

# GEOSTRATEGIC PULSE

*Motto: "Opinions are free, but not mandatory" I.L. Caragiale*



**European Defence. Is There a Risk of Building  
an Autonomous European Defence Capability?**

**NATO After London. Where to?**

**The Assassination of Anwar Sadat:**

**The Birth of Al-Qaeda and Globalization of Jihad**

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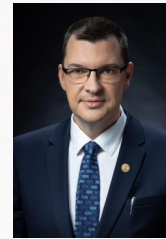


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**EDITORIAL**

**From the Editor**

**Constantin IACOBIȚĂ**



A view on the international environment in 2020, in the context of the presidential elections in the USA, is presented below .

The framework and parameters of the **transatlantic relationship** remain largely unchanged, as evidenced by the NATO summit hosted in London early December 2019. The stakes of the presidential elections in the USA had an echo on the depth and quality of the political dialogue here. The summit was a success in terms of final declaration and results, but the political dialogue suffered – mainly for the imperative of maintaining unity, but for the reason above as well, with consequences for the political dynamics of the Alliance. Even though the unity will continue to suffer given the continued differences in threat perception and tackling and the changing, even worrisome behavior of some of the member states, NATO remains the strongest military alliance and the key guarantor of the European and international security.

The relevance of the presidential elections in the USA for the **American-Russian relations** was again brought to the forefront on the occasion of president Donald Trump's hosting the Russian foreign affairs minister Sergey Lavrov on December 10th, 2019. Held behind closed doors, the meeting took place as the accusations of impeachment against president Trump were announced in the US Congress and one day after the Normandy format (Russia, Ukraine, Germany and France) gathering in Paris – meant to discuss the implementation of the Minsk agreements and a solution to the conflict in the east of Ukraine. While the full content of the talks between the US president and the Russian minister of foreign affairs will likely not be known too soon, some relevant points can be outlined given the context and the post-talks statements of the two sides, as follows :

- Ukraine has not succeeded in obtaining a declaration of support from Washington before the Normandy format summit (the first in three years) and most likely will remain without American support at least for the remainder of the current mandate of president Trump, since the main accusation brought by democrats in their attempt to impeach the US president is related to Ukraine;
- Russia's involvement in US internal politics remains "hot" and will continue to have effects on both fronts of the battle between democrats and republicans – the impeachment of president Donald Trump and the presidential elections;
- the negotiations on arms control will continue, under the spectre of a possible abandonment of New Start similar to that of INF. Moscow offers an extension of New Start (which expires February 2021 and limits the number of nuclear warheads to 1550 for each Russia and USA) by five years or less, while Washington insists for China to be included in a new arms control treaty.

**The USA-China relations** will continue under the current parameters, and Washington's strategic objectives to claim a victory in the ongoing trade war between the two countries similar to the one in the north-American trade agreement (NAFTA). The very same day the accusations of impeachment against president Donald Trump were announced in Congress the USA, Mexico and Canada agreed on the changes to be made to NAFTA. Donald Trump had pledged replacing the agreement, during the presidential campaign in 2016, but the final result of negotiations only brought amendments to it – even if significant ones. And Trump has gotten there based on compromises with the democrats as well, so that each of the two camps would be able to sell the new agreement (USMCA) as a victory to their voters. In China's case, though, things progress much slower and with results well below Trump's claims. After repeated failed attempts to conclude a bilateral trade agreement, on December 13th, 2019 Washington announced an intermediary (phase one) agreement that should, in principle, at least put an end to increases in reciprocal tariffs; at the same time, the Trump administration avoided to predict the timeline for a final (phase two) agreement, given the deep disagreements on aspects such as industrial property and agriculture, as well as the reciprocal lack of trust. Tellingly, and from an electoral perspective too, Donald Trump suggested, mid-December 2019, that a final agreement with China would be preferable after the presidential elections in the USA. In more than two years of trade war between the first two economies in the world we have witnessed a massive decline of the trade

and direct investments between China and the USA. To offset this, China has shifted its trade to partners in Asia while the Chinese direct investments are focusing more and more on Europe. We are witnessing a tough confrontation between the two powers here, and the monopoly over the 5G domain is one of the key stakes. Given the above, the relations between Washington and Beijing have entered a spiral of deterioration which will also affect cooperation on major regional and global matters.

On **the North Korea track** a continuation of the current American policy of sanctions and North-Korean tactics of pressures to elicit concessions is expected. The successful test of a liquid-fuel missile engine on December 7th, 2019 is such an action, and is expected to be followed by new nuclear or missile tests. Unless a surprizing event takes place, in **the Middle East** no extraordinary developments are expected, since: firstly, the presidential elections in the USA will be accompanied by an unprecedented third parliamentary election in one year in Israel, where the campaign promises to be at least as intense and all-consuming; secondly, the transatlantic disagreements on Syria and Iran are there to stay for a while.

How will all the above affect **the European Union**? Given the fact that the USA is retreating from the world scene and becomes more and more unilateralist, and faced with an inevitable Brexit, we should expect more convergence on the continent. EU will be more motivated and emboldened to become more united – especially after the United Kingdom’s exit, stronger in itself and on the global stage, and more determined to defend its own interests. We should see, and are already witnessing this “New Europe” expressing itself when it comes to domains such as trade, industry and technology, environment, and defence – where steps are being taken towards an “European Defence Union”.

Geostrategic Pulse wishes its readers **A HAPPY NEW YEAR!**



## EURO-ATLANTIC SECURITY



# NATO after London. Where to?

**Brigadier General (ret) PhD  
Mircea MÎNDRESCU<sup>1</sup>**

So, *Quo vadis NATO?* An equally natural, suitable and, at the same time, difficult question. Natural, because one of the golden rules of managing any organization is the one which imposes the permanent monitoring of its standing, status, and direction of evolution. Suitable, since the organization just celebrated 70 years since the signing of the North Atlantic Treaty, and difficult because - to paraphrase an old Chinese philosophical saying - we are living interesting times both outside NATO as well as inside the Alliance.

It is worth mentioning that I am an ardent supporter of the Euro-Atlantic idea that sees the American-European defence and security cooperation as the only viable solution for ensuring Romania's security and the security of the other European countries. As such, any criticism comes only from the desire to improve the functioning of NATO's decision making and action taking mechanisms.

History shows that any political construct, including political-military organizations such as NATO have, as any mechanism has, a certain type of internal friction that can eat through it. Understanding it is crucial. An inadequate intervention can turn this friction into breaking forces which can weaken the organization to

such an extent that it becomes vulnerable to external actions, or can lead to a political implosion. This is why clarity in observation and honesty in analysis are needed. The policy of disillusionment, daydreaming, or refusal to acknowledge errors and fix them, the so called "ostrich policy", does not help, it only makes matters worse.

Although many have expected a *summit*, which is a more substantial meeting with several working sessions focusing on matters of highest interest, and therefore "richer" in top level political decisions, consensus was only reached on a "meeting" - a modest meeting with only one work session, even if hosted at an exclusive golf club near London. It would be a mistake not to analyse the meeting in London starting from this point, since everything has significance at this strategic level. I believe that, by accepting a lower tone as far as the meeting format is concerned, there have been implicitly accepted its consequences, at least with respect to the range of the political ambitions regarding the scope and consistency of the debates on subjects of high interest, covering the further adaptation of the Alliance.

Despite the shocking declarations of president Emmanuel Macron, a month before the event, making reference to the so-called "brain-death" of NATO, and despite the harsh remarks of presidents Trump and Erdogan in response to Macron's, the meeting of the NATO leaders in

1. Brigadier General (Ret) PhD Mircea MÎNDRESCU started his military career in 1977 when was admitted at the Military High School in Câmpulung Moldovenesc. Among the educational stages achieved after the High School are the Signals Military Academy, High Military Studies Academy, The Royal Netherlands Military College, Joint Services Command and Staff College in Shirvenham (UK) as well as Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University. In 2012 the Defence National University (Romania) awarded him the title of PhD.

The military career of Bg.Gen. MÎNDRESCU included important national defence domains such as operative units and big units (parachute and special operation), military education, military diplomacy, Theatres of Operations, operational, defence and armaments planning as well as international positions. He is a licensed parachutist, alpinist and diver.

Between 2013 and 2016 he was the first Romanian commander of the Joint Analysis and Lessons Learned Centre, Lisbon, the first and only NATO military structure that Romania is commanding jointly, with Portugal. His last active military position was as Chief, Strategic Planning Directorate of the Romanian Defence Staff.

Brigadier General MÎNDRESCU retired in 2017 after 40 years of military service and is currently the Chair of the Executive Academic Board (EAB) at the European Security and Defence College, after his election in 2017.

London was more successful than predicted by some analysts. It was the fourth consecutive summit after 2014, which had on its agenda the Alliance's long term process of adaptation to the security changes in the security environment, following the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the illegal occupation of Crimea, as well as the terrorist phenomenon orchestrated by ISIL/Daesh. In the light of the latest, such political gatherings, where declarations had a bluntness hard to explain among friends, the relative lack of criticism during the 29 format meeting and the agreeing of the common Declaration are auspicious.

The text of the Declaration adopted by the North Atlantic Council - made of chiefs of states and heads of governments - has only nine paragraphs, which makes it, to my knowledge one of the most concise documents of its kind.

The **first paragraph** reminds us of NATO's first 70 years and marks the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the fall of what Churchill called, in March 1946, very inspiring as a matter of fact, "the Iron Curtain". The very essence of NATO is highlighted, that is the guarantor of the security and territorial integrity of its members; it also reiterates NATO's common values and the Alliance's keystone - that is represented by the solidarity, unity and cohesion of the allies. Moreover, it reaffirms the commitment to maintaining the trans-Atlantic relationship and to Article 5 of the Treaty that states that an attack against a NATO member will be seen as an attack on all NATO members. None of the above represent new political messages. Making a piece of counterfactual history on the spot, I believe that no one would have been tempted to warn on the future of NATO if this paragraph had been missing from the text of the Declaration, since this language had already been present in other documents, some of them international and of more legal importance.

The **second paragraph** of the Declaration is grounded in what NATO largely defines as "fair sharing of responsibilities". The threshold of 2% of the national GDP to go to defence and 20% of the defence budget to be dedicated to purchasing critical armament and military

equipment specified by the Defence Investment Pledge that was adopted in Wales in 2014 is also reiterated here, as is the commitment to continue down this road. The positive narrative is maintained by showing that, for the fifth year in a row the defence expenditures of the European allies have increased, reaching over 130 million dollars, as well as by reasserting the allies' commitment to this upward trend - "we must and will do more". The use of the strongest modal verb defining obligation - *must* is interesting, since its use in diplomacy is seldom, with the exception of some ultimate texts. This phrase is used given the insistence of the Administration in Washington to determine the European allies increase their defence budgets, hence eliminating their dependency on US military capabilities.

Beyond the transactional foreign policy of President Donald Trump, the American leadership is more and more aware of the fact that it must increasingly focus on the Far East, where China is exponentially growing as an economic, military and - implicitly - political power, thus perceived by the USA as an adversary. Even more, this political refocusing of the US Administration didn't come with the current administration, since the first declarations in this respect had been issued by the Obama Administration. One of the natural implications of this shift towards Asia is that the USA, having more strategic priorities, won't be able to assign the same level of attention and resources to the European theatre, for the security and defence of the European allies. It is obvious that, under the circumstances of Russia's growing assertiveness, the USA is expecting that their European allies cover the deficit of capabilities identified at NATO level and become more involved in ensuring their own security and defence.

**Paragraph three** of the Declaration mentions the threats that NATO has to face, explicitly making reference to the aggressiveness of Russia's actions and to terrorism in all its forms. We ought to notice that terrorism has become more important in the



Source: <https://www.msn.com/en-ie/news/world/in-photos-nato-summit-2019/ss-BBXJO6f#image=6>

Alliance's public texts and it should be assumed that the southern allies, which see themselves as the most vulnerable to this threat, would be joined by other allied states that have been victims of terrorist attacks over the past few years. It is also worth mentioning that the international order is being challenged by both state and non-state actors. The Declaration also includes references to cyber and hybrid threats that the Alliance has to face.

When it comes to Russia, it is worth mentioning that not the aggressive Russia is pictured as a threat, but "Russia's aggressive actions", two differently nuanced formulation - since diplomacy is the art of nuances - out of which the second is subtler, most likely being the product of a compromise between the Eastern allies - who usually plead for a more categorical language when it comes to defining Russia as a threat - and those who are concerned to avoid a potentially spiralling rhetoric.

The most consistent, both in size and in substance, the **fourth paragraph** enumerates the

most important commitments through which the Alliance understands to fulfil its purpose, in the context of contemporary realities. It is obvious that a new concept emerges which shows that the main idea that NATO operates and acts on is the Alliance's defensive vocation and its determination to have an omnidirectional approach on all threats (a 360° approach that has become the *mantra* of NATO's public declarations following the Warsaw summit in 2016), in order to ensure the security of the Euro-Atlantic area.

Despite President Macron's appeals for getting closer to Russia, the relationship with this state is explicitly defined by the actions NATO understands "to address in a measured and responsible way" as a reaction to Russia's deployment of new intermediate-range missiles. Furthermore, the allies reiterate their openness to dialogue with this country and their political willingness to build a productive bilateral relationship, from the moment Russia's actions will allow it. It is quite understandable, thus, that

the dual-track approach regarding the relationship with Russia adopted in Warsaw (in 2016) is still unchanged, NATO aiming to keep open its options to dialogue with Russia and, at the same time, to continue strengthening its military capabilities and adapting its policies.

The Declaration reaffirms well-known aspects regarding the need to improve the readiness of NATO's forces by increasing their operational and response capacity and by maintaining its nuclear capabilities, which together with those conventional and missile defence represent the pillars of NATO's credible deterrence and defence. The text also mentions the actions that NATO is willing to take in order to ensure freedom "at sea and in the air", a focus determined by the existence and strengthening of the systems meant to deny and restrict regional access (A2/AD) that Russia has deployed in Kaliningrad, Crimea, or Syria.

**Paragraph five** is grounded in the third fundamental task - "security through cooperation", making reference to the strengthening of NATO's partnerships and its relationships with the UN and the European Union. Even if it comes up *en passant*, the continuous long-term commitment to ensuring security and stability in Afghanistan is worth mentioning. The impact of NATO on Afghanistan may not have been what it was initially expected, however, it has been significant and positive. At the same time, the operation in Afghanistan has had positive effects on NATO, leading to the advancement of institutional adaptability, political cohesion, organisational efficiency, and military interoperability.

**Paragraph six**, which I would take the liberty to call scientific and technical, highlights the importance of keeping an allied advantage in this domain. It acknowledges aspects regarding the necessity to increase the resilience of allied states, including their critical infrastructure, with reference to the 5G communications infrastructure and to the energy security as well. The Declaration brings to attention NATO's decision to recognize outer space as an operational domain, along with the other four that we already know: land, air, sea and cyber.

Mentioning China for the first time in NATO official documents, a country whose growth and influence present both opportunities and challenges, is one of London's main pieces of news. The allied analysis regarding China will continue to be a theme on NATO's long-term agenda, since the country represents, according to Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, a growing concern for NATO: "This is not about moving NATO into the Pacific, but this is about responding to the fact that China is coming closer to us".

**Paragraph seven** makes reference to the strategic direction, showing that the Alliance will launch a complex process of reflection with a view to strengthen NATO's political dimension, including with regard to consultations. The wording of this paragraph shows that London after 70 years of NATO is perceived as a launch pad for a substantial debate regarding the political dimension of the Alliance, and this is - for my part - the most important news from London.

Where will this debate lead? I hope to a stronger NATO with regard to the unity and solidarity among its allies, because this is the foundation of everything that makes the organization. Or, perhaps to the adoption of a new Strategic Concept, since the current one, dated 2010, is in great need of updating - for example, it describes the security environment of the Euro-Atlantic area as "at peace" and mentions that the cooperation between NATO and Russia "contributes to creating a common space of peace, stability and security". Although its structure based on three fundamental tasks - collective defence, crises management and security through cooperation - is still valid and should remain unchanged, the strategic value of this concept was drastically narrowed down following the dramatic changes in the security environment after the year 2014. As of now NATO does not have a military rival, a situation which favours the deterrence potential of the organization; however, NATO must maintain this superiority. One should not forget that the military strength of the Alliance comes from the political solidarity of its members. This is why the result of the reflection process detailed in



the *to-do* folder is so important. I believe that the moment of *stock-taking* and analysis of the future of NATO will lead to a more cohesive and hence stronger Alliance.

Beyond the well phrased and inspired text of the Declaration of the summit, which usually comes out following tough negotiations that last until the day before the event, it is worth mentioning that the allies agreed to continue their military support to Turkey, despite the fact that they vehemently disapproved the Turkish military intervention in the North-East of Syria on October 9<sup>th</sup>, 2009, and despite the agreement that Turkey later signed with Russia for securing Syria's northern borders. The offensive, named *Operation Peace Spring*, targeted Kurdish fighters, the USA's trustworthy partners in the fight against ISIS and didn't do anyone any good, much less Turkey. It did not contribute to strengthening the security of the USA, Turkey or any other partner in the region. On the contrary, it led to the deepening of destabilisation of Syria, while 70 Syrian and 20 Turkish civilians died and 300,000 inhabitants of the Aleppo, Hasakah and Raqqa regions were forcibly displaced by the raids of the Turkish Air Forces.

Even though Spain had announced that it would withdraw its Patriot capability from Turkey (deployed at the Incirlik Airbase) in protest against the Turkish offensive across the Syrian border, during the reunion of the (NATO) defence ministers, at the end of October 2019 Madrid reconfirmed, through the voice of the defence minister Margarita Robles, the Spanish commitment to keep its missile batteries in Turkey for another six months. These signs of allied clemency towards Turkey proof the importance of keeping it in the Alliance, first of all due to its geopolitical location which provides NATO a strategic position in the Black and Mediterranean Seas. At the same time, NATO needs Turkey's strong military - the second in size after the USA's - in order to successfully face the threats from Russia in Europe, as well as to defend itself against the Iranian and North Korean ballistic missiles. This is the reason

NATO did not go beyond the statements of condemnation of the agreement between Erdogan's government and Putin's Russia on the acquisition of the S-400 missile system, signed regardless of USA's strong opposition and defying the danger of American sanctions - which were imposed on Ankara by the Administration in Washington and came into force on the 21<sup>st</sup> of December 2019.

What inconvenienced the most, though, at the allied level was Ankara's sustained opposition with respect to the political agreement on the plans to defend and reinforce Poland and the Baltic states in case of conflict, the Turkish officials linking it to the allies agreement to designate the YPG as a terrorist organization and implicitly as a threat to Turkey and NATO. In reaction to leaks in the press across the globe on this sensitive and confidential issue, Turkey renounces its vetoes on these plans, a "face-saving" exercise determined by the need to not be regarded as a difficult ally that hinders the security of other allies. Even though this last crisis inside NATO's *inner sanctum* seems to have been diffused - the allies were relieved and President Erdogan was congratulated for his flexibility - it is expected that Ankara's fight to have the YPG formally designated as a terrorist organisation by the allies continues.

### **In Conclusion, Where Is NATO Headed?**

The outcome of the NATO leaders' meeting in London has been assessed and will keep on being the subject of introspective analyses, at least for a while. To me, London showed once more the strength and power of the organization. Its strength comes from the fact that its members find it relevant, capable of solving complex security issues and thus necessary. It is obvious that there is political tumult within it, and it can't be any different between 29 democratic countries united by common values, whose fundamental interests coincide but aren't always congruent when it comes to how to reach the objectives. In their wisdom, the "founding fathers" of the

2. YPG – People's Protection Units (Kurdish: Yekîneyên Parastina Gel), the main component of the Syrian Democratic Forces, is the main military organization of the Kurdish Supreme Committee. They were initially established to defend Kurdish-inhabited areas, and became an important opponent, and later an ally to the USA in the fight against the Islamic State

organization foresaw this possibility, so they came up with the solution provided by Article 4, that of consultations, of dialogue at the round table of the North Atlantic Council, where each voice matters and all allies are equal. Dialogue, mutual understanding and, finally, compromise are the solutions for solving small problems or deep crises. The power that gives NATO endurance doesn't necessarily lie with its military capabilities, even if NATO is a formidable military power, but with the ability to identify difficulties and to find solutions to overcome them, which makes it the most successful alliance on the planet.

Creating NATO in 1949 was the most natural and logical answer from some rational actors at that difficult moment, when Soviet tanks were deployed in the middle of Europe threatening to occupy the entire continent. The Soviet "stimulus" has determined Western Europe and North America to associate and establish relations, links, cooperation frameworks, which keep the Soviet danger and its communist ideology "on a leash". The disappearance of this "stimulus", when the Soviet Union imploded in the early 90's led to Neo-Kantian ideas and hopes for an end of history and everlasting peace that proved to be unrealistic. As for the Alliance, a certain weakening of its cohesion, as well as a more pronounced assertion of the national interests and objectives and of particular ways to fulfil them was observed. Once again, political logic is at work - a new situation leads to new priorities, new emergencies. Paradoxically, the new internal dynamic has grounded the allied nations more firmly, and together they remained "in business". Today's Russia is more and more aggressive in pursuing its own interests and does not hesitate to use force to attack and occupy sovereign states. Through its policy and actions, although it doesn't have the strength the Soviet Union once had Russia looks more like the "stimulus" that led to the creation of NATO at the end of the 40's. I believe that what happened then will happen now, with the exception that NATO doesn't need to be created any more, it already exists and has an experience of 70 years. Just like the Soviet Union in the past, Russia pushes

the Alliance towards unity, cohesion and solidarity. I believe that the allied states are aware of the advantages that come with their association within the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and this is why NATO will continue to be the guarantor of the common action to ensure the security and defence in the North Atlantic area.

There is one significant unknown- China. The exponential growth of China's activities in Europe and around it has led, over the past few years, to the USA and EU security and defence officials focusing their attention on this country. It looks like they have been awakened by China's global, multidimensional challenge that includes economic, political, technological, and security aspects. In a document agreed at the level of the European Commission in the beginning of 2019, China is called a "systemic rival", since some of Beijing's strategic objectives are: dominating the global high-tech industry through its technological giant Huawei, developing military capabilities that match the USA's, and connecting a large part of the world's population through the *One Belt One Road* initiative. The idea of creating a NATO-China Council has already been set in motion, following the example of so many others that NATO has established in the past - the NATO-Russia Council, and the NATO-Ukraine and NATO-Georgia Commissions. I believe that this idea is worth taking into consideration.



# Turkey - NATO Relations: Strained and Constrained

**Eugene KOGAN<sup>1</sup>**

Turkey-NATO relations have a history of challenges more or less since Turkey's accession to NATO in 1952. Strained relations between Turkey and NATO have begun long before Turkey's alleged failed coup attempt on 15 July 2016. However, the failed coup attempt increased tensions further and it is fair to assume that these tense relations are likely to continue. At the same time, Turkey-NATO relations are constrained by a not yet amended North Atlantic Treaty of 4 April 1949. As long as the treaty remains not updated very little can be done to change the nature of Turkey-NATO relations.

## Introduction

Military experts argue that geopolitically Turkey plays an extremely important role as it flanks the trouble spots in the Middle East and the Black Sea. However, the former Chairman of the NATO Military Committee, retired German General Harald Kujat, said on German public radio in August 2016: "Turkey's role should not be overstated and Turkey has always been an ally on which one cannot rely 100 per cent."<sup>2</sup> Back in November 2009 the Justice and Development Party (known by its Turkish acronym as AKP or Adalet ve Kalkinma Partisi) government was adamant that despite Turkish soldiers' participation in the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) missions they were not combat troops,<sup>3</sup> but rather troops used for training missions. This point has deeply irritated British and American military in particular because they wanted to have Turkish troops in the combat missions. Therefore, the author agrees with General Kujat that Turkey's role is important but should not be overstated. Thus, tensions between NATO allies have occurred even before Turkey's alleged failed coup attempt on 15 July 2016.

Since 15 July 2016 in particular, relations between Turkey and its NATO allies have substantially deteriorated as will be discussed further below. Despite strains in relations NATO's Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg has repeatedly said that Turkey "occupies a geographically strategic position"<sup>4</sup> and "Turkey is a key country for the security of Europe and without doubt, NATO would suffer from weakness without Turkey."<sup>5</sup> Even after delivery of the first S-400 components to Turkey and the US decision to halt Turkish participation in the multinational F-35 aircraft project, Secretary General Stoltenberg seeks to assure Turkey that the scope of Turkey's ties with the alliance is far beyond the F-35s.<sup>6</sup> Stoltenberg said on 17 July 2019 that no ally had raised the suggestion of pushing Turkey out of the alliance. "*Turkey is an important NATO member and no ally has raised that issue [namely, of pushing Turkey out] at all because we all see we are dependent on each other.*"<sup>7</sup>

It can be thus argued that Turkey found its "advocate" in Secretary General Stoltenberg. Hence, it also appears that as long as Stoltenberg remains Secretary General President Erdogan and his administration will have an ally in NATO to count on.

## Turkey-(Bilateral) NATO Damaged Relations

It should be emphasised that bilateral relations between Turkey and the Netherlands, Turkey and Germany and Turkey and the United States in particular have seriously deteriorated in 2017 remaining strained until today. To remind the reader, German's parliament, the Bundestag, in June 2017 backed the plan to move some 260 soldiers based at Incirlik Air Base to an air base in Jordan. Diplomatic sources claimed that Berlin's potential move would have been *the first time* [author's italics] in NATO's history that a member state were to withdraw a military

installation from another ally and to move it to a non-NATO country, noting that the move would have a negative effect on the alliance's solidarity.<sup>8</sup> Another recent tension between Turkey and NATO was an incident during the Trident Javelin military exercise, held between 8 and 17 November 2017 at the NATO's Joint Warfare Centre in Norway. A photo of Turkey's founding leader Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, along with an image of President Erdogan were depicted as NATO's enemies. Parties across the Turkish political spectrum announced their distrust of the alliance.<sup>9</sup> As Metin Gurcan wrote in the recent article, a small-scale tremor shook relations between NATO and its increasingly rogue member Turkey on 3 May 2019 when (Greek) Cyprus delegation was included on a ceremonial guest list. Military personnel and civilians from across NATO's 29 allied nations and various partners attended the ceremony for US Air Force General Tod Wolters, who assumed his position as NATO's new Supreme Allied Commander for Europe (SACEUR) with one exception: Turkey. According to Turkish diplomatic sources the "big mistake" over the invitation marred Wolters' arrival and would result in a "confidence crisis" between Turkey and NATO's military headquarters that would "take a long time to overcome." Whether it was a blunder in good faith or a tacit rebuke to Ankara, the invitation incident at the military headquarters provides a road map of the bumpy relations awaiting Turkey and NATO in June<sup>10</sup> and beyond. As a result, further tensions between Turkey and the NATO allies are likely to be expected.

An additional factor affecting relations between Turkey and the United States badly was the statement made by Turkish Defence Minister, Fikri Isik, on 21 November 2016 that "Ankara begun negotiations with Moscow to purchase the S-400 air-defence system from Russia",<sup>11</sup> NATO's adversary. The issue of the ultimate delivery of S-400 is discussed below. Turkish statement has undoubtedly contributed to the US and NATO allies uneasy position towards warming relations between Turkey and Russia. Jill Aitoro, correspondent of "Defense News", noted that in early 2016 she asked

Turkey's Undersecretary of Defence Industries, Ismail Demir, whether Turkey would ultimately need to choose sides, Russia or NATO. Demir answer was that: "Turkey's situation cannot be compared to any NATO country that does not have a border of Russia or [is not] a conflict zone. Therefore we must be within a different parameter, and our relations must always be on good terms with the people and countries in the region". Such good terms, he argued, would be good for NATO. Others might argue that such an argument conflicts with the underpinning of the alliance, depending how far concessions go.<sup>12</sup> Demir's argument can be easily refuted by saying that the Baltic States as NATO members are directly facing Russia and can become a conflict zone at any moment. Therefore, Demir's application of different parameter for Turkey lacks both validity and credibility. There is no doubt whatsoever that the delivery of the S-400 components to Turkey dealt a serious damage not just to Turkish-American relations but also to Turkey-NATO relations since the Allies committed themselves to phase out Soviet-built systems delivered to the former Warsaw Pact countries. Furthermore, interoperability is crucial for the NATO's collective defence and decision of Turkey to purchase S-400 dealt a serious damage to building NATO's collective air-defence.

### **A New Peak in Turkey-NATO Worsening Relations: Delivery of the S-400 Components to Turkey**

The first delivery of the Russian-built S-400 components to Turkey took place on 12 July 2019. As a result, we can expect what Simon Waldman, a Visiting Research Fellow at King's College, London, said: "Upon receipt of the S-400, Turkey will no doubt find itself increasingly isolated inside NATO's civilian and military structures". He went on to underline that Turkey could end up being a member of the alliance in name only. Retired Ambassador Suha Umar agrees that the S-400 purchase is likely to create problems for Turkey in NATO as he argues: "There is no one in NATO who shares our views on this matter. One For All And All For One Article 5 of the NATO Treaty could be watered down in Turkey's case over the S-400 affair."<sup>13</sup>

Ian Lesser, Director of the German Marshall Fund (GMF) in Brussels, stated that “the political ramifications of the S-400 delivery are very serious, because the delivery confirms to many the idea that Turkey is *drifting off* [author’s italics] into a non-Western alternative. This will create a lot of anxiety and bad feelings inside NATO – it will clearly further poison sentiment for Turkey inside the alliance.”<sup>14</sup> Thus, it can be said that the estrangement between Turkey and NATO continues and it appears that President Erdogan’s administration tends to play down the significance of the S-400 delivery to Turkey with the hope that NATO allies would accept the S-400 deal as a *fait accompli*.

### **Purges, Brainwash and Brain Drain within the Turkish Military**

The additional factor that contributes to Turkey-NATO strained relations pertained to the massive purge of the Turkish military high command and brainwashing campaign of the Turkish junior and senior military officers to be loyal to President Erdogan and distrustful of NATO in general and the United States in particular. It needs to be emphasised that the newly established National Defence University in Istanbul took a leading role in educating and training Turkish military in a post failed coup attempt on 15 July 2016. Some 500 officers and 3000 non-commissioned officers (NCOs) will be trained at the National Defence University and Gendarmerie and Coast Guard Academy. The newly established university is to fulfil the requirements of the military following the closure of military high schools after the failed coup attempt.<sup>15</sup>

According to former SACEUR, Admiral (ret) James Stavridis, “the importance and service capability of the Turkish armed forces in NATO is likely to decrease. Unfortunately, it is likely that the military in the wake of the coup will be laser-focused on internal controversy, endless investigations, and loyalty checks – and simply surviving as an institution. This will have a chilling effect on military readiness and performance. While some operations have resumed at the crucial Incirlik Air Base, co-operation is already frozen across many US and NATO channels”<sup>16</sup>. Sources within the alliance state that Turkey’s

massive purge of its military since 15 July 2016 has undermined NATO’s integrated military command (IMC) and increased tensions within the alliance. Two Turkish officers previously attached to NATO and now seeking political asylum in Europe are said that 42 of the 53 Turkish officers posted within NATO’s headquarters in Brussels have been removed in the purge, with two-thirds of the 600 Turkish postings across the NATO’s command having suffered the same fate.

General Curtis Scaparrotti, Supreme Allied Commander Europe of NATO until summer 2019, mentioned that the purge of Turkish staff “does have an impact [on NATO’s IMC] because it was largely very senior personnel, and you lose a good deal of experience. I had talented, capable people here and I am taking a degradation on my staff for the skill, the expertise and the work that they produced.”<sup>17</sup> According to General Scaparrotti, Ankara has filled about half of the NATO’s command posts vacated and promised to accelerate replacement of the rest. According to the above mentioned officers, NATO “will feel the *difference* [author’s italics] between us and our successors soon. Some of them belong to Turkey’s ultra-nationalist groups, while others have dubious background”<sup>18</sup>.

General Scaparrotti claimed that the purge has also affected Turkey’s military readiness. “One of the areas is their air force. Those [removed] were their senior pilots, so they are working now to train younger pilots. It is had an impact. I would not say it was serious but I would say it is noticeable.”<sup>19</sup> It should be emphasised that training younger pilots takes four to five years to accomplish. And in the meantime, the Turkish Air Force faces a lack of trained pilots that adversely affects its performance in Syria.

In March 2017 it was reported that the Turkish Armed Forces (TSK) have been hit the hardest by the massive post-coup purge. Several thousand military personnel have been dismissed from their posts, and 40 per cent of the TSK’s generals have been replaced with new officers deemed loyal to President Erdogan. According to Marc Pierini, former EU Ambassador to Turkey and now a Visiting Scholar at Brussels-based Carnegie Europe, “there is a distinct malaise in

Turkey, because so many of its officers have been removed, while all of the personal connections [between them and NATO's command structure] have been lost." Brooks Tigner concludes that Erdogan's purge of the Turkish military will continue unhindered.<sup>20</sup> Unfortunately for Turkey's military, the purge is likely to continue unabated and hence, the strength of the TSK continuing to be undermined. In addition to those imprisoned several high-ranking officers asked for political asylum in the US and elsewhere after the failed coup. According to undisclosed sources, the number of asylum seekers in the US varies between several dozen and up to 100-150, most of them being senior officers.<sup>21</sup>

There is no doubt that abovementioned loss of the personnel connections, ongoing purge of officers of the Turkish armed forces, President Erdogan's and his political partners distrust in NATO in general and the United States in particular as well as the fragile relations between Turkey and NATO undermine strength and cohesion of the alliance. Against that bleak background, three options of future Turkey-NATO relations might be considered:

### **Option 1: Turkey Remains In and Behaves Like a Mole**

This is indeed a nightmarish option for NATO, if one of its members remains in the alliance, pursues its own agenda and influences NATO's decision from within. NATO's military command would realise that Turkey were to consider a rogue state and unreliable partner and, as a result, Turkish military within NATO would be hindered from participating in the alliance discussions on intelligence and other security-related issues. Nevertheless, the Turkish military might participate in the alliance military exercises but at rather insignificant numbers. In case of military conflict breaking out in for instance, the Black Sea region involving Bulgaria and Romania, Turkey would remain neutral with all its ramifications for the famous Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty.

Former NATO senior military commanders will dismiss this option out of hand. However, we need to remember that they are probably continuing to see Turkey through rose-tinted spectacles and remain nostalgic about a Turkey

that increasingly does no longer exist.<sup>22</sup> They tend to see what has happened in Turkey since the failed coup attempt as aberration and cling to the hope that things will get better in the foreseeable future. They argue that the Turkish-Russian rapprochement is a temporarily phenomena and there is more divergence between Turkey and Russia and more convergence between Turkey and NATO. This considered a quite plausible scenario and President Erdogan might be interested in pursuing it.

### **Option 2: Waiting for a Miracle or rather "Waiting for Godot"**

This assumes that NATO is not willing to give up on Turkey despite continuing tensions between NATO and some of its member states with Turkey. There is a saying that hope dies last and that summarise the state of relations between Turkey and NATO. As mentioned before, there is a hope that President Erdogan as a result of Turkey's military isolation and marginalisation within NATO might use Article 13<sup>23</sup> and leave NATO's military command structure<sup>24</sup> but will remain in NATO's political structure. In that case, the famous Article 5 will not cover Turkey in case of [external] armed attack.

Additionally, the supporters of Turkish NATO membership would argue that the purchase of the Russian S-400 was a single deal and Turkey will not activate the system and return to the fold of NATO as the Prodigal Son. This option is less likely to happen because President Erdogan is interested to activate the S-400 for the defence of Turkey and not keep the system in the crates, mothball it or transport the system to Azerbaijan. However, waiting for a miracle gives President Erdogan extra time to play a game of potential purchase of SAMP/T air-defence system that has been on the cards for the last five years. As for the Patriot air-defence system potential purchase the Trump administration rescinded a US\$3.5 billion deal to sell Patriot system to Turkey after it received the Russian S-400 system in July 2019.<sup>25</sup> Each time two sides were close to sign the contract but for President Erdogan and his administration

financial incentives pertained to the deal were not good enough and the issue of transfer of technology (ToT) hindered the signature of the contract. Still, NATO contemplating every potential venue to keep Turkey anchored in the alliance as Hans Binnendijk is arguing in his article supporting this option.<sup>26</sup> Thus, this option is considered to have a 50:50 chance to be materialised.

### Option 3: Shaking Up the Alliance

Three major changes would need to happen in order to shake the alliance:

1. The decision-making process pursued by consensus would have to be changed into decision-making pursued by a qualified (e.g. two-third) majority;

2. The de facto veto power of individual member states would have to be abolished, thus no member can block the first change and finally,

3. A new article related to suspension and ultimately expulsion of a NATO member state from the alliance would have to be inserted into the updated/amended North Atlantic Treaty.

This however would require an immense political will of the NATO political leadership, its current Secretary General, and particularly of its individual member states, including Turkey. Hence, this option is pretty unlikely to happen, not least to the fact that Secretary General Stoltenberg as a consensus-builder is averse to revolutionary developments and prefer a policy of calming tense relations and political disagreements occasionally happening in the alliance. In other words, all is well that ends well.

### Conclusion

As long as President Erdogan governs Turkey and NATO's Secretary General Stoltenberg remains in the helm of the alliance, Turkey-NATO relations are likely to remain strained and constrained by the not-updated/amended North Atlantic Treaty. Furthermore, since Secretary General Stoltenberg is known as consensus-builder, President Erdogan is likely to assume that Turkey will not be suspended and ultimately expelled from the alliance since the

North Atlantic Treaty lacks a chapter related to suspension and expulsion of the NATO member state. As long as each and every member of NATO possess a de facto veto right on formulating amendments to the North Atlantic Treaty and implementing its content in particular would be mission impossible since some NATO member states would veto it. There might be a solution to this vicious circle spelled above but this solution is not going to be implemented.

As a result, we are likely to see that Turkey will consistently be isolated and shun from the decision-making process of the alliance. President Erdogan understands this point but is not ready to leave the military command and civilian structure of the Alliance on its own according to Article 13 of the North Atlantic Treaty. He knows that Turkey despite isolation and marginalisation is better off inside NATO than outside of it. Therefore, suggestion made by Omer Taspinar and Michael O'Hanlon, that if Turkey insists on pursuing military and technological co-operation with Russia, Washington should encourage Turkey to consider this Gaullist option<sup>27</sup> and announce that Turkey leaves the alliance on its own, is not going to be taken by President Erdogan. He knows that being member comes with benefits, while being out means to be under a sort of President Putin's patronage. Furthermore, it should be repeatedly emphasised that Russia and Turkey were not and are not equal partners. In case, President Putin would lead, while President Erdogan would follow, a consequence that Erdogan is definitely not willing to accept. Furthermore, President Putin will be cooperating with Turks as long as it suits Russia's interests. He would be ending it quickly if the Turkey would turn on him. In that case he might subsequently impose crippling economic sanctions on Turkey.

However, it needs be emphasised that despite being isolated and marginalised Turkey can do significant damage to the Alliance from inside. The impression is that President Erdogan is to inflict as much damage as possible to the alliance from inside, though this assessment would be dismissed out of hand by President Erdogan and

his administration. This point should however be fully understood by each and every member of the Alliance. They must understand that irreparable damage applied by Turkey to the cohesion, unity and strength of the Alliance is also in the interest of President Vladimir Putin. On this point Putin and Erdogan not just tacitly agree but also see eye to eye.

EU and NATO allies are deeply divided when it comes to what needs to be done with regard to Turkey. This lack of coherence suits the Turkish government perfectly. The impotence of the EU NATO member states to reach decision on how to hedge or even punish Turkey politically and economically is clearly understood by President Erdogan, who scorns them and is exploiting this weakness. It would definitely need US leadership to initiate an update/amendment of the North Atlantic Treaty. It would be a great exaggeration to say that punitive measures by NATO of its member Turkey would drive Turkey into the arms of Russia. President Erdogan set his agenda moving closer to Russia back in 2016 and not after the first delivery of the Russian-built S-400 components to Turkey on 12 July 2019. Deliveries are set to continue through April 2020. Therefore, a full inclusion of Turkey in NATO is no longer a best option for all concerned parties. In that regard, the author disagrees with Bongiovanni's conclusion that despite the apparent increase in grievances and in the fragmentation of the alliance, the odds are that the Americans, Europeans, and Turks understand that NATO works for all of them and that their world would be far less secure without it.<sup>28</sup> NATO without Turkey would not only survive but would be more resilient and cohesive against common threats. Turkey without NATO would be weaker and likely become a prey to Russia and its neighbouring Iran. Whether the Turkish government is willing and able to understand the consequences of their decisions is beyond the scope of this article. From the outside, it appears that Erdogan's administration tends to misread signals coming from Washington and is scorning EU and NATO members due to their perceived impotence to reach a common position.

### Way Ahead

Strained relations between Turkey and NATO are likely to continue as long as Recep Tayyip Erdogan presides over Turkey. However, even after President Erdogan's term is expired there is no guarantee that his successor would change the nature of strained relations. Turkey's veering towards Russia and Turkey's purchase of the S-400 air-defence system from Russia should be seen in an overall context of distrustful relations between Turkey and NATO developed over the last several years. Turkey's improved relations with Russia will continue in the foreseeable future to the chagrin of the NATO allies. At the same time, Turkey-NATO relations are constrained by not updated/amended yet North Atlantic Treaty signed on 4 April 1949. As long as Turkey remains a NATO member and hold a power of veto in the alliance it can for instance block inclusion of Greek Cyprus in the alliance or block co-operation with EU but not NATO member states like Austria. An additional factor needs to be brought into Turkey-NATO relations, namely a continued purge of the NATO-trained officers of the Turkish armed forces and a brainwash trend to make a new generation of military officers loyal to President Erdogan as commander-in-chief. This new officer generation has a Muslim identity and mistrusts NATO in general and the United States in particular. The latter factor will have a long-term consequences on the strength and quality of the Turkish military and its contribution to the alliance. Turkey with the second largest military in NATO has been seriously damaged in qualitative terms by the ongoing purges. As a result, it can be expected that Turkish military contribution to NATO activities in for instance the Black Sea region is likely to be minimal since Turkey is not interested to irritate Russia. Finally, as long as Jens Stoltenberg remains NATO's Secretary General he will do his utmost to keep Turkey in the alliance even to the detriment of the alliance and despite NATO's military command unease with Turkey.

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**NOTES:**

1. Dr. Kogan is a noted expert in the field of defence technologies. He has held a series of research fellowships at some of Europe's most renowned research institutes, including Deutsche Gesellschaft fuer Auswaertige Politik, Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, the Swedish Defence Research Agency, and the Swedish National Defence College. Recently he was attached as Guest Researcher to the Centre for Pacific Asia Studies at Stockholm University and to the Department of International Relations at Middle East Technical University. For the last five years he was employed as Guest Researcher at the Vienna-based International Institute for Liberal Policy.

Dr Kogan is a prolific writer and has presented an extensive series of papers on the following topics:

- Russian military aviation industry;
- Russian aerospace forces;
- Russian arms exports;
- Defence industrial policy in Central and Eastern Europe including Bulgaria and Romania;
- Arms export policy;
- Israeli defence industrial policy and arms export strategy;
- Energy and energy-security in the Euro-Asiatic area;
- Russian-Turkish relations;
- Turkey-NATO relations;
- South Caucasus countries defence and security agenda.

Dr.Kogan currently resides in Tbilisi and works as defence and security expert.

2.For the complete article, see Bernd Riegert, "NATO and Turkey: Allies, not Friends", see online at: <http://www.dw.com/en/nato-and-turkey-allies-not-friends/a-19444991>- online on 2 August 2016. Hereafter cited as Riegert, "NATO and Turkey". As for the strategic importance of Turkey, read the following text. During the 25 May 2017 NATO Summit in Brussels allied military officials admitted that Turkey's geographical position is too sensitive to allow the country to drift away on its own, whatever the direction. Erdogan is fully aware of this and can be expected to exploit his aces to the maximum. For the complete article, see Brooks Tigner, "Turkey to be 'Elephant in the Room' at NATO Summit", see online at: <http://janes.ihs.com/Janes/Display/1805867> - online on 17 May 2017. Hereafter cited as Tigner, "Turkey to be 'Elephant'". Turkey's NATO membership and its strategic geographic position mean *that any covert NATO criticism of the country is unlikely* [author's italics]. For the complete article, see Tigner, "NATO Recalls Turkey's Failed Coup as Attack's on Democracy, Despite Claims of Contrary Evidence", see online at: <http://janes.ihs.com/Display/1812361> - online on 18 July 2017. Contrary to General Kujat's statement, the US Ambassador to NATO Kay Bailey Hutchinson, stated on 17 November 2017: "Turkey is a very valuable ally in NATO. They have done their part. They are one of the four framework nations in Afghanistan right now and doing a very credible job. And they have answered the call every time NATO has made a call". For the complete article, see Valerie Insinna,

"Ambassador to NATO Unsure if US Will Impose Sanctions on Turkey for S-400 Buy", see online at: <https://www.defensenews.com/global/europe/2017/11/18/ambassador-to-nato-unsure-if-us-will-impose-sanctions-on-turkey-for-s-400-buy/> - online on 17 November 2017. Ankara is a framework nation of the Alliance's Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF) and has offered to lead the group in 2021. Aaron Stein, "The New Turkey: Making Sense of Turkish Decision-Making", Atlantic Council, Issue Brief (April 2018), 6. Hereafter cited as Stein, "The New Turkey".

3.On 1 November 2009 parallel to the resumption of its ISAF command in Kabul, Turkey increased the number of Turkish non-combat troops there by nearly a thousand, bringing its total contribution to 1750. US Ambassador James Jeffrey and National Security Advisor James Jones made it clear after President Barack Obama's speech that the administration would welcome additional soldiers, preferably with "fewer caveats" relating to their mission. However, *Turkish civilian and military leaders have consistently opposed the idea of Turkish troops assuming a direct combat role. This was reaffirmed by Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan immediately before his departure to Washington* (author's italics). Bulent Aliriza, "President Obama Meets With Prime Minister Erdogan", Center for Strategic and International Studies, see online at: <http://www.csis.org/publication/president-obama-meets-prime-minister-erdogan> - online on 7 December 2009.

4.For the complete article, see Brooks Tigner, "NATO's Silence on the Purge of Turkey's Military Carries Risks For All", see online at: <http://janes.ihs.com/Display/1791356> - online on 15 December 2016. Hereafter cited as Tigner, "NATO's Silence". See also Sevil Erkus, "NATO Chief Calls Turkey's Bid For Russian S-400 Missile Systems a 'Difficult Issue'", see online at: <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/nato-chief-calls-turkeys-bid-for-russian-s-400-missile-systems-a-difficult-issue-127711> - online on 22 February 2018.

5.For the complete article, see online at: <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/nato-without-turkey-would-be-weak-alliance-chief-says--112586> - online on 30 April 2017.

6.For the complete article, see Serkan Demirtas, "How Will S-400s Affect Turkey's Role in NATO?", see online at: <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/opinion/serkan-demirtas/how-will-s-400s-affect-turkeys-role-in-nato-145100> - online on 20 July 2019.

7.For the complete article, see online at: <https://bulgarianmilitary.com/2019/07/18/turkey-as-a-nato-member-is-much-more-than-s-400-jens-stoltenberg-said/>

8.For the complete article, see online at: <https://www.dw.com/en/german-parliament-votes-to-withdraw-troops-from-turkey/a-39356874> - online on 2 June 2017. For the complete article, see Sevil Erkus, "Germany to Vote on Withdrawal From Incirlik in Two Weeks", see online at: <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/germany-to-vote-on-withdrawal-from-incirlik-in-two-weeks-time-113225> - online on 18 May 2017. See also Aaron Stein, "The New

Turkey”, 3 and Sebastian Sprenger, “Turkey Defiant on Purchase of Russian S-400 Anti-Missile Weapon”, see online at: <https://www.defensenews.com/smr/nato-priorities/2018/07/11/turkey-defiant-on-purchase-of-russian-s-400-anti-missile-weapon/> - online on 11 July 2018.

9. For the complete article including Turkish reaction and an official apology issued by Secretary General Stoltenberg, see Semih Idiz, “NATO Blunder Ignites Calls to Leave Alliance”, see online at: <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2017/11/turkey-nato-blunder-ignites-calls-to-leave.html> - online on 21 November 2017.

10. For the complete article, see “Turkey Sticks to Its Guns on Russian Missile-Defense Deal”, see online at: <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2019/05/turkey-nato-incident-blunder-or-tacit-rebuke-of-ankara.print.html> - online on 13 May 2019.

11. For the complete article, see online at: <http://kommersant.ru/doc/3148901> - online on 21 November 2016. Isik announced on 22 February 2017 that Ankara was progressing in talks with Russia on the purchase of S-400s. For the complete article, see Bruce Jones, “Putin Backs Ankara-Moscow S-400 Sales Negotiations”, see online at: <http://janes.ihs.com/Janes/Display/1808346> - online on 6 June 2017. President Erdogan first discussed with Russia in August 2016 what would ultimately become a US\$2.5 billion agreement to procure four S-400 systems. See Thomas Karako, “Coup-proofing? Making Sense of Turkey’s S-400 Decision”, Center for Strategic and International Studies, see online at: <https://www.csis.org/analysis/coup-proofing-making-sense-turkeys-s-400-decision> - online on 15 July 2019. Hereafter cited as Karako, “Coup-proofing?”

12. For the complete article, see “Reluctant Allies and What That Means for the Future of NATO”, see online at: <https://www.defensenews.com/opinion/commentary/2017/05/15/reluctant-allies-and-what-that-means-for-the-future-of-nato-editorial/>. On the issue of choosing sides US Vice President Mike Pence tweeted on 3 April 2019: “Turkey must choose. Does it want to remain a critical partner in the most successful military alliance in history or does it want to risk the security of that partnership by making such reckless decision [purchasing the S-400 from Russia] that undermine our NATO alliance?” For the complete article, see Soner Cagaptay, “The Turkish Rupture Could Cause a Fissure in NATO”, see online at: <https://thehill.com/opinion/international/438868-the-turkish-rupture-could-cause-a-fissure-in-nato> - online on 16 April 2019. For a good and plausible explanation what motivated President Erdogan to purchase the S-400 and his willingness to endure considerable US and NATO pressure to acquire it, see Karako, *op.cit.* In support of Karako’s explanation, see also Kerim Has, “Turkey, Russia, and the Looming S-400 Crisis”, Middle East Institute (MEI), see online at: <https://www.mei.edu/publications/turkey-russia-and-looming-s-400-crisis> - online on 10 July 2019.

13. Semih Idiz, “How Will S-400 Affair Affect Turkish-NATO Ties?”, see online at: <https://www.al-monitor.com/>

[pulse/originals/2019/06/turkey-usa-russia-how-s400-affair-affected-turkish-nato-ties.html](https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2019/06/turkey-usa-russia-how-s400-affair-affected-turkish-nato-ties.html) - online on 20 June 2019. Hereafter cited as Idiz, “How Will S-400”. See also a very interesting assessment and the potential way out for Turkey out of the impasse offered by Jim Townsend, former Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Europe currently with the Center for a New American Security. Aaron Mehta, “Turkey Has the S-400. The Trump’s Administration is Silent”, see online at: <https://www.defensenews.com/pentagon/2019/07/12/turkey-has-the-s-400-the-trump-administration-is-silent/>. Jim Townsend’s proposed way out of the impasse is unlikely to happen since President Erdogan determined to have the S-400 operational and not kept in crates. See also three suggestions made by the US Navy Admiral (retired) James Stavridis in his article “Kicking Turkey Out of NATO Would Be a Gift to Putin”, see online at: <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2019/07/19/kicking-turkey-out-of-nato-would-be-a-gift-to-putin-a66484>. The third suggestion offered by Admiral Stavridis namely, to encourage the Turks to keep the S-400 in mothballs, and then selling them another high-tech-end air-defence system is unlikely to be accepted by President Erdogan. Hereafter cited as Stavridis, “Kicking Turkey”. President Erdogan made up his mind and remained steadfast in his approach to have the S-400 operational. And it should not be forgotten that the US offered Turkey Patriot air-defence system back in 2013 and France jointly with Italy offered SAMP/T air-defence system in 2014. For the recent article on President Donald Trump’s suggestion to Turkey not to activate the S-400, see online at: <https://bulgarianmilitary.com/2019/07/26/donald-trump-pleads-turkey-not-to-activate-the-s-400-missile-defence-system/>. Such suggestions are likely to fall on the deaf ears of President Erdogan and his government.

14. For the complete article, see Carlotta Gall, “Turkey Gets Shipment of Russian Missile System, Defying US”, see online at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/07/12/world/europe/turkey-russia-missiles.html>.

15. For the complete article, see online at: <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkey-to-train-3500-officers-in-national-defense-university-103193> - online on 24 August 2016.

16. Riegert, “NATO and Turkey”, *op.cit.*

17. <https://www.militarytimes.com/news/pentagon-congress/2016/12/07/nato-commander-says-150-turkish-officers-have-left-post-coup/>

18. For the complete article, see Tigner, “NATO’s Silence”. [In the days after the coup attempt, the Turkish Air Force purged more than 300 F-16 pilots, most of which had years of experience. The result: The cockpit to pilot ratio dropped from over 1.25 pilots per one aircraft to 0.8. This ratio is important to ensure that pilots get enough rest between flights without impacting the Air Force’s operational tempo. See Aaron Stein, “Turkey’s Fighter Pilot Problems”, Atlantic Council, MENASource, see online at: <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/menasource/>

turkey-s-fighter-pilot-problems/ - online on 8 September 2017.]

19.Tigner, op.cit

20.For the complete article, see Tigner, "Turkey to be 'Elephant'". According to the data gathered by the state-run Anadolu Agency, the number of generals and admirals in the TSK has decreased by 40 per cent due to the dismissals after the failed coup. The number of generals and admirals has decreased from 326 to 196 after the failed coup. For the rest of the collected data, see online at: <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/number-of-turkish-generals-decreases-40-percent-with-post-coup-attempt-dismissals--115852> - online on 23 July 2017.

21.Eugene Kogan, "US-Turkish Relations in Crisis", European Security and Defence (February 2019), 34. See also Tom Bowman, "Growing Number of Turkish Military Officers Seek Asylum in the US", see online at: <https://www.npr.org/2019/05/29/727796635/growing-number-of-turkish-military-officers-seek-asylum-in-the-u-s>. For the Turkish military officers asking for asylum in the EU NATO member states, see Manolis Kostidis, "Turkish Military Officers Are Requesting Asylum All Over Europe", Independent Balkan News Agency (IBNA), see online at: <https://balkaneu.com/turkish-military-officers-are-requesting-asylum-all-over-europe/> - online on 15 February 2017. See also online at: <https://www.thelocal.no/20170322/norway-grants-asylum-to-torture-threatened-turkish-officers> - online on 22 March 2017 and Mark Lewis, "Purged From Turkish Army, NATO Officers Granted Asylum in Norway", Atlantic Council, online at: <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/natosource/purged-from-turkish-army-nato-officers-granted-asylum-in-norway> - online on 10 April 2017.

22.To counter the author's assertion that Turkey as an important NATO ally is continuing to exist, see Peter Roberts and Seth Newkirk, "Turkey, the US and the S-400: A Counter-Narrative", Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) Commentary, see online at: <https://rusi.org/commentary/turkey-us-and-s-400-counter-narrative> - online on 15 August 2019.

23.For the complete article, see online at: [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official\\_texts\\_17120.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_17120.htm)

24.Francesco Bongiovanni present a very lucid analysis of what is likely to happen if Turkey decides to formally exit NATO. "Turkey: The NATO Alliance's Wild Card", Turkish Policy Quarterly, 17:2 (Summer 2018), see online at: <http://turkishpolicy.com/article/919/turkey-the-nato-alliances-wild-card> - online on 28 September 2018, 7-8. Hereafter cited as Bongiovanni, "Turkey". What he however fails to say is that Turkey might formally decide to exit both, military and political structures of NATO. As precedents, in 1966 President Charles De Gaulle left the military command structure but France remained in the political structure. In 1974 Greece exited military command structure but remained in the political structure. For the complete article, see online at: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History\\_of\\_NATO](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_NATO). For the potential Turkey exit from NATO, see Omer Taspinar and Michael O'Hanlon, "A Gaullist Option for Turkey in NATO", see online at: <https://www.berggruen.org/the-worldpost/articles/a-gaullist-option-for-turkey-in-nato/> - online on 18 June 2019. Hereafter cited as Taspinar and O'Hanlon, "A Gaullist Option." See also Idiz, "How Will S-400."

25.For the complete article, see John Deutsch, "Turkey's Patriot Offer Dead After S-400 Delivery," see online at: <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2019/08/turkey-patriot-offer-dead-s400-delivery.html> - online on 22 August 2019.

26."A Last Chance for Turkey? There Could Still be Time to Fix the S-400 Issue," see online at: <https://www.defensenews.com/opinion/commentary/2019/07/29/a-last-chance-for-turkey-there-could-still-be-time-to-fix-the-s-400-issue/>

27."A Gaullist Option." For a plead to keep Turkey in the Alliance, see also Stavridis, "Kicking Turkey".

28.Bongiovanni, "Turkey", 14. The same conclusions are expressed in an article by Lieutenant-General (retired) Ben Hodges, "Time for Turkey-USA 2.0", in Center for European Policy Analysis (CEPA), see online at: <https://www.cepa.org/time-for-turkey-usa-2> - online on 26 July 2019. For the earlier statement that Turkey's inclusion in NATO is surely the best option for all concerned parties, see Mustafa Aydin, "Turkey's Western Connection", see online at: <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/opinion/mustafa-aydin/turkeys-western-connection-122890> - online on 23 November 2017.

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## EUROPEAN UNION



## European Defence. Is There a Risk of Building an Autonomous European Defence Capability?

**Associate Professor CEng  
PhD Gheorghe SAVU<sup>1</sup>**

Although all along the European Union's existence there have been numerous attempts to debate the subject of an autonomous European defence, which would make the Union less dependent on the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in security and defence, so far we cannot talk about a real common European defence. The European defence keeps on being ensured by the Alliance, and the transatlantic link becomes more important than ever after 1990 given the threats from South and East which the Euro-Atlantic community, including the European Union, must face. However, after the adoption of the Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy in 2016<sup>2</sup>, the European Union has made important decisions with a view to strengthen the military cooperation between member states. In only three years there has been remarkable progress on the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), as the members of the EU agreed to concrete initiatives meant to encourage defence cooperation. The purpose of this cooperation is obvious: generating European military capabilities that would diminish Europe's dependence on NATO and implicitly on North

America, especially on the USA. Moreover, the European defence capabilities intended to be developed will also strengthen the image of the EU as a global actor by creating a worldwide competitive defence industry and conducting military operations in areas where NATO is not interested to intervene.

According to the March 2018 Eurobarometer<sup>3</sup>, the European citizens have high expectations from the EU as far as ensuring the peace and security of the continent, 68% of them hoping for the Union to do more in the field of defence. These results confirm those of the 2017 security and defence Eurobarometer<sup>4</sup>; it shows that 75% of the EU citizens are in favour of the European security and defence policy, while 55% even support the idea of an European military capability (so called European Army). The above mentioned results made the European political leaders understand that the citizens of Europe want more from the European Union regarding a common defence against the security threats to the member states. Moreover, leaders - such as the French President Emmanuel Macron - driven by political interests more or less objective, have launched ideas such as a *joint European military project*<sup>5</sup>. Germany, another important European player in the field of security and defence declared, through the voice of chancellor Angela

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2. Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy, [https://ceas.europa.eu/topics/eu-global-strategy/17304/global-strategy-european-unions-foreign-and-security-policy\\_en](https://ceas.europa.eu/topics/eu-global-strategy/17304/global-strategy-european-unions-foreign-and-security-policy_en)

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4. Special Eurobarometer 461, Designing Europe's future: Security and Defence, <https://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/Survey/getSurveyDetail/search/defence/surveyKy/2173>

5. Discours d'Emmanuel Macron pour une Europe souveraine, unie, démocratique, 26 SEPTEMBER 2017, <https://www.elysee.fr/emmanuel-macron/2017/09/26/initiative-pour-l-europe-discours-d-emmanuel-macron-pour-une-europe-souveraine-unie-democratique>

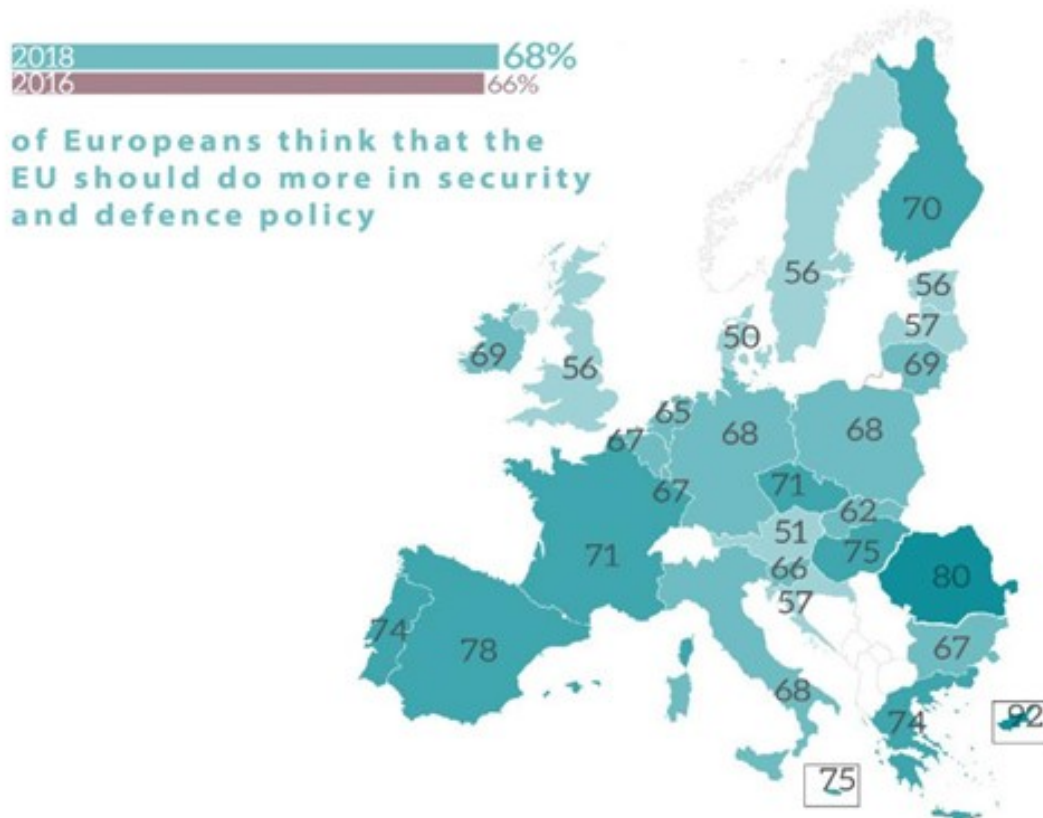
Merkel (European Parliament, November 2018), and resilience of the member states, including that “we have to work based on the vision of a proper European Army being established one day”. These ideas have been embraced by the European Commission, as shown by the State of the Union Address delivered by President Jean-Claude Juncker in September 2017<sup>6</sup>: “By 2025 we need a fully-fledged European Defence Union. We need it. And NATO wants it.”

**Measures Taken by the EU to Increase the Defence Cooperation**

Although the policy of common security and defence is legislated at the level of the Union, the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (the Treaty of Lisbon, art. 42 (2)) clearly states the importance of the national defence

the responsibilities deriving from their status of NATO members, or that of neutrality. Following the adoption of the Treaty of Lisbon (2009), the EU has set in motion an extensive process meant to implement ambitious steps in the fields of defence and security by assigning more resources, stimulating efficiency, facilitating cooperation and supporting the development of capabilities. The main components of this process are:

- The **Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO)**, launched in December 2017. Currently there are 25 countries involved, as Great Britain, Cyprus and Ireland decided not to take part in it. The initiative proved to be even more successful than estimated in its inception,



Picture no. 1 – The EU citizen’s opinion on the increase of the Union’s role in the fields of security and defence<sup>7</sup>

6.State of the Union Address 2017, [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/SPEECH\\_17\\_3165](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/SPEECH_17_3165)

7. [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/resources/library/images/20190621PHT55026/20190621PHT55026\\_original.jpg](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/resources/library/images/20190621PHT55026/20190621PHT55026_original.jpg)

with 34 projects approved and benefiting from firm commitments from the participating member states. As far as this paper is concerned, the most relevant are: the European Medical Command, the Harbour & Maritime Surveillance and Protection (HARMSPRO), the Mutual Assistance in Cyber Security, the Joint EU Intelligence School, and the rapid response capabilities;

- The **European Defence Fund (EDF)**, that was established in June 2017 and marked a first in the history of the EU since, for the first time, the defence cooperation is co-financed by the EU. The fund destined to co-finance the defence constitutes a distinct section in the Multiannual Financial Framework (2021-2027), amounts to 13 billion Euro for research and industrial development in the field of defence. The European Defence Fund is meant to complement national investments and to provide practical and financial incentives for cooperation in the field of research (4.1 billion Euro) and for the common development and acquisition of military equipment and technologies (8.9 billion Euro). It is worth mentioning that, in the current financial cycle the EU allocates 590 million Euro for defence cooperation, out of which the amount of 90 million Euro is intended for research;

- The **Action Plan on Military Mobility** across Europe, meant to ensure a quick response to crises by facilitating the movement of military personnel and equipment. The plan includes clear measures regarding military requirements, transport infrastructure and legal and procedural issues, especially on the cross-border movements between the EU member states. From this point of view, the European Commission has set the following main objectives for the interval 2019-2020: identifying the segments of the transportation network that are suitable for military use so they can be modernised and ensure the transport of military vehicles; identifying the civilian-military synergies regarding the transport of dangerous goods; recommending measures to reduce the duration of custom formalities for cross-border movements; improving the overall mobility in order to respond to threats, including hybrid;

- **a more effective financing of the military and civilian missions**, through a comprehensive approach, better planning and management, coordination with the EU Delegations in the region, and through the coordination of all financial tools destined to a specific area;

- **improving crisis management** through the establishment of the Military Planning and Conduct Capability (MPCC), to complement the already existent Civilian Planning and Conduct Capability (CPCC).

These are the most relevant initiatives taken at EU level after 2016 in the fields of defence and security, with a view to make sure that the EU can act autonomously on security and defence whenever NATO decides not to intervene. These measures will definitely enhance EU's military and security profile. This also fuels some countries' worries that an *European Army* could be built and would duplicate their efforts within NATO. A thorough analysis of this issue clearly shows that the EU is far from getting there, because all the measures that have been taken so far are meant to build capabilities found to be ineffective or insufficient during the process of planning and launching the Union's military missions. These measures are also meant to improve the efficiency of military spending at the level of the EU by avoiding fragmentation and duplication and to facilitate the military technological development, which is far behind the American one.

### **“Defence: Doing More with Less”**

Following a complex analysis of the military expenses of the EU member states, the Union has reached the conclusion that, even though they would spend more on defence given the commitments made at the NATO Summit in 2014, the states that are also NATO members keep on facing a significant level of inefficiency because of the lack of coordination at the level of the EU. Consequently, strengthening EU's defence doesn't only mean an increase in the defence expenses, but also, and especially, improving their efficiency. Besides the USA, the EU member states provide - together - the

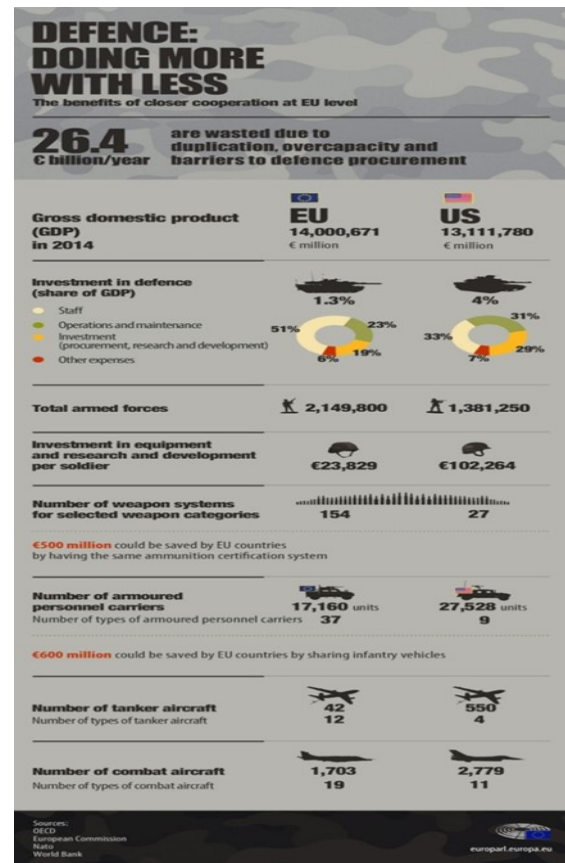
largest defence budget, which means an assessed yearly loss of approximately 26.4 billion Euro because of duplication, fragmentation, restrictive domestic procedures in the field of military acquisition, and lack of logistic support coordination.

Among these causes, fragmentation affects the most the effectiveness of the military expenses of the EU member states, if we are only considering the fact that the number of military technical systems used by Europe is sixfold than in the case of USA. (Picture no. 2)

### Legal Issues

The legal framework necessary to implement a common EU defence policy that could lead to a common European defence capability is provided by the Treaty of Lisbon. In ten years since the adoption of the Treaty of Lisbon the geopolitical environment has changed significantly and new threats to the European security, including of military nature, have emerged. At the same time, just like the Eurobarometers show, the European citizen's expectations have raised as far as the EU assuming a more important role in ensuring the security of the continent. Consequently, the EU member states have decided to implement some of the amendments of the Treaty of Lisbon regarding defence. However, the EU is far from reaching a real common defence that is based on military mechanisms and capabilities developed at the level of the Union.

The support of the EU citizens to the common defence and security is undoubtedly generated by the increasing instability both on a regional and global level. The terrorist threats inside and outside the European continent, the crises in the Middle East, Africa and Central Asia, the Russian military threat at the EU' eastern borders, illegal human trafficking, the shifts in the relationships between world powers, the abandonment of international nuclear treaties, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction etc. are security risks and threats at the origins of a new dynamic in the debates on security and defence matters at the level of the EU and its members. These risks and threats are not circumstantial; they



will keep on

Picture no. 2, The Benefits of Closer Military Cooperation at the EU Level

shaping the international security environment for a long time. This is the main reason why both the European Council and the European Parliament have called for the full implementation of the Treaty of Lisbon's stipulations on the Common Security and Defence Policy as part of the Common Foreign and Security Policy. Although these two policies continue to belong to the national governments as far as the decision-making is concerned within both the European Council and the Council of the EU, as shown before, many initiatives meant to strengthen the security and defence cooperation at the level of the EU have been launched. They have the potential to generate a common defence policy serving as the nucleus of a *defence union* that would, in fact, be what is already called *the European Army*. At the same time, the EU has taken steps to strengthen its cooperation with NATO by means of the Joint Declarations in 2016 and 2018, which have identified many fields of cooperation, except for the development of common military capabilities.

In light of these developments, one of the most important debates on the European defence is the one dedicated to establishing the final objective of a potential defence union. The complexity of the concept of an European Army generates extensive debates as to its purpose and significance, including in the context of the dynamization of the NATO-EU relations, the transatlantic relationship and achieving an EU strategic autonomy as defined in the Global Strategy. While at the level of some European countries there is a high degree of concern generated by the danger of creating an European Army that would come in contradiction with NATO, the French and the German leaders have permanently tried to eliminate this perception by giving assurances that the EU wants to strengthen its cooperation and complementarity with NATO, including as far as the development and the use of military capabilities.

At this moment it is difficult to say whether a real *defence union* will be built, how it will look like and how long the whole process will be. The potential of the Treaty of Lisbon is far from being exhausted from this perspective and, for this very reason, the EU institutions are involved in a comprehensive process of identifying new initiatives that are viable and agreed upon by all member states. This process seems more likely than ever to be implemented now, since BREXIT is bound to happen after the decisive victory of the Conservative Party in the December 2019 elections in Great Britain.

The European Parliament seems to have decided to play a major and active part in this matter, as it wishes the Sub-Committee on Security and Defence (SEDE) to become a standing committee. This development would enable it to increase the number of its initiatives in the fields of security and defence and would allow it to submit report themes and rapporteurs directly to the Conference of Presidents, to adopt reports and submit them for debate in plenary sessions. More than that, the European Parliament requested the High Representative/Vice-President of the Commission to start the process of preparing a White Paper based on the Global Strategy and proposed considering the possibility to create a

position of Director General for Defence within the Commission. Over the past few years, the European Parliament has constantly supported the use of CSDP instruments to their full potential, coordination of national actions and a more efficient sharing of resources. It has constantly highlighted the importance of solving all the operational problems regarding the deployment of EU Battle Groups in theatres of operations, demonstrating its political will to fully operationalize the CSDP's instruments and to implement the initiatives authorized by the Treaty of Lisbon.

On the other side, the European Commission issued - in 2017 - a reflection paper regarding the future of the European defence that is in fact its view on what is called *the EU defence union*. The Commission presented three views on the EU defence for the time horizon extending to 2025. The most ambitious of these is represented by the common defence and security achieved through common financing and acquisition of military equipment from the EU budget, by sharing the costs of the expensive military equipment and the efforts regarding technological innovation with a view to lower the costs of defence. To these they add the development of the necessary capabilities to launch military operations exclusively under EU mandate, all in complementarity with NATO. The Commission proposes the evaluation of the possibility of shared ownership of military equipment and common military budgets and doctrine to be considered. These are seconded by an EU common strategic culture that, according to President Macron, could facilitate the creation of a common military intervention force.

From a legal standpoint, Article 42(2) of the Lisbon Treaty provides the necessary framework to produce a common EU defence policy. If this article could be fully taken advantage of, the European Council could decide on a common EU defence strategy to be agreed upon by the member states in accordance with their constitutions. In line with the Treaty of Lisbon, this should not affect the specificity of the security and defence policy of some of the member states and should comply with their



commitment to NATO. Furthermore, the second subparagraph of Article 42(2) introduces a clear limitation concerning the EU defence policy, stipulating the primacy of the member states' national defence policies, including the status of neutrality or of NATO member. Practically, the neutrality status of Austria, Cyprus, Finland, Ireland, Malta, and Sweden must be observed. Thus, the decision regarding the EU's common defence is strictly in the hands of the European Council and cannot be but unanimously adopted. This is the most difficult situation as far as the future of European defence is concerned, although the principle of subsidiarity could be invoked, which, according to those supporting the European defence, allows the implementation of the defence policy at the level of the EU, including the financing of common military structures.

### **The Future of European Defence**

If the EU wishes to reach the level of ambition assumed by its Global Strategy in the next ten years, in cooperation and coordination with NATO, the Union must strengthen its member states' cooperation in the fields of security and defence. The EU member states have to decide whether they wish to strengthen their military cooperation that would lead to a *European Defence Union* and, possibly, on a long term to a *European Army*. In order to achieve this the EU must consolidate the current institutional framework, including by assigning a Commissioner for Defence and establishing a Directorate General within the Commission that would ensure coherence to the planning and the efficient spending of the budget destined for common defence. The Union will have to allocate more financial resources to defence that would be spent on common projects and more efficiently than before. In this way, the EU could reduce the costs caused by fragmentation and duplication and provide the necessary funds to implement the common military research and development programs.

Despite these ambitious initiatives, in the following period the European Union is expected to continue to remain what we call a *soft power*. At the same time, the Union should gradually devel-

op the instruments specific to a *hard power*, since the international security environment is continuously changing and generates risks and threats that the EU must face. While maintaining their complementarity with NATO, the EU member states should accelerate their military cooperation efforts so that the Union can face the future conventional or unconventional security challenges. The EU must take the necessary steps towards strengthening its strategic autonomy so it can promote and defend its values and principles, protect its citizens, contribute to the defence of the international order and respond to the threats that its members will face individually or collectively. This is why the EU must strengthen its military cooperation, with a focus on the following: common strategic culture, institutional and decision-making consolidation in the field of defence, full implementation of the security and defence provisions of the Treaty of Lisbon, and the rational and collective use of the resources destined for defence. As far as the common strategic culture is concerned, the implementation of the CSDP led to its development and the Global Strategy fully proves that. At the same time, over the past ten years the EU managed to take important steps in the consolidation of the institutions and decision-making process in the field of defence, the newly established MCPP being a relevant example in this perspective. As shown above, exploiting the potential of the Treaty of Lisbon and allocating common financial resources to military projects remain the main domains of action regarding security and defence for the next 10 to 20 years.

### **Final thoughts**

As far as the full implementation of the stipulations of the Treaty of Lisbon in the fields of security and defence, as well as the efficient common use of the resources dedicated to defence, the EU member states still have a lot to clarify in order to achieve a real defence union. The progress registered after the adoption of the Global Strategy, as far as the cooperation in the field of European defence is concerned, is remarkable. However, the member states should continue to strengthen their cooperation if they want to

achieve the level of ambition set forth by the Global Strategy, so they can manage the challenges of a more and more volatile and unpredictable international environment. Moreover, the member states have to define the terms of the institutional framework regarding the cooperation in the field of defence by fully implementing the terms of the Treaty of Lisbon. This way, an European defence union can be created, which on a long term and based on the decision of the member states will be able to count on an European Army. At the same time, all these developments at the level of the EU have to comply with the neutrality status of some of its members, strengthen the cooperation with NATO as agreed in the Joint Declarations in 2016 and 2018, as well as generate a more efficient spending of the public funds allocated to defence through projects developed in common.

As far as the prospect of creating a European defence union, **the New Strategic Agenda 2019-2024<sup>8</sup>** adopted by the European Council in June 2019 is very clarifying: *“The EU’s CFSP and CSDP must become more responsive and active and be better linked to the other strands of external relations. The EU also needs to take greater responsibility for its own security and defence, in particular by enhancing defence investment, capability development and operational readiness; it will cooperate closely with NATO, in full respect of the principles set out in the Treaties and by the European Council, including the principles of inclusiveness, reciprocity and decision-making autonomy of the EU.”* Thus, at this moment it is out of doubt that, on an official level, the EU does not aim for more than *enhancing the investment in defence, developing capabilities, and operational readiness* through cooperation with NATO. It is obvious that this does not imply the creation of the so-called European Army, but a better use of financial resources through cooperation between the member states at the level of the EU.

The author believes that the EU is expected, at least over the next ten years, to make PESCO

operational by implementing the projects already approved, so that the Union becomes an important factor in designing and developing military capabilities. This way the EU can secure a technological level that comes close to that of the USA, which will enable the Union not only to endow its armed forces with state of the art equipment, but to also develop its own defence industry and make it competitive internationally, compared to the USA. Hence, the stakes consist in developing a modern and strong defence industry that brings added value to the armed forces of the member states and ensures an export base stronger than it is today. To this end, the larger EU countries such as France and Germany have to understand that smaller member states should be an active part of the process. They must contribute to the European military research and development to improve themselves technologically and have the necessary motivation for purchasing with priority military equipment made in the EU. The principle of inclusiveness is always cited in all the documents that regulate PESCO and should be abided by the larger states, if they want the projects agreed upon by the 25 member states to be successful.

In parallel with the military research and development activity, at the level of the EU will most definitely take place transformations, in the field of defence, which will eliminate the current deficiencies found when launching missions and military operations for crises management in areas of interest for the Union and where NATO doesn’t want to intervene. To this end, common rapid reaction capabilities must be built, logistics, medical and intelligence support have to be provided, transportation and strategic communication capabilities should be developed, and maritime search and surveillance capabilities are needed. These are absolutely necessary capabilities for the EU to ensure its security and role as a global player as the Global Strategy set forth. However, from this to an *European defence union/European Army* there is a long journey, which is impossible to accomplish at least until 2030.

8. <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/ro/press/press-releases/2019/06/20/a-new-strategic-agenda-2019-2024/#>

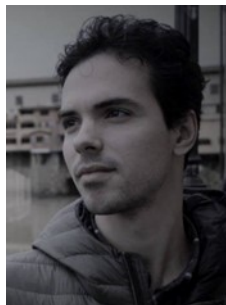
Until then, the EU-NATO cooperation and complementarity will keep staying relevant as far as the defence of Europe is concerned, and the transatlantic link will remain the foundation of the Euro-Atlantic security and defence, and will be strengthened by the implementation of the 74 projects agreed upon in the NATO-EU Joint Declarations in 2016 and 2018. Both the European and the North-American side of the Euro-Atlantic community have to understand that there is an industrial competition in the defence area that has the potential to turn them from competitors into adversaries if all these issues are not submitted for debate in the NATO and EU committees and working groups from tactical level to the summits of heads of state and government. An eventual lack of readiness for a constructive dialogue between the involved parties will affect the security and defence of the Euro-Atlantic community, and strictly commercially speaking, countries such as China, the Russian Federation or Israel will only benefit from it.

Despite the constant debate on the need to share the military effort between the two sides of the Atlantic Ocean and on the need to increase the defence budgets, it is hard to imagine that

the cooperation between NATO and the EU won't prevail.

The military cooperation of the entire Euro-Atlantic community is the basis of a strong, effective and successful military alliance that shares the same values and acts to counter the same threats that face all the EU and/or NATO member states. Without the North-American military potential, Europe would not enjoy the current security status, as the North-Atlantic Alliance would be much weaker without the EU even after BREXIT. Strengthening the military cooperation at the level of the EU will lead to the increase of military spending of the member states and to their efficiency, especially as far as enhancing and modernising the European combat capability, diminishing fragmentation and duplication of military equipment, systems and standards of the EU member states is concerned. Complying with the principle of "a single set of forces", which no EU member state puts into question, the member states of the two organizations will have no restriction on deploying that set of forces in NATO and/or EU operations. Thus, the EU's ambition of strategic autonomy can be developed in complementarity with NATO.

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# "Remain versus Leave", the Latest Structural Cleavage of British Politics?

## Lessons from the Elections on December 12th

Alexis CHAPELAN<sup>1</sup>

voters were facing "an impossible choice" in a crucial election that could carve the future of Great Britain for generations to come<sup>4</sup>. The foreign press had a similar approach. The Italian newspaper *La Repubblica* depicted a country torn by a *Hamlet's dilemma*: "the Disunited Kingdom casts its vote"<sup>5</sup>. The Danish publication *Berlingske* considered the elections as "the most important elections in the past decades"<sup>6</sup>.

Michael Gove, a minister in the Johnson cabinet admitted to the BBC that the vote on the 12<sup>th</sup> of December 2019 was the most important in his life<sup>7</sup>, and Nicola Sturgeon, the head of the Scottish National Party, stated that "the General Elections are the most important in decades and will determine the country's future for a long time to come."<sup>8</sup>

The intense language used by the media observers and by the political actors themselves built the symbolic plan of the latest British elections, under the sign of rupture, discontinuation and, especially the disruptive force of the Brexit. The ideological tension caused by the referendum on leaving the EU



From left to right: Jo Swinson (Lib Dem), Jeremy Corbyn (Labour), Boris Johnson (Conservatives) and Nigel Farage (Brexit Party)

On the 12<sup>th</sup> of December 2019, the day when 45 million British were expected at the polls, *The Guardian* headlined: "polls open in most important general election in a generation"<sup>2</sup>. For its part, the conservative publication *The Spectator* headlined, on 56<sup>th</sup> of December 2019: "the most important election in modern history"<sup>3</sup>. According to *The Financial Times* the

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2. Polls open in most important general election in a generation", *The Guardian*, 12 decembrie 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2019/dec/12/polls-open-in-most-important-general-election-in-a-generation>, accesat 13 decembrie 2019

3. „This is the most important election in modern history – so vote, and vote Tory”, *The Spectator*, 7 decembrie 2019, <https://www.spectator.co.uk/2019/12/this-is-the-most-important-election-in-modern-history-so-vote-and-vote-tory/>, accesat 13 decembrie 2019

4. „British voters face an impossible choice”, *Financial Times*, 28 noiembrie 2019, <https://www.ft.com/content/51b6b1f6-1120-11ea-a225-db2f231cfeae>, accesat 13 decembrie 2019

5. „Il voto nel Regno disunito”, *La Repubblica*, 11 decembrie 2019, [https://rep.repubblica.it/pwa/commento/2019/12/11/news/il\\_voto\\_nel\\_regno\\_disunito-243227113/](https://rep.repubblica.it/pwa/commento/2019/12/11/news/il_voto_nel_regno_disunito-243227113/), accesat 13 decembrie 2019

6. „Briterne går til valg. Her er din håndbog til et uforudsigeligt valg”, *Berlingske*, 12 decembrie 2019, <https://www.berlingske.dk/internationalt/briterne-gaar-til-valg.-her-er-din-haandbog-til-et-uforudsigeligt>, accesat 13 decembrie 2019

7. „General election 2019: 'Most important election in my lifetime' – Michael Gove”, *BBC News*, 11 decembrie 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/av/uk-politics-50741415/general-election-2019-most-important-election-in-my-lifetime-gove>, accesat 13 decembrie 2019

8. „Nicola Sturgeon: General Election the 'most important' in decades”, *The National*, 30 octombrie 2019, <https://www.thenational.scot/news/18003238.nicola-sturgeon-general-election-most-important-decades/>, accesat 13 decembrie 2019

seemed to be still looking for an outlet which the regular parliamentary tempo didn't manage to provide. Starting with 2015, the British were called to the polls five times, out of which three times were for general elections (2015, 2017 and 2019). This lability in a system that was famous for being, historically, among the strongest and most stable in the world, fuelled the narrative of the total collapse of the Westminster model, incapable of providing a clear majority and convincingly institutionalise the overabundant ideological offer of the political parties. *The Economist* wrote "British politics is broken, absolutely broken"<sup>9</sup>.

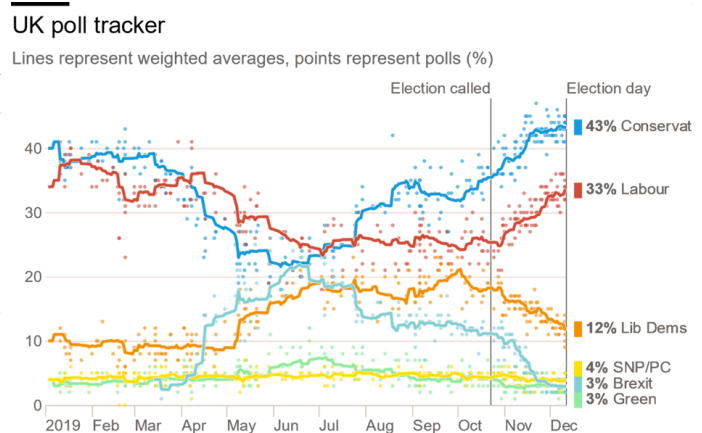
Of course defining political reality as exceptional in a crisis is a communication strategy where one can find the necessary strategies of every actor involved - advertising the elections as an unprecedented moment in history where the political parties are not only trying to mobilise their voters, but to reach out to others, less interested in politics and who, under different circumstances would have not exercised their votes. However, apart from the cynicism sometimes hidden behind this exaggerated rhetoric, there really were political and ideological stakes to the 12<sup>th</sup> of December elections, and we cannot estimate their importance for the future of Great Britain and Europe.

### Brexit and the British Political Field

The British news agency TLDR News surveyed 8367 people, where each person scored from one to five a series of domains of policy (of governance) according to their importance<sup>10</sup>. Following the survey, the highest scores were recorded by the change of the medical system (4.11), environmental protection (3.918), Brexit (3.913) and economic recovery (3.88). Other

themes considered important by those surveyed were education (3.86), public housing (3.47), while immigration and Scottish independence received the lowest scores (2.70 and 2.20). Surprisingly, the fight against crime scored only 3.30, but one must take into account the fact that the survey, even though was published on the 1<sup>st</sup> of December 2019, was conducted before the London Bridge attack on the 29<sup>th</sup> of November<sup>11</sup>, which, once again, brought back security and identity related anxieties, as well as accusations of lax judicial system<sup>12</sup>.

Brexit keeps on dominating the political agenda, and the parliamentary blockage from



Picture 1: Trend in the opinion polls between February - December 2019. Plain lines represent general trends, the dots represent the opinion polls. Source: Financial Times, <https://www.ft.com/content/263615ca-d873-11e9-8f9b-77216ebe1f17>, opened on 25 December 2019

the fall of 2019 was what determined Boris Johnson's government to organise early elections. However, Brexit is more than a tactical dossier or a "public policy" that must be implemented. Taking a stand about leaving the EU has tended, for the past three years, to supersede the traditional cleavages, without completely removing them, but, at the same time taking over and reorganising the divisions,

9. *The Economist*, „Why Britain's election won't end the Political Chaos”, *Youtube*, 12 December 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mc8AWFoyBYo>, opened on 13 December 2019

10. TLDR News, „Comparing all the parties NHS Plans (2019 General Elections) – TLDR Explains”, *Youtube*, 1 December 2019, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NWEkrbfTS\\_M](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NWEkrbfTS_M), opened on 13 December 2019

11. „Usman Khan attack at London Bridge: what we know so far”, *The Guardian*, 30 November 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2019/nov/30/usman-khan-attack-at-london-bridge-what-we-know-so-far>, opened on 13 December 2019

12. „Boris Johnson blames Labour for release of London Bridge killer”, *The Guardian*, 1 December 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2019/dec/01/boris-johnson-blames-labour-for-release-of-london-bridge-killer-usman-khan>, opened on 13 December 2019

which had once been part of the ideological field. The impact of Brexit on the two party political system specific to the Westminster model is obvious; the powerful bipolar tropism power has faded leaving room for an ever more divided politics. A series of surveys that took place from May to September 2019 showed the erosion of the two party system. A survey ran by YouGov in May put the Liberal-Democratic Party and the Brexit Party on top of the list, with 24% and 22%, ahead of the Conservative (19%) and Labour (17%) parties<sup>13</sup>. The combined voting intentions of the two greatest parties in the government amounted to only 36% which represented an all-time low. The decline of the two post war historical parties was accompanied by a surge in the voting intentions for new parties, or parties which in the past had played a supporting role. Thus, a survey conducted by a different polling institution showed for the first time, by the end of May 2019, that five parties were above the symbolic 10%: the Brexit Party (26%) and Labour Party (22%) were in the lead, followed by the Conservative Party (17%), the Liberal-Democratic Party (16%) and the Greens with 11%<sup>14</sup>. This double evolution of the partisan system seemed to be confirmed by the two elections that took place in May 2019: the local and parliamentary elections consecrated a balance of power which questioned the very survival of the Westminster two-party system, on the medium term. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of May 2019, following the local elections, even though the Conservative and the Labour parties remained the most important British parties (with 28% each), observers noticed the rise of the Liberal Democratic Party (19%), of the Greens and independent candidates. The Conservative Party lost a total of 1334 seats in the local councils (approximately one third of what they had

previously had), the Labour party minimised the damage (they lost only 82 seats compared to 2015), the Greens gained 198 (a 400% rise) and many independent candidates won against their opponents from traditional parties<sup>15</sup>. However, the real shock came with the European elections on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of May. Even though the European elections, which make use of a proportionate system, have a dynamic of their own that always favoured major parties, the elections could be compared to an earthquake. Brexit Party, recently founded by Nigel Farage got 31% of the votes at national level, followed by the Liberal-Democratic Party (20.3%). With only 14% the Labour Party didn't even have 2% ahead of the Greens (12.9%). The Conservative Party lead by Theresa May didn't even manage get over the 10% threshold<sup>16</sup>.

The months May through August 2019 were decisive and taught us some very complex lessons. The British two-party system, even if it could artificially survive with the help of the election system, risked a complete separation from the popular vote, which, on a medium term, could have caused serious political cleavages<sup>17</sup>. However, the most revealing political lesson was that regarding the change of ideology in a society and culture influenced by Brexit. *Leavers* (those who favoured leaving the European Union) and *Remainers* (those who wish a reversion of the results of the referendum in 2015, either by a popular vote, or by a parliamentary decision) represent two ideological and influential blocs, two coherent political cultures. Partisanship regarding Brexit is more likely to generate an extreme polarization than any of the traditional interests of the parties. A British Social Attitudes survey proves that only 8% of the respondents admitted to be "committed supporters" of a

13. „Westminster Voting Intention Poll – YouGov/Times 28-29 May 2019”, *Opinion Bee*, <https://opinionbee.uk/poll/4075/yougov-times-28-29-may-2019-westminster-voting-intention>, opened on 14 December 2019

14. „Westminster Voting Intention Poll – Opinium/Observer 28-30 May 2019”, *Opinion Bee*, <https://opinionbee.uk/poll/4076/opinium-observer-28-30-may-2019-westminster-voting-intention>, opened on 14 December 2019

15. „Local elections: results in maps and charts”, *BBC News*, 3 May 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-48091592>, opened on 14 December 2019

16. „The UK's European Elections 2019”, *BBC News*, 24 May 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/topics/crjeqkdevvvt/the-uks-european-elections-2019>, opened on 14 December 2019

17. See Ian Simpson, „Voters are going beyond left-right divide, and the system can't handle it”, *Electoral Reform Society*, 17 June 2019, <https://www.electoral-reform.org.uk/why-uk-parties-are-starting-to-embrace-brexit-driven-electoral-pacts/>, opened on 14 December 2019

certain party, while 40% admitted either to “really oppose” or “highly in favour of” leaving the EU<sup>18</sup>. A different survey ran by the *Populus* Institute, reached the same conclusions: 88% of the British population were either *Leavers* or *Remainers* and 72% state that they identify themselves “very much or fairly enough” with this label. By comparison only 62% identify themselves with a political party (out of whom 47% identify “very much or fairly enough” with a certain partisanship)<sup>19</sup>. Favouring or being against Brexit creates, thus, two political partisanships with a strong structure, deeply rooted in a social and cultural background, as well as in an ethical-axiological one. The geography of the *leave* voters proved to include mostly poor areas, having been highly influenced by the level of education and/or professional qualification, income, and age<sup>20</sup>. In rural areas and small towns, the popular vote clearly favoured leaving the EU<sup>21</sup>. This explanatory pattern of a “peripheral<sup>22</sup>” vote cast in marginalized areas, similar to the anti-system voting patterns in European countries such as France<sup>23</sup>, or the USA<sup>24</sup> must also be analysed from an ideological and cultural point of view. Truly the attitude towards the death penalty is a much more revealing indicator regarding the *Leave* vote than the social status or the income level<sup>25</sup>; it indicates the fact that there is a strong connection between those who are in favour of

*leaving* and those who have a system of values based on “authority” and “conservatism” (a wider meaning, not that associated with the British Tories).

### **The Death of Traditional Cleavages: Brexit as a Short-Term Substitute Cleavage**

Behind the Brexit vote loom the fracture lines of a cleavage at all superficial. However, is it fair to use the notion of *critical juncture* when referring to Brexit?

In the dedicated literature, the term attributed to Seymour Martin Lipset and Stein Rokkan describes a founding moment highly polarising effect and with a deep symbolic and emotional meaning that will determine the subsequent nature of those cleavages. Often encountered in the paradigm of historical institutions, where it is strongly linked with the concept of *path dependency* (a concept that seeks to explain the way a certain choice unfalteringly influences, at a certain point in time future decisions and evolutions<sup>27</sup>), the notion *critical juncture* is more useful when studying history, not immediate policies; in their classic study, Lipset and Rokkan defined as critical junctures of Western history the Reformation, the National Revolution and the Industrial Revolution, significant historical moments that lasted for decades and had a huge shaping impact on the tectonic of societies<sup>28</sup>. The difference in

18. National Center for Social Research, „The UE debate – Has Brexit polarized Britain”, *British Social Attitudes nr. 36*, 2019, [https://www.bsa.natcen.ac.uk/media/39294/8\\_bsa36\\_the\\_eu\\_debate.pdf](https://www.bsa.natcen.ac.uk/media/39294/8_bsa36_the_eu_debate.pdf), opened on 14 December 2019

19. „The importance of Remainder and Leaver identities”, *Populus*, 15 April 2019, <https://www.populus.co.uk/insights/2019/05/the-importance-of-remainder-and-leaver-identities/>, opened on 14 December 2019

20. Sascha O. Becker, Thiemo Fetzer și Dennis Novy, „Who voted for Brexit? A comprehensive district-level analysis”, *Economic Policy*, 2017/10, vol. 32, issue 92, pp. 603-651

21. „UK vote for Brexit : CLA analysis of rural voting”, *CLA*, 24 June 2016, <https://www.cla.org.uk/latest/lobbying/brexit-new-opportunities/brexit-news/eu-referendum-cla-analysis-rural-voting#>, opened on 14 December 2019

22. The concept “periphery” was developed by the French geographer Christophe Guilluy in *La France périphérique: comment on a sacrifié les classes populaires* (Flammarion, Paris, 2014) in order to explain the votes and the lack of votes for the popular party, the National Front

23. Sascha O. Becker, Thiemo Fetzer și Dennis Novy, *op. cit.*, pp. 638-640

24. See Pippa Norris și Ronald Inglehart, *Cultural Backlash: Trump, Brexit and Authoritarian Populism*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2019

25. Alex Burton, „The link between Brexit and the death penalty”, *BBC News*, 17 July 2016, <https://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-36803544>, opened on 14 December 2019

26. See Seymour M. Lipset și Stein Rokkan, „Cleavage Structures, Party Systems, and Voter Alignments”, in Seymour M. Lipset și Stein Rokkan (eds.), *Party Systems and Voter Alignments. Cross-National Perspectives*, Free Press, New York, pp. 1 – 64.

27. Giovanni Cappocia and Daniel Kelemen, „The Study of Critical Junctures: Theory, Narrative, and Counterfactuals in Historical Institutionalism”, *World Politics*, vol. 59, no. 3 (2007), pp. 341–369

28. Seymour M. Lipset and Stein Rokkan, *op. cit.*, pp. 37-39

magnitude makes a comparison with Brexit rather difficult. It is too early to say whether Brexit is but an epiphenomenon grafted on some long term underground mutations, or whether it truly has a matrix dimension able to cause major changes in the British political landscape.

Rokkan's historical concept doesn't thus appear to be the most suitable one to understand the rift - very real, however, hardly institutionalized - between the two sides, *Leave* and *Remain*. There is another theoretical pattern that better describes the reality of this ideological remodelling.

When describing the Eastern European political landscape post-communism, the political expert Daniel Louis Seiler made reference to the coagulation, in the first phases of the transition process, of a series of *cleavage substitutes with temporary life span*, connected to the political immediate dictated by the management of leaving behind the old regime<sup>29</sup>. Such a short term cleavage substitute was, for example, that between the neo-communists and "the democratic opposition"<sup>30</sup>. A cleavage substitute represent a demarcation line that can generate polarization; however, it is hard to imagine whether it remains unchanged (while Lipset and Rokkan's model was based on this ability of the cleavage to remain unchanged and stabilise the conflict on a long term). Moreover, it doesn't have the ability to completely annihilate other dichotomies that are present in society, but will graft on them, blurring them for a while. And, being determined by the immediate political actuality, the conflict didn't have the time to institutionalise under the form of political parties.

We discover that the political landscape after Brexit is structured by a form of partisan conflicting state remarkably similar to that mentioned above - even though in a political space very different from the theoretical model. The conflict regarding Brexit, once the process of leaving the EU is finalised, can be frozen in time only if the discourse really changes. At the present moment, the rhetoric of the pro-European parties is anchored in the hope that the vote from the 23<sup>rd</sup> of June 2016 can be changed, either by rescinding article 50 (the approach of the Liberal Democratic Party<sup>31</sup>), or by organizing a second referendum (the approach of the Labour Party and the Greens<sup>32</sup>). On a longer term, if the Conservative Party manages to withdraw Great Britain from the EU - which at this time seems only a matter of months - the relevance of such rhetoric will be questioned. It is highly unlikely that the technicality of the debates regarding the post-Brexit economic and geopolitical relations with the European bloc will be enough to provide a sufficiently mobilising rhetoric that won't leave room for a re-joining referendum in a near future<sup>33</sup>. The pro-European political identity must survive and cling to more solid structures that are yet to emerge<sup>34</sup>. Furthermore, the rift between the two sides, *Leave* and *Remain*, hasn't completely destroyed the old structural dichotomies of the political life. Left and right haven't completely lost their relevance. It is true that the left-right duo cannot be the only key to understanding the Brexit vote in 2016 or the subsequent elections in 2017 and 2019. However, the new pro and con EU dichotomy isn't all-inclusive either; it rather overlaps

29.Louis Daniel Seiler, „Les partis politiques dans l'Europe de Centre-Est. Le cas de la social-démocratie. Essai de théorisation”, in Mario Telo, *De la Nation en Europe. Paradoxes et dilemmes de la social-démocratie*, Bruylant, Bruxelles, 3/3, 1991

30.Ibidem, p. 148

31.„Liberal Democrat manifesto 2019 : 12 key policies explained”, *BBC News*, 20 November 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/election-2019-50459123>, opened on 18 December 2019

32.„UK election 2019 : Where does each party stands on Brexit”, *Euronews*, 15 November 2019, <https://www.euronews.com/2019/11/01/uk-election-2019-where-does-each-party-stand-on-brexit>, opened on 18 December 2019

33.„Battle for UK to remain in the UE is now lost and rejoining won't be prospect for 20 years from now, admits Lord Heseltine”, *The Independent*, 14 decembrie 2019, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/uk-brexit-heseltine-remain-eu-rejoin-peoples-vote-referendum-a9246611.html>, opened on 18 December 2019

34.„Remain and Revoke hasn't worked for the Lib Dem. So where do they go form now”, *The Independent*, 17 December 2019, <https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/liberal-democrats-remain-revoke-rejoin-brexit-election-core-vote-a9249761.html>, opened on 18 December 2019



instead of cancelling other traditional sources of political conflicting state.

Ideologically speaking, the agenda of the electoral campaign is marked by the strong visibility of the social issues. An independent survey run by the news agency TLDR clearly showed that domestic issues such as the state of the health system, austerity or environment protection could match or even outshine Brexit in terms of visibility during the electoral campaign. Brexit, although a significant matter, isn't hegemonic; according to a YouGov survey, Brexit was one of the most important matters for the voters (68% believed that Brexit was one of the most important stakes in the elections), but so were health (to 40% of the respondents, health was one of the most important issues), security (28%), environment protection (25%) or economy (25%), as they have been brought up by a large number of the respondents<sup>35</sup>. On the 18<sup>th</sup> of November, the Brexit issue was down to 59%, while the state of the health care system was up at 45% and environment protection at 28%<sup>36</sup>. Moreover, surveys conducted in the last weeks of campaign positioned health and the situation of a national healthcare system seriously affected by the budget deficit ahead of preoccupations related to leaving the EU<sup>37</sup>. So we notice that besides the recurrent issue regarding Brexit that truly doesn't follow traditional patterns with respect to the left or right, the campaign was marked by the retention, in the ideological spectre, of other issues, traditionally anchored in the left or right

narratives: the state of the public services, the budget deficit, or security and crime<sup>38</sup>.

Structurally speaking, if we consider the Labour Party the engine that fuels the left and the Conservative Party the engine that fuels the right we see that the chaos from the local and European elections was unmistakably stopped. In December 2019, the two main parties got almost 76% of the votes (43.6% for Boris Johnson's Conservatives and 32.2% for the Labour)<sup>39</sup>. Beyond the mechanisms that the British electoral system uses to produce a majority, the Conservative Party got the second largest number of votes in British post-war history - in 1979 the party led by Margret Thatcher got 43.9% of the votes, only 0.3% more than Boris Johnson's, in a victory that is still historical<sup>40</sup>. Under these circumstances we cannot speak of a dying two-party system that is connected to life support and is kept artificially alive by the *first past the post* electoral system; even more so, since the "new" parties that don't favour a left or a right got very modest scores (11.5% the Liberal Democrats, 2.7% the Greens and 2% the Brexit Party)<sup>41</sup>.

This last aspect takes us to the main issue that makes us think of Brexit as rather a substitute of transitory cleavage. A classical cleavage is, according to the classical definition of Lipset and Rokkan, some kind of internal conflict state *institutionalized by political parties coagulated around this rivalry*. Brexit for sure had a huge impact on the British society, really polarizing it and giving birth in several months to antagonistic political identities. However, institutionalization of the *Leave and Remain*

35. „Which issues will decide the general election”, *YouGov*, 7 November 2019, <https://yougov.co.uk/topics/politics/articles-reports/2019/11/07/which-issues-will-decide-general-election>, opened on 18 December 2019

36. „Top Issues Tracker Great Britain”, *YouGov*, 2 decembrie 2019, [https://d25d2506sfb94s.cloudfront.net/cumulus\\_uploads/document/ea7kub6g2/YG%20Trackers%20-%20Top%20Issues\\_W.pdf](https://d25d2506sfb94s.cloudfront.net/cumulus_uploads/document/ea7kub6g2/YG%20Trackers%20-%20Top%20Issues_W.pdf), opened on 18 December 2019

37. „General election 2019: Will this be a Brexit election”, *BBC News*, 7 November 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-50303512>, opened on 18 December 2019

38. „UK elections: What are the big issues?”, *Deutsche Welle*, 12 December 2019, <https://www.dw.com/en/uk-election-what-are-the-big-issues/a-51571400>, opened on 18 December 2019

39. „Elections results 2019 : what party got the most votes...and other questions”, *BBC News*, 13 December 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/election-2019-50779901>, opened on 18 December 2019

40. „1979: Tory win landslide”, *BBC News*, 5 April 2005, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk\\_news/politics/vote\\_2005/basics/4393311.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/politics/vote_2005/basics/4393311.stm), opened on 18 December 2019

41. „Elections results 2019 : what party got the most votes...and other questions”, *The Independent*, 17 December 2019, <https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/liberal-democrats-remain-revoke-rejoin-brexit-election-core-vote-a9249761.html>, opened on 18 December 2019

concepts - essential for the stabilization of the cleavage over time - was only partial and imperfect. The pro-Europeans joined together in several already existent parties - from Labour to Greens. Only one party emerged out of Brexit as fully pro-European - the fleeting centrist party Change UK, which dissolved in December 2019<sup>42</sup>. The main electoral engine of the *Remain* identity was the Liberal Democratic Party - successor of the old reforming Whig party, which dominated British politics in the 18<sup>th</sup> and the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. The *Leave* camp was more efficiently institutionalized mainly because it had, before the referendum a robust political support - the UKIP, which had well over 10% of the votes (in 2015, Farage's party received 12.65% of the votes)<sup>43</sup> and had built its political identity around European resentment<sup>44</sup>. Established in January 2019 by the former president of the UKIP, Nigel Farage, the Brexit Party is a *single issue party*<sup>45</sup>, built around the idea - a populist archetype - that a mainstream *elitist* party, such as the Conservative Party cannot negotiate a *clean Brexit* without betraying the popular will. The exceptional score that Farage's party got in the European elections didn't put an end to the chaos in the parliamentary elections in December 2019. The Brexit Party was affected by four of its MEPs, who announced their support for the

Conservative Party so as not to create a division among the *Leave* voters<sup>46</sup>, as well as by a timid electoral strategy - conciliatory with the Conservatives, in the sense that it chose not to contest them in their already detained 317 districts<sup>47</sup>. The result was catastrophic not only because of its incapacity to obtain a single mandate (in the past, the UKIP has been systematically thwarted by the *first past the post*<sup>48</sup> electoral system) but also because of the low percentage of votes at national scale (2%). Brexit Party successfully capitalised the protest vote, comfortably dominating the European Elections where the voters were motivated by a punitive logic aimed against the ruling parties<sup>49</sup>. Farage's party adopted a populist style taking advantage of the dichotomy people versus the elites and skilfully adapting the anti-European narrative to an anti-System narrative<sup>50</sup>. Farage used with the Brexit Party the same recipe for success he had previously used with the UKIP: a "multi-layered" anti-European formula where the latter served as a proxy to the anti-elitist resentment pointing this time at the inside, at the British politicians and at traditional media<sup>51</sup>. More credible as opposing the system than the Conservative Party, the Brexit Party - isolated by Johnson's refusal to form an alliance before the December elections<sup>52</sup> - didn't manage to become a credible Brexit promoter on a national level. In

42. See „The party that didn't quite change UK politics”, *BBC News*, 11 September 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-49638633>, opened on 18 December 2019

43. „Election 2015 – results”, *BBC News*, <https://www.bbc.com/news/election/2015/results>, opened on 18 December 2019.

44. Andrea Pareschi and Alessandro Albertini, “Immigration, Elites and the European Union. The Framing of Populism in the Discourse of Farage's UKIP”, *Comunicazione politica: Quadrimestrale dell'Associazione Italiana di Comunicazione Politica*, no. 2/2018

45. Simon Usherwood, „The dilemmas of a single-issue party – The UK Independence Party”, *Representation*, vol. 44, nr. 3, pp. 255-264

46. „Brexit Party imploding after four MEPs defect to back Boris Johnson”, *Euractiv*, 5 December 2019, <https://www.euractiv.com/section/uk-europe/news/brexit-party-imploding-after-four-meps-defect-to-back-boris-johnson/>, opened on 18 December 2019

47. „Brexit Party will not contest 317 Tory-won seats, Farage says”, *The Guardian*, 11 November 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2019/nov/11/brexit-party-will-not-contest-317-tory-seats-nigel-farage-says>, opened on 19 December 2019

48. „The winners and losers of Britain's first past the post electoral system”, *The Economist*, 8 June 2019, <https://www.economist.com/graphic-detail/2017/06/08/the-winners-and-losers-of-britains-first-past-the-post-electoral-system>, opened on 19 December 2019

49. See Hix, Simon și Marsh, Michael, „Punishment or protest? Understanding European Parliament Elections”, *Journal of Politics*, 2007, vol. 69, nr. 2, pp. 495-510

50. „Rage, rapture and pure populism. On the road with Nigel Farage”, *The Guardian*, 19 May 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2019/may/19/nigel-farage-brexit-party-on-the-road-populism>, opened on 20 December 2019

51. See Paul Taggart, „A Touchstone of Dissent: Euroscepticism in Contemporary Western European Party Systems”, *European Journal of Political Research*, vol. 33, nr. 2, pp. 363–88

the light of the election results on the 12<sup>th</sup> of December 2019, Brexit Party remains the prisoner of the debilitating dynamic that characterised the UKIP as well - a party which evolves at the margins of the political system, capable of influencing the political agenda, but, which doesn't have a major political role in the reorganisation of the party system.

### **Conclusion: A New Left, a New Right? The Internal Mutations of the Post-Brexit Conservatism and Labourism**

Brexit has not established itself as a new believable model of cleavage that would replace the traditional dichotomy between the Labour and the Conservative parties. The main lesson of the December 2019 elections was the resilience of the Westminster model at least in England and the Wales (in Scotland and in Northern Ireland, where the temptation for independence is coagulating and generates a growing rejection of the big national parties, the observer needs another analysis grid, more adapted to local dynamics)<sup>53</sup>. The period from May to August 2019 - marked by two rounds of elections, local in the beginning of May and European in the end of the same month - seemed to announce the permanent erosion of the traditional two-party system and to promote new political engines, such as the Brexit Party and the Liberal Democratic Party or the Greens, more in line with the trends that dominate the post-Brexit British society. In the period between July and August, the Brexit Party and the Liberal Democratic Party, after two months of spectacular rise in the polls, were about to surpass, at a national level, the number of votes that the Labour Party and the Conservative Party would get<sup>54</sup>. The fall of 2019 switched the rising trend of the small parties, consolidating

once again the British two-party system that had been governing the country after the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War. The elections in 2019 echo those of 2017 when the two ruling parties got over 80% of the votes<sup>55</sup> (compared to a little over 67% in 2015, before Brexit<sup>56</sup>). We deliberately chose to show the percentages of the popular votes instead of the number of seats in the parliament, because the resilience of the Labour or Conservative votes isn't a mere reflex of the system *first past the post*. The conclusion is that although the balance of power between the two parties is constant, the political antagonism between them continues to be, by far, more relevant in England and Wales.

Even if Brexit hasn't dissolved the traditional cleavage between the left and the right, which has proven its resilience by surviving its two great political, ideological and electoral engines (the Labour Party and the Conservative Party), the shock of the referendum on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of June 2019 triggered deep changes in the nature of the two parties and, indeed, in the concepts of left and right themselves. Brexit was, ideologically speaking, the ruin of *Blatcherism*, which, following the disappearance of *Thatcherism*, ensured a relative stability of the British system. To the essayist and journalist Tom McTague, *the Blair playbook* - which recommended the leaders of the ruling parties, both left and right, to be weary of their own "radical" militant nuclei and urged them, by using programmed *catch-all* centrist platforms, to open towards the less political voters - gradually stopped being useful in the post-Brexit British space<sup>57</sup>. While in the past the political leaders feared that polarisation might lead to ideological segregation that would lead to loss of voters, Brexit changed the rules of the game, as radicalism ceased to impose limits; both Jeremy Corbyn and Boris Johnson (as well as the leaders of smaller parties such as Jo

52. „General election 2019 : Boris Johnson rejects pact with Nigel Farage”, *BBC News*, 1 November 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/election-2019-50264395>, opened on 21 December 2019

53. „UK Election: Scots vote no to Brexit, yes to independence”, *Press TV*, 13 December 2013, <http://french.prestv.com/Detail/2019/12/13/613605/UK-Election-Scotland-Brexit-Independence>, opened 25 December 2019

54. „UK general election poll tracker”, *Financial Times*, 12 December 2019, <https://www.ft.com/content/263615ca-d873-11e9-8f9b-77216ebe1f17>, opened 25 December 2019

55. „Election 2017 – results”, *BBC News*, <https://www.bbc.com/news/election/2017/results>, opened 25 December 2019

56. „Election 2015 – results”, *BBC News*, <https://www.bbc.com/news/election/2015/results>, opened 25 December 2019

57. Tom McTague, „The Clinton-Blair playbook has been junked”, *The Atlantic*, 3 October 2019, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2019/10/boris-johnson-and-jeremy-corbyn-upend-tony-blair-playbook/599302/>, opened 25 December 2019

Swinson of the Liberal Democratic Party)<sup>58</sup> placed their bets on a campaign of intransigence and ideological purity, instead of a pragmatic compromise.

The second mutation deeply redefined the sociological basis of the left and right: the deprived and marginalised lower classes vote right more and more for the, while the relatively educated and relatively stable (from an economic point of view) classes lean - ideologically - toward the left. Unlike the first evolution we mentioned, this tendency has been monitored on a long term and has been documented since the 50's by the French economist Thomas Picketty, who made a study comparison between the Labour Party, the French Socialist Party and the US Democratic Party<sup>59</sup>. The "Brahmanization" of the social-democratic left (this is the name that Picketty chose to describe the "migration of workers" towards the conservative right or the anti-system parties and the re-composition of the left around the urban middle class - hence the reference to the Brahmans, the highest Hindu caste) hasn't been stopped by Corbyn's policy, whose radical promises regarding separation translated into the ideal and frustration of a young, urban leftist electorate. Issues such as minority rights, ecology, immigration or the legacy of the British Empire (Jeremy Corbyn was in the 70's, while serving as a hard Labour MP, the main voice against anti-imperialism)<sup>60</sup> show the difference between the Labour narrative and the agenda of the "red" worker constituencies in the Midlands and Northern England. Also known as the "red wall", this area - made of constituencies that have always been loyal to the

Labour Party and are made of proletarian voters (in 2016 the *Leave* vote was very strong) switched to right in 2019 for the first time in decades, if not in a century. It is the case of the district of Burnley, a former industrial area north of Manchester which has, for the first time in 109 years, a conservative representative in Westminster; 67%<sup>61</sup> of the Burnley population voted *Leave*. By contrast, the English electoral map clearly shows the difference between the rural areas and the major urban areas: most of the London districts and the metropolitan areas such as Liverpool, Manchester and Leeds remain faithful supporters of the left<sup>62</sup>.

Boris Johnson's party more and more attracts elderly, underprivileged voters without a higher education, by effectively capitalizing the Brexit issue. The 2016 referendum was not at the origin of the slow migration of the demographic pedestals to the two major parties; however, it sped up the tendency to disintegrate the structure of the old partisan determinism of the social classes. The "new conservative" vote overlaps Trump's vote in key areas such as immigration, multiculturalism or economic nationalism - a compact narrative that is fuelled by the *anti-establishment* resentment and by a diffuse anti-liberalism (which is not the same as the anti-capitalism of the far left, but is philosophically associated with some kind of economic nationalism that favours local entrepreneurs and is critical towards international ones) - and replaces the former ideological engine represented by the anti-state and anti-bureaucracy narrative of Thatcher's "Tories" or of Reagan's republicans<sup>63</sup>. The social conservatism combined with economic

58. Lib Dem promised to withdraw Article 50, which deals with Great Britain exiting the European bloc, without a second popular consultation, starting a wave of controversies. „The Lib Dem Article 50 Gamble Is so Radical it Might Just Work”, *City A.M.*, 18 September 2019, <https://www.cityam.com/the-lib-dem-article-50-gamble-is-so-radical-it-might-just-work/>, accessed 26 December 2019 or „Lib Dem Are the Real Brexit Extremists”, *The Spectator*, 16 September 2019, <https://blogs.spectator.co.uk/2019/09/lib-dems-are-the-real-brexite-extremists/>, opened 26 December 2019

59. Thomas Picketty, *Capital et idéologie*, Seuil, Paris, 2019, pp. 933-993

60. See Colin Schindler, „Jeremy Corbyn's anti-imperial nostalgia”, *Foreign Policy*, 26 January 2018, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/01/26/jeremy-corbyns-anti-imperial-nostalgia/>, opened 26 December 2019

61. „Labour Party's Red Wall across England falls as voters clamour for Brexit”, *CBC News*, 13 December 2019, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/world/labour-party-s-red-wall-across-england-falls-as-voters-clamour-for-brexite-1.5395046>, opened 26 December 2019

62. „Uk General Election Results Map 2019”, *Map Room*, 13 December 2019, <https://maproom.net/demo/election-map/0.html>, opened 26 December 2019

63. See Tom McTague, „The Conservative Party's genius: enduring”, *The Atlantic*, 30 September 2019, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2019/09/conservative-party-survive-brexite/599050/>, opened 26 December 2019

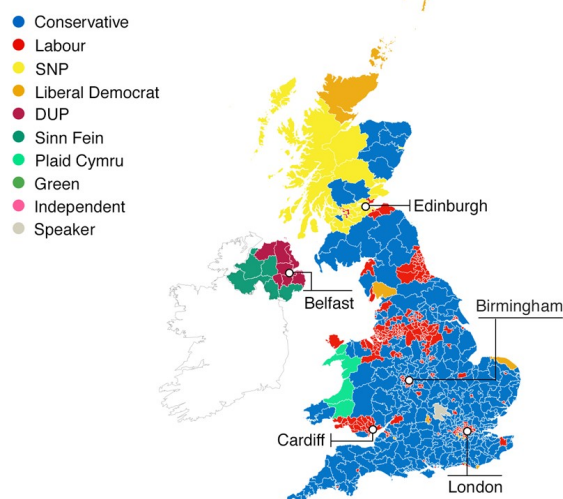
protectionism is the recipe of the new populist right in France as well as in the USA and, more recently, in the UK (even though only in the last two it managed to recover, as ideological engine, the traditional right-wing party)<sup>64</sup>. To Thomas Picketty, the opposition between the new “Brahman” left (it metabolised the economic liberalism of the traditional right) and the social nativism of the populist right is the future engine of the ideological, political and electoral conflicting state<sup>65</sup>.

This mutation, which is not the expression of a British exceptionalism as it is not a direct and sole consequence of Brexit, raises important questions: how will the pro-Brexit Tory elites – with the vision of a “Singapore-on Thames” that

- be able to reconcile the protectionist aspirations of the newly acquired Labour voters with its own liberal volunteerism.

In conclusion, Brexit did not dissolve the Westminster model, but it upgraded it; the conflicting state between the left and the right, following the era of the post-Blair social-liberal consensus, reinvents itself along new fracture lines. Of course, the content of the labels is different from twenty years ago, but their ideological fluid has been constantly flowing, often penetrating the spongy membrane separating the left from the right. Brexit was the catalyst and the accelerator of these mutations, but not a primal cause. Labour is in search of a new identity, After the Corbyn experiment. In full transition, the Toryism - victorious on short term – does not know yet how to articulate the new ideological background and the newly found identity that they take advantage of objectively: while electorally efficient, it is to be determined whether Boris Johnson’s party is able enough culturally to create and embrace, just like Thatcher before him, the political language of this new *Zeitgeist*.

#### UK general election 2017



Picture 2: Final results for the 650 election sections.  
Source : BBC News, <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-49826655>, opened on 25th December 2019

will capture, by means of low-tax and lean-regulation, the energies of the global economy<sup>66</sup>

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64. See Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart, *op. cit.*

65. Thomas Picketty, *op. cit.*, pp. 933-1000

66. The idea of an economic expansion based on the *lasses-faire* recipe provided by Singapore or Honk Kong was given to the public by Phillip Hammond and later adopted by other figures of the Conservative Party, such as Daniel Hannan, Owen Paterson, Jeremy Hunt or, more discreetly, by Boris Johnson. Johnson currently has a project to create “free ports” following the Singapore model, where transit goods are tax-free. Daniel Hannan, „A Singapore-Style Economy Isn’t a Threat, It’s a Growth Strategy”, *Conservative Home*, 16 February 2017, <https://www.conservativehome.com/thecolumnists/2017/02/daniel-hannan-a-singapore-style-economy-isnt-a-threat-its-a-growth-strategy.html>, accessed 27 December 2019; Owen Paterson, “Don’t Listen to the Terrified Europeans. The Singapore Model is our Brexit Opportunity”, *The Telegraph*, 21 November 2017, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/11/20/dont-listen-terrified-europeans-singapore-model-brexit-opportunity/>, accessed 27 December 2019; „Boris Johnson Widens Push for Singapore-Style Free Ports in U.K.”, *Bloomberg*, 2 August 2019, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2019-08-01/boris-johnson-widens-push-for-singapore-style-free-ports-in-u-k>, accessed 27 December 2019; „The Brexit Delusion of Creating Singapore upon Thames”, *Financial Times*, 7 February 2019, <https://www.ft.com/content/a70274ea-2ab9-11e9-88a4-c32129756dd8>, accessed 27 December 2019

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# The European Union and CBRN Terrorism



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## INTRODUCTION

Compared to other policy fields, the involvement of the European Union (EU) in counter-terrorism is a relatively recent development. Traditionally, European countries faced with a terrorist threat, such as the United Kingdom (UK), Italy, Spain and West Germany, addressed it largely on their own. One of the main reasons for this lack of European cooperation was the commonly held view that each European state was confronted by a distinct threat, namely the Irish Republican Army in the UK, ETA ('Basque Fatherland and Liberty') in Spain, the Red Brigades in Italy and the Red Army Faction in Germany. Formally, EU counter-terrorism cooperation only began after the entry into force of the Treaty of Maastricht in

1993. This significantly changed in the immediate aftermath of the terrorist attacks on 11 September 2001. Those can be seen as a 'single precipitating event' that led to the recognition of terrorism, especially Islamist terrorism, as one of the most serious security threats facing the EU and its Member States

(Kaunert and Leonard, 2019). As a result, EU Member States decided to considerably strengthen their counter-terrorism cooperation, as evidenced by the adoption of various ambitious programmatic documents in the following years.

Unfortunately, the CBRN dimension of the EU's counter-terrorism policy have received considerably less attention. Amongst those, one can cite the fight against the use of Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) weapons for terrorist purposes. Some may argue that this is mainly due to the fact that CBRN weapons are rarely used by terrorists. As underlined by Newsome and Jarmon (2016: 169), '[for] the terrorist, firearms and chemical explosives are familiar, mature, portable, cheap, easy-to-use technologies', whereas 'the terrorist would need new intents and capabilities to

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acquire and use CBRN weapons'. Nevertheless, there has been a commonly held view amongst officials and academics, especially following the attacks on 11 September 2001, that the risk of the use of CBRN weapons in a terrorist attack is significant. For example, in June 2003, a report of the US Administration to the United Nations Security Council emphasised the 'high probability' of such an attack by al-Qaeda 'within the next two years' (Newsome and Jarmon, 2016: 169). Such fears can notably be explained by a shift in the expert discourse on the nature of the terrorist threat faced by Western countries. In 1999, Laqueur (1999) had argued in *The New Terrorism* that the nature of terrorism was evolving as it was moving away from the calculated use of violence for political gains towards fanaticism and the pursuit of catastrophic destruction. This had been confirmed by other experts, who warned against the threat of what came to be described as 'super-terrorism', 'mega-terrorism' or 'hyper-terrorism'. Such terms aimed to denote that Western countries now faced a new type of terrorist groups, which were perceived to be more dangerous and less predictable than their predecessors (Neumann, 2009: 3). It was also assumed that these 'new' terrorists would be particularly interested in using CBRN weapons because of their catastrophically devastating effects.

Although al-Qaeda, contrary to predictions, has not conducted any terrorist attacks involving CBRN weapons against the West to date, other political actors have. In particular, the Russian government has been accused twice over the last few years of having backed assassination plots involving the use of CBRN weapons in the UK, which can be considered instances of state terrorism. In November 2006, former spy Litvinenko was killed by radioactive polonium-210 (BBC News, 2016), whilst Sergei and Yulia Skripal were poisoned with the nerve agent Novichok in March 2018. They eventually managed to recover (BBC News, 2018), but another member of the public died following her exposure to the nerve agent. Moreover, European states have become increasingly

concerned about the possibility that returning foreign fighters involved in the Syrian conflict may use chemical weapons. Indeed, since 2012, there have been allegations – some of which made by the United Nations-backed Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) – that chemical weapons, including chlorine, sarin and sulfur mustard agents, have been used in Syria (The New York Times, 2017; UN News, 2019). In its 2016 European Union Terrorism Situation and Trend (TE-SAT) report, the EU Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation (Europol) (2016: 8) noted that '[the] phenomenon of individuals travelling for terrorist purposes to conflict zones increases the risk that expertise in the use of chemical weapons can be transferred to the European Union by returning foreign terrorist fighters'. In addition, the frequent appearance of CBRN-related topics in online terrorist propaganda was highlighted in the 2018 TE-SAT report of Europol (2018: 14). In particular, there has been a significant increase in the number of tutorials for conducting small-scale CBRN attacks being uploaded on the Internet. Those usually recommend using toxic industrial chemicals that are available in the EU thanks to their dual-use nature (Europol, 2018). Thus, as highlighted by the European Commission (2017b), the threat of CBRN terrorism has been high on the EU's agenda in the last few years, because, although it has a low probability, it carries high impact risks. 'Even at a small scale, a CBRN attack may have a considerable impact on the societies and economies against which they are used, resulting in significant and lasting disruption, widespread fear and uncertainty' (European Commission, 2017b: 2).

### THE EU AND CBRN TERRORISM

As previously mentioned, an 'Anti-terrorism Roadmap' was swiftly adopted by the EU in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks on 11 September 2001. This identified five priorities as the main components of the nascent EU counter-terrorism policy, namely police and judicial cooperation, international legal instruments, measures against the financing of terrorism, air



security, and the coordination of the EU's global action (European Council, 2001). However, at the European Council meeting in Ghent in October 2001, tackling CBRN terrorism was also identified as an important area for EU action. This resulted in the adoption of key policy documents in the following years, in particular the 'Programme to improve cooperation in the European Union for preventing and limiting the consequences of chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear terrorist threats' in 2002 (Council of the European Union, 2002), the 'EU Strategy against proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction' in 2003 (Council of the European Union, 2003) and the 'EU Solidarity Programme on the consequences of terrorist threats and attacks (revised/widened CBRN Programme)' (Council of the European Union, 2004b). The important Council Framework Decision of 13 June 2002 on combating terrorism also laid down in its Article 1 that the 'manufacture, possession, acquisition, transport, supply or use of weapons, explosives or of nuclear, biological or chemical weapons, as well as research into, and development of, biological and chemical weapons' was to be deemed a terrorist offence. Furthermore, the EU Counter-Terrorism Strategy, which was adopted in December 2005, highlighted the importance of '[working] with partners and international organisations on [...] non-proliferation of CBRN materials [...], as well as [providing] technical assistance on protective security to priority third countries' (Council of the European Union, 2005: 11).

A first 'EU CBRN Action Plan' aiming to strengthen CBRN security in the EU was subsequently adopted in 2009 (Council of the European Union, 2009). It is evident from the introductory section of this document that concerns about the potential acquisition of CBRN materials by terrorist groups played a crucial role in the development of this action plan (Council of the European Union, 2009: 2). It identified the 'overall goal of the new CBRN policy' as '[reducing] the threat and damage from CBRN incidents to the citizens of the European Union, by way of a coherent,

prioritised EU CBRN Action Plan, which involves all relevant stakeholders, including industry Representatives' (Commission of the European Communities, 2009: 5). The action plan, which comprised more than 100 measures, identified three main priorities, namely prevention, detection, as well as preparedness and response. 'Prevention' focuses on identifying high-risk CBRN materials and ensuring that these materials and the related facilities are kept secure and are controlled. 'Detection' concerns the important issue of having the capacity to actually detect CBRN materials, which is crucial for both prevention and response. Finally, 'preparedness and response' cover a wide range of issues involved in the response to and recovery from CBRN incidents, such as emergency planning, information flows, modelling tools, and criminal investigation capacity. The adoption of this action plan led to several achievements, including the adoption of three EU lists of high-risk substances (concerning chemical, biological and radioactive/nuclear materials, respectively) and the development of information exchange and training on CBRN-related issues at the EU level (Council of the European Union, 2014: 36).

Further advances were made when, on the basis of a progress report published in 2012, the European Commission published a Communication on an Action Plan to enhance preparedness against chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear security risks in 2017 (European Commission, 2017b). The introductory session of this document, which is titled 'the evolving threat' (European Commission, 2017b: 2), clearly shows that terrorism concerns have been the main source of impetus for the further development of EU cooperation against CBRN risks. The European Commission notably underlines that 'there are credible indications suggesting that terrorist groups might have the intention of acquiring CBRN materials or weapons and are developing the knowledge and capacity to use them' (European Commission, 2017b: 2). Against this backdrop, the action plan - which Member States have been called to fully

implement by the end of 2019 (European Commission, 2018a: 14) - identified four priorities: (1) reducing the accessibility of CBRN materials, (2) ensuring a more robust preparedness for and response to CBRN security incidents, (3) building stronger internal-external links in CBRN security with key regional and international EU partners, and (4) enhancing the knowledge of CBRN risks.

Furthermore, as previously mentioned, particular attention has been given in recent years to the issue of terrorist attacks involving chemical weapons. As a result, a common list of chemical substances of concern has been agreed by experts from the European Commission and the Member States, whilst collaboration with the private sector has been reinforced, notably with regard to improving detection capabilities and reducing the access of terrorists to chemical substances (European Commission, 2018a: 14). In that context, the EU has adopted Council Regulation (EU) 2018/1542 that puts in place new restrictive measures against the proliferation and use of chemical weapons. This instrument enables the EU 'to impose sanctions, consisting of travel bans to the EU and asset freezing for persons and entities involved in the development and use of chemical weapons anywhere, regardless of their nationality or location' (European Commission, 2018a: 14). Thus, significant progress has been made with regard to EU cooperation for tackling the threats emanating from CBRN weapons, including their potential use by terrorists. Nevertheless, some challenges remain, such as the need to identify fewer priorities and the importance of ensuring better synergies amongst a large number of stakeholders. The next section examines in greater detail one of the main instruments used by the EU to tackle the CBRN threat, namely the UCPM, which is the cornerstone of the EU's crisis response system.

## CONCLUSION

This article set out to examine the CBRN terrorist threat faced by European states and how the EU has sought to address it to date. This is an important topic to analyse as the existing

literature on the development of the EU counter-terrorism policy has tended to neglect this dimension of the European counter-terrorism cooperation. It is problematic since there have been growing concerns, especially after the terrorist attacks on 11 September 2001, that terrorist groups could use CBRN weapons. More recently, some observers have been particularly alarmed that foreign fighters could return to Europe armed with the knowledge or the materials for conducting terrorist attacks involving chemical weapons, as there have been serious allegations of their use in the Syrian conflict. Although there has been more awareness of the possibility of a terrorist attack involving CBRN weapons, especially in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks on 11 September 2001, their probability remains relatively low, which means that preparing for other types of crises has tended to be given precedence. Some actors, such as the European Commission, have therefore had to regularly remind Member States of the need to prioritise CBRN-related threats as well, given that their impact may be extremely severe and long-lasting. As the EU and its Member States have not been tested by any large-scale terrorist attack involving the use of CBRN weapons, it is not possible to offer any definite conclusions as to their preparedness and response capacities in the face of such an event with potentially devastating consequences.

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## THE BLACK SEA REGION



## Republic of Moldova's Broad-Based Governing Coalition Falls Apart

**Vladimir SOCOR**<sup>1</sup>

### Part One<sup>2</sup>

On November 12, Moldovan President Igor Dodon's Socialist Party joined forces with the opposition Democratic Party (formerly led by the now-fugitive tycoon Vladimir Plahotniuc) to overthrow the ACUM ("NOW") bloc-led government of Prime Minister Maia Sandu in a parliamentary vote of no confidence (see EDM, November 12). The Socialists and the Democrats mustered a situational majority of 63 votes in the 101-seat chamber. The ACUM bloc holds 26 parliamentary seats (Moldpres, November 12).



President of Moldova Igor Dodon (left) with Prime Minister Maya Sandu, whose government was defeated in a vote of no confidence on November 12 (Source: Reuters)

The Socialists' move precipitates the collapse of the broad-based governing coalition that took power from Plahotniuc in June this year. Comprised of the Russophile Socialists and the Western-oriented ACUM bloc (with 36 seats and

26 seats, respectively), this coalition undertook an experiment in joint governance by political and cultural opposites. Such an experiment was not only unprecedented for the fractured Moldova but also without par in contemporary Europe writ large.

This coalition's declared purpose was not merely to muddle through (as is often the case with multi-party coalitions) but to overhaul Moldova's governance, economy and external relations, all of which had previously been subordinated to interest groups shaped as political parties—most recently and most thoroughly Plahotniuc's. The coalition's domestic consensus included promises to refrain from exploiting issues of national identity and external orientation for internal partisan purposes (the "de-geo-politicization" of domestic politics). This consensus found expression in a "balanced foreign policy," based on adhering to the Moldova-European Union Association Agreement while seeking to normalize commercial relations with Russia (see EDM, June 21, 26, 27, August 7, 8).

Four months after the regime change, however, Dodon's Socialists revealed intentions to take over key posts in the judiciary and prosecution systems, replacing Plahotniuc's appointees at the top. Thus, a Socialist parliamentary deputy became chair of the Constitutional Court, and an advisor to President Dodon became the new head of the National Anti-Corruption Centre. Working with the Plahotniuc-staffed, unexpurgated National Audio-Visual Council (media regulatory agency), the Socialists obtained new broadcast licenses for several

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party-affiliated media outlets, including a television channel to rebroadcast Russia's *Channel One TV* (highly popular in Moldova, rebroadcast hitherto by Plahotniuc's media holding) (Newsmaker, November 1–12).

These moves clashed with the ACUM's agenda of freeing the judicial and prosecution systems and market-regulatory agencies from political influence. The Socialists had initially subscribed to that agenda, under the heading of "de-oligarchization" in the coalition's mission statements in June and the detailed coalition agreement signed in September. Yet, the Socialists seemed, by October, to embark on inheriting Plahotniuc's system—working with some of its holdovers in that process—instead of joining forces with the ACUM-led government to dismantle that system altogether.

Concurrently, the Socialist Party laid claim to two ministerial portfolios in Sandu's cabinet (comprised almost entirely of ACUM ministers). This transfer was to occur imminently. And on November 3, the Socialist Party's Ion Ceban unexpectedly won Chisinau's mayoral election, against ACUM bloc co-leader Andrei Nastase (IPN, October 18 – November 4).

All those Socialist gains added to the earlier concern (unsubstantiated thus far) that President Dodon had placed Moldova's Intelligence and Security Service under his personal control. The trends, on the whole, indicated a rapid accumulation of power and influence by the Socialist Party at the expense of its coalition partner.

In view of these reverses, hard-line supporters of unification with Romania (small but vocal groups within and outside ACUM) deserted and turned against the bloc's leaders. The hard-line "unionists" had objected all along to this governing coalition, and their agitation against the ACUM bloc's leaders weakened the latter's bargaining position vis-à-vis the Socialists within the broad coalition (Ziarul National, Deschide.md, passim).

These trends, in combination, caused some key figures in the ACUM bloc to consider exiting from the coalition in the next few months (with sufficient lead time to the 2020 presidential

election campaign), unless the Socialists would recommit to the "de-oligarchization" agenda. Concerns that President Dodon was turning into a "Plahotniuc no. 2" were, however, exaggerated or at least premature; and in any case, they could have been addressed in the established format of discussions among the Moldovan president, government, and the European Union's and the United States' missions in Chisinau.

Maia Sandu's government, however, attempted to address those challenges through a make-or-break test over the selection of a new head of the General Prosecutor's Office. That office had been the alpha and omega of Plahotniuc's state capture and is, therefore, widely perceived as a possible basis for recidivism, unless its independence and political neutrality are fully secured. A government-organized, open competition to short-list candidates for the general prosecutor's post was, however, torpedoed by the competition commission's Socialist member, who gave grotesquely high or ridiculously low scores to candidates depending on political preference. With the botched contest for the Constitutional Court's chairmanship (taken over by a Socialist politician—see above) fresh in mind, Sandu's government declined holding a repeat competition for the general prosecutor's post. Instead, the government moved to change the relevant law and to submit its own short list of candidates, in a three-stage process, whereby the power of appointment to that post rests ultimately with the head of state (Noi.md, October 28–November 12).

The government's unilateral move used a constitutional provision whereby a government ordinance can take legal effect without parliamentary approval, unless overturned by parliament within 72 hours by a vote of no confidence in the government. The Socialist Party pounced on this opportunity to dismiss the ACUM-led government with the help of the Plahotniuc-legacy Democratic Party (see above), at the cost of bringing the latter back from ostracism and into the political power balance.

Western diplomatic missions in Chisinau were not consulted by the government before it made

its high-risk move. The US, EU, German and Romanian missions came out, explicitly or implicitly, for continuation of the governing coalition. The EU and US ambassadors, jointly as well as individually, held multiple meetings with Dodon, Sandu, and other Socialist and ACUM leaders, seeking to mediate a solution that could preserve the coalition.

President Dodon is the undisputed arbiter of any follow-up scenarios, a whole range of which are now under consideration. A further increase in the presidency's *de facto* power and influence seems certain under any of these scenarios.

The governing coalition's collapse was neither foreordained nor predictable as an imminent outcome. Notwithstanding the increase in the Socialists' power at their partners' expense, there was counter-evidence that pointed toward continuity. Disagreements at the top of the coalition did not percolate to local levels. Country-wide local elections, held on the quadrennial schedule, on October 20 and November 3, were the cleanest in many years, and resulted in major gains for the ACUM bloc, which caught up with the Socialist Party in the overall vote for mayors and local councils. These two political forces had agreed beforehand to observe mutual "nonaggression" during the campaign, to support each other's candidates in the November 3 runoff, and to form coalitions at the level of district and town councils, so as to reproduce the model of the central coalition at local levels. While the ACUM bloc's Nastase did breach those understandings in the Chisinau mayoral race (see above), and ACUM went along with that breach (for fear of antagonizing the "unionists"), the winner, Ceban, did not answer in kind and offered to form a coalition with the bloc in the Chisinau Municipal Council.

Surveying the coalition's rubble, the net winners and net losers are to be determined. The net losers seem to be the largest category by far.

## Part Two

The collapse of Moldova's governing coalition (in office from June to November 2019) puts an end to joint governance by political and cultural

opposites - an experiment unprecedented for a fractured Moldova and without par in contemporary Europe (see [Part One](#) in EDM, November 13). Yet, the coalition of the Socialist Party and the ACUM ("NOW") bloc did not collapse over national identity, ideological, or geopolitical issues - none of which came seriously into play within or outside the coalition. Rather, the coalition fell apart over conflicting conceptions about rule of law and the integrity of state institutions.



Supporters of the Government of Maia Sandu rally in front of the Parliament building in Chisinau (Source: EPA/EFE)

This short-lived, Socialist-ACUM coalition was the most broadly representative political construction in Moldova's post-1991 history. The coalition's composition reflected all the currents of opinion extant in Moldova's splintered society and political system: Western-oriented and Russia-oriented, Moldovan/Romanian-speaking and "Russian-speaking" groups (most members of which are not Russians), Romanianists and Moldovanists, as well as Europhiles, Russophiles, and Romanian irredentists, left-wing, centrist, right-wing - all in the local-specific understanding of those terms, which often require quotation marks for relativisation. Yet, beyond all these nuances, Moldova's electorate is enduringly divided roughly evenly between the Western and the Russian orientations. This stubborn division significantly contributed to frustrating the erstwhile ambitions to fast-track Moldova's European integration. When the ACUM bloc took over the government by agreement with the Socialist Party to implement the European Union Association Agreement, an unprecedented chance to integrate both halves of Moldova's

society into a common political construction seemed at hand. But the experiment and the chance ended when President Igor Dodon's Socialist Party embarked on concentrating formal and informal powers at the cost of the rule of law.

The ACUM bloc's cabinet of ministers under Maia Sandu signified a cultural breakthrough for Moldova. Most of its members were graduates of prestigious Western universities and had made careers in international organizations. Unscarred by the perennial struggles over national identity and history and standing above the fray in that sense, their agenda was to bring Moldova into the modern age. This cabinet's physiognomy, overall, was that of the third generation of Moldovan intelligentsia since 1991, the first generation having been educated in a Russian-dominated environment and the second generation in a mainly Romanian milieu. The third, English-speaking generation of ministers was unburdened by the local culture of corrupt clientele, and it set about uprooting it. This government's departure from office marks, in that sense, a loss and regress for Moldova.

President Dodon has lost no time appointing a new cabinet of ministers today (November 14). The list, at first sight, includes at least seven of Dodon's presidential advisors, out of eleven cabinet members under Prime Minister Ion Chicu. In that sense the new government is simultaneously one of experts as well as politically partisan. It is a minority government, dependent on parliamentary support from the Democratic Party, a legacy of the former ruler, now-fugitive Vladimir Plahotniuc. Without claiming ministerial positions, the Democratic Party has opted for now to play junior partner to Dodon—a reversal of roles by comparison with their relationship from 2015 until June 2019. At present, the Socialists hold 35 actual seats and the Democrats 30 theoretical seats (this number includes several seats of fugitive members) in the 101-person parliament (Moldpres, November 14).

Dodon and the Socialist Party are rapidly expanding their power base. They now control the government, the Chisinau mayor's office

(since November 3), as well as the Parliament's chair, Constitutional Court's chair, and now seem likely to appoint the new General Prosecutor (see [EDM](#), November 13). The Socialist parliamentary group has long demonstrated its discipline and loyalty to Dodon. Media organizations connected with the Socialist Party have recently assembled a media holding as powerful as that bequeathed by Plahotniuc to his party. Although Moldova's constitution is that of a parliamentary republic, President Dodon will probably be able to rule it as a presidential republic if he chooses to do so. Whether he does or not, the ongoing accumulation of formal and informal powers should facilitate Dodon's re-election for a second presidential term, in 2020. A negotiated re-election in the parliament could work more smoothly for Dodon than campaigning for the popular vote.

The president's and his party's main challenge will be to gain more support among Moldovan/Romanian-speaking voters in the conventional "centre" of the political spectrum. The Socialist stalwart Ion Ceban has just won election as mayor of Chisinau by reaching out to that centre, even renouncing the "Red" Socialist brand, with Dodon's approval. Without a rebranding, Dodon and his Socialists would have to fall back on the divisive tactics of mobilizing Russophile and "Moldovanist" voters against the other currents in Moldova's society. Such tactics come with the cost of perpetuating society's fractures along ethno-linguistic lines and re-geo-politicizing Moldova's domestic politics (see above).

For its part, the ACUM bloc is settling into the role of parliamentary opposition, with 26 seats in the 101-seat chamber, pending the next legislative elections (these are due in 2023 on the quadrennial calendar, but Dodon may call them already next year, in conjunction with the 2020 presidential election). In the meantime, ACUM will almost certainly lose most of the mayors and district councils the bloc won in the country-wide local elections on October 20 and November 3. Traditionally in Moldova, mayors and local councils abandon opposition parties and switch to governing parties. ACUM still has no funds for campaigning and limited media

support, dwarfed by the Socialists' and the Democrats' respective media holdings. In these circumstances, ACUM's two component parties, led by Maia Sandu and Andrei Nastase, respectively, seem ready to consider fully merging into one party.

Apart from those organizational challenges, ACUM will undoubtedly tackle the unaccomplished task of reaching "Russian-speaking" voters with ACUM's own message, focused on improving the country's governance.

Although ACUM abjures the politics of ethnic

identity or geopolitical choice, the bloc's electorate is all Romanian-speaking thus far. While the Socialist Party holds a near-monopoly on the "Russian-speaking" electorate (catering to it through rhetoric and symbols), the Moldovan/Romanian-speaking vote is divided in three ways: Romanian-"unionists," Moldovan and Romanian "centrists," and Russia-sympathizing Moldovans. The ACUM bloc transcends those divisions, drawing support across those lines, but it has yet to make inroads among "Russian-speaking" voters.



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## THE MIDDLE EAST

# Middle East 2019: Another Arab Spring?



**Ambassador Professor  
Dumitru CHICAN**

## 1. A Short History

Tunisia, 17<sup>th</sup> of December 2010: in the small town of Sidi Bouzid, the young vegetable and fruit vendor Mohamed Bouazizi was held by a police patrol that harassed him and seized his merchandise under the charge of illegal street vending. After his failed complains and attempts to argue his case to the police and to the local authorities, the young man doused himself with gasoline and set himself on fire. The spark of his sacrifice flamed up a mutiny that would quickly spread in the Arab world only to become the so called "Arab Spring". It created a chain reaction which caused, in 2011, after a series of protests, the fall of old and authoritarian regimes. In Tunisia, on the 14<sup>th</sup> of January the dictator Zine Al-Abidin Ben Ali fled the presidency and the country he had run for 24 years. On the 11<sup>th</sup> of February, Hosni Mubarak, who had presided over Egypt for 30 years, followed. After long and violent confrontations between the population and the opposition forces and after NATO's military intervention, the Libyan leader Muammar Al-Gaddafi was captured and killed by the rebels on the 20<sup>th</sup> of October 2011. In the Yemen, on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of June 2011, President Ali Abdullah Saleh stepped down from power. He would be assassinated in December 2017 in another attack led by the Houthi rebels. Civil unrests gradually started in other countries in Northern Africa, the Levant and the Arab Peninsula, such as Algeria, on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of February 2011. The protests led to the abrogation of the martial law that had lasted for 19 years and to a change in the popular mindset that only 8 years later, on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of April 2019, would remove from power the Algerian president, Abdelaziz Bouteflika. Bahrain, March

2011 - the popular riots were suppressed by special operations forces from Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Jordan. In Morocco - due to the restlessness of the population - the monarchy agreed to a referendum to amend the constitution. In three Arab states - Libya, Syria (peaceful protests started on the 18<sup>th</sup> of March 2011) and Yemen - the "Arab Spring" has turned into civil wars that are still ongoing.

One may see that the "Great Arab Spring", the largest of its kind in modern and contemporary Arab history, has consumed its militant developments in less than a year, with one exception - Egypt. Here, the first exercise of state power, claimed in November 2011 by the Islamist movement "The Muslim Brotherhood" was removed by a military institution whose commander, the field marshal Abd Al-Fattah Al-Sisi took over the state leadership from the former Islamist president Mohammad Morsi.

## 2. Eight Years Later: back to the "Arab Spring"

A decade passed since the first "spring season" of the Arab Middle East. This period was marked by hesitations, confrontations, by the so called "stolen revolutions" and, most of all, by its instability and lack of credibility. They are the reason why there have been rushed and timid attempts to social and economic reformation, institutional modernization and, most of all, to eradicate or diminish poverty and corruption. They gave birth to the hope that the aspirations, which determined the population to take to the streets and public spaces eight years before, would be fulfilled.

Equally unexpected and equally dynamic, a new revendicatory "spring" broke out in the last month of the spring in 2019, driven by the taste of betrayed hopes and by the experience of the first modern Arab revolution.

## From Algeria to Sudan

In the context of a surprisingly active mobilization that started in December 2018, on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of April 2019, the 80 years old Algerian president Abdelaziz Bouteflika agreed, from his wheelchair, to give up running for president again and withdrew from public and political life.

On the other side of the African continent, Sudan: worn out from civil wars, land disputes, poverty and the dictatorship of general Omar Bashir - who had governed for 30 years, the country became, starting December 2018, the scene of widespread, massive and revendicatory popular protests generated, as was the case of other "Arab Springs", by the unbearable fall of the living standards. The spark that started the fire was the decision of the regime to triple the prices of bread and other standard products, accompanied by massive arrests of social activists and political opponents. The move that decided the end of this process came from the military forces who, after hesitations, took the side of the protesters. On the 11<sup>th</sup> of April, general Bashir was arrested and the power was taken over by a Transition Military Council that also included members of the civil society.



Once again, both in Maghreb, west of Africa and in the East of the continent, economic factors extended to mainly political demands are at the very origin of popular movements. This, however, leaves room for the conclusion that, in both cases, we are facing the continuation and completion of the phenomenon that started eight years ago. In its turn, the phenomenon proves that the Arab world, with its Mashreq and Maghreb, far from being freed from a metaphorical season that is inconsistent with its unaltered realities, has only gotten to half of a

long term process of reform. This reform aims at overcoming the deep structural crisis that the entire Arab world is going through. To put it straight, this means we cannot talk about a real and long lasting stabilization of the Arab world as long as it doesn't go through a radical process of eliminating the real causes leading to this ongoing blockage.

## Egypt

That this is the way things are can be seen in the domestic developments in Egypt. Eight years after the end of Hosni Mubarak's regime, six years after the first Islamist Egyptian president, and five years after the current head of state, Abd Al-Fatah Al-Sisi came to power (a military man), this country is still dealing with a strong separation of its society, a surprising and bloody dynamic of the fundamentalist terrorist phenomenon, a slow and unconvincing evolution towards social and economic progress and, at the same time, an authoritarian and repressive policy of the newly instated Cairo regime. This situation translated into a long series of revolts similar to those in 2011, which were repressed by force and with the cost of human lives. They all fall into the same pattern of social and economic demands evolving into demands for political reform and removal from power of the serving governance. After two years of such manifestations taking place almost all over Egypt, this past September witnessed a sudden revival of mass protests, free of political influence but reiterating slogans shouted years ago in public places during the "Lotus Revolution" - the name of the Egyptian Arab Spring eight years ago: *irhal* - "leave" and *al-shaab iurid...* - "the people wish...". And the people wished for bread, jobs, a better life and the resignation of the marshal-president, Abd Al-Fattah Al-Sisi.

## Iraq

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of October, the domino of protests moved from the country of Nile to the country of the "two rivers" - Tigris and Euphrates. We are referring to Iraq. The US invasion in the spring of 2003 left behind an imported "freedom" and

“democracy” defined by the disintegration of state institutions, of the military and the national security forces, by a strong sense of belonging to Muslim confessions and deepening rifts between the Sunnis and the Shiites, as well as by the civil war. The national territory was turned into an “Islamic caliphate”, with all the horrors and dramas the fundamentalist jihad brought along. Widespread corruption set in, the exercise of power was handed from one authority to the other, the same that took over and kept the state captive after the fall of Saddam Hussein’s Ba’ath regime almost two decades ago. They served an agenda of their own, their family, group, or clan, but also that of certain foreign regional and international powers. Last but not least, unemployment and poverty ruled over a country that sits on huge oil and natural gas reserves.

Appointed as head of the Iraqi government only a year ago and overwhelmed by the magnitude and the realism of demands, Prime Minister Abdel Abdul Mahdi decided that the only way to “discuss” with the protesters was to order the police forces to repress the demonstrations by force and use of live ammunition. His decision resulted in 100 people dead and other 4,000 wounded and, far from bringing peace to the country, opened the door for renewed social unrest. Iraq keeps on being a volcano with cyclical bursts threatening with a final eruption that would eventually destroy the volcano itself.

Late October, three weeks into the protests, the demonstrations kept on going, and so did the interventions of the security forces against the protesters - the number of dead amounted to 300. According to observers, the forces involved were, in most cases, pro-Iran Shiite militias, indicating a possible drift of the situation in Iraq towards new revolts along confessional lines.

### **Lebanon - More than a “WhatsApp Revolution”**

On the 17<sup>th</sup> of October the government led by Saad Hariri adopted an extreme measure to impose a tax on social media (WhatsApp for instance), hoping to bring to the state budget 200 million dollars in revenues. This is but a

small amount for the country’s treasury, as its public debt amounts to 150% of the GDP. The polarised confessional society, endemic corruption at the highest levels of the political, economic and banking sectors are the main causes for the disruption and regress eroding the stability and development of the Cedar country.



Demonstrations in Beirut

Lebanon was not touched by the waves of the “Arab Spring” eight years ago as it wasn’t the chessboard of significant protests either, a fact attributed by some analysts to the “bohemian and cosmopolitan nature” of the society, especially its younger population.

This is an invented explanation that doesn’t justify the magnitude of the protests that started on the 17<sup>th</sup> of October and extended rapidly all over the country - from the traditional Tripoli in the north, through Beirut, all the way to Sidon, Tyre and Nabatieh in Lebanon’s poor south. For the first time the protesters were united in waving the national flag with its secular Cedar of God instead of confessional or partisan flags. As was the case with other Arab countries, the focus of the intensifying protests shifted from economic and social demands to the demand to fundamentally change the political system. And we are not referring to the traditional confessional triad of presidency, legislative and executive, but to the confessional structure on which this system has been in function ever since Lebanon first showed on the map. This division makes sure that the country and its society actually operate according to the

demographic and economic representation of the 18 known confessions. Hence the remark that Lebanon has rather been going through a deep crisis of governance, an unprecedented institutional, spiritual and moral crisis, at least in the period following its 15 year long civil war (1975-1990). The leadership in Beirut, almost the same - clans and the large feudal families they belong to, didn't understand that it was time for radical changes and the old facade recipes that used to attract investors or ineffective foreign assistance did no longer work.

In Lebanon, under the pressure of the public protests, the leadership tried to employ the same old strategy of temporary solutions. Four ministers belonging to one of the most important Lebanese parties, "the Lebanese Forces", Christians, quit their posts. The street's response was decisive: "not four, not ten, but all of them" should leave. The list of reforms that Prime Minister Saad Hariri offered under the population's pressure included had no less than 20 "reformist" measures, some of which are: establishing a 13 million USD fund to support the poorest families, cutting down the ministerial and parliamentary compensations by 50%, adopting, by the end of the year, of the amnesty bill, drafting a bill to fight tax evasion and recover stolen funds, establishing an authority to fight corruption, the abolition of the Ministry of Information and so on. The street's reaction was very straightforward again: the protests will keep on going until the system is completely changed.

#### **NOTE:**

On the 26<sup>th</sup> of October - ten days since the protests began - Lebanon announced the creation of the "Coordination Committee of the Lebanese Revolution", with branches all over the country, representing about 50 Lebanese occupational and social categories. In a first public announcement, the Committee issued a list of six urgent demands: the immediate resignation of the whole government and the formation of "a national salvation government" made of people from outside the governing system; the recovery of illegal fortunes of those

in power since 1990 and bringing the corrupt to justice, including those living outside Lebanon; finding a solution to the problems that have brought the country to social, economic and financial collapse; reforming the election system and organizing early elections within six months; the Lebanese will continue their protests until their demands are met; the Lebanese Armed Forces are urged to refrain from repressive actions, or harming the protesters in any way. An attempt of the Lebanese Armed Forces to disperse the protesters and reopen the routes of communication blocked by the latter, in Tripoli, resulted in human victims. The protesters became more radical when the leader of Hezbollah delivered a speech where he criticised the demands of the population, openly threatening with a possible return to civil war should the protesters continue to ask for the government's resignation (Hezbollah holds two ministries). It was the first time when the pro-Iran organization, lead by Hassan Nasrallah, was the target of severe public criticism and was accused of trying to turn Lebanon into a Persian Shiite "colony".

On the 29<sup>th</sup> of November, the Prime Minister Saad Hariri offered his resignation; however, he remained in office to manage pressing issues until a new government would be formed. The situation is still unchanged, as the negotiations to form a new mixed technocratic and political executive are difficult.

\*

Is the Arab world in the Middle East up against a new "Arab Spring"? It is difficult to really answer that if looking at it from a "black and white" perspective. What is relevant, compared to the first "Arab Spring" eight years ago, is the fact that today's protesters, the romantics of the 2011 riots, are aware of the fact that they need to be political, without necessarily being part of the governing political structures. This time, the same protesters have stopped shouting the well-known patriotic slogans and have a more coherent approach on a perspective whose values weigh more than the "daily bread", the price of WhatsApp services or the so called

freedom; instead they go beyond, where freedom and bread must be provided with dignity. This cannot be achieved without redefining and rethinking the concept of state and society governance. As much as it is noble and complex, it is also difficult to implement at a time when, just like other countries and societies that have had their share of "Arab spring", it can last for several decades. The Arab Spring is still here, despite what the calendar shows.



## The Assassination of Anwar Sadat: The Birth of Al-Qaeda and Globalization of Jihad

**Ovidiu RAETCHI<sup>1</sup>**

### Foreword

The Egyptian Israeli peace process during 1977-1979 was a shock to the jihadist movement in Egypt, that had been under repression ever since Nasser's political rule. Encouraged by the success of the Islamic Revolution in Iran, the Egyptian jihadists - inspired by the ideologue Muhammad Abd Al-Salam Faraj and advised by colonel Al-Zumar (an intelligence officer) - decided to assassinate the president Anwar Al-Sadat during the military parade dedicated to the celebration of the Yom Kippur War. The attempt was to be accompanied by a popular revolt. Even though the revolutionary project failed, the assassination of Sadat had a major impact on the history of the Middle East: the Arab-Israeli peace process would stop, and the jihadists involved in the conspiracy would leave for Afghanistan and to the USA, becoming the decisive factor behind the birth of Al-Qaeda and the plan to strike down the New York twin towers.

**Key words:** Jihad, Al-Qaeda, the Middle East Peace Process

### A Death that Changed the Destiny of the Middle East

On the 6<sup>th</sup> of October 1981, the Egyptian president Anwar Al-Sadat was getting ready for a triumphant, glorifying celebration. Installed in power in 1970, following Nasser's unexpected death, Sadat went through a critical three years when no one thought he would survive as leader

of Egypt. Then, in a desperate bet he attacked Israel - the Yom Kippur War - and run an extraordinary campaign in Sinai, which allowed him to restore the honour lost by the Arabic armies in the 1948 and 1967 conflicts. Proving to Israel that Egypt was still a dangerous enemy worth negotiating with, rather, Anwar al-Sadat had convinced the Israeli leaders to agree to a peace process where they gave up the Sinai Peninsula (previously taken in the Six Days War in 1967) in exchange for a peace treaty signed with an Arab state. This spectacular success earned him and the Israeli prime minister Menachem Begin, in 1978, the Nobel Peace Prize. Finally, Sadat the *ra'is* succeeded in gradually pulling Egypt out - between 1973 and 1981 - of the bloc of allies of Moscow (which was already heading towards the 1989-1991 bankruptcy) and turning it into a pro-American state (hesitantly) going to the market economy.

Under these circumstances, Sadat had every reason to believe that the traditional military parade on the 6<sup>th</sup> of October 1981, which celebrated eight years since the lightning attack against the Tzahal (Israeli Armed Forces) would represent a moment of deep affection and gratitude towards him from the Egyptian people. The series of unexpected successes and the worldwide appreciation he was enjoying boosted Sadat's toxic confidence in himself and his historic destiny - which made him increasingly intolerant to all forms of opposition and convinced of his own perfection.

This is why, when an artillery truck stopped unexpectedly in front of the presidential tribune, halting the parade, Anwar Al-Sadat stood up,

expecting the people who got off the truck and ran towards him to salute him, in an obviously improper manner that was actually meant to show how the armed forces and the people worshiped him.<sup>2</sup> In reality, Sadat stood at salute to accept and facilitate his own execution (had he kept out of the way he would have had a chance to survive). The four troopers who charged the official stand had no intention to honour, but slaughter him by firing and throwing hand grenades at him. The leader of the firing squad was lieutenant Khalid Islambouli, a promising artillery officer who had graduated the Military Academy. Khalid Islambouli's brother was arrested a few weeks before by Sadat's special services, determining him to swear revenge. Khalid Islambouli was accompanied by a group of corporals only 21 years old.

"My name is Khalid Al-Islambuli. I killed the Pharaoh. I am not afraid to die", shouted Sadat's assassin before being seized by the latter's security team - eight personal bodyguards and thousands of security troops that would have on their conscience the shocking failure of protecting their leader.<sup>3</sup>

Nothing would be the same in the Middle East after the 6<sup>th</sup> of October 1981. The politicians would refrain from assuming decisive steps in the Arab-Israeli peace process, aware that they could have Sadat's same fate. The only exception here was Itzak Rabin - and he would share the *ra'is's* fate. Secondly, the group of conspirators behind the assassination of the Egyptian president would go into exile in Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and Afghanistan, following a short detention period. Sadat's successor, Hosni Mubarak would rather get rid of them channelling their Jihadist rage towards other horizons. It was a catastrophic choice, since among these Jihadists channelled towards new horizons were Ayman Al-Zawahiri and "the Blind Sheikh" Omar Abdel-Rahman, the two Egyptian Jihadists that would inspire the birth of Al-Qaeda and Bin Laden's obsession to take down the twin towers in New York. Omar Abdel-Rahman even left for New York and settled in

Brooklyn (18<sup>th</sup> of July 1990), where he lived and inspired the first attack on the World Trade Centre, on the 26<sup>th</sup> of February 1993; on the other hand, Al-Zawahiri went to Afghanistan and became Bin Laden's mentor and his successor as the head of Al-Qaeda (which he still leads today).

### **Why Was Sadat Killed?**

The Six Days War in 1967 brought Israel an outright victory against an Arab alliance whose main players were Egypt, Syria and Jordan (Iraq didn't share a border with Israel, and Lebanon refrained, ever since 1948, from formally fraternising with its Muslim brethren). Following the war - that started with an Israeli attack justified by a continuous escalation from the Egyptian president Nasser who had re-militarised Sinai, requested the withdrawal of the "buffer" troops provided by the UN and closed the Straits of Tiran to Israeli ships, thus isolating the port of Eilat - the Jewish state occupied the Egyptian Sinai, the Syrian Golan Heights, and the West Bank (according to the Israelis, the biblical Samaria and Judea). The Resolution 242 adopted by the Security Council of the UN on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of November 1967, following the war, referred to the "inadmissibility of acquiring territory by war" and "withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from territories occupied in the recent conflict".<sup>4</sup> At this point, to the Israeli leaders that meant all the above mentioned territories could be subject to discussion regarding their return to Arab states based on the principle "land for peace", with the exception of Jerusalem, which had a far greater symbolic value to be given by any political leader under negotiations. Predictably, the Israeli side would have tried to obtain a series of territorial concessions in Samaria and Judea either for military reasons (as wished by the political left represented by Golda Meir or Yigal Allon) or for nationalist ideological reasons (as intended by Menachem Begin's right) - however, beyond this objective the principle of territorial restitution was generally accepted. Moshe Dayan, the Israeli minister of defence during the Six Days War (implicitly the administrator of the newly acquired territories), stated immediately after the war that "he was

expecting a phone call" from the Arab leaders.<sup>5</sup> However, the position of Arab countries as stated by the resolution adopted at the Summit of the Arab League in Khartoum (1<sup>st</sup> September 1967) came down to a triple "NO": NO to peace with Israel, NO to recognising Israel and NO to negotiating with Israel. However, they wanted to support the Palestinians in order to win back their territories, position equivalent to upholding the annihilation of Israel as a military and political objective.<sup>6</sup>

Since the Arabs refused to negotiate, the events have inevitably entered a phase of adjustment to the endemic conflict and to new tensions. To hide his defeat in 1967, Nasser and the Soviets started the War of Attrition on the Suez Canal (July 1967-August 1970, which reached its peak between the 8<sup>th</sup> of March 1969 and the 7<sup>th</sup> of August 1970), while the Israelis continued to further assimilate occupied territories - by either supporting demographic growth (founding of new settlements) or legislatively integrating some regions (the Jerusalem Law - Jerusalem Capital of Israel since July 1980, for example).

In 1970, the leader of the Arab alliance in the latest confrontations with Israel, Gamal Abd Al-Nasser unexpectedly died, due to heart complications generated by his diabetes. Anwar Sadat was propelled at the leadership of Egypt, a rather unknown and underestimated ruler. Contrasting with Nasser, who saw himself as a great leader of the Arab world, Sadat was more of an Egyptian nationalist. Egypt's interests - stopping the economic recession and strengthening its own regime (clearly weak in the beginning) - were more important to him than the Palestinian issue or the Muslim solidarity against Israel (even though he was not neglecting these matters that were impossible to avoid given the pressure of the public opinion). Besides, Sadat didn't believe in the might of the USSR as he was more of an adept of an alliance with the USA. He was willing to abandon the relationship of economic and military dependency on Moscow, if cooperation with the Americans had been guaranteed. All these calculations of Sadat's were impossible to guess, though, in the period between 1970 and 1973,

when he was perceived as an uninspiring and unconvincing temporary option at the leadership of Egypt.

To accomplish the major Egyptian foreign policy objective (winning back the Sinai Peninsula), Sadat had to overcome two apparently insurmountable obstacles: bringing the Israelis to the negotiating table and keeping the other Arab states involved in the peace process (Syria, Jordan and the Palestinian representatives) at the same table with Israel. Sadat was in fact trapped between the maximal demands of the Arab countries, who wanted major concessions from Israel without giving anything in exchange (not even its official recognition as a state) and the reduced level of willingness of the Israeli leaders to agree with major concessions to enemies who had recently been surpassed militarily. In 1973, Sadat tried, with the help of Nicolae Ceaușescu to initiate a dialogue with the Israeli prime minister Golda Meir, but the Israeli side saw Sadat's terms as unrealistic and lacking substance.<sup>7</sup> This was the context in which the Egyptian *ra'is* launched his October 1973 Yom Kippur War. The conflict allowed Sadat to show that the Egyptian military, combined with the Syrian one represented a threat to Israel despite the catastrophic failure in 1967. The Egyptian army managed, in October 1973, a remarkable crossing of the Suez Canal, secured the strategic surprise on Tzahal and the Israeli military intelligence service (AMAN), and identified the best tactics to thwart the counterattack of the Israeli armoured vehicles and aviation (using surface to air missiles and infantry carrying portable anti-tank launchers).

The surprise produced in the first phase of the Yom Kippur War by Sadat's generals and the panic that Tel Aviv experienced in the first days of the conflict (Tzahal later took over initiative) secured the first major objective of the Egyptian president - the willingness of the Israeli leaders to take part in peace negotiations that had on their agenda massive restitutions of territories seized in 1967. This willingness was still there even when, after decades of leftist governance in Israel, the Likud nationalistic right led by Menachem Begin came to power unexpectedly.

The second major challenge to Sadat was the ability to reach an agreement with Israel given the fact that no less than eight diplomatic actors were expected at the negotiating table: the USA, the USSR, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Syria, Saudi Arabia, and representatives of the Palestinians.<sup>8</sup> These actors would combine amongst themselves following various criteria. Firstly, the Arab camp had to display solidarity. On the other hand, there were a pro-American group (Jordan, Saudi Arabia – towards whom Egypt was leaning) and a pro-Soviet group (Syria, the Palestinians – to whom Egypt was considered to belong). In their turn, the Arab states were divided by their own political and personal rivalries: the Syrian president Hafez Al-Assad was being more and more hostile to Sadat given the way the latter managed the crossing of the Suez Canal in 1973, refusing to attack in depth as he had initially promised; Jordan dreamed of taking over the West Bank, raising concern to Egypt and Syria; the Palestinians had tried to overthrow king Hussein of Jordan etc.

Taking the above into consideration, in 1977, in the context of preparations for a new extended format meeting in Geneva (where similar talks had taken place after the Yom Kippur War), in both the Egyptian and Israeli camps (where Meachem Begin won the elections in May 1977) took shape, for the first time, the need for a direct contact. Both sides believed that collective talks – including more radical actors such as the Syrians and the Palestinians – would make impossible an otherwise feasible arrangement between Israel and Egypt. Both camps felt pressured by the USA and the USSR to accept compromises on far more than the mere dialogue between Israel and Egypt. The Sinai problem was, in reality, easier to solve than that of the Jerusalem or that of the Palestinian refugees.<sup>9</sup>

The secret negotiating channels chosen by Sadat – on behalf of Egypt – and Begin and Moshe Dayan (as foreign minister) – on behalf of Israel – were, at that stage, those provided by Morocco and Romania. Sadat wrote in his memoirs: “In Romania I had a long session of discussion with the president Nicolae Ceaușescu, where he told me about an even more extensive

session he had had with the Israeli prime minister Begin (eight hours long, out of which six had been private). I asked Ceaușescu what he had thought. He said *Begin wants to find a solution*. My main concern regarding this meeting, I said, is whether Israel truly and actually wants peace. As far as I am concerned it is obvious that I want it and I have proven it beyond the shadow of a doubt. But does the Israeli governance today – especially under Begin as leader of the fanatic bloc Likud – want peace? Can an extremist such as Begin truly wish for peace? *Let me tell you firmly* said again Ceaușescu *that he wants peace*. Ceaușescu seemed very confident and I trust this man’s judgement. Besides, the Romanian president had been maintaining a close relationship with the Israelis. The fact that he insisted on Begin’s wish for peace and on him being a *powerful man* confirmed that a change was now necessary.”<sup>10</sup>

Sadat had said this once before, in an interview he gave in 1977 to Ranan Laurie in the house of the Egyptian president in Ismailia, when the *ra’is* stated that the basis for his decision to negotiate peace with Begin had been provided by Nicolae Ceaușescu’s assurance that Begin was a strong leader (unlike Rabin), who really wanted peace.<sup>11</sup>

Tens of documents published in 2012 by the Israeli State Archives attest that, on the 4<sup>th</sup> of September 1977, Begin told his ministers that Sadat had conveyed to Ceaușescu his willingness to meet and discuss with Begin the terms of an Israeli-Egyptian peace agreement.<sup>12</sup>

In the introduction of the joint declaration Begin-Mănescu on the 30<sup>th</sup> of August 1977, in Bucharest, the Israeli Foreign Affairs Ministry stated: “at the invitation of prime minister Manea Mănescu, Mr. Begin spent six days in Romania (25-30 August) and had talks with the leaders of this country, including long talks with president Nicolae Ceaușescu. The talks focused on ways to start peace negotiations between Israel and Egypt. Mr. Begin presented Israel’s position and emphasized his willingness to compromise in exchange for a real peace. The Romanian president later met with president Sadat and told him what the Israelis thought of



him. Both prime minister Begin and president Sadat later entrusted president Ceaușescu with a vital role in making Sadat's visit to Jerusalem possible."<sup>13</sup>

Morocco had been sharing a special relationship with Israel ever since 1961, when king Mohammed V of Morocco set a flexible way of allowing Moroccan Jews to make *aliyah*. From that moment on, when times were hard, the Tzahal and the Mossad offered protection to his young and vulnerable successor, Hassan II. He received military support in the fight against Algeria and intelligence support against Libya – country that planned for his assassination. Being educated in France, in Bordeaux, Hassan II had a particular affinity for the Semite and made reference to an alliance between the “Jewish genius and the Arab strength” as well as about the “Semite brotherhood”. Given the fact that the Moroccan king was holding the presidency of the Arab League, the first serious attempt of Tel-Aviv to negotiate with Sadat took place via Rabat, considered by the Israeli socialists a more reliable avenue than Bucharest- suspected of being too deeply infiltrated by the Soviet espionage.

In October 1976, wearing a wig and sun glasses, Ytzhak Rabin visited Hassan II and established a first mediated contact with Sadat. However, Sadat didn't accept Rabin as partner of dialogue, thinking he was too “weak” to take on major political endeavours. Shortly after, however, Menachem Begin took over from Rabin as head of the state. Based on this, as seen above, Ceaușescu assured Sadat that Begin was a strong leader who had the ability to make peace. Besides, Sadat and Begin shared the same past; they had both been underground fighters for national liberation and political prisoners. Sadat believed he understood Begin better, even though the latter had been considered an “anti-Arab”. This is why Moshe Dayan, Begin's foreign minister and a fine connoisseur of military and intelligence relations with Morocco, resumed the Moroccan avenue initiated by Rabin. Dayan described extensively the negotiations conducted via Morocco: “On the fine and sunny afternoon of the 4<sup>th</sup> of September 1977 I left for what was to be the first of the three secret visits

to an Arab leader, King Hassan II of Morocco. It wasn't his first meeting with a representative of the Israeli government; however, with a new government in power, led by Menachem Begin, the old contact had been renewed and I had received an invitation from the king. Begin had approved my trip and we had agreed on the issues we were to discuss during the meeting. Our main purpose was to secure Hassan's support in establishing a direct meeting and conducting peace negotiations with Egypt's representatives.”<sup>15</sup> On the 9<sup>th</sup> of September 1977 King Hassan sent the Israelis Sadat's agreement for this meeting, that would take place on the 16<sup>th</sup> of September in Morocco as well, in the presence of the king. The Egyptian vice prime minister Tuhami (one of Sadat's middlemen) and Moshe Dayan were to attend the meeting, where both parties would express their requirements for the signing of the peace treaty.<sup>16</sup>

The end of this process is well known all over the world: in the summer of 1978, Begin and Sadat met at Camp David and reached a historical deal, thanks to the mediating abilities of president Jimmy Carter. There follows the Nobel Peace Prize and the signing, in March 1979, on the front lawn of the White House, of the peace treaty between Israel and Egypt, countries whose rivalry had lasted ever since Moses left Egypt ... For this historical undertaking, in October 1981 Sadat would be killed by the Islamists.

### **Who Killed Sadat? The First Al-Qaeda**

The decision of the Egyptian Islamist to kill Anwar Sadat took shape between 1977- 1979, in the context of two major events. After Sadat flew to Tel Aviv and spoke in the Knesset, agreeing two years from then to sign a peace treaty with Israel, his “punishment” at the hand of the Jihadists became unavoidable. The Islamic Revolution in Iran, in 1979, made the Egyptian jihadists hope that the assassination of Sadat would become the opening for a *coup d'état* that would turn Egypt into the first great Sunni theocracy (as opposed to the Iranian Shi'ite regime).

The ideological muse of the Jihadist conspiracy in 1981 was Muhammad Abd Al-Salam Faraj, the spiritual father of Al-Jihad. Faraj was in fact, along Sayyid Qutb, the most influential Jihadist thinker that would inspire Al-Qaeda's ideology. In *The Neglected Duty (Al-Farida Al-Gha'iba)*, his defining publication, Faraj proclaimed Jihad (as warfare, not only as an inner effort) as the fundamental obligation of every Muslim - an obligation that had been ignored for the last centuries, which led to the downfall of the Islamic power. Jihad should be conducted not only against non-Muslim enemies but also against Muslim political leaders that can't accept the fact that the state must be in the service God. These leaders were called by Faraj "apostates" and compared with Genghis Khan or to the Pharaoh. As such, it is every Muslim's duty to kill them, in order to make possible the instauration of an authentic Islamic theocracy. Muhammad Abd Al-Salam Faraj would not be a mere theorist of "regicide"; he would actually organize the *Al-Jihad*, uniting under its umbrella a Jihadi group from Assiut (Southern Egypt) and a group from Cairo, where Ayman Al-Zawahiri was from.<sup>17</sup>

To succeed in their plot against Sadat, *Al-Jihad* needed two key characters: an important military leader, willing to take part in the conspiracy, but also an important theologian and cleric, willing to issue a *fatwa* authorising the assassination of Sadat. The first was colonel Abud Al-Zumar (military intelligence) who, in 1979, was convinced that Sadat would share the fate of the Iranian Shah and would be removed from power through an Islamist popular revolution. Al-Zumar would use his influence to ensure the participation of Lt. Islambouli's platoon in the military parade, in October 1981. The Fatwa that authorized the assassination of Sadat was written by "the blind sheikh" Omar Abdel-Rahman, the Imam of a mosque in Al-Fayyum, a theology professor in Assiut and the spiritual leader of the Islamist group Al-Gama Al-Islamiyya ("The Islamic Group").<sup>18</sup>

After the death of Sadat, the project of a Sunni Islamist revolution failed rapidly, as it wasn't supported by the population. Egypt did not have Iran's fate. The conspirators were caught and put to trial. Faraj and Islambouli were executed

and Al-Zumar was sentenced to a long imprisonment, extended until nowadays (he was recently released from prison). On the other hand, the lower ranking leaders of Al-Jihad that haven't been directly involved in the assassination, such as Abdel-Rahman and Ayman Al-Zawahiri, would be released and encouraged to find other Jihadist strongholds.

Their exile will lead to the birth of Al-Qaeda and the globalization of Islam.

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**NOTES:**

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# The Volatile Alliances in the Middle East: Friendships, Challenges, Clientelism and Interests

**Ambassador Professor Dumitru CHICAN**

## I. A Preamble

During its modern history - marked mostly by the Sykes-Picot agreements in 1916, where Great Britain and France shared the vilayets and Ottoman provinces in the Middle East, then in 1947 by the famous "Partition Plan", when the UN separated historical Palestine in two entities (Jewish and Palestinian Arabic) followed a year later, in May 1948, by the birth, in the Middle East, of the state of Israel – this troubled piece of the global political geography has known just a few, and short-lived moments of peace. Manifold, complex and most of all violent, the conflicts that have marked the developments in the Middle East brought complex and complicated combinations of successions of the actors involved, without significantly altering the essence and the stakes of the conflicts themselves. However, they have generated a series of continuous and varied alliances, more or less enduring, either between regional actors, or between them and one or more of the post-World Wars or post-Cold War global powers or, less so, between the latter. Alliances keep on appearing and disappearing nowadays as well, as they are built on the same ephemeral, mercantile principles and on the circumstances, favouritism, indifference and abuse of the law and international justice system. Such a phenomenon of appearance and disappearance of these alliances, partnerships, axes and blocs has known and still knows a fast growth under the influence of three major factors. They are the end of the Cold War and the fall of the "Iron Curtain" between the East and the West, the terrorist attacks on the 11<sup>th</sup> of September and the wars that followed, as well as the outburst of the fundamentalist Islamic terrorism and the so called "Arab Spring" with its failures and disappointments.

The fluctuating power shifts and other various rivalries and centrifugal geostrategic calculations, accompanied by a host of wars and hybrid or covert confrontations have brought on the military, economic, commercial, energy and/or political battle fronts new actors and strategies that shape the current configuration of the political and strategic landscape in the Middle East.

## II. Landscape

The following lines try to paint a small picture of the main polarisations of forces which, under various names contribute to defining the current geostrategic identity of the Middle East.

### 1. The "alliance" or "axis" that brings together the Russian Federation, Turkey and Iran.

These countries aren't necessarily part of the Middle East, as they each have their own priorities and interests, and even misunderstandings; however, they all share the objective of self-imposing as deciding powers on the complicated conflictual dossiers of this geopolitical area. One of their common interests is the Syrian civil war that, due to the current course of events has become the element that binds them together. Despite the fact that positive steps have been taken to find a solution to the Syrian conflict, this axis has been and still is problematic and ambiguous. Even if Russia and Iran can justify their interference in Syria as having been requested by the regime in Damascus, reality shows more and more that, as far as Russia is concerned, it isn't willing to accept a future scenario where, once pacified Syria will still host foreign forces (Turkish, Iranian and Western). At the same time, president Putin is willing to maintain a functional relationship with Israel, a state that is deeply hostile to Turkey and Iran. However, the Kremlin leader keeps being pragmatic. It is

worth mentioning the fact that he indicated to both Benjamin Netanyahu and Donald Trump that Russia was willing to influence the Iranian withdrawal from Syria, as long as they turn a blind eye on the conflict in Ukraine and as long as the Israeli and US administrations agree on the resumption of negotiations with the Palestinian National Authority. Under such circumstances, one may say that the “alliance” between the three former imperial powers still is, if not problematic and confusing, at least doubtful as far as its duration is concerned.

2. We are currently witnessing a discreet **rapprochement between the Gulf Arab states (minus Qatar) and Israel**, with the sole purpose of thwarting the regional ambitions of the Tehran theocratic regime. The prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu has already been on a state visit in Oman, and Israel maintains close and specific political, military and commercial contacts with Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates. Even the Riyadh monarchy through its crown prince Mohammad Bin Salman has intensified statements in favour of a strategic, military and media *rapprochement* with Israel, and against Iran.

3. As we speak, analysts and media commentators are closely monitoring, even if they don't have enough information, what they call the **“Middle East Alliance”** supposed to develop a dynamic relationship between two great powers - the Russian Federation and China for now - and influential countries in the Middle East. This virtual bloc - meant to bring a new regional order once the regional conflicts are over and envisaged in the context of the imbalance generated by the decision of the current Washington administration to “bring home” its military forces from the Middle East - originates in Doha, and the initiative belongs to the Emir of Qatar, Tamim bin Hammad Al-Thani. According to the Emir, this new “bloc” is meant to be a dynamic alternative to the ossified Gulf Cooperation Council. The initiative was welcomed by Turkey, Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Jordan and Syria, while China and the Russian Federation showed interest and availability to join this new “alliance”. The USA, Israel and Saudi Arabia criticized it. Just as with other

“advertised alliances”, there are doubts regarding the materialization of the project, as well as whether this “alliance” isn't just another lever used by Qatar in its conflict with Saudi Arabia and the other members of the Gulf Cooperation Council.

4. We will finally mention another alliance project, this time initiated by the Donald Trump administration. The **“Middle East Strategic Alliance”** (MESA or “Arab NATO”) was conceived as a comprehensive agreement incorporating military and security elements, as well as economic, energy related and political projects. Ever since its inception, the US initiative had a negative welcome and was subject to criticism from US and Arab analysts and politicians, to whom this strategic alliance was but one of Donald Trump's attempts to place the burden of economic security on the shoulders of the regional member states, all under American leadership and without Washington assuming responsibilities to defend the allies in this “strategic coalition of the new Middle East”. The alliance died before it was even born. The tensions between Qatar and the other Arab monarchies in the Gulf Cooperation Council and the differences between the security priorities and the gaps that separate the countries' approach on regional matters, such as the conflict with the Islamic Republic of Iran, or the different evaluations regarding political Islam, including the Muslim Brotherhood were some of the main issues hindering the accomplishment of the US and Qatari initiative.

It was the same failed experiment and the same volatile alliances as it was the case with the military alliance “Baghdad Pact” (1955-1979) also known as CENTO, that was meant to stop the Communist USSR from reaching in the Middle East and Western Asia. Thus, one may say that alliances in this part of the world have had and still have, nowadays, a miserable destiny either because they lacked substance, or because they were premature or because they died before they were even born.

### III. From Alliances to Partnerships

The countries in the Eastern and central part of Europe, out of which ten are NATO members,

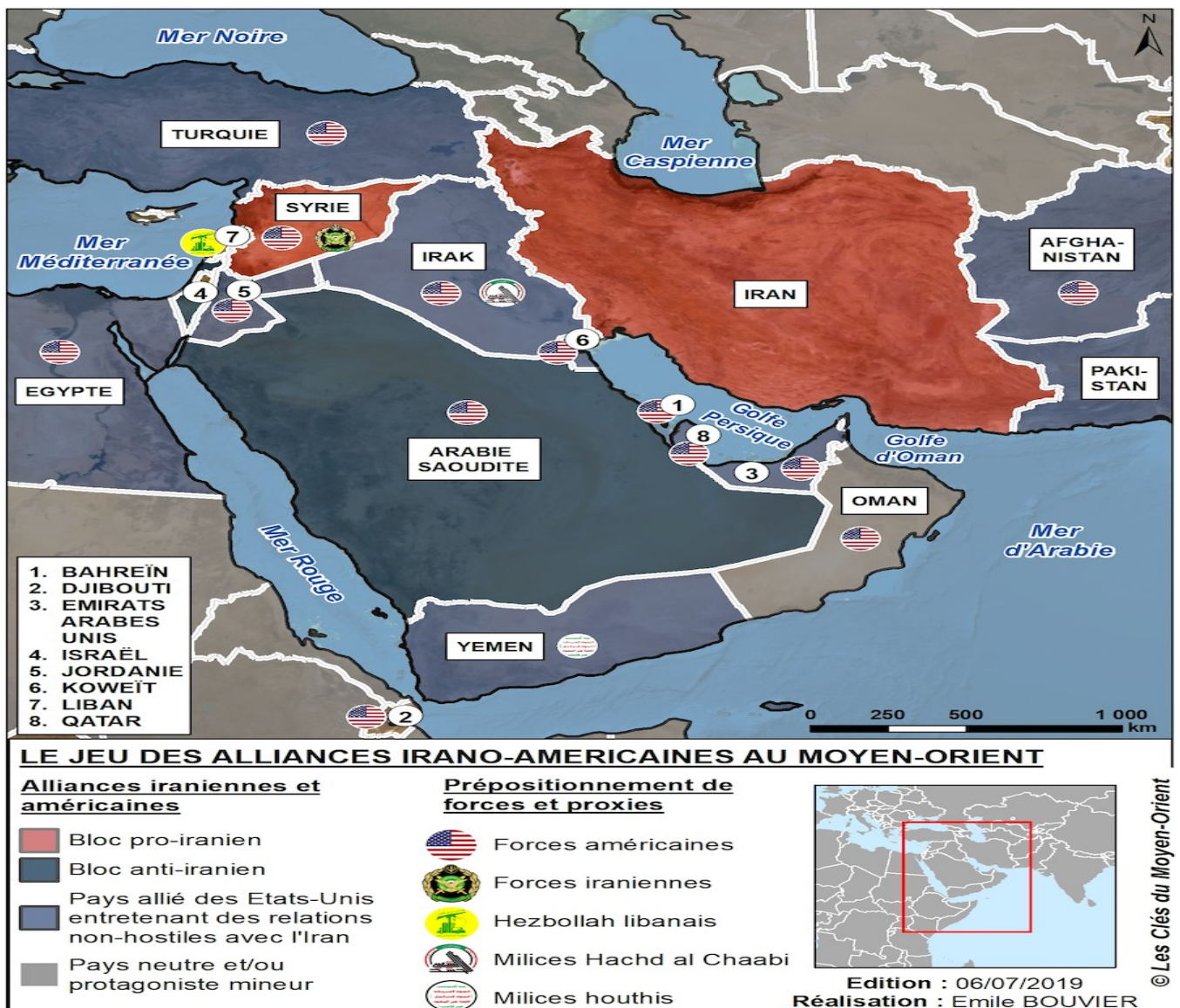
advance partnerships with the USA - based mainly on Washington's ultimate power of decision and on support of the administration regional policies. On the other hand, Western Europe and Canada are reserved with regard to the policy that Donald Trump promotes in relation to the conflicts in the Middle East. We are mostly referring to the dispute with the Tehran Islamic regime, the Syrian civil war and the Palestinian issue.

Moving on to the actual Middle East area, one may see that for a long time the USA have managed to build a large system of bilateral partnerships that, without being immune to shock, tensions and intermissions, all offer support and serve as bridgeheads for the

political and military presence of the USA in this area. (See picture below.)

The Russian Federation, thanks to their policy regarding the Syrian civil war and the relationships with the countries in the region, has almost reached a climax as far as its return and consolidation of presence and influence in the Middle East is concerned. Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Iran act with rigor in order to expand and strengthen their regional power status, while the USA remain, at least for now, the only omnipresent and omnipotent manager of the geopolitical and geostrategic issues in the Middle East.

In these circumstances, **Turkey** has a particular place, since it is one of the founding NATO



Source: les Clés du Moyen Orient, <https://lesclesdumoyenorient.com>

members and has the second largest army in the Alliance. Turkey is also a fundamental outpost for the US regional policies, despite fluctuations in the relationship between the two countries. These fluctuations occurred due to the ever-changing and variable decisions and approaches taken by both the White House leader and the Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdogan. A strong advantage is the US air base in Incirlik (in southern Turkey) where a nuclear arsenal including the long-range strategic bomber force B-52 has been deployed, among others.

Without being a NATO member or part of a long-term regional alliance, the **Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan** is one of USA's most trusted allies in the Middle East. This country has the advantage of being the second Arab state (following Egypt) that concluded a peace treaty with Israel. Besides, it plays a dynamic part in the overall effort to finding a solution to the sensitive Palestinian issue. Military speaking, Jordan has hosted US air force capabilities as part of the international coalition against the Islamist terrorist phenomenon and the fundamentalist terrorist group Islamic State/Daesh.

Equally, **Egypt** benefits from a substantial US financial assistance that serves a military and security purpose and holds a special place in the US regional equation.

In the Arabian Peninsula and on its eastern coast, the Arab monarchies, led by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, but also Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar and Oman may be considered USA's main allies in the Arab speaking area of the Middle East. Speaking from a strategic perspective, but also as main actors on the global market of energy resources, as outlets for the US arms industry and as countries that along with Washington contest the Iranian regime and its policies, these states share an important place in the regional US foreign policy.

Looking at the region from a "Greater Middle East" perspective, we will find **Iraq** in the eastern proximity. This state hasn't forgotten the US invasion between 2003-2011, which is why it has close, official and confidential relationships with Iran. On the other hand, it also has a

relationship with the USA, which might be defined as a sort of catholic marriage that has known its ups and downs. Furthermore, **Afghanistan** and **Pakistan, Yemen** in the southern part of the Arabian Peninsula and **Djibouti** in the Horn of Africa are known as USA's allied clients and are dependent on American financial aid and are exposed to the geostrategic, geopolitical and military developments in the region.

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A long lasting tradition of the USA's foreign policy makes the American diplomacy - no matter its political orientation - divide the international community in two. Using the same rhetoric, we are referring, on one hand, to *the good guys*. They are of course the countries or the communities that suit the USA's national and geostrategic interests and provide the source of future friendships, partnerships and alliances. On the other hand, we are referring to those commonly known as *the bad guys*, which are the countries known as not friendly, even hostile to the interests and plans of the Administrations across the Atlantic. The historical problem in both cases is that, from a resilience point of view, we cannot definitely talk about the steadiness of this paradigm, since for one reason or another *the good guys* can no longer be considered good, once they have exhausted their potential of interest for the USA. *The bad guys* can also revise their hostility and end up on good terms with "America First". We are after all referring to a natural course of events that is as old as the history of alliances between the USA and the rest of the "guys" that make up the international community. Thus, the practice of volatile alliances is but a mere tool, useful under circumstances as volatile as the alliances, to satisfy the temporary interests of the powerful, or of those who want to become powerful or more powerful for a certain amount of time. Nothing new under the sun.



# From the Muslim Brotherhoods to ISIS. The Fall of a Dream: Political Islam

Ambassador Professor Dumitru CHICAN

**MOTTO:**

“Allah is our objective.  
The Prophet is our leader.  
Qur'an is our law.  
Jihad is our way.  
Dying in the way of Allah is our highest hope”

**Hassan Al-Banna**

The founder of the Muslim Brotherhood



In 1929, five years after the fall of the Ottoman Empire and of the centuries old institution of Islamic Caliphate, caused by the blows of the winning empires from the 1<sup>st</sup> World War and by the reformism of the “father of modern Turkey” Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, in Ismailia, Egypt, a theologian and imam, Hassan Al-Banna, founded the Muslim Brotherhood. The movement was meant to be an Islamic organization intended to stand against the British imperial rule over Egypt and, even more so, to mobilize the Muslim community to fight - to Jihad - for the sole purpose of reinstating the universal Islamic Caliphate. Slogans such as “Islam is the way” and “Islam must rule” are the driving force of the movement’s ideology, which promotes the idea that Islam is used to control everything regarding Muslims and Muslim nations, from the intimate lives of their citizens to state institutions and societies. These were similar concepts, their dimensions varying (geographically) from a specific Muslim region to the establishment of Islam, “the true faith”, on a global scale.

Rooting in the ideological and doctrinarian heritage of Hassan Al-Banna, Hamas movement came to life in Gaza, in 1987 – with the objective of turning historical Palestine into an Islamic Palestinian state - and the universal “Jihad against Jews and crusaders” was launched in 1988. The latter was eventually embraced by Osama bin Laden, whose organization “the

base” (*al-qa’ida* in Arabic) would be the starting and leading point for the spread of “the great Jihad”. This Jihad, which reached its peak during the carnage on the 11<sup>th</sup> of September and following the death of Osama bin Laden on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of May 2011 - killed in a US joint military operation - blew up in a million independent “Jihads”. It later spread on an area stretching from the Arab Peninsula all the way through Mesopotamia, the Levant, Western and Sub-Saharan Africa, to the Pakistani Waziristan and the Philippines. One of these would later become famous when it separated from the “parent organization” Al-Qaeda and became the self-proclaimed “Islamic State in Iraq”. It later became the “Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant” and was renamed, shortly after, the “Islamic State in Iraq and Syria”, also known as *the Caliphate*. Following the 644<sup>0</sup> general elections that led to the Palestinian movement Hamas forming a government in the Gaza Strip and the presidential elections in Egypt that brought to presidency a member of the Muslim Brotherhood, it was for the third time that the fundamentalist Islam held the political power. Both “displays of power” proved equally wasteful, with one difference in the case of the “Islamic Caliphate” – which was, for four years in a row, an exercise of terrorism and crime that became a doctrine and a “display of savagery”. This period ended on the night between the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> of this October, when the US Special Forces killed the Iraqi Ibrahim Al-Samarrai, also

known as Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi, the first modern "caliph". Thus ended the third exercise of Islamic political power, and the world rejoiced at the news that one of the most notorious of "Allah's madmen" got his retribution for all the massacres and suffering he has caused humanity and civilization.

\* \*

These present times, which some analysts - sociologists, historians, political experts and thinkers - call post-modernism, where "post" is accurately used, comes across a question that has been recurring for some time. It is in need of an answer, justly we might add - *is fundamentalist or political Islam capable of providing a different approach on how to deal with the future, or how to shape it?*

Islamic trends and their theorists have claimed and are still claiming that the main purpose of the relationship between religion and politics is to accurately reconstitute the original Islamic purity. They claim that the historical evolutions and, most of all, the contact with non-Islamic, Judaic and Christian values has corrupted Islam and drove it away from its original sources - the Koran and the Hadith (the record of the traditions and sayings of the Prophet Muhammad and his first followers in the 7<sup>th</sup> century). In the end, this concept is nothing more than an attempt to go back to a long gone tradition.

A closer examination of the rhetoric of Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi's Islamic State will highlight, though, the very fact that these two fundamental sources of the Islamic doctrine have few and inconclusive references to political matters and to matters related to the concept of institutional state that, following the death of the Prophet, became a pressing matter to the Islamic "nation" (*'umma*) and entailed inventiveness and improvisation. It is not without meaning the fact that political matters initially related to the succession of the leader were at the origin of the first political schisms and conflicts, so one may say that politics in Islamic communities was developed starting from religious motivations and arguments. Politics became organized, theorized and codified only later, during the

Abbasid Dynasty, after the year 750, which is over a hundred years after the death of Prophet Muhammad (630).

On the other hand, one should not ignore the fact that politics and law during the first centuries of Islam - when Salafism was the doctrine that served as the ideal and model for the contemporary Muslim society - were but a set of improvisations meant to answer the needs of that time and to legitimise an authority - that of the caliph - frequently enacted by force, intrigue and what could be called "political scheme". It is obvious that such laws and concepts developed a millennium ago are not compatible with the reality nowadays. This being the case, we won't be wrong when we say that in the absence of a political tradition in harmony with the social and historical evolutions, politics in Islam will be attributed to religion, which thus becomes both political object and subject.

\* \*

By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup>, the so called Islamic Renaissance (*Al-Nahda*) of the Muslim people and societies through "purification of the Islamic dogma" from the "bad influences" of the contact with the Western culture and civilization managed to change religion and religiousness into a tool used in the political and ideological fight against the West, obsessively and exclusively identified with colonialism and imperialism.

This forced politicisation of Islam became the weapon against imperialism and inevitably led to the appearance and development of a generation of both Muslim and converted



militants to whom Islam had to be, in comparison to the West, an anti-model, susceptible to free the "Islamic nation" from the reins of underdevelopment and to protect it from the "bad" and destructive influence of the western culture. It aimed to protect the purity of the legacy left by the forefathers of this religion (*salaf*, pl. *aslaf*, hence *Salafist* and *Salafism*) that was used by the ideologists, followers and militants of the "Renaissance" in their common narratives. The doctrine of the Muslim Brotherhood pre-dated a rigid Islamic fundamentalism that was based on the concept that Islam alone, through persuasion or "Islamic revolution", was the only cure for all the problems humans had all over the world. Given the fact that, closer to our time, a radical movement born in sub-Saharan Africa (Mali, Niger and Nigeria) could call itself "Boko Haram" (literally "Western education is a sin"), the irrational overestimation of this proclaimed Islamic superiority gradually led to the radicalization of the "Islamic Renaissance", giving birth to the extreme organizations that came to be Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State-ISIS. Distancing themselves from seeing faith as an atemporal, unlimited and transcendental entity, the fundamentalists had another objective - to create, by brutal means, a world-wide Muslim ideal state that would carry on for centuries the same caliphate that functioned back in the Middle Ages.

Beyond the causes that led to using an overvalued, all-powerful religion as a solution to governance, the failures of the few Islamic exercises of power - Egypt, Algeria, and Morocco and, to a smaller scale, Tunisia - were also directly caused by non-religious issues.

Firstly, we are referring to the inability of the Islamic political formations that were in power to identify and implement practical and viable social and economic solutions instead of idealistic slogans such as "Islam is the way", or "Koran is our law", which can't help finding a positive solution to the damages those countries suffered from: poverty, unemployment, health security, education, and so on.

Secondly, we are referring to the fact that the

same Islamic political formations haven't been able to face reality and encourage the fundamental values that ensure strength and vivacity to the social and statal edifice, such as: democracy (that to fundamentalist thinkers is nothing but an "evil bastard of the Western culture"), pluralism, human rights and freedoms etc. The Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, the Tunisian party "Al-Nahda", or the Moroccan "Justice and Development Party" haven't necessarily had as a fundamental objective reaching out to the social community, but more likely holding on to absolute power and turning the country in a totalitarian entity that is limited to power circles. Such mistakes were sanctioned at the polls when they failed to provide, as did in Egypt, the opportunity for the military to intervene in keeping a working balance between faith and secularity.

We are also referring to the isolation policy promoted by the fundamentalist Islam that has fully rejected any dialogue with the other trends and ideologies present on the domestic chess-board, favouring privileged and mercantile relationships with the power circles, with the military elites and other elites careless of the realities of the civil society, or with other Islamic entities and foreign governments.

And if, as we have well seen, Islam isn't the answer, especially when speaking about violent and terrorist groups abusively calling themselves "Islamic States" or about governance through Islam and for Islam (the case of the ephemeral fundamentalist radical Islamic leadership in Afghanistan), then what is the answer?

One may say that the "Arab Spring" has brought forward - however, in a shape insufficiently crystalized, less understood and totally unaccepted - one of the fundamental requirements for the success of any political reformative endeavour. It is about the dynamic cooperation between the religious political factor and the cultural identity of the Arabic-Muslim society that is, in the beginning of this third millennium, at a crossroads between post-colonialism and liberalism. This involvement and identity boost also implies the support,

assistance and dissemination of national individual and collective freedoms and the dissolution of the mental barriers of a history always looking back to a past that was sanctified and transformed in a sole destiny set by the power of the founding Islamic texts. Values and concepts such as democracy, equality and human rights are the result of a modernism that political Islam refuses to acknowledge, because it would be a denial of history itself, as well as the denial of the "unique, true and infallible"

Muslim identity.

Only then, by use of new, strong and even painful solutions will fundamentalist political Islam be able to descend from the minarets to reach out to people and raise their hopes and expectations. Such an experiment is heading towards success on Tunisia's social and political chessboard following the elections this fall. Without giving up its taboos, political Islam will be the same as when it was born - a long and wasteful utopia.

## The Caliphate Is Without a Caliph

**Ambassador Professor Dumitru CHICAN**

*"Something very big has just happened."*

This was the phrase that president Trump posted on Twitter on the night between the 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> of October. He didn't provide any details but promised that the next day would make a clarifying statement.

Shortly after, the main American TV stations, including ABC and CNN beat the president to it and announced that the leader of the terrorist organisation the Islamic State, the "caliph" Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi had been killed. The event took place during a raid lead by the US Special Forces in a rural area in the north-western part of Syria, in the Idlib province, not far from the Turkish border. The operation benefited from informative support provided by the CIA, Turkish military intelligence and sources from the Kurdish coalition. During the attack, Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi, his three children and his two wives killed themselves by igniting their suicide vests. Later on, representatives of the US Administration stated that they would run DNA and fingerprints tests to confirm the death of the famous terrorist. Killing Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi was the second major US counterterrorist success, after the killing of Osama bin Laden on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of May 2011, in his shelter in the Pakistani city of Abbottabad.

Addressing the nation from the White House on the 27<sup>th</sup> of October, president Donald Trump

stated, among others, that "Last night, the United States brought the world's number one terrorist leader to justice. Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi is dead. [...] Capturing or killing Baghdadi has been the top national security priority of my administration. [...] No personnel were lost in the operation, while a large number of Baghdadi's fighters and companions were killed with him."

The disappearance of the "caliph" Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi (by his real name Ibrahim Al-Samarrai) doesn't necessarily mean, in itself the ideological disappearance of Jihad. One of the first major steps taken by the remaining ISIS groups - whether active or dormant - will most likely be to coronate a successor (a tradition inherited from early Islam).

On the 31<sup>st</sup> of October, the A'amaq ("Depths") News Agency, which is linked to the Islamic State and relay its propaganda, issued an announcement according to which the "caliph" Al-Baghdadi had nominated a successor - Abdullah Qardash (photo above). An Iraqi of Turkmen origin, Abadullah Qardash was Baghdadi's former cell mate during the time they spent in the famous internment camp Camp Bucca, established close to one of the most important ports in Iraq - Umm Qasr.

He used to be a religious commissar and a general shari'a judge for al-Qaeda, and top legislator and policymaker for ISIS. Before joining these organizations, he served as an officer in Saddam

Hussein's army.

Qardash's future leadership of Daesh is problematic, since according to the tradition of early Islam, in order to be named leader he needs the approval of all the heads of the terrorist groups and Jihadist structures, including chiefs of entities that have affiliated to Al-Baghdadi's "caliphate" and are spread across at least 12 states in the Middle East, Africa and



Abu Bakr Al- Baghdadi

Abdullah Qardash

the Asian Far East. To this we add many other, important or less important leaders who, throughout the existence of the Islamic State have tried to manoeuvre their way up its decision-making, command or financial ladder. This competition could affect the level of adherence to, and unity around Al-Baghdadi's will regarding the continuation and escalation of Jihad against the "infidels".

However, there is another "post-caliphate" evolution of this Salafi-Jihadist terrorist structure. With Al-Baghdadi gone, the level of support for the 2014 rupture between Daesh and Al-Qaeda is expected to fade away since the latter has also suffered major losses among its traditional regional leaders (the case of Al-Nusra Front in Syria, Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, or Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula). According to Arabic speaking analysts, this state of facts favours a reconfiguration of the relationship between Daesh and Al-Qaeda that is they would resume some forms of communication, cooperation and coordination.

Besides, the killing of Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi may turn out to be - for many zealot Jihadists that have no future either in the Orient, or in their home countries - an incentive to the so called *tha'r* (revenge by bloodshed, or the

traditional vendetta), which means that fanaticism and terrorist acts will intensify and will be harder to fight against.

This is why one may say that the fight against Islamic terrorism is facing a new, unpredictable stage.

Eliminating the terrorist leader Al-Baghdadi delivered, without a doubt, a harsh blow to the Jihadist group, yet not lethal. In the social and institutional chaos that keeps on inflicting damage on Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, chances are that, following a period of relative quietness Daesh could prove - just like Al-Qaeda did - a remarkable ability to adapt to evolutions on the frontline. In the short time following the demise of the former "caliph", lone Jihadists or dormant Jihadist cells kept on engaging in sporadic, yet bloody terrorist attacks that resulted in human and material losses.

There are at least four recent developments that call for caution and restraint when so triumphantly speaking about the disappearance of the "Islamic State in Iraq and Syria".

Firstly, we are referring to the frequent ups and downs in the US policy regarding the American military presence in the terrorist conflict area. This is why there are voices, both within the area and outside it that allege the Donald Trump administration is giving up on the fight against the Jihadist-terrorist phenomenon, while focusing on taking control over the oil and gas resources in the northern and north-eastern part of Syria.

Secondly, we are referring to the protests in Iraq, Syria and Lebanon, that together have generated a situation in which the territory freed from ISIS' control cannot be managed well enough by their own governments, which are supposed to deny the presence of Jihadists. This is why vast territories in the southern part of Iraq, the center of Syria and the Lebanese Bekaa Valley may present themselves as uncontrolled areas and available for a gradual reassembly of the terrorist organization's destructive capabilities.

Thirdly, we are referring to the consequences of the decision - already put into practice - of the Turkish government to repatriate the more than

1500 Daesh prisoners detained in Turkey. The fact that there are no serious guarantees as far as monitoring the released prisoners to their destination means the terrorists could take advantage of the situation and seek support in the rural and tribal areas in order to reorganize a clandestine resistance and keep Abu Bakr Al-Baghdady's legacy alive.

Lastly, we are referring to the Turkish operation to establish a safety zone in northern Syria that is flawed, which can encourage the Kurdish community to follow Ankara's example and get rid of the significant number of Arabic and foreign Jihadist prisoners held in Kurdish detention facilities.

The killing Al-Baghdadi has beheaded the Islamic State; however, this doesn't hold back individual and small groups/cells combat initiatives. Osama Bin Laden, Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi, Abu Omar Al-Baghdadi, Abu Muhammad Al-Julani (Al-Qaeda) were as many Salafists whose disappearance did not prevent the rise of Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi's "caliphate".

Daesh isn't gone and the war against Jihadist-Salafism isn't over. This is why it would be useful if the leaders of the countries involved in the fight against terrorism on both sides of the Atlantic gathered together to share the lessons learned during four years of fight against terrorism, reach common conclusions, and take common decisions that would eventually be implemented through joint efforts.

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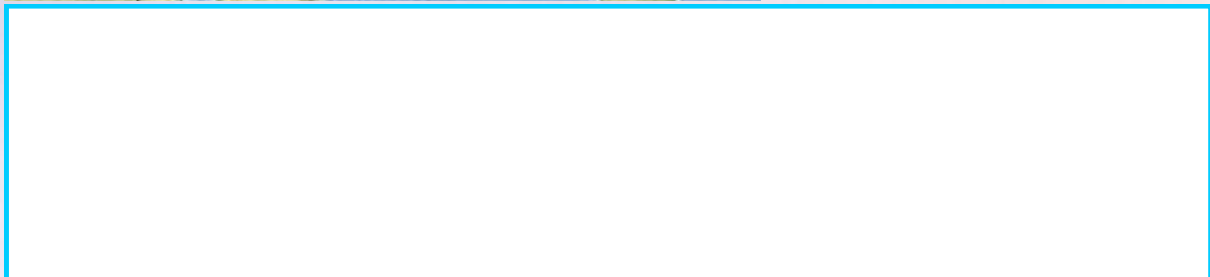


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