cabinda, an Angolan Province

Angola, a Sub-Saharan country, lies on the Atlantic Coast of Africa, belonging to the central (ECCAS) and south (SADC)¹ economic regions. It runs from the tropical forests at the mouth of the River Congo to the semi-desert savannahs, opening to the Namibian Desert. Most of the territory lies on a huge plateau that is crossed by several large rivers, with many cataracts that guarantee abundant hydroelectric power, currently in the process of development. Lying behind the plateau are mountain ranges that are high enough to afford the country a degree of natural protection. To the north of this territory and separated from the rest of the country by a narrow strip of land about 40 km wide belonging to the Democratic Republic of Congo and situated on the north bank of the River Congo², lies Cabinda province, which is the subject of this research owing to the armed conflict that has been going on there as a result of the independence demands.

Although the origins of the armed conflict in Cabinda can be traced back to a peaceful independence movement in the late 1950s, it actually began a few months before Angolan Independence in 1975³ from Portugal, the colonial power that ruled the country. The Angolan Civil War was taking place at the same time as this conflict, until the former came to an end in 2002. The Angolan Civil War originally involved the three liberation forces signatories of the Alvor Agreement, which led to the country's independence⁴. The monopolisation of the Government by the MPLA (People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola), the predominant force in the west of the country and more specifically in the capital (Luanda), led it to a confrontation with the

¹ AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION, «Regional Economic Communities». AU. Available at the website: <http://www.au.int/en/organs/recs> (Consulted: 3rd June 2016).

² JANE'S «Angola – Geography» *Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment – Southern Africa*. IHS, 25th September 2015. Available at the website: <https://janes.ihs.com/Janes/Display/1304279> [Consulted: 9th September 2016].

³ COSTA ALMEIDA Eugenio, «O Dificil Processo de Definição das Fronteiras e Pertenças Político-identitárias no Debate de Cabinda». *African Studies Notebooks* (2013) 25, 65-93. Lisboa, Centro de Estudos Africanos do ISTCE – Instituto Universitario de Lisboa, 2013. Page 83. Available at the website: <https://cea.revues.org/849> [Consulted: 13th September 2016]

⁴ DEPARTMENT OF PEACE AND CONFLICT RESEARCH UPPSALA, «Government of Angola», *Uppsala Conflict Data Program*. Uppsala University. Available at the website: <http://ucdp.uu.se/#actor/99> [Consulted: 12th September 2016].

other two forces, UNITA (National Union for the Total Independence of Angola), predominant in the south and east of the country, and the FNLA (National Liberation Front of Angola), predominant in the north and north-west.

Angola's main source of wealth lies in its oil reserves⁵, which have made the USA and China the country's main trading partners⁶. Unfortunately, the long Angolan Civil War and the corruption, have prevented this wealth from yielding benefits that would have enabled the country to develop and improve the Angolans' standard of living, especially where the inhabitants of the interior are concerned. The oil production in the province of Cabinda is almost equivalent to the country's entire percentage of oil exports.⁷

Diamonds are Angola's second largest resource, the country being the fourth biggest producer in the world⁸. Angola also produces natural gas, iron, phosphates, copper, feldspar, gold, bauxite and uranium. Other major industries include metal processing, fishing, brewing, and cement, tobacco and textile production⁹. Furthermore, the province of Cabinda produces precious timber, coffee, cacao, rubber and palm oil¹⁰. The tropical climate that envelops the province of Cabinda has generated the Mayombe Forest, the second most extensive forest reserve in the world after the Amazon¹¹.

The International Monetary Fund has considered the Angolan economy to be sustainable since 2012¹². The country's progress from being a receiver of cooperation programmes to becoming a development partner is further proof of the positive path taken by the Angolan economy¹³. Angola is one of

⁵ STRATFOR, «Angola's Elite Will Preserve the Status Quo». Stratfor, April 2016. Available at the website: <https://www.stratfor.com/image/angolas-elite-will-preserve-status-quo> [Consulted: 24th August 2016].

⁶ JANE'S «Angola – Executive Summary» *Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment – Southern Africa*. IHS, 11th May 2016. Available at the website: <https://janes.ihs.com/Janes/Display/1304277> (Consulted: 9th September 2016).

⁷ COLUMBIA ELECTRONIC ENCYCLOPEDIA, «Cabinda». *Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia, 6th Edition*. Columbia University Press, 2016. ISBN: 9780787650155. Page 1.

⁸ PESTANA BARROS Carlos, «Country Survey: Angola». *Defence and Peace Economics*, vol 27, nº 3. Routledge, 2016. DOI: 10.1080/10242694.2014.976388. ISSN:1476-8267 (Online). Page 423.

⁹ COLUMBIA ELECTRONIC ENCYCLOPEDIA, «Angola». *Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia, 6th Edition*. Columbia University Press, 2016. ISBN: 9780787650155. Pages 1-3.

¹⁰ COLUMBIA ELECTRONIC ENCYCLOPEDIA, «Cabinda». *Op. cit.* Page1.

¹¹ PALANQUE Luis, *Angola, tierra de oportunidades*. LPE Edição Global, Ministerio de Planificación, Angola, 2012. Page. 155.

¹² PESTANA BARROS Carlos, *Op. cit.* Page 424.

¹³ FERNÁNDEZ DE LA FUENTE Nuria, «Angola: De tres décadas de guerra a constructora de la Paz». IEEE Opinion Document 21/2016. Instituto Español de Estudios Estratégicos, 29th February 2016. Available at the website: http://www.ieee.es/en/Galerias/fichero/docs_opinion/2016/DIEEE021-2016_Angola_ConstructoraPaz_NuriaFdezdeLaFuente.pdf [Consulted: 13th September 2016]. Page15

the ten countries with the greatest growth potential in the coming years¹⁴ and is sixth in the world ranking of entrepreneurial countries¹⁵. The large-scale diversion of resources to the armed struggle throughout the long civil war that was to last from the country's independence in 1975 until 2002, and the devastation that the conflict caused to the country's infrastructures, meant that in spite of the considerable investment efforts, these are notably deficient, especially in some of the regions¹⁶.

The Angolan Armed Forces (FAA) are one of the major forces in Sub-Saharan Africa. The Army, comprising 100,000 men divided into about 30 regiments, is the largest in the centre and south of the continent. The country's Air Force has undergone a process of modernisation in recent years, making it one of the major air forces in Sub-Saharan Africa. It was the Navy that took longest to initiate its modernisation process, but this is now in full swing¹⁷. Although some researchers argue that the FAA's growth is a response to the need to modernise and develop the Armed Forces, as is the case with many developing countries, Barros considers that the explanation for the FAA modernisation policy in the quest for well-trained and well-equipped professional forces with a deployment capacity, lies in the fact that its leaders are among the elite that governs the country and in the role played by the military forces at a political level, as well as in the commitment to improve Angola's ability to exert influence in Africa on a regional level. However, Barros, far from being satisfied with this explanation, believes that this tendency is a response to a greater specific need, which is no other than to export the image of a vigorous country, rich in oil resources¹⁸.

The current (2010) Angolan Constitution guarantees that the country will operate as a democratic system with the respective separation of powers¹⁹. Yet the information arriving from the country is not in keeping with a purely democratic model. Apparently, the President strictly controls the legislative

¹⁴ IHS «Angola, among the countries with the greatest growth potential». Angolan Embassy in Spain, 25th June 2015 Available at the website: www.embjadadeangola.com *Apud* FERNÁNDEZ DE LA FUENTE Nuria, *Op. cit.* page 8

¹⁵ APPROVED INDEX «Angola, on the list of the nine most entrepreneurial countries in the world ». Angolan Embassy in Spain, 2nd July 2015. Available at the website: www.embjadadeangola.com *Apud* FERNÁNDEZ DE LA FUENTE Nuria, *Op. cit.* page 8.

¹⁶ JANE'S «Angola – Infrastructure» *Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment – Southern Africa*. IHS, 11th May 2016. Available at the website: <https://janes.ihs.com/Janes/Display/1304282> (Consulted: 9th September 2016).

¹⁷ JANE'S «Angola – Executive Summary». *Op. cit.*

¹⁸ BARROS C. P. *Op. cit.* Page 431. The existence of a committed interest in improving the ability to influence on a regional level on the continent is consistent with Bras's conclusions. See BRÁS L. M. «Angola in the Architecture of Peace and Security of Africa » *Journal UNISCI*, No.37. Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 2016. Available at the website: <https://www.ucm.es/data/cont/media/www/pag-72478/UNISCIDP37-8BRAS.pdf> (Consulted: 26th August 2016).

¹⁹ PALANQUE Luis. *Op. cit.* Page 20.

and judicial powers²⁰. The MPLA has an overwhelming parliamentary majority, occupying 175 out of the 220 seats in the Parliament, whereas the main Opposition party, UNITA has just 32 seats²¹. A powerful State action system enables the Government of the MPLA, the only party that has governed in Angola since its independence in 1975, to pursue an aggressive policy that controls any protest²². The information that appears in a variety of sources about the reactions of the law enforcement agents at demonstrations, which do not generally exceed more than one hundred demonstrators, or their reactions to those who are not content with the system, all reveal the extreme control that the MPLA Government holds over the population²³.

The strict presidential control means that threats to domestic stability are minimal but, on the other hand, this is conducive to the corruption²⁴ that has given rise to a national elite with a vested interest in minimising political changes²⁵. All of this adds fuel to the idea that any future succession to President Dos Santos at the head of the MPLA, after over 30 years in power, will be «hand-picked»²⁶.

While most of the country's inhabitants are in poverty, the elites associated with power are getting richer²⁷ in a country with a very high level of corruption²⁸,

²⁰ JANE'S «Angola – Executive Summary». *Op. cit.*

²¹ JANE'S, «Angola – Internal Affairs» *Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment – Southern Africa*. IHS, 11 May 2016. Available at the website: <https://jan.es.ih.s.com/Janes/Display/1304283> (Consulted: 09 September 2016).

²² STRATFOR ANALYSIS, «Angola Cracking Down on Social Dissent» Stratfor, 9th March 2011. Available at the website: <https://www.stratfor.com/analysis/angola-cracking-down-social-dissent> (Consulted: 7th August 2016) STRATFOR ANALYSIS, «Obstacles for Angolan Opposition Groups» Stratfor, 25th August 2011. Available at the website: <https://www.stratfor.com/analysis/obstacles-angolan-opposition-groups> (Consulted: 7th August 2016).

²³ See PAWSON Lara, «The 27th May in Angola: a view from below». *Relações Internacionais*, 14th June 2007. Instituto Português de Relações Internacionais. Universidade Nova de Lisboa. Pages1-2 Available at the website: http://www.ipri.pt/images/publicacoes/journal_ri/pdf/RI14_LPawson_Eng.pdf (Consulted: 10th August 2016). See also REI Joana, «To prison for reading in a bookshop». *El Español*, 16th November 2015. Available at the website: http://www.elespanol.com/cultura/20151113/78992151_0.html (Consulted: 10th August 2016). See also JANE'S «Angola – Executive Summary» *Op. cit.*

²⁴ JANE'S «Angola – Executive Summary», *Op. cit.*

²⁵ STRATFOR «Angola's Elite Will Preserve the Status Quo», *Op. cit.*

²⁶ JANE'S «Angola – Executive Summary». *Op. cit.* See also CRISISWATCH, «Latest Updates, Africa» *CrisisWatch* August 2016. International Crisis Group. Available at the website <https://www.crisisgroup.org/crisiswatch> (Consulted: 9th September 2016).

²⁷ STRATFOR ANALYSIS «Angola's Elite Will Preserve the Status Quo», *Op. cit.* For greater details, see also STRATFOR ANALYSIS, «Angola Tries to Reshape Perceptions of Corruption» Stratfor, 6th May 2013. Available at the website: <https://www.stratfor.com/analysis/angola-tries-reshape-perceptions-corruption> (Consulted: 7th August 2016).

²⁸ TRANSPARENCY INTERNATIONAL SPAIN. *Corruption perception rate*. Available at the website: http://transparencia.org.es/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/comparacion_ipc-2007_a_2015.pdf (Consulted: 7th August 2016).

and in spite of the apparent efforts to combat this scourge²⁹, in Angola it has reached macroeconomic levels³⁰.

Angola's ethnic make-up renders it impossible to distinguish between the population of Cabinda and the rest of the north of the country, even though some people from Cabinda try to play down this fact³¹. However ethnic differences remain in Angola that were linked to the different groups involved in the long-lasting civil war, something that will take time to overcome³², such differences do not apply to the province of Cabinda. The third ethnic group in Angola are the «Bakongos», who account for about one and a half million of the country's nearly 20 million inhabitants. This ethnic group, which is the same one that occupies the western regions of the two Congos (Republic of Congo and Democratic Republic of Congo), are to be found in the north-west of Angola as well as the province of Cabinda. During the war of independence and the subsequent civil war, most of the members of the FNLA (National Liberation Front of Angola) came from that group³³.

Apart from the aforementioned considerations, there are also certain concerns over the presence of a mixed-race elite that would attempt to hold on to control in Angola over the negro majority in the country, a phenomenon that would appear to date back to the attempted coup d'état on 27th May 1977, two years after independence was achieved, spearheaded by a faction of the MPLA itself and led by Nito Alves³⁴. Bartolomeu Capita, the dissident Cabindan also expresses this concern in his book «*Cabinda. Obama's Challenges in Africa*», in which he links the economic interests of the Europeans and their elitist intentions on Africa, with this other predominant mixed-race elite³⁵, in

²⁹ JANE'S «Angola – Executive Summary», *Op. cit.*

³⁰ BERNE DECLARATION «Trafigura's business in Angola» The Berne Declaration, Lausanne, February 2013. Available at the website: https://www.bernedeclaration.ch/fileadmin/files/documents/Rohstoffe/DB_Report_Trafigura_Angola_February_2013_E.pdf (Consulted: 11th August 2016). See also ELECONOMISTA.ES «Isabel dos Santos, power and the alleged corruption of the richest woman in Africa». *Ecoprensa*, 29th June 2016. Available at the website: <http://www.eleconomista.es/evasion/caprichos/noticias/7671966/06/16/Isabel-Dos-Santos-el-poder-y-la-corrupcion-de-la-mujer-mas-rica-de-Africa.html> [Consulted: 9th September 2016]

³¹ JAMILAH KONÉ Elizabeth M. «The Right of Self-Determination in the Angolan Enclave of Cabinda». University of Pennsylvania – African Studies Center, 1998. Available at the website: <https://www.africa.upenn.edu/Workshop/kone98.html> (Consulted: 11th August 2016). Document submitted at the 6th annual seminar of the African Studies Consortium.

³² STRATFOR ANALYSIS. «The Geopolitics of Angola: An Exception to African Geography» Stratfor, 7th May 2012. Available at the website: <https://www.stratfor.com/analysis/geopolitics-angola-exception-african-geography> (Consulted: 9th August 2016).

³³ JANE'S «Angola – Demography» *Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment – Southern Africa*. IHS, 25th September 2015. Available at the website: <https://jan.es.com/Janes/Display/1304280> (Consulted: 9th September 2016).

³⁴ PAWSON Lara. *Op. cit.* pages 12-13.

³⁵ CAPITA Bartolomeu, *Cabinda. Obama's Challenges in Africa*. Chiado Publishing, London, 2013. ISBN: 978-989-51-0719-3. Pages 199-200.

his endeavour to explain the MPLA's policy throughout the period in which they held power in Angola³⁶.

Before starting to analyse the problem that concerns us, which is no other than the independence aspirations of certain sectors of the Cabindan population, reflected not only in the political life of the province, to a greater or lesser extent, but also in an armed movement whose political leaders are in exile, it is also advisable to point out that there is very little literature dealing with this subject, which makes it difficult to estimate the depth and seriousness of the problem at present³⁷.

Historical Background

From an International Law perspective, we can go back in time to Cabinda in 1786 and the Madrid Convention, whereby France recognised Portugal's sovereignty over the African coastal territory to the north of Cape Padrão³⁸, now known as «Cross Cape», on the Namibian Coast³⁹.

In 1810, as a result of the alliance treaty signed between Portugal and Great Britain signed in Rio de Janeiro, recognition was given to the rights of the Crown of Portugal over the territories of Cabinda and Molembo, along similar lines to the agreement reached with France in the Madrid Convention of 1786⁴⁰. The contents of this Treaty regarding Portuguese sovereignty over Molembo and Cabinda was to be confirmed by the Treaties of 1815 and 1817⁴¹.

The Portuguese Constitution of 1838 recognised Molembo and Cabinda as part of Portuguese territory⁴².

³⁶ It is one of the lines of argument of this work in its denunciation of injustice in the Cabinda case.

³⁷ DEPARTMENT OF PEACE AND CONFLICT RESEARCH UPPSALA, «Government of Angola – FLEC-FAC», *Uppsala Conflict Data Program*. Uppsala University. Available at the website: <http://ucdp.uu.se/#/statebased/832> (Consulted: 8 September 2016).

³⁸ The Padrão was a «cross» hewn in stone, bearing the Portuguese coat of arms, which Portuguese explorers were wont to erect in the most remote of places that they had reached on their voyages. The one erected at Cape Cross was the work of the navigator Diogo Cão, who reached this point in 1486, during the reign of Juan II of Portugal. GONÇALVES Antonio, «Cao, Diogo», *Navegações portuguesas*. Instituto Camões, 2003. Available at the website: <http://cvc.instituto-camoes.pt/navegaort/d15.html> Consulted: (13 August 2016).

³⁹ SÁ NOGUEIRA DE FIGUEIREDO SÁ DA BANDEIRA Bernardo de, *Facts and statements concerning the right of the Crown of Portugal to the territories of Molembo, Cabinda, Ambriz, and other places on the west coast of Africa, situated between the fifth degree twelve minutes, and the eighth degree of south latitude*. HP, Middletow DE, 2016. Reprint of the digitalised file of a publication of the work in question, written in Portuguese in Lisbon in 1855, translated into English and published under the title *Portuguese Western Africa, vol. 2*. Herbert J. Fitch Printer, London, 1877. Page 17.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* pages 16-17.

⁴¹ *Ibid.* page 23.

⁴² *Ibid.* Page 25.

Later on, in 1885, under pressure from France and other European countries in the Congo Basin, the Portuguese signed a treaty with the local tribes living in the area between the River Congo and the 5th Parallel whereby the territory concerned fell under the protection of the Kingdom of Portugal. This treaty contained the Portuguese commitment to keep united the territories included therein and to be tolerant towards country's traditions and customs and to require others to do likewise⁴³.

The aforementioned treaty, signed on 1st February 1885 and known as the Treaty of Simulambuco, was a sort of desperate measure for the signatory parties. The Commander of the corvette Rainha de Portugal, Britto Capelo represented the Kingdom of Portugal, whereas the signatories for the N'Goyo Kingdom were local leaders or their representatives. The Treaty of Simulambuco was a compendium of the contents of earlier treaties of the same kind and purpose, referred to as the Treaties of Chimfuma (29th September 1883) and Chicambo (26th December 1884), and amounted to a security option for the Cabindans against the pressure exerted by the colonial powers. From Portugal's viewpoint, the treaty guaranteed the country's control over the trade in a very rich region. Although these agreements were a consequence of local needs and fruit of the initiative of local official Portuguese representatives in the region, the Treaty of Simulambuco was to be submitted by Portugal during the Conference of Berlin held between 19th November 1884 and the 26th February 1885, whose purpose was no other than to share Africa out between the colonial powers⁴⁴. Thus the Treaty of Simulambuco was endorsed by the rest of the colonial powers⁴⁵, thereby being recognised by them with respect to «effects on third parties»⁴⁶.

The first modifications to the terms contained in the Treaty of Simulambuco were made in the following years owing to French pressure from the north and Belgian pressure in the Congo Estuary, which forced the Portuguese to accept territorial modifications. The most significant one involved granting Belgium an outlet to the sea, on the northern bank of the River Congo, which led to Cabinda being established as an enclave⁴⁷ separated from the Kingdom of N'Goyo, or «exclave» for those who wish to call it that⁴⁸.

⁴³ COSTA ALMEIDA Eugenio, 2013, *Op. cit.* pages 87-68.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.* Pages 72-73.

⁴⁵ ALMEIDA E.C. *Africa: Political, Religious and Cultural Trajectories*, Azeitão, Autonomía, 2004. P. 27. *Apud* COSTA ALMEIDA Eugenio, 2013, *Op. cit.* Pages 73-74.

⁴⁶ See PASTOR RIDRUEJO, José A., *Curso de Derecho Internacional Público y Organizaciones Internacionales*. Reprint of the 13rd Edition. Tecnos, Madrid, 2010. ISBN: 978-84-309-4930-4. Page 116

⁴⁷ COSTA ALMEIDA Eugenio, 2013, *Op. cit.* page 77.

⁴⁸ Although the word «exclave» is not contained in the dictionary of the Spanish Real Academia de la Lengua, the definitions that for the term «enclave» appear, do not apply to the geographical situation, or, as we shall see later, to the conditions of Cabinda, an Angolan province separated from the rest of the national territory by a strip of territory forming part of the Democratic Republic of Congo. See REAL ACADEMIA ESPAÑOLA. Dictionary of the

The Portuguese Constitution of 1930, in force until 25th April 1975, stated that the Portuguese territory in West Africa, comprised the archipelagos of Cape Verde, São Tomé and Príncipe, Forte de S. João Baptista de Ajudá, Portuguese Guinea, Cabinda and Angola. As from 1955, and for administrative purposes, Cabinda was considered to be a district of Angola, without this being shown in the contents of the Constitution⁴⁹.

As early as 1915 several oil companies had begun prospecting in the province. The licence to exploit oil was obtained by Chevron in 1954⁵⁰. Ojakorotu links this fact to the decision to include Cabinda in the colony of Angola for administrative purposes and he bases this on the enormous economic contribution played by Cabinda in sustaining Portuguese colonial administration in Angola, which included the defence budget allocated to combating the Angolan independence movements⁵¹.

History of the Cabindan Independence Movements

The first independence movement to appear in the province of Cabinda, probably emerged in 1958 with the formation of the AREC, *Association des Ressortissants de l'Enclave de Cabinda*, (Association of Cabinda Enclave Natives), whose members tried to distance themselves from the armed struggle movements fighting for the independence of Angola and demanded the independence of Cabinda under the pretext that theoretically the region was a protectorate⁵².

The MLEC (Movement for the Liberation of the Enclave of Angola) emerged in 1960 and demanded the independence of Cabinda, terminating the protectorate agreement. A year later, the first signs of internal divisions began to appear within the movement, a feature that was to characterise it until the present time, several options being put forward ranging from independence to protectorate, including holding a referendum and annexing the province to either of the Congos. However, the wish to set themselves apart from the Angolan independence aspiration was constant throughout and shared by the factions, and made known by the entire movement⁵³.

Spanish Language 23rd Ed. 2014. Available at the website: <http://dle.rae.es/?id=F74Y0Ps> (consulted: 6th August 2016).

⁴⁹ COSTA ALMEIDA Eugenio, 2013, *Op. cit.* Page 78.

⁵⁰ PALANQUE Luis, *Op. cit.* Page 155.

⁵¹ OJAKOROTU Victor, «The Paradox of Terrorism, Armed Conflict and Natural Resources: An Analysis of Cabinda in Angola». *Perspectives on Terrorism*. Vol. 5, Issues 3-4. Vienna, TRI, September 2011. ISSN (on line): 2334-3745. Available at the website: <http://www.terrorismanalysts.com/pt/articles/issues/PTv5i3.pdf> (Consulted: 22nd August 2016). Page 101.

⁵² COSTA ALMEIDA Eugenio, 2013, *Op. cit.* Page 80.

⁵³ *Ibid.* Page 81.

The CAUNC (Action Committee of the Cabinda National Union) first appeared in 1962, led by N'Zita, advocating the end of the treaties with Portugal and the union with the peoples of the Congo. In 1963, the CAUNC, the MLEC and another movement called the Mayombe National Alliance, came to an agreement to create the FLEC (Front for the Liberation of the Enclave of Cabinda). At that time, the only armed movements that, albeit in a limited way, were operating in Cabinda were the UPA from the Belgian Congo and the MPLA in Angola, while the Cabindans were attempting to steer clear of the armed struggle⁵⁴.

The defence of the independence of Cabinda also had its place in the international arena, linked to the History of Portugal itself.

In 1960, the Vice-President and Minister of Foreign Affairs of what is now the Republic of Congo (former French Congo), demanded in the United Nations, the total independence of Cabinda⁵⁵.

In 1964, the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), predecessor to the current African Union (AU), placed Cabinda in the 39th position on the list of African countries to be decolonised, distinguishing it from Angola, which occupied the 35th position; this list was to be ratified by the UN⁵⁶. On 19th February 1975, during the twenty-fourth session of the Organisation of the African Unity Council of Ministers, the Foreign Affairs representatives from the Congo and Zaire tabled two motions in favour of Cabinda⁵⁷.

Cabindan independence aspirations suffered a severe setback because none of the Cabindan Independent Movements, not even a local leader, were present during the signing of the Alvor Agreements in November 1975. The three main armed Angolan movements were seated opposite the Portuguese Government, namely the MPLA, UNITA and the FNLA, plus a few local Angolan leaders, but none from Cabinda⁵⁸.

The result of the Alvor Agreements was the recognition of an Angolan independence of which Cabinda formed an essential part. This scenario, which was already contemplated in the previous agreements between the Portuguese Government and the aforementioned armed movements, prompted the leaders of the FLEC to proclaim the independence of Cabinda and embark on an armed struggle as from August of that same year⁵⁹.

How come the Portuguese and Angolans kept the Cabindan representatives out of the negotiations when there was international support for Cabinda's

⁵⁴ *Ibid.* Page 82.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* Page 82.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.* Pages 82-83.

⁵⁷ *Apud* CABINDA NEWS, «Has Cabinda been recognized as a nation?». Available at the website: <http://cabindapress.com/about-cabinda/> (Consulted: 12 September 2016).

⁵⁸ COSTA ALMEIDA Eugenio, 2013, *Op. cit.* Page 83.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.* Page 83.

independence demands, reaching a result that neglected the existing evidence in the international arena that there was an interest in independence in Cabinda?

It is possible that the answer lies in the great production wealth of raw materials in Cabinda. A year before the Alvor Agreements, the leader of the Civic Association of Cabinda, Agostinho Chicaia, warned of the major Portuguese interests in Cabinda and Angola that would prevent a solution in favour of the former for economic reasons⁶⁰.

As we have already pointed out at the beginning of this chapter, Cabinda is rich in raw materials. One of the major ongoing demands made by the Angolan pro-independent movements, both violent and non-violent, has revolved around an economic reinvestment in the province that is proportional to the contribution that it makes to the State coffers⁶¹.

The armed struggle in Cabinda

The pressure exerted by the armed independence movements in the province in the past has forced oil exploitation to be an off-shore enterprise, out of reach of the guerrillas that mainly operate in the north-east of the province, in the Mayombe Forest. The disproportionate strength between the Angolan Armed Forces and FLEC means that the latter organisation has to operate as an insurgent guerrilla force from the jungle, where it obtains economic benefit from trafficking with precious timber⁶².

Throughout this period, the Cabindan separatist movement was still characterised by being splintered into several factions, which played into the hands of the Angolan Government. Costa Almeida mentioned up to five different movements in the 70s. This state of affairs was to continue in the 80s and 90s. In the 90s, two factions of the FLEC involved in the armed struggle seemed to prevail: FLEC-Renewed and the FLEC-Armed Forces of Cabinda (FLEC-FAC)⁶³.

In 2006, FLEC-Renewed signed a cease-fire agreement with the Angolan Government on joining, under the leadership of Antonio Bento Bembe,

⁶⁰ CASTRO O. *Cabinda, ontem protectorado, hoje colonia, amanhã nação*. Porto, Letras de Ferro, 2011. Apud COSTA ALMEIDA Eugenio, 2013, *Op. cit.* Page 83.

⁶¹ STRATFOR ANALYSIS, «Angola: Cease-Fire in Cabinda». Stratfor, 13th July 2006. Available at the website: <https://www.stratfor.com/sample/analysis/angola-cessate-fire-cabinda> (Consulted: 5 August 2016). See also CAPITA Bartolomeu, *Op. cit.* Page 260.

⁶² JANE'S «Angola – Security» *Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment – Southern Africa*. IHS, 11 May. 2016. Available at the website: <https://janes.ihs.com/Janes/Display/1304433> (Consulted: 9th September 2016). See also JANE'S «Attacks on cargo and military in Angola's Cabinda exclave more likely, but energy assets remain low risk». *Jane's Country Risk Daily Report* Jan 13th 2015. Available at the website: <http://search.proquest.com/science/printviewfile?accountid=32797> (Consulted: 11th August 2016).

⁶³ COSTA ALMEIDA Eugenio, 2013, *Op. cit.* Pages 84-85.

the Cabinda Forum for Dialogue, which brought together some of the representatives of Cabindan civilian life⁶⁴. This agreement, long sought after by the Angolan Government⁶⁵, guaranteed the recognition of a degree of autonomy for the province⁶⁶, together with an amnesty plan aimed at persuading the FLEC to disarm⁶⁷, which included the guarantee of jobs in the Army, the Government and the Angolan Foreign Office⁶⁸. Bento Benbe himself, was appointed Minister without Portfolio⁶⁹.

Meanwhile, the FLEC-FAC, whose political leadership in exile was fronted by the historic leader of the FLEC, Tiago N´Zita⁷⁰, carried on with its armed struggle. At the beginning of 2010, FLEC-FAC perpetrated an attack that was to have great media repercussions because the victims formed part of a convoy transporting the Togo national football team which was participating in the Africa Cup tournament that was being held in Angola at the time⁷¹. Although the FLEC later admitted that its target was no other than the military convoy escorting the football team⁷², the Angolan Government considered this attack to be an act of terrorism that confirmed its stance in treating the FLEC's actions as «terrorism». The Angolan Government generally uses the argument that the FLEC is a terrorist group to justify numerous actions that could be described as not very appropriate in a democracy⁷³.

Although the armed actions of the FLEC normally target military units through the use of guerrilla tactics, they have a strategic political purpose. Combining such actions with others of a criminal nature such as kidnapping for economic purposes and taking hostages, the objective of which is also to achieve strategic political goals⁷⁴, make it difficult to disassociate this type of armed opposition

⁶⁴ *Ibid.* Page 86.

⁶⁵ STRATFOR ANALYSIS, «Luanda to offer Peace Proposal to Cabinda». Stratfor, 18th February 2003. Available at the website: <https://www.stratfor.com/analysis/luanda-offer-peace-proposal-cabinda> (Consulted: 5th August 2016).

⁶⁶ STRATFOR ANALYSIS, 13th July 2006, *Op. cit.*

⁶⁷ IISS «Angola July 2006» *Armed conflict database*. IISS, 2006. Available at the website: <https://acd.iiss.org/conflicts/angola--archived-2006-659a?year=2006&month=7> (Consulted: 9th September 2016).

⁶⁸ REUTERS, «Cabinda separatists in Angola set to disarm» Reuters, 5th January 2007. Available at the website: <http://uk.reuters.com/article/angola-cabinda-arms-idUKL0563495720070105> (Consulted: 5th August. 2016).

⁶⁹ DEPARTMENT OF PEACE AND CONFLICT RESEARCH UPPSALA, «Government of Angola – FLEC-FAC», *Op. cit.*

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ STRATFOR ANALYSIS, «Angola: An Attack in an Oil-Rich Province» Stratfor, 8th January 2010. Available at the website: <https://www.stratfor.com/analysis/angola-attack-oil-rich-province> (Consulted: 6 August 2016).

⁷² THE GUARDIAN «Togo footballers were attacked by mistake, Angolan rebels say», The Guardian, 11th January 2010. Available at the website: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/jan/11/two-arrested-togo-football-attack> [Consulted: 22 August 2016].

⁷³ OJAKOROTU Victor, *Op. cit.* Pages 105-7.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.* Pages 103-4.

from terrorism⁷⁵. Furthermore, there is no doubt that FLEC's activities are not aimed at gaining the upper hand on the battlefield and that they could be described as actions against a social organisation at a State level, directed at those who are identified as part of that organisation, which comes close to the concept of terrorism⁷⁶. Despite all the above, this opinion is not unanimous; for example, the analysts at JANE'S IHS (Information Handling Services) do not appear to regard FLEC's actions as being acts of terrorism⁷⁷.

In 2010, FLEC leaders once again seemed to show interest in making a new peace agreement⁷⁸, although subsequent information about this was confused and contradictory⁷⁹, probably due to the continuing internal struggles between the different factions of the FLEC⁸⁰. FLEC's armed actions were to carry on in this vein intermittently, alternating with information about the FLEC's wish to bring the armed struggle to an end⁸¹. One possible reason for this apparent inconsistency could be attributed to the fact that the FLEC leaders in exile lack authority over the armed groups that operate within the territory⁸².

The good relations between Angola and the Governments in the Republics of Congo (the former French Congo) and the Democratic Republic of Congo (the former Belgian Congo) enable the former to pursue the FLEC guerrilla beyond its own frontiers with these countries, without causing diplomatic incidents⁸³. This cooperation has been customary since the beginning of

⁷⁵ See CUNNINGHAM W.G., «Terrorism Definitions and Typologies» en *Terrorism: Concepts, Causes, and Conflict Resolution*, Advanced Systems and Concepts Office, Defence Threat Reduction Agency & Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution, George Mason University, 2003. P. 7-8. *Apud* OJAKOROTU Victor, *Op. cit.* Page 98.

⁷⁶ LÁZARO José «The mechanisms of violence: dialogues with Enrique Baca Valdomero» in AZNAR Federico *et al*, *The war against Violence*, Madrid, Triacastela, 2014, ISBN 978-84-95840-87-5. Pages 64-65.

⁷⁷ In an analysis published on 11th May 2016, with a new FLEC offensive under way, Jane's estimated the risk of terrorism in the province of Cabinda to be on the wane. JANE'S «Angola – Executive Summary». *Op. cit.*

⁷⁸ STRATFOR ANALYSIS, «Angola: FLEC Leaders To End Fighting» Stratfor, 9th July 2010. Available at the website: <https://www.stratfor.com/situation-report/angola-flec-leaders-end-fighting> (Consulted: 6th August 2016).

⁷⁹ See STRATFOR ANALYSIS, «Angola: FLEC Announces New Management» Stratfor, 26th August 2010. Available at the website: <https://www.stratfor.com/situation-report/angola-flec-announces-new-management> (Consulted: 6th August 2016).

⁸⁰ JANE'S, «Angola – Internal Affairs». *Op. cit.*

⁸¹ See REUTERS, «Angola Cabinda rebels want talks with Govt. after vote» Reuters, 6th August 2012. Available at the website: <http://in.reuters.com/article/angola-cabinda-idINL6E8J603L20120806> (Consulted: 7th August 2016).

⁸² JANE'S «Attacks on cargo and military in Angola's Cabinda exclave more likely, but energy assets remain low risk» *Op. cit.*

⁸³ See JANE'S «Congo Brazaville – External Affairs» *Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment – Central Africa*. IHS, 20th April 2016. Available at the website: <https://janes.ihs.com/Janes/Display/1302524> (Consulted: 9th September 2016). See also JANE'S «Democratic Republic of Congo – Security» *Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment – Central Africa*. IHS, 22nd April

the century⁸⁴, in view of the fact that the Angola's MPLA Government was guarantor to the access to power and subsequent stability of the current leaders of both countries, as part of its strategy to isolate and defeat UNITA in the final phase of the approximately 30 years of the Angolan Civil War⁸⁵ and because is currently part of its strategy to attain an important place in Sub-Saharan Africa⁸⁶. This quest for international importance was clinched in October 2014, when Angola was elected Non-Permanent Member of the UN Security Council for the period 2015-2016⁸⁷.

The present situation has remained virtually unchanged in the last few years. In March 2015, the Cabindan activist José Marcos Mavungo was arrested, accused of being linked to activists found in possession of explosives. Mavungo was tried and found guilty a few months later in spite of the international outcry. The European Parliament passed a resolution on 9th September 2015 expressing its concern over the deterioration of the guarantees in protecting human rights in Angola and calling for the immediate release of political prisoners and human rights activists⁸⁸.

Midway through 2015, JANE'S IHS informed that the FLEC had not been involved in actions since 2012⁸⁹. According to the data furnished by the Department of Peace and Conflict Research at the University of Uppsala, the number of deaths per year caused by the confrontation between the FLEC-FAC and the Angolan Armed Forces was no greater than 4 persons in 2010 and 2011, 2 in 2012 and, after that, no death being reported in

2016. Available at the website: <https://janes.ihs.com/MilitarySecurityAssessments/Display/1302441> (Consulted: 9th September 2016).

⁸⁴ STRATFOR ANALYSIS, «Cornered Rebels May Lash Out in Cabinda» Stratfor, 12th February 2001. Available at the website: <https://www.stratfor.com/analysis/cornered-rebels-may-lash-out-cabinda> (Consulted: 13th September 2016).

⁸⁵ STRATFOR ANALYSIS, «Angola Braces for Possible Spillover of Congo Fighting». Stratfor, 13th August 1998. Available at the website: <https://www.stratfor.com/analysis/angola-braces-possible-spillover-congo-fighting> (Consulted: 5th August 2016), «Angolan Rebels May Target U.S. Interests in New Offensive». Stratfor, 29th October 1998. Available at the website <https://www.stratfor.com/analysis/angolan-rebels-may-target-us-interests-new-offensive> (Consulted: 5th August 2016) y «UNITA Tactical Shift May Hurt Rather than Help». Stratfor, 31st March 2000. Available at the website <https://www.stratfor.com/analysis/unita-tactical-shift-may-hurt-rather-help> (Consulted: 5th August 2016).

⁸⁶ STRATFOR ANALYSIS, «Angola: Net Assessment» Stratfor, 5th September 2008. Available at the website: <https://www.stratfor.com/analysis/angola-net-assessment> (Consulted: 6th August 2016). See also STRATFOR ANALYSIS, 7th May 2012, *Op. cit.*

⁸⁷ EMBASSY OF ANGOLA «Angola at the UN Security Council». Angolan Embassy in Spain, 17th October 2014. Available at the website: www.embjadadeangola.com *Apud* FERNÁNDEZ DE LA FUENTE Nuria, *Op. cit.* Page 8.

⁸⁸ JANE'S «Sentencing of Angolan activist increases protest and injury risks in Cabinda and capital city» *Jane's Country Risk daily Report*. IHS, 22nd September 2015. Available at the website: <https://janes.ihs.com/Janes/Display/1752972> (Consulted: 9th September 2016).

⁸⁹ JANE'S, «Angola – Internal Affairs». *Op. cit.* This information contradicts other information published by JANE'S IHS, which mentions attacks that occurred in December 2014. See JANE'S «Angola – Security» *Op. cit.*

2013, 2014 and 2015, serving as proof that the group's activities had fallen considerably⁹⁰. The analysts at JANE'S IHS state that the FLEC has shown certain interest in giving up the armed struggle since 2012⁹¹; this analysis is consistent with the aforementioned decrease in activity.

Predictions published by JANE'S IHS at the beginning of 2015 indicated a slight increase in FLEC activities⁹², although this did not occur until February 2016. FLEC's first actions in 2016 were accompanied by an announcement of a return to hostilities by the dissident armed group⁹³. In April that same year, the FLEC responded affirmatively to a proposal made by the main Angolan opposition party, UNITA, to create a forum for peace and national reconciliation⁹⁴. In June, apart from the attacks on the Angolan Armed Forces that had been taking place since February, according to sources, an attack was also carried on an off-shore oil rig at sea, which was a new development out of keeping with the line generally followed by the FLEC in recent years⁹⁵, as it normally limited this type of attack to facilities and workers on the mainland, especially in the proximities of their main zone of operations in the forests in the north-east of the province⁹⁶. On 3rd June, the historic leader of the FLEC, Tiago N'Zita, died in exile, giving rise to a confrontation over the leadership of the movement between his son Emmanuel and the Vice-President of the group Alexandre Tati⁹⁷.

At the time of this Chapter going to print, CrisisWatch reported that the actions against the Angolan Armed Forces have continued in July and August, and that the number of casualties among Angolan military forces has increased considerably⁹⁸.

Analysis of Cabinda's demand for independence

The main legal argument justifying the Cabindan demand for independence is to be found in the 1885 Treaty of Simulambuco, which received international

⁹⁰ DEPARTMENT OF PEACE AND CONFLICT RESEARCH UPPSALA, «Government of Angola – FLEC-FAC», *Op. cit.*

⁹¹ JANE'S «Angola – Security». *Op. cit.*

⁹² JANE'S «Attacks on cargo and military in Angola's Cabinda exclave more likely, but low risk to energy assets», *Op. cit.*

⁹³ CRISISWATCH, «Latest Updates, Africa» *CrisisWatch February 2016*. International Crisis Group. Available at the website: <https://www.crisisgroup.org/crisiswatch/february-2016> (Consulted: 24th August 2016).

⁹⁴ CRISISWATCH, «Latest Updates, Africa» *CrisisWatch April 2016*. International Crisis Group. Available at the website: <https://www.crisisgroup.org/crisiswatch/april-2016-0> (Consulted: 24th August 2016).

⁹⁵ CRISISWATCH, «Latest Updates, Africa» *CrisisWatch June 2016*. International Crisis Group. Available at the website: <https://www.crisisgroup.org/crisiswatch/june-2016> (Consulted: 24th August 2016).

⁹⁶ JANE'S, «Angola – Security», *Op. cit.*

⁹⁷ CRISISWATCH, «Latest Updates, Africa» *CrisisWatch June 2016*. *Op. cit.*

⁹⁸ CRISISWATCH, «Latest Updates, Africa» *CrisisWatch August 2016*. *Op. cit.*

recognition on being accepted as one of the conditions of the agreements arising from the Conference of Berlin in 1885. Although it is true that violations of the treaty took place from the French occupation of Punta Negra (now part of the Republic of Congo)⁹⁹ until the province of Cabinda was finally incorporated into Angola's territory as a result of Article 3 of the Treaty of Alvor in 1975 that put an end to Portugal's colonial period in Angola¹⁰⁰, the first question that would have to be asked, is whether any of the signatories reported violations of the treaty, i.e., if the authorities representing the governments that signed reported any such violation. Apparently, according to what the pro-independents claim¹⁰¹, the treaty was never revoked, which means that Portugal would still be responsible for the Protectorate under the terms contained in the Treaty of Simulambuco.

What does appear to have been demonstrated is that none of those authorities corresponding to the signatory governments formed part of the Treaty of Alvor¹⁰². If that had been the case, there would have been a sufficiently good reason for terminating the Treaty of Simulambuco¹⁰³. Furthermore, apparently, after the signing of the former, none of the signatory governments of the second one would have reported its supposed violation.

However, the request that gave rise to the signing of the Treaty of Simulambuco, which was included in the same document that apparently contained the Treaty¹⁰⁴, formulated by the governors and representatives who signed it, indicates the wish of those governors to enter the domains of the Portuguese Crown at some point in the future. Furthermore, the Treaty of Simulambuco contains Portugal's obligation to confirm to the future leaders of the people that inhabited the territories referred to in the Treaty that were elected by those people according to the laws and uses thereof.

All the above makes one wonder whether or not such authorities existed when the Treaty of Alvor was signed. It is possible that the answer to that question is «no». The Portuguese administration of the territories of Angola and Cabinda could well have gradually reduced the authority of the former governors of the territories included in the Treaty of Simulambuco until they had no powers at all, to the extent that the only authority left was the Portuguese Government, which would be consistent with the express wishes

⁹⁹ The Treaty of Simulambuco dated February 1885 establishes in Article 3, that Portugal is required to keep united the territories under its auspices. Copy of the Treaty of Simulambuco dated 22nd January 1885. Available at the website: <http://www.portugal-linha.pt/opiniao/CAlexandrino/tsimulambuco.html> (Consulted: 19th August 2016)

¹⁰⁰ JAMILAH KONÉ Elizabeth M. *Op. cit.*

¹⁰¹ NOTHOLT Stuart A. *Fields of fire. An atlas on ethnic conflict*. BM ATLAS, London, 2010. ISBN: 978-0-9554657-7-2. Page 2-60.

¹⁰² JAMILAH KONÉ Elizabeth M. *Op. cit.*

¹⁰³ See PASTOR RIDRUEJO, José A., *Op. cit.* Page 126

¹⁰⁴ Copy of the Treaty of Simulambuco dated 22nd January 1885. *Op. cit.*

of the former governors of the territories that now constitute the province of Cabinda to be incorporated into what was then the Portugal Monarchy. This could be considered a case of terminating the status of international subject leading to the termination of the Treaty of Simulambuco¹⁰⁵.

It must also be pointed out that the circumstances giving rise to the Treaty of Simulambuco, which are no other than the Conference of Berlin in 1885¹⁰⁶, as is contained in the request that leads to the signing of the Treaty¹⁰⁷, ceased to exist after the end of the colonial period, which gave any of the parties a good reason for deciding to withdraw from that Treaty, which would have meant the end of their obligations where its content was concerned¹⁰⁸. Despite this, there does not seem to be a record of any of the parties having made such a decision, apart from the Government of Portugal signing the Treaty of Alvor.

Furthermore, against the arguments put forward in 1998 by Jamilah Koné with respect to the inability of Angola to guarantee its territorial integrity, Cabinda is, currently a province of Angola, over which it exercises the authority of the State in spite of the fact that an armed group operates, albeit in a very limited way, in the Mayombe Forest. What is more, the circumstances surrounding the application of democratic processes in Angola have changed in recent years, invalidating the argument that the Cabindans do not participate in the Angolan political institutions provided by the same author¹⁰⁹. In fact, as we have seen above, the 2006 peace agreement signed by the Government of Angola and the Cabinda Forum for Dialogue was conducive to persons belonging to the emancipation movements entering these institutions¹¹⁰. Furthermore, the free participation of the Cabindans in electing representatives and in playing a role in the Angolan institutions demonstrates that they form part of Angola's population in exactly the same conditions as all other Angolans, regardless of race, creed or colour, which

¹⁰⁵ DÍEZ DE VELASCO Manuel, *Op. cit.* Page 222.

¹⁰⁶ According to the General Minutes of the Conference of Berlin on 26th February 1885, its aim was to «regulate the most favourable conditions for developing trade and civilisation in certain regions of Africa, and to guarantee all nations the advantages of free navigation in the two main rivers in Africa, which flow into the Atlantic Ocean», as well as «to prevent the misunderstandings and disputes that could arise in the future as a result of further acts of occupation (possession by companies) on the coast of Africa, while at the same time finding ways of encouraging the moral and material welfare of the indigenous inhabitants». GENERAL MINUTES OF THE CONFERENCE OF BERLIN (26th February 1885) Available at the website: <http://www.dipublico.org/3666/acta-general-de-la-conferencia-de-berlin-26-de-febrero-de-1885/> (Consulted: 19th August 2016).

¹⁰⁷ Copy of the Treaty of Simulambuco dated 22nd January 1885. *Op. cit.*

¹⁰⁸ DIEZ DE VELASCO Manuel, *Public International Law Institutions*. Reprint of the 17th Edition. Tecnos, Madrid, 2010. ISBN: 978-84-309-4930-4. Page 222.

¹⁰⁹ JAMILAH KONÉ Elizabeth M. *Op. cit.*

¹¹⁰ DEPARTMENT OF PEACE AND CONFLICT RESEARCH UPPSALA, «Government of Angola – FLEC-FAC», *Op. cit.*

invalidates the arguments in favour of the right to self-determination versus the guarantees that, according to International Law, have to exist regarding national unity and the territorial integrity of States¹¹¹.

Conclusions

One of the major demands made by the Cabindan independence movements is that they do not feel the benefits of the country's wealth. Although it is true to say that the investments in infrastructures in the province of Cabinda may not be proportional to the wealth that Cabinda contributes to the country, it is also undeniable that Cabinda has not been forgotten when it comes to efforts to modernise the country. The construction of new communication routes, the enlargement to the port of Cabinda, the modernisation of the airport and the hospital, the construction of the Chiaze national stadium and the tourist complex in the Mayombe Forest, all bear witness to the fact that investments are being made in the province of Cabinda¹¹².

However, the redistribution of the country's wealth and the proportions that correspond to each region are quite a different matter. Redistribution and solidarity are basic principles for the development of communities and, in the world we currently live in, the trend is towards supporting solidarity in order to develop the least favoured territories in national and supranational organisations, as opposed to isolationism, with a few exceptions such as the one involving the United Kingdom with its upcoming exit from the EU. In Africa, the economic communities formed between countries, with aspirations similar to those that prompted the creation of the European Economic Community, include virtually the whole continent¹¹³.

Furthermore, Angola will never accept a solution that threatens its territorial integrity, amongst other reasons because the great effect this would have on the country's economy would jeopardise its development as a Nation. What is more, the major U.S. and Chinese oil interests encouraged by the Angolan Government make it highly unlikely that the independence movement would ever receive the foreign support needed to stand any chance of success¹¹⁴. One only has to remember that it was US economic interests that saved the MPLA's Communist Government from having to face much greater armed opposition during the civil war¹¹⁵ and possibly a different outcome to the conflict. It would

¹¹¹ PASTOR RIDRUEJO, José A., *Op. cit.* Pages 263-266.

¹¹² COSTA ALMEIDA Eugenio, 2013, *Op. cit.* Page 89.

¹¹³ MWAI Collins, «Africa: Why Africa Should Be Keen on the Tripartite Free Trade Area». The New Times, 7th September 2016. All Africa. Available at the website: <http://allafrica.com/stories/201609070063.html> (Consulted: 12th September 2016).

¹¹⁴ ROBERTS Adam., «Introduction» in ROBERTS A. and GARTON ASH T. (edit.), *Civil Resistance and Power Politics: The Experience of Non-violent Action from Gandhi to the Present*. Oxford University Press, 2009, New York. ISBN 978-0-19-955201-6. Pages 23-24.

¹¹⁵ PESTANA BARROS Carlos, *Op. cit.* Page 426.

also seem to be the case that the proximity in time between the granting of the first oil licence in Cabinda, the latter's administrative incorporation into the colony of Angola and the emergence of the Cabinda independence movement, is much more than pure coincidence. Oil constitutes part of the problem, and it even makes sense to admit that this is what motivates all the parts directly or indirectly confronted in the Cabinda conflict.

The demands based upon legal arguments within the context of International Law, as we have been able to see, are not very sound. We must also add that the reality of that context, at the present time, is that there would not appear to be any support in international forums for the position that defends these demands.

Everything would appear to indicate that FLEC's armed struggle will lead nowhere. The future of the province of Cabinda does not seem to include independence, but its citizens, just like many other Angolans, will continue to look towards a future that economic forecasts predict will be promising and that offers the hope of an improvement in their living conditions in the medium- and long-term.

The possibility of a ceasing of hostilities and the establishment of a good governance depend on the main actors in the conflict: the FLEC and the Angolan Government. The future of the Cabindans, that promising future we have referred to in the preceding paragraph, is in their hands.

Table of geopolitical indicators

TABLE OF GEOPOLITICAL INDICATORS-ANGOLA	
Surface Area 1.246.700 Km ²	
GDP \$ 103,000 mill. (est. 2015)	
GDP structure (est. 2011)	Agriculture 10.2%
	Industry 61.4%
	Services 28.4%
GDP per capita \$ 7,300 (est. 2015)	
GDP growth index 3% (est. 2015)	
Exports \$ 37,380 mill. (est. 2015)	China 43.8%, India 9.6%, USA 7.7%, Spain 6.2%, South Africa 4.8%, France 4.0% (2015)
	Main goods
	Oil, diamonds, refined petroleum products, coffee, sisal, fish and by-products, timber and cotton
Imports \$ 21,930 mill (est. 2015)	China 22.1%, Portugal 13.8%, South Korea 11%, USA 6,9%, South Africa 5%, United Kingdom 4.1%, France 4% (2015)
	Main goods
	Machinery, electrical equipment, vehicles, spares, medicine, food, textiles and arms

TABLE OF GEOPOLITICAL INDICATORS-ANGOLA	
Population: according to the results of the 2014 Angola census the country has an estimated 25.8 million inhabitants	
Age structure (est. 2015)	0 -14 42.95%
	14-54 50.46%
	54 6.94%
Population growth rate 2.78% (est. 2015)	
Ethnic groups:	Ovimbundu 37%, Kimbundu 25%, Bakongo 13%, mestizos 2%, Europeans 1%, others 22%
Religions: (est. 2014)	Catholics 41,1%, Protestants 38.1%, others 8.6%, none 12.3%
Literacy rate 71.1% (est. 2015)	
Population below the poverty threshold 40.5% (est. 2006)	
Communication & information systems (2015)	1 telephone fix line and 71 mobile phones per 100 inhabitants
Military expenditure: 3.63% of the GDP (2012)	

Prepared by the author

Source: CIA, «Angola», *the World Factbook*. Central Intelligence Agency, 25th Aug. 2016. Available at the following site: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ao.html> (Consulted: 13th September 2016).

Chronology of conflict

CONFLICT CHRONOLOGY	
THE CABINDA ENCLAVE	
DATE	EVENTS
1958	AREC (Association of Cabinda Enclave Natives) is established. Demand the independence of Cabinda by peaceful means
1960	The MLEC (Movement for the Liberation of the Cabinda Enclave) is established. It is also a peaceful movement. The Republic of Congo demands the total independence of Cabinda in the United Nations.
1960	The Republic of Congo demands the total independence of Cabinda in the United Nations.
1962	The CAUNC (Action Committee for the Cabinda National Union) is established, led by Tiago N´Zita. A peaceful movement.
1963	The CAUNC and the MLEC merge to form the FLEC. Peaceful as well.
1964	The OUA (Organisation of African Unity) publishes the list of African countries to be decolonised. Cabinda appears separately from Angola
1975 - August	The FLEC initiates the armed struggle after the refusal of the Portuguese and armed Angolan pro-independents to agree to the Cabindan aspirations

CONFLICT CHRONOLOGY	
THE CABINDA ENCLAVE	
DATE	EVENTS
1975 -November	Signing of the Treaty of Alvor. The Cabindan independence movements' fears were realised: Cabinda becomes a province of an independent Angola
1990s	The FLEC is split into several factions. The most representative factions are the FLEC-FAC and FLEC-Renewed
2002	The Angolan Civil War comes to an end, led until then by the Angolan Government, in the hands of the MPLA and UNITA
2006	FLEC-Renewed, led by Antonio Bento Benbe, joins the Cabinda Forum for Dialogue and signs a peace agreement with the Angolan Government. The FLEC-FAC carries on with the armed struggle.
2010	A high profile attack is perpetrated against the convoy in which the Togo national football team is travelling
2012	The armed activities of the FLEC decrease significantly. The JANE' S IHS analysts attribute this to FLEC's wish to reach a peace agreement
2016 - February	The FLEC announces resumption of the armed struggle
2016 – April	The Opposition Party UNITA, proposes the creation of a Peace and National Reconciliation Forum. The FLEC shows interest in the proposal
2016 – June	The FLEC perpetrates its first attack against an off-shore oil rig. The historic leader of the FLEC, Tiago N' Zita, dies in exile. Internal tensions appear in the FLEC over his succession.
2016 -July - August	The number of casualties among Angolan armed forces increases as a result of FLEC attacks.

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Chapter twelve

Central Asia, the fought-over bridge between Asia and Europe

Pedro Sánchez Herráez

Introduction

A complex thoroughfare of the world

According to the United Nations definition,¹ the region known as Central Asia encompasses the countries of Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, which are commonly called the «Stans» – a somewhat simplistic generalisation that clearly evidences people's lack of knowledge of this key area of the planet.

These names are commonly associated with a group of remote states and, when uttered, tend to conjure up a jumble of related past images and perceptions of Russia, the Soviet Union and the Soviet world in the broad sense, but also of Asia. They bring to mind images of vast steppes and huge mountains, isolated green valleys, ancient villages and legendary cities such as Samarkand; of nomads on horseback and caravans of camels laden with wares from China... Almost intuitively, we picture a region of transit, a crossroads of cultures, one of the world's natural pathways.

And so it is: this large landmass spanning more than eight million square kilometres (about 16 times the size of Spain) which is landlocked –that is,

¹ United Nations Statistics Division, Geographical region and composition, Asia. Available at <http://millenniumindicators.un.org/unsd/methods/m49/m49regin.htm#asia>

with no outlet to the sea– is a natural point of passage between Asia and Europe via Russia.

As has occurred with other similar areas, this «thoroughfare of the world» has been an object of constant desire and a transit point for peoples and empires: Alexander the Great, Genghis Khan, Tamerlane, the Ottoman Empire, tsarist Russia, the British Empire, the Soviet Union and, more recently, the planet's major powers and even non-state actors like radical Islamism have aspired or aspire to control Central Asia, which can therefore be considered a veritable Axis Mundi.²

And as an area of interest, it has been and still is subject to interests and tensions of all and sundry. The heterogeneity of these nations, both geographically speaking and in terms of their economies and populations – vast steppes populated by nomads or deep valleys nestled among high mountains, abundance or shortage of water, large size and wealth or scant areas and population, Turkic or Persian roots – gives rise to differences and disputes between them.³

And there are also deep internal divides, as not only did these countries come into existence in an entirely artificial way – they were designed not to be viable as autonomous entities during the period of USSR domination – but perception and loyalty to the clan or ethnic group continues to take priority over loyalty to the state in many cases. This is a source of significant internal weakness and fuels nepotism and corruption, as well as dashing hopes for the future. And if too weak, highly dependent economies we further add the effects of the global crisis, the result is a tense social environment that prompts people to flee however they can – by migrating, or attempting to steer the country in a different direction by means of revolts or revolutions.

Coupled with these internal weaknesses and differences are external tensions and designs on this area – or ploys to prevent it falling into the hands of enemy empires and powers, throughout history... and today as well. The perceptions and importance of the area to Russia since the tsarist period and as part of the post-Soviet space, its closeness and the interest it holds for a China in the throes of global expansion and resurgence, the reshaping – or perhaps not – of the United States' power and presence in the world, the possibility of radical movements of all kinds becoming established in a population mass of some 60 million people in a complex socioeconomic situation perhaps indicate that we have come to a milestone. The fact that the tectonic plates of the world power balance are realigning is giving rise, or may do so, to

² As pointed out by ZAPATER ESPI, Luis Tomás, in his excellent book *Asia Central: conflictos étnicos, nuevo nacionalismo e islam*, Quiles, Valencia, 2005, p. 10.

³ The basic geopolitical data can be found in the charts at the end of the chapter, but to cite an example, despite the possible image of homogeneity the Stans might convey, there are enormous differences between the geographically huge and reasonably wealthy Kazakhstan with significant economic potential, very close to Russia and with a Russian population of nearly 20%, and Tajikistan, which does not share a border and is very remote in many aspects.

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powerful earthquakes in certain areas of confluence of these powers, with potentially devastating local, regional and even global consequences.

And Central Asia – the apparently distant «Stans» which are in fact very close – is one of these areas of friction. The following brief analysis centred mainly on general aspects – as we do not intend to carry out a detailed local, national, regional or global study here – sets out to highlight simply, but hopefully not simplistically, some of the internal and external tensions that could lead to conflict, as this is one of the aims of this volume.

Background to the conflict

Central Asia: Russian security sphere

The broad plains that make up much of the territory of the east of the European continent, furrowed by large rivers and covered in the north by the dense taiga, witnessed not only the birth of the Rus of Kiev, the origin of today's Russia, but also the arrival from the steppes of the Asian peoples. These horsemen succeeded in defeating and subjugating it, burning down many of its cities – the Mongols laid waste to Moscow in 1238 and to Kiev, the original capital of the Rus, in 1240 – and forcing some of the original inhabitants to take refuge in the cold taiga, the stronghold located in snow forests northeast of Moscow where the horsemen of the steppes lost their comparative military advantage.

After recovering, in a sort of lengthy cathartic process the ancestors of today's Russians progressively enlarged the buffer zone protecting their stronghold, which they secured by surrounding it with space and towns. Furthermore, when they felt strong enough, they continued their advance to block off potential ways into the heart of their territory, attaching particular priority to the steppes, the route followed by their Asian invaders.⁴

Ivan IV (1530–1584), known as «the Terrible», began his conquest of the territories of the ancient Golden Horde in the sixteenth century, advancing and capturing its most important cities, such as Kazan in 1552 and Astrakhan in 1556. These actions would be continued during the following centuries and extended to creating a line of fortifications designed to stem the incursions of the «Kazakhs»,⁵ which largely corresponds to the border with today's

⁴ See SÁNCHEZ HERRÁEZ, Pedro, «Marco Geopolítico de Rusia: Constantes Históricas, dinámica y visión en el siglo XXI», pp. 15–77, in *Rusia bajo el liderazgo de Putin: La nueva estrategia rusa a la búsqueda de su liderazgo regional y el reforzamiento como actor global*, Instituto Español de Estudios Estratégicos. Cuaderno de Estrategia no. 178, Madrid, 2015. Available at http://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/cuadernos/CE_178.pdf

⁵ The name «Kazakh» has the same roots as «Cossack» and comes from the Russian *kozak*, from the Turkish *kazak* (adventurer, guerrilla, nomad) and *gaz* (to wander).

Kazakhstan.⁶ At the end of the nineteenth century, Central Asia became part of what had been recognised as the Russian Empire. During the nineteenth century, when Europe's colonial expansion reached a peak, the apparently remote and distant Central Asia came under the gaze of the empires of the period whose interests were both direct and indirect.

An area where imperial interests converged

Apart from the oft-cited, hackneyed argument of achieving a «security space» that would enable it to secure its stronghold and take over land, villages and resources, Russia's southward advance pursued another aim, a geopolitical ambition cherished by Russia since time immemorial: to have an outlet to the sea, a means of reaching warmer waters to make possible Russia's international trade and expansion. And this goal brought the Russian Empire into conflict with the other empires of the period: the Ottoman Empire in the Caucasus and, especially, the Balkans; and the British Empire, the maritime power of the day, in Central Asia. This led to a string of world-scale disputes albeit with a very special significance in this area – the creation of Afghanistan was a consequence – that Rudyard Kipling came to call «the Great Game».⁷

But Russia's advance through Central Asia not only concerned the British. It also worried China – then engaged in dispute with the western powers – because of the closeness of Sinkiang,⁸ an area it considered essential for many reasons, but especially for its value as a defensive glacis of the Han dynasty, the heart of the Chinese nation.

After Russia was defeated by the western powers in the Crimean war (1853-56) and its expansion towards the Mediterranean and the Balkans was temporarily halted,⁹ it hastened its advance through Central Asia, stepping up the «russification» of the area and encouraging ethnic Russians to migrate there, especially to Kazakhstan, where they went from accounting for 20% of the population in 1887 to 40% in 1911.

The various geopolitical schools of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries highlighted the paramount importance of the continental mass of Russian

Online Etymology Dictionary, Cossack. Available at http://etymonline.com/index.php?term=Cossack&allowed_in_frame=0

⁶ ZAPATER ESPI, Luis Tomás, *Asia Central: conflictos étnicos, nuevo nacionalismo e islam*, Quiles, Valencia, 2005, p. 18.

⁷ HOPKIRK, Peter, *The Great Game: The Struggle for Empire in Central Asia*, Kodanska USA, New York, 1994.

⁸ SKRINE, C.P. AND NIGHTINGALE, Pamela, *Macartney at Kashgar: New Light on British, Chinese and Russian Activities in Sinkiang, 1890-1918*, Routledge, Oxfordshire, 2005.

⁹ This war had a devastating impact on Russia, as it highlighted its industrial backwardness and loss of significance in the world order, triggering a wave of indignation and heated reactions all over the country. An interesting analysis can be found in FIGUES, Orlando, *Crimea: la primera gran Guerra*. Edhasa, Barcelona, 2012.

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territory, its key role in the world power structure and ways of gaining control of or surrounding it in order to deny the possibility of controlling the world to whoever dominated what would come to be called the «heartland». In this connection, we might stress the writings of the Briton John Mackinder,¹⁰ who, after exploring and realising Russia's vastness, power and potential, pointed to the need to surround and separate this land mass from Europe and coastal Asia¹¹ as the only means of ensuring control of it.

Attempts at assimilation and absorption

Russification – efforts and actions undertaken to impose Russian language, culture and customs on the people of the new territories¹² – took place in different ways and in different intensities. It could be said, very generally, that degree of intensity was proportional to distance from Moscow, being greater in Kazakhstan and weaker closer to the mountainous heart of Asia. Russification was directly related to migration too, to the arrival of people – voluntarily or otherwise – from all over the empire to the new lands, most of whom were ethnically Russians or from the «Russian world».¹³

The first and largest wave of migrants was to the present-day Kazakhstan, which witnessed the arrival of some 400,000 people between 1893 and 1905 and 1.5 million between 1906 and 1917. This human mass drastically changed traditional ways of life, as most of the immigrants became settlers of the vast plains, greatly disrupting the traditional lifestyle of the nomadic herders, whose land became occupied by sedentary farmers. The mass arrival of settlers, much more than in the rest of Central Asia – where Russian expansion and settling was more in keeping with colonial parameters, displacing the ruling classes but only a few settlers¹⁴ – continued in later periods and largely explains why Russia's relations

¹⁰ MACKINDER, H. J., «The Geographical Pivot of the History», Royal Geographical Society, 1904. Available at http://www.google.es/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=0ahUKEwi5ucSNkdf0AhVEzxQKHxT1DakQFggfMAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.iwp.edu%2FdocLib%2F20131016_MackinderTheGeographicalJournal.pdf&usq=AFQjCNG0ZLSa4dGu7g6RFVfSfhDKC6Cy8w&sig2=Ai1RjPjXV0HlznqPeMrf4rw

¹¹ Now called Asia-Pacific.

¹² See BRAZEL, Sean C., «Russification Efforts in Central Asia and Baltic Regions», Air University (US). Air Command and Staff College, Maxwell, 2012.

¹³ To give an idea of the size of the ethnic groups in Russia at the end of the empire and before the birth of the USSR, the population stood at about 160 million and was highly heterogeneous, though there was a majority of Russians, Ukrainian «Little Russians» and Belarusian «White Russians» (78.32 and 5 million respectively), while none of the other nationalities numbered more than 5 million (five nationalities numbered between 4 and 2 million, 8 between 2 and 1 million and 80 less than 1 million). MAWDSLEY, Evan, *The Russian Civil War*, Birlinn Limited, Edinburgh, 2011.

¹⁴ RICHARD, Pierre, *Russia Central Asia 1867-1917*, University of California, Berkeley, 1960, p. 127.

with Kazakhstan are closer in many aspects than with the rest of the Central Asian republics, as well as accounting for the large ethnic Russian population in Kazakhstan¹⁵.

This institutionalised mass migration of settlers or ruling elites naturally sparked resistance from the conquered peoples and was a source of constant tension and in many cases strong anti-Russian sentiment that encompassed various differences: rejection of another culture, competition for resources – especially water and land – between the nomadic population and the new settlements of farmers, and reluctance to change ways of life in extremely traditional societies. This sentiment has sometimes been identified as the seed of nationalism in these peoples.

But it was not until 1916, in the throes of the First World War (1914–1918), with the Russian Empire in full decline (it should be recalled that the outbreak of the revolution in 1905 had rocked its foundations and led to the later revolution of 1917) that a major revolt occurred in Central Asia. The trigger was the end of exemption from military service for Russian Muslims, who were called up amid the turmoil of the Great War.

This was a catalyst for many of the existing tensions and problems for which, as at other times in history, a solution was sought through use of force. What Moscow called the revolt of the Basmachi «bandits» thus erupted, with episodes of extreme violence and killings on both sides during the tsarist and the Bolshevik periods alike, as the revolt continued with the same virulence after the latter seized power in 1917.

In November 1921, General Enver Pasha, former defence minister of the no longer extant Ottoman Empire and a champion of pan-Turkism, rapidly became the leader of the Basmachi, which he turned into a more centralised and organised movement. His aim was to create a pan-Turkic confederation encompassing the whole of Central Asia, Anatolia and parts of China,¹⁶ and he did not hesitate to call for jihad, which enlisted major support and converted the rebel movement into a veritable army.

Pan-Turkism and pan-Islamism became the driving force behind the revolt, which was also an outlet for many of the differences and resentments harboured by the people of Central Asia against Russians and Soviets.

¹⁵ An analysis of the Russian populations in the «post-Soviet» space can be found in SÁNCHEZ HERRÁEZ, Pedro, «La pugna por el espacio postsoviético: la cuestión de las minorías rusas», in *Panorama geopolítico de los conflictos 2015*, Instituto Español de Estudios Estratégicos. 2015, pp. 57–93. Available at <http://www.ieee.es/publicaciones-new/panorama-geopolitico-de-los-conflictos/2015/PANGEOCONF2015.html>

¹⁶ OLCOTT, Martha B., «The Basmachi or Freeman's Revolt in Turkestan 1918-24», *Soviet Studies*, vol. 33, no. 3 (July, 1981), pp. 352–69, p. 358; see also YILMAZ, Suhnaz, «An Ottoman Warrior Abroad: Enver Pasha as an Expatriate», *Middle Eastern Studies*, volume 35, 1999, issue 4, online publication 2006, pp. 40–69.

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With the Bolsheviks already in power – albeit precariously at first and in the midst of a civil war – as a means of apparently «breaking away from» their tsarist past and limiting the battlefronts, the Soviets adopted the so-called policy of «korenisation» or «indigenisation», which involved granting great autonomy and showing respect for local customs and laws. And once they had grown stronger and had a tight grip on the reins of power, they combined this policy with overwhelming military might – including many units made up of local recruits. The fighting continued for several years, after which the population was practically exhausted. Following the death of General Pasha and the flight of the remaining leaders to Afghanistan, this combination enabled the Soviets to put an end to the revolt – except in a few strongholds – which had dwindled down to groups of fugitives who lived as bandits to survive, having lost all their popular support.

Although it varied in intensity in the different parts of the large region studied, this war claimed thousands of lives, forced hundreds of thousands of people to emigrate and become displaced, and substantially changed the proportions and living areas of the traditional ethnic groups. And it is sometimes held to be the first attempt at nationalism in this part of the world.¹⁷

Nationalism or integration?

We cannot speak of political-territorial structures in the strict sense of the word until the Soviet period, as Central Asian political structures were predominantly local, and cohesion was based on loyalty to a dynasty or clan. Therefore, korenisation or indigenisation meant that, to an extent, local elites affiliated with the party were given posts and an institutional presence in the new structures as a means of establishing a distance with the «tsarist way», as commented earlier.

Most of the current territorial borders of Central Asia were established in 1924 – though Tajikistan was not granted the status of republic until 1929 – with the idea of designing a map in keeping with Moscow's interests. Accordingly, the largest ethnic groups were assigned the largest administrative units (republics or regions), while the rest either had none or were allocated smaller units (oblasts and autonomous republics).

The artificial division and sovietisation of Central Asia was carried out using the following mechanisms,¹⁸ which, despite the prevailing official discourse, were in fact very similar to those employed during the tsarist period:

¹⁷ PAKSOY H. B., «*Basmachi*»: *Turkistan National Liberation Movement 1916-1930*. Academic International Press, 1991, volume 4, pp. 5–20. Available at http://vlib.iue.it/carrie/texts/carrie_books/paksoy-6/cae12.html

¹⁸ In many aspects this question – which perhaps is only natural in view of its origins – recalls the geopolitical engineering employed by Tito in the organisation of Yugoslavia after the Second World War. A more detailed analysis of the sovietisation mechanisms can be

- Manipulation of the size of the minorities compared to that of the majorities, and the deliberate establishment of minorities in different areas to prevent the proximity of large ethnic or religious groups from giving rise to secessionism or potentially joining «pan» movements (pan-Turkic, pan-Islamist, etc.).
- Consolidation and promotion of the diverse identities of each new republic (Tajik, Uzbek, etc.) as a means of differentiating between them and preventing them from forging a common identity (Turkmen, Persian, etc.).
- Design of artificial territorial borders that even hindered the possibilities of movement within the various republics¹⁹ by forcing inhabitants to cross the territory of the neighbouring republics owing to the scarcity of roads and passages in some areas; this not only discouraged potential independence but made them necessarily dependent on each other.
- Population movements, especially in the form of foreigners emigrating to these lands. As a result of the abovementioned Russian and Ukrainian kulaks sent to Kazakhstan in the 1920s, the subsequent mass deportations of Germans, Koreans and Tatars in the 1940s (accused of collaborating with the Axis troops in the Second World War), and the colonisation of virgin lands encouraged by Nikita Khrushchev in the 1950s, the proportions of natives and foreigners progressively changed, leading to a decrease in the ethnic majority group in all cases.
- Creation of differentiated languages, maximising the linguistic particularities of each area, changing alphabets (Arabic, Latin, Cyrillic, Persian) and identifying each ethnic group with a different language, and always with Russian as the official «lingua franca».
- Manipulation of history as a means of boosting the predominant discourse of identifying each ethnic group with a particular territory (precisely that generated following the invention of the borders), seizing control of teaching, modifying texts and books, monopolising the media, creating a purported cultural heritage based on myths – true or invented – and identifying everything «old» with backwardness, superstition and inefficiency, and the «new» system with modernity, transparency and progress.
- Designation of the «enemies» of the new model, both external (fascism, capitalism) and internal (reactionaries, religion, history and past customs, etc.) as a means of shoring up the new situation and maintaining permanent tension and supervision.

found in ZAPATER ESPI, Luis Tomás, *Asia Central: conflictos étnicos, nuevo nacionalismo e islam*, Quiles, Valencia, 2005, pp.36–41.

¹⁹ OLIVIER, Roy, *La nueva Asia Central o la fabricación de naciones*, Sequitur, Madrid, 1998, p. 119.

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The new political and administrative entities created by the Soviets were thus absolutely inviable as independent states for both internal and external reasons, as even their economies – which were planned – specialised in certain products,²⁰ and the rest needed to be imported from other USSR republics and vice-versa.

The purpose of creating these new nations on the basis of ethnic groups – in a proportion that suited Soviet interests – which in many cases had very many similarities, was to establish differences and fuel distinct nationalist sentiments (within the party) in the new politico-administrative entities with territorial borders created especially for this purpose, among peoples with no similar organisational background.

Once the Soviets had a firm grip on power, in the 1930s Stalin – who was not Russian but Georgian, and whose first important post in the Politburo was as commissar for nationalities – began what would come to be called the Great Purge, which had a devastating effect throughout the USSR and Central Asia. Nearly all the party leaders and local elites of the Central Asian Republics – those who had risen to power as part of the korenisation policy – were executed, being accused of deviationism and revisionism, and once again the region was russified.

Like the rest of the Soviet Union, Central Asia suffered from the aftereffects not only of the purge – constant assassinations, selective deportations of millions of people from the region and the arrival of millions of deportees – but also of the collectivisation and resulting famine, the industrialisation of certain areas at all cost without any sort of criterion (environmental, health, social) other than maximising output, and systematic persecution of any remnants of previous identities and traditional practices and ways of life in order to create the so-called «homo sovieticus».

The dilemma was apparently settled from the Soviet point of view: entities had been artificially created around ethnic groups – the Persian suffix «-stan» means «country, place where one stands, land of»²¹ – whose differences were emphasised (and exaggerated unnaturally) in order to prevent a hypothetical union and accordingly keep the struggle permanently buried; and the majority ethnic groups of each new republic were in the right proportion – never too high – so that the new entities required the tutelage

²⁰ To cite an example, in Uzbekistan and much of Kazakhstan cotton was almost cultivated as a single crop – directed by the state. This not only prevented the development of a more interwoven economic structure but led the Aral Sea, one of the world's largest freshwater lakes until the mid-twentieth century, to become almost completely dried up and the croplands to be saturated by the chemicals used in huge quantities, causing pollution and environmental risks that even today are a serious direct threat to the security of the people and countries in the region. This aspect is examined in greater detail in due course.

²¹ Online Etymology Dictionary, «Stan». Available at http://etymonline.com/index.php?allowed_in_frame=0&search=stan

of the USSR to remain viable and were in turn used by Moscow to ensure its regional and global interests, as the struggle for the region continued, and was furthermore immersed in a global ideological conflict.

The global struggle for Central Asia continues

Following the Second World War, in which the USSR fought on the side of the Allies, and Hitler's defeat, the situation ended up morphing into the Cold War, with the Soviet Union at the core of one of the two blocs that vied for global supremacy. And the Great Game returned, this time in the form of Keenan's so-called theory of containment²² – which, together with other initiatives designed for the same purpose, underpinned world politics for nearly half a century. By and large, these theories take up geopolitician Nicholas J. Spykman's ideas on the need to control what he calls the Rimland – a broad strip of land encircling the heartland – enabling it to be contained.

In this global confrontation, Central Asia continued to be a key area for both the USSR and its adversaries, in keeping with the age-old role it had played with respect to the empires of each period. Apart from its geopolitical value (or as a further indication of it), nuclear weapons were deployed in Kazakhstan (which came to have 1,410 nuclear warheads and a centre for testing these weapons in the northeast of the country, Semipalatinsk, 150 km from the city with that name in the northeast of the country), as well as biological weapons (the USSR's largest plant for producing these weapons was in Stepnogorsk, 200 kilometres northeast of Astana) and chemical weapons (in Pavlodar, 450 km northeast of Astana and 405 km southeast of the Russian city of Omsk),²³ thereby reinforcing these republics' role in Soviet military doctrine. Indeed, most of these locations were in the northern part of Kazakhstan, which was – and continues to be – home to a large proportion of ethnic Russians, leaving a huge buffer zone made up of the rest of the Central Asian republics and Kazakhstan's own steppes to the south.

But the struggle was not only between Marxism and capitalism, between the USSR and the US; especially in the «underbelly» or southern flank of the USSR, other movements and actors engaged in their own fight, which obviously made an impact on the area and served as a sounding board on a global level; as in past and recent times, pan-Turkism and pan-Islamism thus played a role in Central Asia, despite russification, korenisation and Russian and Soviet nationalism.

²² George F. Keenan (1904–2005) was a US diplomat whose publications inspired the theory of containment, among other important aspects of US foreign policy. It is extremely interesting to read the so-called «long telegram» sent from Moscow in 1945 presenting the Soviet world view of the time from his perspective. The text of the telegram is available at <http://nsarchive.gwu.edu/coldwar/documents/episode-1/kennan.htm>

²³ Nuclear Threat Initiative, «Kazakhstan». Available at <http://www.nti.org/learn/countries/kazakhstan/>

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Pan-Turkism²⁴ arose in the nineteenth century as an effort to unite all the Turkic peoples, both the Turks of Turkey and the so-called «outside Turks» (*Diş Türkler*). It emerged in the academic field, where Orientalists – mostly westerners – drew attention to the existence of common characteristics between the different Turkic peoples, and their essays greatly influenced the bourgeois and elites of the time.

Following the First World War (1914–18), the end of the Ottoman Empire and the creation of Turkey by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (1881–1938) put a major damper on pan-Turkic and pan-Islamic ideals.

With respect to pan-Islamism, at the start of the Russian Revolution and during the subsequent civil war, the Islamic radicals attempted to take advantage of the existing anarchy to win positions, but were crushed by the Bolsheviks, who regarded them as a bourgeois and reactionary movement, as well as by the White Russians, who pursued a harsher ethnic policy than the tsars.²⁵ And the abovementioned Basmachi Revolt was a clear warning to the Soviets of the risks of pan-Turkic or pan-Islamic movements spreading in Central Asia.

Both Russians and Soviets reacted to these integrating movements by acting in the opposite direction. As pan-Turkism and pan-Islamism aimed for union, the idea was to boost nationalism and localism by drawing attention to the ethnic «specificity» of each group and stressing how these elements were part of the Russian Empire or Soviet Union.

Although during the Second World War (1939–1945) Nazi propaganda attempted to revive this irredentist pan-Turkic project as a means of acting against the USSR, pressure from the Allies and the defeats the Axis forces began to suffer on the eastern front highlighted the danger of again embracing pan-Turkism.²⁶ And after the war, with Turkey having joined the western sphere – it became a member of NATO in 1952 – the formal discourse ceased to exist, though pan-Turkism did catch on again among part of the population, especially people who were less integrated in the major cities, and grew significantly from the 1970s onwards.

Furthermore, beginning in the late 1960s, the Soviets set out to use the Muslim populations living in their territory to increase their infiltration of the Arab Muslim world – it should be remembered that this was the height of the Cold War – by sending delegates to Islamic conferences in various countries and even organising one. These actions had an undesired effect for Moscow,

²⁴ See BALCI, Bayram and SALI Ahmet, *Panturquisme: vie et mort d'une idéologie*, Institut Français d'Études Anatoliennes, 2001, pp. 15–22. Available at <http://books.openedition.org/ifeagd/140?lang=es>

²⁵ ZAPATER ESPI, Luis Tomás, *Asia Central: conflictos étnicos, nuevo nacionalismo e islam*, Quiles, Valencia, 2005, p. 29.

²⁶ ÇALIS, Saban, «Pan-Turkism and Europeanism: A Note on Turkey's' Pro-German Neutrality during the Second World War», *Central Asian Survey*, no. 16, 1997, pp. 103–14.

as contact with the outside world led the Soviet Muslims to realise they were second-class citizens and brought political Islam to the regions of the USSR with a Muslim majority, leading to serious subsequent consequences.²⁷

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, with foreign assistance and funding, ended up triggering a new jihad against the Soviets, this time highly successful as it managed to expel a USSR by then in the throes of decline and spark a resurgence of Islam in Central Asia.

There was thus a clash between these «pan» visions and the absolute value the Soviets attached to territory, which had led them to create national territories for the invented nations.²⁸ Similarly, in the ideological framework of the regime, the Soviets laid the foundations for local nationalist movements and assigned each Central Asian republic a different cultural heritage²⁹ in an attempt to give solidity to the entities created – even distributing great historical figures among them according to spurious criteria – and avoid their potential integration into all-embracing foreign movements like pan-Turkism and pan-Islam based on cultural or religious parameters.

But the protection of the «Big Brother», the USSR, ensured a certain degree of stability and continuity, and while the Soviet Union continued to exist, the situation appeared to be under control.

The USSR falls... what about Central Asia...?

When the USSR crumbled very quickly in 1991, out of all its republics, the five of Central Asia were the least prepared to stand on their own two feet – in fact, Kazakhstan was the last of all to proclaim its independence. None of the native peoples had experience – at least not in the modern age and without any kind of supervision – of functioning as a state, or any tradition of formal political representation of this kind, let alone a democratic system, as both the nomads of the steppes and mountains and the sedentary farmers, until being brought under the yoke of the tsars or Soviets, had always in varying degrees been a mixture of Khanate and tribal authority.³⁰

In view of the foregoing, the Communist Party secretaries general of three of the new independent republics (Nazarbayev in Kazakhstan, Karimov in

²⁷ JONSON, Lena, *Tajikistan in the New Central Asia: Geopolitics, Great Power Rivalry and Radical Islam*, I.B. Tauris, London, 2006, p. 43.

²⁸ FRAGNER, Bert (2001). «Soviet Nationalism: An Ideological Legacy to the Independent Republics of Central Asia», in SCHENDEL, Willem Van and ZÜRCHER, Erik J. (eds) *Identity Politics in Central Asia and the Muslim World*, I.B. Tauris Publishers, London, 2001, p. 22.

²⁹ TOUTANT Marc, «De l'indigénisation soviétique au panturquisme académique», *European Journal of Turkish Studies*, no. 22, 2016. Available at <http://ejts.revues.org/5308>

³⁰ DENISON, Michael, «Identity Politics in Central Asia», *Asian Affairs* volume XXXIV no. 1, p.58. Available at <http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/apcity/unpan011695.pdf>

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Uzbekistan and Niyazov in Turkmenistan), using the existing power apparatus inherited from the Soviet era, quickly morphed into nationalist leaders, presenting themselves as guarantors and continuers of stability. Kyrgyzstan witnessed a change of government and it initially appeared that certain reforms were being made, whereas Tajikistan, the poorest and most remote republic – from Moscow, the centre of power – became fragmented and a bloody, predominantly local civil war broke out (1992–97) between parties over control of resources and the principles that should guide the country (Islamic or lay, authoritarian or democratic, etc.). It lasted five years, claimed 60,000 lives and displaced more than 600,000 people out of a population of about six million.³¹

One of many direct consequences of the disappearance of the USSR was the emergence as independent actors of five Turkish-speaking states (Azerbaijan in the Caucasus and Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan in Central Asia). This was greeted with euphoria by the supporters of pan-Turkism, whose aim of creating a Turkish world, a «Turkish arc» spanning from the Adriatic to the Wall of China, seemed to be possible at one point.

Fear that radical Islam would spread across Central Asia with Afghanistan, where the Taliban seized power in 2006, as the focal point garnered a certain amount of support for the pan-Turkic idea from certain international sectors. However, the leaders of the new independent nations that had recently emerged from under the Soviet wing, many of them with a strong Soviet educational background – though, as usual, there are differences between the five republics – in general were not very keen on an alternative type of supervision.

Turkey was not the only country with interests in the area: other actors – for example the western world and China – also had their sights set on Central Asia. Furthermore, Central Asian leaders were focusing their efforts on the opposite task: on promoting each nation's particular features as a means of gaining a firm grip on power and controlling the power structures of these very fragile states as far as possible.

Similarly, the situation of Russia following the breakup of the USSR is highly complex³² – so much so that amid the economic, social and military collapse

³¹ AKINER Shirin, *Tajikistan: Disintegration or Reconciliation?* Royal Institute of International Affairs, London, 2001.

³² The purpose of this section is not to examine in detail the situation resulting from the collapse of the USSR and the changes of all kinds in Russia as the core of the extinct Soviet Union, as there is much literature on this, such as: KHAZANOV, Anatoly M., *After the USSR: Ethnicity, Nationalism and Politics in the Commonwealth of Independent States*, University of Wisconsin Press, Wisconsin, 1995; ASLUND, Anders and OLCOTT, Martha B., *Russia after Communism*, Brookings Institution Press, Washington, 2013; BOWKER, Mike and ROSS Cameron, *Russia after the Cold War*, Routledge, London, 2014.

any attempt to cling to at least part of its former superpower status clashed head-on with reality, giving rise to a gradual need to reverse the situation and regain internal stability and what Russia believes to be its rightful role in the world. And this is the mission Vladimir Putin took it upon himself to fulfil from the time he was appointed by Yeltsin in 1999 and elected as president in 2000.

Current situation

Domestic affairs

Although it is not easy to make sweeping generalisations encompassing all five countries in the region, it is possible, without attempting to be exhaustive, to establish several common parameters that explain the internal tensions to which they are all subject to a greater or lesser degree.

Nationalism

As pointed out earlier, the Persian suffix «-stan» means «country, place where one stands, land of». Kazakhstan is thus the land of the Kazaks, just as there is a land of the Uzbeks (Uzbekistan), of the Tajiks (Tajikistan), and so on. But by extension, although it currently designates the country's citizens, regardless of their ethnic origin, the human mosaic in each of the different nations artificially created beginning in the tsarist period makes it difficult to identify an ethnic group automatically with a country.

Therefore nationalism, taken to mean citizens' identification with their nation state, can have a double meaning in these countries, as their very name links them to a particular ethnic group. This can be contrasted with the perception of a national identity among the various ethnic groups and, no less importantly, it can generate tension with neighbouring and nearby countries where there are minority ethnic groups «outside their Stan». For example, the existence of Kazaks in China, Russia and Turkey could, under certain circumstances, cause the same kind of problems that exist in Afghanistan, whose north has important Tajik, Uzbek and other minorities and has withstood for the longest period – often successfully – being controlled by the country's capital, Kabul.

The fact that most of these societies have no history of state structures and, on the contrary, revolve around the clan and the tribe, accounts for the greater loyalty that continues to be shown towards these organisations, human structures which are often more familiar and intuitive. Therefore, the various governments' attempts – with varying degrees of determination – to achieve loyalty towards the «State» instead of towards the «clan» or «ethnic group» clash with the history and habits of their subjects, who do not fully perceive a sensation of equality regardless of their ethnic origin.

Structural weakness and corruption

Institutional weakness is evident in most cases: not only because of the difficulties inherent in the problem of national cohesion but also because of the authoritarian governments which often remain in their posts for decades. By way of example, in Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev has been president since the country gained its independence, with a regime that we would not be hard put to describe as authoritarian and displaying severe constraints on freedoms;³³ and the death – on which there was speculation for several days – in early September 2016 of Uzbekistan's President Islam Karimov, who had also been in power since the dissolution of the USSR, raises significant doubts as to the country's future.³⁴

The weakness of the area's economic web and its reliance on other countries, largely Russia and the sale of commodities, is evidenced by the importance of emigrants' remittances in shoring up the national economies. Indeed, they are often the only source of income on which much of the population survives: remittances accounted for 42% of Tajikistan's GDP and 32% of Kyrgyzstan's in 2014, the highest percentages in the world.³⁵

When the global economic crisis first struck, millions of emigrants from these countries lost their jobs and headed home, placing further strain on the already weak or almost non-existent social support structures, especially in Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, giving rise to a situation that has been unparalleled in recent decades.³⁶

As if this situation were not serious enough, the situation has been further exacerbated, as following Russia's action in Crimea and Ukraine and the resulting sanctions imposed by the western countries, the Russian economy was weakened and the value of the rouble fell steeply; therefore, not only were emigrants' chances of finding work there diminished and remittances lost value owing to the depreciation of Russia's currency, but they also fell in number. And as a collateral effect, as in a vicious circle, the value of the currencies of each of the countries, which are closely linked to the rouble, also plummeted, weakening their economies in varying degrees.

The situation is such that, in addition to high unemployment, wages are paid late or not at all – and this sometimes applies to the security forces, a key

³³ *Human Rights Watch, World Report 2015*, «Kazakhstan». Available at <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2015/country-chapters/kazakhstan>

³⁴ *El país*, «Miedo al vacío», 2 September 2016. Available at http://internacional.elpais.com/internacional/2016/09/02/actualidad/1472840523_759540.html

³⁵ World Bank, press release 6 October 2014. Available at <http://www.bancomundial.org/es/news/press-release/2014/10/06/remittances-developing-countries-five-percent-conflict-related-migration-all-time-high-wb-report>

³⁶ International Crisis Group, «Central Asia: Migrants and the Economic Crisis», Report no. 183, January 2010.

element under such circumstances. This has triggered an overall increase in malaise about the significant inequality and corruption and rising poverty.³⁷

Accusations of corruption, nepotism and cronyism are constant. For example, in the context of a criminal investigation initiated by the Swiss authorities into alleged money laundering, it was concluded that large sums of money paid by US citizens into Swiss bank accounts were in fact bribes paid by US companies to Kazak government officials in exchange for obtaining prospecting rights for oil in the country. The investigation led to the confiscation – and return to Kazakhstan – in both Switzerland and the United States of more than a hundred million dollars, which were indeed related to oil industry bribes.³⁸

Struggle for control of information and the population

In these environments, transparency and freedom of expression and communication are not exactly exemplary, and it is common for them to be routinely obstructed or even for access to the social media or electronic messaging services to be hindered. This is sometimes carried out repeatedly, usually following the publication of material or information classified by governments as potentially dangerous.

Counter-terrorism is used as a pretext for denying users access to many websites, though in many cases they are simply media that have published political analyses critical of the government. Any criticism of the authorities or political opposition related to combating corruption is monitored especially closely by the authorities, although the situation of freedom on the internet as measured by Freedom House (on a scale of 0 to 100, from more to less freedom) varies from one country to another, between Kyrgyzstan (35) and Uzbekistan (68)³⁹ with Kazakhstan in the middle (61).

The new battlefield the electronic and social media have become reflects the present-day dispute between the «Russian» and «western» worlds. There are even bids to close these countries' cyber-borders, campaigns pointing out that internet data are not secure, and warnings of the risk of their being used to spread «colour revolutions».⁴⁰ All these aspects attest to the fact that

³⁷ Radio Free Europe, «Down and out in Central Asia», 9 April 2015. Available at <http://www.rferl.org/content/qishloq-ovozi--economic-crisis-central-asia-russia-remittances/27664253.html>

³⁸ Gretta Fenner Zinkernagel and Kodjo Attisso, «Returning Stolen Assets. Learning from Past Practice: Selected Case Studies», International Center for Asset Recovery, p.5. Available at https://www.baselgovernance.org/sites/collective.localhost/files/documents/131024_selected_case_studies.pdf

³⁹ Freedom House, «Freedom on the Net 2015». Available at <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-net/freedom-net-2015>

⁴⁰ Globalvoices, «Urgen a los líderes eurasiáticos a que cierren sus ciberfronteras», 24 February 2016. Available at <https://es.globalvoices.org/2016/02/24/urgan-a-los-lideres-eurasiaticos-a-que-cierren-sus-ciber-fronteras/>

the respective countries' governments can rely on foreign support to achieve their aims in this respect.

There is thus a constant awareness among governments and opposition alike that civil unrest – organised and encouraged to a greater or lesser degree, and similar to the so-called «colour revolutions» that occurred in other parts of the former USSR (such as in Georgia in 2003 and in Ukraine in 2004) – could succeed in overthrowing the established power, such as the «tulip revolution» that led in 2005 to the fall of the Kyrgyz government accused of authoritarianism and corruption.

This new government was in turn toppled in another revolt in 2010, the so-called Osh uprising.⁴¹ This was followed a few months later by a major ethnic clash⁴² in a dangerous spiral that has generated large-scale instability and, as usually occurs in most of these revolutions, spurs the new leaders to tighten their control over the population to prevent a counterreaction... which normally brings everything back to square one. And if to this political situation we add leaders' loyalty to an ethnic group or clan, it can be seen how political revolts can and do easily develop into ethnic struggles (as occurred between Kyrgyz and Uzbeks following the uprising of 2010) in which clan and tribal cultures reign supreme over national or political identity.

Regional issues

It is feasible to add to these internal weaknesses the sum of the differences between the various nations and regional issues that necessary require the involvement of all or several of these countries in order to be addressed with any degree of success.

Border disputes and security

Given the artificial origin of these nations and the fact that they were designed purposely by the Soviet Union to be vulnerable and mutually dependent, there are unresolved border disputes – mixed up with political, economic, nationalist, ethnic and other quarrels related to corruption and organised crime – between several of these republics. Kyrgyzstan is involved in border disputes with Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, as the border (measuring 1,314 km) has not yet been properly delimited; these quarrels include occasional crossfire between the border guards of the different countries.

⁴¹ BBC Mundo, «'Gobierno del pueblo' en Kirguistán», 8 April 2010. Available at http://web.archive.org/web/20100412013815/http://www.bbc.co.uk/mundo/internacional/2010/04/100407_0150_kirguistan_gobierno_opositor_ministros_gm.shtml

⁴² *El País*, «La Suiza de Asia Central en peligro», 11 July 2010. Available at http://elpais.com/diario/2010/07/11/domingo/1278820360_850215.html

Borders between states not only represent administrative dividing lines; they are also one of the main attributes of national sovereignty and act as barriers for keep out external risks and threats. The location of Central Asia along one of the world's main thoroughfares means that illegal cross-border trafficking – in drugs, arms and people – is highly significant. Therefore, cross-border security and systems for securing borders, and awareness of the key role played by security and the significance and power of corruption are a top priority. The need for a stable and well-defined border, which would have a key impact on regional security, possibilities of economic cooperation, ethnic relations and the results of combating religious extremism and unlawful trafficking,⁴³ was pointed out nearly fifteen years ago and has now become an urgent concern.

A characteristic example of this situation is the Fergana Valley, a natural compartment measuring some 300 x 70 km that is rich in resources and has a high population density. When the Soviet Union created the republics in the 1920s, it was divided – and not precisely in keeping with the existing ethnic groups – between Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan.

Unrest began to emerge in the final stage of the Soviet Union's existence, and following its collapse quarrels over resources – for this is one of the richest agricultural areas in the whole of Central Asia – became widespread. The situation was further exacerbated by the difficulty and scarcity of links between the outer part of the valley and the respective capitals of each republic, and by the fact that the governments have failed to reach a proper agreement on the demarcation of its borders, which is a source of constant problems.⁴⁴

In addition, its key geographical location – it is no coincidence that it was one of the points along the old Silk Road – makes it rife with illegal trafficking of all kinds, especially heroin from Afghanistan. And the existence of radical Islamist groups brings an added difficulty, both locally as well as regionally and globally – so much so that this valley is considered the heart of Central Asia⁴⁵ and perhaps a compendium of many of its differences and difficulties.

Therefore, cross-border cooperation is essential, as it is the only means of stemming these threats – and in this respect the European Union has been activity involved⁴⁶ – especially considering that three of these republics

⁴³ International Crisis Group, «Central Asia: Border Disputes and Conflict Potential», Asia Report no. 33, 2002.

⁴⁴ *New Europe*, «Border Dispute in Central Asia: A Real Threat!», 26 January 2014. Available at <https://www.neweurope.eu/article/border-dispute-central-asia-real-threat/>

⁴⁵ STARR, S. Frederick, *Ferghana Valley: The Heart of Central Asia*, Routledge, New York, 2015.

⁴⁶ European Commission, International Cooperation and Development, «Central Asia Border Management». Available at http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/regions/central-asia/eu-support-border-management-central-asia_en

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share borders with northern Afghanistan. However, as stated, not only is there disagreement over border delimitation, but the structural weakness of the nations is leading to highly complex situations: Uzbekistan's accusations of Kyrgyzstan's failure to control its borders have sometimes been used as an excuse for incursions into neighbouring territory.⁴⁷

But the disputes are ongoing, for different reasons and with different arguments. What is more, when they are between the two richest and most powerful nations in the region, including in terms of military might (Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan) and the poorest (Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan), with Turkmenistan in the middle, they are often asymmetric, with one party enjoying a stronger bargaining position.⁴⁸ In addition, since Kyrgyzstan is also, to an extent, the country with the most open and transparent regime compared to the rest of the region, and this situation gives it a something destabilising image in the eyes of the rest, the cocktail can be explosive.

Water and energy

The Central Asian countries can clearly and simply be divided into two groups in this respect: those with rich hydrocarbon resources but a shortage of water (Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan); and those that are rich in water – as they contain and therefore control river sources – but poor in hydrocarbons.

The regional structuring carried out by the Soviets seriously compromised each nation's ability to guarantee its energy and water security without the assistance of its neighbours, and therefore, on top of the factors already discussed, relations are not exactly cordial. Indeed, these resources have become a constant source of disputes: threats of cutting off the gas supplied by Uzbekistan to Kyrgyzstan in the midst of winter – recalling the situation experienced by Ukraine several times – and the use of gas as a means of exerting pressure on this country led Russia to attempt to mediate, once again highlighting the role Moscow plays in the region.⁴⁹

Two of these countries' rich water resources and their use in agriculture – often hugely water-intensive crops, such as cotton – and hydroelectric production contrast with the necessity and shortages suffered by the rest. And since the water infrastructure of the Soviet era was created from a regional point of view, it is currently triggering heated disputes: one-third

⁴⁷ Institute for the Study of Conflict, Ideology and Policy, «Uzbek-Kyrgyz Relations fall into the Trenches», volume XVI, no. 1, 2009. Available at <http://www.bu.edu/phpbin/news-cms/news/?dept=732&id=54392>

⁴⁸ *The Diplomat*, «An Absence of Diplomacy: the Kyrgyz-Uzbek Border Dispute», 1 April 2016. Available at <http://thediplomat.com/2016/04/an-absence-of-diplomacy-the-kyrgyz-uzbek-border-dispute/>

⁴⁹ Institute for War and Peace Reporting, «Russia Factor Shifts Kyrgyz-Uzbek Power Balance», 12 July 2014. Available at <https://iwpr.net/global-voices/russia-factor-shifts-kyrgyz-uzbek-power-balance>

of Central Asia's water is controlled by Kyrgyzstan, which, with its 6 million inhabitants, has a substantial water supply and hydroelectric potential, whereas the more powerful Uzbekistan, which has 29 million inhabitants and is located in the lower part of the watercourses, depends on the flow of water from its neighbour. Despite the agreements signed, including that on the relative use of the Orto-Tokoy dam,⁵⁰ the situation is so tense that there is sometimes talk of water wars.⁵¹

Uzbekistan's rich gas and hydrocarbon resources, whose supply it uses as a means of exerting pressure on Kyrgyzstan, are threatened by the projects to build hydroelectric plants that would ensure the latter an energy supply, though this would probably force it to place more restrictions on the flow of water – a red line for Uzbekistan.

Therefore, not only does the uneven distribution of these resources trigger differences between the Central Asian nations themselves, but their abundance, especially hydrocarbons, is whetting the appetite of the powerful nations in the area⁵² and shaping a new framework for a global energy dispute. As a result, although there are different positions with respect to reserves and production capacity, there has been talk of a new «Great Game» in the area, centred on energy, for more than a decade.⁵³

Environmental problems

The growing demand for water and energy, coupled with their inefficient use due to habits dating from the countries' Soviet past and the age and low capacity of their distribution networks, leads to considerable losses, especially in urban distribution and industrial use, as well as a high degree of pollution. And if we bear in mind that crops requiring significant irrigation are the livelihood of one-third of the population of Central Asia and account for between one- and two-fifths of the region's GDP, internal and external tensions are evidently unavoidable.

The location in the region of a nuclear testing site and the abundance of atomic and industrial waste dumps is not only causing a high degree of atmospheric pollution – especially owing to the low technological standards

⁵⁰ Institute for War and Peace Reporting, «Uzbek-Kyrgyz Border Spat Highlights Tensions», 24 March 2016. Available at <https://iwpr.net/global-voices/uzbek-kyrgyz-border-spat-highlights-tensions>

⁵¹ European Parliament Research Service, «Water Disputes in Central Asia. Rising Tension Threatens Regional Stability», Briefing, October 2015. Available at [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2015/571303/EPRS_BRI\(2015\)571303_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2015/571303/EPRS_BRI(2015)571303_EN.pdf)

⁵² *Foreign Affairs*, «Oil's Well in Central Asia», 29 May 2015. Available at <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2015-05-19/oils-well-central-asia>

⁵³ See KLEVEMAN, Lutz, *The New Great Game: Blood and Oil in Central Asia*, Grove Press, New York, 2004.

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of the past – but is increasing the possibility of cross-border pollution and is a source of constant recriminations between countries.

What is more, climate change is having a devastating effect on Central Asia, where it is becoming a problem of national and regional security; long periods of drought and major thaws are not only affecting the weak economies but are giving rise to considerable social malaise and undermining available income in an area that already has more than its fair share of natural disasters. And while the traditional remedy for an inactive labour force was emigration – legal or otherwise – the current situation is making this an increasingly less feasible means of ensuring survival, as we have seen.

In short, environmental degradation is giving rise to a situation that is intensifying the scramble for resources in and among the nations and poses a serious threat to regional security.⁵⁴

Global issues

On top of the state-level and regional circumstances which can and sometimes do trigger conflict situations, it should be realised that, in the eyes of the outside world, Central Asia is regaining much of the value that it had perhaps lost for foreign actors and forces when it was under powerful Soviet protection.

These powerful dynamics are converging in the zone in a highly evident way, sparking new struggles and differences that can potentially trigger disputes. In addition, the actors in question often use state and regional problems to achieve their own ends. Accumulated tension could thus develop into a conflict with unpredictable consequences.

Although the role of the external agents will be examined briefly in a later section, we will refer here to two issues that are highly relevant to conflict potential: religious radicalism – and evidently terrorism – and the new «Great Game», which attest to the existing religious struggle.

Terrorism and religious radicalism

Fearing that Central Asia would become a possible hotspot for radicalism, following the 9/11 attacks in 2001 President Vladimir Putin agreed to the deployment of western military forces and allowed the United States to use air force bases in Central Asia during the Afghanistan campaign. For fighting what was already perceived as a global terrorist network concerned – and continues to concern – Russia as much as it did most nations in the world.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ EUCAMwatch, *Environmental Security in Central Asia*, Issue 13 October 2012. Available at http://www.eucentralasia.eu/uploads/tx_icticontent/EUCAM-Watch-13.pdf

⁵⁵ JONSON, Lena, *Vladimir Putin and Central Asia: The Shaping of Russian Foreign Policy*, I.B. Tauris, London, 2004, pp. 74–75.

This possibility – a new source of radicalism – which has merely grown over the years, is spurred by the fact that the generation born after the fall of the USSR has witnessed the collapse of a way of life with clear-cut paradigms and ideologies and the existence of a certain degree of support and public welfare. And the vacuum left by the end of this era has not been filled by other ideals and realities that indicate a change for the better; on the contrary, people's perceptions are of a lack of freedom, corruption and few expectations.

Under such circumstances, the messages of radical Islam are taking deep root, especially as moderate Islam, which is professed by the vast majority of the population, lacks sufficient government support and is even questioned insofar as it is perceived by the respective governments to be a criticism of their actions.

Although the concept of national identity is stronger than the idea of the caliphate proclaimed by Daesh, the question of national identity versus Islamic identity is highly controversial⁵⁶ as it often entails an ethnic component in these nations and also goes back a long way – Russians and Soviets were aware of and used it as a weapon in past centuries. As such, it is one of the main factors for addressing the terrorist threat. Therefore, progress in nation building, which encompasses aspects ranging from national identity to combating poverty and corruption, can directly curb the threat of Daesh's expansion,⁵⁷ in combination with regional efforts, as the potential shift by any part of these countries, and especially by a whole country, towards extremism would undoubtedly trigger a regional conflict with potentially global implications.

Although it is difficult to verify the data, members of Daesh in Syria and Iraq are thought to include some two thousand people⁵⁸ from Central Asian countries, though other estimates put the figure at about 1,500.⁵⁹ And now that Russia is engaged in direct confrontation with Daesh in Syria, and the coalition and Iraqi army are advancing, the terrorist organisation's retreat is spurring the return to their countries of origin of many people who went to join its ranks. The fact that they are returning with the status of veterans is arousing considerable concern among their countries of origin as they are a potential threat to these nations.⁶⁰

⁵⁶ STARR, S. Frederick, *Ferghana Valley: The Heart of Central Asia*, Routledge, New York, 2015, pp. 296–372.

⁵⁷ In this connection, see Arne C. Seifert, «Preventing the 'Islamic State' in Central Asia. Conditions, Risks and Peace Policy Requirements», Security Police Working Paper no. 7/2016, Available at https://www.baks.bund.de/sites/baks010/files/working_paper_2016_07.pdf

⁵⁸ DW, «El atractivo de Asia Central para el EI», 29 March 2016. Available at <http://www.dw.com/es/el-atractivo-de-asia-central-para-el-ei/a-19148926>

⁵⁹ International Centre for the Study of Radicalization, «Foreign Fighter Total in Syria/Iraq now Exceeds 20,000; Surpasses Afghanistan Conflict in 1980», 26 January 2015. Available at <http://icsr.info/2015/01/foreign-fighter-total-syriairaq-now-exceeds-20000-surpasses-afghanistan-conflict-1980s/>

⁶⁰ *The Diplomat*, «Is Central Asia Ready to Fight ISIS?», 8 July 2016. Available at <http://thediplomat.com/2016/07/is-central-asia-ready-to-face-isis/>

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There is thus significant concern about terrorism and radicalisation in this region, as the situation may well be worsened by the existence of a potential breeding ground and the return of people from different areas of conflict. Indeed, the United Nations launched an initiative designed to support the Central Asian governments and the regional and international organisations in the area in implementing the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, developing an Action Plan for this purpose.⁶¹ And the fact that terrorist attacks are periodically perpetrated, the growing presence of Central Asians in Daesh's structures⁶² and the desertion of the chief of one of Tajikistan's special police units, who subsequently joined the organisation,⁶³ are evident proof that radicalism is attempting to gain a foothold in this key region of Eurasia.

The new battle for Central Asia

In 2013 China's President Xi Jinping announced the idea of recovering the old Silk Road as one of China's main trade strategies for boosting its economy and foreign trade, which had been dented by the global economic crisis. This initiative consists of a group of land routes which, like the Silk Road that connected Asia and Europe centuries ago, will allow the movement of goods between the two continents, with Central Asia as one of the main transit areas crossed by these routes. The initiative even includes a shipping route linking China with southeast Asia and Africa.

This project, known by the acronym OBOR (One Belt One Road), presents an overview of the idea. Many issues will need to be developed and many difficulties and complexities overcome, as it crosses some 60 countries and connects nearly half of the world's population.

Certainly, the idea is not to create huge new infrastructure out of nothing, but rather to gradually improve existing elements and put in place any that are needed, as well as implement coordination mechanisms. Using various financial structures, China has not only set up a 40-billion-dollar fund to encourage investment in the initiative but is planning to directly invest one billion dollars.⁶⁴

⁶¹ United Nations, «Implementing the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in Central Asia», United Nations Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force. Available at http://www.un.org/es/terrorism/ctitf/proj_centralasia.shtml

⁶² International Crisis Group, «Syria Calling: Radicalization in Central Asia», Europe and Central Asia briefing no. 72, 2015.

⁶³ International Crisis Group, «Tajikistan Early Warning: Internal Pressures, External Threats», Europe and Central Asia briefing no. 78, 2016.

⁶⁴ ABC; «China invierte un billón de euros para impulsar la nueva Ruta de la Seda», 1 September 2016. Available at http://www.abc.es/economia/abci-china-invierte-billon-euros-para-impulsar-nueva-ruta-seda-201608230147_noticia.html

But this project will not only have an impact on China: it will also improve the infrastructure of the countries it passes through. In addition, it will not only boost trade relations but will also strengthen existing political and diplomatic ties – there are plenty of comparisons with the Marshall Plan after the Second World War. This is already occurring in Central Asia, potentially one of the key areas for this route as a world thoroughfare.

Therefore, as the implications of this issue are obviously not confined to global economic or commercial aspects, many partly overlapping and/or complementary initiatives are being developed: for example, a regional investment forum⁶⁵ held in Istanbul in February 2016 was attended by all the Central Asian republics except Uzbekistan, in addition to Turkey, China and Mongolia. Russia did not take part.

Therefore, it is of utmost interest to establish whether the main part of the route will run through Central Asia towards Russia and Europe (north corridor) or whether preference will be given to the south corridor, which would link Europe with Turkey and Iran via Turkmenistan – the already existing TRACECA initiative⁶⁶ envisages a corridor that largely runs through this area – and could avoid crossing Russia, thereby depriving Moscow of a major economic and geopolitical advantage. And the central corridor designed to run from China across the Caspian Sea and to Turkey via Azerbaijan and Georgia also undermines Russia's position and possibilities, while reinforcing those of Turkey in the «pan-Turkic» area par excellence.

Moscow was initially extremely wary of this initiative, which it regarded as a lack of respect for Russia's traditional interest in the area,⁶⁷ but certain circumstances, such as China's powerful presence and financial clout in the region, the international isolation to which Russia was subjected following its actions in Crimea and Ukraine, which China did not support – the Chinese president took pride of place next to Putin at the Victory parade in Moscow in 2015 – and the search for real or apparent common interests in the region under the pretext of creating a common economic area, seem to have helped allay any extreme misgivings about the project.

Following a summit meeting in Moscow in May 2015, Putin stated that this initiative complemented others started up by Russia – including with

⁶⁵ European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, «Central Asia investment Forum: Forging Relationships for Growth», 18 February 2016. Available at <http://www.ebrd.com/news/events/central-asia-investment-forum-forging-relationships-for-growth.html>

⁶⁶ TRAansport Corridor Europe Caucasus Asia. Available at <http://www.traceca-org.org/en/home/>

⁶⁷ XIN, Zhang, «Has 'Coordination' Started?», p. 2, *Russian Analytical Digest*, no. 183, 3 May 2016, pp. 2–5. Available at <http://www.css.ethz.ch/content/dam/ethz/special-interest/gess/cis/center-for-securities-studies/pdfs/RAD183.pdf>

the Eurasian Economic Union⁶⁸ – and there is apparently some common ground: Russia is interested in ensuring that this initiative is connected with the Trans-Siberian network from the Pacific ports in order to strengthen – instead of eclipsing – its role as a fundamental link between Asia and Europe. In security matters in Central Asia, Russia will continue to be the leading actor without Chinese interference.⁶⁹ In addition, the different levels of socioeconomic development of the countries in the region are greatly hindering China's possibilities of achieving a good level of coordination,⁷⁰ and this sometimes requires the assistance of Russia to achieve tangible results. Russia thus seeks to tweak its role in the region in this age of readjustments to the global power balance in order to protect its influence and interests.⁷¹

As a result, the possibilities – and pressures – of and on Central Asia are increasing,⁷² just as, obviously, determination to have the network of routes run across its own territory is growing because of the economic potential this generates and, above all, the power that being able to control an important global route or isolate a «rival» area entails.

The Central Asian republics, which, as pointed out, are not a homogeneous and cohesive element, are attempting in varying degrees to follow what the president of Kazakhstan calls a «multi-vector» policy, which can be summed up as endeavouring to achieve a pragmatic balance between the powers' interests in the region in order to maximise the country's benefits, albeit with a progressive shift towards Asia,⁷³ aware of its situation of relative dependence and weakness and of the huge, powerful forces that converge in the area.

⁶⁸ Belarus, Armenia, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan belong to the Russian-led organisation. More information at Eurasian Economic Commission <http://www.eurasiancommission.org/en/Pages/default.aspx>

⁶⁹ *The Diplomat*, «Eurasian Silk Road Union: Towards a Russia-China Consensus?», 5 June 2015. Available at <http://thediplomat.com/2015/06/eurasian-silk-road-union-towards-a-russia-china-consensus/>

⁷⁰ LIFAN, Li, «The Challenges Facing Russian-Chinese Efforts to 'Dock' the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) and One Belt, One Road (OBOR)», p. 7, in *Russian Analytical Digest*, no. 183, 3 May 2016, pp. 5–9. Available at <http://www.css.ethz.ch/content/dam/ethz/special-interest/gess/cis/center-for-securities-studies/pdfs/RAD183.pdf>

⁷¹ GABUEV, Alexander, «Post-Soviet States Jostle for Role in One Belt One Road Initiative», p. 10 in *Russian Analytical Digest*, no. 183, 3 May 2016, pp. 9–11. Available at <http://www.css.ethz.ch/content/dam/ethz/special-interest/gess/cis/center-for-securities-studies/pdfs/RAD183.pdf>

⁷² *La Vanguardia*, «Foro económico busca establecer Asia Central como puente entre China y Europa», 19 February 2016. Available at <http://www.lavanguardia.com/vida/20160218/302259926239/foro-economico-busca-establecer-asia-central-como-puente-entre-china-y-europa.html>

⁷³ CONTESSI, Nicola P., «Central Asia in Asia: Charting Growing Trans-regional Linkages», *Journal of Eurasian Studies*, volume 7, no. 1, January 2016, pp. 3–13. Available at http://ac.els-cdn.com/S1879366515000329/1-s2.0-S1879366515000329-main.pdf?_tid=231f9df4-6f56-11e6-84a1-00000aab0f6b&acdnat=1472632822_c82c2c941d2b179f12225bfe7466cffc

The role of the external actors

Russia's role and interests in the area have been progressively unravelled in the previous paragraphs. It is necessary to stress all the security aspects, which date back to early times, coupled with Moscow's interest in boosting its role as a petro-state, as its economy is largely based on selling hydrocarbons and the rich reserves in much of Central Asia are leading the Kremlin to attempt to control oil production and/or transport in order to achieve a dominant position. Therefore, any project or initiative capable of diminishing or limiting this ability to control – ranging from independent negotiations with potential clients by any republic to attempts to bypass Russian territory with gas and oil pipelines – come up against Moscow's head-on opposition.

Following the fall of the USSR there was a certain sensation that the cost of maintaining Russia's presence and support in the area was a «burden», and with respect to the Caucasus too. However, since Putin came to power Russia has been constantly attempting to regain control of the region and remedy the economic fragmentation of the post-Soviet area. Indeed, the Kremlin regards them as regional and not global issues.⁷⁴

Actions designed to bolster Russia's position in the area – or at least to allow it to retain a dominant position – send out a clear message to the rest of the actors regarding their potential intentions to trespass on this «restricted area».⁷⁵ And as a constant point of reference, Russia's action in the Crimea and Ukraine has set alarms ringing in the capitals of most Central Asian republics – and other nations in the world – which have witnessed how Moscow is again making a show of military force to achieve its aims.⁷⁶

China's position is outlined in the previous section: one of the focuses of its recent expansion as a new global actor is its natural outlet across and towards Central Asia, whose key geographical position and significant aspects (presence of radical Islamism, major energy capacity, trade potential and insecure, permeable borders)⁷⁷ are both objects of desire and threats shared by China.

⁷⁴ *NEO New Eastern Outlook*, «The US and Central Asia», 18 February 2016. Available at <http://journal-neo.org/2016/02/18/the-us-and-central-asia/>

⁷⁵ SECRIERU, Stanislav, «Bumps on Russia's Road to the Eurasian Economic Union: Postponed Integration, Costly Enlargement and Delayed International Recognition», Policy paper no. 10(93), July 2014, The Polish Institute of International Affairs. Available at https://www.pism.pl/files/?id_plik=17741

⁷⁶ See SÁNCHEZ HERRÁEZ, Pedro, «Rusia: ¿El retorno al paradigma del empleo de la fuerza?», Documento de Análisis 32/2016, Instituto Español de Estudios Estratégicos, Madrid, 2016. Available at http://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs_analisis/2016/DIEEEA32-2016_Rusia_retorno_fuerza_militar_PSH.pdf

⁷⁷ MEDEL-BASCONES, Jesús L., «Asia Central», Documento de Opinión 60/2012, Instituto Español de Estudios Estratégicos, Madrid, 2012. Available at http://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs_opinion/2012/DIEEE060-2012_Asia_central_JL-MB.pdf

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Its direct involvement in the region through the new Silk Road initiative can be attributed to external as well as domestic aims: trade flows and movements of goods to China are normally via routes beyond its control; this initiative allows it to seek alternatives to those that exist to date, as well as to show to the world its capabilities and global might.⁷⁸

This initiative is also aimed at opening and strengthening new trade and political-diplomatic channels vis-à-vis other initiatives centred on the Asia-Pacific area and largely championed by the United States in its pivot to Asia, and also bearing in mind the growing disputes in the South China Sea and Sea of Japan. It is even thought that, despite the lower capacity and higher cost of overland compared to maritime transport, the initiative is designed to combat the isolation into which China might find itself plunged by the United States following the signing of the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement (TPP)⁷⁹ with another 11 countries of the Pacific basin and the efforts to give impetus to the negotiations for the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP)⁸⁰ with the European Union (EU), which would make it possible to redesign the world trade system and leave Beijing somewhat weakened and isolated with respect to trade.

The United States, for which, following the fall of the USSR, Central Asia regained part of its importance during the Afghanistan campaign, is attempting to win back some of its influence in the area. Initiatives are being developed under the so-called 5+1 format (the Central Asian countries and the US) to boost economic development, clean energies, the environment and counterterrorism,⁸¹ though, as in other parts of the post-Soviet area, it is constantly accused of attempting to create conditions conducive to the overthrow of the existing political regimes and their replacement with other more favourable regimes – along the lines of the so-called «colour revolutions».⁸²

And one of the cornerstones of the tactics used by these great nations – to which can be added India and Pakistan on account of their power, closeness and interest – is Central Asia.

⁷⁸ Excelsior, «El plan de China para revivir sus viejas glorias», 22 February 2016. Available at <http://www.excelsior.com.mx/global/2016/02/22/1076565>

⁷⁹ Office of the United States Trade Representative, «The Trans Pacific Partnership». Available at <https://ustr.gov/tpp/>

⁸⁰ Office of the United States Trade Representative, «Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership». Available at <https://ustr.gov/ttip>

⁸¹ SPUTNIK, «EE. UU. quiere ampliar cooperación a países de Asia Central», 28 July 2016. Available at <http://mundo.sputniknews.com/politica/20160728/1062512332/eeuu-asia-central.html>

⁸² NEO, *New Eastern Outlook*, «The US and Central Asia», 18 February 2016. Available at <http://journal-neo.org/2016/02/18/the-us-and-central-asia/>; *New York Times*, «U.S. Helped to Prepare the Way for Kyrgyzstan's Uprising», 30 March 2005. Available at <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/03/30/world/asia/us-helped-to-prepare-the-way-for-kyrgyzstans-uprising.html>

As pointed out, other actors like the European Union are involved in a host of initiatives and partnerships with the region's countries. Political dialogue, human rights and cooperation on issues related to education, the environment, cross-border security and the rule of law⁸³ are not incompatible with trade relations, which, for example, account for the fact that nearly 50% of Kazakhstan's exports (chiefly hydrocarbons) are sold to the European Union. This has sometimes led the question to be raised of whether the Union wields «soft power» or «realpolitik» in the area.⁸⁴

Turkey – which, after abandoning Turkic irredentism and its determination to achieve regional supremacy in the 1990s,⁸⁵ succeeded in boosting its influence in the cultural and economic sphere until the middle of the past decade, when, following Putin's advent to power, Russia began its new cultural expansionism in Central Asia⁸⁶ – is being cited as one of the potentially key areas of transit of the new Silk Road. This fact, coupled with its at times tricky relations with Russia, makes interest in the area very high, and is spurring it to attempt to take advantage of its geographical location to gain a foothold as a significant actor.⁸⁷

Iran's recent incorporation into the international arena, now that the nuclear sanctions have been lifted, means that the route may become a reality and that Russia can be fully bypassed. As a result, Iran, which has shared interests (economic, political and security, among others) with Turkey, is forging new links with the latter – defined as a friendship of interests⁸⁸ – and this relationship, which may also be joined by the United States, can be viewed as being cultivated to potentially undermine Russian interests.⁸⁹

⁸³ European Union, External Action, «EU Relations with Central Asia». Available at http://eeas.europa.eu/central_asia/index_en.htm

⁸⁴ LARUELLE, Marlene and PEYROUSE, Sebastien, *Globalizing Central Asia: Geopolitics and the Challenges of Economic Development*, M.E Sharpe, New York, 2013, pp. 58–74.

⁸⁵ BALCI, Bayram and SALI BIÇAKÇI, Ahmet, «Panturquisme: vie et mort d'une idéologie», pp. 15–22 in BALCI, Bayram and BUCHWALTER, Bertrand, «La Turquie en Asie centrale. La conversion au réalisme (1991-2000)», Institut Français d'Études Anatoliennes, Istanbul, 2001.

⁸⁶ SHEYBAL, V., LORCA, A. and FUENSANTA G. J., «El renovado intento de Turquía como gran potencia regional tras la elección presidencial del 2014, y su encrucijada futura desde la primavera del 2015», documento de opinión 46/2015, Instituto Español de Estudios Estratégicos, Madrid, 2015, p. 9. Available at http://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs_opinion/2015/DIEEE046-2015_Turquia_Potencia_Sheibal-Lorca-GilF.pdf

⁸⁷ PERAZZO, Nicolo, «Turquía, actor de relevancia en el panorama geopolítico global», Documento de Opinión 51/2012, Instituto Español de Estudios Estratégicos, Madrid, 2012, p. 6. Available at http://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs_opinion/2012/DIEEE051-2012_TurquiaPanoramaGeopoliticoGlobal_NicoloPerazzo.pdf

⁸⁸ LA VANGUARDIA, «Amistad de intereses entre Irán y Turquía», 6 March 2016. Available at <http://www.lavanguardia.com/internacional/20160306/40241402663/iran-turquia-cooperacion-bilateral-crisis-regionales.html>

⁸⁹ RT, «Alianza inesperada: ¿Qué une a EE. UU., Turquía e Irán?», 18 August 2015. Available at <https://actualidad.rt.com/actualidad/183430-alianza-eeuu-turquia-iran>

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Even the Gulf States are interested in the region; their rich hydrocarbon reserves make the Central Asian republics worthy of consideration in the global energy sphere, as does the fact that one of the battlegrounds of the struggle for supremacy in the Islamic world – and radicalisation of certain elements – is located in Central Asia, sometimes with accusations that are by no means veiled.⁹⁰

Spain, as a member of various international organisations and alliances and a reliable fulfiller of its obligations, contributes to the forums as it is legally bound to do; its bilateral relations have not been particularly extensive, though they have always existed⁹¹ and various attempts have been made at establishing new relations, initially to increase the presence of Spanish companies in the area,⁹² with somewhat disparate results. To gain an idea of the importance the area holds for Spain, suffice it to recall that during the Spanish presidency of the European Union in the first half of 2010, it included Central Asia among its established priorities.

Although the world is global, some areas arouse great interest and are the object of a power game that could turn into a clash under certain circumstances. And Central Asia, without a doubt, is one of the potential epicentres of such a global earthquake.

Conclusions and prospects

Although some of the main points of reflection on Central Asia and its value – and, consequently, the interest it has aroused and arouses globally – have been dealt with throughout the text, it is appropriate to highlight a few aspects.

World history time and time again draws attention to a series of paths and crossroads. Central Asia is one of them. And when major powers set about controlling, or prevent others from controlling, this area, the potential for conflict is assured. A landlocked enclave apparently in the middle of nowhere is thus an area whose geographical position, wealth of natural resources, population and location among different, powerful world views accord it a key role in reorganising the planet and in the struggle among external forces.

⁹⁰ Sputnik, «US Congressman: Gulf States Finance Radicalization in Central Asia», 15 June 2016. Available at <http://sputniknews.com/middleeast/20160615/1041339082/gulf-states-finance-russia-radicalization.html>

⁹¹ ALONSO, Antonio, «La política exterior de España hacia Asia Central (2000-2011)», UNISCI discussion papers no. 27 (October/November 2011).

⁹² *La Razón*, «Margallo llega a Uzbekistán para aumentar presencia española en Asia Central», 21 April 2014. Available at <http://www.larazon.es/espana/margallo-llega-a-uzbekistan-para-aumentar-presencia-espanola-en-asia-central-BL6159254#.Ttt1EsQ9HvpuZKt>

If to these tensions we add the significant internal weakness and considerable heterogeneousness and imbalances among the nations that make up this region, we have a high potential for conflict, especially if any of the external or internal tensions cross any of the red lines and unleash a cascade of forces. If this were to occur, conflict could be inevitable.

Indeed, the reshaping of power on a world scale, possibly towards a multipolar – or polycentric, as Russia points out – world is not free of tensions leading to clashing interests in pursuit of a new balance. But this reshaping is also the result of new actors taking over and – let us not forget – of new global threats which, in most cases, are shared.

Therefore, instead of addressing this situation as a potential crisis or conflict, if we pay greater attention to factors that unite than to those that separate, we can view it as an opportunity for ensuring that certain aspects and certain key areas are not drawn into zero-sum games and are structured in such a way that everyone stands to gain – for this is feasible.

And one such area, without a doubt, is Central Asia.

Table of geopolitical indicators

The following tables display data from 2015 unless stated otherwise. Source: CIA, *The World factbook*

TABLE OF GEOPOLITICAL INDICATORS		
Russia-China		
	Russia	China
Area (km ²)	17,098,242	9,596,960
GDP in billions of dollars	1,325	10,980
GDP structure	Agriculture	4.4%
	Industry	35.8%
	Services	59.7%
GDP per capita (dollars)	25,400	14,100
GDP growth rate	-3.7%	6.9%
Exports: in billions of dollars	337.8	2,270
Imports: in billions of dollars	197.3	1,596
Population (July 2015 est.)	142,423,773	1,367,485,388
Age structure	0-14	16.68%
	15-64	69.70%
	Over 65	13.61%
Population growth rate (2015 est.)	-0.04%	0.45%

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TABLE OF GEOPOLITICAL INDICATORS		
Russia-China		
	Russia	China
Ethnic groups	Russians 77.7%, Tatars 3.7%, Ukrainians 1.4%, Bashkir 1.1%, Chuvash 1%, Chechens 1%, Other 10.2%, Unspecified 3.9% Note: nearly 290 ethnic groups are listed in the Russian census of 2010 (2016 est.)	Han 91.6%, Zhuang 1.3%, other 7.1% Note: the Chinese government officially recognises 56 ethnic groups (2010 est.)
Religions	Russian Orthodox 15–20%, Muslim 10–15%, other Christians 2% (2006 est.)	Buddhist 18.2%, Christian 5.1%, Muslim 1.8%, folk 21.9%, 52.2% no declared religion, remainder other religions
Languages	Russian (official) 85.7%, Tatar 3.2%, Chechen 1%, other 10.1% (2010 est.)	Mandarin Chinese (official), Putonghua, Yue, Wu, other (no figures available)
Population literacy rate	99.7%	96.4%
Population living below the poverty line	11.2% (2014 est.)	6.1% (2013 est.)
Military expenditure as a % of GDP	3.49% (2014)	1.99% (2012)

TABLE OF GEOPOLITICAL INDICATORS						
Central Asia						
		Kazakhstan	Kyrgyzstan	Tajikistan	Turkmenistan	Uzbekistan
Area (km ²)		2,724,900	199,951	144,100	488,100	447,400
GDP in billions of dollars		173.2	6.85	7.818	35.68	65.68
GDP structure	Agriculture	4.8%	18%	25.7%	12.7%	18.8%
	Industry	35.3%	25.5%	17.3%	49.3%	33.7%
	Services	59.9%	56.4%	57%	37.9%	47.5%
GDP per capita (dollars)		24,300	3,400	2,700	16,400	6,100
GDP growth rate		1.2%	3.5%	8.5%	8.5%	8%
Exports: in billions of dollars		45.37	1.933	0.5556	21.04	13.53
Imports: in billions of dollars		31.64	4.268	3.162	14.82	13.5
Population (July 2015 est.)		18,157,122	5,664,939	8,191,958	5,231,422	29,199,942
Age structure	0–14	25.41%	29.92%	32.75%	26.14%	24.56%
	15–64	67.41%	65.07%	64.06%	69.48%	70.55%
	Over 65	7.17%	5.01%	3.19%	4.38%	4.9%

TABLE OF GEOPOLITICAL INDICATORS					
Central Asia					
	Kazakhstan	Kyrgyzstan	Tajikistan	Turkmenistan	Uzbekistan
Population growth rate (2015 est.)	1.14%	1.11%	1.71%	1.14%	0.93%
Ethnic groups	Kazaks 63.1%, Russians 23.7%, Uzbeks 2.9%, Ukrainians 2.1%, Uighurs 1.4%, Tatars 1.3%, Germans 1.1%, other 4.4% (2009 est.)	Kyrgyz 70.9%, Uzbeks 14.3%, Russians 7.7%, Dungan 1.1%, other 5.9% (includes Uighurs, Tajiks, Turks, Kazaks, Tatars, Ukrainians, Koreans, Germans) (2009 est.)	Tajiks 84.3%, Uzbeks 13.8%, other 2% (include Kyrgyz, Russians, Turkmens, Tatars, Arabs) (2010 est.)	Turkmens 85%, Uzbeks 5%, Russians 4%, others 6% (2003)	Uzbeks 80%, Russians 5.5%, Tajiks 5%, Kazaks 3%, Karakalpaks 2.5%, Tatars 1.5%, others 2.5% (1996 est.)
Religions	Muslims 70.2%, Christians 26.2% (mainly Russian Orthodox), other 0.2%, atheists 2.8%, unspecified 0.5% (2009 est.)	Muslims 75%, Russian orthodox 20%, other 5%	Sunni Muslims 85%, Shia Muslims 5%, other 10% (2003 est.)	Muslims 89%, Eastern Orthodox 9%, unknown 2%	Muslims 88% (mainly Sunni), Eastern Orthodox 9%, other 3%
Languages	Kazak (official) 83%, Russian (official) 94.4% (2009 est.)	Kyrgyz (official) 71.4%, Uzbek 14.4%, Russian (official) 9%, other 5.2% (2009 est.)	Tajik (official), Russian Note: different ethnic groups speak Uzbek, Kyrgyz and Pashtun	Turkmen (official) 72%, Russian 12%, Uzbek 9%, other 7%	Uzbek (official) 74.3%, Russian 14.2%, Tajik 4.4%, other 7.1%
Population literacy rate	99.8%	99.5%	99.8%	99.7%	99.6%
Population living below the poverty line	5.3% (2011 est.)	33.7% (2011 est.)	35.6% (2013 est.)	0.2% (2012 est.)	17% (2011 est.)
Military expenditure as a % of GDP	1.21% (2012)	NA% (2012) 3.74% (2011)	1.1% (2014)	NA%	NA%

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Chronology of conflict

CONFLICT TIMELINE	
CHAPTER X	Central Asia, the Fought-Over Bridge between Asia and Europe
DATE	EVENTS
880 AD	The Rus of Kiev is born
13th century	Mongol invasion. The Rus of Kiev disappears
1547	Ivan IV adopts the title of «Tsar of All the Russias»
1735	Russia builds its first military fortification in the area in Orsk (now part of Russia)
19th century	The Great Game
Late 19th- to early 20th centuries	Mass migration to Central Asia
1916–30s	Basmachi revolt in Central Asia
1917	Russian Revolution. The Russian Empire disappears
1922	The Soviet Union is born
1924–29	The Central Asian republics emerge as part of the USSR
1941–45	Great Patriotic War of the USSR (Second World War). Mass deportations to Central Asia
1945–89	Cold War. Containment of the Soviet Union
1979–89	Soviet invasion of Afghanistan
1989	The Berlin Wall falls
1991	The Soviet Union is dissolved
	The former Soviet Republics become 15 independent states
1992–1997	Civil war in Tajikistan
2000	Vladimir Putin comes to power in Russia
2001	International intervention in Afghanistan
2006	Tulip revolution in Kyrgyzstan
2010	Osh revolution in Kyrgyzstan
2013	Chinese president announces the new Silk Road initiative
2015	Putin declares that the new Silk Road initiative is in keeping with Russian interests
2015	5+1 initiative (United States and the 5 Central Asian countries)
2016	Islam Karimov, Uzbekistan's president since independence, dies

Chapter thirteen

El Salvador: a state that is unwilling to fail

María Luisa Pastor Gómez

Introduction

On 5 August 2014 the archbishop of San Salvador, Luis Escobar, bemoaned in a homily that «the level of self-destruction we are sadly experiencing is such that it is threatening to ruin the country. We are on the verge of becoming what is called a failed state». This memorable phrase was quickly contested by the then newly elected president of the republic, Salvador Sánchez Cerén, who denied such a state of affairs, claiming that «the state is still functioning, carrying on with its educational tasks, providing a service to the population, guaranteeing security, guaranteeing justice».¹

Since these statements were made two years ago, the truth is that the country's domestic situation has not improved. Indeed, unless a remedy is found – be it investing more in security and/or requesting the international community for assistance – it is highly likely that El Salvador will end up becoming a failed state and a haven for criminals, like Somalia. Unfortunately the danger is real.

Failed state

The general dictionary definition of the term «failed» is «having not succeeded», though it is used by journalists and political commentators to

¹ *La Prensa Gráfica*, available at <http://www.laprensagrafica.com/2014/08/20/el-salvador-estado-fallido#sthash.j9jOLEuo.dpuf>,

describe a sovereign state whose government is considered to have failed at guaranteeing basic public services. In general a failed state is characterised by social, political and economic failure; by a government so weak or ineffective that it has little control or only nominal control over vast areas of its territory; by the presence of armed groups which defy the state's authority and prevent it from enforcing laws; by high rates of corruption and crime, refugees and displaced people, as well as significant economic deterioration and a weak judicial system.

There is no formal definition clearly establishing what a «failed state» is, but the Fund for Peace (FFP) has compiled what it calls the Fragile States Index, which identifies a number of circumstances that apply or may apply in varying degrees to the countries at risk. These circumstances are summed up below.

According to the FFP, a state has failed when there is (1) loss of physical control of its territory, or it no longer has a monopoly on the legitimate use of force; (2) erosion of the state's legitimate authority to make decisions; (3) inability to provide basic public services; and (4) inability to interact with other states. El Salvador currently ranks 100th out of a total of 178 countries in the foundation's Fragile States Index; it is currently at what the FFP calls the «elevated warning» stage, very close to becoming a failed state. Indeed, if the country's situation is examined for these four parameters, we find that the first and third aspects are quite applicable, the second is partly, and only the fourth is not, as El Salvador does interact with its neighbours and other states.

This Central American country, once hailed as exemplary for the negotiations leading to the signing of the January 1992 Chapultepec Peace Accords (Mexico), which put an end to twelve years of internal strife triggered by Cold War confrontation, unfortunately overtook Honduras in 2015 as the peacetime country with the highest murder rate in the world. This fact is despite the establishment of peace and democracy and stems from its geographical location in the most heavily populated and poorest region of Latin America which is a drug trafficking pathway with a cultural tradition of violence and is suffering the aftermath of years of internal war.

Background to the conflict

The geopolitical context of Central America

The seven Central American countries – including Belize – located in the narrow strip of land that links Mexico's southern border with the northern border of Colombia form a natural bridge between the cocaine-producing South American countries and the main consumer of this drug, the United States of America. The fact that these countries are also a route for south-north people trafficking and north-south arms trafficking has had highly negative consequences on their societies.

Unlawful trafficking in the isthmus emerged at the end of the last century. In coordination with Colombia, the United States launched a crackdown on drug trafficking at the end of the 1980s; it took control of the Caribbean and dismantled the Florida cartels, and Bogotá did likewise with the Colombian cartels. As a result, the Colombian cartels took over from the Mexicans in transporting and distributing drugs, and the shipping route shifted from the Caribbean to the waters of the Central American isthmus. From this point onwards overland routes via Central America began to be used. The Central America-Mexico-southern US border route is more complex as it is longer and more fragmented, though the advantage for the drug traffickers is that, together with areas under authority, it includes small, weak states marked by institutional fragility.²

In addition to unlawful trafficking, transnational organised crime and youth violence (maras) have made Central America – which spans 522,760 km² and has 45.7 million inhabitants, more than half of whom live in poverty and 15 percent in dire poverty – one of the most violent regions in the world. Central America has an average rate of 39.26 murders per 100,000 inhabitants, higher than that of the Caribbean (28.8), the Andean countries (24.8) and the Southern Cone (10.9), and nearly five times higher than the «standard» rate of 8.8 established by the World Health Organization (WHO). «Violence in the isthmus is now an 'epidemic' that is practically out of control. Far from ceasing, violence is increasing daily as the activities of organised crime grow, to the point of becoming the main threat to national security, especially in the Northern Triangle, while governments seem unable to come up with the right policies for neutralising it and the democratic institutions are being progressively eroded.»³

Surveys show that the social impact of crime has greatly increased over the past five years and that crime has overtaken unemployment as the main problem perceived by citizens of these countries. Central America's murder rate – the highest in the world – is attributed to several factors, among them the low level of human development, easy access to firearms, used in approximately 75% of homicides, and transnational criminal organisations that vie for control of drug routes, cities and territory – which is the main cause of gang fights.

The armed conflict. Origin and evolution

Growing poverty and corruption in the public institutions gave way in the 1960s and 1970s to the emergence of armed groups with Marxist leanings,

² VILLALOBOS, Joaquín, «El infierno al sur de México», *Nexos*, January 2015.

³ SEPÚLVEDA MUÑOZ, Isidro, «América Latina, final de siglo y riesgos persistentes», published in *Panorama Estratégico de los conflictos 2016*, Instituto Español de Estudios Estratégicos (IEEE), Ministerio de Defensa, available at http://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/panoramas/Panorama_Estrategico_2016.pdf.

which fought for a future without inequality. The guerrillas strove to topple the military regimes of these countries which, under US influence, had applied the so-called National Security Doctrine originating from the containment of communism following the establishment of Fidel Castro's government in Cuba in 1959. Beginning in the 1960s, national security was broadened in the countries with military regimes to incorporate political tasks and activities designed to counter the insecurity caused by the guerrillas and the revolutions of organisations with communist leanings.

The Guatemalan civil war broke out in 1960. In July 1979 the Sandinista revolution triumphed in Nicaragua. Ronald Reagan's advent to power in the US in 1981, against a backdrop of Cold War and geopolitical struggles between the US and the USSR, gave rise to an anti-revolutionary foreign policy focused on containing the Soviet Union and stemming the spread of communism in the Americas. Having seen Nicaragua fall into the hands of the Sandinistas and fearing a domino effect, Washington decided to support other governments in addressing the need to crush subversive groups.

The Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) found itself up against well-funded foreign opposition on two fronts: political and military. On the political front, sectors of the oligarchy together with the Catholic Church and other groups that did not see eye-to-eye with the Sandinista policy embarked on a long process of peaceful political opposition, chipping away at the national policy from within. On the military front, the Nicaraguan Resistance (Contra) revived the civil war.⁴ In 1981 the United States backed a counterrevolutionary army in Honduras formed by remnants of the National Guard and peasants dissatisfied with Sandinismo. This army came to have as many as 17,000 men, who received training, money and arms, including air defence missiles. In 1984 they were expelled from the country by the Sandinista regime and sought refuge in Honduras.⁵

In El Salvador, the civil war was sparked by a division among the military leading in March 1972 to a fierce armed clash between splinter groups from the same army. A new rebellion broke out in the army in 1979, when a group of military led by Colonel Adolfo Majano ousted General Carlos Humberto Romero from the presidency of the republic and formed the Revolutionary Government Junta. The state increased its repression and the rebel organisations, unified under Cuban sponsorship, stepped up their violent actions as part of the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN). The aim of the FMLN was to seize power through armed action, remove the

⁴ MATUL, Daniel, RAMIREZ, Alonso, «El proceso de paz en Centroamérica. Agendas pendientes y nuevos focos de conflictividad: los casos de Guatemala y Nicaragua», Coordinadora Regional de Investigaciones Económicas y Sociales, Buenos Aires 2009 available at <http://www.gloobal.net/iepala/gloobal/fichas/ficha.php?id=9581&entidad=Textos&html=1>

⁵ VILLALOBOS, Joaquín, *op.cit.*

military from power and establish a socialist-style society.⁶ In March the archbishop of San Salvador, Oscar Arnulfo Romero, was assassinated after demanding the Salvadoran regime put a stop to government repression.

In the mid-1980s, «armed conflicts in Central America were widespread and threatened to go beyond the national borders of countries not yet directly involved (Honduras and Costa Rica). The overall state of war was a threat to regional security. Therefore, the Central American presidents decided to step in and the peace processes were begun».⁷

The peace process started with the Esquipulas Declaration of May 1986, an initiative promoted by five Central American presidents at their meeting in the Guatemalan town to find a peaceful solution to the conflicts after the Contadora Group prepared the ground between 1983 and 1985. On 7 August 1987, the leaders of Guatemala (Vinicio Cerezo), El Salvador (José Napoleón Duarte), Nicaragua (Daniel Ortega), Honduras (José Azcona Hoyos) and Costa Rica (Oscar Arias) signed the Esquipulas II Agreement setting out the Procedure for the Establishment of a Firm and Lasting Peace in Central America. The negotiations resulted in tangible commitments being made by all the states towards achieving peace in the region in a continuous and effective manner. These agreements were verified and followed up by international organisations such as the United Nations (UN) and the Organisation of American States (OAS).

The first country to bring the revolutionary period to an end was Nicaragua. Peace talks began in 1988 and ended in February 1990. Peace subsequently came to El Salvador in 1992; to Guatemala a few years later in 1996, when the guerrilla finally laid down their arms, and the agreement on firm, lasting peace was signed in the presence of the UN secretary-general later that year on 29 December.

In addition to the good offices of the Central American leaders, the peace process was also undoubtedly influenced by external trends in the area towards democratisation and demilitarisation in the sense of a reduction in the size of the armed forces and their privileges, political influence and autonomy. At the same time, initiatives for regional demilitarisation were promoted, as well as the separation of police functions from those pertaining to national defence (Framework Treaty on Democratic Security 1995).

The peace process was satisfactory;⁸ both the paramilitaries and the revolutionary groups were demobilised. Nevertheless, the existing social

⁶ GOMEZ HECHT, et al, *op.cit.*

⁷ MATUL et al. *op.cit.*

⁸ The Agreements laid down ten points for achieving peace: 1/ National reconciliation (dialogue, amnesty and national reconciliation); 2/ Cessation of hostilities; democratisation (freedom of the press, political pluralism, abolition of situations such as state of emergency or exception); 3/ Free elections; 4/ No more assistance to irregular forces or insurrectional movements; 5/ No use of the territory to attack other states; 6/ Negotiations on security,

unrest attested to unsolved problems, which triggered violence and insecurity. A number of factors in the post-conflict process were not appropriately dealt with, leading to a rise in crime, violence and insecurity and hindering the consolidation of peace and the country's development. Failure to comply with many of the conditions agreed on by the actors involved in the process has fuelled the situation of criminal violence the country is currently experiencing.

Rising crime

First phase

The shift from political violence to organised crime began no sooner than the war had ended. The Esquipulas Treaty granted the guerrillas the status of political parties so that they would lay down their arms and could take part in free democratic elections, which proved to be a success. After the peace treaty was signed, El Salvador was governed by the right-wing Nationalist Republican Alliance (ARENA) for the first years, but subsequently by two democratic governments of the FMLN: that of President Mauricio Funes (2009–14) and the current government of President Salvador Sánchez Cerén.

However, the disarmament process ran into problems, as many military and former guerrilla fighters remained on the side-lines of the agreements and neither handed over their weapons nor became reintegrated into civil life. Indeed, in February 1995, the Salvadoran defence minister stated that approximately 300,000 arms used by the military had fallen into civilian hands. The significant number of weapons in the hands of the population is undoubtedly one of the main factors that have contributed to generating violence.

As for reintegration, a few combatants seized the opportunity to make a go of it in the new post-conflict context, but others preferred to sell the land, tools and machinery they had been given and a few even took up illegal activities such as drug trafficking or set up their own criminal outfits devoted to stealing vehicles, abductions and people trafficking. Another segment was employed in private security for illegal groups, their military experience being a valuable and highly-appreciated asset in this field.

An initially successful chapter in El Salvador was the demilitarisation envisaged in the Peace Agreements, specifically a reduction in the size of the army and in the privileges it had enjoyed during the conflict period, when it had all the help of Washington as well as political influence and autonomy.

verification, control and limitation of armaments; 7/ Refugees and displaced persons; 8/ Cooperation, democracy and freedom for peace and development; 9/ Verification and international follow-up (international verification and follow-up committee, backing and facilities for the reconciliation and verification and follow-up mechanisms); 10/ Calendar of implementation and commitments.

Accordingly, as a requirement of the agreements, public security and national defence functions were separated and the National Guard and the Treasury Police were abolished and replaced by a new security institution, the National Civil Police (PNC), a mandate approved in the Constitution of 1983 (art. 59) and in a Legislative Decree of 1992. The idea was to establish a new, democratic police force untainted by the ideology of the previous period, subordinate to the rule of law and upholding the values of respect for human dignity. It was intended that its members should be chiefly civilians unconnected with the conflict.

The National Civil Police force of El Salvador, established in 1993, was initially made up of personnel unrelated to the armed conflict (60%) as well as from the parties to the conflict (20% each) in order to ensure that both were represented and would keep an eye on each other.

Despite the good intentions or sense of this approach, experience has shown that such a criterion was not valid for this context, as the budgetary aspect – lower state expenditure – also played a significant role in the demilitarisation process, hindering the adaption of security to new threats. Indeed, the shortage of personnel, coupled with the one-and-a-half-year learning and training period required by the new police agents, created a security vacuum in various parts of the country that was quickly filled by crime groups, which were always lurking in the background.

In 1995, the observers of the UN Mission in El Salvador (ONUSAL) first became aware that the PNC was straying from its original mind-set and spirit and warned that it could become a closed power structure owing in part to the delay in establishing internal and external control units. By 1999, structures connected to organised crime had been detected within the PNC and a significant number of police were involved in serious crimes and criminal groups. The president of the republic recognised the severity of the situation in 2011 during the International Conference on Security in Central America, when he confirmed that organised crime had found its way into the PNC.⁹

Second Phase, the gangs appear

The second phase of the cycle of criminal violence¹⁰ was marked by the emergence of street gangs or *maras*, an urban phenomenon that is tribal and particularly virulent and has become highly dramatic in El Salvador. These crime groups engage above all in extortion and abduction, as well as drug-peddling on a local scale – which has been dubbed «retail» drug dealing – especially in crack, cocaine, amphetamines and marihuana, particularly

⁹ GOMEZ HECHT, et al, *op.cit.*

¹⁰ Insight Crime, El Salvador, *op.cit.*

in the poor districts. The maras are also sometimes hired by criminal organisations as hitmen or for other specific tasks and there is evidence that they are seeking to expand their activity to larger-scale distribution and international drug trafficking.

The maras originated from Los Angeles and are the result of the social exclusion suffered in the United States by Salvadoran immigrants who had fled from the civil war. The tragedy is that many young members of the diaspora were victims of ethnic violence and joined the Mexican gangs to protect themselves or ended up forming one of their own. This is how the two main gangs, Mara Salvatrucha and Barrio-18, came about.

In view of the activity of the maras in California, around the time of the Central American peace processes in the mid-1990s, the US began implementing a policy of mass deportations. Non-US citizens sentenced to more than one year's imprisonment were thus repatriated to their respective countries. The list of offences subject to deportation was significantly enlarged, and as a result, between 2000 and 2004 some 20,000 young Central Americans were sent to countries they barely knew, as most had come to the United States at an early age.¹¹

The most disastrous consequence was that many of the deportees had belonged to gangs in the US and imported this culture on returning. «These young people found a political and social context that worked for them: a government being rebuilt following the civil war, which was attempting to carry out the transition to democracy in an orderly manner and lacked the means to integrate into society the young people who had recently arrived and did not yet belong to the maras and had no idea how to react to a phenomenon that was unknown to them.»¹²

The name «mara» is a Central American term denoting gang; «salva» refers to El Salvador; «trucha» is a slang word for «intelligent» or «sharp». The Mara Salvatrucha initially only took in Salvadorans, but it soon extended to other nationalities and then to other cities. The MS was later rebranded MS13, in honour and recognition of the protection afforded to it by the Mexican mafia, the «M» as it was called, and one of the legendary gangs of California; the Salvadorans added the number 13, which is the position of the letter M in the alphabet. The MS13 is the largest gang in the region. Central American migration to other parts of the United States, such as the New York and Washington D.C. areas, also contributed to the expansion of the MS13 in the United States. The MS13's connections to people trafficking from Central America have helped strengthen the gang's position on the Mexican crime scene, especially in the southern border region.

¹¹ SAMPÓ, Carolina, op.cit.

¹² SAMPÓ, Carolina, «Las maras centroamericanas, raíces y composición», Asociación Latinoamericana de Sociología, Buenos Aires (2009).

The Pandilla Callejera 18, also known as «Barrio 18», owes its name to the street where it was formed –18th Street. It is one of the largest organisations of its kind in the Western Hemisphere. Like its rival, MS13, Barrio 18 has operational cells spanning from Central America to Canada, including the United States. With thousands of members throughout hundreds of kilometres and stakes in various illegal businesses, Barrio 18 is one of the most important emerging criminal threats in the region. The deportations triggered a sudden inflow of members of Barrio 18 to Central America and Mexico. In 2005 Barrio 18 split into two factions in El Salvador: one known as the «Revolucionarios» (Revolutionaries) and the other as the «Sureños» (Southerners) owing to its southern Californian heritage.

Since their creation, both maras have been at loggerheads with each other for years in a merciless war. Rivalry with the other gang is what gives them their identity, though this «otherness» also embodies a struggle to defend their own trade to the death. The distinctive feature of these two maras (MS13 and Barrio 18) is their fight to possess land, which translates into control of the district. In general, living conditions in Central America are conducive to the reproduction and development of maras, which are very often embraced as another family and generate a very strong feeling of belonging, as people's families of origin are segregated and/or fragmented in the vast majority of cases. The situation is further exacerbated by the fact that these young people have access to drugs, alcohol and arms from very early ages. Inside the maras, violence is not only justified but legitimised.

As a rule, members of maras are characterised by the high degree of violence they inflict on each other and on other people. They are young people aged between 12 and 30, usually from marginalised social groups. They join voluntarily, though a few might be forced to do so by their circumstances. Although they are mainly male, more and more women are joining. The mara affords these young people a strong sense of belonging and identity, as well as protection for the group and a particular lifestyle that they call the «crazy life» based on sex, drugs and money; the downside is «hospital, prison and death».¹³

Many gang members know or feel that they do not have much going for them outside the mara and therefore prefer to live their youth to the full, even it means eventually paying the price with imprisonment or even death. They express their rebelliousness through their tattoos, although lately they seem to prefer to go more unnoticed and avoid getting tattoos for safety reasons. They profess total devotion to their clan. It is difficult to leave a mara, as membership is basically for life.¹⁴ Members express their sense of belonging through symbols related to their clothing and manner of speaking, as well as the abovementioned tattoos. What counts inside the clika – close

¹³ SAMPO, Carolina, op.cit.

¹⁴ *ibid.*

group – is seniority and the activities members have been performing since joining. They have a system of protection and affection, but also of promotion and punishment. Loyalty to the organisation entails a code of silence and commitment to the mara, which they must defend with their life if necessary, there being harsh penalties for anyone who infringes the rules.¹⁵

There are only two ways of leaving the gang: through death or marriage, which is viewed as the start of a new family. Most do so through death, which is why it is said that «technically speaking nobody leaves» a mara; the possibility of retiring (referred to as «calmarse», literally «calming down») is a middle-of-the-road solution that is sometimes related to these young people's joining evangelical churches. In such cases they are excused from committing crimes, though they still belong to the clika and must respect the codes.¹⁶

Over the years the maras' violent conduct, far from diminishing, has worsened. Like the drug trade, the maras' activity has progressively evolved, and has likewise proven to have significant ability to adapt. The maras have gone from being street gangs focused on protecting what they consider their territory to transnational criminal organisations with sophisticated firearms and a presence not only in the cities but throughout practically the whole country.

As established by John Sullivan in his well-known evolutionary classification, the maras have changed over the course of three generations owing to their interaction with other gangs and transnational organised crime organisations.¹⁷ According to Sullivan, first-generation gangs are the traditional turf gangs centred exclusively on protecting their territory and on loyalty to the gang. The second-generation gangs are more market focused, set on obtaining profits from the lucrative drug trade, and are not limited to the neighbourhood or clika but operate in broader geographical areas that can include cities and neighbouring countries. The third-generation gangs are globalised and more complex and sophisticated; their criminal activities extend to homicides – hired killings of witnesses or people who are a hindrance to their criminal activity – and drug distribution, and they have gone from using blade weapons or homemade firearms and explosives to military weapons, including AK-47 and M16 assault rifles.

Third phase. Transportation groups

The last phase of the process of violence entails the emergence of increasingly sophisticated transportation groups. These transnational organised crime groups started out during the civil war period, when they

¹⁵ SAMPO, Carolina, «Las maras de Centroamérica. Raíces y composición».

¹⁶ *ibid.*

¹⁷ SULLIVAN, John, «Transnational Gangs: The Impact of Third Generation Gangs in Central America», *Air & Space Power Journal*, Second Trimester 2008, airpower.maxwell.af.mil/apjintrnational/apj-s/2008/2tri08/sullivan_eng.htm.

smuggled goods across the borders of Honduras, Nicaragua and Guatemala. They still use these routes for trafficking in people and contraband goods, illegal counterfeits, chemical precursors and narcotics.¹⁸

These illegal networks often operate with the aid of corrupt government, police and army officials. The two main drug transport networks are Los Perrones and the Taxis Cartel. They are hired by Colombian and Mexican cartels such as the Sinaloa Cartel or Los Zetas. El Salvador is playing a growing role in the drug trade. It acts as a reception and storage area for drugs along the Pacific coast and also as a centre for money laundering owing to its dollarised economy. The country's mountainous terrain prevents the drug lords from transporting their products by air, but it has facilitated the overland transportation of arms, people, contraband and, more recently, drugs too. It is a bridge across the Pan-American highway, the gulf of Fonseca and a few roads leading from Honduras across relatively unpopulated areas.¹⁹

The *transportistas* are responsible for the drug shipments that are moved across the country, but the gangs are chiefly to blame for most of the violence.

Current situation of the conflict

Initiatives to combat the maras

Save for exceptions, state measures have generally been repressive. In 2003, for example, Plan «Iron Fist» was implemented during the presidency of Francisco Flores, of ARENA. The main goal was to eliminate the threat posed by the maras using police power, based on a «zero tolerance» theory. This period saw mass incarcerations leading to overcrowding in prisons. The figures show that the first plan to tackle the phenomenon aggressively merely exacerbated the spiral of violence.

The first Anti-Maras law was enacted to limit the funding and movement of gangs throughout El Salvador and any criminal conduct characteristic of the maras: extortion, hired killings and the drug trade. Nevertheless, the Supreme Court of El Salvador declared it to be unconstitutional on the grounds that it violated the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Although the results of the first stage of the «Iron Fist» policies had been negative, in 2004 Flores's successor as president of the republic, Elías Antonio Saca – also a member of ARENA – proposed an equally aggressive plan called «Super Iron Fist», which included almost identical measures but, unlike the previous policy, had public support. Although more people were

¹⁸ Insight Crime, El Salvador, op.cit.

¹⁹ *ibid.*

arrested, the murders continued to rise – 2,172 in 2003, 2,762 in 2004 and 3,825 in 2005 – and therefore its aims were not achieved.

In view of the failure of ARENA's crackdowns in El Salvador, in 2012 Mauricio Funes's FMLN government (2009–13) attempted to reduce the killings resulting from the rival maras' struggle for territory by encouraging a truce between the two main gangs, which has become known as «the truce». As a result, the rate of homicides dropped, but extortion greatly increased. The criminals did not view the truce as a sophisticated strategy for reducing deaths, but as a weakness of the state, and the gangs not only were not intimidated but actually thrived when they became aware of their power. The truce thus heightened the gangs' power to intimidate and this strengthened their control over the territory.²⁰

Indeed, as Douglas Farah points out, this truce among the gangs, achieved with the intermediation of the government and the Catholic Church and the support of the Organisation of American States (OAS), proved to be a key factor in the gang members' political and criminal evolution: they used the almost two-year ceasefire to rearm, reorganise themselves and forge closer ties with the regional cocaine trafficking networks, developing a political and economic strategy; they began a profound metamorphosis from street gangs to criminal organisations with political and territorial control.

Empowered by their ability to negotiate with the government on an equal footing, the gangs thus came to understand their true political strength for the first time. When they found that even their most preposterous demands (availability of prostitutes in prisons, unhindered mobile phone communication, police withdrawal from prison interiors) could be met if they dumped enough dead bodies on the streets, the gangs rediscovered their primary negotiating tool: murder.²¹

The strategy was laid bare by the time the truce formally fell apart at the beginning of 2014. The Salvadoran government and the OAS had announced an official drop of more than 40 percent in homicides. But the Institute of Legal Medicine, the forensic body under the Salvadoran Supreme Court, found that although more than 800 fewer homicides were being reported, the number of «disappeared» – a term with deep psychological impact in the wake of the nation's civil war – had risen by almost the same amount. Many of the «disappeared» had been buried in clandestine cemeteries. The excavation of those graveyards simply overwhelmed the system, and efforts to identify the bodies were largely abandoned.²²

²⁰ FARAH, Douglas, «Central America's Gangs are More Dangerous Than Ever», Insight Crime, 27 January 2016, available at <http://es.insightcrime.org/analisis/pandillas-centroamerica-mas-peligrosas-nunca> <http://www.insightcrime.org/news-analysis/central-america-gangs-are-more-dangerous-than-ever>

²¹ *ibid.*

²² *ibid.*

The year 2015 ended with a death toll of 6,657, equivalent to a rate of 103 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants, a sad record that made the country – which is not at war – the most violent in the world according to UNODC sources.²³ What is more, the degree of impunity in murder cases is the highest in Central America, as only one out of every 10 homicide cases reached the courts last year. In view of the rise in murders in the first quarter of the year, in April 2016 President Sanchez Cerén announced a series of extraordinary measures²⁴ which included holding imprisoned mara leaders incommunicado to prevent them giving orders to their companions on the loose.

Immediately after these extraordinary measures were announced, the spokesmen for the three gangs – MS13, Barrio 18 Revolucionarios and Barrio 18 Sureños – pledged non-aggression between each other, as a result of which the high murder rate, which had risen to 22 daily by the end of March, was halved to 11, although the extortion rate has not fallen. As the two announcements were made around the same time, both the government and the gangs have claimed responsibility for this drop.

The role of external actors

Regional implications

The actions of the people and organisations that trigger insecurity have proven to know no borders. It is therefore necessary to complement each state's activities with greater cooperation between them; this cooperation needs to go further than that specified in the «Central American Security Strategy» adopted by the members of the Central American Integration System (SICA), which refers to prevention, combating crime, rehabilitation and institutional strengthening in this area and also to assistance from multilateral agencies and the US, which ought to pay more attention to the problem, if only for reasons of proximity.

In December 2015, President Obama managed to get Congress to approve USD750 million-worth of aid for Central America out of the USD1 billion he had asked for. Nevertheless, 75% of the approved aid is conditional upon the regional governments' stemming corruption and putting an end to impunity.

²³ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

²⁴ 1. Transfer of prisoners; 2. Special gaol conditions, isolation of gang leaders as part of the state of emergency; 3. Suspension of visits throughout the prison system; 4. Restricting prisoners' movement; 5. Setting up temporary detention centres in various places. 6. Suspension of inmate transfers to judicial proceedings. 7. Tolling the clock to prevent offences from expiring. 8. More powers and special measures to prevent telecommunications traffic in prisons, technical measures to ensure the cutting and suspension of communications traffic. 9. One-year duration of the temporary measures. 10. Reinforcement of 1,000 army reservists.

More recently, the Northern Triangle countries, at the proposal of Honduras, have been finalising the creation of a regional anti-gang force called «Elite Security Group» which, to quote President Sánchez Cerén, is designed to combat these groups and rescue the areas plagued by violence and organised crime.

Conclusions and perspectives

The unilateral commitment pledged by the gangs could be proof that, deep down, they do not want El Salvador to become a failed state, and in this they differ in their aims from non-state armed groups, for example. Unlike the latter, the gangs have no wish to seize control of the state. They are not centralised, efficient crime syndicates run by a godfather,²⁵ and nor are they a «new urban insurgency» set on gaining political power to ensure the freedom of action and commercial environment they wish for.²⁶ The gangs have not declared war on or attempted to topple any government. Indeed, in some places they seem more interested in remaining inside the law and even collaborating with the state actors, including the security forces, to avoid being outlawed and to protect their economic activities.²⁷

The gangs do not aim for a total absence of governance. They stand nothing to gain from chaos. On the contrary, informal groups usually prefer a low level of governance or at least guarantees of security and an economy that functions, so that nothing interferes with their illegal activities. They are not interested in «failed states». They rarely pose a direct challenge to the state, although they do pose an indirect challenge as they represent an alternative to the government in areas where it is weak and ineffective. This situation is an indirect threat to the state because it undermines governance, democracy and law and order in such areas.

When there is a high density of crime, a high density of police is essential. To win the battle against criminal intimidation, a large and permanent police presence is necessary – not so much to act as to exert its deterrent power – but above all an effective and, almost more importantly, permanent deployment throughout the territory is required. In other words, it is not enough to step in to take action and then leave; instead, it is necessary to stay around, and also to muster a speedy reaction and forge a close relationship with citizens in order to garner information and handle intelligence. Unless the territory and terrified population are snatched from them, criminals will carry on

²⁵ *ibid.*

²⁶ MANWARING, Max G., *Street Gangs: The New Urban Insurgency*, S. Army War College, Strategic Studies Institute, March 2005.

²⁷ HAZEN, Jennifer, M., «Understanding Gangs as Armed Groups», *International Review of the Red Cross*, no. 878, June 2010.

reproducing themselves, switching to any kind of crime and wielding all the power.²⁸

El Salvador is at risk of becoming a failed state owing to the weakness of the state and its lack of authority in certain areas. This structural weakness is enabling organised transnational crime to corrupt civil servants and politicians in all three constitutional branches, the police and even the armed forces who are also involved in combating these threats. As the causes of violence and insecurity are many, the explanation must undoubtedly also be many-sided.

It is necessary to develop longer-term policies focused on strengthening state structures and security forces, as well as the judicial and penitentiary systems. There is also need for a change in the political culture of rulers and their subjects.

So far the political solutions have not proven to be very effective. Violence continues to grow and so does the cruelty with which it is wielded, and this influences the economic costs insecurity generates.²⁹ It is therefore of vital importance to come up with ways of tackling situations of high insecurity, but at the same time avoiding «securitisation» and the growing militarisation of politics and security, which, if it continues, may affect the military institution by distracting it from its traditional functions and missions and involving it in internal security affairs that will in turn prevent it from acting where it is needed in strengthening and improving political and judicial activity.

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²⁸ VILLALOBOS, Joaquín, «Bandidos, Estado y Ciudadanía», *NEXOS*, Mexico, January 2015.

²⁹ CHEYRE, Juan Emilio, «Las amenazas a la seguridad en América Latina», Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, January–April 2015.

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Table of geopolitical indicators

GEOPOLITICAL INDICATORS	
Area 21,040 Km ²	
Borders 545 km	
GDP USD25.164 billion	
GDP structure	Agriculture 10.7%
	Industry 20%
	Services 58%
GDP per capita USD4,120	
GDP growth rate 2.0%	
Public debt USD15.180 billion	
Trade relations (Exports): USD5.4849 billion (20.96% GDP)	
Trade relations (Imports): USD10.4156 billion (41.79% GDP)	
Population 6,237,662 inhabitants Male 2,869,995 Female 3,337,740	
Age structure	0–14 37.68 % (male 1,198,623; female 1,151,584)
	15–64 57.27 % (male 1,693,865; female 1,878,254)
	Over 65 5.05 % (male 142,345; female 172,991)
Population growth rate 1.85 % annually	
Ethnic groups Mixed (86.3%), white (12.7%), indigenous (1%)	
Religions Catholic (54%), Evangelist (31%), agnostic (10%)	
Population literacy rate 88.3%	
Population living below the poverty line 40.9% Extreme poverty 12.5%	
GINI index 0.53	
Military expenditure as % of GDP (0.93%)	

Chronology of conflict

CONFLICT TIMELINE	
CHAPTER	EL SALVADOR: A STATE THAT IS UNWILLING TO FAIL
DATE	EVENTS
1931–79	Period of military authoritarianism
1970	The political situation leading to war takes shape. A splinter group from the Communist Party of El Salvador forms the «Farabundo Martí» Popular Liberation Forces (FPL)
1971	«The Group», an organisation of young university students – predecessor of the People’s Revolutionary Army – kidnaps and murders businessman Ernesto Regalado Dueñas, who came from one of the country’s most powerful landowning families
1972	General elections. The winner is Colonel Arturo Armando Molina of the National Conciliation Party (PCN). The National Opposition Union (UNO) led by José Napoleón Duarte considers the result to be rigged
1977	General elections. UNO presents General Ernesto Claramount as presidential candidate. The military’s candidate, General Carlos Humberto Romero, wins and new protests of fraud are voiced. The political crisis worsens.
1977–79	Lack of hope of a democratic solution exacerbates the political crisis, and armed left-wing groups ERP and FARN National Resistance proliferate. The crackdown becomes stricter and paramilitary groups spring up such as the Death Squadrons and the White Warriors’ Union
15 October 1979	A group of military led by Colonel Adolfo Majano expels General Carlos Humberto Romero and forms a Revolutionary Government Junta
24 March 1980	The archbishop of San Salvador, Arnulfo Romero, is assassinated while saying Mass in the chapel of the Hospital de la Divina Providencia
1980	The civil war begins. The guerrilla groups organise themselves under the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN)
1989	Negotiations begin between the FMLN and the government of Alfredo Cristiani (ARENA)
May 1990	The parties sign the Caracas Agreement with the intermediation of Álvaro de Soto, personal representative of the UN secretary-general
December 1990	The FMLN launches its last military offensive
January 1992	The negotiations end with the signing of the peace agreements at Chapultepec castle in Mexico

El Salvador: a state that is unwilling to fail

CONFLICT TIMELINE	
CHAPTER	EL SALVADOR: A STATE THAT IS UNWILLING TO FAIL
DATE	EVENTS
1994	The first post-conflict democratic elections are held. They are won by the leader of ARENA, Armando Calderón Sol
1997	Municipal elections. FMLN wins the office of mayor of San Salvador
1999	General elections and a new victory for ARENA, with Francisco Flores
2004	ARENA presents Elías Antonio Saca González for the elections and wins again
2009	FMLN wins the elections. Mauricio Funes's government begins
2012–14	Truce between the government and the gangs
2014	FMLN, led by the vice-president of the Republic, Salvador Sánchez Cerén, wins the elections. The truce with the gangs ends
2016	The government launches 10 extraordinary measures. The gangs agree among themselves to a unilateral cessation of hostilities

Chapter fourteen

Bangladesh, a vulnerable country at risk of radicalization

María José Izquierdo Alberca

Abstract

In recent years, Bangladesh has seen a rise in political radicalism and terrorist attacks. Three factors are herein analyzed: its high environmental vulnerability, relations with the neighboring region, and the rise in terrorist attacks. In spite of its small size, Bangladesh has accomplished major economic development, flawed as a result of its labor policies. Within the regional scenario, its weight in the regional balance may become heavier if it achieves a halt in terrorist pressure and political radicalism.

Keywords

Bangladesh, terrorism, political radicalism, environmental vulnerability.

Antecedents

Birth as a Nation.

The territory of the present-day Popular Republic of Bangladesh formed part of British India as the eastern part of the province of Bengala. Today it occupies 144,000 km² within the fertile delta of the Ganges; 130,170 km² are land and 18,290 km² are water, so that more than 580 km are maritime coastline. Its present borders were established in 1947 with the so-called second partition of Bengala, which originated the State of Pakistan.

The origin of Bangladesh as a State is very recent and is linked to the Indo-Pakistani war of 1971 and to a painful process of independence. In 1947, after the independence of India from the British Government, Pakistan was born, but its territory lay divided into two provinces, the Western, with the capital at Lahore, and the Eastern, with its capital at Dacca. Separated by a distance of 1,600 km., East Pakistan received very little attention from the central Government of Pakistan, and although they did share a religion, Islam, there were great cultural and linguistic differences between the two regions. Thus, in the east of the country there was a mounting resentment towards politicians and the military in Lahore, who, in the eyes of the Bengalis, demonstrated a clear indifference to their demands. When in 1948 the Government of Pakistan established Urdu as the national language, the social, political and cultural sectors broke out in protest to which the government reacted by annulling the right of assembly and banning public gatherings. Students and other political activists defied the ban and organized a protest on 21st February 1952 which culminated that same day with the deaths of two demonstrators and which provoked the outbreak of a revolt among the population led by the Awami League. Following years of conflict, in 1956 the central government granted Bengali the character of the official language of East Pakistan¹, thus accepting affirmation of the national Bengali identity.

In November of 1970, tropical cyclone Bhola lashed Eastern Pakistan killing nearly 500,000 people in one of the worst natural disasters in its history. The lukewarm aid efforts of the military dictatorship caused indignation among the Bengali population, so that when the military leaders of Pakistan permitted the holding of elections at the end of December 1970, East Pakistan voted overwhelmingly for the Awami League, the Bengali nationalist party, clearly demonstrating the possibility that the demographic superiority of the eastern province would carry the Bengalis into the Government of the country. The elections were «cancelled» and East Pakistan erupted in open rebellion led by the movement «Mukti Bahini», or Freedom Fighters. The

¹ CHOUDHURY, G.W. «Bangladesh: Why It Happened». *International Affairs* vol. 48, no 2 (April 1972), pp. 242-249.

military response gave rise to the so-called «Operation Searchlight» under the command of Tikka Khan «Searchlight», later known as the «Butcher of Dacca». The result was one of the bloodiest genocides in history, today nearly forgotten, in which close to three million people were murdered and which generated an exodus of more than 10 million people into the east of India. It was also the beginning of the Indo-Pakistani war of 1971.

The issue of Time Magazine of 2nd August 1971 quotes the words of an American official: «This is the most incredible and calculated massacre since the days of the Nazis in Poland»². The article describes the waves of refugees: «Down rivers and roads, and along the countless paths through the jungle, the population of East Pakistan continues to flow over India: an interminable and disorganized flood of refugees with a few tin pots, cardboard boxes and ragged clothes piled on their heads, carrying their sick children and their old people. They walk barefoot and the mud sucks at their heels in the wet parts. They say nothing, except for an occasional weeping child, but their faces tell the story. Many are ill and covered with sores. Others have cholera and when they die on the way, there is no-one to bury them.» Indian support of the insurgency was decisive and on 16th December the Pakistanis signed a surrender in Dacca. Bangladesh had been born. The leaders of the Awami League, from their Government in exile in Calcutta, formally swore in Mujib Nagar as the first president of Bangladesh as well as Tajuddin Ahmad as Prime Minister of the provisional government. A year later, in 1972, Sheikh Mujibar Rahman was named Prime Minister of Bangladesh, which was constituted as a parliamentary democracy. In the Parliamentary elections of 1973, the Awami League won an absolute majority. From that time on, pursuing an irregular passage through coups and counter-coups, the Government of the Awami League has been disputing power with the opposition and concentrating itself around the family of the Prime Minister, Sheikh Hasina, daughter of the man considered to be the father of the country³.

Today Bangladesh is a representative example of a littoral nation of low income, great corruption and scarce resources, progressing economically under a formal democracy «over-supplied with electoral competitiveness but scarce on control mechanisms», as pointed out by Collier⁴, and running a risk of being weakened by its major internal conflicts. Considered a demographic time-bomb, it is the 9th most populated nation on earth with 161,000,000 inhabitants, with a population density of 1,099.3 inhabitants per km², an

² Apud SANYAL, Sanjeev Sanyal, «*The Indian Renaissance: India's Rise after a Thousand Years of Decline*» in Project Syndicate. Available at <http://www.almendron.com/tribuna/el-genocidio-olvidado>. Date consulted: 01.09.2016

³ IHS Sentinel Security Assessment. Available at <https://janeshs.com/Janes/Display/1304791>. Date consulted:03.09.2016

⁴ COLLIER, Paul, «The Club of Destitutes. What fails in the world's poorest countries.» De Bolsillo, Barcelona, 209, pp. 116-117.

annual demographic rate of 1.6% and where half of the population is between 16 and 54 years of age⁵. This is a county practically surrounded by India (more than 4,000 km) which shares only 271 km of natural borders with one other country, Myanmar, and whose territory essentially occupies the deltas of the two great rivers which flow from the Himalayas, the Ganges and the Magna, towards the extensive estuary at the Bay of Bengal. This geographic location is the cause of their lack of cultivable lands, as well as its propensity for floods, contamination, and the pollution of waters, which favor abysmal sanitary safety and a territory in permanent deterioration. This extreme environmental vulnerability becomes a high-risk factor for a State with such a high population density. Nonetheless, and although Bangladesh still shows very precarious development⁶, its economic progress is noteworthy. Since 1975 it has doubled its GNP, the poverty rate has been reduced by 20% since the decade of the 90's and it figures among the economies of the «next eleven». With a rising growth in GNP since 2000 expressed by the figure of US\$ 195,079,000⁷, Bangladesh came to be considered a candidate for the «next eleven» in the study published by the Goldman Sachs investment bank in 2005⁸ and even today is considered a promising economy for investment and for future economic growth, according to a World Bank forecast.

In spite of its undoubted economic advances, Bangladesh is a fragile State⁹ which holds 36th place—between Timor and Angola—and is considered to be a country in a state of alert, with an index of 9.7 and where, should the State's weakness persist, conflicts may be hatched. The social tension index is also high, at 8.9, and political violence appears to be endemic. The difficult relations between the two political parties, the Awami League and the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), are on a dead-end street and will seemingly continue to be so until the end of the Government's mandate in 2019¹⁰.

Economic development in Bangladesh is very unequal. In spite of the increase in the textile industry, the livelihood of 50% of the population is agricultural, more than 30% of the population still lives below the poverty line and more than 1,500,000 people live in conditions of modern slavery¹¹. Forced labor

⁵ BANCO MUNDIAL. Available at <http://datos.bancomundial.org/pais/bangladesh> 60,558 on the Human Development Index according to the UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME. Available at [Http://hdr.undp.org/aite/default/files/2015_human_development_report.pdf](http://hdr.undp.org/aite/default/files/2015_human_development_report.pdf)

⁶ (No text in original)

⁷ WORLD BANK, *Op. cit.*

⁸ The N-11: «More than an Acronym», Global Economics Paper, N° 153, March 2007. Available at <https://www.chicagobooth.edu/~media/E60BDCEB6C5245E59B7ADA7C6B1B6F2B.pdf>

⁹ Follows indicators collected in the FRAGILE STATE INDEX. Available at <http://fsi.fundforpeace.org/> and www.fundforpeace.org

¹⁰ HIS, Sentinel Security Assessment, *Op. cit.*

¹¹ According to an estimate which reflects data from a random survey at national and representational level carried out by the Walk Free Foundation in collaboration with Gallup

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stands at nearly 80% and affects 85% of men. Although particularly frequent in manual labor (24%), it is also found in construction (22%) and even in drug production (13%) and agriculture (11%). The research quoted suggests that modern slavery in Bangladesh principally affects the manufacture of clothing, but also prostitution and drug production.

Tragedies at factories commonly pepper the press and attract attention to the lamentable working conditions of laborers in the textile sector. The collapse of a 9-story building in the Rana plaza in April of 2013 took some 1,130 lives, left more than 2,500 injured and shook the foundations of the principal export motor of this Asian country. The collapse took place five months after a fire left a hundred dead at the Fazreen Fashion factory, also near the capital. The Government, as well as foreign firms, international organisms and some proprietors, made haste to offer a response: minimum wages were raised, labor law was amended, three levels of factory supervision were created and a compensation fund was set up. Following the collapse, a fund was established which should have reached the figure of \$30 million to compensate the victims, but two years later the fund is still \$6 million short of that amount. Two years later the sector has undergone reform, but indemnity of victims is still pending, unionism has lost strength and many factories have avoided inspection¹², casting a shadow over a buoyant textile sector which generated \$24,500,000 in exports in a single year. Another outstanding aspect of life in Bangladesh is the high rate of forced marriage: 29% of girls under the age of 15 are likely to contract marriage in Bangladesh, and 2% of these are married by the age of 11. Prime Minister Hasina promised at a Summit on girls in 2014 to take measures to reduce child matrimony in Bangladesh and to reduce the number of girls marrying between 15 and 18 years of age by the year 2021, and to completely end child marriage in the country by 2041. However, this has achieved very little¹³, and in 2015 it was found that many girls from the ages of 9 to 10 years were the victims of trafficking leading to forced prostitution inside Daulatdia, the largest brothel in Bangladesh, where more than 1,500 women and children work¹⁴

Bangladesh is ranked low on all transparency indices and the indices of corruption give it a high qualification: 8. The global barometer of public corruption published a survey between 2015-2016 where 70% of those

in 2005, a percentage estimated at 0.95% of the population lives in modern slavery. On a world ranking, Bangladesh occupies 10th place out of 16. All data available at <http://www.globallslaveryindex.org/country/bangladesh/>

¹² AGENCIA EFE. Available at <http://www.efe.com/efe/espana/portada/la-tragedia-del-rana-plaza-no-acaba-con-los-problemas-textil-en-bangladesh/10010-259398>

¹³ (UNICEF. Available at UNICEF. Available at <http://222.unicef.es/actualidad-documentacion/noticias/cumbre-de-la-nina-es-necesario-tomar-medidas-urgentes-contra-la> and <http://www.unicef.es/actualidad-documentacion/noticias/poner-fin-al-matrimonio-infantil>

¹⁴ Globalslaveryindex, *Op. Cit.*

interviewed said they had paid some type of bribe and placed the political parties at the head of the corruption¹⁵.

With regard to health, Bangladesh has seen «the greatest documented case of poisoning of a population in history» in the words of the World Health Organization¹⁶, due to arsenic pollution of the underground waters whose source is the Brahmaputra basin and which are pumped for domestic use through thousands of wells. The non-governmental organization Human Rights Watch (HRW) has denounced the inaction of the government and the political favoritism which permit some 20 million people, above all in rural areas, to continue to drink water with high levels of arsenic causing tens of thousands of deaths a year. According to data from a study by the World Health Organization in which 125,000 water wells were analyzed between 2006 and 2012, nearly the entirety of the samples taken in this period held levels of arsenic above 50 micrograms per liter, the accepted national standard, five times higher than that recommended by the WHO. Some 43,000 people die annually in Bangladesh due to illnesses related to the ingestion of water contaminated by arsenic, such as cancer plus lung and cardiovascular diseases. The report also denounces the high cost of deeper wells, where the water is of better quality, and says that the taking of new samples is carried out as a function of networks of clients with «political interference»¹⁷.

In spite of these shocking cases of collective poisoning, there have been undoubted advances relating to sanitary safety in a country particularly prone to natural disasters, where 26% of the population suffers from the effects of cyclones and 70% live in flood-prone areas.

The rates of death and disease of these occurrences have been substantially reduced in the past 50 years, in part due to improved disaster management. Thousands of cyclone shelters have been built and both Government and the civil society have been mobilized to provide early-warning and rapid-response strategies¹⁸.

I conclude this chapter by underlining one final aspect in which the bankruptcy of the social contract with the State can be seen: the reduced space for freedom of the press¹⁹. The attacks in 2016 on bloggers, professors

¹⁵ Data at WORLDWIDE GOVERNANCE INDICATORS. Available at http://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/index.asp#_home and TRANSPARENCY INTERNATIONAL. Available at www.transparency.org/research/gcb/gcb_2015_16

¹⁶ «Arsenic contamination of irrigation water» at <ftp://ftp.fao.org/docrep/fao/009/ag105e00.pdf>

¹⁷ AGENCIA EFE. Available at <http://www.efe.com/efe/espana/sociedad/millones-beben-agua-con-arsenico-en-bangladesh-por-inaccion-denuncia-hrw/10004-2888667#>

¹⁸ WORLD BANK. Available at <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2016/07/20/modern-brick-kilns-yield-development-benefits-in-bangladesh>

¹⁹ For Reporteros sin Fronteras, it stands 129th of a total of 179. REPORTEROS SIN FRONTERAS. Available at <https://rsf.org/en/bangladesh>

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and journalists increased the perception that Bangladesh is at risk of losing its traits of identification as a lay nation.

In words of the journalist and writer Tahmima Anam, «the history of Bangladesh is not the history of a secular country which has converted to radicalism; it is the story of a country which, against all prognoses, has survived and even prospered» but there remains still a long road ahead, «we go to school, we have doctors, companies. Two women—Sheikh Hasina Wajed and Khaleda Zia—have been our democratically elected heads of state since 1991. Boys and girls have achieved parity in entrance to primary schools» but, she concludes, «there are only two models for a country made up of Moslem citizens: the path of suicide terrorists, or a commitment to tame, in some way, the fundamentalist beast which lives among us²⁰.

Current situation of the conflict

Terrorism and political confrontation

Terrorism has turned into a major problem for Bangladesh. The causes must be sought in the traditional political violence which sets Government parties at odds with the opposition as well as in the expansion of Islamic radicalism in the region.

Violence seems to have an endemic character in this country as it has become usual during electoral periods. Clashes in the second phase of the 2016 local elections between the followers of the Awami League and its rivals in the Nationalist Party of Bangladesh left a hundred dead and more than 8,000 injured²¹.

Although the government seemed to have neutralized the activities of some groups, such as Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh, terrorist attacks have only increased, to the point where Bangladesh is now considered a country of high terrorist impact, climbing up the scale on that bloody ranking²² and now holding a prominent place between Israel and Mali. In February of 2005 the leaders of the two most important Islamic organizations of Bangladesh, Jagrata Muslim Jnata Bangladesh (JMJB) and Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh, were arrested, tried and executed. These groups, active since 1999, carried out, in 2005, some 500 attacks all over the country and in 2013

²⁰ ANAM, Tahmima, «Is Bangladesh turning fundamentalist?»—and other questions I no longer wish to answer», The Guardian. Available at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/May/16/bangladesh-killings-atheist-gay-liberal-isis-tahmima-anam>

²¹ EUROPA PRESS.. Electoral violence leaves hundreds dead in Bangladesh. Available at <http://www.europapress.es/internacional/noticia-violencia-electoral-deja-centenar-muertos-mas-8000-heridos-bangladesh-20160528154525.html>.

²² GLOBAL TERRORISM INDEX 2015 assigns it a range between 5.9 and 10 and world position 25. Available at <https://www.start.umd.edu/gfd/search/Results.aspx?search=bangladesh&sa.x=37&sa.y=17>. Date consulted 11.07.201 (sic).

alone produced 220 bombing attacks. However, 2016 has been the year which has seen the greatest number of attacks against religious minorities, bloggers, and foreigners as well as against the civilian population. These brutal murders have underlined the growing power and impunity of the violent extremist groups²³. Thus, in April of 2016 a law student and secular blogger, Nazimud-din Samad, was murdered using machetes in Dacca: within a month the same attack was repeated against a doctor, and later against a Buddhist monk; shortly before this there had been murders of a Sufi Moslem leader, a rights activist for the GLBT minority, and an English teacher; in July, two police officers and an attacker died when the police identified several suspects heading towards a prayer space in the center of Bangladesh during the celebration of *Eid al-Fitr*, a Moslem holiday marking the end of Ramadan.

Together with the attacks on individuals, most outrageous has been the assault of a terrorist commando group, responsibility for which was claimed by the Daesh, which took as hostages the customers at a Dacca cafeteria and killed 22 people²⁴.

In spite of the declarations of the police respecting the death of the supposed planner behind the attack and suspicion about some of the hostages, many doubts still surround not only the safety of those interrogated, but about the entire process²⁵. The reiterated official position is that the Government is taking energetic measures against the militants, that «greater vigilance is being maintained on homegrown terrorists in extremist dress», and that there is no evidence to support the allegations that Daesh and Al Qaeda are behind the attacks. Prime Minister Hasina blames the violence on the main opposition party, the Nationalist Party of Bangladesh and on its Islamic ally, the proscribed organization Jamaat-e-Islami (JEI), which in her opinion are deliberately attempting to destabilize the country.

These remarks are being written within a climate of major confrontation of the Prime Minister with the leader of the BNP, Khaleda Zia, which goes back to the years immediately after the war of independence, when Hasina's father was assassinated. In 2010, Prime Minister Hasina created the International Crimes Tribunal to judge war crimes committed during the struggle for the independence of Bangladesh, which is trying and sending to be hanged some of those considered to be guilty of treason. Official figures confirm that around 3 million people died and thousands of women were raped in

²³ For a sequence on the wave of attacks, see THE GUARDIAN, available at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/bangladesh>)

²⁴ EL MUNDO, Bangladesh, new «nest» of the jihadist serpent. Available at <http://www.elmundo.es/internacional/2016/07/03/57781105268e3e89608b4627.html>

²⁵ THE NEW YORK TIMES, Two hostages From Bangladesh Standoff Are Still Missing. Available at <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/13/world/asia/bangladesh-amnesty-international-hostage.html?rref=collection%2Ftimestopic%2FBangladesh&action=click&contentCollection=world®ion=stream&module=streamunit&version=latest&contentPlacement=1&pgtype=collection&r=0>

the nine-month war, in which certain factions, including Jamaat-e-Islam, were opposed to the separation and independence from Pakistan. However, independent researchers reduce the death count to fewer than 500,000²⁶. Thus, since December of 2013, arrests, trials and convictions have taken place for crimes committed during the 1971 war, not only of the principal leaders of Jamaat, but also of the former Ministers of the opposition party, such as Salahuddin Quader Chowdhury, executed in November of 2015, eldest son of the late leader of the Moslem League and president of the National Assembly of Pakistan in 1965, or Motiur Rahman Nizami, director of the student wing of Jamaat-e-Islami in 1971, twice elected to the Parliament of Bangladesh and Minister in the government led by the BNP between 2001 and 2006. Others convicted were leaders and authorities of Islamic teaching, such as Delwar Hossein Sayeedi, sentenced to death and considered an extremist who provoked protests by British Parliamentarians during his tour of Europe.

Executed in 2015 were Ahsan Ali Mohammad Mujahid, 64, secretary general of Jamaat-e-Islam and Minister of Social Welfare during the BNP government between 2001 and 2006, and Muhaamad Kamaruzzaman, found guilty in May of 2013 of planning what the public prosecutor described as one of the bloodiest episodes of the war of independence: the massacre of over 120 unarmed agricultural workers in the remote northern village of Sohagpur, subsequently known as the «village of widows». The latest convictions are those of Abdul Kader Mullah, secretary general of the Jamaat-e-Islami party since 2010 and executive editor of *The Daily Sangram*, which provoked popular demonstrations demanding the replacement of his sentencing to life imprisonment by that of a death sentence. The most recent execution of a Jamaat-e-Islam leader was carried out last September 3rd upon the person of Mir Quasem Ali, 63, charged with murder, torture and incitement to religious hatred during the war of independence from Pakistan²⁷.

The International Crimes Tribunal has roused criticism by politicians of the opposition, who accuse the Prime Minister of using it against her political enemies. In addition, groups for the defense of human rights point out that the acts of this tribunal have been characterized by grave irregularities and violations of the right to a fair trial. As an example of the partiality of the process, they point to a constitutional ruling making it impossible to impugn the jurisdiction of the tribunal, even when admitted as proof are statements by prosecution witnesses whose falsity had been proven by the defense. However, sworn statements of witnesses for the defense were not admitted, and the Government has denied visas to witnesses for the defense who were living abroad, thus preventing them from attending

²⁶ THE GUARDIAN, Islamist hanged for atrocities committed in Bangladesh war. Available at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/sep/03/islamist-hanged-for-atrocities-committed-in-bangladesh-war>

²⁷ <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-20970123>

the trials²⁸ The interest of the Hasina government in judging all of those considered responsible has led it to include this matter in the recent visit of the Secretary of State of the United States, John Kerry, to Bangladesh. At the request of the Foreign Ministry, the collaboration of the United States has been requested²⁹ regarding the extradition of the assassin of the man hailed as the father of the country, Bangabandhus Seijh Mujibur Rahman, founder of the nation and father of the current Prime Minister, assassinated in 1975.

The other outstanding aspect of the panorama of security in Bangladesh is the analysis made by the Bangladesh government regarding the rise in terrorism during the past year. Although ISIS claimed responsibility for the attack on the cafeteria, showing photos taken from inside it and of the five attackers, the Bangladesh authorities reject the allegation and insist that the international jihadist networks have no presence in the country. Hasina indirectly blames the political opposition and seems not to take seriously the threat represented by these attacks. However, it is obvious that this assault was an operation of much greater magnitude than the usual knife attacks, as it involved at least five men armed with automatic weapons and grenades. Police sources say the attackers are young members of the middle and upper middle classes, have studied at private universities and are disassociated from the *madrastas*, in another attempt at presenting this as a case of domestic terrorism. However, some analysts have identified this type of attack as a prototype of the so-called «glocal (global + local) jihad», a tactic used by Al Qaeda and currently in use by ISIS³⁰. The statements made by the Secretary of State, John Kerry, during his meeting with Sheikh Hasina in August of 2016 are in line with an increase in cooperation on security between the two countries and represent recognition of the connection of Daesh with operatives in Bangladesh³¹.

Another group which some analysts believe may be leaning towards the cause of Daesh is Ansarullah Bangla TEAM (ABT), which took its name from the Al Qaeda group Ansar Ul Islam, headquartered in Iraq, and is inspired by the teachings of the U.S.-born clergyman Anwar al-Awlaki, a high-ranking member of Al Qaeda in Yemen who died during an aerial attack in 2011. The possibility that Al Qaeda has recruited local militants

²⁸ AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL 2015-2016. Available at <https://www.amnesty.org/es/countries/asia-and-the-pacific/bangladesh/>

²⁹ BDNEWS. Kerry promised Bangladesh to look into the repatriation of Bangabandhus killer foreign ministry. Available at <http://bdnews24.com/Bangladesh/2016/08/31/Kerry-promised-bangladesh-to-look-into-the-repatriation-of-bangabandhus-killer-foreign-ministry>

³⁰ CHOUDHURY, A., Mapping out the Dhaka Gulshan Attack at <http://www.ipcs.org/article/south-asia/mapping-out-the-dhaka-gulshan-attack-5087.html>

³¹ ALJAZEERA. Kerry visits Bangladesh talks security. Available at <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/08/kerry-visits-bangladesh-talks-security-160829052530475.html>

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in Bangladesh cannot be discounted, as Al Qaeda announced in Dabiq, the organization's magazine, the birth of a new group in Southeast Asia in 2014³². Although it is premature to claim that Daesh holds a formal presence in Bangladesh, both this group and Al Qaeda have made references to this country as an area of potential expansion, although to some, these should be more associated with the strong attraction of the brand than with a formal operative presence³³.

For its part, Al Qaeda, which has dedicated whole videos to the country urging Moslems to rise up against their «apostate» rulers, has had a marked presence in the region since 1996. In 2014, the leader of Al Qaeda, Ayman al-Zawahiri, announced the formation of a new affiliate in the south of Asia (Aqisa), whose area of operations extended from Afghanistan to Bangladesh. So far, Aqisa has not left its imprint, but there is a possibility that the July attack in Dacca was a real attempt³⁴. In any case, this attack makes it much more difficult to ignore the threat which Islamic radicalism represents for the authorities of the country.

Bangladesh has a long history of extremist fringe groups. Some of them are a legacy of the war in Afghanistan, in which Bangladeshis fought; others are the result of Wahabi influence on Bangladeshi workers returning from Persian Gulf countries. The rise in terrorist attacks has been interpreted as a security problem, but also as one of governability³⁵.

The reaction of Dacca to the possible presence of Daesha in the country has closely approached indifference and the arrests linked to these attacks have been carried out with little publicity.

Given the opposition party's links to a hard line, the charges of the Prime Minister, Sheikh Hasina, may not be totally false, but it is evident that the political climate in Bangladesh is gravely polarized, and the execution of opposition leaders, through defective legal processes, does nothing to contribute to pacification.

Environmental vulnerability

The relation between climate change and security is receiving ever more attention from analysts, and countries most often hit by natural catastrophes are equally the most affected by internal conflicts, both in the form of forced migrations and of destruction of critical infrastructures. Environmental

³² KUGELMAN, m., «Will ISIS infect Bangladesh?». Available at <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/will-isis-infect-bangladesh-0>

³³ SOUFANGROUP. Foreign Fighters. Available at <http://soufangroup.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/TSG ForeignFightersUpdate3.pdf>

³⁴ Mapping out the Dhaka Gulshan Attack, *op. cit.*

³⁵ MILAM, William B. The Real Source of Terror in Bangladesh, at <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/20/opinion/the-real-source-of-terror-in-bangladesh.html>

vulnerability is determined by the impact of natural disasters, demographic factors and pressure on critical infrastructure³⁶. It seems undeniable that the scarcity of resources engendered by climate change, combined with their unequal distribution, can not only give rise to numerous humanitarian crises, but also augment the fragility of the equilibrium of the State, incapable of responding to the demands of its people for land or food, and constitute a serious threat to the security of a country³⁷.

The Himalayas heat more rapidly than any other spot on earth. Between 1970 and 2006, the earth's permanent ice cap was reduced by more than 18% and glaciers have been reduced in China by more than 10% since 2000. Data on the consequences of climate change warn that a rise is taking place in the levels of deforestation and of soil erosion. Other effects are high levels of pollution, the growth of sedimentation, decreasing pasturelands and patterns of unpredictable flooding.

Forecasts anticipate a rise in temperatures in the region of 1 to 2 degrees centigrade by the year 2050³⁸. Given the regional dependence on the waters supplied by the Himalayas, the geopolitics of water are clearly fundamental for Bangladesh, a small territory, dependent for energy and sanitation on the water supplies from the north which are controlled to a great extent, by large neighbors: China and India³⁹

Bangladesh is a country of high environmental vulnerability. Not only does climate change threaten the country, but also earthquakes, floods, a rise in sea level and sudden changes in the courses of rivers are a curse for many of the millions of inhabitants of Bangladesh who live in the lower areas of the delta of the Brahmaputra River. In a country of 161 million people, 70% of whom live in rural areas, natural disasters are magnified and the impact of a climate ever hotter and wetter is making itself felt among the poorest and most marginalized segments of the society⁴⁰. Scientists from Lamont-Doherty at the University of Dacca have initiated

³⁶ DIEZ NICOLAS, Juan in Demographic Imbalances, Madrid, Ministry of Defense, IEEA, Strategy Notebooks 159, February 2013.

³⁷ GEMENNE, Francoisse, «Environmental Conscience, a condition of sustainable power?», *CERISCOPE Puissance*, 2013. Available at <http://cerrriscciope.sciences-po.fr/puissance/content/part6/la-conscience-enviironmntale-conditon-d-une-puissance-soutanable>. Date consulted 23/08/2016.

³⁸ ICIMOD, International Center for Integrated Mountain Development, Climate change Available at <http://www.icimod.org/?q=16901>

³⁹ Izquierdo Alberca, MJ. «China-India-Nepal-Bhutan-Tibet: the difficult balance between cooperation and confrontation in the Himalayas», *Geopolitical Panorama of Conflict*, Madrid, Ministry of Defense, 2015, pp 382-405.

⁴⁰ UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME, Bangladesh: Disaster Risk Reduction as Development http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/ourwork/crisispreventionandrecovery/projects_initiatives/Bangladesh-drr-casestudy-transformationalchange.html

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a five-year project to learn the risks and the possible hidden connections among them⁴¹.

An exceptional case is that of the islands created by the sediment which a river leaves upon changing its course, the *chars* or river islands which are none other than small mounds of land formed by sedimentation originating from changes in the coastline, from floods, or from the beds of dried-up rivers⁴². On these artificial islands live between 50,000 and 70,000 people in Bangladesh. According to the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), Bangladesh has experienced accretion, which means the creation of territory by addition of other bodies, of some 20 square kilometers of land per year. Many of those who have been left without land opt to live in *chars* to start a new life, although they lack nearly every basic service, having neither water supply nor sanitary facilities, hospitals, nor schools, electricity, transportation nor security. The Government of Dacca itself recognizes in its Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan⁴³ that the floods brought about by the monsoons, tropical cyclones and storm tides are the three principal climate threats the country faces⁴⁴, and in an attempt to protect some of its most vulnerable communities, has established a project with 12.5 million dollars in funds to «minimize environmental risks» and safeguard communities in situations of risk. The World Bank Director for Bangladesh recognizes that «it is increasingly evident that climate change will have an enormous impact on a low-lying country like Bangladesh and it is essential to help communities living at the edge of the sea to augment their resistance in the face of adversity related to climate.»

The economic impact of natural disasters in Bangladesh has been assessed at billions of dollars: Cyclones Sidr and Aila (in 2007 and 2009 respectively) caused damage estimated at 1.7 million and 550 million dollars each⁴⁵.

The human impact is also significant: between 1988 and 2004 nearly 150,000 people died in floods, cyclones, drought or tornados⁴⁶, and in 2014 alone natural disasters displaced some 543,000 people. Some forecasts calculate the displacement of over 20 million people by 2050⁴⁷.

⁴¹ The report Vulnerability: Climate Change and Risks to Food Security, sets out the data from the analysis regarding this risk in the 2016 report from The Global Risks Report 2016. Available at <http://www.dsn.gov.es/es/actualidad/sala-prensa/global-risks-report-2016>

⁴² INTERPRESS SERVICE, *Bangladeshi «Char Dwellers» in Search of Higher Ground* Available at <http://www.iopsnews.net/2014/10/bangladeshi-char-dwellers-in-search-of-higher-ground/>

⁴³ Bangladesh Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan. Available at http://www.plancomm.gov.bd/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/11a_Climate-Change-and-Disaster-Management.pdf

⁴⁴ *Op. Cit.* P. 16.

⁴⁵ The Guardian, Anam, *Op. Cit.*

⁴⁶ ASIAN DISASTER REDUCTION CENTER. Available at <http://www.adrc.asia/countryreport/BGD/2005/english.pdf>

⁴⁷ DACCA TRIBUNE, «Climate-induced displacement now highest concern» Abu Bakr Siddique. Available at <http://archive.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/2016/may/08/climate-induced-displacement-now-highest-concern>



Satellite image of Bangladesh

According to the 2015 FAO report⁴⁸, agriculture is the sector most affected by these disasters and nearly a quarter of the damage caused by natural disasters in the developing world impact on the agricultural sector, and yet, during the period 2003-2013 only 4.5 per cent of humanitarian aid went to repair the effects of natural disasters in this area.

To its vulnerability in the face of natural disasters Bangladesh adds a scarcity of water, typical of the entire region. The Asian Development Bank estimates that more than 75 percent of the Asia-Pacific region suffers from water insecurity and warns of the gravity of hydraulic stress on countries of the south of Asia, a region which supports 20 percent of the world's population and only has access to 8 percent of world hydraulic resources, in large part

⁴⁸ FAO NOTICIAS. Available at <http://www.fao.org/news/story/es/item/280688/icode>

originating in Tibet. Water is of obvious importance for energy generation, mining and fishing, apart from its vital domestic use, with emphasis on its significance for guaranteeing food security in the world's most densely populated region. China and India, the two neighbors, represent 62 percent of the territory of the Himalayas and enjoy an advantageous position because they can take advantage of the upper part of the current⁴⁹, which explains why the works of Infrastructure and the construction of dams on the part of India have brought about major tension with Dacca. Specifically, the construction of a dam upstream on the Teesla river carried out by the Delhi government produced serious impact on rice production in the regions of Dalia, Nilphamari, Sayedpur and Rangpur, which were crucially affected, losing more than 4 million metric tons of rice in the Teesla Catchment area between 2006 and 2007⁵⁰. As if scarcity were a minor problem, 80 percent of the rivers of Asia turn out to be in poor condition⁵¹. More than two thirds of the residual waters dumped into the River Ganges in India receive no treatment, in addition to the aforementioned exposure to arsenic in Bangladesh.

To the extent that China expands its regional influence and India's economy prospers, the competition for strategic resources like water will probably make cooperation increasingly more difficult⁵². As pointed out in *Global Risks 2016*⁵³, extreme meteorological phenomena, the failure in mitigation stemming from and adaptation to climate change and natural catastrophes are profiled as the major challenges for the environment, and of all of these the water crisis stands out, together with weapons of mass destruction, as one of the most important factors of impact for 2016. The Bangladesh government, in collaboration with foreign development agencies, has spent years undertaking activities ranging from preparing shelters to planting trees, training people in first aid, introducing subjects into the academic curricula, and diversifying crops beyond rice, and for this, the Prime Minister, Sheikh Hasina, last September received an award from the United Nations in the category of political leadership⁵⁴. During the Paris Climate Summit, a thousand people [demonstrated] in Dacca as a reminder that the rise in sea

⁴⁹ ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK, *Asia Must Address Climate Change Impact on Water and Food*—ADB. Available at <https://www.adb.org/news/asia-must-address-climate-change-impact-water-and-food-adb-panel>

⁵⁰ IWAPONLINE, *Assessing the regional food insecurity in Bangladesh due to irrigation water shortage in the Teesla catchment area*. Available at <https://wp.iwaponline.com/content/18/2/304/>, date consulted 01/07/2016.

⁵¹ WORLDBANK, *What does climate change mean for Africa and Asia?* Available at <http://www.bancomundial.org/es/news/feature/2013/06/19/Infographic-Climate-Change-in-Subsaharan-Africa-South-Asia-South-East-Asia>

⁵² ALBERT, Eleanor, *Water Clouds on the Tibetan Plateau*, Council on Foreign Relations. Available at <http://www.cfr.org/asia-and-pacific/water-cloud-tibetan-plateau/p37848>

⁵³ *Global Risk Report*. Available at <http://www3.weforum.org/docs/Media/TheGlobalRisksReport2016.pdf>

⁵⁴ United Nations environment program. Available at <http://www.unep.org/newscentre/Default.aspx?DocumentID=26844&ArticleID=35460&l=es>

level affects the *sundarbans*⁵⁵, the largest mangrove swamp in the world, at risk of destruction from salinization and the change in rain patterns, and that meteorological phenomena are destroying crops and forcing thousands of people to emigrate to other rural or urban areas.

This initiative served as a reminder that Bangladesh is one of the countries most at risk from climate change.

The role of external actors

The most important and complex foreign relations of Bangladesh are those with its neighbor, India. It involves old and close cultural ties which began with India's support of Bangladeshi independence from Pakistan.

Bangladesh and India share an extensive and complicated border of more than 4,000 kilometers, a great part of which began to be walled off by the Delhi government in 1980 to put a stop to smuggling, immigration and the entrance of insurgents into the northeastern States, but also to calm the separatists of Assam, who repeatedly attack the illegal immigrants coming from Bangladesh⁵⁶. This Indo-Bangladeshi barrier has revealed what has been a major problem for some time: the enclaves. An enclave is a part of territory of a jurisdiction completely surrounded by territory under another jurisdiction. Many of these small territories are invisible on maps, but have a great impact on the population because their inhabitants become stateless and are deprived of access to services of education, security and health care⁵⁷.

This territorial anomaly, originating in confused and tangled map-drawing, ended in 2015, when Indian Prime Minister Modi transferred 162 enclaves, putting an end to the border dispute. The transfer of these small territories located on alien land, has permitted the enjoyment of true citizenship to 52,000 people who had lived in quasi-legality for decades. Nonetheless, questions related to land registry continue to cause problems for the residents of the enclaves, poor in the extreme, whose small holdings are their only property and who for decades bought and sold land without valid documents or a proper register⁵⁸.

⁵⁵ AGANCIAEFE, *Bangladesh reminds the world of its vulnerability facing climate change*. Available at <http://www.efe.com/efe/america/sociedad/bangladesh-recuerda-al-mundo-su-vulnerabilidad-frente-cambio-climatico/20000013-2775977>

⁵⁶ INDIAN EXPRESS, *Indo-Bangladesh ties reached new height*. Available at <http://inndianexpress.com/article/india/india-news-india/indo-bangladesh-ties-reached-new-height-says-indian-diplomat-3029000/>

⁵⁷ MIGRATION POLICY INSTITUTE, *India and Bangladesh Swap Territory, Citizens in Landmark Enclave Exchange*. Available at <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/india-and-bangladesh-swap-territory-citizens-landmark-enclave-exchange>

⁵⁸ *Op. Cit.*

The agreement between the two Prime Ministers in June of 2015 represents a major achievement, eliminating an obstacle in the relations between the two countries and facilitating an approach to questions of greater import, such as the sharing out of waters.

Although relations between Dacca and Delhi are currently very cordial, there remain certain sources of tension between the two nations. In the words of the ex-Prime Minister of Bangladesh, «The present relationship is very good. We had two problems pending. One of them was the land border agreement, which is being implemented. In the second place, we've had a problem with the maritime area, where we could not go to explore for petroleum or gas, which has been very amicably resolved through arbitration. The two principal problems have been resolved in very friendly fashion», said Ahmed, former Vice President of Bangladesh and a representative of the nationalist Party of Bangladesh⁵⁹, who also pointed out that the major pending subject between India and Bangladesh is the division of the water from the 53 rivers which, originating in India, flow across the Bangladeshi lowlands. In this respect, the construction of the dam at Farakka, 18 km from the border with Bangladesh, is an obstacle to the proper sharing of the water flow.

Relations with China have undergone rapid transformation in recent decades. Trade between the two countries has grown rapidly, making Bangladesh China's greatest trading partner; Beijing and Dacca are participants in regional cooperation, sharing in an agreement to connect the whole of Southeast Asia by means of an economic corridor involving Bangladesh, China, India and Myanmar. For its part, China is becoming an important partner not only for the development of physical infrastructure, but also in aspects of security: China is the greatest supplier of military equipment to Bangladesh⁶⁰. In fact, security relations are as important to Dacca as the economic, and a greater cooperation between the two countries means, to Bangladesh, covering its security in the region.

The strategic projects which Dacca intends to develop force Bangladesh to involve itself with technological and financial partners like China, Japan, the United States and South Korea, among others, which places the Dacca Government in a delicate role. One of these, the construction of a deep sea port, has at least four possible locations: Chittagong, Sonadia, Matarbari, and Payra⁶¹, of great economic and geopolitical interest for regional neighbors. Chittagong is a fine place for the ambitions of China to construct a land corridor from the province of Yunnan to the Bay of Bengala. Dacca, playing with neighborly equilibrium, in 2015 granted permission for cargo ships

⁵⁹ *Op. Cit.*

⁶⁰ ASIANNNEWS, Bangladesh-China relations: What's next? Available at <http://www.asiannews.network/content/opinion-bangladesh-china-relations-whats-next-1483>

⁶¹ The Diplomat, *China, Japan and India are all competing to build Dacca's first deep sea port.* Available at <http://thediplomat.com/2016/06/bangladehs-deep-sea-port-problem/>

from India to use the port. The other option, Sonandia, seemed certain during the visit of Sheikh Hasina to Beijing in 2014. However, the political pressure exerted from India and the United States led to the formal announcement in February of 2016 that this option had been dismissed. Perhaps weighing in the balance was the fact that China, after the construction of ports in Sri Lanka, Pakistan, the Maldivas, and Myanmar, would consider Bangladesh as the last link in a chain which would leave India completely surrounded.

In spite of its small size, Bangladesh is of major geopolitical importance. The Indian Ocean region contains 40 percent of world gas and oil reserves, a third of the world's population, and spans one of the most transited and important maritime routes on earth, which is as well a supply route to Central Asia.

As Laborie points out, the Asia-Pacific region seems to be receiving special attention from the United States, upon its being given the clarifying classification of «vital theater». In this way, the Pentagon signals the intent to move forward with the «rebalancing of forces» in the area—the aforementioned strategic «pivot» towards the Pacific—where the most advanced military capabilities are to be deployed. In the same way, alliances with Australia, Japan, South Korea, the Philippines and Thailand will be reinforced and those with India, New Zealand, Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia, Vietnam and Bangladesh will be strengthened. For Washington, all these efforts are essential for the maintenance of peace and the construction of regional capabilities linked to antimissile defense, cybersecurity, maritime security, and actions in case of natural disasters⁶²

Meanwhile, Dacca has become a cornerstone of the region, thus balancing the rival influences of India, China, the United States and Japan, which requires a balanced relationship, especially with Delhi and Beijing. If the diplomacy of Dacca must confront India as commercial land and investment ties to Beijing grow⁶³, China's role, if it truly wishes to help with the development of the strategic and security infrastructure of Bangladesh, will have to be different from that which it has played in other parts of South Asia. Like many other countries along the length of the leash and the road, Bangladesh wishes to take advantage of its position among the principal world powers and to be a «friend to everyone». A military confrontation with India is unlikely, and the risk of conflicts has been forestalled with the resolution of the border dispute. Perhaps the Rohingya militants who operate on the Bangladeshi side of the border with Myanmar may be a potential trigger for low-intensity skirmishes.

⁶² LABORIE, Maro, *Front to Front: the military strategies of the United States and China*. Available at http://www.ieee.es/Galerías/fichero/docs_opinion/2015/DIEEE0104-2015_Estrategias Militares ChinayEEUU MLI.pdf

⁶³ DHAKATRIBUNE, Bangladesh, China to be connected high speed train. Available at <http://archive.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/2015/jun/19/bangladesh-china-be-connected-high-speed-train>

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But at this point, the country finds itself in very turbulent waters and the advances in relations with India may be undermined if the Nationalist Party of Bangladesh returns to power. Destabilizing Bangladesh could also mean destabilizing India⁶⁴.

Although in a central and key position between Asia and the Pacific, Bangladesh has been a priority neither for Washington nor for Europe. If there has indeed been a certain attention paid to its economic awakening, few have turned their attention to the increasingly restricted space for pluralism as well as rising Islamic radicalism, and yet, with the equilibrium of Bangladesh, regional security is also at risk.

Conclusions and perspectives

Seen in general terms, Bangladesh is a success story. Contradicting Kissinger⁶⁵, poverty levels have decreased drastically, education and health care have improved enormously, and a nation which once was prey to famines now produces a rice crop sufficient to feed its 160 million inhabitants. In political terms, it is a parliamentary democracy, participates in regional forums, such as SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation), forms part of the Millennium Development Objectives and is a very relevant actor at the United Nations, especially through their Peacekeeping Operations to which it contributes one of the world's largest troop contingents.

Unlike many predominantly Moslem countries, the enabling of women has also made great strides, symbolized by the fact that both, its present Prime Minister, Sheikh Hasina, and her predecessor, Khaleda Zia, are women. Nonetheless, the difficulty in admitting the importance of terrorist attacks on foreigners and religious minorities and against freedom of expression darkens its image and raises it into consideration as a high-risk country. The smothering of opposition—ideological or political—has become customary in Bangladesh. The government jails opposition leaders and sues publishers of newspapers for slander and sedition, 2015 and 2016 have seen growth in violence against foreigners and locations considered enemies of extremist Islam: secular bloggers, open critics of fundamentalism, members of religious minorities and police agents.

In this small country, 4^o among nations of Moslem population⁶⁶, if to economic development flawed by the deficit in social rights is added political

⁶⁴ BAÑOS, Jordi. Tensión en las costuras de Bangladesh. Available at <http://blogs.lavanguardia.com/india/tension-en-las-costuras-de-bangladesh-41906>

⁶⁵ AGENCIA EFE, From lost cause to development surprise. Available at <http://www.efedocanalisis.com/noticia/de-caso-perdido-a-sorpresa-de-desarrollo-bangladesh-es-pais-de-renta-media>

⁶⁶ After Indonesia, India and Pakistan. More information at PEW RESEARCH CENTER. <http://www.pewforum.org/data> and at <http://www.globalreligiousfutures.org>.

polarization and a rise in terrorism, the impossibility of its exit from the club of the poverty-stricken will consolidate it as a fragile State. As Lisa Curtis points out, the alarming rise in extremist violence could bring about a self-fulfilling prophecy: the aggressive marginalizing of the opposition could lead some political groups into radicalization and make them more prone to extremism⁶⁷.

On another front, true economic integration is very small, the bureaucracy is obstructive and endemically corrupt and infrastructures are poor. Efforts are being made to modify labor laws and avoid dramatic labor catastrophes, but disturbances continue to be common, especially in the garment sector. Bangladesh suffers from a profound energy crisis, supply is poor and the country undergoes frequent natural disasters. The sustained growth in recent years has generated a greater demand for electricity, water, transport and telecommunications services, and has contributed to a rise in the deficit of infrastructures. While the population growth rate has fallen, the workforce is growing rapidly.

In the field of security, Dacca's first step should be to admit the state of the question and recall that in 2013, hundreds of thousands of supporters of Hefazat-e-Islam, the largest Islamist movement in the country, demonstrated peacefully in the capital to protest secularism, perhaps presaging the bloody attacks of 2015 and 2016. Ignoring the signs of alarm represents a danger to the security of the region. Hasina insists on emphasizing the secular principles of the country's founding. Nonetheless, her Government should now concentrate on setting up the security measures necessary to protect the people who want those principles to be respected. Otherwise, there could be produced the paradox of Bangladesh becoming like Pakistan, the country it fought so hard to separate itself from.

Bangladesh, although in a key central position in South Asia, has not been a priority for the centers of global power. Its economic development has been outstanding, but what is at risk is that a lay and plural Moslem nation be overwhelmed by a cyclone of violence which it cannot control. It is, therefore, a country to which more attention should be paid.

⁶⁷ CURTIS, Lisa. «Bangladesh Attack Shows Depth of Country's Extremist Problems». Available at <http://dailysignal.com/2016/07/03/bangladesh-attack-shows-depth-of-country-extremist-problems/>

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Table of geopolitical indicators

TABLE OF GEOPOLITICAL INDICATORS		
Surface Area	144,000 km ²	
Aquatic Area	18,290 km ²	
Cultivable lands	70.1%	
Irrigated surface	53,000 km	
GDP	195,100,000 USD	
Remittances from emigrant workers	15,000,000 USD (8% of the GDP)	
Inflation	6.2%	
Structure of GDP	Agriculture	16 %
	Industry	30.4 %
	Services	53.6 %
Per capita GDP	3,600 USD	
Rate of GDP growth	6.6%	
Rate of industrial production growth (Ranked 10 in the world)	9.4%	
Population	161,000,000	
Burmese refugees	232,000	
Internal displaced persons	426,000	
Workforce	82,000,000	
Workforce emigration to Persian Gulf countries	7th country	
Child labor (ages 5-18)	8,000,000	
Structure by ages	0-14	31.62 %
	15-64	63.25 %
	Over 65	5.13 %
Rate of population growth	1.6 %	
Ethnic groups:		
Bengalis	98 % others 1.2 %	
Religions:		
Sunni Islam	89.1 %	
Hindu	10%	
others (Buddhists, Christians)	0.9%	
Literacy rate of the population	61.5%	
Education expenditure	2% of GDP	
Population below poverty line	31,5 %	
Index of human development	0.558 (142 / 188)	
Military expenditure, % of GDP	0 %	

Chronology of conflict

CHRONOLOGY	
1947	End of Indian colonial period. Birth of Pakistan, established as East Pakistan and West Pakistan
1949	The Awami League initiates campaign to obtain autonomy of East Pakistan.
1970	Awami League wins elections in East Pakistan. Government of West Pakistan does not recognize electoral results. Beginning of disturbances. A cyclone causes over 500,000 deaths in East Pakistan.
1971	Beginning of Indopakistani war. Arrest and detention of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in West Pakistan.
1972	Sheikh Mujibur Rahman returns from exile and is elected Prime Minister.
1974	Major flooding and famine causing 28,000 deaths. State of emergency declared.
1975	Sheikh Mujibur becomes President of country. Military coup in August and imposition of martial law. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman assassinated.
1976	Banning of labor unions.
1977	General Zia Rahman assumes the Presidency. Islam enters the Constitution of Bangladesh.
1979	General Zia's Bangladesh National Party (BNP) wins elections. Martial law lifted.
1981	Assassination of Zia in aborted military coup attempt.
1982	General Ershad holds power after new coup. Constitution and political parties suspended.
1986	Parliamentary and Presidential elections convoked. Ershad elected for period of 5 years. Martial law lifted and Constitution re-established.
1988	Islam declared official religion. Over ¾ of country flooded. Tens of millions of people lose homes.
1991	Ershad tried and imprisoned for illegal possession of arms. Widow of President Zia Rahman, Khaleda Zia, elected Prime Minister. Constitution modified to grant all executive power to this office. Major flooding due to tides which kill 138,000 people.
1996	Electoral victory of the Awami League with Sheikh Hasina Wajed, daughter of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Prime Minister.
1998	Major flooding devastates 2/3 of the country. Trials begin of 15 ex-military figures charged with assassination of Sheikh Mujibur in military coup of 1975.
2001	Terrorist attacks: 32 deaths. Incidents on the Indian border.
2002	Law passed banning and punishing the use of acid and other practices against women. Jaamat-e-Islam kills 17 people in bomb attack. First visit by a Pakistani President, Musharraf.
2004	Opposition calls 22 general strikes throughout year. Attack on Moslem sanctuary at Sylhet. Hasina survives attack during election year.
2005	350 bombs used in wave of attacks attributed to Islamist groups.
2007	Death sentence for 6 Islamic militants charged with the 2005 attacks. Hundreds of deaths caused by Cyclone Sidr.
2008	Local elections and triumph of candidates backed by Awami League. Awami League victory (250—300 seats). Hasina elected Prime Minister.

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CHRONOLOGY	
2009	Local branch of Islamist organization Hizb-ut-Tahrir declared illegal by government.
2010	Execution of 6 ex-officials for the assassination in 1975 of Prime Minister Mujibur Rahman
2012	Attacks on Buddhist towns and sanctuary in southeast of country.
2013	Prime Minister Hasina vetoes bill banning criticism of Islam
2014	Conviction for war crimes of 2 Jamaat-e-Islam party leaders.
2015	Ansarullah Bangla Team claims responsibility for assassination of secular figures. Attacks on Christians and Sunni Moslems.
2016	Death sentences for two students for the murder of blogger Ahmed Rajib Haide

Chapter fifteen

Islamic radicalism in Indonesia

Maria del Mar Hidalgo García

Abstract

Despite the religious tolerance and the recognition of Indonesia as a moderate Muslim country, over the past years a boom is being apparent of the Islamization of the country. The attacks that have taken place in 2016 have ended with a period of absence of jihadist terrorism on Indonesian territory and revealed that Indonesia must make an effort to prevent the activity of violent Islamist groups who have declared their support to IS/Daesh.

Keywords

Jihadist terrorism, IS/Daesh, Indonesia, MIT, Jemmah Islamiyah.

Introduction

Indonesia is a country comprising 17,000 islands. It has a population of approximately 250 million people, although most of them, around 141 million, live on the island of Java¹. There are over 400 ethnic groups in Indonesian territory². But the thing that perhaps most characterises Indonesia from a demographic point of view, is that Indonesia is the country with the highest number of Muslims in the world, 90% of its population practicing Islam, most of them Sunnis.

As is the case of other nations in Southeast Asia, Indonesia is not subjected to serious security threats from the outside, but rather the main threats are essentially of domestic character. Focal points of instability are related to ethnic and religious confrontations, as has been the case since independence from Holland in 1945.



Source: www.mapcruzin.com

By its constitution, Indonesia is not an Islamic state. Although religion is an important factor, it is not the basis of the country's politics, which is based on the five philosophical principles of Pancasila: the belief in one and only God, just and civilised humanity, the unity of Indonesia, democracy and social justice³. Driven by President Sukarno in 1945, these five pillars were

¹ Bergmann, K. «Threats to Indonesia's Internal Security». *Defence Review Asia*. Jan-Feb 2016.

² M. Syafi'i Anwar. «The future of Islam and democracy in Indonesia. Between hope and history». International Centre for Islam and Pluralism. Jakarta, Indonesia.

³ http://www.indonesianembassy.org.uk/human_right-2.htm. Consulted 25th June 2016.

established as a nexus common to all cultural, ethnic and religious diversity to favour development of the Indonesian State.

Islam, in Indonesia, is characterised by being moderate, tolerant and perfectly compatible with democratic values. In fact, since its independence, attempts to impose Sharia law in the country's constitution have failed. Both Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah, the two largest and most influential Islamic organisations in Indonesia promote inter-religious tolerance and solidarity, and support the democratic system. An example of this situation is the youth branch of Nahdlatul Ulama which takes part in surveillance of Christian churches during religious services to avoid any acts of violence⁴.

In spite of this visible harmony, it is no less true that the September 11th attacks in the USA in 2001 and those in Bali in 2002 and Jakarta in 2003 and 2004, have brought more attention to the problem of Islamic radicalism in Indonesia. Nevertheless, this phenomenon is nothing new, as there have been fundamentalist groups since the State's independence who have tried to impose Sharia and spoil the peaceful coexistence of different religious groups in a country that is mainly Muslim. The threat of violence today from Islamic extremists by IS/Daesh in Indonesia is cause for concern not only internally but throughout Southeast Asia, and therefore for the international community as a whole.

Since 2004, the Indonesian Jihad community is divided into two groups: those who support indiscriminate violence against Western targets and police forces, outwardly supporting IS/Daesh, such as MIT (Mujahidin Indonesia Timur) and those who believe that this type of violence is more detrimental than beneficial since it claims the lives of «innocent Muslims». Within the second group the most prominent is the weakened Jemmah Islamiyah (JI) –linked to Al Qaeda– outwardly showing support for IS/Daesh's main rival in Syria: the Al-Nusra front and its allies⁵.

Historical Background

Islam was peacefully introduced in Indonesia in the 14th century through traders from India and the Middle East, adapting it to local populations and even being somewhat influenced by Hinduism and the ancestral regional religions. Nevertheless, the process did not take place uniformly throughout the archipelago. In eastern regions, far away from the trade routes, there was never a Muslim majority. The Hindu/Buddhist culture also posed a barrier to the introduction, as was the case of Bali.

⁴ Bertrand J. and Soedirgo J., «A threat to stability? Islamic Extremism and Fundamentalism in Indonesia». CIGI PAPERS, No. 95, MARCH 2016.

⁵ Jones S., «ISIS in Indonesia». Southeast Asian Affairs, 2015.

In other areas, Islam mixed with the animist beliefs, as was the case on the island of Java. According to experts there are two types of Muslims on this island: the «Abangan» who mix Islam with Hinduism, Buddhism and animist traditions, usually practiced by people in rural communities, and the «Santri», known as orthodox Muslims who are mostly found in the cities and more inclined to the creed of the Koran in mosques⁶.

Islam arrived in Indonesia's region in several waves. The first one took place with the traders in the early centuries of the Islam era. There were a further two waves later attempting to establish a more orthodox Islam: Wahhabism arising out of Arabia which arrived in the early 19th century and then Salafism from Egypt, which was implemented at the end of the 19th century. The last wave led to tension between those who were loyal to local, more tolerant Islam, and the new conservative reformists who arrived on the archipelago.⁷ This situation caused marginal violent conflicts related to implementation of Sharia. These more radical Islamic influences were further increased by the opening of the Suez Canal in 1896, when contact between Indonesian Muslims and the religious centres in the Middle East intensified.

Indonesia, as mentioned earlier the country with the highest Muslim population in the world, is since 1998 a clear example that Islam and democracy are not two incompatible terms. The basis of this religious tolerance resides in the 1945 Constitution, approved when Indonesia became an independent state, after its independence from Holland. The text refers to monotheism without specifically and predominantly including Islam, which many Muslims who had fought for independence disagreed with, leading to the rebellion by the Darul Islam organisation between 1948 and 1962 with the group accusing the State of apostasy. Although this movement was finally disbanded, it split into several other groups such as Laskar Jihad which carried out a campaign against Christians throughout Indonesia, or the most well known Jemaah Islamiyah (JI). Other regional conflicts added to the Darul Islam rebellion, such as the massacre of communists in 1965-1966, the kidnapping of an aircraft in 1981 and several attacks on Christian churches and Buddhist monuments. In recent decades there have been attacks against hotels and entertainment areas⁸.

In chronological order, the most critical moment of violence linked to Islamic fundamentalism in Indonesia took place in 2002 when members of Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) - coined the Al Qaeda franchise in Indonesia - carried out large scale terrorist attacks in Bali, killing 202 people, mostly Australian tourists.

⁶ <http://www.indonesia-investments.com/culture/religion/islam/item248>. Consulted: 25th June 2016.

⁷ Riviere, C. Will jihadist-salafism present a security challenge to law and order in Indonesia in the next ten years? Available at: www.defence.gov.au/adc/publications/publications.html. Consulted 16th August 2016.

⁸ <http://www.indonesia-investments.com/culture/religion/islam/item248>. Consulted 25th June 2016.

There was a bombing in the J.W. Marriot hotel in Jakarta in 2003, killing 12 people and in 2005 another attack killing 25 people in Bali. Later on, in 2009, seven people were killed in suicide bombings at two hotels in Jakarta, the Ritz-Carlton and once again the J.W. Marriot, very popular with foreigners, particularly westerners.

The then president, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (2004-2014) established counter-terrorism initiatives and measures that contributed to reducing the frequency and the intensity of Islamic attacks in Indonesia. Since the death of Noordin in 2010, who headed up the JI faction responsible for the bombings in Bali in 2002, the number of suicide attacks was reduced. For example, between 2011 and 2013 there were only three suicide bombings with the only mortal victims being the terrorists themselves. In 2014 there were none, mainly due to the counter-terrorism measures implemented by the Indonesian Government and the loss of capabilities by the extremist groups. The few attacks perpetrated against the police were by the hand of MIT (Mujahidin Indonesia Timur) and its network that includes Jihadists who are in Syria and Iraq.

But the reduction in terrorist activity was not only due to the death of Noordin, but also the lower capabilities of the new militants, who do not have the same experience as those who were trained in the Afghanistan fields (at the end of the 80's and early 90's) and in Mindanao (Philippines) from the middle of the nineties to early 2000⁹. This decrease in attacks is also related to the dismantling of the Aceh training camp in 2010, led by Dulmatin, also involved in the Bali bombings which was supported by Abu Bakar Bashir, the leader of Jemaah Anshorut Tauhid (JAT) and Al Qaeda in Aceh. A training course lasting for two months was provided, in accordance with the «Qital Tamkin» concept, consisting of armed fighting to take control of territories to implement Islamic law whilst conserving the Governmental institutions and the economic capacity of the conquered territories instead of simply destroying enemy targets¹⁰.

Current situation

Despite this religious tolerance and Indonesia being recognised as a moderate Islamic country, there has been a rise in Islamisation in the country in recent years with an increase of external signs more inherent to conservative Islam in the daily lives of Indonesians, such as their clothing and the rise in the sale

⁹ Report «Terrorism in Southeast Asia». Congressional Research Service, 2009. Available at <https://www.fas.org/spp/crs/terror/RL34194.pdf> (consulted 18th August de 2016).

¹⁰ Koruth Samuel, T. «Radicalisation in Southeast Asia: A selected case study of Daesh in Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines». Available at: https://www.unodc.org/documents/southeastasiaandpacific/Publications/2016/Radicalisation_SEA_2016.pdf. Consulted 06 October 2016

of Islamic literature¹¹. Although these events must not be linked to Islamic fundamentalism, it could become a basis to foment religious intolerance.

A sociological survey published by Pew Research Centre revealed that only 22% of the Muslim population in Indonesia is in favour of the laws enforcing strict teachings of the Koran, compared to 52% who believe that only the values and principles should be enacted. 16% of the population prefer no Koranic influence in politics¹².

Since the emergence of IS/Daesh in 2014, both the former president Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono and the Indonesian Islamic organisations have forbidden this organisation's ideology. The Indonesian Government has followed a policy based on «Softpower» dealing with religious and cultural affairs to counter the influence of IS/Daesh in the territory, arguing that other nations act wrongly by using violence, such as the cases of Afghanistan or Syria¹³.

Nevertheless, the terrorist attack perpetrated in January 2016 against a police post killing eight people, the suicide bombing injuring a policeman on 5th July and the suicide attack at the end of August 2016 against a Catholic church on the island of Sumatra ended the seven years of absence of Jihad terror on Indonesian territory, making it evident that Indonesia needs to make a bigger effort to avoid an upsurge in Salafist Jihadism¹⁴. Both attacks are connected to IS/Daesh and there is therefore growing concern, not only in Indonesia, but also among the International community, that radical Islamic movements could pose a real threat to the security of this country and its surrounding area. This situation largely weakens all the efforts the country has been making to consolidate a solid, long-term counter terrorism structure¹⁵.

What is most worrying however today is that through the proclamation by IS/Daesh, a new threat has arisen owing to the loyalty several radical groups such as MIT have sworn to that organisation. Initial support for IS/Daesh in Indonesia was initially through two channels: the website www.al-mustaqbal.net and the teachings of the cleric Aman Abdurrahman¹⁶. On the other hand, the return of Indonesian fighters from Syria and Iraq could further fire radicalisation in the country.

¹¹ <http://www.indonesia-investments.com/culture/religion/islam/item248>. Consulted 27th June 2016.

¹² <http://www.pewforum.org/2016/06/23/number-of-countries-with-very-high-restrictions-and-hostilities-went-down-in-2014/>. Consulted 10th August 2016.

¹³ <http://www.globalindonesianvoices.com/27135/is-isis-a-threat-to-indonesia/>. Consulted 16th August 2016.

¹⁴ Salafist Jihadism is a violent branch of Sunni Islam which emphasises the importance of returning to a «pure» form of Islam, based on the theological justification of violence to establish a Caliphate. The ideology encourages taking up a violent Jihad as a personal religious task.

¹⁵ Sinai, *Journal of Counter-terrorism & Homeland Security International*. Vol. 21. No.1.

¹⁶ <http://news.asiaone.com/news/asian-opinions/what-does-isis-spell-regional-security?nopaging=1> (Consulted: 30th August 2016).

In May 2016 there was shown a two-minute video on the web where IS/Daesh declared war on Malaysia and Indonesia. An adult surrounded by children was depicted claiming they would overthrow the leaders and governments who did not follow Islamic principles. Documents that were apparently Malayan and Indonesian passports were then burnt¹⁷. However, and despite the effectiveness of these propaganda campaigns, what the Indonesian police are most concerned about is the other way of recruiting used by IS/Daesh, consisting of offering fighters a salary of between 6 and 20 million Rp (equivalent to 420 and 1,400 euro, respectively)¹⁸.

Main radical Islamic groups in Indonesia

IS/Daesh supporters

There are several violent Islamic groups in Indonesia who have declared their support for IS/Daesh. There is a certain amount of overlapping and even signs of rivalry to hold the leading role in the region among these groups, and it is therefore fairly unlikely that they will unite under the same flag to establish a Caliphate in Indonesia¹⁹. These groups are the following²⁰:

MIT (Mujahidin Indonesia Timur)

This terrorist group has links with IS/Daesh. It consists of around thirty men who have established in the Poso hills in Sulawesi. The leader, Santoso, alias Abu Wardah, established training camps in 2011 and periodically uploaded videos to Youtube and on radical websites. He was the first Indonesian to swear loyalty to Abubakar al-Baghdadi when he proclaimed the new Caliphate in June 2014. Santoso²¹ was one of the most wanted terrorist in recent years. The leafy jungle provided him with shelter, hindering his capture²². Finally, in July 2016 he was killed during a police raid. Santoso was considered an icon and a symbol of the Jihadi movement²³ in Indonesia and it will therefore be difficult to replace his position of strong leadership.

¹⁷ <http://foreignpolicy.com/2016/05/19/isis-is-training-indonesian-cubs-of-the-caliphate-to-kill-for-the-cause/>

¹⁸ <http://jakartaglobe.beritasatu.com/news/govt-blocks-isis-video-allegedly-showing-indonesian-children-assault-rifles/>

¹⁹ Galamas, F. «A general overview of terrorism in Indonesia». Research document 04/2015, available at http://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs_investig/2015/DIEEEINV04-2015_Terrorismo_en_Indonesia_FcoGalamas.pdf. Consulted 5th July 2016.

²⁰ <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/report/2016/PBAAD863.pdf>

²¹ Santoso even proclaimed himself the Zarqawi of Indonesia.

²² A detailed description of the raid can be found at: [http://www.channelnewasia.com/news/video/indonesia-s-most-wanted\(2968314.html](http://www.channelnewasia.com/news/video/indonesia-s-most-wanted(2968314.html)

²³ <http://edition.cnn.com/2016/07/20/asia/terrorism-indonesia-santoso-killed/>

Ansharut Dualah Islamiyah (ADI)

It is not known if this is an «umbrella organisation» comprising several groups or a number of individuals together based on the same beliefs. They believe that if they are organised formally, there will be no difference between them and other Islamic groups, who they consider a rung lower than IS/Daesh. Their outlook on the group is to establish an IS/Daesh embryo in Indonesia. For now they limit their activity to sending fighters to Syria and Iraq and to encourage Islamic teachings, but them turning to violence cannot be ruled out if the leader of IS/Daesh Abu Bakar Al-Baghdadi declares Indonesia or any other region in Southeast Asia a target of the Caliphate²⁴.

Jamaah Anshorut Tauhid (JAT)

Founded and led in 2008 by Abu Bakar Bashir, the spiritual leader of JI. This group has been involved in several attacks, but the arrest of the group's leader who is currently in prison and the success of counter-terrorism action have significantly diminished the capabilities of the group. Today, this group is little more than a few members who spend their time trying to recruit new members, since around 80% of their initial members left the organisation through disagreements about supporting IS/Daesh and formed a new group, namely Jamaah Anshorut Syariah (JAS).

Jamaah Tauhid wal Jihad

Founded in 2004 by Aman Abdurraman. It features a «flexible» structure, consisting of cells made up of individuals connected to terrorist acts.

Ring Banten

Formed in 1999 after the Darul Islam group split up. The members of this group were involved in the 2002 Bali bombing and in the attack on the Australian embassy in 2004. One of its leaders, Iwan Dharmawan, alias Rois, has been sentenced to death for his involvement in the Australian embassy attack. Some of its members have joined IS/Daesh in Syria.

Gema Salam

This group is known for being the movement of Islamic law students. It is one of the groups that has most been supporting IS/Daesh in many parts of Indonesia since 2013. Its members follow the teachings of Aman Addurrahman and manage the Shoutussalam.org website, with a clear pro

²⁴ <http://www.insideindonesia.org/more-than-a-fanclub>

IS/Daesh trend. They are also in charge of translating and publishing on-line the Indonesian version of IS/Daesh's magazine «Dabiq».

MIB (Mujahidin Indonesia Barat)

As is true in the case of MIT, this group is considered to be pro-violence. Founded in 2012 it is established in the west of Java Island. Many of its members have links to a network of the former Darul Islam, headed up by Abdullah Umar who is currently in prison. It includes members of the organisation Abu Bakar Ba'asyr, Jamaah Anshorul Tauhid (JAT) and several followers of Aman Abdurrahman, a cleric who is currently in prison.

Forum Aktivistis Syariah Islam (FAKSI)

Created in 2013 by Muhammad Fachry and Bahrum Syam. They promote the most extreme ideology of IS/Daesh through website www.al-Mustaqbal.com. In May Bahrum joined IS/Daesh in Syria, giving him huge popularity in the social media, while Fachry's activity is mainly focussed on recruitment, selection and training.

Against IS/Daesh

There are fewer groups, although they are not less important, since they have also perpetrated violent attacks, although for the time being they have not sworn allegiance to IS/Daesh. Nevertheless, their role is crucial in discredit IS/Daesh actions among the Indonesian population. These groups would include²⁵:

Jemmah Islamiyah (JI)

This has been the biggest and best organised Jihadi movement in Southeast Asia. It was founded in 1993 in Malaysia by Addullah Sungkar and Abu Bakar Ba'asyr, both Indonesian leaders in exile who had left Darul Islam a year earlier.

Among the attacks they have perpetrated, the most serious was the one in Bali in 2002. They also carried out attacks later against western hotels and the Australian embassy. Nevertheless, the magnitude of the attack in Bali divided the organisation creating new groups who are unwilling to abandon violence. JI believes that the cost of the Jihad in Indonesia exceeds the benefits, and therefore, since 2007, it has forbidden its members to carry out attacks in places that could cause collateral deaths of Muslims.

²⁵ <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/report/2016/PBAAD863.pdf>

Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia (MMI)

Founded by Ba'asyr in 2000 as an alternative to JI. The paramilitary branch of this group was responsible for the violence against Christians in the early years of the 21st century. Ba'asyr subsequently founded JAT and MMI lost a large part of its members, but those who stayed, did so under the leadership of Abu Jibriel, an Afghan veteran. MMI opposes ISIS and has its own channels with the group Al-Nusra.

On the other hand, there are also radical groups who cause low-intensity conflicts without sharing the Jihadist fight.

Jamaah Anshorul Syariat (JAS)

As mentioned earlier, this group was created in 2014 after the restructuring of JAT, following Ba'asyr swearing his allegiance to IS/Daesh.

Other radical groups

In addition to these terrorist groups, in recent years some other radical groups have used violence or have threatened to use it to achieve their ideals, even attacking the Muslim population, such as vendors who sell food during Ramadan. The Indonesian Government and Justice have not been very forceful with these radical groups, perhaps because they trust that the Muslim community will support religious pluralism and disapprove any type of religious violence.

Harakah Sunni Movement for Indonesia Society (HASMI)

In October 2012 the «Detachment 88» (Commando forces) arrested 11 of its members and during the operation they discovered explosives and a list of targets including the US Embassy in Jakarta, the Consulate in Surabaya and an American mining corporation. The main motivation firing this group was revenge for the film «Innocence of Muslims»²⁶.

Islamic Defenders Front (FPI)

This group is considered to be the main Islamist organisation in Indonesia. Among the action perpetrated by this group, that against bars and nightclubs and against Christians are the most noteworthy, although they have also attacked Sunni Muslim sects, such as Sunni Ahmadiyah deeming them insufficiently orthodox, and Shia sects as they consider them heretics.

²⁶ J. Sinai, *Journal of Counter-terrorism & Homeland Security International*. Vol. 21 No.1.

The true force behind this group is not in its 3,000 followers, but rather in the wide support it receives through the social media and the influence it exercises over the Government with some high ranking officials and police officers having claimed sympathy towards the group²⁷.

Counter-terrorism initiatives: Detachment 88

One of the most successful counter-terrorism initiatives the Indonesian government has implemented was the creation in 2003 of the elite commando force «Detachment 88»²⁸, founded and trained by western powers such as USA and Australia, which acts in conjunction with the local police forces. In fact, the «88» is the number of Australian victims there were in the Bali bombings of 2002²⁹.

Although the exact number of members is not known, they are estimated to be around four hundred. In addition to being formed by special forces personnel, this detachment has a wide intelligence network thanks to which over 200 people involved in radical Islamic terrorism have been imprisoned or killed, and the most radical leaders of JI such as Noordin, responsible for planning the attacks on the J.L. Marriot and Ritz-Carlton hotels in Jakarta on 17th July 2009, were either captured or killed³⁰. In 2014, Detachment 88 carried out several raids, capturing at least 54 suspected terrorists, most of them belonging to MIT.

Another less known aspect of Detachment 88 is that part of its members are trained to be «spiritual advisers» and they even join prisoners for prayer in the prisons. This measure strengthens the strategy by the Indonesian authorities of considering terrorists as «minds with confused ideology». Nevertheless, in spite of this efficiency, Detachment 88 has been accused of practices violating human rights such as torture³¹.

Reinforcing the legal framework

In addition to professionalising the anti-terrorism forces, the Government must reinforce the current legal framework, which to date has been somewhat slack³². Despite the Indonesian Government outlawing IS/Daesh in 2014, there is no criminal legislation permitting the authorities to arrest supporters

²⁷ . *Ibíd*

²⁸ Detachment 88. Also known as Densus 88 or Delta 88. The number «88» is the number of Australian victims there were in the Bali bombings of 2002.

²⁹ <http://www.military-quotes.com/forum/densus-88-detasemen-khusus-88-a-t83067.html>

³⁰ <http://www.insideindonesia.org/the-wives-of-noordin-top>

³¹ <http://soufangroup.com/tsg-intelbrief-assessing-indonesias-counterterrorism-campaign/>

³² Bergmann, K. *Opus cit.*

of this organisation unless there is evidence that they have participated in terrorist acts³³. It must also be pointed out that declaring IS/Daesh illegal by the Indonesian Government, is not based on the grounds of terrorism or Jihad violence, but rather because their beliefs are contrary to Pancasila³⁴.

An example of the lack of criminal prosecution of fighters abroad can be seen in the case of the JAT leader Afif Abdul Maiid, who was trained in Syria in 2014 although he has not been condemned for this, but rather his relationship to a terrorist camp in Aceh in 2010³⁵.

Radicalisation in prisons

In Indonesia, prisons are an important channel of radicalisation, the attention being brought to the case of Aman Abdurraman who managed to translate and publish IS/Daesh propaganda on the Internet whilst in prison³⁶. The case of the aforementioned Iwan Dharmawan, alias Rois, is also worthy of mention, he coordinated the 2004 Australian Embassy bombings, and despite being sentenced to death, managed to encourage some of his acquaintances to go and fight in Syria.

The problem with returning fighters

Although it is not easy to establish an exact figure, at the start of 2016 it was estimated that there were around 250 to 300 Indonesian fighters in Syria and Iraq³⁷. Most of the Indonesian fighters in Syria come from Jihadi groups such as Jemaah Islamiyah (JI), the Ring Banten faction of the group Darul Islam, the Mujahidin Indonesia Timur (MIT) or Jamaah Ansharut Tauhid (JAT). Having said that, there is a significant difference among them according to the groups they join in the conflict. Whereas the fighters from JI join forces with the Al-Nusra front or other Al Qaeda sympathisers, those linked to MIT, namely Ring Banten or JAT fight for IS/Daesh swear allegiance to Abu Bakar Al-Baghdadi³⁸. There are also Indonesians who have established themselves in the Middle East but without any affiliation to any specific Jihadi organisation, and they go to fight in Syria or Iraq after being influenced by personal contacts or the social media. This is the case of Bahrin Naim, who

³³ V. Arianti. «Indonesia». Counter Terrorist Trends and Analysis. Volume 7, Issue 1, January/February 2015.

³⁴ Bergmann, K. *Opus cit.*

³⁵ <http://www.insideindonesia.org/more-than-a-fanclub>

³⁶ S. Jones and Solahudin. ISIS in Indonesia. Southeast Asian Affairs, 2015.

³⁷ Riviere, C. Will jihadist-salafism present a security challenge to law and order in Indonesia in the next ten years? Available on: www.defence.gov.au/adc/publications/publications.html

³⁸ Navhat Nuraniyah. Returning Indonesian Fighters from Syria and Iraq: Learning for the past. www.rsis.edu.sg

was responsible for designing the Jakarta bombings in January 2016³⁹, from Al Raqqa, and who also planned the suicide bombing perpetrated in Solo in July 2016, injuring one police officer⁴⁰.

Indonesian fighters abroad keep in touch with militants of groups sympathetic to IS/Daesh in Indonesia, as was evident with the arrest in mid June 2016 of eight people suspected of keeping links with that organisation who intended to carry out an attack on the police or public institutions during Ramadan. One of the detainees had been in contact with Abu Jandal, an Indonesian known to be fighting in Syria⁴¹.

In general terms it is difficult to establish the degree of threat posed by returning fighters since their inclination to carry out terrorist attacks depends on several variables, including the political situation of the country they return to and their personal circumstances.

The issue of returned fighters in Indonesia is nothing new, since between 1985 and 1995 around 200 to 300 Indonesians were trained in Afghanistan to subsequently fight in Mindanao, Poso and Ambon. For example, the Imam Samudra, who was trained in Afghanistan and fought in Mindanao, later continued his terrorist activity on returning to Indonesia. On the other hand, other returned fighters support the cause but do not become involved in terrorist attacks. Some of them renounce any extremist ideology and even cooperate in the fight against terrorism. Sometimes they join up on returning, as happened in July 2014 with the creation of the military group Katibah Nusantara, formed by fighters from Southeast Asia who IS/Daesh contacted one by one through Facebook. The objective of this group is to help Malay or Indonesian speaking fighters join the IS/Daesh forces, since very few Indonesians spoke Arabic or English fluently⁴².

Some sources indicate there are around a hundred Indonesian fighters who have returned, who could establish an organised core to commit acts of terrorism.⁴³ The National Police force and the Police Civil Service are the main resources employed by the Government to tackle this problem, and the situation is not exempt of difficulties.

The Police Civil Service is in charge of Administrative Affairs more than enforcing the law, and the National Police Force, characterised by its corruption⁴⁴, has not proved to be efficient enough. These internal

³⁹ Echeverría, C. «El Estado islámico/Daesh y su proyección asiática» [The Islamic State / DAESH and their Projection into Asia]. *Revista Ejército*, Issue 899 March 2016.

⁴⁰ <http://edition.cnn.com/2016/07/20/asia/terrorism-indonesia-santoso-killed/>. Consulted 22nd July 2016.

⁴¹ Information from the ISW report: «ISIS-Linked Activity en Southeast Asia», 22nd April to 23rd June.

⁴² Sindney J. «ISIS in Indonesia». *Southeast Asian Affairs*, 2015.

⁴³ Bergmann Kym, *Opus cit.*

⁴⁴ <http://www.business-anti-corruption.com/country-profiles/indonesia>

shortcomings are further hindered by the geographical complexity of Indonesia, comprising 17,000 islands, covered by leafy jungles and dense forests that give shelter to violent groups and their training camps.

The de-radicalisation process

In the case of Indonesia there have been successes and failures in the de-radicalisation programmes. One of the failures was the case of Santoso, the founder of MIT, who after being released from prison was assigned a cleaning up project in Palu, in the central part of Sulawesi, and was even allowed to hire his followers with the hope that a stable job would keep him away from extremist terrorism. Despite these good intentions, the only thing they managed to do was to allow him to reorganise his members and obtain funding to form a new group⁴⁵. Another failure was the case of Addullah Sonata who was condemned for terrorism in 2006. He was released from prison in 2009 for good behaviour and a few months later returned to his group and became involved in acts of violence against the President and high authorities. The attention he received from the police, who had even paid the hospital bills when his wife gave birth served for nothing⁴⁶. The aforementioned Bahrun Naim is another case, he was imprisoned for two years for illegal possession of arms and after being released left for Syria, from where he was able to design the Jakarta bombings in January 2016.

Successful examples of de-radicalisation include the farm managed by former terrorists in Lamongan, in the east of Java, and a café managed by an NGO in the centre of this island. Although perhaps the most successful case of de-radicalisation was that of Nasir Abas, an Afghan militant who trained the terrorists who carried out the Bali bombings in 2002. After being released from prison in 2004, he has been cooperating with the police by visiting prisons to persuade radical inmates to abandon violence⁴⁷.

The success of these programmes is mainly based on three points: the implementation of a dual material and religious care programme, extending the network of contacts among terrorists and their families with members of other communities and with other ideologies, and last but by no means least, is the monitoring of the activities by former terrorists to avoid them regrouping and using the project funds to finance terrorism⁴⁸.

External agents

Jihad terrorism is a global affair, and therefore ending it will not be possible without international cooperation. In the case of Indonesia, regional

⁴⁵ Bergmann Kym, *Opus cit.*

⁴⁶ JTR, volume 6, Issue 2-May 2015.

⁴⁷ *Ibíd*

⁴⁸ *Ibíd*

cooperation in terms of security has had some positive results. For example, one of the major arrests carried out outside Indonesian borders took place in Thailand in 2004 when Hambali⁴⁹, who was considered to be «one of the most lethal terrorists in the world» according to President Bush⁵⁰, was captured. He was later transferred to Guantanamo where he is awaiting extradition to Indonesia, although the Government of this country has not shown itself to be very willing to carry out this process.

The January 2016 terrorist attacks in Jakarta for which Daesh claimed responsibility showcased the improvements in coordination of capabilities by this organisation and its branches in other countries. In order to stop this threat, not only is world-level coordination necessary, but also specific coordination between countries in Southeast Asia, particularly bearing in mind that investigations have revealed that the weapons used in the attack were supplied by extremist groups located in the south of the Philippines⁵¹, and that the terrorist cells in Indonesia have received funds channelled through Australia and Syria⁵².

Under this perspective of cooperation, the Indonesian Government is reaching specific agreements with the countries in its surrounding area, such as Singapore. At the end of January both countries agreed to share intelligence information, mainly focussing on finances, in order to halt the possible growth of IS/Daesh in the region⁵³.

Owing to the international nature of the Jihadist threat, diplomacy is an important part of any counter-terrorism strategy. As a member of ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations), Indonesia played an important role in the signing of the «Declaration of Joint Action to Counter-Terrorism» (ADJACT) in 2001 and the «Convention on Counter-terrorism» (ACCT) in 2007. At the last ASEAN Summit in August 2016, one of the main issues dealt with was cooperation between the countries in the association to fight against Jihadist terrorism in order to avoid it spreading and the subsequent negative effects on the economic growth of the region.

In addition to this collaboration in the area of counter-terrorism, the external agent with most influence on the possible growth of Jihadist terrorism in Indonesia is the conflict in Syria. Many Muslims throughout the world are

⁴⁹ Hambali was the operations leader of JI and acted as liaison between JI and Al Qaeda.

⁵⁰ <http://edition.cnn.com/2003/WORLD/asiapcf/southeast/08/15/hambali.reax/>

⁵¹ Among the Jihad groups with links to Daesh in the Philippines, Abu Sayyaf must be emphasised, whose leader acts as an Emir, coordinating other groups such as Abu Khubayh Brigade, Jundallah Battalion, Abu Sadr Battalion and Abu Dujana Brigade. Information from the ISW report: ISIS-Linked Activity en Southeast Asia, 22nd April to 23rd June.

⁵² Report from Jane's Defence Weekly: «Indonesia, Singapore step up co-operation in light of a more co-ordinated Islamic State». Date: 27 January 2016

⁵³ Report from Jane's Defence Weekly: «Indonesia, Singapore step up co-operation in light of a more co-ordinated Islamic State». Date: 27 January 2016

going to fight in the conflict, since according to the apocalyptic prophecies, it is in Dabiq where the Final Battle will take place. As discussed in the previous chapter, fighters' return pose a serious threat, since their experience and the strength earned in combat is a huge motivation for them to commit acts of terror.

On the other hand, other terrorist groups are present in Southeast Asia that can have an influence on the increase of violence in Indonesia. This is the case of the Philippines for example with the group Abu Sayyaf whose leader, Isnilon Hapilon, is also the leader of an IS/Daesh «Battalion» in the Philippines known as «Katibah Al-Muhajir» or the «Emigrants Battalion», mainly consisting of Malays and Indonesians⁵⁴. A video launched by IS/Daesh encouraged sympathisers of this organisation in Southeast Asia to join Abu Sayyaf if they were having difficulties to travel to Syria and Iraq. In view of this situation, the Philippines plays a key role in stability, not only stability in Indonesia, but throughout the Southeast Asia region.

Conclusions

In addition to professionalising the anti-terrorism forces, the Government must reinforce the current legal framework, which to date has shown to be somewhat slack. After the January 2016 attacks, the Indonesian Government has voiced the need to severely punish membership of IS/Daesh, to increase the period detainees suspected of terrorism can be held before charges are brought forward, from seven days to fourteen days, and to prevent Indonesian citizens from travelling to the Middle East to fight alongside IS/Daesh. These necessary changes in legislation will have to be driven directly by President Widodo, since processing them through Parliament can be a very slow process plagued with obstacles.

One of the measures that could be most effective for returned fighters to be re-educated and break links with Jihad organisations, is to extend their social and working circles to other people external to these organisations. A stable political system in Indonesia and better experience in the fight against terrorism could also help to weaken the capabilities of the terrorists.

There are several factors in Indonesia that serve as motivation for individuals to become radical and commit acts of terrorism: the implementation of Sharia, in solidarity with those victims of a conflict for revenge, for simply following up a social phenomena, or by force. This situation means that as soon as one terrorist cell is eliminated, another takes its place. That is why counter-terrorism actions in prisons are so important, since these are a source of training and motivation for young people to become radicalised, more so when the situation they face once they are released is one of unemployment

⁵⁴ <http://www.manilatimes.net/foreign-jihadists-helping-abu-sayyaf/272732/>

and poverty. One of the most effective, imminent measures the Indonesian Government should take to fight against radicalisation and Islamisation is to restrict the capacity of imprisoned clerics to continue preaching.

Continuing to encourage religious tolerance must be one of the main commitments by President Joko Widodo, without forgetting that laws need to be tightened and sentences made harder to condemn acts of violence and radicalisation related activities. This will be the only way for Indonesia to carry on being an example of a democratic Muslim country and to stay away from an extremism whose consequences would be very negative for the security of the Southeast Asia region. Without disregarding conflicts between Muslims and Christians, the problem of terrorism could take a new turn based on a sectarian struggle between Muslim groups fomenting anti-Shia feelings. An example of this is the violent conflicts there have been between Sunni and Shia Muslims in early 2015 in the east and west of Java and also in Jakarta.

On the other hand, the Indonesian Government should effectively tackle the problem related to fighters returned from Syria and Iraq. Their status as leaders, their ideological commitment and their experience in combat and in the handling of weapons could help to convert fairly unskilled Indonesian extremists in a serious threat to the country's security. One way to minimise this problem is to avoid Indonesians fleeing to fight in the first place. Nevertheless, there is no legislation in Indonesia that allows passports to be taken away if someone is suspected of fighting in foreign conflicts or intending to join an organisation included on the United Nations' list of terrorist organisations. Criminalising foreign fighters could be an effective measure as dissuasive action.

The death of Santoso, the leader of MIT, in July 2016, was a big success of the Indonesian Security Forces, and a very important step towards ending Jihadist terrorism in Indonesia. Nevertheless, it is possible that MIT members carry out attacks against military and police targets in revenge.

International cooperation is fundamental to avoid IS/Daesh expanding in Indonesia. At present, JI holds a position against IS/Daesh, but it must also be taken into account that JI is a numerous Jihadist group, with long-term strategic capabilities.

In addition to the cooperation concerning counter-terrorism intelligence and training, one of the main priorities must be prohibiting fighters to leave to the nearby Philippines for joining the Abu Sayyaf terrorist group.

Table of geopolitical indicators

TABLE OF GEOPOLITICAL INDICATORS	
Extension: 1,904,569 km ² Coastline: 54,716 km	
GDP: \$ 859,000 million	
GDP Structure	Agriculture 13.6 %
	Industry 42.8%
	Services 43.6 %
GDP per capita: \$11,100	
GDP growth rate: 4.8%	
Trade relations (Exports): Japan 12% USA 10.8%, China 10%, Singapore 8.4%, India 7.8%, South Korea 5.1%, Malaysia 5.1%	
Trade relations (Imports): China 20.6%, Singapore 12.6%, Japan 9.3%, Malaysia 6.0%, South Korea 5.9%, Thailand 5.7%, USA 5.3%	
Population 258,316,051	
Age structure	0-14 25.42%
	15-64 67.42%
	Over 65 6.79%
Population growth rate 0.89%	
Ethnic groups: Javanese 40.1%, Sundanese 15.5%, Malays 3.7%, Batak 3.6%, Madurese 3%, Betawi 2.9%, Minangkabau 2.7%, Buginese 2.7%, Bantenese 2%, Banjarese 1.7%, Balinese 1.7%, Acehnese 1.4%, Dayak 1.4%, Sasak 1.3%, Chinese 1.2%, others 15%	
Religions: Muslims 87.2%, Christians 9.9 %, Hindu 1.7%, Others 0.9%	
Literacy rate 93.1%	
Population under the poverty threshold 11.3%	
Black market ranking* 13	
Black market value* \$ 23,050 million	
GINI Index 34.14 (2011)	
Military expenditure. % of GDP 0.78%	

Chronology of conflict

CHRONOLOGY	
1945	Constitution passed
1949	Foundation of Darul Islam
1993	Foundation of Jemmah Islamiyah (JI)
1999	Foundation of Ring Banten
12th Oct. 2002	A car bomb exploded in front of a nightclub in Bali killing 202 people.

CHRONOLOGY	
5th Aug. 2003	A car bomb exploded at the JW Marriot hotel killing 12 people
9th Sept. 2004	Bomb attack to the Australian Embassy killing 9 people
1st Oct. 2005	A number of bombs in tourist areas in Bali killing 20 people
2008	Foundation of Jamaah Anshorut Tauhid (JAT)
17th July 2009	A number of explosions around several American hotels in Jakarta killing 9 people
2010	Foundation of MIT
2014	The Government bans IS/Daesh ideology Santoso, leader of MIT, swore allegiance to Abubakar al-Baghdadi
14th Jan. 2016	A number of explosions and shooting kills 2 civilians and 5 attackers in the centre of Jakarta
5 July 2016	One police officer injured in a suicide attack
August 2016	Santoso killed

Composition of the working group

Coordinator: **D. Miguel Angel Ballesteros Martín**
Brigadier General
Director of the Spanish Institute of Strategic Studies (IEEE)

Secretary: **D^a. Josefa Izquierdo Alberca**
Main analyst at the IEEE

Members: **D. Ignacio José García Sánchez**
Navy Captain
Deputy Director of the IEEE

D. Mario Laborie Iglesias
Army Colonel
Political Advisor. Eurocorps headquarter

D. Francisco José Berenguer Hernández
Air Force Colonel
Air Staff

D. Emilio Sánchez de Rojas Diaz
Army Colonel
Main analyst at the IEEE

Composition of the working group

D. Jesús Diez Alcalde

Lieutenant Colonel (Army)

Military Adviser of the

Spanish Military Representation to EU Military Committee

D^a. Blanca Palacián de Inza

Main analyst at the IEEE

D. Juan Mora Tebas

Army Colonel

Main analyst at the IEEE

D^a. María del Mar Hidalgo García

Main analyst at the IEEE

D. Ignacio Fuente Cobo

Army Colonel

Main analyst at the IEEE

D. Pedro Sánchez Herráez

Army Colonel

Main analyst at the IEEE

D. José María Santé Abal

Air Force Lieutenant Colonel

Main analyst at the IEEE

D^a. María Luisa Pastor Gómez

Main analyst at the IEEE

D. Federico Aznar Fernández-Montesinos

Frigate Captain

Main analyst at the IEEE

D. José Luis Cabello Rodríguez

Army Colonel

Lecturer at the Spanish Joint Staff College

