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Special contributions (in alphabetical order)



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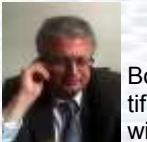
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Motto: "Opinions are free, but not mandatory"—I.L.Caragiale

EDITORIAL

"Creating a shared future in a fractured world"

Corneliu PIVARIU



The World Economic Forum that took place in Davos-Switzerland under this title during the last decade of January, 2018, is a Forum founded and inaugurated in 1971 by Klaus Schwab, with the initial intention of facilitating an exchange of experience between the USA and Europe. Over the years, it evolved and especially during the last 5-10 years it became a world platform as the yearly reunion in Davos is an opportunity of direct dialogue among prestigious personalities globally and regionally. In 2018, more than 3,000 participants from all the fields of economic, social, financial, political, academic, civil society and media were registered without notable differences of structure as compared to previous years. The direct participation of the American president Donald Trump was a novelty, an American president's coming back to Davos after 20 years. The Forum had more than 400 sessions of which around 160 were broadcast live.

The Forum's title is made up of two parts: a truth – *we live in a fractured world* (even a deeply fractured one and with many discrepancies, most of them growing); and a wish – *to create a global shared future* (something that, under current circumstances and at least on the medium run is, with all condescension, an utopia). Setting high objectives may be mobilising indeed, yet if these objectives are quite impossible to reach they become discouraging and do not contribute to reaching the proposed goal.

Among the documents published before the beginning of works, we notice the report on global risks and the one on „Europe's renewal”.

One of the Davos Forum's stars was India represented by prime minister Narendra Modi, who spoke at the inaugural session. India is a country asserting more and more pregnantly on the international arena especially in the economic field with a growth of between 7.1% and 7.6% over the last years and an estimation of 7.4% for 2018, while China's growth is around 7%. India is the sixth world economy and the third measured as PPP.

The Fourth Industrial Revolution created outstanding conditions for success innovations leading, among others, to an unprecedented growth of information flows. At the same time, we are witnessing global significant challenges, some of them recent, some other new such as deepening the inequality of incomes, the persistence of growing unemployment, escalation of violences and conflicts all over the world, threats to states' stability, erosion of public confidence in governments, increased geostrategic frictions under the circumstances of climate change and the aggravation of the environmental problems.

The classification of the first five global risks for 2018, published by the Forum, places on the first spot the WMD followed by climatic risks, natural disasters, climatic change and water crisis with some changes as compared to the last year (water crisis was on the third place, not on the fifth). We notice the disappearance of the financial crisis (which was on the first place in 2014) or major systemic financial failures (on the first place in 2013 and 2014).

According to the likelihood of their occurrence in 2018, the following are specified in order: extreme climatic events, natural disasters, cyber attacks, data frauding and theft, failure of limiting climatic change and of adapting to it. In 2015, the danger of interstate conflicts was on the first place, the failure of certain governments was on the third and on the fourth the collapse or crisis of certain states. Of course, the abovementioned classifications do not exclude the existence of certain risks which were not underlined among the first five.

In what concern president Donald Trump's presence at Davos, one noticed that the speech delivered in plenary was confined to the written text, a sign he paid a special attention to this manifestation. The clarification that "America first does not mean America alone" is important. His speech, focused on the economic field did not mention any geopolitical realities: he did not indicate China, India Iran and not even Europe.

The World Forum in Davos represented a good opportunity for exchanging opinions on macro and even punctual issues and one of the hottest topics was related to Artificial Intelligence. In all likelihood, globalisation 3.0 will mean a fragmented globalisation, dotted by breaks, delays and several bi and multilateral treaties.

The Current Geostrategic World-wide Outlook

The new french-german Europe. Where will we be?

Cristian UNTEANU

The first round of negotiations for forming the German government between the coalition CDU/CSU and the socialist was successfully concluded after a night of heated debates.

A framework document of 28 pages was adopted as a rule of game for the next moves which should be finalized next month at the latest and, at the same time, gives a first solid answer to the topics proposed by Emmanuel Macron for extending the duration of functioning of the French-German engine which, this time, becomes the de facto axis around which whatever will the construction of the new great European project mean evolves.

For no one may have any doubt on this type of evolution and on the manner of what comes is drawn, the text clearly specifies that: *"Europe's renewal could succeed only if Germany and France work together with all their forces. That is why we want to strengthen and renew the French-German cooperation."*

It is a move of utmost importance since, at least at this moment, it proves that some new moves are about to materialize and will redefine extremely rapidly the manner the important community policies are devised and implemented and tells us who are the main two Guardian Powers of Europe's new project. They got and knew how to use the context created following Great Britain's voluntary withdrawal from the EU. And shows something else: for the first time, the European idea was at the core of negotiations for the formation of a national government and that the European topics and policies were the real and top subject for all the partners.

What does it mean? It is an essential move. For France, and now for Germany, the idea of "national priority" – politically, economically, socially – coincides on very many strategic levels with the existence of an European project secur-

ing the necessary "market"

on which they develop

plenary. What "market" will it be about? It is the one that will be articulated from now on either by the actual Member States joining the project in the future or, why not, their remaining in a "grey zone" or, why not, their self-ejection from the system according to the British model.

Beware, here is the key of the future construction: the capacity of some countries to prove political will doubled by administrative strength and the existence of some reasonable supporting resources allowing them to coherently articulate themselves at the level of the great project and of its sectoral offshoots. If the central idea is that of the "great strategic projects", it is clearly indicated that it is the result of a main concern for the power zone which is the eurozone. Or, if you wish, for what will be the future euro-Schengen super-force zone after applying all the restrictive and qualitative adjustments already proposed by the French-German engine. These adjustments imply, among many others, (read the document) assigning specific budgetary resources for economic stability, social convergence, and, obviously, for backing the structural reforms in the euro-zone, a possible starting point for the future emergence of a specific budgetary zone dedicated to strategic investment programmes. It is extremely important that the negotiations in Germany support now the French idea of transforming the present European Stability Mechanism into an European Monetary Fund under parliamentary control and encoded as such in the European legislation.

"In this spirit, in close partnership with France, we want to sustainably strengthen and reform the eurozone so that we better face the global crises"...



One of the remarks with the heaviest of consequences is that concerning the possibility to condition the EU budget on political imperatives such as for instance the proof of "solidarity of the reciprocity" counts... a message directed to Poland or to Hungary, countries which, in spite of all the EU's pressing appeals refused to accept refugees. The remark concerning the EU's future positioning in the world is very relevant as "Europe must take its fate in its own hands much more than it did before", and that by condemning and renouncing "protectionism, isolationism and nationalism", a clear reference to the present line of the American policy imposed by Trump Administration.

A remake of all games in the EU will follow. I do hope we have been readying ourselves since longer time for that and know to correctly negotiate our place in the formal and informal alliances of power. For Europe prepares itself for that. Yet where will we be? Exactly where we prepared our place.

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PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS WITH A PREDICTABLE OUTCOME IN THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION



Dr. Octavian DUMITRESCU

There is nothing new in the equation of the next Russian presidential elections due to take place on 18 March 2018. The overall strategy of the current Russian president is already known and no one doubted that he would apply it again, this time because, as in the previous cases, he secured conditions that would enable him the participation and winning of the presidential elections. However, unlike the previous elections, the current situation seems more favorable to him, both at a domestic level and at an external level. The ease and safety with which Vladimir Putin has worked in the recent years and especially the manner in which he acted during the annual press conference on 14 De-



cember 2018 demonstrated that he was sure to win the upcoming elections. We will try in the following lines to highlight some significant issues for the way in which Vladimir Putin prepared his way for the fourth term as President of the Russian Federation. Apparently, these issues are "great achievements" for his presidential term, but, basically they show the clear political skill and sometimes cynicism to avail himself of the difficulties and dysfunctions of the Russian society and of the neighboring regional conflicts, virtually the former sphere of influence of the former USSR.

At a domestic level, Vladimir Putin is confident of success due to the support of a large part of the Russian Federation's population, which approves most of the measures taken during the current mandate, but mostly because of the "victories" achieved by the Russian Federation abroad - namely the annexation of Crimea, the involvement in the crisis in Ukraine, the improvements in the US attitude towards the Russian Federation or "sweetened" relations with some Western countries. The appreciation of a large part of the population is due to the measures taken to improve working conditions and living standards, at least in terms of statements and statistics. On the other hand, the favorable attitude of the population can be influenced by the apparent good relationship with the US President, which might suggest some eas-

ing of international relations of Russia and, in this context, the hope that the Russian institutions would be able to handle more of the social, economic and material situation of the citizens.

At an external level, Russia has gained a higher position than it had at the beginning of the current term of President Vladimir Putin, an improvement materialized in several victories of the current leadership of the country: the annexation of Crimea, preventing the settlement of the crisis in Ukraine and involvement in this crisis; Turkey's closeness to Moscow; the independent and direct involvement in the crisis in Syria and the destruction of the terrorist ISIS formations without direct coordinated action with the US and international efforts but by supporting the Assad regime; mitigating the effects of the sanctions imposed by the EU and the US and others. We can add the satisfactory progress of the process of formation and development of the Eurasian Economic Union and the less significant evolution of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO).

Another advantage for the fourth candidacy of Vladimir Putin to the presidency of the Russian Federation is that **there are no strong opponents** in the presidential race. Until the annual press conference in mid-December 2017, the list of those who said they would run in the presidential elections of 18 March 2018, although long, does not contain any important names. This is due to either the exclusion of certain personalities - such as the fiercest political opponent Alexei Navalny, who is impeded by the Russian justice to run as a result of entrapment and false

accusations - or to obstructions from presenting an electoral program to the people or from conducting electoral campaign activities (no spaces are rented, for example), as it is the case of journalist Ksenia Sobchak, presented during the annual press conference of 14 December 2017. According to the RIA Novosti (15 December 2017), the *Central Election Commission of the Russian Federation* has presented the list of the people who expressed intention to join the presidential race by that date, comprising 67 people, including: the current President Vladimir Putin, the journalist Ksenia Sobchak, the political scientist Andrei Bogdanov, Boris Iakemenko - one of the founders of the movement "Nashi", the leader of the Communist Party Gennady Zyuganov (after the final decision of the Communist Party Congress, running against the rival Vladimir Jirinovskii), the journalist Ecaterina Gordon, Rahman Iansukov - the head of the association Avanti, Elena Semericova - the leader of the party "Feminine Dialogue", the entrepreneur Sergei Polonskii, Irina Volanetz - President of the National Parents Committee, Alexander Ciuhlebov - the leader of the movement "Vozrojdenie" (Renaissance), Vyacheslav Smirnov - Director of the Russian Institute of Political Sociology, Mikhail Kozlov - an expert in social psychology. Of course that all candidates are equally important, but the chances of each are different, especially since some are in opposition to the incumbent president and cope much harder with the objective and subjective difficulties of the campaign.

Vladimir Putin said at the annual press conference on 14 December 2017 that the proposal to run does not come from any party or institution, being a self nomination and that the main objectives of the future presidential term will be the development of infrastructure, health and education. However, Putin said at the annual press conference in December 2017 that he expected to be supported by organizations and political parties, institutions and citizens who share his ideas.

At the previous elections, Vladimir



Putin presented some large scale strategic objectives to the voters: the creation of the Eurasian Union, the achievement of a new identity for Russia, an increased economic and military power of the country and others, and the results of implementing the measures envisaged by the current mandate of the Russian President can be points of support in the upcoming election campaign. Of course, there will be more details when Putin's electoral program will be made public and we could, at that point, make a meaningful analysis of it. But Putin has already begun his presidential campaign when announcing some projects displaying his strength and determination to rule the Federation on definite accounts that he would win the elections. They have long-term implications and a positive impact on ordinary citizens leading to a definite positive turnout.

The most important impact on the Russian citizens, especially on the ethnic Russians - a majority in the Russian society, had, in our opinion, **the annexation of Crimea to the Russian Federation**. Crimea is sentimentally related to the history of Soviet Russia and the historical sensibility of the Russian citizens can be compared to a coup de grace given by President Putin to his opponents in the country or abroad, be they politicians or ordinary citizens that cannot challenge the effectiveness of his actions. The recovery of the military facilities with historical significance, the Russian citizens and the Crimean territory have special significance for the current presidential term and for the future election race. Although it is considered that this change of borders is contrary to international law and was not officially recognized by international or global actors that matter to international security, the Russian President and the government in Moscow started immediate actions to integrate the energy, social and economic systems of Crimea in the Russian Federation, as well as to improve the situation of people as it is in the Russian Federation. For example, a bridge was quickly built over the Kerch strait in order to connect the territory of Crimea with its new country, which facilitates the transport of the necessary supplies to the Crimean territory. This

is an important geopolitical and security step, at least for the Black Sea region, if not for the security of the world and can positively influence candidate Vladimir Putin in the presidential elections of 18 March 2018.

In late November 2017, Vladimir Putin announced **measures to prepare the economy of the Russian Federation for war**, according to which ***all large enterprises in Russia would be ready to go at any time from civilian to military production*** (according to the portal "newsru.com" quoted by the National Journal, 27 November 2017, p. 22). Vladimir Putin said that "all strategic and large enterprises, regardless of ownership" must be prepared to serve mobilization. Some Russian commentators have pointed at the mobilization during the former USSR, considering that the Russian economy is being directed by Putin "on a military path". The same source mentions that part of the Russian Federation's effort in the military domain could thus be borne by the private and business sector in Russia, while the Russian government has proposed to increase defense spending to 176.9 billion rubles (31 billion USD). We believe that there are sufficient elements - institutions and civil organizations, political parties and social power structures - which favor this measure and they will support Vladimir Putin in the presidential elections.

Another element of support for the Russian President in the next campaign refers to ***the general evolution of the society and especially of the Russian economy***. Vladimir Putin began his annual press conference in December 2017 with a brief overview of some development indicators of the Russian Federation in his mandates: the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in Russia increased in 2000 by 75 percent; the industrial production increased by 60 percent and manufacturing by 70 percent; real incomes have also increased in 2000 by 250 percent; real pensions have increased by 260 percent; infant mortality decreased 2.6 times and maternal mortality by 75 percent; the decrease in population was about 1 million per year, but the demographic situation was reversed, resulting in a trend of stabilization at this level. Simultaneously, life

expectancy has increased from 65.3 years to 73 years and during the same period the country's debt dropped 3 times and the reserves increased 30 times in Russia.

If real, the data presented by President Vladimir Putin, show a positive track record of the Russian Federation, both during his mandate as president and as prime minister of the Russian Federation, a period when he was more visible than the president of the country at the time.

Another element of support for the candidacy of Vladimir Putin to the presidency of the Russian Federation is ***the enhanced combat capacity of the Russian Armed Forces*** reflected by increased budgets, the purchase of newer, modernized weapons and equipment and reforms in the Russian military structures, even if some of them did not come out as expected by the decision makers in Moscow. This tendency will continue in the next potential presidential term: *the Russian military expenditures for 2018 are estimated at over 46 billion USD, which is 2.8 percent of Russia's GDP*, as stated by Vladimir Putin at the annual conference press in December 2017. After the annexation of Crimea, the focus of the efforts to modernize the Russian Armed forces has been on the West and South Military Districts, especially on the forces in Crimea and the proximity of the area of conflict in eastern Ukraine. Particular attention has been given to Russia's Black Sea Fleet, which must become *an instrument more capable of acting as a state instrument in support of Russia's national interests in the region* in the next 54-20 years, says Alex Schneider in European Maritime Security Topic Week (28 March 2017).

In this context, President Putin, a candidate to the presidency of Russia, has launched the most interesting measure to increase the combat capacity of the Russian fleet in the Black Sea – ***building the most powerful and modern Russian nuclear missile submarine***, class Borei II, called ***Knead Vladimir***. The commander of the Russian naval forces, Admiral Vladimir Korolev, who communicated the information to the media, said the project would be launched in August 2017. Some sources say that this submarine

will be “invisible” to the opposing forces. Of course, apparently, the information is not directly connected to the upcoming presidential elections in Russia, but the impact on the people can be important, especially if brought to public attention during the campaign, given the appreciation of the Russian population for the annexation of Crimea with its military facilities of historical resonance. In fact, after the annexation of Crimea, the national institutions and personalities with responsibilities in national security have triggered a campaign to increase the combat capabilities in Crimea, the Black Sea and the regions of their proximity by deploying numerous weapons and equipment and the appropriate troops so as to create the perception of enhanced safety for the people living in the region. At the same time, these measures lead to a significant increase of Russian weapons and equipment in the Black Sea region.

At an external level, some of the objectives that Vladimir Putin had established for the current presidential term have been achieved. Among these, ***the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) has represented an important point in the plans of the Russian president***, which has been implemented though it has had its obstacles. At the annual press conference in December 2017, President Putin emphasized several points, as it follows: the EEU is an important common achievement confirmed by the fact that the domestic production of goods has increased by 26 percent from its foundation and it is exported, while the GDP of the EEU increased by 1.8 times compared with the Russia's GDP which increased by 1.6 times; Putin believes that it is a good sign for the union. The EEU member countries are Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Russia, but Tajikistan may also become a member of the union. Within EEU, some member countries have increased trade with important percentages, up to one third of their production. Vladimir Putin acknowledged, however, that there are still problems with custom regulations, the introduction of electronic declarations on the movement of goods between countries, the liberalization of electricity and others.

At the same time, ***Russia's illegal involvement***

in the actions in the eastern of Ukraine and the multilateral support to the Ukrainian rebels had a significant impact on the Russian citizens, especially on those who were nostalgic about the past, *an impact just as important as the impact related to the annexation of Crimea*. In the annual press conference in December 2017, Vladimir Putin noted several times some aspects about the creation of Ukraine and the current situation in this country, ironically comparing "democracy" in Ukraine with the one in the Russian Federation. The fact that the officials in Moscow are involved in various forms, more or less legal, in the support of the ethnic Russians in other countries creates the impression and sometimes the belief that they are equally concerned about all the Russians, regardless of where they live, without comparing them with people in other countries. In fact, Vladimir Putin said earlier that Russia is responsible for the situation of all the Russians regardless of the country in which they live and that the decision makers in Moscow must intervene for them so as they would live safely wherever they are. And, as everyone knows, ethnic Russians are spread in all the countries that have belonged to the former Soviet empire.

At the same time, ***the Russian President Vladimir Putin has skillfully speculated the events and changes that took place in Turkey and Syria***, something that could count to the public vote. Regarding the situation in Syria, Russia has participated almost in pretense at the international community's efforts to destroy ISIS forces, but it had direct agreements with the dictatorship that brought Syria to collapse and acted against its own citizens. Russia has deployed significant forces and acted independently against the rebel forces and in cooperation with the forces of the Assad regime. Russia has also deployed significant aviation forces in the final attack against ISIS forces and acted as such. Moreover, it surprisingly managed to deploy these forces without the actions being discovered by the numerous land, air and spatial reconnaissance forces of other countries, including the US. No one explained how has Russia managed to carry out this major action without being discov-

ered by the numerous surveillance elements. Is this a strong point for the candidate to the Russian presidency? Of course, nobody can deny it.

Regarding Turkey, the events that have occurred in recent years have led to a visible approach between Turkey and Moscow, in the context of distant relations with the US and the Western countries, although it is a member of NATO. The change of political and social direction in this country, with significant sacrifices especially among the Turkish armed forces, has been speculated with the same ability by President Putin and the Kremlin, which can have a significant impact for the citizens voting on 18 March 2018. The crisis in Turkey increases again the distance between Ankara and Washington, much to the benefit of Moscow and Putin.

The international context in which the presidential elections in the Russian Federation will take place **is complex enough to create conditions that will facilitate winning the fourth presidential term**, given Putin's ability to speculate in his favor the events in the vicinity of Russia's borders. And unfortunately, these events are numerous. After the US presidential election, these events enriched with the aggravation of the conflict related to the nuclear developments and the acceleration of experiments with nuclear weapons by North Korea, which give the Russian President the opportunity to go public with Moscow's position and come up with approaches of peace and agreement between the parties. In our opinion, it is possible that the current thawing of relations between the two Koreas, related to the winter sporting events, is the result of a possible influence of the Russian President on the leader of North Korea, a situation which would be also a trump card in the election campaign of Vladimir Putin.

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The analysis of the context in which the presidential campaign in the Russian Federation is carried out has more components and may reveal other unexpected components. However, given the above, **we can conclude that Vladimir Putin has sufficient means to ensure his fourth**

term as President of the Russian Federation. He remains within the traditional limits of the Russian people – he is a firm, strong and unscrupulous leader for the country in international relations and in the confrontations with those agreeing and disagreeing with him in public or in private, directly or indirectly. **It is Russia's tradition as a state to be led by a man of this type, who could be compared to Lenin, Stalin or Khrushchev, who would "take care" of the Russian people and of its interests. And Putin knows how to do these things very well.** It is also in the tradition of the Russian people that those who run the country to do it for a long term and Putin manages it without having the majority of Russian citizens bothered by the "democracy" specific to Putin's regime.

Vladimir Putin has succeeded so far and continues to have chances to turn the most difficult and controversial situations in the Russian Federation and in the countries former members of the Soviet empire into advantages to himself and to the people around him. We will see after the presidential elections in the Russian Federation if these traits of Putin matter for the voters. We have to wait a little bit more and then we will see the truth.



Rise and fall of the american model



Adrian SEVERIN

The power of a state is not measured only by the capacity of its economy of dominating the markets, by the efficiency of its military technology, by its demographics and dimension of its territory or by the possibilities of acting as center of irradiance and forming alliances but by the attractiveness of its cultural values, of its way of life. We speak here of the cultural dimension of power alongside its economic, military, demographic, technological, geoeconomic and geopolitical dimension.

1. The USA became a global empire not only because the dollar, supported by a strong economy fueled by outstanding natural and human resources, imposed itself as reserve currency of all world's states, not only because the American army was able to move in record time anywhere it had the interest and to win militarily any war it was involved in (winning peace is quite another matter) and not only because they had the appropriate technologies to bring them information and of sending their message (instructions) in real time from and to the farthest corner of Earth but also and, maybe especially, because the American dream and the American way of life captivated the minds and hearts of people everywhere.

In the 1980s, Jean-Jacques Servan-Schreiber, if I am not wrong, noticed that although we all admired Japan's performances and Japanese's industriousness, no one wanted to live like the Japanese but like the Americans. This is why America and not Japan had the vocation to dominate mankind. This is why those who saw in the last quarter of the XXth century in (an Americanized) Japan the superpower of a future unipolar world (after the envisaged defeat of the USSR in the Cold War) were wrong. For the Japanese productivity could not rival the... "American dream".

The greatness of the American model was due to understanding the fact that dream can defeat reality and it is from here it extracted its seduction capacity and, finally, its global domination.

One may object that communism too or even Nazism generated and tried to sell dreams. The fundamental difference is that the respective dreams were sad; almost nightmares. According to an anecdote of the time, the communism heaven was visible at the horizon, but horizon is the imaginary line that moves off the more you come closer. The specificity of the "American dream" was its fulfilment during the lifetime of those who dreamed it; sleeping was... enough.

The communists were promising happiness for future generations on condition of sacrificing the present generation; the monotheistic religions opposed to communism were promising happiness, too, but only after death and on condition of accepting a sad and tormented life. The cult of the American consumerism only offered happiness here and now and for the eternity. The fact that if no promise based on alternative models ever materialized, the "American dream" came true and that beats all devil!; at least for a time and at least apparently. This is why many (almost all for a time) believed in it; and accepted rejoicingly that the world, as we know it today, be based on the Yankee paradigm.

Today's world is as America built it – says, and not ill-founded, the neocon political scientist Robert Kagan. Who added prudently that America did it in its own interest and not in the interest of the others; therefore due to selfishness, not due to selflessness. Yet a smart selfishness since the architecture of this world, guaranteed by the American power, is everything that can be better for all. To paraphrase Churchill, the American global order is the worst form of organizing the world except for the other forms (sic!).

2. What are the fundamentals or what are the constants of this order? The three of them are: peace, human rights and freedom of commerce. More precisely: the armed peace (we spend, the USA included, more for self-armament than we spend for social development and integration),

the rights of individual who has no cultural identity and national roots (the holder of the right has no obligation towards the state he exercises the right and obtains the guarantee of the right from an "international community" with which he has an asymmetrical relationship of a neo-feudal type) and freedom of consumption (the economy is stimulated by consumption and the consumption is stimulated by credit, namely virtual money and by removing any legal/fiscal barriers, i.e. virtual freedom).

The former president of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, Miguel-Angel Martinez, stressed shortly after the fall of Berlin Wall that the Euro-Atlantic order had not such a big attraction capacity if it was limited to offering only peace, freedom and democracy (inseparable from the rule of law/legality and human rights), were it not brought welfare with them. In other words, the democratic state is not worth a farthing and peace would have not lasted two days were it was not the welfare state; be it of the virtual welfare. I myself was paraphrasing even at the beginning of the 1990s former American president John Keneddy and I was writing: "Freedom without welfare is futile and welfare without freedom is unsustainable".

The USA forged at the global level the conviction that freedom and welfare can coexist in a world of peace and free exchange. At the foundation of this world they put four stones: Hollywood, Coca-Cola, Credit Card and McDonald's. Its resistance structure was for a long time made up of three pillars – the American fleet, the American nuclear arsenal and the American dollar – to which a fourth was recently added, the most terrible one – the internet (the Americans only have the technology to control it).

3. This pax americana it is not, indeed, the product of an order of love since the Americans are an aggressive and expansionist people inspired by Old Testament's God who descended them from March (the planet of war) unlike the Europeans, descended from Venus (the planet of love) – as the same Robert Kagan believes. Any other superpower (among the known ones) replacing America's role of global empire would

either not be able to, nor wanting to keep it.

Would it be better? – Mr Kagan asks himself. The lack of capacity of imposing peace (including and especially manu militari) means war and war means both death of freedom and death of welfare. Nevertheless, admitting that Russia or China (as the EU is out of the question) would succeed in becoming a real and efficient global gendarme, none of them would offer mankind and individuals freedom as their culture is dominated by authoritarianism and equalitarism, namely mentalities inhibiting competition, slowing down progress and annihilating prosperity. In the best of cases, such superpowers are organizing themselves domestically as illiberal democracies and therefore their interest would be to export illiberalism to the world and turn it into world order. This is why, according to Mrs Madeleine Albright expression, "America is a necessary empire".

4. I do not have sufficient space here and it is not the moment to analyze the merits, limitations and side-slips of the American democracy. Alexis de Tocqueville did that in its glorious times. During current period, of its decadence, Emmanuel Todd and Noam Chomsky made the analysis with splendid eloquence and maximum depth. I confine myself to mention, for informing those who proclaim America's right to teach us lessons on democracy, the phone-call I received, during the presidential elections of 2000, when I was the president of the PA-OSCE, from the Democrat senator of Florida, A.H., a former judge, asking us if we could declare that the vote was rigged. The frauds were obvious and our answer was we could not do anything since we did not have there any evaluation (monitoring) mission and our only representatives were some Kazakh parliamentarians sent there for learning the way free and fair elections are carried out. I add to that the story the wife of the Republican Congressman C.S. told me that to every parliamentary elections some 5,000... dead people used to vote against her husband.

In spite of many negative examples, Romanians and not only, have a lot to learn from the numerous positive aspects of the American democracy.

What is to be emphasized now is that if within its borders the USA is/was a democracy – with shortcomings, yet democracy – outside these borders, in the international relations, it is not. It was a democratic empire, or at least a liberal, pluralistic, empathy-driven and solidarist empire only when a comparable power opposed it. (The most relevant example is the Marshall Plan and the American behavior in the framework of the world bipolar system during the Cold War.) The language of force is the only one known not only in Russia – as we use to say – but in any other empire or in any geopolitical entity having imperial ambitions.

5. In an imperial, ademocratic and illiberal world order: human rights are no longer defended for the emancipation of human person but for destructuring the nations by depriving them of citizens; the rule of law does not mean any longer the supremacy of law but the arbitrariness of selective justice, as the right of force has the primacy in front of the force of law; free exchange is not any longer an equal chance in a free and loyal competition dynamizing the progress and distributing its fruits according to excellence and also in the spirit of social integration, but a mechanism of "extracting" the added value resulted from the work of all to the benefit of some oligarchs and continuously increasing the mass of the vulnerable, disadvantaged, marginalized and excluded ones – nations and individuals alike. The American world order is not any longer "inclusive" but "extractive", to use the concepts advanced by Timothy Besley, Daron Acemoglu and James Robinson. Or, such an order, even if it produces (economic) growth by using brute force, it can do it on a limited period of time. The entire historic experience shows that.

An "extractive" or "exclusive" system creates security threats (military ones) subsequent to the reactions of the excluded. That enforces the increase of security expenditures (military ones) to the detriment of growth. On a medium run, the opening scissors of these expenditures, namely the ever growing discrepancy between climbing military expenditures and the diminishing expenditures for development ("social investments" included) lead to the collapse of the

imperial power – as Paul Kennedy perfectly demonstrates in his attempt of learning the causes of the fall of empires.

6. If the viability of the "American peace" depends tactically on increasing the military expenditures, from a strategic standpoint it depends on economic growth. The latter secures peoples' access to Hollywood civilization, to – Coca-Cola – Credit Card – McDonald's, making them more easily to be manipulated through the internet. The premise of such a civilization is that of the infinity of growth. The Americans, and not only, believed their model or its attractiveness are neverending since economic growth will be neverending.

Such a conviction is wrong as Earth's resources are finite. Or, one cannot devise an infinite growth in a world with finite resources. The 2008 economic and financial crisis and the chronic stagnation that followed until today prove that. The stagnation kills now the "American model" at the global level the same way it killed the Soviet model during Leonid Brejnev's time.

7. The American elites (or at least part of them) understood (or have begun to understand) this phenomenon and are exerting now efforts for prolonging the lifetime of their empire. What do these efforts mean? What might they do?

First of all, it is about raising the "imperial annuity", namely increasing the volume of resources the other nations should transfer to America as well as of the profit rate they have to yield by "opening" their less and less protected markets. Secondly, we speak of fabricating enemies and demonizing them and their leaders – Russia, China, Iran, the "Muslim terrorism" etc. Thirdly, we take into account the ever stringent "alignment" of its allies, going from limiting their right to a diverging opinion, passing through reducing their action capacity up to "their vassalage".

Without being aware he was repeating Stalin's words, the former president George Bush Jr. declared that those who are not with the USA are against it, while his Under Secretary of Defense,

Paul Wolfowitz, devised the doctrine according to which the USA is entitled to intervene (even by force) everywhere someone contests its geopolitical agenda for annihilating the contesting side's capacity of opposition.

Paradoxically, when it exalts globalisation and claims the statute of sole global leader, the USA nationalizes; when it asks removing the barriers in front of international trade, it enforces the protectionism on its own market. America, once open, hospitable, generous and tolerant, surrounds itself literally by walls. The everywhere emigrants' paradise charmed by the "American dream" (created by themselves) towards the promised land of the New Jerusalem is closing its gates and refuses new vigorous arms and new ingenious minds..

Such "remedies" have nothing original in themselves. They are merely the conservative answer enforced by the need of preserving the domination while the resources are being exhausted; of preserving the model of global order in which, due to its "extractive" character, it become less and less seducing, attractive and motivating (for the Americans themselves included). However, a vicious circle emerges: the more the described safeguarding therapy intensifies, the more the rejection reaction of the periphery of the empire increases and thus the tensions between the periphery and the center exacerbate; the more the said tensions exacerbate, the more the insecurity of the center and, pending to it, the more the expenditures for security rise; the more the expenditures for security rise, the more the "imperial annuity" increases and the capacity of generating "economic growth" rises; the more the capacity of generating "economic growth" decreases, in other words stagnation prevails, the more the power of the center diminishes; finally, the more the power of the center diminishes, the more its reactive (reactionary) and dominating policies amplify, strengthening the resistance of the dominated ones; and so on.

8. All these should be in the Romanians' minds when they think of /and speak of what sometime was and what is still called today the strategic partnership with the USA. ... I continue

to believe in its strategic necessity, yet insist on returning to what we designed, together with America's representatives, that it should be: a mechanism of consultation, concertation, coordination and collaboration on all levels (economic, political, military) where our vital interests are congruous, and realistically acknowledging the difference of amplitude between the partners but intelligently evaluating Romania's capacity of interpolating in an useful way into the American geostrategy of Central, East and South-East Europe, of the Black Sea and the Black Sea portion of the Danube.

..... Anticipating Russia's coming back into the game of global powers, the shortsightedness of the EU strategy and NATO's tactical timidity as well as unwilling Romania's turning into a buffer state or into an object of partition between the Anglo-Saxon West and the Slavic East, in 1977 (from spring to autumn), the Romanians entered a strategic partnership with the USA, a partnership based on shared, compatible, convergent and/or liable to be harmonized values that: a) did not acknowledge to any of the two sides the moral superiority over the other; b) did not confer to either of the sides the role of a mentor, guide or censor of the other; c) did not seek the creation of some parallel roles with those ruled by the international law (Vienna Convention regarding the relations between states included) and especially the UN Charter (the prohibition of the interference in domestic affairs and the sovereign equality); d) did not transfer to either of the two sides the power to appoint the government of the other or the managers of the public institutions of the other); e) did not grant either of the two sides veto right on the legislation of the other; f) did not allow to either of the two sides to be involved in the internal political struggles of the other country; g) did not provide for the attitude of any of the two sides to draw the other side into its geopolitical adventures. The spirit of this partnership and the

way the USA was looking at Romania at the date it was initiated result irreproachably from the statement of the American Secretary of the State Department, Madeleine Albright, delivered during the joint press conference held on April 21st, 1997 on the occasion of my visit to Washington: "The common aim of the United States and Romania is that of building a free, united, peaceful and prosperous Europe Romania's extraordinary progress brought inspiration on both shores of the Atlantic..... I do anticipate a close partnership between our nations in coming years". Neither American narcissism, nor Romanian servilism. Neither lightning bugs, nor servant, but how to build together the united Europe as a transnational democracy. It is urgently needed to return to this spirit and to these ideas and principles.

9. The American global empire was forged by the American soldier and by the "American dream". The soldier is still on the ground. For winning the war is not the same thing with winning peace, and peace is not only the absence of war. Regarding the dream Under the effect of an ever tightened belt and of the ever heavier handcuffs, mankind is awakening. The world is awakening, the dream is scattering and, together with it, the magic of the empire vanishes.

Nevertheless, the situation is not a reason of joy. The fall of the American model takes place simultaneously with the arousal of the old instincts of the national selfishness in the disorderliness of the global multipolarism. War is not any longer a theoretical hypothesis, but an actual reality. A war the American sword alone cannot win.....





“A Romanian Perspective on the Three Seas Initiative”

Liviu MUREȘAN and Alexandru GEORGESCU



ABSTRACT

The Three Seas Initiative is a recent formula describing an older concept. Romania is a reflexive supporter of regional cooperation initiatives, but it is paying special attention to this initiative, as it encompasses a geopolitically significant area with relevance to long-term Romanian interests. This paper argues that this valuable initiative has a latent geopolitical subtext with regards to the two powers flanking the region which is perceived as such, if not commonly articulated, by the countries of the initiative. At the same time, the Black Sea will be a main deciding factor for the success and failure of the Initiatives, owing to several underlying conditions, as well as potential complicating factors. Any sort of Three Seas Initiative development will have to keep this in mind or else

risk a concentration of vulnerabilities in the middle portion of the Initiative’s geographical space. The Three Seas Initiative must also be regarded from the perspective of synergies with Chinese initiatives, such as the Belt and Road Initiative and the 16+1 cooperation between China and Central and Eastern European countries.

Since its inaugural summit in Dubrovnik in 2016, the Three Seas Initiative (also spoken of as the Baltic, Adriatic, Black Sea or the Trimarium) has garnered significant attention from actors projecting their own interests and aspirations unto what is currently still a mostly blank canvas. Its 12 member states have defined a concrete interest in developing regional infrastructure linkages in transport and energy, especially on a North-South axis but, as of yet, the institutional profile of the Initiative still amounts to a

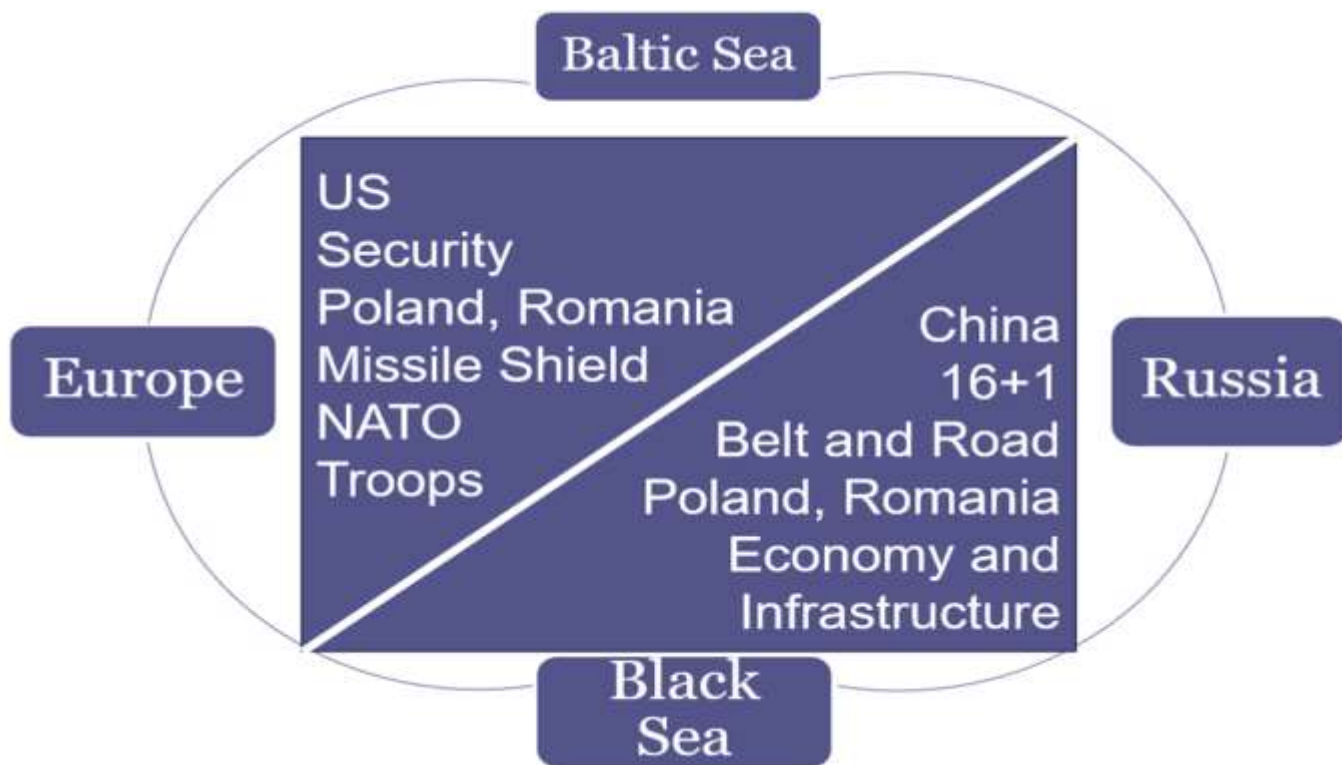


Fig. 1 – Geopolitics in the Intermarium region (source: authors)

forum for discussion and coordination and new directions are hinted at, including in security. President Donald Trump's full-throated endorsement of the concept during the Warsaw Summit in July 2017 projected a significant spotlight on the nascent construct, generating opportunities, credibility and political capital, but also raising expectations and pressures to perform early in the Initiative's development stage.

The paper presents a Romanian perspective on the Initiative, but not THE Romanian perspective, which is likely to shift along with its mutable institutional form and the demands that Romania's agenda places on its regional policies. The main points of discussion are the likely directions into which Romania would prefer the Initiative to evolve, the Black Sea space as a determinant of Initiative success and the American and Chinese potentialities for the Initiative.

The complexities of the new international context, defined by increased interdependencies, motivates countries to try to establish network effects to promote common projects for inclusive growth. Whether or not, as Jean Claude Juncker said, the win is back in Europe's sails, it is necessary for the countries of the often neglected if not marginalized Three Seas region to coordinate to pursue common interests of a various nature, in a challenging security environment also replete with opportunities.

Geopolitical considerations

Przemysław Żurawski vel Grajewski wrote that, while the historical roots of the concept for North-South cooperation in Central and Eastern Europe can be traced to the Polish Intermarium idea, which was an answer to a military threat, "today's Trimarium is not primarily about security but about infrastructure"¹. Rapid progress has been registered after decades of underinvestment and malinvestment in a region that accounts for 28% of the EU's territory and 22% of

its population, but only 10% of its GDP². He lists Russian assertiveness as a continuing concern and speculates about a possible future security component to the Three Seas Initiative, based on a shared outlook regarding Russia. In his description of the proposed and planned infrastructure projects for the region, key issues stand out, such as energy and the opposition of the group's members to the North Stream 1 and 2 projects linking Germany and Russia, bypassing Central and Eastern Europe. This is presented as an explicit security issue related to Russian foreign policy, meaning that the Initiative, even as it couches its actions in terms of infrastructure development, is ultimately developing the economic security that would help its members in resisting, economically, militarily and, not least, psychologically, Russia's pursuit of its agenda. Even the United States involvement in the Warsaw Summit, where deliveries of American natural gas were touted as responding to Eastern European energy needs and are being factored into the regional LNG infrastructure plans, had an overt security component. It also represented a counterpoint to President Obama's "pivot to the Pacific", announcing America's regional comeback to directly aid its most enthusiastic European supporters and provision their security needs.

The figure above summarizes key elements of the geopolitical landscape in the region, juxtaposing the security and military element with the economic and infrastructure development elements which have, institutionally, remained separate but are, in practice, inseparable. Between a sometimes aloof Europe playing its own games and a resurgent Russia pursuing what it perceives as legitimate interests in its near abroad, the countries of the Trimarium will have to maintain group cohesion and translate economic success into security gains. Neither is Russia the only issue for concern in the region. Less noted is the likely result of the Three Seas Initiative in keeping Germany and Russia from

1. Przemysław Żurawski vel Grajewski, "Trimarium: A View from the North", part of Kinga Redłowska (ed.), *Adriatic – Baltic – Black Sea: Visions of Cooperation*, Institute for Eastern Studies, Warsaw, 645¹, http://www.forum-ekonomiczne.pl/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Adriatyk-Ba%C5%82tyk-Morze-Czarne16x24_2017en_PDF.pdf

2. PWC& Atlantic Council, *The Road Ahead – CEE Transport Infrastructure Dynamics*, <https://www.pwc.pl/pl/pdf/the-road-ahead-report-pwc-atlantic-council.pdf>

pursuing a rapprochement based on complementary interests and structural compatibilities. That Germany is a developed Western democracy does not make the historical connotation of what were until recently ever closer ties any less poignant. Andrey Devyatkov, with the Center for Post-Soviet Studies at the Institute of Economy (Russian Academy of Sciences), wrote that³: “The German decision makers do not seem to want “to push Russia out” of Eastern Europe and the post-Soviet space (in comparison with some political circles in other Western and Eastern European countries). Vice versa, they see Russia as a Gestaltungsmacht (structural power) whose legitimate interests should be accepted. The only one issue which is of huge importance for Berlin is its need for Russia to obey some basic rules and principles of international law, particularly in its policy towards European countries”.

Romania reflexively support constructivist approaches to handling the various issues of governance and is an active participant in the Three Seas Initiative, the various Chinese initiatives and has been touted as a possible member of the V4+, in addition to its own efforts to organize the Bucharest 9 and, in the past, the Craiova Group and POLROB (Poland-Romania-Bulgaria). The predictability of its environment and the rules

that govern it are an important element of Romanian national interest, whether globally or regionally.

The infrastructure focus of the Three Seas Initiative is welcome, given Romania’s lagging performance in this regard among its peers, as is the perspective of improving regional trade ties. It also complements Romanian participation in the Danube Strategy, in the 16+1 Initiative for cooperation between China and its Central and Eastern European Partners, as well as the Belt and Road Initiative. While there are exceptions to this rule, such as Poland and the Czech Republic, the North-South connectors (along with commercial exchanges, people-to-people contacts) are weaker than the East-West connectors that lead Eastern European countries to their main trading partners in Western Europe. This issue was noted by the Atlantic Council and Central Europe Energy Partners (CEEP) in their 2014 report, “Completing Europe – From the North-South Corridor to Energy, Transportation, and Telecommunications Union”, which led to the coalescence of the Three Seas Initiative.

Ultimately, however, this apparently purely economic issue also turns back to security. Firstly, we have the problem of critical infrastructure protection, which is compounded by the creation

of more infrastructure (75% of infrastructures which will be used in 2050 have not been built yet), as well as the challenging security environment and the prospect of cascading disruption of infrastructures not only within the ever more tightly integrated EU, but also within global production and supply chains. The European Program for Critical Infrastructure Protection specifies obligations, best practices and mechanisms for European level infrastructures, but there are categories of threats which are ever increasing,

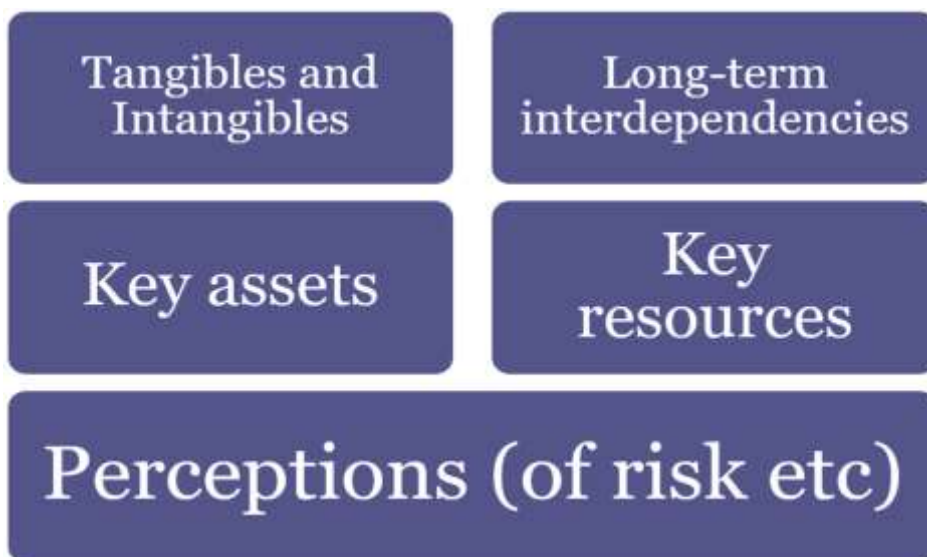


Fig. 2 – Elements for a holistic approach to developing the Three Seas Initiative (source:

3. Andrey Devyatkov, *Germany-Russia: Normative Deadlock and Confrontation Fatigue*, The Market for Ideas, no.7, Jan.-Feb. 2017, <http://www.themarketforideas.com/germany-russia-normative-deadlock-and-confrontation-fatigue-a177/>

such as cyber threats and others related to hybrid warfare.

At the same time, the countries of the Three Seas Initiative, especially those who feel themselves most threatened (Poland, the Baltics, Romania) will reflexively weigh the security potential of even a supposedly purely economic program. For instance, in the experience of the authors, discussions between experts from the same group of nations in the context of the 16+1 cooperation initiative also turned to the security risk posed by Russian assertiveness and the likely impact on consumer and investor confidence of the high level of tensions. This necessitates a countervailing factor to provide security and stability along the New Silk Road and its Eastern European offshoots, a role that China is not willing to embrace (though it has conducted tentative military diplomacy in the Black Sea, with Chinese naval vessels visiting Odessa and Constanța in 2012 and 2014). Ultimately, while the Three Seas Initiative seemingly accounts for the need to build up key assets and key resources for regional development, it must not neglect the importance of actively managing regional risk perceptions (fig. 2).

Romania's interests lie in utilizing the current momentum of the Three Seas Initiative to develop a coherent institutional framework that addresses the common needs of participating nations and complements EU and NATO roles. Security must definitely factor into the equation, though the extent to which an evolution in this direction is possible politically or even desirable, to avoid duplication of efforts with other initiatives, remains debatable. Also of interest is to draw the Republic of Moldova, Ukraine and, if possible, Georgia into a partnership with the Three Seas Initiative, as a complementary avenue of increasing cooperation and capability to the much more developed Northern one.

The Black Sea perspective

One of the likely problems with the Three Seas Initiative is that each sea will have "a mind of its

own", responding to sub-regional concerns and perspectives to formulate agenda for the countries in question, especially given the current lack of a formalized coordination mechanism under the Initiative. The current center of gravity for the Initiative is in the Baltic Sea, on account of the concentration of population, wealth, governance capacity and existing infrastructure. When the potential for expansion is discussed, the Scandinavian countries are, with good reason, the first to be mentioned, especially since they actively share the CEE concerns regarding Russian influence and aggressive posture. This advantage is likely to persist and grow, since Poland and the Baltic countries display an admirable "discipline of messaging" which is observable in issues pertaining to NATO presence in their countries, the NATO Baltic agenda and the reaction to Russian assertiveness.

From a Romanian perspective, the Black Sea space should not be neglected, not only as a source of opportunities, the positive focus of the Initiative, but also as a source of instability and threats stemming from a complex security environment. If the Initiative is to contribute to regional capacity for problem solving and coordination, then, as the Southern anchor of the old Intermarium idea, the Black Sea must find itself near the top of a future enlarged agenda, containing also dimensions of non-military security.

It is easy to list regional economic advantages and assets for Romania and Bulgaria – the Romanian port of Constanța is the largest container port in the Black Sea and its capacity is underutilized, the Bulgarian energy port at Burgas, the Danube-Black Sea Channel infrastructure, the Danube as a TEN-T corridor leading from the Black Sea to the heart of Europe and subject to the European Commission's second Macroeconomic Strategy after the Baltic Strategy etc. Opportunities abound and companies are planning to access them, as with the new class of container ships for transport company CMA CGM designed specifically to maximize capacity for passing through the Bosphorus, the first of which, out of a planned 28, was called the Danube⁴.

4. Grace Lavigne, *CMA CGM deploys ship designed for Bosphorus service*, Journal of Commerce, joc.com, 27 June, 2014, https://www.joc.com/maritime-news/container-lines/cma-cgm/cma-cgm-deploys-ship-designed-bosphorus-service_20140627.html

However, as an economic space, the Black Sea region as a whole is the least developed of the three seas, in terms of infrastructure and accumulated wealth. Political fractures have prevented the formation of pan-regional infrastructure networks and current conflicts and geopolitical hotspots are diminishing the region's wealth and attractiveness for investors. The proximity to the Ukrainian conflict, the unrecognized change of borders following the annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation, including its Exclusive Economic Zone abutting that of Romania, have been a wake-up call for the country. The unease is heightened by the transformation of Turkey and the resulting uncertainties regarding its policies and future with European and NATO cooperation.

As Dimitrios Triantaphyllou noted⁵, the Black Sea suffers from having too many competing and conflicting narratives for its countries to coordinate effectively, no matter what formula is used to define the region (the six littoral countries in a strict geographical sense or the EU and Organization for Black Sea Economic Cooperation formula, featuring an additional four and six countries). It is also the most diverse area, especially from a civilizational perspective, with transregional dimensions pertaining to South-Eastern Europe or the Middle East, and sub-regional dimensions such as the South Caucasus. The proximity of the Caspian Sea space and its own issues, which are nevertheless vital for the Black Sea as an asset, only heightens the complexities.

At the same time, unlike the other regions, the Black Sea has always suffered from the lack of an institutionalized security architecture to pursue communication and coordination not only to lessen secessionist tendencies or ameliorate the frozen conflicts, but also to address issues such as the smuggling of contraband goods, drugs, people and even nuclear materials. A report from the Kadir Has University, authored by Igor Delanoë⁶, stated that: "As of December 2013, five

of the seven most recent trafficking incidents involving HEU (enriched Uranium) outside authorized control had taken place in the Black Sea region. According to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), such material has been seized on four separate occasions (2003, 2006, 2010, and 2011) in Moldova and Georgia. The former Soviet Union, and most precisely Russia (nearly 100 trafficking incidents recorded between 1991 and 2012 involving nuclear material) and the former Soviet Republics of Central Asia (92 trafficking incidents recorded in Central Asia between 1991 and 2012), has been identified as the primary source of proliferation".

Regional stakeholders are divided by the lack of a regional identity, by strategic competition (Russia and Turkey, Russia and NATO), by ethnic and religious conflicts, frozen and "lukewarm" conflicts, and the lack of pre-existing functional and successful institutions. Attempts such as the Organization of Black Sea Economic Cooperation, the GUAM formula, the Community of Democratic Choice have largely failed to promote meaningful change. Even in the Baltic region, which had a more developed institutional framework, there have been issues. The resurgence in Russian assertiveness has stalled or frozen cooperation arrangements in the Baltic Sea, with the "Northern Dimension" launched by the European Union encountering difficulties, the Council of the Baltic Sea States not having had a high level meeting since 2014, the Nordic Council closing its offices in Russia in the aftermath of the invasion of Ukraine, the disruption of Russian participation in the Interreg Baltic Sea Program (2014-20) and the EU Strategy for the Baltic Region being given a restrained posture towards Russia by its Baltic members. Stefan Gänzle argues in favor of macro-regional strategies to provide multi-level governance and embedding new EU Members into a cooperative framework that can then become an avenue for EU-Russia "reconciliation"⁷. There is very little such institu-

5. Dimitrios Triantaphyllou, *The Uncertain Times of Black Sea Regional Security*, Euxeinos no.6, p. 4-10, Center for Governance and Culture in Europe, 2012, ISSN 2296-0708, <https://gce.unisg.ch/en/euxeinos/archive/06>

6. Igor Delanoë, *Weapons of Mass Destruction – a Persisting Security Challenge in the Black Sea Region*, Neighborhood Policy Paper no. 16, Center for International and European Studies, Kadir Has University, July 2015, [https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/193512/NeighbourhoodPolicyPaper\(16\).pdf](https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/193512/NeighbourhoodPolicyPaper(16).pdf)

tional capital in the Black Sea, and it is not backed by multilaterally developed countries in addition to the EU such as in the Baltic Sea.

Ultimately, it is difficult to decide whether, for the Three Seas Initiative, for Europe and for NATO, the Black Sea is a border region, a buffer region or a bridge, and the rhetoric changes in accordance with domain and the crisis of the moment.

Possible synergies

While the American presence during the Warsaw Summit of the Three Seas Initiative was an important factor in the validation of the Three Seas Initiative, also present was a Chinese government representative who discussed the compatibilities with China's initiatives. There is a significant degree of overlap between the Three Seas Initiative and the 16+1 Initiative between China and its Central and Eastern European Partners, with Austria missing from the 16+1 and the Western Balkans, outside of Croatia, from the Trimarium. The future launch of a 5+1 formula for Scandinavian countries also dovetails with the aforementioned Three Seas Initiative expansion possibilities. China's pursuit of structural economic change and enhanced relations with Eastern Europe as a logical addendum to the already significant Western European relations places it in a position to support the Three Seas Initiative, through coordination primarily on infrastructure construction in transport and energy, though other avenues may become apparent. This is because China is exploring synergies with the macro-regional development policies of the EU, such as the Danube Strategy, itself having a significant overlap with the Three Seas Initiative.

The process is also taking place in reverse, with Poland and a number of other Three Seas Initiative countries becoming members or candidates for the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and relying on the rapid growth⁸ of Chinese in-

vestment in Eastern Europe to complement the European funding in order to accelerate growth. Whether such feats of coordination are possible with the numerous and heterogeneous stakeholders remains to be seen, but the potential is there. While the United States, a European power in its own right, has been skeptical of the Belt and Road Initiative and its numerous offshoots (also opposing the creation of the AIIB), seeing it as a Chinese non-military push for Eurasian hegemony, there have been recent signals that the benefits of China shouldering the costs of development in Central Asia and beyond, as well as having a vested interest in the maintenance of a stable and predictable security environment, could make the US more accepting of the Belt and Road Initiative and also inclined to take advantage of the possibilities. Gal Luft wrote in Foreign Affairs that the "the Belt and Road Initiative could become either a source of great-power competition or a force for stability and collaboration"⁹. He added that: "This passive-aggressive approach is misguided: it allows China to shape Eurasia's economic and political future without U.S. input; it denies American investors opportunities to profit from major infrastructure projects; and, insofar as it seeks to weaken the initiative, it could stifle a source of much-needed growth for Asia's developing economies and Europe's stagnating ones. As the failed U.S. attempt to prevent its allies from joining the AIIB shows, resisting China's regional economic initiatives puts Washington in an uncomfortable position with some of its closest partners".

As its Central and Eastern European partners are wont to do, Romania is attempting to leverage the synergies of the various initiatives in which it has become involved to not only pursue the stated objectives of economic growth and infrastructure development, but also to highlight its own comparative advantages to foreign partners in the regional competition between the nations cooperating in the Three Seas Initiative.

7. Stefan Gänzle, *Macro-regional strategies of the European Union, Russia and multilevel governance in northern Europe*, Journal of Baltic Studies, 48:4, p. 397-406, April 2017, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01629778.2017.1305201>

8. Angela Stangel et al, "China's investment in influence - the future of 16+1 cooperation", European Council on Foreign Relations, Dec. 2016, ISBN: 978-1-910118-99-3, http://www.ecfr.eu/publications/summary/chinas_investment_in_influence_the_future_of_161_cooperation7204

Conclusions

The Three Seas Initiative is still in its infancy, but has a good basis from which to build, having established a coherent common interest among its members (infrastructure) and gained political capital through overt American political support. Romania's interests lie in developing its role within the Initiative and exploring synergies with the other ones of which it is a member along with other Eastern European countries. In the medium and long-term, as will likely be on display during the 2018 Bucharest Summit, Romania will seek to shape the agenda and institutional profile of the Initiative to match key national interests which are shared with other members, in particular countering Russian assertiveness and ensuring a continued security subsidy of the wider area from its American, European and, possibly in the future, Chinese partners. The Black Sea's challenging security environment should be a priority for a functional Three Seas Initiative, as its dysfunctions threaten the general security environment of the entire region and acts as a conduit for threats stemming from outside Europe.

Ultimately, Romania's must establish and develop new partnerships on the European chessboard (V4+, other trilateral initiatives) to increase the potency of regional cooperation and to strive for Bucharest 2018 to be not just a photo opportunity, but also a validation of the formula with concrete results.

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9. Gal Luft, *China's Infrastructure Play - Why Washington Should Accept the New Silk Road*, Foreign Affairs, sept/oct 645⁰, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/asia/china-s-infrastructure-play>



Is Nazism coming to life again in Europe? A serious cry of warning, disquieting arguments

Cristian UNTEANU,

The European press echos an open letter signed by personalities of the international life, a deeply disquieting text as it adds, to an unprecedented tough appeal, a series of arguments that should make us ponder very seriously at least.

It is about the attempt of a mobilization in favor of an European and international boycott against 6 ministers of the new Austrian government representing the Freedom Party of Austria (FPA) and against the future presidency of the Council of Europe that is to be assumed this summer by Austria. And all that on the background of a real revival of the presence and influence of the parties openly heralding, since they pretend of being the inheritors or of Nazi influence, extreme-right parties that succeed in collecting votes, in mobilizing an important number of more and more fanaticized supporters, reuniting a variety of tendencies considered, so far, of being "marginal" and "irrelevant". Things proved wrong, be it only for their ultra-nationalist, racist, anti-semitic and xenophobic in general discourse reviving the topics of any social and identity profound crises, usually in a violent and intolerant way.

This is the said letter that I submit it to your judgement:

"Let us not look the other way: the inheritors of Nazism are those who entered the power positions in the new Austrian government. We are all worried, as we are all threatened by their nefarious ideology of hate. Democracy and Europe are confronted with a new frontal blow that could prove calamitous. It is a dangerous stage.

Nevertheless, the chanceries received this situation with a guilty silence and apathy.

We deny to accept the idea that the progress witnessed by nationalism and the end of democracy would be a fatality as well as that the action

against these inheritors of Nazism is something futile or even illegitimate.

On the contrary, we believe that everyone's ethical, civic and political responsibility is to express the opposition in the firmest manner.

That means as well the boycott by chiefs of states and governments of the Austrian presidency of the Council of Europe between July 1st – December 31st, 2018.

One cannot build a future of Europe while there is tolerance for the ideologies that led to the destruction of our continent, except by vigorously fighting in favor of the fundamental human rights.

It is about our common destiny."

The list of signatories:

Bernard Kouchner (former French minister of Foreign Affairs), Beate și Serge Klarsfeld, leaders of the children of the Jewish deportees in France, UNESCO honorary ambassadors and special envoys of France and Germany for learning the lessons of Holocaust and preventing genocide, Jose Ramos-Horta, Nobel Peace Prize winner, former president of East Timor, Miguel Angel Moratinos, former Spanish minister of Foreign Affairs, Kim Campbell, former prime minister of Canada, chairperson of the organization World Movement for Democracy, Livia Frankel, chairperson of the Association of the Survivors of Holocaust (Sweden), Danis Tanovic, filmmaker, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Voijitec Blodig, Deputy Director of the Memorial of the former concentration camp in Terezin, Olivero Toscani, plastic artist (Italy), Rithy Panh, writer and filmmaker, Cambodia, Jovan Divijak, former general, commandant of the 1st Army Corps in Bosnia and Herzegovina, defender of Sarajevo during the siege and Executive Director of the organization Education Builds Bosnia and Herzegovina, Richard Pasquier, vice-chairman of the Foundation for the memory of Holocaust, former chairman of the representative Committee of the Jewish institu-

tions in France-CRIF, former president of Yad Vashem in France, Willy Silberstein, chairman of the Swedish Committee against anti-semitism, Evelyn Garbacz, Director of Yad Vashem programs in Great Britain, Gerald Biard, editor in chief Charlie Hebdo (France), Naomi Kramer, chairperson of the Canadian Foundation for preventing genocide and education on Holocaust, Oriol Lopez Badell, coordinator of the European Observer of memories (Spain), Alain Goldschlager, former chairman of the Academic Committee of International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, Canada, Felicia Waldman, lecturer with Goldstein Goren Center for Hebrew Studies with Bucharest University, deputy of the head of the national delegation to the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (Romania), Jacques Smits, Director of the organization Territoires de la memoire (Belgium), Benjamin Abtan, Chairman of EGAM (the European anti-racist Movement).

Is it really announced the return of the dark times of hatred and blood spread over Europe and over the world by the brutal ascension of Nazism and its ideology that divided mankind between a superior race, meant to rule everything, and "sub-humans" whose only destiny was to work and die for the Third Reich's prosperity?

We should not forget, indeed, that in the said period we ourselves had too, what was directly reflected in Romania with well-known consequences. Yet, I do not know how useful is this present attempt of creating a supplementary hostility climate among the European countries. Launching a warning signal is something, while entering the direct zone of the international boycott is something else altogether, especially when it could have as consequence a deepening of the fault line that is beginning to be drawn between Mitteleuropa the West's "hard core".

Or, on the contrary, maybe such an appeal to preventive action against what is likely an institutionalization among the mainstream political parties and the extreme right is extremely necessary for warning the voters on possible institutional results as it is Poland's case, for instance.

It is possible that too long a time has passed since the horrors of the Second World War and, inside the ensuing welfare, memories have faded or even disappeared entirely and, therefore, the defense and survival reflexes diminished. Or, as it may be the case, we all, not only the politicians, will pay again the costs.

In all likelihood, too much time has passed since the horrors of the Second World War and the welfare that ensued and its remembrances blurred or even disappeared totally and, therefore, the defense and survival instincts alleviated. Maybe. A case in which all of us, not only the politicians, will pay again. That is the real danger and, I think, this is the key in which the open letter must be read.

'Last Chance' Juncker has only 2018 to deliver the goods



Shada ISLAM

This is the year when Jean-Claude Juncker's 'Last Chance' Commission must chalk up worthwhile achievements and shake off the sense of inertia that already risks turning into full retreat.

The theatrics of Brexit overshadowed much of 2017, but with the UK-EU relationship hopefully relegated to the intricacies of behind-closed-doors trade negotiations, the Union should focus public attention on key topics that will determine the European elections of mid-2019.

It may be tempting to hand over the keys to Europe's future to French President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Angela Merkel. But the latter has emerged weakened from the elections and the French leader, for all his verve and energy, needs the support of the EU executive.

It's now or never. By the end of this year, Juncker will be a lame duck president, and his Commission's drive and authority will be ebbing away. This is therefore the time for the most difficult EU problems to be tackled. Not all of them



fall exclusively under the Commission's responsibility, but whether or not they are shared with other EU institutions or require the support of member governments, the Juncker Commission must urgently show greater strength and leadership.

The Juncker Commission has yet to demonstrate leadership that is tough-minded enough to rally public support

Several burning issues top the EU's agenda for 2018, and so far have shown no signs of being resolved. Instead, they have festered. There's the uncertainty over reforming the Eurozone to shore up the single currency and reduce its vulnerability. And then there's the immigration question that continues to pit EU members against one another, threatens Schengen's free movement and is poisoning national politics across Europe. Bolstered by the inclusion of the Austrian Freedom Party in government, Europe's Far Right leaders - whether in government or in opposition - are clamouring for more restrictions on immigration and pounding home their anti-Islam message.

This year also needs to see substantial progress on the next EU budget. The shape and scale of the 2021-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework have been thrown into doubt by Brexit, by profound disagreements between some southern and northern European countries over austerity policies and the nature of economic 'solidarity', as well as by the Euroscepticism of beneficiary newcomer states, particularly the Visegrad countries in central and eastern Europe.

On all three issues, the Juncker Commission has yet to demonstrate leadership that is tough-

minded enough to rally public support. Its own positions seem far-sighted and positive, but have not yet been expressed forcefully and unambiguously. With nothing to lose - Juncker made it clear when he took over in November 2014 that he wouldn't seek a second term - the time is right for plain speaking.

That means acknowledging the demographic need for more immigrants, not fewer, and putting an end to the out-dated notion of 'white, Christian Europe'. Juncker and his colleagues have regrettably embraced the new Austrian government despite the inclusion of the Freedom Party when in fact they should be bolder in taking on populists and start reflecting on an inclusive European narrative which recognises the diversity of its citizens. EU institutions must also take a close look at their own recruitment policies to ensure greater ethnic diversity of their staff.

It means underlining the case for an economic union under an EU 'finance minister' if the euro is to be saved from eventual collapse. And it means openly rebuking governments that insist on pegging the EU budget to a niggardly 1% of gross national income (GNI) when in research & development and innovation Europe is rapidly slipping behind its global competitors. In short, it's time to nail the EU flag to the masthead and defy the nationalists.

Several burning issues top the EU's agenda for 2018, and so far have shown no signs of being resolved

There's more. At home, the steps taken last year on European defence and security need to be consolidated, with greater efforts also being made to tackle cyber security and hybrid threats. And abroad, with the US still in retreat on the global stage, the EU must try its best to support an increasingly fragile multilateral, rules-based international order. This will require working with China, Japan, India and other Asian countries, and also with Canada. It means a determined effort to maintain the authority of the World Trade Organisation while pursuing bilateral and region-to-region trade deals.

The Middle East and Africa will demand special

European attention. Repercussions of the US recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel will continue to sour the political landscape in the Middle East, while speeding Africa's development has to be a crucial part of the EU agenda, not just because of the migration challenge but in the interest of the continent's fast growing number of young people.

Trump, Brexit and Catalonia dominated the headlines last year, distracting us from many of Europe's real, long-term concerns. The temptation to pay more attention to emergencies while neglecting seemingly less urgent problems will remain strong in the coming year, but must be resisted.

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Missing: A beefed-up plan for Africa's population explosion



Giles MERRITT is Founder and Chairman of Friends of Europe

Where is Europe's relationship with Africa headed; where is the Grand Bargain they both need?

When EU leaders, who included France's Emmanuel Macron and Germany's Angela Merkel, met their African Union opposite numbers at the end of November, their summit was billed as the "defining moment" for the re-shaping of EU-AU relations. Since then, there's been a deafening silence.

So where's the beef? The summit produced little or nothing in the way of a strategic vision of how the two partners intend to jointly tackle problems like migration and Africa's under-development. That's probably why it didn't receive much press coverage.

Lack of media attention doesn't diminish the importance of planning to cope with the population explosion under way in Africa. Over the next 25 years, the number of Africans will double to some two and half billion people, far more than

Africa's backward farms can feed or its struggling businesses employ.

No one can tell how many Africans may try to make the perilous journey to Europe in the years ahead

European governments seem lulled into a sense of security by a fall-off in migrants. The UN's Institute of Migration (IOM) in Geneva recently reported that the number of people crossing the Mediterranean to Europe by boat in 2017 was, at about 170,000, half the level of the year before. Both were a trickle compared to 2015, when well over a million refugees fled from Syria and other conflict zones.

The issue of migration was discussed at Abidjan, although it's far from clear if anything was agreed. The president of the 54-nation AU, Guinean leader Alpha Condé, spoke of "points of divergence" on migration, adding: "It's obvious we Africans cannot accept that Europeans should tell us to take back our children."

No one can tell how many Africans may try to make the perilous journey to Europe in the years ahead. The demographics suggest they will be in their millions, and perhaps their tens of millions. A report to the World Economic Forum, organisers of the annual Davos event, has warned that by 2050 there will be 800 million new working age people in sub-Saharan Africa.

Right now, only one young African in six is in a regular, paid job. Although there's much talk of "Africa Rising" thanks to some countries' GDP growth rates of 8 per cent, that won't be enough. The handicaps common to much of Africa are so great that for most annual growth of at least 7 per cent is needed just to stand still.

For the EU, the centrepiece of the Abidjan summit was the European Commission's plan to funnel €44 billion in new investment into African business start-ups. Labelled by some as a 'Marshall Plan for Africa', the idea is to leverage €3.3 billion in EU seed money into fifteen times more private sector funding. It's an admirable idea, but it is wholly inadequate in terms of Africa's problems. The 'funding gap' between Africa's needs and what it gets is estimated to be

€2.3 trillion yearly.

Ambitious and far-sighted initiatives of breath-taking dimension are, after all, what the European Union is about

The platitudes uttered on both sides in Abidjan contrast uncomfortably with grim reality. Half of sub-Saharan Africans – 600 million people – either don't have reliable electricity, if they have it at all. A third of the region's children will never go to school. Climate change and drought increasingly affect the 90 per cent of African farmers who, without irrigation, must rely on rain.

The AU's president Condé has spoken of "replacing China as the factory of the world", but, in fact, manufacturing in Africa has shrunk since its high point in 2007. An enormous effort

is needed to stabilise and perhaps reverse Africa's ebbing economic and social fortunes.

At the same time, Europe's steadily ageing workforce is going to require more African manpower to cover snowballing pension costs. The elements are present for a mutually beneficial Grand Strategy, so where is the EU's imaginative leadership with the political courage to tell Europeans and Africans they cannot do without each another? Ambitious and far-sighted initiatives of breath-taking dimension are, after all, what the European Union is about.

The article was first published by Friends of Europe, www.friendsofeurope.org and republished with the kind acceptance of the author

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CONSIDERATION

New opportunities for a durable solution in the Middle east?

Corneliu PIVARIU

There are certain voices, strong enough from the standpoint of international audience, saying that the current developments in the Middle East would represent opportunities for a positive evolution in a foreseeable future in this area. Is it really like that?

Most of the Arab states have, especially after 2011, weak political leaderships, without vision and that ignore the experts' warnings concerning the serious problems they are confronted with since almost half a century such as weak economic policy, population growth and the dictatorial ruling of the states. A report published in 2016 on the situation in the Arab countries contains many data revealing the difficult situation of the Arab countries:

- the Arab world is the epicenter of global conflicts. Although it has only 5% of the global population, from 1947 to 2014 registered 17.6% of the world's conflicts. Between 1989-2014 it registered 27.7% of the total dead people in wars and this percentage raised to 68.5% in 2014.
- in 2014, 45% of the terrorist attacks took place in the Arab world;
- in the same year, 2014, 57.5% of the total number of refugees and 47% of the internally displaced persons belonged to the Arab countries;
- until 2020, the Arab world has to create 60 million jobs as it is an area where youth (15-24 years) unemployment represents almost 30% and growing; the unemployment rate among young Arab people is double compared to the countries with average economic development and the percentage of young women in the working force is 24% as compared to 50% globally.

Wars and political crises as well as the drop in oil prices and consequently drop in revenues from marketing the oil affected most of the countries in the region such as Algeria, Libya, Tunisia, Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Jordan, Bahrain, Yemen etc. Military spending represented for the Arab countries on the average 6% of the GDP and some of the countries exceeded by far this level: between 2014-2016 Iraq spent from 8.5% to 11.6% of GDP, Oman between 11.8%-15.3% of the GDP and Saudi Arabia spending raised from 8.9% in 2014 to 12.7% in 2016.

The divisions between Sunni majority countries increased after the crisis between the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries and breaking off of relations with Qatar that was pushed to increase its relations with Iran, distanced Oman from GCC, allowed maintaining the inter-communities tensions in Bahrain and contributed to Kuwait's increased exposure while the war in Yemen limited the role Saudi Arabia can play in the Arab world. We have to see the outcome of the Saudi Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman's (MBS) tour to France and Great Britain (delayed from the end of February to the beginning of March) and then to the USA.

In Iraq, the state leadership does not succeed in being united for solving the serious domestic problems it is confronted with while the Iranian influence is constantly growing. In Syria, the civil war resulted in almost 500,000 dead and difficult to estimate destruction (some sources assess the reconstruction effort to \$250 billion - taking into account the so far losses) while Assad seems to cling on to power keeping the country divided and on the brink of self-destruction, escalation signs are being registered (downing the Russian jet Su-25 on February the 3rd and the provocation of the Iranian drone that entered the Israeli territory followed by Israeli retaliation that resulted in downing an Israeli F-16) represent as many elements showing that Russia wants to maintain its image of „broker” making all games in Syria, keeping its good relations with Israel and not hurting its alliance with Iran (yet, not allowing the latter a wider expansion in Syria) and to keep Assad under control. The general situation in the Arab world favors Iran in achieving its strategic objective of securing a direct terrestrial corridor to the Mediterranean Sea (a corridor it could not keep permanently in our opinion). Israel and then, Turkey are important players that may influence the evolutions and solutions including the Kurdish and Palestinian issues.

The European Union, with its own problems, is a less important player in the Middle East while the USA will shape a clearer position in this area after solving the domestic problems the current Administration is confronted with. China tries, too, to position itself as best as possible in this complex conjecture. The huge resources of the region will further contribute to maintaining a tense and conflictual climate in the Middle East for the next decades.

The Main Factors of the Middle East Situation



"OPERATION OLIVE BRANCH": A NEW EXTENSION OF SYRIA'S CRISIS?

**Ambassador Prof. Dumitru
CHICAN**

Heralded even during the last days of 2017, on the background of some acute controversies and tensions with Donald Trump's American Administration and of some disputes with the Russian Federation and preceded, in the second part of January 2018, by intense artillery preparations and accumulation of reinforcements with military equipment and troops of the Turkish Army, Operation Olive Branch was launched on January 20th against the Kurdish enclave of Afrin on Syrian extreme north-western territory at the border with Turkey. Having the Turkish aerial support against the positions of the "People's Protection Units" (YPG) – the military branch of the Kurdish Democratic Union Party (PYD), considered a Syrian offshoot of Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), banned in Turkey and listed as terrorist organization, the terrestrial Turkish operations started on January 22nd together with the Free Syrian Army (FSA) troops – the oldest armed structure of the opposition backed and armed by Turkey. The officially declared strategic objective of the operation was eliminating the Kurdish terrorists who, through the secessionist and independent policies they promote represent, according to Ankara's narrative, a "serious threat to Turkey's national security interests".

The very nature of the operation, the political and security problems and the consequences, including on the regional level, the challenges and effects of the Turkish strategy are as numerous as they are intricate and little known.

I. Afrin – strategic and political stakes

The community of the Syrian ethnical Kurds inhabits, from a historical perspective, the north-eastern portion of the Syrian territory and has as its regional capital Qamichli town in the north-east extreme of the border between Syria and Turkey. On the background of the seven year war, the Kurdish militias, strongly supported by the multi-state, anti-terrorist coalition led by the United States of America, scored important advances on the front against Islamic State and other jihadist-Islamist factions and succeeded in expanding their territorial control on a large area towards the west, alongside the border with Turkey, to the strategic point of the small town Kobane (Ain Al-Arab) liberated from the jihadists presence of Islamic State, bordered to the north-east by Turkey, to the south by the course of the Euphrates River, north of Deir Ez-zor town. The northern half of this territory (called in Kurdish language *Rojava*, or "Western Kurdistan", in a rough translation) was declared autonomous region ruled by a self local administration. After the Turkish military intervention code-named the Euphrates Shield succeeded in bringing to a halt the west-

ward advancement of the Kurdish "rojava" to the Turkish border, a Kurdish enclave remained separated from the rest of the "Rojava autonomous region" with the potential threat of the Kurdish minority's trying to make the junction with this enclave and instituting a *de facto*



continuous presence alongside the entire northern border with Turkey – a prospect Ankara rejects in most definite terms. This is the Kurdish enclave Afrin (*Efrîn*, in Kurdish language) which is situated north of Aleppo city, designating the homonymous town and district. After 2012, when the government in Damascus lost control over this area, Afrin town was declared the capital of the Afrin Independent Canton (*Kantona Efrînê*, in Kurdish language) and the entire district was included in 2014 as autonomous region in the "Western Kurdistan (*Rojava*)". The last demographic statistics of 2005 indicated a total of 173,000 inhabitants of whom 35,600 were residing in Afrin. The control over the district and town is secured by the Kurdish forces of the People's Protection Units (YPG) which established a Constitution and an autonomous government of the Western Kurdistan whereby the entire area of Afrin autonomous district and town is part of.

II. Calculations, political crossroads and positions

If previous operations carried out by the Turkish Army on the Syrian territory for bringing the "expansionist" tendencies of the Kurdish minority to a halt alongside the border and towards the western bank of the Euphrates River were code-named "Euphrates Shield", suggesting a defensive meaning, the assault launched on January 20th is code-named "Euphrates Sabre" (with "Olive Branch" version, inducing the offensive and, at the same time, "pacifying" nature of the Turkish intervention against the strategic location of Afrin). According to some estimates, 25,000 troops – Turkish military and fighters of the Free Syrian Army were mobilized for the offensive pertaining to the first stages of the operations.

After two days of artillery bombardments, on January 23rd, the Turkish Army and units of the Free Syrian Army launched the ground stage of the operation. Concurrently, president Erdogan defined more accurately the strategic objective of the expedition, namely instituting a severe siege on Afrin town to compel the Kurdish mili-

tias' withdrawal from this enclave and then setting up a security buffer zone with a depth of 30 km within the Syrian territory where around 3 million Syrian citizens, who are now in Turkey, having refugee statute, are to be relocated. Washington, concerned with "calming" down Recep Teyyip Ergogan's warmongering euphoria, assured, on January 22nd, through the Secretary of State Rex Tillerson's voice, that the United States will grant its support for achieving the said security zone that, together with the possible emergence of the "border forces" announced by Washington, will practically form a wall encircling the ethnical Kurds in the areas controlled by the Kurds east of the Euphrates River.

Most statements and communiqués emanating from political and military officials in Ankara insist that operation "Euphrates Sabre/Olive Branch" is not directed against "Syrian Kurds" generally but against the armed groups of the two major Kurdish political formations, the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and its Syrian branch, the Kurdish Democratic Union Party. Three big fighting groups of the Free Syrian Army were dispatched on the ground, namely "Sultan Murad" Brigades, "Jaysh Al-Nassr" (Victory Army) and "Al-Djabha Al-Shamiya" (the Syrian Front). If the delayed timing preceeding the proper launching of the operation was due to Ankara's wish to reach arrangements with Russia and Iran for guaranteeing a "political umbrella" of the new intervention in Syria and to avoid conflicts and clashes between Turkish attackers and their allies of the Syrian opposition, on the one hand, and the presence of the Russian units and the Iranian militias, on the other hand, the decision of setting in motion the war machine was precipitated by the pervasive tensions surrounding Regep Teyyip Erogan's regime and the Administration in Washington following the American decision, announced on January 14th, of setting up, training and arming some "border forces" made up of around 30,000 fighters of the "Democratic Syrian Forces" (QUSD) alliance, a coalition dominated by the ethnical Kurds of the "People's Protection Units" and backed actively by the United States in cooperation with local factions of the Syrian armed

opposition. According to political and military officials in Washington, such "border forces" will have as their mission guarding the demarcation lines of the Kurdish controlled territory, defined by the border with Turkey at the north-east and north, with Iraq at north-east and east and by the course of the Euphrates River at south. Not only Turkey, the Russian Federation and Iran, but also analysts of the Arab-speaking regional media had a virulent rejection reaction against this intention assessing, on the one hand, that it reveals Trump Administration scope of creating a new entity in the framework of the plans of federalizing Syria and, on the other, creating the conditions for the emergence of new hotbeds of armed conflict leading to new dimensions of the Syrian civil war with long term consequences not only in Syria but also for the regional stability and security. The Administration's denials uttered by the Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and his appeals to calm addressed to all players involved in the Syrian civil war strengthened Ankara's assessment that the United States will not intervene in any way in the new conflictual situation and that contributed therefore to the decision of implementing "Olive Branch" operation.

II.1. The Russian Federation

Probably Turkey's most important element in the Kurdish and Syrian context was the **Russian Federation's** position under the circumstances as Russia has a decisive and unavoidable saying in what concern the local developments in Syria and their possible reverberations on the regional security system and, implicitly, on the Russian interests. Moreover, Russia is part of a vast regional relations network of coordination and cooperation with Turkey, Iran and Damascus regime not only at the strict bilateral level but also in the framework of the Geneva, Astana and more recently the so-called "Sochi process" of politically and militarily solving the Syrian crisis. Under the circumstances, one can simply understand that Recep Teyyip Erdogan's decision was preceded and will be further accompanied by debates, negotiations and multilateral consultations between Ankara and Moscow and it is

supposed that any concession Vladimir Putin accepted in connection with the programmes of the Turkish partner will be dependent on the fulfillment by the latter of certain commitments already assumed in Astana framework concerning, among others, the future of the so-called "de-escalation zones", abstaining from obstructing any projects the Russian side contemplates in the Syrian conflict zones, such as Idleb or Deir Ezzor or a more active involvement in liquidating the still existing Islamic resistance centers such as for instance the yet remaining Daesh enclaves or the progressive uprooting of "Fath Al-Sham" (former Djabhat Al-Nussra, the Syrian offshoot of Al-Qaida network) etc.

At least until the de facto launching of the operation, on January 20th, the only declaration made by Moscow leadership belonged to the head of the Russian diplomacy, Serghei Lavrov, who called for "avoiding violences in Afrin", followed by the "working" visit paid to the Russian capital by the chief of staff of the Turkish Army, general Hulusi Akar, and by Hakan Fidan, the head of the intelligence services in Ankara. Beyond any doubt, either conditional or not, Russia expressed its agreement for "Afrin operation", an agreement speeded up by the consent existing among the Russians, the Turks, the Iranians and Bashar Al-Assad's regime around the necessity of preventing the "federalist" American plans by creating of a "new army" on the Syrian front made up of fighters of the ethnical Kurds – a project that no one of the allies of the Troika Moscow-Ankara-Tehran agrees upon. That did not prevent the Russian side to ask Turkey to adopt proper measures to avoid significant confrontations with the fighters of the Kurdish Democratic Party in Syria that has relations with the Russian Federation and a representation office in Moscow and that was invited to attend the Sochi round of peace negotiations. According to the requests made by the Russian side, the main military actions of the Turkish Army will be directed against the "non Syrian Kurds", namely the Turkish Kurds of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) who would fight on the northern Syrian fronts. The "Afrin operation" launched by Turkey represents, one may say, a real exam for

"saving" its oscillating relations with Russia as well as Moscow's local alliances system and, not the least, the perspective of the evolution of the Russian strategy of "politically solving" the Syrian civil war.

II.2. Iranian positions

Prior to launching the military operations, the officials in Ankara had intensive contacts and consultations with the Iranian leadership, contacts which, starting from Ankara's and Tehran's joint opposition to any Kurdish project of autonomy, had as a purpose getting even an evasive Iranian agreement for launching the campaign against the Kurdish enclave of Afrin. The Islamic Iranian regime's reaction was somewhat muddled as the regime in Tehran had reservations concerning Turkish intentions and, the reason not clearly expressed, was that a new Turkish armed intervention in Syria could create unforeseeable obstacles in front of Tehran's projects of expanding and strengthening its influence in Syria, including in the northern regions adjacent to Iraq. The Iranian reservation concerning a development that might impose Turkey as a possible post-conflict candidate to the "Syrian cake" should be added, too.

II.3. NATO and "Olive Branch"

Less than a week from launching the "Olive branch" operation, NATO Deputy Secretary General, Rose Gottemoeller, declared in Istanbul for the mass-media that the Alliance "acknowledges that Turkey is threatened by terrorism" meaning, in a language not placed in the straight-jacket one of diplomacy, not only that for the NATO high official the threat comes punctually from the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) included by the USA on the list of terrorist organizations but especially that the North Atlantic Alliance agrees and supports the intervention of the Turkish Army against the Kurdish enclave of Afrin in the north-west of the Syrian territory.

For Turkey – one of the oldest and strongest NATO members – any concession made to the independentist Kurdish ethnics – be them civil-

ians or military fighters – would be but a new step they could take on their path towards a Kurdistan's enlarged independence. And the support underlined by the Deputy Secretary General is just a natural manifestation of solidarity with one of the member states. It highlights the reality that the "Afrin operation" is assessed as bringing benefits for the North Atlantic Alliance itself or, at least, is not a worrying reason. For NATO, the fundamental worrying reason does not come from the Kurdish minority but from the Russian Federation. If Bashar Al-Assad's Syrian army – Vladimir Putin's ally – restores the control over the entire Syrian national territory it will place Russia on a more strengthened position in the Middle East's geopolitics. And, to an equal extent, a Syria entirely controlled by Bashar Al-Assad would pose the problem that the regime does not need Moscow's backing any longer that would logically impose the withdrawal of the Russian presence from this country. For NATO – and, in the same context, for the European Union – it is preferable, for the time being, that the civil war in Syria and the tensions in the immediate vicinity to subsist, under control, and that would keep the Russian Federation busy with consolidating its "victories" in Syria and all that means not only a wear and tear of its military and economic and financial potential but also keeping the "Russian threat" at distance from the Alliance's and the European Union's eastern and south-eastern border. The intervention of the Turkish Army in Syria is, by itself, a benefit in this respect especially that the "Afrin operation" will not go, according to all estimates, to an extreme situation whereby the Alliance will be in a position to activate Art. V of the constituting Treaty. So that, it is supposed that NATO's position will be one of politically backing, without direct involvement in this episode having too few perspectives to reach the amplitude of the Libyan crisis and much less the one in the Western Balkans.

III. International reactions

The first reactions from the international chanceries oscillated between expressing worries,

appeals to "restraint", and requests of submitting the Turkish intervention to international debate.

- France requested convening an urgent meeting of the Security Council for debating Syria's developments and the possible consequences of the Turkish military intervention. The head of the French diplomacy, Jean-Yves Le Drian, expressed "France's concerns for the humanitarian consequences" of the intervention and asked Turkey to "immediately halt the military operations". The Turkish foreign minister, Mevlut Cavusoglu, criticized the French initiative and appreciated that France and any other state asking to submit the developments in Syria to the UN debate "do nothing but align themselves with the terrorism's side and offer their support".

- In Moscow, the Russian Foreign minister, Serghei Lavrov, said in a press interview that the "unilateral steps taken by Washington (the decision of arming the Kurds and the project of setting up of a "new Kurdish army" on the Syrian domestic scene - o.n.) are the main causes that brought about Turkey's decision of intervening militarily against the Syrian Kurdish ethnics". On the other hand, the first deputy of the head of the Russian Federation's parliamentary Committee on Security and Defense declared that "Russia will not intervene in case of armed confrontations between Turkish troops and the Army of the Syrian regime". Even before the start of hostilities in Afrin region, the Russian side decided the withdrawal of its "observers" deployed in the "de-escalation" zones north of Syria and abstained from adopting any critical position towards Turkey, a fact due to which officials of the Syrian Kurdish formations expressed their disappointment concerning the "Russian Federation's unprincipled position" and evoked the possibility that the Kurdish formations decline the invitation of attending the "dialogue of Syrian national reconciliation" planned to take place in Sochi at the end of January.

- In London, a spokesman of the Foreign Office declared that "Turkey is entitled to defend the security of its national borders", while in Berlin the head of German diplomacy, Sigmar

Gabriel, expressed, without any other comments, the concerns for the "dangerous consequences" that Afrin operation might have.

- In Tehran, the spokesman of the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Bahram Kassemi, declared that his country "follows with concern" the evolutions in the Syrian region of Afrin and hopes for an as quick as possible ceasefire. "The continuation of this crisis, he added, will lead to the strengthening of the fundamentalist-jihadist groups and to the chronicity and a prolongation of the crisis in Syria".

IV. Turkey and the Kurdish haunting idea

The objective understanding of the reasons governing Turkey's Syrian policy, reasons to which the campaign against the Kurdish enclave in Afrin are circumscribed, supposes the understanding of the general background marking not only the way the Ankara regime addresses the issue of the Syrian civil war but also the entire foreign policy vision of this country nowadays. From this standpoint, one may say that after seven years from the "Arab spring" and the civil wars grinding down the Arab vicinity of the region, Turkey is at a crossroads which, summed up, represents for the country a source of polymorphous crisis from the perspective of the causes, the way of manifestation and the already visible or probable consequences on a short run. When we refer only to Turkey's positioning and Recep Teyyip Erdogan's doctrine concerning the complicated Syrian file, we bear in mind the fact that, while the main foreign players linked to the Syrian civil war chessboard succeeded in a way or another to define their set of interests and set them in accordance with a well mapped out scale of priorities and to strengthen them as programmatic directions of policy, Turkey continues to be confronted with what might be defined by the syntagm of "the obsession or syndrome of failure". So, for instance, whether the Russian Federation and the United States succeeded in sharing the victory over the jihadist Islamist phenomenon represented especially by "Islamic State", followed by Bashar Al-Assad's regime and the Islamic Republic of Iran, Turkey, on the con-

trary, persistently endeavoured to present its military intervention in Syria (code-named the "Euphrates Shield") as a brilliant victory. Nevertheless, there are not a few those who – from a part of the Turkish public opinion to mass-media commentators and regional or extra-regional government representatives continue to tax Erdogan's regime for the heavy responsibility of allowing the influx of foreign fighters to the active front of the neighbouring country, on the one hand, and the inability of harnessing to the maximum the advantages offered by putting straight the relationship with the Russian Federation in order to contain the expansionist role of the Kurdish minority who, as far as they are concerned, turned to better use their cooperation with Russia, then with the Syrian regime and with Iran, and after that with the United States and its regional strategic interests.

For the moment, the historical relations between Ankara and Washington are witnessing the most serious period of regress and crisis while the solidity and the strategic nature of these relations were affected in a less expected direction, namely the overbided interest Washington channelled towards the ethnical Kurds and their problems even to the detriment of its old political and military ally on the Bosphorus and ignored the latter's security worries and concerns. The Kurdish community proved to be, through their fighting militias, a dynamic and efficient factor of backing the campaign led by the United State against Islamic State that had as an immediate consequence the awareness of the Kurdish ethnics of the fact they have their own interests in the framework of the Syrian file and those interests were materialized without delay (yet with the support from both the Americans and the Russian Federation) in proclaiming as autonomous region and as "Western Kurdistan" an area of more than 35,000 sq.km within the Syrian territory from the Turkish and Iraqi frontiers to the north and the Euphrates River valley to the south in the Syrian central and eastern parts. Yet, Turkey's relations with the Russian Federation did not equate and, much less, surpass the cooperation level between Moscow and the Iranian regime. So, the Kurdish haunting

idea, as Recep Teyyip Erdogan's foundation of his regional policy, led today to a nature of the relationship between Ankara and the universe of the Kurdish ethnics – both in Iraq and Syria - being marked by hostilities and tensions while Tehran plays a role of recognized arbitrator between the federal government in Baghdad and the Kurdish local authorities in Erbil.

Even from the beginning of the Syrian crisis, Ankara's policy accumulated a series of strategic errors that are now very difficult, if not impossible, to correct, including in what concerns the exclusivist and maximal manner in which it approached the chronic conflict separating Erdogan's Turkey from the ethnical Kurdish community.

The "Afrin Operation", launched less than two weeks before the planned "Syrian dialogue of national reconciliation", in Sochi, upon Recep Teyyip Erdogan's initiative places in an awkward position not only his old American ally but also the Russian Federation that has forces deployed in the framework of the "de-escalation" zones in Afrin areas. It remains to be seen how far the operation launched will go and how prepared Ankara will be to absorb the unwanted reactions from its own Kurdish citizens, of Kurdish ethnicity, who are united with their Syrian co-ethnics. The Turkish adventure in north-east Syria risks to turn into a long-lasting hornets-nets very difficult to come out of.

V. What about the Kurds ?

From a strategic standpoint, Turkey's achieving the targets proposed by its expedition of conquering the autonomous region of Afrin would mean the definite falling apart of the Kurdish autonomist and separatist project, a fact that will bring to a close, for a long time, the effects of the failure registered in 2017 by the referendum for independence initiated by Masoud Barzani that was practically disavowed by the entire regional and international political community.

As their Iraqi co-ethnics did, the Syrian Kurds made in general the same errors which were turned into lessons taught by the opponents

(Turks, Iranians etc.) of the idea of independence and autonomous state, an idea promoted all-along the modern history of the Kurdish ethnics, and which was promptly exploited by Ankara. And, among the most blatant miscalculations in this regard, one should mention:

- Overbidding the conviction that the role – a prominent one, indeed – they had in the campaign carried out by the Multinational Antiterrorist Alliance led by the United States against the jihadist terrorist group Islamic State will confer them a "diploma of excellence" and immunity from the traditional opposition to their independence aspirations, namely a "certificate of good behavior" and a green light for continuing their demarches for achieving national and state rights.

- Such a triumphalistic approach brought about crossing some "red lines" by occupying territories inhabited by the non-Kurds, by expelling the Arab populations from those areas and by instituting their own laws and rules. That was, and still is, a strong hostility factor from the Arab Muslim ethnics or of other confessions who do not hesitate to welcome Recep Teyyip Erdogan's "liberating" intervention in the more than 200 rural places inside the "autonomous district" of Afrin in Aleppo administrative governorate.

- After extending and strengthening the control over the Syrian "Western Kurdistan" to the Euphrates River course, they imposed a strict monopol on Syria's important oil, agricultural and hydrological reserves treating all these as their "own and exclusive national wealth" and ignoring that one of the important objectives of the Russian Federation's, the United State's as well as Iran's Syrian strategy is represented, in perspective, by securing the access of all Syrians to these important natural resources, especially in the energy field.

In fact, all these were exploited by Turkey that took advantage of the Russian Federation's "neutrality", of the hesitations and the ambiguities of the American position on the Kurdish issue as well as of the European Union's lack of interest or helplessness so it decided to "solve"

manu militari the "Kurdish haunting idea" in Syria at Ankara's chosen moment and under the conditions established by the Turkish strategists and decision makers. Under the situation created by launching the "Afrin operation", it has been reached the paradox that Turkey and Bashar Al-Assad's Syrian regime have presently the same joint target: annihilating the Kurdish projects.

VI. Preliminary conclusions

The inflammation of the Syrian north-western front between the Turkish Army and the fighters of the Kurdish Democratic Unity Party is sending the historic conflict between Ankara and the ethnical Kurds into a new stage of developments containing in themselves the possible perspective of turning the "Olive Branch" operation into an open and total war that might degenerate into an extension of the military operations to the Iraqi Kurdistan, on the one hand, and a more aggressive conflictual deterioration of the Syrian political and military scene, on the other hand. It is known that this last deterioration of the tensions between the Turkish state and the Kurdish separatists in Syria is due to a great extent to the obstination with which during the last years both belligerent camps rekindled and brought again to light the old "existential" confrontation between the injustice feeling dominating the Kurdish collective mind from the perspective of the aspiration of getting "the legitimate national rights" and the obsession with which the Turkish side looked at the ethnical Kurds community as a permanent security and identity threat to the country – a challenge that in accordance with the Turkish elites' approach should be definitely uprooted by any means. And that cleavage was deepened and widened on the background of the Syrian civil war, of numerous foreign interferences, regional and extra-regional, in conjunction with the fluctuant and changing alliances in which both the Turks and the Kurds were driven into in the hope that the players involved in the conflict will support their positions, their approaches and claims. Such a thing did not happen or happened

sporadically or fragmentarily with no viability on a long run, both in case of the Turkish side and in the case of the Kurdish independentists. No less influential were, from this standpoint, the alliances the conflicting camps established with the domestic players on the Syrian internal scene. While Turkey supported mainly the Syrian opposition and its armed formations in the confrontation with the regime in Damascus, the Kurdish secessionists represented politically by the Kurdish Democratic Unity Party placed itself on closer positions to those of Bashar Al-Assad's regime which provoked an intense breaking off the Kurdish body between the supporters of the military solution of the Syrian war and those supporting the negotiation process, especially after the Russian type political initiatives (Astana process) and, more recently, "Sochi process". Such a situation represented, in its turn, another element of accumulations contributing to the "Afrin outcome".

Whether the "Olive Branch" operation will lead to a Turkey's most likely victory, that would mean less an achievement of Turkish's projects of creating a buffer zone and of resettling the Syrian refugees in Turkey, and more of opening of new doors to the resilience of the military conflict which, inevitably, will set a deep footprint on the internal developments in Syria even by the foreseeable bloating of the Kurdish regions of Syria's north-east, on the Iraqi border, and probably in areas of the Iraqi Kurdistan too. That would certainly mean new configurations of the Syrian front and of its political solution with all new foreign interferences taking place which will send away the so hoped for horizon of ending the war.

Nevertheless, the euphoria of the Turkish decision-makers for attaining a "decisive" victory without particular costs must be prudently considered. First of all because three weeks since launching the offensive operations in the Afrin area, the Turkish Army's quantifiable achievements were modest. The front zone is situated in a difficult, hilly and mountaneous area, which, added to the winter conditions, makes improbable the engagements in decisive battles. Secondly, it is about the demographic density which

prevents deploying ample attacks that could result in important losses among the civilians while the population of the Afrin district is openly and categorically against the "Turkish occupation" of the Afrin "autonomous territory" as part of the Western Kurdistan that is autonomous de facto and not de jure. Thirdly, one should not preclude that the militias under the umbrella of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) remain insensitive and do not return to the - brutal and blood tainted - guerilla warfare it wages since some decades against Turkey, on the Turkish territory. It may be said that, at least in the light of the evolutions of the first weeks of the "Olive branch" operation, that no one can speak in the end of real "winners" and real "vanquished" but rather of perpetuating on an indefinite term a new hotbed of conflict in Syria, leaving its footprint on the results that will be reached in the framework of the "Syrian national dialogue" initiated by Moscow and which was declined by a good part of the Syrian opposition and the Kurdish ethnics having in mind that Russia and Turkey (as guarantors of the "peace process" in the Russian alternative) are either aggressors against the Kurdish minority (Turkey), or its supporters (Russia).

NOTES

1. As president Erdogan stated in a press conference that the "Turkish forces will chase away the Kurdish fighters from Afrin area to the eastern border between Iraq and Syria", something that unavoidably supposes confrontations between the Turkish forces and the American forces supporting the Kurdish minority, one day later the Turkish minister of Foreign Affairs, Mevlut Cavusoglu, requested the United States to "immediately" withdraw its military presence from the north-western region of Manbij¹ - another strategical point situated north of Afrin and previously liberated by the Kurdish forces from the control of the terrorist group Islamic State. Cavusoglu added that Ankara "wishes to see concrete and immediate steps" made by the USA for halting the support the Americans are granting to the Kurdish militias of the "People's

Protection Units” (YPG). According to the Turkish officials’ declarations, the American advisor on security matters, H.R.Master, told Ankara the United States will halt the arms and military equipment supplies to YPG without telling the exact date this will happen.

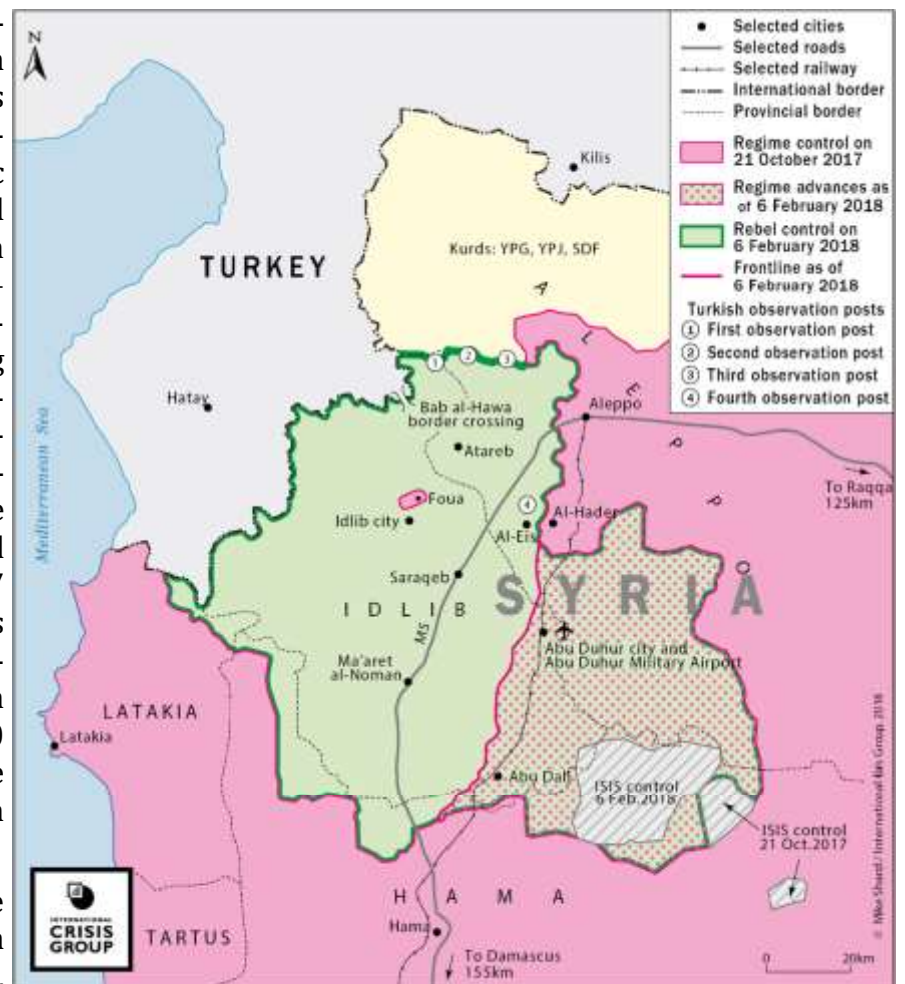
2. A few weeks since the first actions of the Turkish Army and of the Free Syrian Army, the “Afrin campaign” is going on rather as a positions war whereby the main role is played by the bombarding Turkish aviation and the Kurdish units of anti-aerial defense.

In spite of president Recep Teyyip Erdogan’s repeated warnings concerning the impending “breakthrough” of the static front of the Afrin-Manbij area and the extension of the operations towards the eastern frontier between the Syrian Kurdistan and Iraq, the attackers succeeded only in occupying Barsaya, the mountaneous strategic peak, north-east of Afrin, and some rural localities in the region of which some were reconquered by the Kurdish militias. According to data coming from both the Turkish headquarters and from the Kurdish formations which could not be independently confirmed, since the outbreak of the operations until the first days of February, 557 Kurdish fighters and civilians were killed, wounded or captured (according to Turkish sources) while more than 200 deads were registered among the attackers (according to Kurdish sources).

3. “If the operation of the Turkish Army in northern Syria degenerates into an invasion,

then we will have a real problem” said the French president Emmanuel Macron on January 31st in an interview for the Paris daily “Le Figaro. “If this Turkish intervention is something else than a fighting action against a potential threat of Turkey’s frontiers and turns into Syria’s invasion we will have a real problem” added the French president who suggested the regime in Ankara “to have continous consultations with Europe and its allies”.

4. At the beginning of February, the total number of the Kurdish “terrorists” neutralized since the start of the operation amounted to 616 according to the Turkish task force engaged in the “Olive branch” operation.



1. Manbij is a town and district in northern Syria at a short distance from Afrin , 30 km. west of the Euphrates River, with a heterogenous population made up of Kurds, Sunni Muslim Arabs, Cherkesy, Turkomans and Checens. In January, 2014 the town was conquered by the terrorist organization Islamic State, until June, 2016, when following a powerful offensive of the Arab-Kurdish allinace called the Democratic Syrian Forces (QUSD) passed under Kurdish administration. The headquarters of the American troops displaced in the area for arming, training and preparing the allied Kurdish troops is in Manbij. Manbij is a strategic point which dominance facilitates the advancement of the attacking troops to the heartland of the Syrian Kurdistan (Rojava) and to the Syrian eastern frontier with Iraq.

THE "AXIS" WASHINGTON - RYIADH - TEL AVIV: A NEW TERM OF THE MIDDLE EAST'S EQUATION?

Dinu COSTESCU

We are living a time when – and we, the global community, – entered a new year of great geopolitical and geostrategic changes whereby the great ones stubbornly continue their race for global supremacy. America swims, spastically led by Donald Trump towards a mirific Eden where it is not the Creator who guards the knowledge tree but Donald Trump wrapped up in the star and stripes on which "America First" and "Only" is written, Russia, which, since conquering Berlin and since the one color flag of former USSR multiplied in the tricolor flag (white, blue and red) of the Russian Federation, is sipping the elixir of the "historical" triumph in the tiny geographical triangle called simply Syria since several millenia, China, which strives in the purest Asian style of "working hard silently" to come closer or even overtake the statute of "China first", and the enumeration might go on as there is plenty of thematic raw material.

The passage between 2017 and 2018 was marked by the American Administration's decision of recognising Jerusalem as capital of the State of Israel accompanied by Donald Trump's decision of transferring the American embassy from Tel Aviv to the city of the "three great religions".

These decisions triggered strong emotions and criticism both in the Arab-Islamic world and among America's European allies as they were resented as a brutal breaking off from the 70-year tradition of the American administrations in the Arab world and in the regional aggregate of the Middle East.

According to repeated assurances coming from Washington, the following segment of the American challenge and of the process of achieving that "big deal" of the century Donald Trump spoke not only once is to be implemented yet in a formula the analysts were not late in notifying:

Donald Trump's Administration will not work alone in order to bring peace to the Palestinians but in a context that could be called a "regional axis" which is to include alongside the United States, Israel and Saudi Arabia! An alliance which, as it will be seen, is conceived not so much on the idea of negotiations and diplomacy but mainly on the idea of simultaneously using the offers considered to be attractive for the Palestinians and on the financial and political blackmail in case the latter will prove reticent and not ready to accept the more commanded Trump's ideas than ideas submitted to analysis.

What will be followed carefully in this new formula is the fact that until recently irreducible enemies, Saudi Arabia and Israel join their potentials and focus it around the American approaches so that together could convince the Palestinian leaders and decision-makers (and to enforce, if need will be) to accept the new peace plan.

What plan is it about?

Even at the beginning of November, 2017, when visiting Cairo for the neverending reconciliation negotiations with Hamas movement, the Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas was unexpectedly invited to Riyadh as guest of the Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman (MBS) who, according to sources of the delegation accompanying the Palestinian president, presented a "new peace plan" between the Palestinians and the Jews stipulating in the main the Palestinians' acceptance that the settlements blocks in the West Bank (Judea and Samaria in Israeli language) be annexed by Israel and under Israel's sovereignty and the rest of the Palestinian "national" and "autonomous" enclaves constitute, together with Gaza, the "independent Palestinian state" while East Jerusalem is not its capital but instead the small town of Abu Dis – a Palestinian location divided and separated from the area of "Greater Jerusalem" by the "separation wall" built by the Jewish state between its own territory and the West Bank. Renouncing to the old claimed idea of the right of return of the Palestinian refugees and of their descendants to the lost homes is to be attached

to this arrangement, according to MBS's offer. In exchange for accepting this format, the Saudi monarchy pledges to offer the Palestinian side substantial financial benefits for a "durable development" of the "future Palestinian state". Refusal of such an offer would mean – Mohammed Bin Salman dixit – ceasing any Saudi financial assistance – an assistance already in deep coma – for the National Authority.

One may easily find out that the said plan was flatly rejected by Mahmud Abbas, insofar it has nothing to do with the famous "Arab peace initiative" presented by Saudi Arabia in 2002 which provided for a pan-Arab recognition and normalisation of the relations with Israel in exchange for its withdrawal from the Arab occupied lands in 1967.

Confronted with the subsequent Arab community reactions by the adventurer Saudi Crown Prince, accused of having taken over ideas and plans dictated by Israel, the monarchy returned to confused explanations from which one could understand it was not about a plan conceived in Riyadh. Then, where was it conceived? The journalists asked themselves this question and could identify two origins only: Washington or Tel-Aviv. The truth that this is the case and that there is an American-Israeli-Saudi coordination is proved by the series of actions, decisions and positions expressed during last months by Washington, Tel Aviv and Riyadh among which mention should be made of:

- On November 18th, 2017, the American administration decided to renounce to the renewal of the working licence of the Office of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (granted in 1994 and renewed every six month). After the announcement, the Palestinian leadership reacted and warned they will end up all contact with the Administration and the American decision was not implemented.

- On December, 31st, 2017 with a belated answer to the "plan" presented by prince Mohammed Bin Salman, Likud's ruling party Central Committee recommended its parliamentary group in the Knesset to actively promote the idea of annexing the Jewish settlements in the

West Bank and passing them under Israel's state sovereignty.

- On January the 1st, 2018, the Knesset adopted a law forbidding the Israeli governments all negotiation on the political, territorial and demographic statute of Jerusalem except for the case two-thirds of the number of parliamentarians agree on that.

- Two days later, on January the 3rd, president Donald Trump declared on Twitter the United State will cut funding of the UN Agency for Refugees, (UNRWA) addressed to the Palestinian refugees pretending that the Palestinians "were no longer willing to talk peace". In her turn, the American ambassador to the UN, Nikki Haley, completed Trump's announcement and declared that "Washington will cut the financial contribution for *coercing* the Palestinians into coming back to the negotiations table". Mention should be made that UNRWA Agency secures assistance (education, health, food etc.) for around 5.8 million Palestinian refugees. In the summer of 2017, the Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu even requested dissolving the Agency arguing it "paves to way to conflict instead of contributing to its solution".

- The withdrawal from the Agency for Refugees is not the singular pressure exerted by Trump Administration as a political tool in the context of the Arab-Israeli conflict in general or the Israeli-Palestinian one in particular. So, in October 2017, a statement of the State Department announced the United States' decision of withdrawing from UNESCO as a result of the "need of a fundamental reform within the organization". An announcement in the same sense was made a little later by the Israeli government, too, arguing that within UNESCO "continuous anti-Israeli positions are manifest", an argument that is but a curtain for covering the real reason of the withdrawal, namely the acceptance of the Palestinian National Authority as a member with full rights to UNESCO which was sanctioned on October, 31st, 2017.

- We finally remember that on January 5th, 2018 Saudi Arabia and Egypt rejected, in Amman, a Jordanian initiative of convening an ex-

traordinary Arab summit of the Arab League member states to discuss the measures the Arab community should adopt for supporting the Palestinian people's rights and diminishing the impact the American resolutions on the issue of Jerusalem might have, in a negative sense, on the process of politically and diplomatically solving the Palestinian file.

It is difficult to foresee how viable or how provisional such an alliance between the Wahhabite regime and the State of Israel, suggested and backed by the United States will prove. If for the monarchy in Riyadh the motivation is circumscribed to the bitter conflict existing between the kingdom and the Iranian theocratic regime, it is more difficult to believe Israel will let itself drawn into an "alliance" which predominantly serves the Saudi interests in relation to the Saudi-Iranian conflictual situation. In December, 2017, general Gadi Eizenkot, chief of General Staff of the Israeli Army declared, for the Saudi site "Elaph", that "the two countries (Israel and Saudi Arabia) "never waged war" and stressed Israel's "availability" of establishing an "exchange of information" with the Saudi services in order to counteract the Iranian expansion in the region. On January 8th, the same Saudi site published an interview with Iytzak Herzog, the former chairman of the Israeli Labor Party and leader of the Israeli political opposition in the Knesset in which he eulogized the Saudi Crown Prince, Mohammed Bin Salman, as "one of the Arab world's greatest revolutionaries" and expressed his hope Saudi Arabia will have an important role in relaunching the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations process. Concomitantly, a delegation of 24 intellectuals, clerics and personalities of the Kingdom of Bahrein paid, at King Hamad's initiative and with the support of Elie Wiesel foundation, an official visit to Israel for a "better mutual knowledge and for strengthening the dialogue between cultures, religions, civilizations".

An "axis" in its initial stages with unclear perspectives and objectives for the time being and it is known that none of the American, Saudi or Israeli participants are ready to risk engaging in axes and alliances as long as they will not be

considered, without doubts, useful to its members.

SEVEN YEARS OF "ARAB SPRING": WHAT KIND OF A MIDDLE EAST?

Ambassador Prof. Dumitru CHICAN

For the Arab world of the Middle East, 2018 means seven years since the great uprising the Maghreb and the Mashreq witnessed and about which one talks less and less and when memory speaks of, it whispers timidly. The Middle East – which did not become either "bigger" or "newer" – remains covered by clouds while the spring buds, from which a new miracle of revival was expected, whitered and were grounded by a chaos meant, by the dreaming theorists, to build a new Eastern Eden on the land of the third millennium.

The last two decades of contemporary history of the region were marked by at least three manifestations that cannot either be contested or ignored for the way of evolving on this complicated and sensitive chessboard of the political geography.

Firstly, it is about the panorama of the relations between the states and the governing Arab systems, relations that are far from having any longer a connection worth mentioning with the concept of pan-Arabism and Arab unity. The fragmentation on national criteria and the priority granted to their own policies and interests is the syntagm characterizing probably most exactly the contemporary "state" of the Arab nation. The indicator of the trust level and "brotherhood" descended to lowest worrying rates, the Arab kings and presidents are looking suspiciously to each other when they are not spying on each other, and are libeling either openly and directly or through "spokesmen" when they are not accusing and are sanctioning breaking off of bridges by political walls and economic and embargoes of other nature.

Secondly, as an objective reflection of such a state of affairs, the Arab League – emblem, symbol and engine of the "joint Arab action" (Al-

'Amal Al-'Arabiy Al-Mushtaraka) ceased to be a debate, decision-making and dynamism space in fighting the challenges and threats to the Arab community and of its collective security. Today, the Arab regional organization, still set in the mentalities and structures existing as such ever since the creation of the League 73 years ago, represents rather than otherwise a precise barometer of the degree of fragmentation and division of the global Arab system at least in comparison with the period of the league's peak of proving itself in the 1960s-1970s.

Speaking of the defense projects and institutional visibility of the Arab unity and solidarity, they became since a long time history facts that do not attract and interest anybody any longer. The Union of the Arab Maghreb (UMA), is eroded by the historical Algerian-Moroccan disputes in connection with the sovereignty of the so-called "Western Sahara Republic" while at the eastern frontier of the Arab Mashreq, the Cooperation Council of the Arab Gulf States got bogged down because of the rupture occurred last summer between Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates and Bahrain (plus Egypt, which joined the three monarchies due to moneywise reasons and national interests) on the one hand and Qatar, on the other hand. To the causal problems inventory eroding the unity of this sub-regional organization one should add the war in the southern Yemeni tip of the Arabic Peninsula initiated and waged by the monarchy in Riyadh which is, in its turn, in a bitter proxy war with the Iranian theocratic regime which stake is circumscribed to the competition for regional power and influence between the Wahhabite Sunism of the Saudi Kingdom and the "revolution" of the Twelver Shiism of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Finally, the much publicised opening of the "Arab joint action" overall to the Islamic world, the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, initially considered a driving and dynamising factor of the pan-Arab solidarity and cohesion did not do anything but took over and discursively proclaim a sum of outdated paradigms that failed miserably in the inert sands of the same problems, dissensions and conflicts eroding the entire global Muslim community. The most recent and telling example

in this sense is offered by the Islamic summit that took place in Istanbul on December 13th, 2017 as a reaction to the American decision of recognising Jerusalem as capital of the State of Israel and the reunion had a peak participation of only 16 heads of Islamic states out of the 57 Muslim countries members of the organisation.

On the other hand, the world of the Middle East is the game board on which at least four active wars are registered with a sectarian and domestic political and social character yet with deep reverberations on the security and stability climate at the level of the international community, namely the civil wars in Iraq, Syria, Libya and the global war against the terrorist-Islamist phenomenon which origins are deeply rooted in the fertile soil of the customary societies making up the Arab world of the Middle East. The already mentioned conflict in Yemen should be added, too, where the Saudi Arabia-led "Sunni Arab coalition" is dramatically confronting the Islamic Republic of Iran. And all these, separately or jointly, are not strange to the great and historic religious conflict opposing the "Sunni arch" and the "Shia crescent" forming a deep fault line splitting nowadays' Middle East.

The inventory of the shortcomings affecting this part of the world is much more comprehensive and cannot be exhaustively presented indeed in a single article. It seems to us more interesting not the establishment of an index of the disputes indenting and inflaming the Middle East but rather the causes at their origins and which determine some Arabic speaking analysts to describe the Middle East as a failed system on the brink.

From this standpoint, one may state we are in front of a double category of causes, namely those internal in character pertaining to the Arab world proper, considered both a sum of state individualities and their way of relating to the rest of the international community and particularly to its main power states, on the one hand, and causes coming from "the others", from outside the Arab world of the Middle East, on the other hand.

As the causes internal in character are the majority in case of the Arab Middle East, they are

due predominantly to the very paradigm of the Arab ruling regimes irrespective of their conservative or progressist nature and which, since the inception of the independent nation-states and until after the “Arab spring” phenomenon, made a programmatic objective from the exacerbated accentuation of regionalism (*qutriya*) approximately understood in the sense of own, civic “nationalism” to the detriment of the concept of “Arab nationalism” (*qawmiya*) approximately synonymous to the concept of Arabdom and pan-Arabism. In other words, it was about an Arab world which, although pretending to be a “sole nation with an eternal message”, as it was the case with the doctrinary approaches of the Baath Party, it was made up of as many nationalisms delimited by state frontiers and, most of the times, profoundly different from the multiple historical, tribal, social, customary, ideological, economical, political and so on perspective. Syntagms such as Habib Bourghiba’s Tunisia, Hafez (or Bashar) Al-Assad’s Syria, Ibn Saud’s Arabia, Saddam Hussein’s Iraq etc. imposed themselves and are circulating in the contemporaneity. Nasser’s nationalism and pan-Arabism progressively became a simple secondary derivative of the “districtual nationalism” in which the regime, the party and the leader constituted a kind of “alpha and omega”, a kind of Jack of all trades, omnipotent and omniscient, backed by a strong police and security apparatus. And the result was visible among others in that the Arab world, with all too few and precarious as well exceptions, one could not speak of and is still difficult to speak today of a functional democracy as it has been seen in the rapidity with which the “Arab spring” removed the longest-living and authoritarian regimes in a series of of Arab states in the Maghreb and, partially, in the Mashreq.

As far as the causalities are concerned, one may easily find out that they have old roots in the older or more recent history of the Arab world – from the colonial regimes to the modern interferences in the domestic affairs of the Arab world, not a few times encouraged by the very regimes in the Arab Middle East by complicated systems of alliances concluded or terminated

subject to conjectural interests.

In such occurrences, and seven years since the change movement started in the spring of 2011, the current landscape of the Middle East seen from a short run perspective does not seem to inspire hopes concerning a “new renaissance” of the global system of the Arab Middle East. The world of the Middle East, in an identity crisis dominated by the fatalism of the “predestined defeat”, dependent to a great extent on the outside world and on the great players on the global scene, unable to identify in itself the necessary resources of a deep reform of thinking and of durable future, has not the wide perspective of renewal and of coming out from the morass it is in. At least not in the coming decade.

SYRIA AND THE MIDDLE EAST - 2018

Ambassador Prof. Dumitru CHICAN

I

The analysts who, according to the tradition of passing from a year to another, draw up balance sheets of the of the last year and scenarios for the evolutions in the new year agree upon that a retrospective look at the political, military, diplomatic and of other nature landscape of 2017 experiences in the region of the Middle East represents the deep footprint of some events with possible dramatic consequences in the political register, events which headliner was held by the following points of reference:

- The decision of the American administration of recognising Jerusalem as “eternal and unified” capital of the State of Israel and the transfer of the American embassy to the “capital” of the three universal monotheistic religions;

- The end of the existence of the jihadist-terrorist entity “Islamic State in Syria and Iraq” both as a military structure and as an active presence in Syria’s and Iraq’s physical and social geography;

- The all of a sudden change of weathervane in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia’s regional and

international foreign policy, a change that points out, according to analysts, to the beginning of a new regional “axis” reuniting the Saudi Kingdom, the United States of America and Israel on the motivational substrate of fighting the Shia sectarian, political and military “terrorism” and “expansionism” of the Iranian theocratic regime;

- 2017 witnessed, at the same time, a dramatic change in what concern the balance of forces on the chessboard of the Syrian civil war manifested particularly by Donald Trump Administration “unilateral” divorce from the Kurdish rebels, Turkey’s abrupt ascension on the game board of the conflicts in Syria and in other tense zones of the Middle East, a fact that allowed the threesome Russia-Turkey-Iran to launch and implement a new strategy that might be named by the syntagm “Astana-Sochi” of controlled management (by the three states) of the peace process in Syria in a context in which the American projects are still maintained enveloped – intentionally or inertially – in a cover of lack of clarity and fluctuation.

II

Starting from these realities corroborated with the information portfolio existing at the end of 2017, one may forecast from the perspective of 2018 that the regional developments on the Middle East’s game board will sit, in all likelihood, under the mark of moments where the surges of violence will be crossed with the initiatives of calming and halting them and the following considerations have to be taken into account:

- Spurred on by the decision adopted by the head of Washington Administration, the leadership of Likud Party asked on December 31st the parliament (Knesset) to promote the idea of a fragmented and progressive annexation of the West Bank followed by the law adopted on January 2nd 2018 forbidding the Israeli governments to engage in negotiations on modifying the statute of Jerusalem except for two-thirds of the members of the parliament accepting that, it is presumable that unlocking the negotiations process between the Israelis and the Palestinians will continue to remain at a wished-for stage ac-



companied, on the one hand, by American pressures on the Palestinian National Authority and, the attempts of the latter to find a replacement for the United States as driving force for the peace process, possibly by orienting towards the European Union or, even to a greater extent, towards the Russian Federation.

The regional observers, analysts and political scientists and their geopolitical counterparts in the West believe that these movements made by Benjamin Netanyahu are in fact a preamble to “Israel’s solving the Palestinian file” in a future that cannot offer surprises any longer.

- All these will mean that, after a long period, in which the influence of the “Arab springs” should not be ignored and when the Palestinian cause was overshadowed, the Palestinian file will come back in the political and media spotlight accompanied by the risk of its slow returning back to the previous condition to the extent the Palestinians themselves and the Arab and the European community would not bring innovative ideas and would not cease to make of the “Palestinian cause” a “bargaining chip” in exchange for as mercantile as possible interests. A deepening of tensions and conflicts between the Palestinians and the Israelis is to be expected as well resulting, as usual under such conjectures, in loss of life nobody will count except for partisan outlooks and never from an approach of the sense of Palestinian stones and Tshal’s lethal bullets.

- As far as we are concerned, we can expect a sine die dynamisation of the violent and dis-

cursive Palestinian-Israeli “clashes” that could not be named a genuine intifada having in mind their amplitude as it was the case with the two uprisings of 1993-1997 (Intifada Al-Aqsa) and 2000-2005 considering that the hatred of the Palestinian population against the Israeli occupation regime is not equaled but by the disappointment of the lamentable performance of the leading Palestinian elites, either those “emanating” from the miserable “Oslo Agreement” or those generated by the governance in Gaza of the Muslim Brotherhood rebaptised with the logo of “Hamas”;

- In spite of wishful thinking media comments, we have to expect that the Russian, Turkish and Iranian players “throw on the green velvet” all their hard assets. Neither Russia fights for Erdogan’s sake nor the latter is ready to sacrifice neo-Ottomanism for the Russian neo-Tsarism and so much less for the Persians who are, historically, the conflictual reverse of Ottoman’s Turks from whom the neo-Ottomanism in Bosphorus claims its descendancy;

- As far as the fog which engulfed during the last seven years the Syrian crisis is concerned, it continues to dominate the new year yet the discursive coming closer of the “Syrian peace” will remain, at least in the spring of 2018, an active conflict breeding ground. The Iranians are in Syria, the Americans do not want either the Iranian presence or the Russian one, yet they are strengthening their own presence packed in diplomatic covers (diplomats who will participate to fields mines cleaning and to training other...corporal-diplomats) as the general cum minister Mattis announced us, the Russians want a solution but in the known conditions. The Syrian peace is still a capricious goddess;

- It is expected that on the conflictual front of the Middle East to assist to an increase of the role and the military dynamism of the Russian-Turkish-Iranian “trio” as a main player on the Middle East’s game board. It is difficult to suppose on this background that the Iranian player will relax its known positions in what concern the regional conflictual problems or its way of relating with the Western community or with

Israel;

- In Iraq, where both the central government in Baghdad and the officials in the Iraqi Kurdistan are relentlessly describing the bilateral relations in the rosiest colors even if the realities looked in its in-depth hidden by an artificial and fragile crust of festivism herald rather than otherwise a continuation and even an intensification of the conflicts between Erbil and Baghdad as long as neither the federal rulers nor the provincial ones renounce the reasons that led to the degeneration of the conflict as well as the conditions either of the two sides formulate as a precondition for a real conciliation;

- One of the sensitive segments of the Arab Mashreq, namely the sub-regional organisation of the Gulf Cooperation Council will continue being a tensions and instability breeding ground as a result of the hubris struggle between the Saudi Wahhabite Kingdom and its allied monarchies on the one hand and the small Qatar Emirate, on the other hand, and a perspective of solving the crisis is still missing.

- Even if approached with reserves, the possibility of a new conflict between Israel and the Lebanese military-political movement Hezbollah still looms and is increasing particularly after the December-January social turbulences Iran witnessed and that the top power structures in the Islamic Republic tried very hard to present them as a result of conspirations initiated and managed by the “enemies of the Iranian people” among which the United States of America is placed on a prominent spot. Far from making a step back as the west and its strategists request, Iran will continue to pursue its policy of increasing its presence, influence and control over the political geography of the Middle East, already proclaimed by Tehran as its “vital space” and as its “corridor to the Mediterranean Sea”, as essential moves for the regional Iranian projects. From this standpoint, we may rather expect that far from bringing political solutions to the conflictual regional files, 2018 brings new outbursts of violence and tensions which, related to the rapidity with which the positions and policies of the involved states change, slide to a



menacing spiral of the regional and multistate war.

III

For Syria and the developments of the internal conflict in this country, both the situation existing on the political and military front and the situation on the game board of the horse trading for solving the crisis, 2017 passed with difficulty among the clouds of uncertainty and fog overshadowing the prospects of halting the destruction and bloodshed. In the way the panorama of the Syrian internal war emerged at the beginning of 2018, one may estimate that in spite of the political demarches in Geneva then Astana and Sochi lead to a prognosis for this year as being far from bringing the de facto and de jure end of the seven years conflict and instead will bring to the chronicle of the dramatic war yet a new period of turbulences and painful delays of the projects related to peace, to national reconciliation and to the reconstruction of a ruined country and society.

One may say that all belligerent-players or involved from the sideline of this war are animated by the wish of reaching an outcome of the so far delayed fights and conflicts and the main players are Bashar Al-Assad's regime and its allies. From this outlook, in a priority order, there is the on-going campaign for reconquering the town and district of Idleb in north-east that further remain if not a fiefdom then at least a tran-

sition shelter for the armed formations of the Syrian opposition headed by the Islamist and jihadist groups detachments. On the same list of priorities of the regime army is strengthening the control over Aleppo and Hama cities and of their rural areas, of the rural areas east and west of the capital Damascus, recovering from the Islamist rebels of oil and gas fields in Deir Ezzor area, east of the country, and the fights for securing the state frontier between Syria and Iraq, in the east and between Syria and Jordan, in the south where the Islamist-jihadist movement is still dynamic enough to maintain currently the war status in Syria.

In the first quarter of 2018, one may state that the security threats represented by the terrorist-jihadist formation Islamic State are still topical as the researches carried out by prestigious western and Russian geostrategic centers estimate that there are still around 2,000 Islamist fighters into battle positions on the entire Syrian territory. After partially "cleaning" the periphery and the rural areas of the capital Damascus of the jihadist activism, the national army was engaged at the end of 2017 and the beginning of 2018 in eliminating the rebel presence west of Damascus up to the transit route Damascus-Beirut as well as south-east of the country on portions adjacent to the frontier with Jordan and of the demarcation line separating the Syrian Golan Heights from its rest, under Israeli occupation since 1967.

IV

The landscape of the morphology of the Syrian internal front as it was at the end of 2017 has substantial differences and geographical rearrangements as compared to the situation at the beginning of the year.

At the beginning of 2017, the distribution and components of the fighting forces on the dynamics of the Syrian front were as follows:

The Islamist rebels of "Islamic State in Syria

and Iraq” formations held under control 95,320 sq.km. representing 51.48% of the geography of the Syrian national territory. “Syrian Democratic Forces” (QUSD) were placed the second as human and logistic dimensions, an alliance made up of Syrian Arabs and Kurds backed by the United States of America, who controlled 35,144 sq.km., namely 19% of the national territory while the government forces were on the third place controlling an area of 31,419 sq.km. (17% of the Syrian territory) followed in decreasing order by the mosaic of tribal, sectarian, partisan or districtual rebel formations opposed to Bashar Al-Assad’s regime (23,053 sq.km., respectively 12.4% of the national territory), mercenary foreign combat units and other independent rebel forces (20,828 sq.km. or 11.2% of the national territory), then the Turkish intervention forces code-named Operation Euphrates Shield (2,250 sq.km. or 0.13% of the territory).

At the beginning of 2018, the government forces backed by the Russian and Iranian allies had under their control or influence 103,318 sq.km., namely 55.8% of the territory, the Syrian-Kurdish alliance (QUSD) was controlling 35,500 sq.km. of the territory (27.4%) while the terrorist organisation Islamic State controlled separate enclaves totalling 5,600 sq.km. (cf. the daily electronic publication “An-Nashra”, Antelias, Lebanon, 2nd January 2018).

With the help of the Russian aviation and of the Iranian combat troops, the national army was carrying out in the first days of 2018 an ample offensive of recovering the territory still under rebel forces’ control and some analysts and observers assess that one could speak of a generalised ceasefire on the Syrian front only when entering the second quarter of this year. That would not mean Syria’s pacification and its return to normality as long as a political codification of peace is not reached and as long as foreign forces of the Russian Federation, the United States, Iran and Turkey continue to be in Syria.

V

Two weeks before the planned deadline (28th-29th January) for convening in Sochi the confer-

ence “on dialogue and national conciliation”, conceived by Vladimir Putin in agreement with Turkey and Iran, January was marked – even if not so pregnant in the media landscape – by a tense conflictual climate among the belligerent camps on the Syrian game board which are seriously questioning the festivist declarations made both in Moscow and in Washington about the “victory against the terrorism” or of “completion of missions” on the Syrian front. There are, in our opinion, two signals which must catch the attention and urge restraint when “the Syrian victory” is about.

Firstly, it is about the declarations coming from the Syrian – political and military – opposition, to an equal extent, and which tried to use a diplomatic language without succeeding too much in this sense, announcing they will not attend Sochi conference. The fact that the leader of Al-Nusra (the Syrian offshoot of Al-Qaida organisation), from an equal footing, called on the opposition to boycott the solutions the Russians (yet not those of the Americans) want to impose on the “Syrian people”. The American officials who took positions welcome the declaration while Moscow rejects it since when announcing the “completion of the mission in Syria” the Kremlin evoked exactly the continuation of the fight against the Syrian Al-Qaida as argument – one of the several invoked – for perpetuating the presence of the Russian army in Syria.

Secondly, another element is more important and which, if confirmed, will not herald anything good either for the Syrians or for the idea of peace. On January 14th, the United States announced the implementation of a plan of setting up, arming and training a “new Syrian army” made up of around 30,000 fighters of the alliance “Syria’s Democratic Forces” (*Quwāt Suriya Ad-Dīmūqrātiya – QUSD*), dominated by Kurds and having as objective the control of a territory of over 35,000 sq. km. between the eastern bank of the Euphrates and the frontier between Syria and Turkey in the north and between Syria and Iraq in the north-east and east. If one takes into consideration that in Astana the United States agreed upon the “de-escalation” zones whose guarantors will be on the one hand the United

States at the southern border with Jordan and with Israel on the demarcation line between Syria and "the Syrian Golan Heights) and the "trio in Astana" (Russia, Turkey, Iran) on the other hand, the Trump Administration's decision overturns practically the entire equation of the fragile prerequisites created (and accepted by all warlords of the Syrian war) in order to focus on the issues of political solution.

What were the rejoinders to such a decision signed by Donald Trump?

One day later, on January 15th, Vladimir Shamanov, the Chairman of Duma Committee on Defense warned that the step announced by the United States "will not remain without an appropriate rejoinder", and the American decision was, from Moscow's standpoint, a "direct and inadmissible threat to the Russian Federation's vital interests" and sought "to overthrow the Syrian regime, derail the demarches for a political solution of the conflict and an attempt of changing Syria's territorial, demographic and social status-quo".

On January 16th, a source of the Arab-Kurdish Alliance (QUSD) declared that the American-led anti-terrorist multistate Alliance "envisages setting up and recognising a federal system of Syria's future organisation where QUSD alliance constitutes a fundamental component of the northern and north-eastern regions of the Syrian territory". According to the same source (taken over by "Ash-Sharq, London, "Al-Hayat, London and Al-Jazeera, in Doha) the new army is conceived by the American administration as a pillar for establishing in the offing of a Kurdish "rojawa" (state entity), from Erbil, in Iraq, to the shores of the Mediterranean Sea.

In its turn, the presidency in Ankara declared through its spokesman, that the decision of the American side is unacceptable, and Turkey is determined to continue "firmly" the fight against the Kurdish terrorists backed by Trump Administration with the pretense of securing the Syrian borders. The United States wants to impose,



against Turkish will, a permanent Kurdish presence Turkey will never accept. At the time these lines were written, the international press agencies were speaking of an imminent "ample military operation of the Turkish army in Syria for driving away the Kurdish fighters from the strategic areas Idleb-Afrin in the north-eastern Syrian territory".

On January 18th, after a phone conversation with his Turkish counterpart Mevlut Çavuşoğlu, the head of the American diplomacy confusedly contested the USA's intention of setting up "a border army" at the Syrian-Turkish frontier.

The general cum dignitary, and chief of the American defense, Jim Mattis declared that "with the beginning of the new year, America will have more diplomats on the fighting fronts in Syria and Iraq". Asked what kind of missions these diplomats will have on the battle front, the American minister specified that they "will take part, among others, in demining actions and training the military of QUSD formations", thus bringing back into the current times his pledge concerning ..."diplomacy as war waged with other means" preached by Carl von Clausewitz.

All such declarations contradict knowingly or look hesitant in what concern the path to be followed in the near future to the "road to peace".

In the opinion of the majority of analysts, the said American project, far from bringing extra progress on the road to stability, opens the gates of a period of new tensions and conflicts and questions even the precarious agreements

achieved in Geneva-Astana process concerning particularly the diminishing of the explosive potential of the Syrian internal war. At the same time, the Administration's option for the Kurdish minority – as sole indigenous reliable partner – calls into question the American equidistance to the other formations of the Syrian political and military opposition and consecrated Washington's political decision of imposing itself – according to the Afghan and Iraqi model – as an indefinite military presence in Syria, something that removes any difference between the United State's strategy in the conflictual problems of the Middle East and the Kremlin's expansionist projects in the same area of the global political geography.

The statement that any peace following military conflicts can not endure except for it is finally a political peace is a truism. At the beginning of 2018, such a political peace in Syria remains a distant outlook insofar the competition between the United States and the Russian Federation increases with no sign that the belligerents are ready to accept the classical tactic of compromise. So that this new year has all the prospects of bringing a new and equally blood stained and destructive prolongation of a war which left behind almost half a million dead.



THE PALESTINIANS AND JERUSALEM: IS DONALD TRUMP THE ONLY RESPONSIBLE?

Munir SALAMEH, Ramallah

A lot has been said and will be said about the American administration's decision of recognising Jerusalem as capital of the State of Israel and of transferring the American embassy from Tel Aviv to the holy city. Donald Trump's decision was labelled as unjustified and unrealistic, a "new Balfour declaration" and, at any rate, as a step that is not conceived and could not contribute to paving the way to a just and lasting peace between the Palestinians and Israelis. More regrettable, the protests manifestations that followed the step made by the administration resulted in counteracting measures adopted by the Israeli force institutions against the Arab and Palestinian protesters that left behind, as it was predictable, numerous casualties, dead and wounded. Beyond the juridical aspects of the American decision, one may talk, at this time of bloodshed, of an ethical side and responsibilities. For the time being, ethics has no cordial relations with politics, the interests and hubris and those who condemned or disavowed the measure decided by the American administration – from individuals to communities, to governments and states, including among those having strategic and alliance relationships with the United States, laid all responsibility on the leader of the White House. It is a topic that may and must generate time-consuming debates and dialogues which will bear fruits only insofar they will be animated by good-faith, restraint and the genuine desire of identifying a modus operandi so that, in spite of all roughness and suspicions lead to a solution for the historical conflict between the Palestinian Arabs and the Jewish state.

In such a context it is necessary that the Arab and Palestinian counterparts overcome the fatalistic complex of "foredoomed defeat" of the "conspiracy approach" and analyse critically and self-critically the extent they them-

selves bear a part – and not the smallest – of the responsibility in paving the way which during decades made a decision like that adopted by Donald Trump possible. One cannot ignore, indeed, the reality that the policies of the administrations succeeding one after another at the helm of the United States of America proved a deep, constant and biased alignment to Israel and its policies along the 70 years since its creation. Trump Administration's recent decision on Jerusalem is not new in the



tradition of American positioning towards the long-lasting Arab-Israeli and Palestinian-Israeli dispute. With two exceptions – the one represented by the Israeli-French-British tripartite aggression against Egypt in 1956 and then pushing the Israeli rulers to accept launching, in 1990, of the so-called Madrid process of negotiations with the Palestinians that resulted three years later in the Oslo Agreements, none of the American presidents who paraded in the Oval Office exerted pressures or demarches designed to determine the Israeli rulers to adopt the spirit of justice and fairness distributed in a balanced way in the process of the dispute with the Palestinian party including the necessary abstention from pre-conditionality of the peace process or the sustained program of Jewish settlements in the territories administered by the Palestinians.

Under these circumstances, the Palestinian representatives have the duty of answering two questions which, above all, are raised by the Palestinian population and the exiled Palestinians: what was the criterion determining the Palestinian leadership of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation, of the Fatah movement and of the Palestinian National Authority – to accept the bet on the quality of the United States as impartial mediator and guarantor of peace and, moreover, to cling fast on this bet during more than a quarter of a century since the start of the Palestinian-Israeli political negotiations process?

The analysis of this process does not suggest in any case that the answers should result from or lead the Palestinians to enmity attitudes towards the United States that are ultimately a

great power of the global geostrategy and global policies and also, at the same time, a sovereign state drawing up its strategies and policies exercising these very supreme prerogatives of national sovereignty to the primary benefit of the American society, its prosperity, security, culture and their own way of life.

On the other hand, it is the duty, if not the obligation, of the Palestinian leadership, and we speak of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation, Fatah movement or the National Authority to acknowledge in its turn their responsibility of the form, content and finalities of the American decisions and that to the extent in which, through its political positions, by its lack of internal cohesion and by its blatant distancing from the deep realities of the society as well as by the cleavage separating the Palestinian body in its assembly contributed indirectly to the American administrations' positioning towards the Arab Middle East and to the decisions and steps deriving from that.

It is neither the American administration, nor Israel but the Palestinian leadership who accepted and promoted sine die addressing, during the negotiations for the 1993 Oslo Agreement, the fundamental files such as Jerusalem, the refugees, the Jewish settlements in the autonomous territories or within the borders of the future Palestinian state. The delay turned into status quo to which, today, the same Palestinian leadership is prisoner.

In the same "Oslo process", the Palestinian strategists and decision-makers did not base

their negotiations tactic on international law references, namely the pertinent resolutions of the Security Council, of the General Assembly of the UN, and allowed thus the negotiations counterpart to circumvent the international juridical references and to channel the negotiations on a trajectory of procrastinations and discussions lacking juridical content and fundamentals.

The international diplomatic campaign, with certain positive results in attracting the international community sympathy for the Palestinian state project and accepting it as an observer or full rights member in international organisations, bodies and agencies is not enough for excusing corruption, the deterioration of the living standards of the population in the West Bank and the lack of any notable initiatives towards peace. So that, found itself in an abnormal juridical condition, i.e. losing its legitimacy as a result of the paralysis of the democratic process of electing the leadership, of the legislative and executive fora, the Palestinian National Authority did not do anything except consolidating the negative perception existing at the level of the Palestinian society, far from bringing the much awaited peace. The Oslo Agreements of September, 1993, had as a unique result the consecration of the "perpetual" character of the autonomy and of the Palestinian Authority which, in its turn, accepted this statute of a perspectiveless transition to concluding peace and without a vision of what that conclusion will mean.

It is obvious that the paralysis status in which is now the political negotiation peace process with Israel cannot be causally attributed exclusively to the Jewish state as one of the decisive factors contributing to maintaining this status quo is to be found primarily in the political Palestinian elites' lack of political will if we have in mind the Islamist movement of Hamas, the National Authority, Fatah movement or the Palestinian Liberation Organisation of engaging in a serious process of reconciliation and restoring the Palestinian unity around a single program able to make the Palestinian party a credible and acceptable negotiator.

Today, the situation in the Palestinian autonomous territories and punctually the legitimacy of the National Authority represent a controversial if not an explicitly contested subject. President Mahmoud Abbas was elected in 2005 and his mandate expired in January, 2009, two years before the arrival of the "Arab spring" in the Middle East. Mahmud Abbas extended his prerogatives one more year, to January 2010, which expired as well without any perspective for new presidential elections. The Palestinian Legislative Council (the parliament) which mandate expired in 2010 is in a similar situation. According to common rules of any functional democracy, the legislative and executive legitimacy of the National Palestinian Authority can be contested. Yet the de facto situation in the autonomous territories or related to it – the conflict opposing the two main political and military movements Fatah and Hamas and the split it generated among the Palestinian population, the positive echo of the recognition of the Palestinian state by the parliaments of the member states of the European Union and, its acceptance with an observer status in the United Nations calmed down to an important extent the protesting tendencies and claims of the population or passing the Palestinian issue on a secondary level of the political priorities of the regional and international community – should be approached from another outlook which allows a better understanding of the "Palestinian spirit".

The Palestinian movement needs help. It can be granted on condition that before everything else, the Palestinian political elites help themselves.





MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA (MENA) BETWEEN RELIGIOUS PLURALISM AND GEOPOLITICAL ASSETS

**Ambassador Prof. Dumitru
CHICAN**

2011, followed by global mobilisation for fighting the terrorist phenomenon of Islamic doctrinary inspiration marked, at the same time, the beginning of an ascending expansion of the political Islam on the background of the ideological, political, social and security landscape of the Middle East. This phenomenon witnessed a rapid dissemination geographically conducted on a large range of movements and orientations, from grabbing the political power in Tunisia and Egypt to the strong revivalism of the violent extremism based on a powerful politicisation of the religious factor embodied at its peak in the institutional form of "Islamic State in Syria and Iraq".

The "Arab spring" phenomenon and the military and sectarian conflicts that followed had, among other consequences, a reproblematisation of the general situation in the Middle East geopolitically, by bringing to the forefront new rivalries in the configuration of the regional political geography and especially, with an unprecedented offensiveness, the "war by proxies" between the Saudi Sunni Wahhabism and the Iranian Twelver Shiism, a confrontation that has redrawn to a great extent the balances of forces and the alliances systems at the Middle East level – a network in which other less active states until then were involved in the region's conflictual economy depending on interests and national and ideological calculations. It is about Turkey, Egypt, Qatar as regional players, on the one hand, and extra-regional players having at the forefront the United States, the Russian Federation and other states, mainly from the geographical area of the western half of the European continent, on the other.

The outside simultaneous or successive interferences in the developments on the Middle East scene and their support of the wide kaleidoscope of sectarian and ideological groups en-

gaged in conflictual relations massively contributed to deepening the inter-sectarian cleavages and to the emergence of new dividing and fragmentation lines of a conflictual nature while turning the religious arguments and legitimisations into instruments and tools supporting the political struggles and the geopolitical competition and all that had, in their turn, as a consequence the proliferation of a wide range of extremisms simultaneously with the localisation and polarisation of internal conflicts in countries such as Syria, Irak, Yemen or Libya and that meant, in the last years, calling into question the existence and future of the religious and sectarian minorities and the coexistence relations among them.

Today, seven years since the explosion of the "Arab spring" and four years of existence of the Muslim "neo-caliphate" in Levant, the relation between the forms of manifestation of religion and religiosity, on the one hand, and the sphere of politics in the Middle East region, on the other, presents three defining characteristics. Firstly, it is about the religious polarisation and the separation, on hostility criteria, among the religious communities, a process that led to a multiplication and diversification of the forms of relating between secular and religious, respectively between state and religion with all conflictual irradiations deriving from this phenomenon. Secondly, it is about the deep transformations occurred in the landscape of the political Islam materialised mainly by the multiplication of the trajectories followed in its evolutive process that unfolded within differentiated coordinates from the so-called "moderate Islam" to the extreme radicalisation in case of the Muslim Brotherhood movement and the myriad of small extremist groups derived ideologically and doctrinarywise from the Brotherhood or, as it is the case of political involvement of the Salafist movements or, finally, as it is the case of the dichotomy local-global such as the jihadist movements. Thirdly, it is about the direct impact of the geopolitical con-

text in reconfiguring the relations and positionings between religion and politics as well as in case of relations between the Islamic Shiism and Christian minorities constituting the most numerous sectarian entities in the societies with majority Islamic demography.

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There are enough reasons allowing the statement that the regression witnessed by the Islamic radicalism starting with the 1990s, namely after the end of the civil war in Algeria and on the background of violent clashes between the radical Islamist entities and the totalitarian regimes contributed substantially to the emergence and rapid dissemination of new forms of manifestation of religiosity among which, not the least, mention should be made of new preacher-leaders projected on the foreground of the social life by televisions and social media, then the emergence of women-preachers with a great audience in the intimacy of the public opinion or, finally, the ascension of the new phenomenon of involvement and attracting the young generation towards the militantist Islam by means of and favor and protection of charity foundations, of the establishments with educational character and of different forms of volunteering for the common good, yet seeking finally the intense promotion of the so-called *da'wa* – the Islamic mission work of conversion to the religious activism and mission with political finality.

During the years preceding the break out of the “Arab spring”, one could note the emergence and ascension in the Arab-Islamic societies of the Middle East and the north of the African continent of a genuine campaign of religious mobilising similar to that promoted by the American televangelists, yet which allowed the Salafists and Islamists neo-fundamentalist movements an active offensive of resuscitating the traditionalist reading of the sacred texts and also of social activism which proved, most of the times, more incisive and more attractive than that carried out by the “official religion” and by the state institutions. We are witnessing the ascension of a current some researchers called “market Islam”

which has two opposite faces. On the one hand, it is permissive to pop music and heavy metal, to the women shy presence in bikinis on the beaches, to the liberalisation of the women’s right of driving a car or the opening towards the introduction of TV and cinema in Saudi Arabia, something that determined some authors to speak of the beginning of “post-Islamist era”. Yet, on the other hand, this frond against traditionalism and supremacy of sacred scriptures was met with violence by the conservative Islamic orientations which responded by declaring all these aspects as “*bid’a*”, impermissible fabrications and brought back in question the terms of *kufr* and *kāfir* translatable by “heresy” and “heretic” – a felony which, according to the rigorism enforced by the Islamic religious jurisprudence is liable to excommunication and, in extremis, to death penalty – namely the very practices accredited and overbid by a group such as Islamic State/Da’ish.

The fragmentation and polarisation of the religious phenomenon in the entire area of the Arab Mashreq and Maghreb of the north of the African continent had a not at all negligible reflection on the orientation, adaptation and configuration of geopolitical manifestations and rivalries that entailed on the one hand the factors of the politicised Islamist militantism manifestations – from the moderate movements to the conservative terrorist ones – and the global players having fluctuant alliances relations with the regional players. To an equal extent, the ascendancy and territorial and doctrinary expansion of the terrorist phenomenon proper to Islamic State group which, for the first time in the modern history of human society imposed, as a reaction, the concept of transnational antiterrorist multistate coalition having as declared objective the uprooting of radical jihadism sought with the same determination implementing political and geopolitical finalities of penetrating and disseminating of the great players’ influence and control in this sensitive region of the world that became, once more, a pivot of the axes the new cold war is waged and in the competition for the global order. All these contributed to shaping the manifestations with geopolitical

dimensions.

Even if the jihadist-terrorist structures suffered major defeats on the the battle fronts, it goes without saying that in MENA region the weight, activism and the influence of the religious factor will not vanish but, on the contrary, will seek new approaches and new manners of adapting to the political and geopolitical developments so that one may say that the intersections between the religious factor and the geopolitical manifestations will continue to unfold and keep this region in an instability status propitious to any unpredictable developments.

Who Attacked a Russian military base with a 'Swarm' Strike?

Laurențiu SÎRBU

Russia is pointing fingers in all directions as it attempts to decipher who, exactly, attacked the Khmeimim air base and the Tartus naval base in Syria by deploying a massed flight of what appear to have been home-made GPS-guided drones - what seems to be the first attack coordinated of this type in history.

None of the 13 bomb loaded drones reached their target – the Russian forces rejected these attacks with anti-aircraft missiles or intercepted them with electronic warfare equipment, thus taking over their direct control. In addition, these attacks came less than a week after another attack on an air base in Syria where two Russian soldiers lost their lives and several military planes were damaged.

Russian mass media have extensively presented images of the attack by the Russian forces on the Muazzara village, from where the drone attacks were launched, stating that their authors were eliminated.

According to The National Interest, Moscow seems to believe that the militant groups in Syria behind these attacks have received assistance from other states, including images and information from spy satellites. Moreover, Moscow



implied that the United States, Turkey and Ukraine are involved in these attacks.

In the case for Turkey, however, the Kremlin quickly backtracked, withdrawing any insinuations during a meeting President Putin had with news editors in Moscow. He explicitly told journalists that Turkey hasn't been involved. Nor did he directly accuse Washington of involvement, though.

"Those were provocations aimed at disrupting the earlier agreements, in the first place. Secondly, it was about our relations with our partners – Turkey and Iran. It was also an attempt to destroy those relations. We have a perfect understanding of that and will act in solidarity® the Kremlin leader said.

"It is impossible to develop such drones in an improvised manner" Major General Alexander Novikov, head of the Russian General Staff's Office for Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Development, said on January 11. "They were developed and operated by experts with special skills acquired in countries that produce and apply systems with UAVs [unmanned aerial vehicles]."

As noted by National Interest editor Dave Majumdar, the Russian Defense Ministry does not dispute the fact that much of the hardware used to manufacture these drones - which have a range of roughly 100 km and can carry 10 bomblets - is commercially available. Moscow, however, is suggesting that the manner in which the aircraft were designed, built and launched – not to mention their specialized munitions used - are indications that the authors of this attack

had outer assistance.

"In order to produce these drones, some components such as the engine, servo units, and electrical batteries could be bought on the market," Novikov said. *"However, assembly and use of these components in the joint system are a complicated engineer task demanding special training, scientific knowledge, and practical experience of producing these aircraft."*

Furthermore, Moscow argues that the software needed for the coordinated and precise attack on the Russian army bases would have required specialized navigational data - beyond the information that is freely available on the Internet. *"Moreover, special software is required for using fire means of the drones"* continued Novikov. *"Insurgents needed to receive sharp coordinates of targets and take into account numerous parameters such as altitude, flight speed as well as wind direction and speed in order to reach necessary strike effectiveness."*

The bottom line is that Syrian militant groups have technical capabilities beyond the Kremlin's expectations - and Russia does not accept the possibility that they could have independently developed such capabilities.

"The fact that terrorists have received assembly technology and programming technology is the evidence that this threat stretches far beyond the Syrian borders" the Russian Defense Ministry spokesman Major General Igor Konashenkov concluded.

Even though the Russians learned where the attack was launched from and by whom - the village of Muazzara, in the Idlib area, and by the Ahrar-Ash-Sham group - the Russian army officials did not back off from an earlier implicit accusation that the United States had a hand in the attack.

"It is a strange coincidence that during a UAV attack on the Russian military facilities in Syria, a US Poseidon reconnaissance aircraft was cruising for more than four hours over the Mediterranean Sea at an altitude of 7,000 meters", a Russian Defense Ministry source told the TASS news.

More recently, the Russians have implied that

Ukraine might have had a connection to the attack. *"One should pay attention to munitions carried by the drones. These are 400g improvised explosive devices."... "Each drone carried ten munitions. Preliminary researches have showed that the PETN" ... "is produced by a number of countries, including Ukraine."... "This explosive material cannot be produced in an improvised manner or extracted from other munitions",* Novikov said.

Olga Oliker, director at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, told The National Interest that some of the Russian accusations seem excessive. *"I would speculate that there was something about the precision of the targeting that made them think that the attackers had help of some sort"* and fueled by *"a certain amount of general paranoia feeds this, too and as the U.S., Turkey, and Russia all support different parties in the Syria war"*. Moreover, a number of western analysts believe that Moscow may be underestimating the sophistication and technical expertise of modern insurgent groups—or conversely overestimating the difficulty of acquiring the technology to launch such an attack.

"It is actually surprising that this sort of drone attack has not already happened more often," according to George Beebe, director for intelligence and national security at the Center for the National Interest - formerly director of Central Intelligence Agency's Russia analysis. *"The technology is widely available commercially, and contrary to Russian assertions, the technical expertise required to mount this kind of attack is not particularly sophisticated and is fairly widespread. The U.S. made drone strikes a key part of its counter-terrorist operations at a time when few countries could match our capability, but we did so with seemingly little regard for what would happen when our state adversaries and non-state actors inevitably began getting their hands on the technology. The attack in Syria is a preview of what might soon be pointed at the U.S."*, the former American official said.

One of the conclusions of these attacks could therefore be that the world has already entered a new "brave" era, where almost anyone, however small, has access to devastating weapons.

“THE SYRIAN NATIONAL DIALOGUE” AT SOCHI: NEITHER VANQUISHED, NOR VICTORS

Dinu COSTESCU

The “struggle” for pacifying Syria and the competition among the big regional and international players involved in this process is unfolding since a longer time and intensified during the last months of the yesteryear on three main levels which, at least apparently, are balanced in what concern the objectives and the means of achieving them. It is about the “Geneva Process”, in which based on the resolution 2254, the United Nations appears as the guarantor of the Syrian peace and of the agreements that might be reached in this respect. Secondly, it is about the “Astana Process” placed under a triple guarantee from the Russian Federation, Turkey and Iran with a symbolic international involvement. The third path is represented by the “Sochi Process” for national dialogue and reconciliation in Syria initiated by Moscow for whose preparation the Russian side carried out an intense diplomatic campaign for attracting the support and the auspices of the international community.

On this background, the demarches of the international mediator Staffan De Mistura for convening, on January 21st a new round, the ninth, of the “Geneva Process” passed temporarily on a secondary position as the attention of the public opinion and of the international chanceries was garnered by the “Sochi event” with an estimated attendance of around 1,500 people. Who are they and in accordance with what criteria were they selected was less talked about and mainly with critical accents as from the principled list of participants an important component of the Syrian opposition was excluded, namely the Kurdish minority who are reunited under the organizational banner of the “People’s Protection Units” and of the “Democratic Syrian Forces” (QASD) and control around 35% of the Syrian national territory.

At the end of December, 2017 and during the beginning of the new year there were not a few

analysts who tried, according to tradition, to scan the most important events that marked the international and regional scene of the Middle East and what novelties can the new year 2018 bring and estimated, probably in a too enthusiastic way, that the nine rounds of the Geneva and Astana processes and especially the initiative of national reconciliation at Sochi, on the Russian shore of the Black Sea, mark for Syria the beginning of the real end of the civil war and moving to the stage of pacification and reconstruction of a country destroyed during the seven years of war.

Under these circumstances and on a background troubled by the on-going Turkish military operations against the Kurdish enclave of Afrin in the extreme north-west of the Syrian territory and by the escalation of the violent clashes in eastern Ghouta oasis near the Syrian capital where since several days intense attacks of the Syrian army are taking place against the positions held by the opposition formations and in the absence of an important part of the Syrian opposition, the works of the reunion for the “Syrian national dialogue” took place on 29th and 30th of January at the tourist resort of Sochi on the Russian shore of the Black Sea.

In a synthetic way of portraitizing the objectives of this initiative, the following aspects may be noted:

- “Sochi Dialogue”- conceived as an opposite and competitive alternative to the “Geneva Process” (under the UN patronage and backed by the western community led by the United States) – should, in Vladimir Putin’s vision and who expects a new electoral exam, make 2018 a year of achieving the “political peace” in Syria, a peace securing at the same time both the national reconciliation and Bashar Al-Assad’s remaining in power as an active presence on the future configuration of the domestic Syrian scene;

- Enforcing the Russian Federation position as the sole “peacemaker” and, consequently, Moscow’s monopolization of the decision-making leverages in the Syrian geopolitics. Even if on the front the sound of arms is loudly heard, Vladimir Putin wants that along the already announced

political peace to add on his prize list a victorious conclusion, even a partial one, of the military conflict prefacing Vladimir Putin entering the competition for a new presidential mandate at the elections to take place in March. Such a victory would bring the candidate Putin a valuable image capital to be invested in the confrontation with the domestic opponents and foreign enemies including, or first of all, the adversaries-players in the Syrian issue on the Geneva-UN chessboard. The Syrian peace should be a Russian peace as such and above all the previous rounds of negotiations carried out in the world capitals – Geneva, Astana, Vienna, Riyadh, Brussels, Istanbul etc. be perceived, when compared to Sochi, but simple steps for Vladimir Putin's and Russia's coming back to the front echelon of those who decide the future and the fate of the world globally.

On December 27th, after the discussions held in Russia with the representatives of the Syrian opposition of the "Moscow platform", the head of the Russian diplomacy Serghei Lavrov warned of the consequences the attempts of temporizing or preventing the "congress of the Syrian national conciliation" in Sochi might have. Serghei Lavrov's warning intervened when around 40 armed formations of the Syrian resistance and of the political opposition announced they will not attend the congress arguing that Moscow wanted to turn this event into an opportunity for getting the legitimacy of "all Syrians" for the status-quo created by a permanent Russian military presence in Syria. In the same context, Serghei Lavrov specified that the fundamental objective of the dialogue in Sochi is the establishment of a wide representative basis for launching an extended process of constitutional reforms on which all the Syrian sides involved in the domestic conflict agree upon.

The apprehensions expressed by the leaders of the Syrian opposition are based on the suspicion that speaking of a dialogue to which "all" ethnical, sectarian, tribal, provincial and social components of the Syrian people take part as the resolution 2254 adopted during "Geneva round 1" negotiations process stipulates, the Russian counterparts stressed, at the same time, the ne-

cessity of continuing the fighting until the formation "Djabhat Al-Nussra" – the Syrian offshoot of the Al-Qaida network is eliminated. Or that is seen by the opposition circles as a black-mailing signal in the sense that in case the opposition will not engage in Sochi process, Russia has the necessary capacity and potential to continue its war and oblige the opposition forces to conform to the requisites of the peace process as they are formulated and patronated by Moscow.

The dialogue at Sochi is overshadowed by the fact that the Russian Federation, too, did not present and submit yet a clear project concerning the post-conflict reconstruction. Although some big Russian and Chinese companies expressed already their intention of joining such a program, the opposition believes that the Gulf Arab monarchies – considered to own the main investments funds – will not be ready to participate to such a project called by Vladimir Putin "Marshall-2" as long as the Iranian presence in Syria will be maintained and as long as either the European Union or the United States sent not too encouraging signals concerning their involvement in the reconstruction of the Syrian economy and society.

A reason invoked by the opposition for not participating to the national dialogue at Sochi is to be found in the Syrian regime's refusal of signing, during the negotiations in Astana, of an agreement for liberating some hundreds of thousands of detainees in the Syrian prisons, a refusal encouraged as well by the insufficient efficacy of the pressures exerted in this regard by the Russian side on the regime in Damascus.

On the eve of Sochi reunion, the representatives of the local authorities of the "Kurdish autonomous territories" in Syria announced their non-attendance as long as Turkey, alongside Russia and Iran, is both a guarantor of Sochi process and an aggressor state while the host of the reunion itself, the Russian Federation, supports the Turkish offensive against the Syrian Kurds.

In the end, what did the Russian Federation want and expect from "Sochi process"? And why, during the last months, this issue was practically present in any of Vladimir Putin's discursive

official position? It is difficult indeed to elaborate a pertinent answer to this interrogation without knowing the backstage of the motivations these positions are based upon. What is certainly sure is the fact that



Vladimir Putin wants a political solution to be reached in Syria suitable to Moscow's strategic interests in this country and in the Middle East region. Two years since the Russian military intervention in the Syrian civil war any political finality of the war that might be called "peace" and that does not correspond with high priority to Russian interests would mean an annihilation of all efforts and political, strategic and military investments made by Moscow in the file of Syrian crisis. Yet the final consecration of the Russian "victory" in managing Syria's developments could be proclaimed only to the extent any military operations of the terrestrial, aerial and maritime battlefields of the Syrian conflict cease. And that "consecration" will have to mean, from Vladimir Putin's standpoint, a recognition as well from the international community, in general, and of the United States, in particular, of Russia's role as a great power pole of the global order and as a weight factor in managing the important active conflictual problems on the international scene among which, not the least, one finds Crimea issue, the North-Korean race towards the "nuclear club" or the disputes between the American Administration and the theocratic regime in Tehran.

The problem, in case of the "Syrian dialogue" and particularly of "Sochi Process" is, at the core, that what the Russian Federation wishes do not correspond either to the priorities of its regional allies – Iran and Turkey - or to Bashar Al-Assad's ambitions. And this undeclared cleavage will continue as long as Moscow and Washington will not agree upon a convenient partition of the Syrian "cake". Until then, the internal war in Syria remains for all players involved in the policy of regional expansion an ordinary "file" that misses the most important pages i.e. the Syrians'

dramas and the destruction of the Syrian society and state.

Until the eve of the D day of the "Sochi dialogue", a new round of Geneva Process took place this time in Vien-

na under the auspices of the UN special envoy Staffan De Mistura, that ended in failure after tough discussions and also with the decision of the High Negotiations Committee of Syria's Revolution – the most important segment of the Syrian opposition front – of not attending Sochi Conference yet leaving its members the liberty to attend it as individuals in case Moscow will address them such type of invitations. The Vienna round of Geneva Process was in fact a continuation of a previous meeting at the level of ministers of Foreign Affairs known as the "restricted group for Syria" or G5 Group for Syria that took place in the French capital where the United States, Great Britain, France, Jordan and Saudi Arabia presented the UN special envoy to Syria Staffan De Mistura a "non-paper" drawn up by the US State Department meant to stress once more when Sochi dialogue comes near the "fundamental" role the UN plays and has to play in the peace process to the detriment of the "individual solutions and initiatives". The document, backed by the five states, proposes that from now on all negotiations be focussed exclusively on constitutional matters, on organizing legislative and presidential elections and on setting up in Syria a secure environment inducing the start of the process of political transition. According to European diplomatic sources, this "non-paper" sought after all at least three essential objectives: preventing the Russian Federation from "seizing" the meaning and the essence of "Geneva Process" to its favor, a perspective totally rejected by both the western camp and by the Syrian opposition (the High National Committee for Negotiations of the Revolution and of the Opposition) which cancelled its participation to "Sochi Forum"; secondly, imposing the UN special envoy to Syria as the main if not the sole arbiter in the initiatives concerning Syria's polit-

ical transition period from war to peace, a transition that has to meet, under the UN umbrella, the grievances and expectations of the five signatories of the “non-paper” presented in Vienna; and, thirdly, securing, in perspective, a juridical climate ensuring that the new constitution and the modality of organizing the future presidential elections in Syria block up Bashar Al-Assad’s road to Syria’s post-conflict structures. As it was expected, the head of the Syrian government delegation to the negotiations, Ambassador Bashar Al-Jaafari, bluntly rejected the “non-paper” of the five mentioned states accusing it that “pours oil on Geneva fire only for putting sticks in the wheel of Sochi dialogue”. Consequently, the comments coming from both the Syrian opposition circles and from the main western chanceries brought back to discussion the idea that, through Sochi Conference, Vladimir Putin wants to undermine the Geneva Process in order to use it exclusively symbolically only for obtaining an umbrella and internationally legitimating Moscow’s role in pacifying Syria and in the configuration of its future political and state morphology.

Sochi, January 30th, 2018

- translation from Arabic -

“We, the participants to the Conference for Syrian National Dialogue, representatives of all social segments, of political forces and civil society, of Syria’s ethnical, sectarian and social communities,

Upon the invitation of the friendly (sic!) Russian Federation, have met in the town of Sochi in order to bring to an end the seven years suffering of the Syrian people by reaching a consensus on the necessity of rescuing the country from armed confrontation, from social and economic destruction and for regaining our prestige regionally and internationally, for securing the fundamental rights and freedoms of all citizens and firstly for securing them a safe life and a haven from violence and terrorism, and the only way for reaching these objectives is represented by politically solving all challenges our mother country is confronted with starting from the following principles:

1. Fully respecting and adhering to the sovereignty, independence and unity of the people and and of the territory of the Syrian Arab Republic. The Syrian people will not give up even an inch of the national territory and will use all possible means - juridical and in accordance with the UN

The text of the Final Statement of the Conference for the National Syrian Dialogue



Chart - to regain the occupied Golan Heights.

2. The respect and adherence to the principle of the Syrian national sovereignty, on an equal footing with the other states and based on non-interference in Syria's domestic issues. Syria should fully recover its place and role on the regional and international arena as an indivisible part of the Arab homeland and in accordance with the UN Chart, with the objectives and principles it stipulates.

3. The Syrian people is the one who, through democratic elections, will independently decide his future. He has the sovereign right to choose his political, economic and social system away from any foreign pressures and interferences and observing Syria's international rights and commitments.

4. Syria is a democratic and secular state based on the principle of political pluralism and equality among all citizens irrespective of their religious, ethnical and gender appurtenance. The Syrian state fully guarantees the supremacy of law, the separation of powers, the independence of justice, the multicultural character of the Syrian society, the civil liberties, the freedom of faith and belief included. The Syrian state is ruled by a government acting in the framework of the national juridical system and undertakes efficient steps for fighting organized crime, corruption and abuse of power.

5. The power is a guarantor of the national unity and of the social harmony as well as of a balanced and multilateral growth and of fair partition of the representativity at the local administration level.

6. Functioning and strengthening the state and public institutions, protecting the social infrastructures, of private property, securing the necessary services for all citizens according to a good management and gender equality. In their relations with the institutions of power, the citizens will benefit from mechanisms ensuring the supremacy of law, the human rights and protection of private property.

7. Preserving the army and the armed forces which will accomplish their missions in strict con-

formity with the provisions of the Constitution, defending the national borders and the citizens from any foreign threats included. Fighting terrorism and the citizens' protection from it whenever necessary. The provisions of the constitution will be strictly observed when exerting the missions of security and intelligence.

8. Unwavering rejection of all forms of terrorism, radicalism, extremism and sectarian segregation, its resolute fighting and securing the appropriate conditions for disseminating and strengthening the cultural diversity and pluralism.

9. Defending and observing the human rights and freedoms during crisis including justice and colour, religious, ethnical, linguistic and gender non-discrimination. Securing an active mechanism of protecting political rights and equality of chances including in for women by increasing the latter participation to decision-making process so that a 30% be reached in what concern woman's participation up to a complete gender equality.

10. Complete respect will be expressed for the Syrian society and its rich national, historical and valuable identity to which all religions and civilization Syria has known over time including in what concern the cohabitation among all the components and segments of the Syrian society. Protection of the national cultural heritage.

11. Fighting poverty and a sustained struggle for its eradication. Protecting the elder, the vulnerable social groups, of the needy, of the orphans and of those affected by the war. Guaranteeing safety and shelter for all refugees and displaced persons, protecting their rights and facilitating their safe return to their homes.

12. Protection of the natural heritage and of the environment in accordance with the international agreements concerning protection of the environment and the UNESCO declaration concerning the intentional destruction of the ecological and cultural heritage.

We, the representatives of the brave Syrian people who were subject to unimaginable pain yet who fought courageously against the international terrorism declare our determination of bringing back again to the homeland the prosperity and

wellfare and to secure for all a dignified and tranquil life”.

*

Making a comparison between the expectations of the Russian side and even of the “representatives of the entire Syrian people”, the results of Sochi conference are modest at least in what concern Moscow’s ardent desire to make of “Sochi round” of the Syrian dialogue an award of the “political victory” Russia hastened to announce even long time in advance, the very fact that the reunion took place when Russian jets and the Syrian national army were engaged in violent attacks on the front overshadowed the event, strengthened by other factors no less important among which not the least the massive absence of the political and military opposition, the absence of the main international players involved and invited to the conference (the United States, Great Britain, France), the marginal role attributed to the special envoy Staffan De Mistura and, ipso facto, to the United Nations and to Geneva spirit or the on-going conflict in the Syrian Kurdistan that brought about the abstention from participation of the Kurdish representatives etc. One may say that the Russian diplomacy succeeded only in bringing to Sochi Bashar Al-Assad’s regime and the main components of the opposition making up “Moscow”, “Ankara” and “Astana” platforms alongside social segments supporting the regime in Damascus or backed by Moscow, Ankara and Tehran. So, most of the Syrians – members of the civil society or “moderate” opponents who paraded down the halls and the corridors of the building the dialogue took place (whom a journalist of the Qatari TV Station Al-Jazeera described as being rather than otherwise “a chatter among the fighters during the interlude between two attacks”) did not hesitate to vocally express their admiration for Vladimir Putin and Russia, whose president and Foreign Affairs minister hurried to stress that “all the conditions are there for turning a tragic page of Syrian history”. A page that was only half turned and which, according to the majority of observers did not bring any significant progress towards peace and towards consecrating the “political victory” Vladimir

Putin was speaking about.

As one can easily find from reading of the Final Statement of the Conference, the participants did not succeed to bring into discussion and, therefore, to achieve a consensus or the prerequisites of a possible consensus, in what concern the major issues provided otherwise in the resolution 2254 adopted by the Security Council on December 18th, 2015 and among which one should mention: the ceasefire and implementing a general truce allowing for materializing a political solution; the file regarding organizing legislative and presidential elections under the UN international auspices and configuring the transition period to peace (which must include the approach of Bashar Al-Assad’s remaining in or leaving power).

The only concrete level is the agreement on setting up a permanent committee on constitutional reform yet without mentioning details concerning its composition, agenda and implementing mechanisms. The point concerning setting up the committee on constitutional reform, discussed and agreed rather than otherwise on the corridors and at the backstage of the meeting and which was not included in the Final Statement, consecrates a *de facto* “monopolization” of Syria’s constitutional future by Russia, Turkey and Iran through the provision stipulating that the said committee be made up of 150 members to be chosen in equal proportions (50 members each) by Moscow, Ankara and Tehran with the possibility that the special envoy Staffan De Mistura alter this number plus or minus yet in “reasonable limits” and agreed upon by the three “guarantor” countries. That means practically eliminating the “true Syrian voices” and their replacement with obedient elements to the policies and interests of the three abovementioned capitals.

The superficial character and the lack of substance of the reunion – even in what concern the only nominated concrete point as an achievement of the conference, namely setting up a permanent joint committee for constitutional reform was called into question two days only after the end of the “dialogue” through the solidar-

ization of the Syrian opposition who conditioned its participation to the structure and the activities of the committee on these being placed under the international “umbrella” of the UN, a condition neither the Russian Federation nor Bashar Al-Assad’s regime are willing to accept.

In a first public reaction of the Syrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs broadcasted by the Syrian Press Agency SANA, the Syrian government “welcomes the results of the dialogue in Sochi that proved the political peace process cannot be carried out and reach the desired result except if it is achieved under Syrian leadership and without any outside interference”.

The meeting in Sochi was rather than otherwise a image media exercise meant to highlight

the “virtues” and the potential of the “providential man” Vladimir Putin whom the Russians will have the duty to reinvest at the next presidential vote in March. It is a theme-song the Russian media and particularly the TV Channel Russia Today is assiduously promoting.

In all likelihood, after so many rounds of “negotiations” that took place from Europe to South-East Asia and to the Black Sea, the last “Syrian serial” will be directed on the stage from where it started, namely on the Syrian front. It will be preceded indeed by the entire circus of negotiations among the same players for whom the Syrian political peace is the least interesting subject.

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The world energy will no longer be as we know it.

What should Romania do?

Interview with Mehmet OGUTCU at Digi24

Who controls the planet's energy resources? In principle those who have a strategy for that. How much will pay those who do not have the possibility to deal with their energy security and what is Romania's situation from this standpoint? One of the best analysts in the energy field at the world's level, Mehmet Ogutcu, answered to these questions in an interview with Cristina Cileacu, journalist with Digi 24 at "Diplomatic Passport", interview first published by digi24TV on <https://www.digi24.ro/stiri/economie/energie/>

If things go on as now, the USA will become the biggest oil producer in the world and will replace Saudi Arabia. Yet the riskiest development in the world is China's expansionism, warns the expert Mehmet Ogutcu.

The world energy system will not be any longer as we know it since decades. We are moving into a new era whereby the players and the game will change as will do the price, technology and finances structure. All companies and governments should be prepared for what we will see not only in 2018 but also thereafter. We have a new energy situation in which the green energy will become indeed more and more important and will gradually replace coal and other fossil fuels. Yet one cannot ignore coal even if it is a dirty source of energy thinks the expert Mehmet Ogutcu. In case of renewable energies, the technology plays a somewhat destructive role. Therefore, one should pay attention to technology and the direction it goes to and one must not in-

vest huge amounts of money in impressive projects that might prove redundant or outdated in the next 3-5 years.

As far as the Black Sea resources are concerned, maybe it is NOT the moment now to invest billions in exploration activities except for the blocks we are sure the oil and gas will be extracted says the analyst.

Russia will remain the main natural gas supplier for Europe, yet Norway and and the north of Africa are to be followed closely.

Liquefied gas is also a more convenient perspective than pipelines. One may build in less than a year floating facilities for liquefied gas that can help bring this type of gas anytime one may need it.

As far as the geopolitical risks of our days are concerned, the biggest threat surrounds Iran stresses the expert in the interview with Digi24.

What means energy security? The world's states act continuously to access easily attainable resources and with good prices. Although everyone pays attention to this aspect, **those who have a long term strategy will make timely investments subject to consumption estimations they will have.** Thus, they secure both their reserves and the costs the companies and the population will pay.



Cristina Cileacu: Mr Mehmet Ogutcu, welcome back to "Diplomatic Passport". You have been several times to our TV Show and, most of the times we are inviting you, the issue surely refers to energy problems. Let us start with China as we see since some years China buys

many resources from all over the world and invests, as well, a lot in facilities for energy. **What is the big plan China has for the entire world?**

Mehmet Ogutcu: China is an energy consuming country, there is no doubt about that. It is the most populous country. It is also the country producing most of Carbon dioxide emissions if we speak of climate change. It is the second biggest oil importer in the world. From whatever direction you look at it, China is a huge power not only in geopolitics and economy but also in energy terms. And its own energy production is not enough for satisfying this continuously growing economy which is now slowing down from 13-14% to 7-7.5%, something called the "new normality". It also tries to diversify the output besides coal which dominates their energy economy. This is why they need more oil, more natural gas, they need more nuclear facilities, and more of the new fuels appearing on the international markets as a result of the developments of technologies. And China is the world leader in electric cars technologies as well, especially in the field of batteries. That is why China has to go worldwide for securing a greater energy security. What it does now is massively investing in resources rich countries no matter if it is about oil, in Brazil, Africa, Russia, almost everywhere in the world, even if it is about Kurdistan region in Iraq, in Iran. They are everywhere. And they do not invest only in oil, but also in natural gas and in liquefied gas. In what concern renewable energies, China is world leader as well in terms of technology, finance and widespread applications of renewable technologies in whatever aspect of its economy. Therefore we can say about China that it is a world power in energy field and that it brings with it not only technology, demand and profitable gains, but it comes also with financing. **It is the only country in the world that can bring hundreds of billions of dollars in the international economy,** as it does already through the Belt and Road initiative which involves more that 60 countries



and it has every year a budget of 900 billion dollar for investing in energy and in infrastructure projects. This is the reason why whenever we speak of global economy and future projects, **China must be mandatorily brought into discussion not only as a player but also as a major decision-maker and influencer in any decision pertaining to the energy field.**

Cristina Cileacu: *You mentioned technology and if we see the US withdrawing from Paris Climate Agreement we may say about China that it is securing the position of world leader in the field of clean energy. How can we translate this into reality namely it will lead the world at the energy level both in what concern classical resources and the new ones?*

Mehmet Ogutcu: I have read recently an interesting analysis about the risk in the global economy and geopolitical system worked out by a famous American analyst and, from his point of view, **the riskiest development in the world is China's expansionism that will fill the void left by the USA.** A certain field in this regard is the climate change. As president Trump gives up all the American commitments on the Climate Agreement, China intensifies its efforts and enters the landscape as leader of the negotiations on climate change and implements the steps. This is not because China has a benign policy making it care more about the planet but it is its own interest as China endures a lot due to local pollution and due to the consequences of

climate change globally. This is the reason China takes over the leadership in what concern technology, and the terms of implementing the commitments and channeling the funds for reducing Carbon emissions and of other demands of green economies. China is world leader in these directions and the USA will have difficulties in catching up with even if it decides to change policies in near future.

The energy consumption rises or diminishes in accordance with demographics and with the degree the economies of each state grow. During the last years, the world map changed from this standpoint. They say that when China makes changes, they are resented quite rapidly on a global level. And China, and other countries in the region consume more and more.

Cristina Cileacu: *We began the interview on China and let us move to Europe so we will cross Central Asia and the countries of Caucasus where we see many resources if we speak of oil and gas yet the main issue is the same since several years: the transport of these resources to the rest of the world.*

Mehmet Ogutcu: What we know now is that most energy is produced in regions where demand is negligible and it must be transported to regions where the consumption centers are very strong. And, in this respect I think that now China, India, other Assian economies and Europe are the strongest in the world in many ways. Nevertheless, we see in Europe a decrease of demand and this decrease will continue, **yet Europe will remain one of the biggest markets in the world for energy** and energy products and there is no urgent need for Europe to bring oil, gas and other types of energy from Central Asia, from Caspian area, from east of the Mediterranean or Iran, Iraq, via Turkey to Europe. For **Russia remains the main supplier of natural gas for Europe** and I believe things will stay that way for a long time from now on. Then, **Norway**, not a member of the EU, is an important player in what concern natural gas for

the EU. North of Africa, **Algeria, Libya** follow, with problems now and even in the future and probably **Egypt** too, in the future, will continue to be important suppliers for Europe. Then comes **liquefied gas**, bringing flexibility for both markets and for the prices and the already signed contracts with Russia and other suppliers in the past. **One may build in less than a year floating facilities for liquefied gas (stations o.n.), that may help bring this type of gas whenever one needs.** Its price could be a little higher than of natural gas but it offers a huge flexibility and helps to negotiate better transactions with natural gas producers. Therefore, **I do not see any immediate project for bringing oil, natural gas and other resources through pipelines to Europe for the demand is limited.** It is clear that there is no immediate need for Central Asia oil and gas to be brought in Europe and to today's big markets, China, India, Turkey and the European Union that have now plenty of resources, something very significant to keep in mind because in the past we talked always of scarcity of resources. Now we have plenty of resources coming from various sources. The buyers are the kings of the market and if we take into consideration the USA as well, that is a major supplier of oil and liquefied gas. As far as oil is concerned, we expect that by November 2019, **the USA**, if everything goes as now, **will become the biggest producer in the world and will replace the now biggest producer, Saudi Arabia.** It will be the same in what concern the production of shale gas and the exports of liquefied gas will gradually increase. Therefore **the world energy system will not be any longer as we know it since decades.** We are moving to a new era whereby the players and the game will change as will do the price, technologies and finances structure. I think that all companies and governments must be prepared for what we will see not only in 2018 but also afterwards. We have a new energy situation in which the green energy will become indeed more and more important and will gradually replace coal and other fossil fuels.

The green energy is conquering the international markets. We see how deserts turn into photovoltaic parks, the plains, seas and oceans become places where ever more wind turbines emerge, geothermal energy is within reach and the examples of renewable resources may go on. Yet, are they enough, too?

Cristina Cileacu: *We see that green energy develops in those countries that have already plenty of resources you were talking about. If I have to give you an example, Kazakhstan invests a lot in developing these green energies. How sustainable is this intention and when will we see all the planet using only green energies?*

Mehmet Ogutcu: I do not think this will happen during our lifetime or a little further after that. I think any type of fuels are needed. Coal, **you cannot ignore coal. Yes, it is a dirty source of energy yet you cannot ignore it.** Two thirds of China's economy is still based on coal. It is the same in Russia, India, even in the USA, Germany, Japan, so coal is important. Neither oil, nor gas are irreplaceable. What I mean is that **renewable energies, green energies will increase gradually their influence,** which started from very low. Now the part of renewable energy at the world's level is not bigger than 7%. Even if it doubles, it will be only 14%. So we will not have green energy entirely in our global system but **we are moving to an era where the market share of this type of energy will increase gradually.** Probabably quicker than we expect for if we look at the projections made 15-20 years ago, they did not foresee what we already have now. Maybe there will be a revolutionary stage in technology and we will have a quicker transition to renewable energies than we anticipated. Anyway, in case of renewable energies, the prices decreased substantially. We could not have imagined that. Yet this is disruptive, too, for the investors will want to know clearly what their gains will be and within what span of time the technologies will be outdated. If it is less than 10 years as things stand now, - every year, from time to time, we have new technologies emerging for wind, geothermal re-

sources and photovoltaic energy – then you hesitate. It is like the Iphone you have. Shall I buy the existing model or shall I wait for Iphone 11, which will appear at a certain moment on the market? Therefore, **technology plays a somewhat disruptive role in case of renewable energies.** But there are no difficulties in financial terms. Most of the funds already assigned for hydrocarbons industry are now reassigned and directed to renewable energy in a significant proportion. This is why **our future will be the one of renewable energies yet we have to have in mind the key-role the fossil fuels are playing. Nuclear energy, too, will gradually grow and will spread all over the world,** not only in the emergent markets where it is already. If we are looking at the image offered by new technologies, we do not have to invest amounts of over 20 billion dollar for nuclear plants of 4, 5, 6 GWh. Now we have smaller reactors. This is another trend. In order to say that, **you have to mind the technology, where it is heading for and you must not invest huge amounts of money in impressive projects that might become redundand or outdated in the following 3-5 years.**

The Romanian sector at the Black Sea was the place where an important gas deposit was discovered in 2015. The blocks where these resources exist are administered by different foreign corporations from which the Romanian government gets royalties. The market will decide whether the exploitation of the new deposits starts or not.

Cristina Cileacu: *The Black Sea is now what many energy experts call the "new North Sea". Russia and Turkey are the important players in the area. Do you think that if Romania exploits these resources it might become a player, too, if we refer to gas exportation to Europe only?*

Mehmet Ogutcu: I think Romania is already an important player in South-East Europe from many standpoints, not only energy wise, but also geopolitically and economically and as a center for cultural attractions. I think also Romania will benefit from the recent discoveries at the Black

Sea administered by OMV and of which Chevron and Exxon Mobil are interested too. We believe that from 2019 on, if the project goes forward as it is established, **Romania will have natural gas overplus and it may export up to 4 billion cu.m.**, something significant for the region and particularly in South-Eastern Europe. In what concern oil, Romania is already a player and I believe it will be also in the case of natural gas. The expectations that the Black Sea becomes the new "North Sea" are garnering everybody's attention since a longer time and there were very many explorations both in the east of the Black Sea and in the west and towards Crimea. Until now no major resources were discovered of which people would talk about. We know oil is there, at great depth and when the prices will increase maybe to a level justifying such type of exploration, it could be carried out. **We know there are such resources in the Black Sea and probably it is not the right time to pour billions in the exploration activities there except for the areas where we are sure oil and gas can be extracted**, as it is happening now already especially in what concern gas in Romania.

The impressive quantities of oil and gas in the Middle East continue to be vulnerable due to security fluctuations in the area. And since things are connected to each other, the uncertainty there may affect their deliveries to other areas and, implicitly their energy security on a medium and long run.

Cristina Cileacu: What about the Middle East because we know that 48% of the world oil resources are there. *Yet there is a lot of unrest as usual in the area. The wars in Syria and in Irak are not over yet and we saw recently that there are problems with Iran, too, probably we will see certain developments of these events, probably not. The countries in the Gulf have unsolved diplomatic problems as well. Who will set the prices after this situation calms down or not?*

Mehmet Ogutcu: The Middle East will remain one of the most unstable areas in the

world threatening our security also and I mean both safety and energy security. Our lives will be affected because there is the potential of terrorism growing there and spreading all over the world. **I believe that the main risk in the world of our days is the threat surrounding Iran.** Will the USA tighten even more the screw in case of Iran not only in what concern the sanctions, which might lead to tough confrontations. I think this is the country we must follow very attentively as what happens will keep down Iran's progress and since the sanctions will not be integrally lifted and Iran will have difficulties in marketing its energy products and in attracting more investments in their liquidities strapped economy. What will happen in Syria is also of critical importance for each of us in terms of geopolitical risks. Russia is now the biggest player in the area due to its military presence, they have ground and air bases and support Damascus regime. It is a region we must follow as we must follow also the growing crisis between the Israelis and the Palestinians which will be another tough point in 2018. All these will significantly affect the energy "game" in the region. The region you are referring to, the Middle East, will continue to be a source of problems for both itself and for the countries outside it.



The Secret Services of the 21st Century and Security Issues

NATIONAL AMERICAN STRATEGY: SI VIS PACEM, PARA BELLUM ?

Dinu COSTESCU

"My fellow Americans,

The American people elected me to make America great again. I promised that my Administration would put the safety, interests and well-being of our citizens first. I pledged that we would revitalize the American economy, rebuild our military, defend our borders, protect our sovereignty, and advance our values (...) The whole world is lifted by America's renewal and the reemergence of American leadership (...) My Administration's National Security Strategy lays out a strategic vision for protecting the American people and preserving our way of life, promoting our prosperity, preserving peace through strength and advancing American influence in the world (...) We will promote a balance of powers that favors the United States, our allies and our partners (...) Most of all, we will serve the American people and uphold their right to a government that prioritizes their security, their prosperity and their interests. This National Security Strategy puts America First"

The above lines reproduce excerpts of the first and last paragraphs of *National Security Strategy of the United States of America* which, under the seal and signature of the president Donald Trump, was published in December, 2017, almost one year into the presidential mandate and reflects the vision of the 45th American president not only strictly on national security strategy, but also on the conceptual and pragmatic significance of the projects the signatory of the strategy takes into consideration for fulfilling the electoral promises so that the world lives globally, at least during the next three years, in a reality on which pediment the fundamental slogans "America First" and "A Greater America" be written.

As it was expected, the reactions triggered not only by the content itself of National Security



Strategy but also by Donald Trump's atypical political positionings during his first year in the Oval Office were as numerous as they were varied as far as the way of their picking up and interpreting them were concerned, among which the contestable reference to an ideatic similitude with the traditional Germanism anthem "Deutschland über alles" (Germany above all in the world), placed into an equally contestable relation with the expansionism of Hitler's Nazism. After all, America, above its historical references represented by the 44 presidents succeeding one another at the White House, was and remains a super power and its aspirations of holding and consolidation the statute of sole global power pole do not fundamentally differ from the ambitions of other states which, during the centuries, aspired at holding the same statute, including by the confrontation between the holders and the wannabes to leading the world, becoming, by this very aspiration, targets of adulation or defamation according to circumstances.

*

In the midst of the tempest generated by Donald Trump's December 6th declaration recognizing Jerusalem as Israel's capital and the entire cortege of reactions that divided the world (or more exactly a small part of the world) between the supporters and foes of Donald Trump's visions, the announcement of the new

"America first" national security strategy had, by its timing, an obvious contribution to the intensification and exacerbation of the polemical discourse which – for the first time during the last decades – engulfed the space of the Security Council and the rostrum of the United Nations from where, a rare fact, threats and warnings sounding like financial blackmail were uttered against that part of the international community which would not observe Lenin's and Bush Jr's famous slogan: "he who is not with us is against us". Summing up, what happened and was entirely covered by the press offers a synthesis of the contemporary "state of America" in relation to the otherness of the non-American world on the one hand and in relation to another part not at all calm and permanently boiling of this world in the just started year.

On this background, the document regarding Trump Administration's National Security Strategy of the United States of America offers a more synthetic framework of the United States of America's positioning in the international environment, a framework that leaves uncertainty and vagueness over a series of quite important issues related to the American foreign policy and security strategy. Such vagueness could be explained on the one hand that, as he proved both during his electoral campaign and during his first year in office, Donald Trump, who came from business world, has not the full scope of a strategist, of a thinker and of an experimented analyst on the fundamental diplomatic issues and of the diplomatic art, and, on the other, between the president and his team of advisors on national defense and security there is no functional harmony as the tenant of the White House has rather than otherwise as a reference point his own ideas and preconceptions and which, when implemented, had the contrary results that imposed later corrections which impacted on the degree of credibility as far as his competence and realism are concerned. In general, it is noticeable that, through its content and its form, the document outdistances itself from many angles from the traditional and consistent

orientations of all previous administrations succeeding one after another at the White House, orientations focused predominantly around the idea of edifying and presenting an ideal America which sought to impose itself as "the absolute power providing the good" (as Barack Obama said) or "the beacon city irradiating light" according to Ronald Reagan.

Donald Trump's discourse does not suit with such flamboyant stylistics. In the current president's strategic approach, the world is a hostile universe, too little bound to America by common interests, egoistical and interested only in exploiting and consuming, in its own interest, America's capacities and energies. Donald Trump's does not propose to offer a Messianic message calling for the creation of the "common good" and of an equal opportunities future. From this standpoint, Susan Rice, president Obama's National Security Advisor considered, in an article for the "New York Times" of December 20th that "Donald Trump's National Security Strategy represents a breaking off with the old Republican and Democrat traditions by presenting a dark and frightening image of a contemporary world dangerous par excellence. A world made up of hostile and menacing states whereby Donald Trump's strategy does not mention anything about the ideals of action for freedom and common prosperity which during all the period after WWII represented the founding coordinates of the American foreign policy".

A lot has been written and a lot will be certainly further written about the strategic vision on national security taking into account that it is aimed at an American policy of positioning itself in an unforeseeable world in constant change. From this perspective, the analysis of the way in which the national security strategy announced by Donald Trump is approaching the military segment of the policy of a superpower which, from the president's standpoint, is in an unceasing race of searching and identifying existing or emerging enemies is important.

*

If during the mandates of a George W. Bush or Barack Obama, the documents on the American national security strategy started in general from the pilot-idea according to which the United States, as world's sole superpower, has and should maintain the capacity of waging a "continuous war" anywhere and against any threat no matter where it came from on the global map, Donald Trump's vision is outdistancing unequivocally from such an approach for announcing the idea that the role of the American military power (as well as of the American diplomacy) is not any longer of "regulating the world" but of "defending the American people's interests". From a perspective which is not stranger to "real politik" concept – promoted during their time by Henry Kissinger and Zbigniew Brzezinski, Donald Trump identifies from the very beginning three categories of threats for which America and its strategists should find antidotes and therapies:

- The rivalry and the way of conflictually relating with the Russian Federation and China that are "containing" the United States and act for limiting and undermining its power and influence;

- Regional threats dominated in Asia by the communist regime in North-Korea and in the Mashreq by the theocratic Islamist Iranian regime;

- The jihadist terrorism phenomenon together with the transnational organised crime.

By stating that if the United States are not any longer the world's sole superpower, America still has in exchange a predominant power and from here comes the imperative stressed in the doctrine of the national security of keeping this military ascendancy at least by relating to its main "state enemies" nominally mentioned namely, on the one hand China that aspires to the exclusion of the influence and the military, economic and strategic presence in areas of interest for both Washington and Beijing and, on the other hand, the Russian Federation, accused, among others, of acting for undermining the

American influence in the world including by sabotaging the relations between the United States and its allies or partners in different regions of the planet's political geography. In this context, Donald Trump is distancing himself from "Wolfowitz doctrine" that considered the European Union as a strategic competitor, and the new doctrine considers the European community as a partner and, from a security perspective, as a NATO's completion and prolongation. President Trump's "mercantile" approach of the military cooperation garnered critics' attention: the American president starts from the prerequisite that all America's "friends" and "allies" are in a general panic situation taking into account the possibility of enemy attacks – as the American leader imagines – and need America's redeemer help. Yet, Donald Trump's America is led by market principles: he who pays receives help! Imposing a certain percentage of the national budgets of the "friends and allies" as condition for benefitting from the protecting umbrella of the Statue of Liberty translates this logic. Yet what happens with the ally loyal to the American strategy that does not afford, due to various reasons, to pay the bill?

The analysts addressed, in this context, the "semi-darkness" in which the new American security strategy keeps an old principle of military doctrines in general and the American one, in particular. America's power potential, Donald Trump says, will be used only in case and only against the potentially threatening sources for the American people's national security. Yet, without mentioning the criteria according to which the reality and amplitude of such threats will be decided, the new American strategy is as old as all the so far doctrines of the American administrations that preached the so-called preemptive wars among which those launched by George W. Bush in Iraq and Afghanistan, by Barack Obama in Syria and those Donald Trump himself envisages, without the existence of a *casus belli* proper, against some rebel states such as Iran, Venezuela, the states sources of migrationist flows etc. In other words, it is about a discourse taking over and continuing theories

America implemented consistently during pre-Trump period: deterrence war or imposing by force democracy and value criteria “made in America”.

The American national security strategy is, in president Trump’s approach, unfolded on two levels to a sense nothing should be omitted of what can counteract potential threats of “enemy states” on the one hand, while in case of the allies (who, nevertheless, when threatened, put at the disposal of the American war machine human potential, territory for setting up a permanent American military presence and other logistics resources) need, for benefitting in counterpart of the discursive American support, to “pay” in accordance with the most elementary logic of the businessman, either by increasing the contribution of the GDP to difficult to sustain levels, or by raising the self-arming effort that supposes acquisition of technique, know-how or training – supplied on cost-profit base by... the American ally. Here, Donald Trump proceeds with a fundamental overthrow of the conception concerning the place and the functioning of the American defense industry: from renewal and quantitative and qualitative increase of America’s military arsenal, president Trump looks at the issue from an opposite angle: the American defense industry will not be any longer a seller of its products to the federal government, the state will be instead the one presenting offers either for its own needs or for meeting some foreign contracts. Weapons businesses worth hundreds of billion of dollar initiated by Donald Trump in his first year in office with partners violating the principles of the American moral concerning the freedoms and civil and human rights yet having financial funds and energy resources are clearly expressing such a strategic vision.

In what *intelligence* is concerned, the text of “National Security Strategy” does not do anything, in its fundamental lines, but to take over the theories and assertions of the former presidential Advisor on National Security, general Michael Flynn, concerning not only CIA’s repositioning but also of the entire “intelligence community” and the objective of this

reorientation is the discovery and identification of multifarious existing threats and towards the capacity of anticipating the strategic movements America’s rivals have in mind and of pertinently analyzing their significance and consequences. In other words, for president Donald Trump, the role the GPS technology and the traditional devices might have is less important but the analysis “quantity”, interpretation and decision-making pragmatism facilitated by all these.

Speaking of the field of regionalised approach of the strategic vision Donald Trump signed, the document does not offer, in our opinion, substantially new elements, except for, maybe, the relations with Australia, India and Japan that are subordinated as well to the ambitions of counteracting the global ambitions of China’s general-president Xi Jinping.

Finally, as far as the issues and security challenges the Middle East raises, we notice the “novelty” element according to which the jihadism “experiment” embodied by Islamic State proves that the problems and the challenges generated by this part of the world are not due to either Israel or the Israeli occupation, or to the perpetuation of the thorny Palestinian issue but to the Islamist jihadist phenomenon and to its ideology. And, of course, to theocratic Iran that refuses the negotiations (in the way they are understood by Trump administration).

In spite of the appearances a first lecture leaves, the American national security strategy signed by Donald Trump is technically, ideologically and philosophywise thoroughly worked out. It that, the on-going realities distinguish more convincingly between what is really new and what is only a re-arranged old story.



THE SIPRI TOP 100 ARMS-PRODUCING AND MILITARY SERVICES COMPANIES, 2016

Aude FLEURANT, Alexandra KUIMOVA, Nan TIAN, Pieter D. WEZEMAN and Siemon T. WEZEMAN

KEY FACTS

- The arms sales of the SIPRI Top 100 arms-producing and military services companies (excluding China) totalled \$374.8 billion in 2016. This represents an increase of 1.9 per cent compared with 2015 and is the first year of growth in Top 100 arms sales after five consecutive years of decline.

- Arms sales by US-based companies in the Top 100 rose by 4.0 per cent to \$217.2 billion in 2016. With 38 companies ranked in the Top 100 for 2016, the USA accounted for 57.9 per cent of the total Top 100 arms sales.

- The sales of West European arms producers in the Top 100 were mostly stable in 2016. Their combined arms sales totalled \$91.6 billion—an increase of 0.2 per cent compared with 2015.

- Arms sales by Russian companies in the Top 100 have continued to grow, rising by 3.8 per cent to \$26.6 billion in 2016. However, the rate of growth has declined for the second year in a row.

- South Korean companies in the Top 100 increased their arms sales by 20.6 per cent to \$8.4 billion in 2016.

Arms sales of the world's 100 largest arms-producing and military services companies (the Top 100) totalled \$374.8 billion in 2016 (see table 1). This represents a 1.9 per cent increase compared with 2015 (figures exclude China, see box 1).¹ This is the first year of

growth in Top 100 arms sales after five consecutive years of decline. The arms sales of the Top 100 for 2016 are 38 per cent higher than those for 2002, when SIPRI began reporting corporate arms sales (see figure 1). The growth in arms sales was expected and was driven by the implementation of new national major weapon programmes, ongoing military operations in several countries and persistent regional tensions that are leading to an increased demand for weapons.

DEVELOPMENTS IN THE TOP 100

The Top 100 companies are ranked by the value of their arms sales. Companies based in the United States and Western Europe continued to dominate the Top 100 in 2016. A total of 63 US and West European companies are listed, which together accounted for 82.4 per cent of total arms sales for 2016 (the same percentage share as US and West European companies held in 2015). US-based companies increased their arms

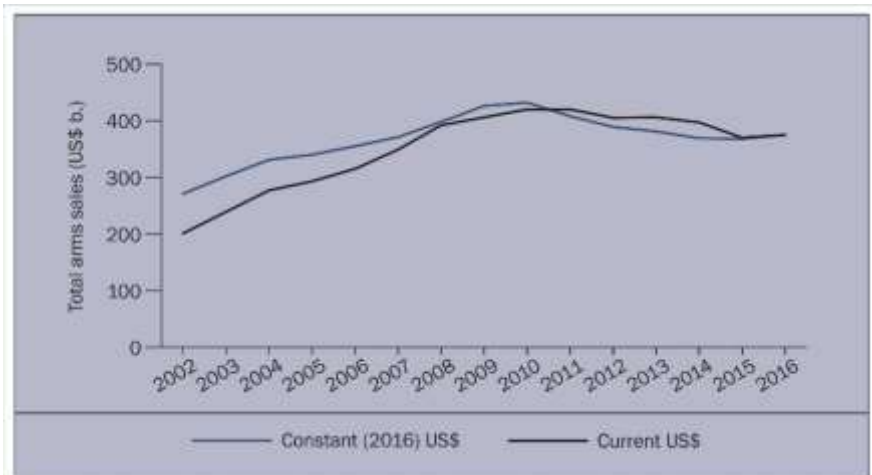


Figure 1. Total arms sales of companies in the SIPRI Top 100, 2002–16

Notes: The data in this graph refers to the companies in the SIPRI Top 100 in each year, which means that it refers to a different set of companies each year, as ranked from a consistent set of data. 'Arms sales' refers to sales of military equipment and services to armed forces and ministries of defence worldwide. For a full definition see <<https://www.sipri.org/databases/armsindustry>> or *SIPRI Yearbook 8673*.

1. Unless otherwise specified, all changes are expressed in real, or constant, terms (not current or nominal); 'Arms sales' refers to sales of military equipment and services to armed forces and ministries of defence worldwide; sales are only for those companies that are ranked.

sales by 4.0 per cent, reversing a five-year decline (see figure 2). The USA has a decisive influence on the global trend given the high number of US-based companies listed in the Top 100. The combined sales of West European arms companies remained stable in 2016 at a total of \$91.6 billion— a slight increase of 0.2 per cent compared with 2015.

The companies occupying the first 10 ranks of the Top 100 are all based in the USA and Western Europe. With combined arms sales of \$194.8 billion in 2016, the top 10 companies accounted for 52.0 per cent of the total sales of the Top 100 in 2016 (almost the same percentage share as the top 10 held in 2015). An assessment of the SIPRI Top 100 yearly rankings over the longer term shows that the same 12 companies have occupied the first 10 ranks during the past 15 years.

A total of 10 Russian companies are listed in the Top 100 in 2016—one fewer than in 2015. Their combined sales were \$26.6 billion, which is 3.8 per cent higher compared with the total in 2015. This rate of increase is lower than it was between 2014 and 2015, which is possibly due to the financial constraints caused by the recent falls in oil and gas prices, the impact of sanctions implemented by the European Union (EU) and the USA in 2014, and the effect of exchange rates on the rouble.

The combined sales of companies in the ‘other established producers’ category amounted to \$20.9 billion in 2016, a decrease of 1.2 per cent compared with 2015.² By contrast, sales by ‘emerging producers’ grew by 12.3 per cent, reaching a combined total of \$17.8 billion in 2016. This rise was driven by the large overall growth in the sales of South Korean companies, seven of which are listed in the Top 100 in 2016.

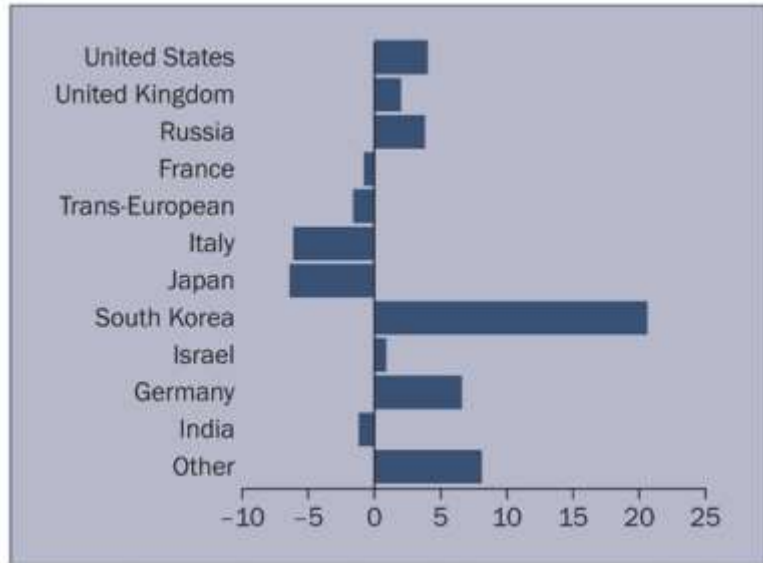


Figure 2. Percentage change in arms sales of companies in the SIPRI Top 100, by country, 2015–16

Notes: The change refers to the companies in the Top 544 for 2016. The figures are based on arms sales in constant (2016) US\$. The category ‘Other’ consists of countries whose companies’ arms sales comprise less than 1% of the total: Australia, Brazil, Canada, Norway, Poland, Singapore, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey and Ukraine.

NATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

United States

The combined sales of the 38 US-based companies in the Top 100 amounted to \$217.2 billion in 2016, accounting for 57.9 per cent of the overall total (see figure 3). Lockheed Martin, the world’s largest arms producer, increased its arms sales by 10.7 per cent in 2016, reaching \$40.8 billion and significantly widening the gap between it and Boeing—the second largest arms producer. Growth in Lockheed Martin’s arms revenues was expected following its acquisition of helicopter manufacturer Sikorsky from United Technologies and increased deliveries of F-35 combat aircraft.

2. SIPRI introduced the ‘other established’ and ‘emerging’ producers categories in the 2013 edition of the SIPRI Top 100 Fact Sheet. The other established producers category covers companies based in 6 countries (i.e. Australia, Israel, Japan, Poland, Singapore and Ukraine) that have mature and some-times significant arms-producing capabilities but are not looking to develop their capabilities further. The companies in the emerging producers category are based in 4 countries (i.e. Brazil, India, South Korea and Turkey) that have stated objectives with regard to building significant indigenous arms-production capabilities and achieving some greater level of self-sufficiency in arms procurement.

Table 1. The SIPRI Top 100 arms-producing and military services companies in the world excluding China, 2016^a
 Figures for arms sales, total sales and profit are in millions of US\$. Dots (.) indicate that data is not available.

Rank ^b		Company ^c	Country	Arms sales (US\$ m.)		Total sales, 2015 (US\$ m.)	Arms sales as a % of total sales,	Total profit, 2016 (US\$ m.)	Total employment, 2016
2016	2015			2016	2015 ^d				
1	1	Lockheed Martin Corp.	USA	40 830	36 900	47 248	86	5 302	97 000
2	2	Boeing	USA	29 510	28 313	94 571	31	4 895	150 500
3	3	Raytheon	USA	22 910	22 055	24 069	95	2 174	63 000
4	3	BAE Systems	UK	22 790	22 689	24 008	95	2 351	83 000
5	5	Northrop Grumman Corp.	USA	21 400	20 313	24 508	87	2 200	67 000
6	6	General Dynamics Corp.	USA	19 230	19 483	31 353	61	2 955	98 800
7	7	Airbus Group ^e	Trans-European	12 520	12 869	73 652	17	1 101	133 780
8	5	BAE Systems Inc. (BAE Systems UK)	USA	9 300	9 417	10 000	93	..	29 500
8	10	L-3 Communications	USA	8 890	8 881	10 511	85	647	38 000
9	9	Leonardo ^f	Italy	8 500	9 264	13 277	64	561	45 630
10	11	Thales	France	8 170	8 094	16 471	50	1 073	64 100
11	8	United Technologies Corp.	USA	6 870	9 620	57 244	12	5 436	..
12	12	Huntington Ingalls Industries	USA	6 720	6 825	7 068	95	573	37 000
13	17	United Aircraft Corp.	Russia	5 160	4 465	6 216	83	-67	..
14	16	Bechtel Corp.	USA	4 920	4 658	..	..	..	53 000
15	19	Textron	USA	4 760	3 696	13 788	35	843	36 000
15	5	Pratt & Whitney (United Technology Corp. USA)	USA	4 530	4 587	15 100	30	..	35 100
16	14	Rolls-Royce	UK	4 450	4 260	18 601	24	..	49 900
17	25	Leidos	USA	4 300	3 332	7 043	61	246	32 000
18	13	Harris Corp.	USA	4 200	4 982	5 900	71	553	17 000
19	15	United Shipbuilding Corp.	Russia	4 030	4 553	4 501	89	90	89 650
20	18	Booz Allen Hamilton	USA	4 000	3 949	5 804	69	252	23 300
21	20	Mitsubishi Heavy Industries	japan	3 670	3 856	35 947	10	805	..
22	22	Honeywell International	USA	3 480	3 423	39 302	9	4 809	..
23	23	DCNS	France	3 480	3 327	3 530	99	97	12 800
24	26	Almaz-Antey	Russia	3 430	3 191	3 727	92	..	125 000
25	27	MBDA ^g	Trans-European	3 260	3 162	3 319	98	7	10 340
26	30	Rheinmetall	Germany	3 260	2 876	6 327	52	238	20 990
27	29	Elbit Systems	Israel	3 100	2 969	3 260	95	..	..

Rank ^b		Company ^c	Country	Arms sales (US\$ m.)		Total sales, 2015 (US\$ m.)	Arms sales as a % of total sales, 2016	Total profit, 2016 (US\$ m.)	Total employment, 2016
2016	2015			2016	2015 ^d				
28	21	Babcock International Group	UK	2 950	3 024	6 136	48	776	35 000
29	24	Russian Helicopters	Russia	2 910	3 210	3 196	91	242	..
30	33	Saab	Sweden	2 770	2 626	3 342	83	137	15 470
31	31	Science Applications International Corp.	USA	2 630	2 886	4 450	59	148	15 500
32	32	Israel Aerospace Industries	Israel	2 610	2 798	3 577	73	..	..
S	S	Sandia Corp. (Lockheed Martin USA)	USA	2 600	2 633	3 070	85	..	12 210
33	36	Safran	France	2 600	2 378	18 232	14	2 111	66 490
34	34	CACI International	USA	2 540	2 562	3 744	68	143	19 900
35	35	Tactical Missiles Corp.	Russia	2 530	2 325	2 576	98	247	50 610
36	28	General Electric	USA	2 480	3 028	123 780	2	..	295 000
37	37	Hindustan Aeronautics	India	2 380	2 354	2 590	92	490	..
38	40	AECOM	USA	2 280	2 177	17 411	13	163	87 000
39	41	CSRA	USA	2 250	2 096	4 993	45	316	18 500
40	38	Indian Ordnance Factories	India	2 200	2 224	2 232	98	..	85 890
41	43	Rafael	Israel	2 120	1 993	2 166	98	119	7 500
S	S	Bell Helicopter Textron (Textron USA)	USA	2 090	2 116	3 239	64	..	..
42	46	CEA	France	2 020	1 948	4 577	44	-83	15 620
43	39	Rockwell Collins	USA	1 960	2 248	5 259	37	728	19 000
44	52	High Precision Systems	Russia	1 940	1 712	1 975	98	..	..
45	58	Orbital ATK	USA	1 920	1 651	4 455	43	293	12 700
46	44	General Atomics ^h	USA	1 800	1 995	..	..	..	..
47	47	ThyssenKrupp	Germany	1 770	1 894	43 433	4	289	156 490
48	56	Korea Aerospace Industries	South Korea	1 760	1 624	2 671	66	231	3 880
49	48	Kawasaki Heavy Industries	Japan	1 730	2 067	..	..	..	..
50	51	United Engine Corp.	Russia	1 710	1 712	2 826	61	283	..
51	55	ST Engineering	Singapore	1 690	1 644	4 836	35	351	21 970
52	69	Uralvagonzavod	Russia	1 680	992	2 095	80	29	..
53	53	KRET	Russia	1 610	1 644	1 845	87	205	..
S	S	Sukhoi (United Aircraft Corp. Russia)	Russia	1 610	1 566	1 610	100	..	24 000
54	59	Fincantieri	Italy	1 600	1 494	4 899	33	15	..
55	54	LIG Nex1	South Korea	1 600	1 654	1 603	100	76	3 120
56	50	United Instrument Manufacturing Corp.	Russia	1 580	1 800	1 700	93	..	..

Rank ^b		Company ^c	Country	Arms sales (US\$ m.)		Total sales, 2015 (US\$ m.)	Arms sales as a % of total sales, 2016	Total profit, 2016 (US\$ m.)	Total employment, 2016
2016	2015			2016	2015 ^d				
57	45	Cobham	UK	1 550	1 743	2 623	59	81	10 690
S	S	United Launch Alliance (LM and Boeing USA)	USA	1 540	1 559	1 800	86	..	..
58	57	Serco	UK	1 500	1 450	4 713	32	45	47 000
59	60	ManTech International Corp.	USA	1 460	1 438	1 602	91	..	..
60	49	Dassault Aviation Groupe	France	1 390	1 849	3 967	35	425	11 940
61	87	Fluor Corp.	USA	1 380	861	18 114	8	3	38 760
62	66	Engility	USA	1 360	1 114	2 076	66	-6	9 100
63	77	Oshkosh Corp.	USA	1 350	952	6 279	22	216	13 800
S	S	Irkut (United Aircraft Corp. Russia)	Russia	1 320	1 284	1 623	81	18	..
64	68	IHI Corp.	Japan	1 290	1 189	13 651	9	..	..
65	73	DynCorp International	USA	1 280	1 002	1 836	70	-53	10 700
66	113	KBR	USA	1 220	608	4 268	29	28	27 500
67	72	ASELSAN	Turkey	1 220	971	1 247	98	263	5 170
68	76	GKN	UK	1 210	845	11 906	10	329	58 000
69	-	Hewlett Packard Enterprise Company ⁱ	USA	1 200	..	50 123	2	3 161	195 000
70	74	Hanwha Corp.	South Korea	1 190	1 063	40 593	3	1 110	..
71	67	Hanwha Techwin	South Korea	1 190	965	2 265	53	69	3 040
72	63	Vectrus	USA	1 190	1 195	1 191	100	..	..
73	70	DSME	South Korea	1 190	984	9 808	12	-1 217	11 260
74	61	GenCorp	USA	1 180	1 235	1 761	67	18	4 970
75	62	PZG	Poland	1 140	1 131	1 268	90	..	..
76	81	Turkish Aerospace Industries	Turkey	1 120	864	1 300	86	..	5 250
77	84	UkrOboronPromi	Ukraine	1 060	847	1 107	95	..	80 000
S	S	UMPO (United Engine Corp. Russia)	Russia	970	944	1 063	91	262	..
78	88	Krauss-Maffei Wegmann	Germany	950	842	996	95	..	4 000
79	75	Austal	Australia	940	982	974	97	44	..
80	83	Meggitt	UK	940	774	2 688	35	231	11 210
81	91	Embraer	Brazil	930	839	6 218	15	168	18 510
82	65	Nexter	France	910	1 129	958	95	..	1 750
83	85	Cubic Corp.	USA	880	871	1 462	60	2	8 500
S	S	Austal USA (Austal Australia)	USA	870	881	870	100	..	..
84	89	The Aerospace Corp.	USA	870	840	940	92	..	3 680
85	71	Bharat Electronics	India	850	1 002	1 310	65	..	..

Rank ^b		Company ^c	Country	Arms sales (US\$ m.)		Total sales, 2015 (US\$ m.)	Arms sales as a % of total sales, 2016	Total profit, 2016 (US\$ m.)	Total employment, 2016
2016	2015			2016	2015 ^d				
86	111	NEC Corp.	Japan	830	678	24 476	3	251	107 730
87	90	RUAG	Switzerland	820	797	1 909	43	118	8 730
88	86	Moog	USA	820	871	2 412	34	127	10 500
89	96	CAE	Canada	780	744	2 039	38	194	8 500
90	-	Mitre Corp.	USA	770	476	1 542	50	..	8 210
91	112	ViaSat	USA	770	618	1 559	50	22	4 300
92	80	Triumph Group	USA	770	901	3 532	22	-43	14 310
93	93	MIT	USA	770	810	973	79	..	..
94	98	Kongsberg Gruppen	Norway	770	726	1 886	41	77	7 160
S	S	BAE Systems Australia (BAE Systems UK)	Australia	740	742	892	83	..	4 000
95	-	Hanwha Group ^k	South Korea	740	..	55 430	1	..	..
S	107	Hanwha Systems (Hanwha Group South Korea)	South Korea	740	644	742	100	..	2 060
96	105	Bharat Dynamics	India	730	651	726	100	..	..
97	100	Ultra Electronics	UK	720	605	1 061	68	92	4 000
S	S	Raytheon Australia (Raytheon USA)	Australia	720	722	717	100	..	1 170
98	97	Navantia	Spain	710	737	801	88	-336	5 510
99	79	Mitsubishi Electric Corp.	Japan	700	989	38 928	2	1 932	..
100	101	Poongsan Corp.	South Korea	700	650	1 753	40	119	3 580

a. Although several Chinese arms-producing companies are large enough to rank among the SIPRI Top 100, it has not been possible to include them because of a lack of comparable and sufficiently accurate data.

b. Companies are ranked according to the value of their arms sales at the end of their financial year considered 2016 by SIPRI. An S denotes a subsidiary company. A dash (-) indicates that the company did not rank among the SIPRI Top 100 for 2015. Company names and structures are listed as they were on 31 Dec. 2016. Information about subsequent changes is provided in these notes. The 2015 ranks may differ from those published in *SIPRI Yearbook 8673* and elsewhere owing to continual revision of data, most often because of changes reported by the company itself and sometimes because of improved estimations. Major revisions are explained in these notes.

c. For subsidiaries and operational companies owned by another company, the name of the parent company is given in parentheses along with its country. Holding and investment companies with no direct operational activities are not treated as arms-producing companies, and companies owned by them are listed and ranked as if they were parent companies.

d. Figures for previous year arms sales—i.e. a company's arms sales in 2015—are presented in constant 2016 US\$, so as to be better comparable with the figures for arms sales in the current year, i.e. 2016. In previous editions of the *SIPRI Yearbook* and Top 100 lists, previous year arms sales were presented in current US\$.

e. Trans-European refers to companies whose ownership and control structures are located in more than one European country.

f. Finmeccanica was renamed Leonardo in April 2016.

g. Following a reassessment of MBDA, its status was changed from 'joint venture' to 'company'.

h. The arms sales figure for this company is an estimate and subject to a high degree of uncertainty.

i. Hewlett Packard Enterprise is a new company emerging from the split of Hewlett-Packard Company.

j. Aircraft manufacturer Antonov was integrated in UkrOboronProm in 2016.

k. In 2016 Hanwha Group acquired full ownership of Hanwha Thales, a joint venture previously owned by Hanwha Group and France-based Thales.

l. Chinese arms-producing companies. Chinese companies are not covered by the SIPRI Top 100 due to the lack of data on which to make a reasonable estimate of arms sales for most companies. Nonetheless, some information is available on the major state-owned conglomerates under which most of the Chinese arms industry is organized.

The growth in sales of military services companies is a noticeable trend in the USA. Military services companies have managed to increase sales mainly by acquiring smaller services companies divested by larger arms producers. The sales of DynCorp and KBR, for example, grew by 27.7 and 100.8 per cent respectively in 2016. The rise in KBR's sales was due to the acquisition of two companies in 2016 and new major contracts with the USA and the United Kingdom.

Major national developments in Western Europe

With arms sales of \$36.1 billion in 2016, the eight British companies ranked in the Top 100 accounted for 9.6 per cent of the total. The combined arms sales of British companies grew by 2.0 per cent compared with 2015. BAE Systems, the UK's largest arms producer, increased its sales by 0.4 per cent compared with 2015. Arms sales by Rolls-Royce, the UK's second largest arms producer, rose by 4.5 per cent. The highest growth in arms sales (43.2 per cent) was recorded by GKN, an aerospace components manufacturer. Although arms sales for some British companies increased in 2016, the short-term economic and political outlook in the UK remains uncertain following its decision in 2016 to leave the EU.

The combined arms sales of the six French companies ranked in the Top 100 amounted to \$18.6 billion, accounting for 5.0 per cent of the overall total for 2016. This represents a decrease in sales of 0.8 per cent compared with 2015. The slight fall was mostly due to a slowdown in deliveries of Rafale combat aircraft (produced by Dassault) compared with the previous year. Dassault's arms sales decreased by

24.8 per cent in 2016. The arms sales of land system producer Nexter also fell (by 19.4 per cent).

After a corporate restructuring, Italy's largest arms producer, Finmeccanica, was renamed Leonardo in 2016. The company's subsidiaries no longer exist, except for the US-based Leonardo DRS. The company also sold its civilian transportation business and will now chiefly focus its activities on aerospace and military capabilities. Leonardo's arms sales reached \$8.5 billion in 2016—a decrease of 8.2 per cent compared with 2015. The arms sales of Italy's second largest arms producer, the naval shipyard Fincantieri, totalled \$1.6 billion in 2016, representing an increase of 7.1 per cent. This was due to deliveries of littoral combat ships to the USA, and frigates and submarines to Italy.

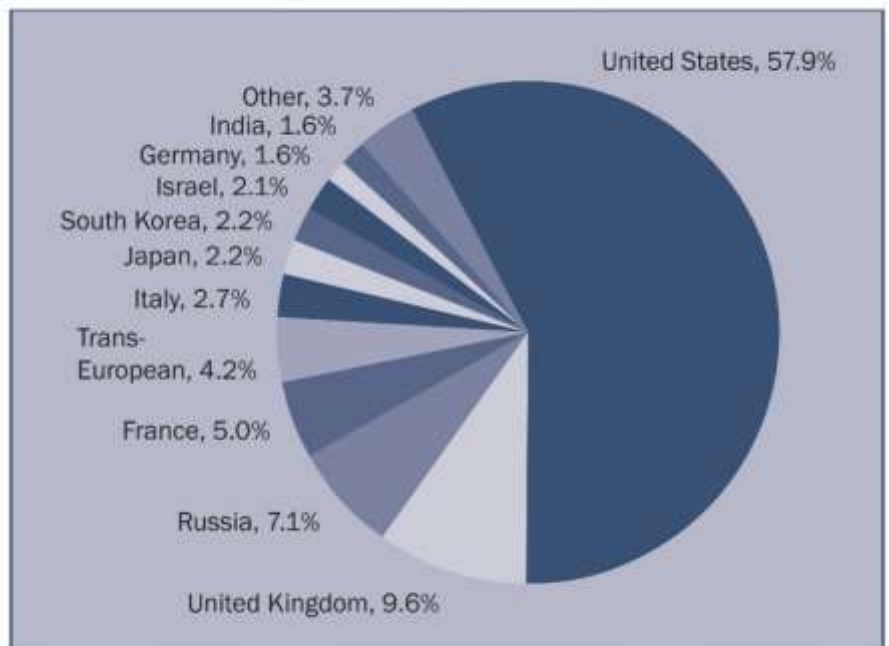


Figure 3. Share of arms sales of companies in the SIPRI Top 100 for 2016, by country

Notes: The Top 544 classified companies according to the country in which they are headquartered, so sales by an overseas subsidiary will be counted towards the total for the parent company's country. The Top 100 does not include the entire arms industry in each country covered, only the largest companies. The category 'Other' consists of countries whose companies' arms sales comprise less than 1% of the total: Australia, Brazil, Canada, Norway, Poland, Singapore, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey and Ukraine.

Figures do not always add up to a total of 100% because of the conventions of rounding.

Based on the growth in China's military spending, which has increased almost threefold between 2002 and 2016, as well as China's arms exports and limited information on individual companies, at least 9 or 10 companies would almost certainly be in the Top 100 if figures for arms sales were available. Of these, 4 to 6 would probably be in the top 20, and 2 (the aircraft producer AVIC and the land system producer Norinco) may be in the top 10.

The combined arms sales of the three German companies listed in the Top 100 for 2016 rose by 6.6 per cent to \$6.0 billion. The arms sales of land systems producers Krauss-Maffei Wegmann and Rheinmetall rose by 12.8 and 13.3 per cent, respectively, due to increased German arms procurement. By contrast, ThyssenKrupp's sales fell by 6.6 per cent.

SIPRI categorizes companies that are owned by more than one West European state as 'Trans-European'. MBDA is listed as a Trans-European company in the Top 100 for 2016.³ Its arms sales grew by 3.1 per cent to \$3.3 billion in 2016. The arms sales of Airbus Group, which is ranked in the top 10 for 2016, totalled \$12.5 billion—a decrease of 2.7 per cent compared with 2015. The fall is partly due to delays in delivering the A-400 military transport aircraft.

Russia

The combined arms sales of the 10 Russian companies listed in the Top 100 reached \$26.6 billion in 2016, accounting for 7.1 per cent of the overall total. This represents an increase in sales of 3.8 per cent compared with 2015. It seems that the major economic difficulties experienced by Russia have had a mixed impact on the sales of the companies ranked in 2016. Five companies recorded sales growth, while the other five showed decreases. Russia's largest arms company, United Aircraft Corporation, is ranked 13th, with arms sales of \$5.2 billion—a sharp increase of 15.6 per cent compared with 2015. By contrast, United Shipbuilding Corporation's arms sales declined by 11.5 per cent, placing it at 19th in the Top 100.

Emerging producers

South Korean arms producers continue to dominate the emerging producer category with seven companies ranked in the Top 100 for 2016. Their combined arms sales totalled \$8.4 billion, representing a 20.6 per cent increase in sales compared with 2015. South Korean arms producers held a 2.2 per cent share of the total Top 100 sales in 2016, putting South Korea

alongside 'other established producers' such as Israel and Japan. The growth in sales is largely due to rising threat perceptions in South Korea. This has accelerated the acquisition of military equipment, which South Korea increasingly sources from its own arms industry based on policy considerations. The arms sales of Brazilian and Turkish companies also rose in 2016, growing by 10.8 and 27.6 per cent respectively. India is the only emerging producer showing a decline (−1.2 per cent) in arms sales in 2016.

Other established producers

The combined arms sales of the companies based in the six countries categorized as established arms producers fell by 1.2 per cent to a total of \$20.9 billion in 2016. However, only companies based in Australia (−4.3 per cent) and Japan (−6.4 per cent) recorded overall decreases in sales.

The established producers category is heavily influenced by trends in Japan due to the number of Japanese companies ranked and their comparatively high volume of arms sales. The fall in Japan's arms sales in 2016 was driven by a decline in the sales of its largest arms companies, namely Mitsubishi Heavy Industries (−4.8 per cent), Kawasaki Heavy Industries (−16.3 per cent) and Mitsubishi Electric Corporation (−29.2 per cent). The decline is partially attributable to the appreciation of the yen against the US dollar and a reduction in orders.

Ukrainian company UkrOboronProm's arms sales rose by 25.1 per cent in 2016. This was mainly due to high local demand as a result of the ongoing conflict in eastern Ukraine, its absorption of the aircraft producer Antonov in 2016, and arms exports.

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3. Following a reassessment of MBDA, its status has been changed from 'joint venture' (between Airbus Group, BAE Systems and Finmeccanica) to 'company'. Its new status is reflected in adjustments for arms sales of the Top 100 for previous years.

Military Technology and Equipments, New Weapon Devices

Gowind 2500 Corvette



The **Gowind** design is a family of steel monohull corvettes developed since 2006 by Naval Group, formerly known as DCNS, to conduct missions in littoral zone such as anti-submarine warfare (ASW). The Gowind family includes vessels with lengths from 85 m to 102 m and displacement from 1,000 t to 2,500 t.

The Gowind design can deploy Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs), Unmanned Surface Vehicles (USVs) and Underwater Unmanned Vehicles (UUVs). An aft deck has been provided allowing for a 10-ton class helicopter or Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) operations.

The platform's weapon system consists of a multi-functional radar and MICA SAM. It is armed with Exocet anti ship missiles. The propulsion system is based on Combined Diesel and Diesel (CODAD) and includes water-jets for improved maneuverability in shallow waters and high-speed performance. There is no funnel (smokestack) on these ships. The radar and other sensors are mounted on a single central mast thus allowing 360-degree view. Naval Group offers two variants of the design: Gowind 1000 and Gowind 2500.

The Gowind 2500 corvette is one of two vari-

ants in the Gowind family of multi-mission corvettes developed by DCNS Group.

The corvette can perform complex naval missions, including anti-air warfare (AAW), anti-surface warfare (ASuW) and anti-submarine warfare (ASW), as well as low-intensity operations such as maritime security, surveillance and patrol missions against trafficking and piracy.

DCNS Group received the first contract for Gowind 2500 from the Royal Malaysian Navy in 2014. The contract also includes a technology transfer agreement for the construction of six corvettes at the Boustead Naval Shipyard in Malaysia.

The Egyptian Navy entered an agreement with DCNS in June 2014 for the design and construction of four Gowind 2500 corvettes.

The contract also includes a technology transfer agreement for building three units at Alexandria Shipyard in Egypt. The first vessel was built by DCNS in Lorient.

DCNS cut the metal for the first corvette at Lorient, in April 2015. The vessel was launched in September 2016. Deliveries of all units are scheduled to be completed before 2019.

First metal was cut for the first Gowind 2500 corvette being built by Alexandria Shipyard in Egypt, in April 2016. Alexandria received supervision and technical aid teams from DCNS to support the construction of three corvettes.

DCNS also delivers training services at its Lorient shipyard for the workforce of Alexandria Shipyard. The technical data and essential components will also be delivered to the Egyptian shipyard to conclude the construction of the corvettes.

The Gowind 2500 is a steel mono-hull vessel offering superior stealth capabilities. Its low-acoustic signature and radar cross section avoid



The corvettes will be armed with an OTO Melara 76mm main gun, two Nexter Narwhal 20mm cannons, a vertical launch system (VLS) for 16 VL Mica surface-to-air missiles, eight MBDA MM40 Exocet anti-ship missile launchers and two triple torpedo launchers.

The onboard sensors and radars include a 3D radar, electronic support measures (ESM) suite, a hull-mounted sonar, a variable depth sonar (VDS) and a fire control system.

The vessel features a helicopter deck for allowing the permanent deployment of a 10t heavy-lift helicopter and unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs).

easy detection by hostile platforms, making the corvette stealthier than other vessels in its class.

The vessel allows the integration of multiple mission modules to meet emerging operational requirements of the users.

The corvette has a length of 102m, beam of 16m, depth of 5.4m, and displacement of 2,500t. It can complement a crew of 65, and 15 Special Forces.

The Gowind 2500 corvettes incorporate the SETIS combat system, which is also in service with FREMM frigates. The intuitive man-machine interface and integrated command prompts enables the crew to analyse large amounts of data fed by onboard sensors and allows them to take quick counteractions against wide range of threats.

The combat system also supports the integration of unmanned aircraft system (UAS) for extended detection and response against threats. The system is capable of conducting engagement of surface vessels, defence against aerial platforms, detection and tracking, and engagement of submarines.

It can also share the accurate tactical picture with other vessels in the task group through interoperable data links.

It also provides a hangar facility for embarked helicopter.

The Gowind 2500 is powered by combined diesel and electric propulsion system. The power-plant provides a maximum speed of more than 25kt. The corvette can attain a range of 4,000 nautical miles (nm) at speeds of 15kt.

Presented by Cornel VAIDA



Project Scorpion



Project Scorpion is a multinational military modernization program which uses military-run experimentation for acquisition of new armaments. Project Scorpion also tests new military behaviors such as effects-based operations, network-centric warfare, and irregular warfare and civilian-military concepts.

Originally a U.S. Army concept, Project Scorpion was the new name for the former Intelligent Munitions System (IMS), was re-baptized in its new name around 2004 under the Future Combat System (FCS) framework, this a program which was cancelled in April 2009 by Secretary of Defense Robert Gates; parts of the FCS were swept within the U.S. Army Brigade Combat Team Modernization Program under the U.S. Army Office for Acquisition, Research and Development.

From the outset in 2004, the U.S. Department of Defense promoted Project Scorpion as a means of providing domestic military interoperability, i.e. inter-agency operational facilitation U.S. military bodies such as the Army, Navy, Air Force and Coast Guard. Yet Project Scorpion was also promoted internationally by the U.S. Department of Defense as a means of promoting multinational interoperability for closer U.S. integration with coalition (NATO) militaries. In this light, Project Scorpion was easily adopted by Defense Ministry acquisitions agencies of

France, Germany and the United Kingdom; Non-NATO partners appear to have been invited to participate.

As from 2010, it would appear that the United States (DOD) and France (DGA) are the lead-players in the multinational Project Scorpion coalition.

Project Scorpion uses part of the system of systems principles. Such military modernization efforts are part of a wider military concept of Revolution in military affairs, or "RMA".

Press reports indicate that Project Scorpion was intended for "NATO Interoperability". In this light French, German, U.K and U.S.

military descriptions of Project Scorpion are similar, using the same defense companies serve as "lead systems integrators" for the program. Project Scorpion is a facet of the Revolution in Military Affairs modernization program known in the U.S. as Future Combat Systems (FCS), in the UK as Future Rapid Effect System (FRES), in Germany known as *Infanterist der Zukunft* (IdZ), and in France as *FÉLIN*, an abbreviation for *Fantassin à Équipements et Liaisons Intégrés* (Integrated Infantryman Equipment and Communications). All such programs are designed using the "System of Systems" (SOS) military concept philosophy, whereby humans, munitions and "sensors" are jointly used to achieve desired military objectives, these being part of a wider concept under a RMA, or "Revolution in Military Affairs umbrella. None of this nomenclature is especially descriptive or specific in terms of outputs, non-descript nomenclature perhaps being perhaps the hallmark of activities and operations under the Project Scorpion umbrella.

In our next issue we will present the Scorpion program for the French army in more detail.

The photo is one of the achievements of the Scorpion program in Germany – the armored carrier "Boxer".

Presented by Cornel VAIDA

Leading Articles, Studies and New Analyses

POLITICALLY INCORRECT**Sensitive Facts and Dangerous Truths that we are Banned to Discuss****Author: Jan Van HELSING****Publisher: Antet, 2016**

Udo Holey (born 22 March 1967, Dinkelsbuhl) known by his literary pseudonym Jan van Helsing is a controversial German author whose writing advances many conspiracy theories about the involvement of the franc masonry in the control of the world, the so-called survival of Hitler after World War II by going to Antarctica and the theory that the earth would be empty etc.

His books *Geheimgesellschaften* (Secret Societies) and *Geheimgesellschaften 8* have been banned in Germany and Switzerland on charges of inciting hatred against the Jews.

“One element in which our planet is certainly unique is the fact that the people who tell the truth are rather argued with than supported in their statements. But, the truth should be admitted, although people prefer instead to be deceived and live a peaceful life where others make decisions on their behalf”. JAN VAN HELSING

The author’s statement is included in this volume, saying that authors, journalists and publishers (in Germany) are characterized by the fear of expressing their opinions freely, “But - he says - “opinions” are our lives. And the other people, our fellow citizens have the right to come into contact with other opinions and build their own picture of the world. They have the right to decide what is “good” and what is “bad” for themselves and what is “true” and “false” in the media reports - and above all it is important to know what is considered the TRUTH in our country and worldwide. Have we, the authors, got to work with scissors in the head? Have we got to the censorship of our own thoughts? Is it “normal”?

Here are the chapters of the book: Do you still think politically incorrect or you have been al-

ready convinced? – The freedom of expression or propaganda? On the danger of radicalization! – The manipulation of opinion in Germany – The lie of the growth – Do environmentalists act as “tools” of the financial sector? – The war plans of the Russians? It is a politically incorrect phrase! - Codex Alimentarius - A day in September – Hidden secrets - or what the world needs not to know! – Does the Bundeswehr have in custody “flying saucers”? - Transforming the Federal Republic of Germany into the GDR – The violence against the police is increasing – Was there “political correctness” in the Middle Ages? – The “Secret Hess files” – Crimes of thought in the 21st century - The son of a member of the Illuminati speaks - Interview with Ben Morgenstern – “You mean your son is not a homosexual?” - The persecution of Christians: It is not reminiscent of the Roman Empire! – The immigrants and the German press censorship - Who benefits from it? - Criticism to the vaccines - politically and medically incorrect! – In the wild Kurdistan - Climate Lies – Political correctness and incorrectness are within us, Afterword, References.

Presented by Cornel VAIDA



The future WORLD ORDER

Author: Andrei MARGA

Publisher: NICULESCU, 2017

Andrei Marga is the author of numerous books on the history of modern and contemporary philosophy, political philosophy and the philosophy of religion. In 1979 he became a lecturer and after 1989 he was promoted to professor of contemporary philosophy and logic. Later, he was appointed Dean of the Faculty of History and Philosophy, pro-rector and then rector of the Babes-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca. While he was a rector, for about 15 years, he implemented a number of reforms, including the Charter of the University in 1995, and promoted the establishment of 11 new faculties. At the proposal of the Democratic Party Convention, he became Minister of Education on 5 December 1997, a position that he held until 28 December 2000. As Minister of Education, he initiated a reform in education, which included the reform of the teaching program, changes in the academic and financial management of education and the decentralization and reorganization of research. He promoted advanced forms of international cooperation aimed at the full transition of Romania to the European education.

He was Foreign Minister from 7 May 2012 to 6 August 2012.

This is not the first volume in the domain of international relations, the book was preceded by "Crisis after Crisis" (2009), "Changing the World. Globalization, Culture, Geopolitics" (2013) and "The Global Rise of China" (2015).

The author presents the purpose of this book in the "Introduction": "There are books on the history of international relations, but here it is about capturing something that belongs in fact to the future that is being shaped in front of our eyes. There are books on geopolitics, but their current view is short. There are books on the theory and methods of international relations, which say well-known things, but they

do not advance options. In the book *The Future World Order* I tried to overcome the mentioned limitations by writing in full awareness of the economy, history and sociology of the international relations, in a method that acquired philosophical relevance and is able to guide actions".

The volume has an Introduction and five parts, as it follows: Part I: Background, Part II: Recent History, Part III: The Agenda of Today's World, Part IV: The Main Players, Part V: Romania – the Need to Profile, Conclusion: Political Responsibility, three Annexes: A changing world - an innovative foreign policy, Romania's foreign policy agenda and Romania in a changing world, Selective Bibliography.

Analyzing the concept of "post-democracy" the author concludes that it is "above all a diagnosis" and that "The citizen equality underlying democracy is left empty".

Presented by Cornel VAIDA





Corneliu PIVARIU - Director and Editor-in-Chief of the *Geostrategic Pulse*
President-General Director of INGEPO Consulting

Author of books on strategic intelligence, terrorism and the situation in Iraq, of other studies and articles on the strategic information and the current geopolitical developments. Training on regional security at Harvard University-Kennedy School of Government. Member of the International Institute for Strategic Studies—London.



Dumitru CHICAN

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An entire active career in the Romanian diplomacy, with permanent missions in numerous Arab countries. Other special missions abroad, such as Envoy of the Romanian Chief of State. One of the Romanian best experts in the Arabic language, the Arab culture and world. Author of several works and translations in and from Arabic, published in Romania and abroad. One of his latest books appeared in the UAE and was declared the best editorial issue at the International Book Fair in Sharjah and the best book



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